

Affiliate Classroom

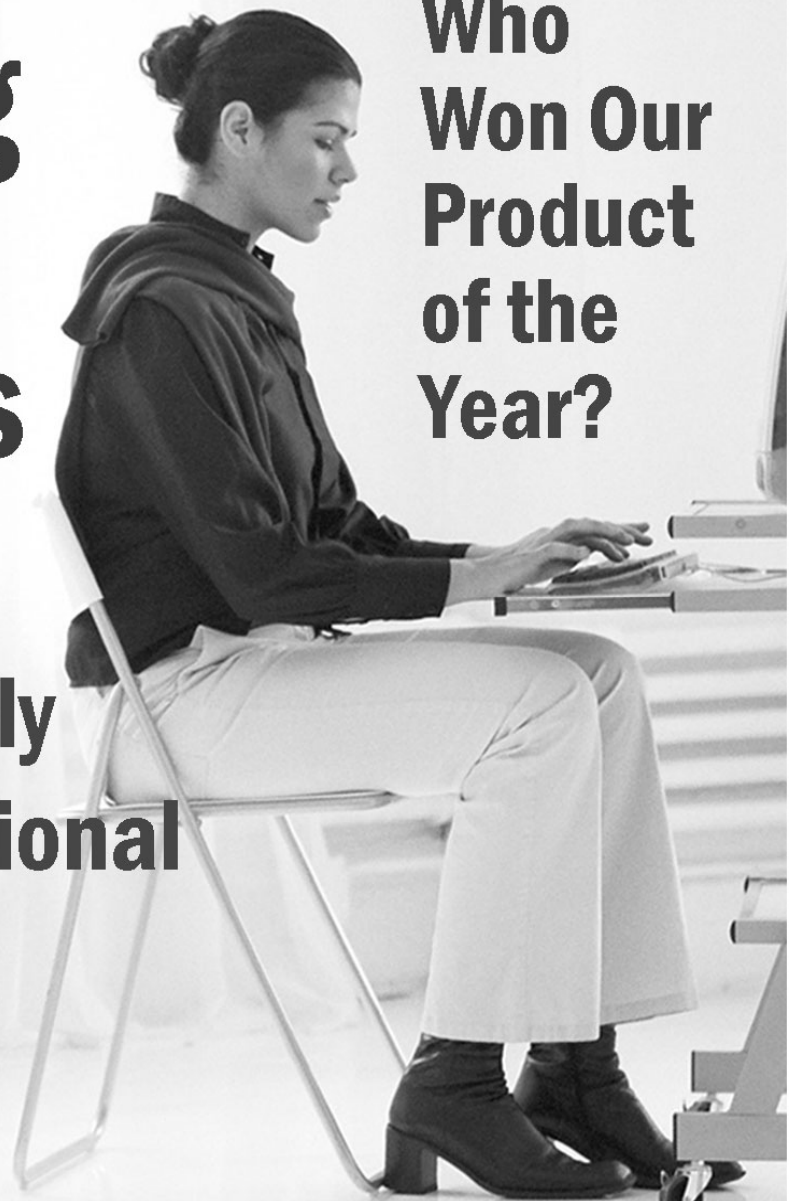
The journal of affiliate marketing and management best practices

Selecting Affiliate Programs

Research Tips Choosing Wisely Going International

Who Won Our Product of the Year?

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AffiliateClassroom.com



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In This Issue

- 3 Top 5 Affiliate Programs for January, 2007**
- 5 COVER STORY - Merchant Selection—Tips For Maximizing Profits**
- 10 Product of the Year**
- 14 How To Find International Affiliate Programs**

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Staff

Helen Swann Montgomery, Managing Editor
Jeffrey Perren, Associate Editor

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Affiliate Classroom, Inc.™
387 Technology Drive
College Park, MD 20742

Top 5 Affiliate Programs



AffiliatePrograms.com

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Featured Program – Triple Jack

http://www.triplejack.com/in.php?referrer=ap_poker&url=affiliate.php

What makes Triple Jack so incredibly tempting is the fact that they allow you to play poker for free and win prizes all day long. Triple Jack is the only poker site that is so interactive that you can throw pies, eggs, tomatoes, and more at other players.

