

Affiliate Classroom

**Web 2.0 and
Niche Market
Research**

The journal of affiliate marketing and management best practices

Niche Marketing Revisited

CPA and Niches: The Perfect Combination

How to Choose Your Niche



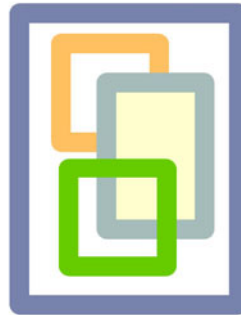
Volume 2, Number 11
October, 2006

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Top 5 Affiliate Programs



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Forge Business Corporation is a strategic marketing firm that provides the most exclusive offers available. They employ a full-time staff of affiliate program managers, client service representatives & support personnel. They are focused on helping you make the most profit by any means necessary.

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Top 5 Programs: October 2006

Cardoffers.com

<http://www.cardoffers.com/manage/track/d.asp?ID=10623>

Cardoffers provides the most detailed credit card information in the industry to ensure affiliates are well taken care of. They use various free content feeds that are designed to match your sites needs and layout. They help maximize your earning potential. You have over 130+ products to choose from, starting with major card issuers to detailed online reporting with sub-tracking technology.

Cardoffers knows that affiliates need support so they have toll-free customer service, excellent marketing advice, and offer individual management of each account. Their payouts are as high as \$160+ per credit card approval or \$36 per application. If you are looking for a top of the line credit card affiliate program then go see what they are all about.

WeRLive

<http://partners.werlive.com/wmaster.asp?WID=422269386>

WeRLive provides expert opinions on Mysticism & Astrology, Personal Counseling & Coaching, Education & Tutoring, Health, Diet & Fitness, and much more. They are the web's leading live video chat expert in their industry.

They provide their users with the most immediate and reliable expert knowledge. Their affiliates can refer members and earn up to \$32-\$100 or 20% lifetime rev share. WeRLive also provides the newest quality promo tools that are updated regularly. Promoting WeRLive's offers is easy because they have experts waiting to chat with your traffic to help you convert faster. Go check out the next wave of the future.

AFFILIATE PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

AdValiant

https://www.advaliant.com/Affiliate/New_AffEditProfile.aspx?Signup=1&ReferralID=1054

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USCS Military Loans

<http://www.uscsaffiliatenetwork.com/>

There are millions of active and retired military personnel affiliates already generating over \$750 million per year in personal loans. Unlike typical lenders who overlook this market, the USCS Military Loans has tapped into this goldmine by representing the largest privately held military loan company in the country.

Simply place a link (or banner ad) from your website to theirs and watch the money start rolling in. Some of their Affiliates earn up to \$20,000 a month! If you are looking for a great opportunity that can create overwhelming profits then you have come to the right place.

Central Coast Nutraceuticals

http://centralcoastnutra.directtrack.com/index.html?super_affiliate_code=CD13

Ready to partner up with one of the fastest growing companies in the nutrition industry? Get ready to represent the most popular products online: Central Coast Nutraceuticals, Inc. is the company for you! They are the leader in developing and formulating cutting edge nutritional products with superior health-benefits.

Central Coast Nutraceuticals offers \$20 for payout plus 5% down line. In the health industry their products generate the highest EPC's and clickthrough/conversion rates. Join an industry where you can get rich making people healthy!

Until next time...

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(http://www.affiliateprograms.com/industry_newsletter/10-17.htm)

In our newsletter you can find all the latest industry news, tips, and tools. Communicate with our team of experts through in-depth articles and free online resources. These resources will help you to dramatically, increase your knowledge of affiliate marketing. Here is a place where you can receive the guidance and support you need to reach your full potential.

COVER STORY

Riches In Niches, Promoting Cost Per Action Campaigns

by Mark Thompson

<http://www.give-me-articles.com>



We all have our favorite niches, ones we return to time after time. We know what products sell and which Pay Per Click programs will earn us a good income. Many people who want to quickly increase their income will turn to a familiar niche and monetize it the same way that they always have.

