

Tip for Beginners #04: Affiliate Program Link Options

Tuesday, 04 April 2006

There are often several linking options present if you want to link to affiliate programs. In this tip, you will learn to understand the difference between the existing options.

Affiliate marketing linking methods

Not all the affiliate programs are the same. There are different types of affiliate programs but also the linking methods differ. This page is dedicated to explain you all the available linking types with their advantages and disadvantages.

Most of the affiliate programs require you to import a link into your HTML code. The clue of these links is that they all have a special code built in. This code registers the visitor to keep track of commissions. There are many types of links but not all programs offer every kind of link. Reading this page will help you to decide which type of link suits your site the best and will help you to select an appropriate merchant. Affiliate Marketing & Banner Links Everyone has already seen a banner. Some people find them annoying, some people don't. The image is linked with your unique affiliate URL. If people click on it you will be credited and redirect to the appropriate page without people noticing your referral link.

Basically, there are two problems with banner links: the classical 468x60 banner has been spit on a lot: scientific research has shown that fewer and fewer people pay attention to a banner. The alternative formats such as skyscrapers try to regain the visitors attention. Question is, how long will this last. Nowadays people seem to have grown immune for banner ads or even worse, they just have installed an ad-blocker on their computer.

There's yet another problem, this time on the merchants side: big merchants tend to create banners that are not attractive to click on when they run a pay per click program. Fewer clicks on the banner means less commissions they have to pay. However, the impressions on the publisher's site remain which offers the merchant a very cheap branding tool.

Affiliate Marketing & Text Links

This kind of links is a much better way to link to affiliate programs because they are more powerful than ad banners: A visitor who clicks a banner knows the publisher gets paid. With text ads this often isn't the case.

There's also another important reason why you should use text links, especially if you promote a pay per lead or pay per sale affiliate program: When people click a banner they realize they will be tempted to buy something or respond in a certain way. With text links, people won't feel pitched and they will arrive on the merchants site with an 'open' state of mind. With this kind of mind-mood, you will much more likely make a sale or generate a lead.

Of course a collection of text links won't do the job. It's necessary that the text link is incorporated in relevant content. If not, chances are people won't click your links at all.

Affiliate Marketing & Product Specific Links Some affiliate programs (mostly stores) offer the possibility to use product specific links. For example, if you have added a review on a film to your site, you can add a text link to the product page of the online video store or add the posters of the movie. In that way people can buy the movie instantly which will of course significantly increase the conversions. A second bonus is the fact that affiliate programs sometimes pay a higher commission on a sale using a product specific link. Amazon.com, the world's leading online retailer is a famous example of this practice. Affiliate Marketing & Interactive links

Interactive links are very powerful as they generate an action without leaving the publishers site. There are numerous examples available with a search engines search box being the most common one: you add a search box to your web site and when a visitor enters a search query, you are paid. Implementing these kinds of links sometimes takes a bit more time but are definitely worth the while. Storefronts

Basically there are two types of storefronts: One you set up yourself and one that uses the technology of the merchant. In the first case you must choose the products that you want to sell. In the other case the merchant allows you to easily pick the products you want to sell. If you want to set up your own storefront try finding merchants that offer some extra options like co-branding or very specific targeting. You will generate much more money if you are able to use these features.

Some programs allow affiliates to insert their logo or navigation system on the page of a store that is maintained by the merchant partner. That is what people call co-branding. You don't have to do a thing other than driving traffic to your co-branded storefront. A good example of this co-branding market is everyone.net that offers free e-mail accounts. Content links

More and more affiliate programs offer actual content for the publisher's site. In the content, your affiliate links are already incorporated. The big bonus for this type of affiliate linking is the fact that adding content to your site is an easy way to get people to come back to your site.

Content is something that is interesting to your viewers. Do a quick check on your site: If you would visit your own site,

would you come back or not ? In other words, do you offer features or content which are interesting to come back for? This is important if you want to use pay per click networks or want to get banner advertising on your site. If your site only offers information chances are you will not see them back anymore. Once people have read the info, they may not have a reason to come back.

Pop Ups – Pop unders

Just in case you have missed them, pop up screens are little windows that pop up when you enter or leave a site with a banner in. Using this method in order to try to earn money can create the opposite effect. Pop up windows are considered to be quite annoying lately and more and more people buy pop up blockers to prevent these screens from popping up.

Does this mean you cannot use a pop up? Well, not really of course, just as with everything, don't exaggerate: Firing 5 pop ups on the screen of your visitor will only cause discontentment and may result in the visitor abandoning your site. Of course this is not what you are looking for so go slow on these intrusive kinds of advertising. A good rule of thumb is to limit you to one pop up per session. RSS and Data Feeds and Affiliate Marketing

One of the newest trends, also in affiliate marketing are data feeds: the principle is quite simple: the merchant offers you a feed with his products which you can upload directly in your database. Obviously all of the items are automatically linked to your affiliate login. I