They have created a crazy, fun new poker game that is quickly taking the industry by storm. Get an all access pass to everything that Triple Jack has to offer without any of the annoying ads. You will make nonstop commissions and keep all of your referrals for life.

Poker is an addicting game that everyone wants to be a part of, so take a chance by getting in the game. Not to mention that it is also 100% legal everywhere, including the US.

Top 5 Programs: January 2007

Hotels Combined

http://www.hotelscombined.com/affiliates.aspx?a_aid=32b85f10

If you are looking for a unique and generous travel affiliate program, then HotelsCombined.com affiliate program is the one for you. They are willing to pay up to 70% of their revenue and have also created an ingenious way to allow your visitors to search multiple sites simultaneously!

What makes this program stand out against the others? It compares major sites so that visitors are less likely to leave the site. HotelsCombined.com is literally a one-stop shop for hotel reservations. The best part is that affiliates get a whole year of repeat action cookie plus great integration options and data feeds.

EC Research

<http://www.ecresearchcorp.com/SearchResults.asp?Cat=27&Click=52114>

EC Research develops only the most advanced cosmeceutical skin care products in the industry, all of which are in high demand. All of their affiliates have experienced huge conversion rates of 9%, earn up to 20% per sale.

On average, the order value can be up to \$125.00. To make sure payments are made efficiently, they use 60-day cookies and track affiliate IDs on phone orders. This is a program you definitely want to check out.

Pingo Prepaid Calling Card Affiliate Program

<http://www.pingo.com/affiliate.do>

Pingo is a high-quality, high-conversion-rate prepaid phone card service. With the rapid growth of prepaid calling services, Pingo offers tremendous revenue potential. Pingo affiliates earn up to 150% of a new customer's first order and continue to earn \$15.00 per new customer.

Pingo offers a variety of creative affiliate promotions that include free movie passes, \$25 restaurant certificates, up to 4 hours of free long distance, discount coupons, and trial cards. Pingo also provides affiliates ongoing dedicated support that's always ready to create new custom promotions for innovative partners.

Pingo phone cards are a service of iBasis, a public company (NASDAQ: IBAS), and is one of the largest carriers of international phone calls in the world. Pingo customers take advantage of the same high quality international service and price advantage that iBasis has been providing to leading phone companies like AT&T, MCI, and Sprint on a wholesale basis for almost 10 years.

Check them out & join Pingo at <http://www.pingo.com/affiliate>. Mention you found them on affiliate programs and email them at affiliate@pingo.com to receive a free phone card.

Matcash

<http://admin.matcash.com/click.php?mid=&APID=996&affID=0001612>

Matcash has come up with an easy way to make money through an exclusive affiliate Toolbar that almost every affiliate needs. They pay you for every time a surfer installs the Toolbar onto their computer. Matcash's toolbar even works perfectly with all types of traffic by increasing your revenue dramatically. This toolbar does the hard work making your job even easier. Check out what they can do for you.

Forex Affiliate Programs

<http://www.forexaffiliateprograms.net/>

Forex Affiliate Program provides online businesses and site owners a valuable opportunity to maximize the revenue to their sites by promoting the Forex trading tool. Forex is committed to teaching and guiding you through each step needed to promote their services to reach your highest potential.

They also make sure you have all of the needed marketing materials, which include banners and text links, and Forex content (which is continually updated on a regular basis). Their two-tier affiliate program pays generously at \$100-\$300 per sign-up plus 10% of all second tier earnings. It provides their affiliates with the freshest banners, monthly specials, and promotions that will optimize your revenues and help you seal the deal.

Until next time...

Check us out in our **Industry Watch Newsletter**

(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.