However, there comes a time when you need to move out of your comfort zone and look for new methods of earning income. The new kid on the block is CPA advertising. (Experienced affiliates will recognize it as not so much the new kid on the block, but as the old kid in bright new clothes with a new gung-ho attitude.)

CPA eBooks

Last month CPA (Cost Per Action) advertising was thrust firmly into the limelight with the release of 2 e-Books: "The Death of AdSense" and the follow up "Life After AdSense".

By adding related CPA campaigns to existing Niche sites with traffic you can quickly increase your income.

With over 25,000 downloads of each eBook, CPA advertising became the most talked about subject in the Internet marketing world for a while. Whether you agreed or disagreed with the ideas put forward in the book your curiosity about CPA advertising can't fail to have been aroused. With Google currently testing CPA as a possible addition to PPC advertising, and eBay announcing their own CPA program, it looks like CPA is here to stay.

The two eBooks concentrated on a method called "Click Flipping", which is a form of AdSense arbitrage where you bid for low cost keywords in the hope of making high costs sales. While this method works for some people, the books didn't cover many of the opportunities that CPA advertising has for people with niche sites.

By adding related CPA campaigns to existing Niche sites with traffic you can quickly increase your income. With newly created sites you will start to reap the rewards once you attract good quality traffic.

From the advertisers point of view CPA is considered the optimal form of paying for online advertising. An advertiser only pays for the ad when a specific action has occurred. As we'll see later this action can be a product being purchased, a form being filled, etc. With more and more programs coming into the market every week it has never been easier to add a CPA campaign to your niche sites.

Getting Started

Getting started with CPA programs is very easy. Simply sign up with one of the many companies that act as middlemen for the advertisers and, once approved, you'll get access to the list of available programs. CPA campaigns are available in a number of different guises.

CPA campaigns are available in a number of different guises. Pay Per Lead and Cost Per Sale are the most common.

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A Pay Per Lead campaign is one that pays you for each action that an end-user completes on the advertiser's site. In most cases each advertiser

defines this action differently. An example of an action might be an end user filling out a form to receive a newsletter. You are paid for every unique person whom you send from your site to the advertiser's site and who completes the specified action.

Cost Per Sale campaigns are campaigns that pay you on a per sale basis. You will be paid for every unique purchase from a person whom you send from your site.

Occasionally you may also find a Pay Per Call campaign which will reward you for each phone call you generate to the advertisers call center. (Google has been experimenting with this recently.)

Finally, there are still a few Pay Per Click campaigns available. But these are getting rarer all the time. Most of the 'low hanging fruit' of PPC has been consumed already and affiliates need to get more creative to find new revenue.

When you sign up and start creating campaigns you'll be assigned an account manager who will liaise with you and help you if you have problems. It is worthwhile establishing a good working relationship with you account manager. They may have the ability to increase your commissions once you have proved yourself to be a successful earner.

It is worthwhile establishing a good working relationship with you account manager. They may have the ability to increase your commissions once you have proved yourself to be a successful earner.

They also have knowledge of what new programs are available and what programs may better suit your niches. They will know what creative material is getting the best results. A good relationship with you account manager can be worth big bucks to you

Which Niches?

We'll look now at a series of niches and give examples of suitable CPA campaigns that could be added to sites to generate additional income. We'll select a variety of Pay Per Lead and Cost Per Sale campaigns to demonstrate the different incomes that can be achieved.

All the results below will be gathered "blind." I'll pick a niche and spend no more than five minutes trying to find suitable CPA products to add to a niche site. This is purely to demonstrate how easy it is to find CPA campaigns to fit almost any niche

The first Niche we'll look at is mobile phones.

If you have a mobile phone site you could add a number of different types of campaigns — call plans, new phones etc. One of the more popular series of campaigns at present is for free ringtones. A quick glance through some of the CPA sites will show a number of companies offering from 88 cents to \$9.20 for a sign up for a free ringtone.