Merchant Selection - Tips to Maximize Your Profits

by Evelyn Grazini

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



So, you've finally made the decision to get into the affiliate marketing business. Bravo! And, why not? It's really the easiest business to get into that I know of. There's a low initial cost, and high potential return. The advantages of not having to stock products, or mail them (as with eBay), or worry about store overhead, seem to take all the apprehension out of the new business venture. But it does require a lot of research, effort, and — above all — proper merchant selection.

Always choose a product you have a passion for. That will help motivate you to market it and people will notice your enthusiasm. If you believe in it, the feeling can be contagious.

What influences your choice could be anything. Maybe it was noticing a cool product online. You thought to yourself – I could sell this! Or, maybe you are selling one product now, and want to branch out into others.

Whatever your current situation, the time will come when it's necessary to market more products. This means finding merchants who have those products; merchants that offer good commissions, and opportunities that will make the venture worthwhile.

When choosing a product, always choose a product you have a passion for. Passion for the product will help motivate you to market it. Also, people will notice your enthusiasm for the product, making it much easier to get a sale. If you believe in it, the feeling can be contagious. You are more likely to stick with a product if you like it.

After choosing the product, you may find that there is more than one merchant selling that product. Now there is another choice to be made. Lets see what good merchants look like. First, a review of characteristics and cookies, then a few other things to keep in mind before making that all-important final merchant selection.

Characteristics

One way to have a huge selection of merchants immediately at your fingertips is to use a network like ShareASale, Commission Junction, or LinkShare. These networks have agreements with hundreds of merchants and the merchants associated with the particular network are all listed in one place. Payment and performance specifications are usually listed in an easy to scan table format.

Some of the things to compare when looking at the merchant tables are:

- **The sales commission amount**
- **7-Day EPC (earnings per 100 clicks)**
- **30-Day EPC**
- **Average sale amount**
- **Average commission paid**

None of these five items are more important than the others. Just make sure that the sales commission amount is not the only thing researched. On similar products, the commission amounts can be the same, while the Earnings Per Click vary widely.

For instance, on ShareASale, there are two merchants selling a well-known weight-loss product of the same name. **Here are some sample statistics:**

- **Merchant #1 – Average Sale = \$42.29; Commission 30%;
7 Day EPC \$46.69 – 30 Day EPC \$22.90**
- **Merchant #2 – Average Sale = \$47.92; Commission 30%;
7 Day EPC \$24.80 – 30 day EPC \$26.85**

Now, if you decided to market this product, you would probably select merchant number one. They have much higher 7-day earnings. You'll definitely see more immediate income while marketing for this merchant.

On this first review, I am most concerned with selecting a merchant who has a high profit margin. However, I don't want to stop there.

After selecting the merchant, there are a few more items to research before a final decision can be made. These are all things that should be considered before finally selecting any merchant. They can be done for merchants that are included in networks, as well as those who have their own affiliate programs.

Cookies

It may surprise some people to find out that there are merchants that do not use cookies. In the examples shown above, it is apparent that both of these merchants use cookies. If there were no cookies, they would not be able to track the 30 day EPC.

When a merchant doesn't use cookies, it means that a visitor who clicks through from your link **MUST** make a purchase on that visit. As soon as they leave, there is no evidence left to say that you sent them to the merchant's site.

This may seem a little unfair, but it's a common occurrence in many high-competition niches, such as affiliate marketing. It's designed to motivate affiliates to do what's necessary to close the sale immediately. Generally, marketers with strong opt-in lists can persuade their subscribers to buy immediately from their ezine link.

The second type of merchant tracks referrals using cookies. This is very common with merchants who sell hard goods, consumables, and high-ticket items.

Since most people do not purchase on a first visit, the cookie will tag potential buyers with the affiliate's ID. It does this by writing a tiny bit of data to the visitor's temporary Internet files. When they come back to the site, the affiliate gets credit for the sale, even if the visitor didn't come directly through the affiliate link the second time.

Click on one of your own affiliate links. Then find your browser cache folder and open it. Look for a file with a name similar to one of these:

cookie:yourcomputername@merchanturlname.com

One of the problems with cookies is that they expire after a time period set by the merchant. Some last one session, others 72 hours, or 30 days, or 6 weeks, and so on. Another potential problem is that anti-spyware programs can erase them.

The best thing to do is select a merchant with a cookie period of at least 30 days, and make sure they have a good tracking mechanism in place. The merchant I send the most traffic to has this statement in their Affiliate Agreement:

"Our Affiliate Program is set up to maintain affiliate credit even when the customer's computer is set to reject cookies. This means that even without cookies, you will get your commissions. This happens because the affiliate software we use will also track the IP addresses of the visitors you refer."

I'm sure you can see why it's worth marketing this merchant's products. You don't need to worry about lost commissions due to failed cookies.

Do a double check to see if the cookie and "expire" date are correct. Click on one of your own affiliate links. Then find your browser cache folder and open it. Look for a file with a name similar to one of these:

☒ **cookie:yourcomputername@merchanturlname.com/**

☒ **cookie:yourcomputername@www.merchanturl.com/**

The code should have an expiration date. Check to see if it's accurate based on the length of the cookie the merchant claims to set. Most of the time, it will not be a problem.

Sales Web Site

Be sure to check the merchant's website; the one that you will be sending visitors to. The site should be attractive and grab the customer's attention. Ultimately it should persuade them to purchase the product.

Check for a guarantee statement. Customers are more likely to make a purchase if there is a money-back guarantee. An effective full-refund guarantee could potentially double sales of one product compared to products that do not offer one.

Creatives

After determining that the sales site will actually sell, find out what kind of marketing help the merchant offers. Some merchants will supply everything they are using to help make sales. At the very least, there should be banners and text links available. Then, look for sample email letters that can be used and sample PPC ads or reviews of the product(s).

Some merchants offer free courses for jumpstarting your business. It is becoming more popular all the time to host weekly webinars. Ongoing newsletters are also used to make sure everyone is on the right track; making the most sales possible.

Timing of Payment/Minimum Payment Amount

Find out how often the merchant pays commissions and the minimum payment amount.

Some merchants pay every two weeks, others pay only after 90 days. Make sure you have enough income from other sources in the meantime.

Some merchants pay every two weeks, others pay only after 90 days have passed to ensure refund requests are covered. The 90-day wait time isn't necessarily a bad thing, but make sure you have enough income from other sources to make it worthwhile. If the product is a constant seller, after the first 90 days it won't be a problem anymore.

Also check the minimum payment amount. If you register at several network sites that all have a minimum payout of \$200.00, it could be awhile before any payment is received. Most people prefer a minimum payout between \$25 and \$50.

A reputable merchant pays commissions on any sales made within the cookie timeframe. Good merchants will do that even if the sale is made from a follow-up.

Some merchants pay immediately via PayPal. This sounds like a great deal, but remember: PayPal charges a commission to deposit money into an account. Sometimes it's better to wait for a larger check and get the full amount. Again, it depends on your circumstances.

Selective Product Commissions

Merchants with a lot of products may pay commissions only on a few of them. Why should you care? You *could* market just those products that pay.

Well, in the world of marketing, the money is in the list. When you send a visitor to a merchant and a sale is made, the merchant now has the name of a paying customer. A customer who is not afraid to spend money. When the merchant continues to market other non-commissioned products to that customer, no further commissions are paid to the affiliate.

A reputable merchant will keep the cookie active on that customer and pay commissions on any sales made to the customer within the cookie timeframe. Good merchants will do that even if the sale is made from a follow-up done by the merchant.

Do a quick search on the merchant's name at several forums and/or blogs to see if there are any unhappy customers or affiliates. Unhappy customers make for refunds and lost future sales.