Additionally, you could earn \$1.20 for getting an end-user to enter a competition for a free Motorola Razr Phone. All that is required is for the end-user to supply a zip code. Other campaigns could be for calling plans and phone insurance.

One ever popular niche is weight loss. Here we immediately find two different types of products available for promotion. The first is for appetite suppressants. By promoting a free-trial offer the advertiser will pay you \$18.40 for each sign up. Another similar appetite suppressant will pay 32% of each sale.

Rather than promote appetite suppressants, you could choose to advertise products like Slendertone which

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purports to tone muscles. This would pay you \$28.80 per sale. By collecting a mailing list of users who applied for the free appetite suppressants you would have a targeted list of people who may try other methods of weight loss. Indeed, they may be susceptible to a slendertone offer in a few months time.

Many of the Pay Per Lead sites have free offers which you can promote.

One of the keys to success with CPA advertising is to test different offers.

The last niche we'll look at is a seasonal one, Halloween.

Obviously, it is too late for this year. But there will be similar campaigns available for every holiday and festival. Within two minutes of logging into one of the new CPA sites I found the following suitable campaigns: Halloween costume hire, paying \$9.60 per lead and personalized Halloween gifts paying \$8.40 per lead.

You could also get paid 88 cents for giving away a free bag of Halloween candy or \$1.25 for getting an end-user to submit his or her email address and completing a very short candy survey. Finally, you could earn 96 cents for getting someone to vote in a Snickers vs Reese's contest and supplying his or her email address.

The range of products and opportunities available is vast. While looking at the niches above I came across garden tools which pay \$7.50 per sale, golf clubs which pay \$75.00 per sale and life insurance portals which will pay you \$56 if someone completes a quotation request.

Costs and Revenue

Many of the Pay Per Lead sites have free offers which you can promote. When someone signs up you get paid. One of the keys to success with CPA advertising is to test different offers. Which will earn you more: selling one product per day that pays \$30 per sale, or getting multiple payments of 80 cents for getting a user to apply for a free trial offer? One of the great things about CPA's is that you often have the choice of trying to get the sale or get the lead and leave the sale to the company.

As you can see there is a CPA offer for almost any niche and with a bit of creativity and traffic generation you could quickly add a new income stream to your niche site. Many of the offers above convert far better than traditional affiliate programs and many of the offers appeal to the high percentage of people who want something for free.

Compare some of the offers to what PPC programs pay and you can see just why CPA is getting a lot of interest at the moment. Each advertiser has their own set of rules about what you can do to promote their products. Some will allow you to use any method you wish and provide you with email campaigns, keywords for PPC campaigns and articles for your newsletter. Some don't allow PPC campaigns and others won't allow email campaigns.

If you do start to use CPA ensure you know exactly what the advertiser allows and what is frowned upon.

COVER STORY CONCLUSION

When researching suitable products one noticeable factor was the number of products that have previously been advertised on ClickBank that are now setting up CPA campaigns. While the commissions offered are the same, there are often additional benefits in using the CPA campaign.

By employing a method of email collection you can establish a highly targeted list of potential clients for related CPA campaigns.

Often you will find that better quality banners and adverts are available on the CPA site. Plus, you'll also have access to an account manager who can assist and advise you where necessary. You'll also frequently have access to additional payment methods such as direct deposit payments and PayPal payments in addition to checks.

CPA and Niches: Perfect Couple

Cost Per Action advertising campaigns are the perfect companion for your niches and can open up a whole new method of monetizing your sites. Further, by employing a method of email collection you can establish a highly targeted list of potential clients for related CPA campaigns or new CPA products that come along at a later date. Start looking at what's available now and get ahead of the pack.

CPA is here to stay.