Check Reputation

Do some research to find out the current reputation of a merchant and/or network. Forums and blogs all have search capabilities. Do a quick search on the merchant's name at several forums and/or blogs to see if there are any unhappy customers or affiliates.

Remember, unhappy customers make for refunds and lost future sales. Reports from unhappy affiliates can help keep you from making the same mistakes.

Final Thoughts

In closing, here are a few other things to keep in mind:

- ☒ **Select a product wisely and do not jump from product to product.**
- ☒ **Focus on one company. Determine what income you would like to receive.**
- ☒ **Work until you reach that income.**
- ☒ **Once you reach the desired income level, start all over again.**

Merchant research is not easy and it's time-consuming. However, YOUR Name and reputation is at stake. The proper research will be very much worth the effort for future sales success.

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. Get some of Evelyn's free reports at: http://www.reawakener.com/free_gifts.htm

Affiliate Classroom Product of the Year - WordPress

by Mark Thompson
<http://www.income-academy.com>



In a year with so many great products it hasn't been easy choosing a product of the year. But in spite of all the powerful products released in what has undoubtedly been a vintage year, there was only ever one real candidate.

This product has enabled everyone to create great sites quickly and promote products and sites with ease. The product comes with numerous features and a wealth of additional plug-ins. And best of all it's free.

Introducing...

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives us great pleasure to announce that the Affiliate Classroom Product of the Year 2006 is: WordPress Version 2.0 (<http://wordpress.org/>).

-
- **Better administration tools and image uploading**
 - **Faster posting, and an improved import**
 - **Rich editing**

WordPress V2.0 was released in December 2005 and replaced the earlier version 1.5, which had been released in February 2005.

Version 2.0 of WordPress was a major step forward. It added better administration tools and image uploading. Along with faster posting, and an improved import system, it added rich editing.

It also contained a completely new back end. One of the hidden benefits were the improvements to the plug-in system which allowed developers to create additional tools and functions which integrate seamlessly.

WordPress is developed under a GNU (General Public License). It is available for free and this means that a lot of the development work can be done by a community of developers. The lead developers are Matt Mullenweg and Ryan Boren.

Mullenweg and Boren are assisted by four contributing developers and the development community. There is also a large network of developers who create plug-ins which they then make available to the public.

What's It For?

Why is it so worthy of this accolade? WordPress is nothing less than a personal publishing tool and content management system. In other words, at the simplest level it is a tool for creating a blog without technical assistance. You can set it up on your own domain or get an account at WordPress.com and create your blog there. As we will see, it is also much more than a simple blog creation tool.

One of the great joys of WordPress is the ease of installation. It was initially promoted as having a five minute install. But it's common to do much better.

Easy Install

One of the great joys of WordPress is the ease of installation. It was initially promoted as having a five minute install. But it's common to do much better, since once you have installed it a few times you can have it installed on your site in under a minute.

If you have Cpanel-based hosting, you will find that you can install WordPress through the Fantastico tool that comes as part of Cpanel. Just select where you want it to be installed, enter the username and password you wish to use, along with the email address, and it installs automatically for you.

On the surface it looks like it could be quite a complicated install as it is PHP and MySQL based. This is usually enough to deter the less adventurous and non-technical user. However, the install is so simple that you have no need to even look at a MySQL database or even realize that it uses PHP.

The usability, the simplicity of the installation, and the fact that it is free would on their own be enough to ensure that WordPress warranted serious consideration for product of the year. But the best is still to come.

More Benefits

Once installed, the real benefits of WordPress V2.0 come to light. Without any changes or further configuration you can start to create and publish posts. A few minutes after the install, you can have content published and online for people to read. If you want something a bit more unique you can find hundreds of themes. These are just like new templates that will change the look of your site.

Many of these themes are available for free. Once you have chosen the ones you like you just need to download them to your PC and then upload them to a folder. You can then log into your admin panel and the new themes can be selected and deselected. This allows you to change the look and feel of your site within seconds.

Allow users to add comments to your sites if you wish, which you can then moderate before publishing. This is a great way of adding fresh content or getting feedback from your customers. Add or remove links with ease from the sidebar. In fact, almost everything you do on a "normal" website can be achieved with ease on a WordPress site.

You can add blog posts and articles to different categories and even create static pages. The possibilities with just the standard install plus some themes are immense.

However, when you add in the plug-ins that are available, then WordPress Version 2.0 becomes an invaluable tool for every marketer, whether you are a full-time professional, experienced, or a novice.

Plug-Ins

I said earlier in this article that WordPress V2.0 was simply a tool for creating a blog. This actually did it a great disservice. Although you could use it for just creating a blog, you would be wasting a lot of its huge potential.

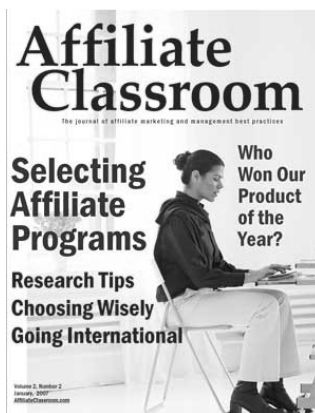
Because in truth, WordPress is without a doubt one of the finest marketing tools available to the Internet marketer today. Just as by adding themes to WordPress you can change the look of a site, by adding plug-ins to WordPress you can change the way it functions.

A quick search of Google for the expression "WordPress plug-ins" will return around 15 million results. Among them you will find plug-in directories, plug-in blogs and individual plug-ins.

A plug-in is a simple add-on to WordPress that can be activated or deactivated from the control panel. These plug-ins can add features, change the way that WordPress attracts search engine spiders, change the way that users interact, and even add spam control functions.

The number of available plug-ins is so large that it would probably take a

Attention Affiliates! AC Magazine is Now Brandable!



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Step 1

Go to <http://www.affiliateclassroom.com> to become an AC Affiliate.

Step 2

<http://www.affiliateclassroom.com/affiliate/brandmag.html> to grab the branding package.

Step 3

Follow the simple branding instructions and start earning!



whole magazine just to cover them. You really can find plug-ins that will do almost everything you could want to do with a WordPress site. If you find that there is no plug-in available for your purpose, there is such a large and knowledgeable community that you can get the plug-in written for you. Alternatively, you could have an existing plug-in adapted to your needs.

As well as plug-ins that deal with functionality, there are also a number of marketing related plug-ins. Companies like Amazon and CafePress have plug-ins that allow you to add their products to your sites. There are also plug-ins to add data feeds to your WordPress sites.

Still lother plug-ins let you add affiliate banners and ad rotators or AdSense adverts. A recent plug-in I came across allows you to add month's worth of content that will be added to your site on autopilot.

Complementary Software

In addition to plug-ins, a large market has sprung up supplying WordPress-based software and tools that integrate with WordPress V2.0. Tools like Rapid Niche Websites (<http://rapidnichewebsites.com/>) and Semiologic Pro (<http://www.semiologic.com/software/>) will allow you to build unique WordPress-based sites with lots of features and plug-ins already installed. You will find tools to create and modify templates. There have been number e-books that give details of how to create good online incomes by using WordPress.

There is software available that will allow you to create your perfect WordPress install and then roll it out across multiple sites. WordPress even has a multi user version, WordPress MU (<http://mu.wordpress.org/>), that allows you to create large blog farms.

Marketing Networks

Other tools will allow you to find WordPress blogs in related markets and ask for links or add relevant comments. You will also find a number of video based WordPress tutorials along with various guides.

By using a standard WordPress V2.0 install and a combination of plug-ins you can use WordPress to create a network of marketing sites. You can then use WordPress to promote the same sites and also to blog about your experiences. When it come to creating an online empire WordPress V2,0 really is the most versatile tool available to you.