About the author

Mark Thompson spent many years working in IT consultancy in London. Following a re-evaluation of his goals and lifestyle in 2004 he sold everything he couldn't fit into the family car and moved to rural Spain where he now pursues a variety of online ventures. See: <http://www.give-me-articles.com>

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

How To Pick A Niche

by Evelyn Grazini,

http://www.reawakener.com/free_gifts.htm



Niche Defined

So, what exactly is a niche? Simply stated, a niche is a high-demand, low-competition market. Niches are usually found by first looking at a large market, then breaking out several smaller markets from within the larger one. (Example: the large fitness market has niches of weight loss, exercise equipment, etc.).

Once you've found a good niche, I'm betting you won't tell everyone because that would make the "low competition" statement quickly invalid.

That's why I wonder about the growing number of people selling "niche" information. If you think about it, that in itself is a perfect example of a niche goldmine! It's a hungry market, willing to pay top price to have information handed to it.

Niche Memberships

I've seen niche membership clubs that are almost \$300.00 a month and people are lining up to get into the club first!

If a marketer can pay \$300 a month for this type of information, you can bet that he or she is a pretty high roller. They will dominate the niche in no time.

The only problem I have with these (other than the price) is that they are sold to around 200 people (more or less). I suppose in the large world of the web, that's not a lot of competition. However, if a marketer can pay \$300 a month for this type of information, you can bet that he or she is a pretty high roller. They will dominate the niche in no time.

Also, if the person doing the niche research finds a keyword that is a goldmine, do you think it will ever get to the club members? Maybe, maybe not.

It's best to do a little work on your own to find a niche that's all yours. It's really not that hard to do, but it does take a little time.

AFFILIATE STUDENT CONTINUED...

Things to Consider

There are a few decisions you need to make before you can determine a good niche to invest in. You need to approach this research like you're starting a business. Your future success will hinge on whether you have a concise business plan, or no plan. Without a mini-marketing plan you can easily get off-track and start following the next best thing.

Develop a marketing plan for each niche you decide to enter, and don't start another niche project until you have everything in place and on autopilot for the first one.

There are two key things to consider when searching for a niche market:

- Do you want to target a specific audience? or,
- Do you want to target a product first?

Lets review what is involved in targeting each of these areas:

When you start thinking about your target audience, the product may come to you.

Think about baby boomers for a minute. Do you get the feeling that a good niche might be a travel product, or a health and fitness product?

Target = Audience

Many people jump right into trying to find a product. But there is another way to think about the market. Consider identifying a target "audience", then brainstorm what products that audience might be interested in.

For example, take baby boomers, teens, tweens or even men and women as a target. When you start thinking about your target audience, the product may come to you.

Think about baby boomers for a minute. Do you get the feeling that a good niche might be a travel product, or a health and fitness product? What about a product describing how to live longer or look younger?

As you can see, when you start with an audience in mind, you'll come up with all kinds of ideas for products that this market would love.

Target = Product

If you're having problems coming up with an audience, then it's time to try to find a product. The easiest way to find a product is by using one general marketing principle. You've probably heard of this one: If you want to make money quickly, sell something that people are already buying.

OK, that sounds simple enough. But if there is already a product being sold, determine how big the market is for that type of product. If it's small, find a gap in the market that isn't being serviced.

There are some free and relatively low-cost tools to help you get started. Such as Overture Search and Wordtracker .

Idea Generation

While you were deciding on which niche to target, the audience or product, you probably came up with a few ideas of your own. But what if you didn't?

The first, and easiest thing to do is to look at what you do on a daily or weekly basis. What hobbies are you involved in? What are your interests and strengths? What do you watch on TV? And, most importantly, what is FUN for you? It's always easier to start with what you know. Then narrow down the market from there.

Tools

There are some free and relatively low-cost tools to help you get started. These will help you drill down to smaller niches by looking at what you already know. For example, if you like to garden, use the Overture Search tool (<http://inventory.overture.com/>). Look at the keyword for garden (or gardening). By looking at the results from that search, you should get ideas for a good smaller market within the large gardening market.