Worthy Winner

WordPress V2.0 is without doubt a worthy winner of the Affiliate Classroom Product of the Year Award for 2006. One article really can't do justice to its potential. Any tool that costs nothing, that a person with limited technical ability can install, and that they can then use to create a steady stream of income is worthy of this and many more awards.

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://ww.income-academy.com>

International Programs - Challenges and Tips

How to find new merchants and build partnerships across borders

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



International Affiliate Programs

In the very first article I wrote for Affiliate Classroom magazine ("Challenges of the European Affiliate Marketplace", February 2006), I introduced readers to the opportunities and challenges of the European affiliate market for non-European marketers. Cross-cultural marketing is a whole science onto itself that no internationally active marketer can ignore, not even affiliates working across the seemingly open borders of the Internet.

Venturing across the border sounds scary to some, while others are more adventurous and feel at home internationally right away. No matter which camp you belong to, you will sooner or later face some of the unique challenges that come with a globalized, yet not always standardized marketplace.

In this article I will focus on how to work with international affiliate programs, how to research foreign merchants, and how to go about building strong partnerships with them.

Finding Programs

Deciding that you would like to work with foreign merchants is the first step, and setting up a plan should be the next. The process of market research and researching a niche abroad isn't much different than in your home market, but you will need to know which local tools to use and pay attention to language differences.

Networks may reject your application. If so, email them and try to get an exception. About half will agree.

When you have found your niche, you can start searching for merchants offering products in that niche, and narrow down the choices to those that both look lucrative for your site and goals, and most importantly, are willing to work with you as an international affiliate.

As an affiliate marketer in Europe, I frequently encounter automatic rejections from affiliate programs in the main networks because I am not located in the US, or even the UK or other main market where the merchant is located.

If this happens to you and you are convinced that the merchant would be a very good fit to your site, don't give up. Email them and explain that you are being rejected because of your location, but assure them that you can drive quality traffic from within their target geographic areas (if that's true, that is). In my experience, this works about 50% of the time.

Half the merchants email back and approve me (or explain that their legal department doesn't allow them to accept international affiliates, which is a shame, but there is not much left to do). The other half of the merchants never bother to reply, in which case, it wouldn't be worth wasting your time on them anyway.

Where to Look?

Start with the "big" networks, TradeDoubler (www.tradedoubler.com), dgmPerformance (www.dealgroupmedia.com), zanox (www.zanox.com), omg (www.omguk.com), buy.at (www.buy.at), Linkshare (www.linkshare.com), and Commission Junction (www.cj.com).

Start with the big networks: dgmPerformance, zanox, omg, buy.at, Linkshare, and Commission Junction

Browsing the merchant directory of the larger affiliate networks is the best way to start. In particular, Commission Junction is a very globalized affiliate marketplace. Their affiliate interface offers many tools to discover merchants from different countries, and their consolidated payments, and currency conversion take the guesswork out of international transactions.

If you have existing relationships with one or more networks, ask your account manager or support team about international programs. Even if the merchant search of the network's site doesn't allow searching by location, the support team will be able to give you a list of their merchants from your chosen target country.

There is one downside to this method — since this is the easiest way to find international programs, you will find lots of competition promoting these merchants.

« **Local Networks**

If you are ready to part from your home networks, it is time to explore the local affiliate scene.

Search for "affiliate network + country name" in your favorite search engine to find the local affiliate networks.

Search for "affiliate network + country name" in your favorite search engine to find the local affiliate networks.

Be prepared to find lots of sign-up forms that restrict applications to within the local country or region. As mentioned earlier, this can be remedied by emailing the network's support, who will manually set up your account.

« **Local Affiliate Community**

Even before applying to any of the programs, it pays to look around the local affiliate scene by browsing directories, blogs, and forums with a local focus.

If you participate in any affiliate communities, ask around to see if anyone is knowledgeable about your target geographic location. Search for blogs covering the local affiliate market. You will most likely learn about the biggest players quickly this way.

« Search Engines

When searching for foreign merchants in the search engines, keep in mind any language differences and spelling variations. For example, in Europe affiliate programs are often referred to as "affiliate scheme" or "affiliate programme". In Germany, affiliate programs are "Partnerprogramme".

- È **Tip: Keep an eye out for multilingual merchants.** Online stores are frequently available in multiple languages. Yet, even if they have an affiliate program, it might not be translated into every language version.

I found this to be the case with more than one French merchant, for example. The affiliate program was listed on the French version of the site, but not on the English or German version. If you don't speak the local language, use a good online translator to decipher foreign program descriptions.

Dealing with Foreign Merchants: The Practicalities

Signing up for the programs is the easy part. Now let's look at the practical details of what to look for to find a flawless future partnership, and how to work with a foreign merchant.

Tip: Put current exchange rates on a Post-It note and stick it on the bottom edge of your monitor. Don't forget to update it to current rates every once in a while. (Daily is best.)

Money Matters Currencies

Working in an international environment, the first challenge you will discover is that of differing currencies. Make friends with a good online currency calculator, or even better, your own bank's, if available. Dealing in multiple currencies impacts many aspects of your business, from cashing payments to simple things like inputting commission amounts into your goal tracking spreadsheets.

- È **Tip: Write the current exchange rates for the most important currencies you do business in on a Post-It note** and stick it on the bottom edge of your monitor. It saves many unnecessary clicks. Just don't forget to update it to current rates every once in a while. (Daily is best.)
- È **Tip: When constructing your site, it might be more work, but putting in currency conversion for major currencies will keep customers happy.** Also, when programming them, it's best if can be altered to reflect the current rate automatically. Customers should be able to easily find what an item costs them in their native currency.

Payments

In cross-border trade, your biggest headache will be dealing with payments, so it is best to be well prepared. Ask your local bank about cashing foreign checks and checks in foreign currencies, as well as incoming bank transfers from abroad and in different currencies.

Tip: When constructing your site, putting in currency conversion for major currencies will keep customers happy. Customers should be able to easily find what an item costs them in their native currency.

PayPal is an easy way to deal internationally but, unfortunately, it hasn't quite caught on as an alternative affiliate payment option just yet.

This leaves checks and bank deposits as the most frequently used options, and unfortunately at a price. Banks often charge a high fee for cross-border transactions, so investigate carefully.

If you are looking to be paid via bank deposit, ask your bank for the information that your merchant needs in order to send you a bank transfer. Other than your account number, this means international routing codes, and most often the bank's address and phone number as well.

Legal matters

Different countries have different legal environments. A top brand in one country may be illegal to promote across the border in the neighboring country. Entire industries may be illegal to promote in some regions. (Especially lucrative ones like gambling and betting.)

While researching your niche, look at the legal requirements as well. Always read merchant agreements carefully, as they may refer to rules and regulations that you may not yet be familiar with.

If you are promoting offers internationally, talk to your affiliate manager about whether you need to pay attention to any VAT issues. VAT is the European equivalent to sales tax, and is a very complex system. Affiliates generally do not need to be concerned with VAT issues, but it is best to ask your merchant. Be sure to indicate to them where your traffic is coming from (geographically speaking).

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Shipping options

☛ **Tip: If you are promoting merchants' offers internationally, research their shipping destinations and charges.** Don't frustrate your visitors by presenting offers that they will later discover cannot be shipped to their country.

Communications

Keep in mind the time and seasonal differences when working internationally. If you are working with merchants from different time zones, don't always expect an answer the same business day. Your affiliate manager may be getting ready for dinner when you just finished your breakfast. Merchants in the southern hemisphere may be in summer vacation mode when you are in the middle of a snowstorm.

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We can't do more than barely scratch the surface of international affiliate trade here. Promoting foreign offers comes with its own set of challenges and may seem daunting at first. But it can be a highly profitable venture, and a good option for breaking out from your fiercely competitive home market.

Fortune favors the bold.

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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