Using Wordtracker <http://www.affiliateclassroom.com/Keywords> will get even more results. Wordtracker will give you related keywords that do not have the original keyword in them (like landscaping, or hydroponics).

Wordtracker gets one step closer to the niche than Overture, because Overture will only display keywords that include the one you input. You will get plenty of results using Overture, but you are more likely to find a smaller niche using Wordtracker <http://www.affiliateclassroom.com/Keywords>

With these tools, you could easily run across something that you never thought of. Do multiple searches to make sure you have drilled down far enough to that goldmine niche!

Brainstorming

I suppose now you're wondering what to do if you think you're not good at anything. Not to worry. You can still find something to market. Although, you might have to hire someone to write for you.

The best way to find possibilities is to do some brainstorming. If you have a trusted friend you can bounce ideas off, this session should go fairly quickly and, it will be much more fun than sitting alone and writing only your ideas on a piece of paper.

Make it a game. Say a word about a hobby or something you've heard in the news. Have your friend say a related word (or whatever comes to mind). Between the two of you, there should be more than enough ideas generated to do some serious niche keyword research.

When you're brainstorming, here are a few things you can do to help you move along:

- Think about what (or who) interests you. Remember there are two ways to think

about niches – the target audience or a specific product. Write down a few ideas for both sides. Then do your research online.

- Ask yourself questions such as "how do I..." or "where can I..."

If you still are not coming up with anything here are three more ways to get ideas. (Write down anything interesting you see so you can do more research later.)

- Search Google Zeitgeist (<http://www.google.com/press/zeitgeist.html>) for the most popular search phrases of the week.
- Go to Amazon.com and look for the top sellers.
- Go to eBay.com and look at the "Popular Stores" section. Click through some categories and see how many items are being sold in each category. And at what price.

Research, Research, Research

It's now time to break down your list further. Don't just select the item or keyword that you think is the winner. Research online to see if others are already selling your product. Some competition is a good thing!

If you find nothing, search on another keyword. If there's no competition, you will not have affiliate products to market as upsells. Or for that matter, affiliates to market your product in

Remember there are two ways to think about niches – the target audience or a specific product. Then do your research online. Search Google Zeitgeist, go to Amazon.com, go to eBay.com.

the future.

Most importantly, determine if your new keyword will be profitable. This is an important step to carry out before deciding to invest your time and money in any particular area.

Determining Profitability

Lets go back to your keyword list and see if you've found a moneymaking niche. If the online market is too small for your business venture, it will not be profitable. A saturated market is not a good niche.

First, we'll go back to our Overture research on the large gardening niche. Lets see if there is any interest in the smaller niche of "container gardening."

Interestingly, there were over 4,000 searches done in August for the term "container gardening" and quite a few smaller, related niche words.

Using Wordtracker I run the keyword again to get the percentage for the number of searches

done vs. the number of competing web sites (they call this the KEI – Keyword Effectiveness Index). I find that it's about in the middle. There is a fair amount of competition. But it's not saturated.

I still need to know how many of these searches converted to sales and, if possible, what type of containers sold best (large, small, indoor, outdoor, etc.).

There is no easy way to answer these questions directly. It's time to do more research online. Search for your keyword. Look at the results and see what Sponsored Ads come up. What

There is no easy way to tell if there is too much competition. If your keyword revealed 500 searches per month with Google indexing 500,000 pages, you might want to look into the next keyword.

comes up in the regular search listings? Who is buying the AdWords ads on the right side of the page. If there are a lot of sponsored listings, see if they are relevant to the regular listings. A lot of big commercial sites selling your niche item is not a good sign. Unless they have high affiliate payouts!

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to tell if there is too much competition, or if the market is saturated. The general rule is to look at your keyword search volume and weigh that against the number of indexed pages reported by Google. If your keyword revealed 500 searches per month with Google indexing 500,000 pages, you might want to look into the next keyword. Or, get more information by doing a survey.

Surveys

If you have the time, you can do a survey and ask people exactly what they are looking for. A survey will require a current list of subscribers or a way to get quick traffic to a survey website. This is a much larger process than your other research. If you want to go this route, research (using Google and others) to find survey software and information.

Just Do It!

It all may seem a little overwhelming at first, but after you've done it a few times, you will find your niche. Hopefully it will be the niche goldmine you've been waiting for!

About the author:

Evelyn Grazini is an Affiliate Classroom student and the author of "Directed Dreaming, Success From The Subconscious." Her specialty is Self-Help information, including Dreaming, Hypnosis, and Stress Relief. Her writings effectively condense volumes of professional research into one succinct resource. Find free reports at:

http://www.reawakener.com/free_gifts.htm

AFFILIATES AND WEB 2.0

The Social Web, Market Research Treasure Chest

by Katalin Torok, <http://mktg.idared.net>



Not long ago, affiliates researching lucrative niche areas had just a handful of tools at their disposal. Most of them centered around finding out what Internet users were searching for using the various search engines. Since web search is still the most important way to find information on the web, these tools have not lost their relevance or importance.

However with the emergence of the so-called social web, a new breed of tools has surfaced that can aid your niche research. In this article we look at how you can leverage Web 2.0 sites and trends in your market research.

Zeitgeist and Buzz

For the past five years, Google has been publishing a snapshot of what the Internet world is interested in during a given period of time on a page called Zeitgeist. The Zeitgeist acts as a constantly updated trend report on Internet society with the top emerging searches and most popular searches overall published in weekly and monthly lists, as well as a topical yearly overview.

Yahoo publishes its own "zeitgeist" lists, rounded out with a blog, called Yahoo Buzz (<http://buzz.yahoo.com/>). The insight into current emerging trends provided by these trend watching sites are on the one hand organic, on the other hand filtered and human-edited.

Web 2.0 brought with it a new breed of consumer involvement in creating content (blogs, lists, public bookmarking) and organizing (tagging). Consumer generated media presents a much more organic trend research environment.

With the emergence of the so-called social web, a new breed of tools has surfaced that can aid your niche research.

Today more and more websites become aggregators of Internet users' behaviors, similar to how search engines aggregate what people are looking for. Del.icio.us aggregates bookmarks (personal libraries of information). Flickr aggregates contributors' photos.

The social shopping sites we profiled in a previous issue aggregate shopping lists, wishlists and product picks. All through these sites Internet users leave a mass of data behind either consciously through consumer created content, or by their actions and interactions on the sites.

This new social environment can be leveraged for market research to find out what people really search for, shop for, wish for, or read, see, or take photos of. You can dig into the data for niches with real demand, real Internet users expressing dedication to the subject.

Here are a few ideas on how to start and what tools you can use to research affiliate niches and learn about emerging and fading trends.

Tag-based research

In previous articles we discussed the emergence of tagging as one of the most important new concepts of Web 2.0. Not surprisingly, tags are a great tool for your market research as well. Watch for tags that begin to pick up a larger volume of content, tags that appear on the "popular" pages of social sites. The more people use a tag, the more prominent it will become for the whole community. That's how new trends are born.

Tags are a great tool for your market research as well. Watch for tags that begin to pick up a larger volume of content, tags that appear on the "popular" pages of social sites.

- Finding a niche topic can be finding a unique new angle on a general subject. A great way to get ideas for narrowing a broad subject is to start out with a general tag like "fitness" and browse the related tags that the social sites show on the results pages.

(Try for example <http://del.icio.us/tag/clothing> where "shopping, fashion, design, tshirts, vintage, art, accessories, clothes, humor, retro, shop" are the current related tags of "clothing". This page shows an apparent interest for "retro clothing" and "vintage clothing".)

- Use del.icio.us (<http://del.icio.us>) to find what people are bookmarking in real time. The del.icio.us Popular page (<http://del.icio.us/popular/?new>) shows what is gaining popularity right now on the site. This is a good starting ground for ideas, as the list is a varied and colorful mix of articles, tools, company sites.

Use it as a brainstorming aid to find new article topics or look for patterns in the constant stream of new popular bookmarks. Drill down into narrower topics by exploring the "popular" list of each tag. (For example this is the popular page of the "affiliate" tag: <http://del.icio.us/popular/affiliate>.)

Keep in mind that the del.icio.us user base is more web-savvy than many general Internet users, so don't draw hard conclusions based solely on del.icio.us trends. On the other hand, these geeks are the "early adopters", and as such, frequently good forecasters for the mainstream trends of the future.

- Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>) is a blog search engine / directory / aggregator. As such, it is their major goal to organize the information in the blogosphere and highlight

trends and popular blogs, authors and topics, resulting in valuable research options for us, affiliates.

Explore the Technorati Popular page (<http://www.technorati.com/pop/>) to see what topics people are blogging about and what the most popular blogs of the day are. The Tags page (<http://www.technorati.com/tags>) shows the most popular tags (blog post categories) overall and in the last hour. And, finally, use the blog search engine to check existing blog conversations about your planned niche topic. Does the topic generate buzz?

- Research firm Nielsen Buzzmetrics runs its own trend watching site, called BlogPulse (<http://www.blogpulse.com/>), focusing on consumer generated media. They crawl blogs and discussion boards and provide different tools for searching user-generated content, including a great trend comparison search.

Using it you can compare the presence of different phrases in consumer-generated content over time. (See: <http://www.blogpulse.com/trend>) It is a great tool for comparing what gets more buzz: pilates or yoga? Knitting or scrapbooking? Low-carb or low-fat?

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The Social Proof

It is the same with any business idea: you may think it is brilliant, but that doesn't mean there is a market for it. Market research is as much about finding out what the next big thing is, as it is about finding out if those creative ideas you get waking up at 3 a.m. are viable. Social sites can be a starting point for this kind of research because they present real interest in your topic by real Internet users.

Try searching for unique combinations of tags on social bookmarking sites, or see what, if anything has been said on the topic on blogs. If you find a critical mass of interest on the topic, that is your initial user base right there.

Explore the combinations of tags, the conversations, the bookmarks and you can see what has already been done, what is popular, what is frowned upon. All this is input generated by your target market itself, and available for free.

Another idea is to look at social networks like MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>) where

users list their interests on their profiles. MySpace has more than 100 million users, so - especially if you focus on a younger audience - it can be a valuable insight into what the popular interests of our times are.

Back to Search Research

Research on social sites is excellent for brainstorming new topics, and can give you a list of terms describing your new niche topic. Then it's time to go back to where we began, researching search terms and search demand for them.

By entering search phrases into Google Trends, you get charts and graphs of information about the search volume of that phrase on a timeline from 2004.

We mentioned Google's Zeitgeist pages at the beginning of the article. It is an entertaining read and offers some unique insights into global search interests, but its not a very valuable research tool. However, a different Google project, Google Trends (<http://www.google.com/trends>) - still in "beta" phase, a part of Google Labs - is an excellent tool for niche research.

By entering search phrases into Google Trends, you get charts and graphs of information about the search volume of that phrase on a timeline from 2004, as well as international and local characteristics (in which country or region is it a popular query). Which brings us to a final idea for your niche affiliates sites.

International Trends

This one is for affiliates willing to venture into foreign territories... literally. Despite globalization, trends sometimes cross oceans or even just borders very slowly. Take advantage of your expertise in your niche and research that niche in other markets worldwide.

The above mentioned Google Trends website can be a great way to start. See if there is a rising search interest for your topic on a different continent, in a different country, in a different language. You can get ahead of local competitors by being the first to localize your established niche site in new markets where that niche is only just gaining ground.

About the author

Katalin Torok is an independent marketing consultant with a focus on Web 2.0. Her website and blog contains many helpful tips at: <http://mktg.idared.net>

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