

## **Marketing as an Affiliate**

As you will soon discover, affiliates who make serious revenue as a result of referrals do so because they are dedicated to successful strategy development and implementation. Whether you are an affiliate looking to capitalize on commissions from your affiliate partners or simply wish to optimize your web site productivity, knowing how to market your site using the Internet will produce the desired results.

There are six (6) strategies to online marketing. These online marketing strategies are divided into the following categories (that will be discussed in more detail further in this page):

- 1) Top Listings in the Major Search Engines and Search Directories
- 2) Pay-Per-Click Search Engines
- 3) Ezines, Online Newsletters/Magazines
- 4) Usenet Groups
- 5) Auction Sites
- 6) Specialized Directories

Effective online marketing, especially for solid affiliate marketing campaigns, should consist of quality, long-term, consistent traffic from unique visitors. It is extremely important that the traffic your web site receives comes from visitors who match your target audience profile. The closer your visitors match this profile, the more likely they will be to make a purchase. And, if a visitor makes a purchase, you earn commission as an affiliate.

To help you better understand the concept of unique visitors, think of unique visitors as individual humans. Each human has his or her own set of DNA, fingerprints and physical appearance. If, for example, a crime had been committed, forensic investigators could determine who most likely committed the crime simply by looking for a set of fingerprints. Unique visitors function the same way. Each time you visit a web site, your computer tells the web site (or traffic reporting software) that you have visited that web site by logging your IP address. And, as you know, each computer must have its own IP address to connect to the Internet. In the online marketing world, unique visitors are desired when considering overall traffic because unique visitors equal new sales prospects.

Now, let's get right to the marketing strategies that will help you jump-start your affiliate success!

### **Top Listings in the Major Search Engines and Search Directories**

Search Engines (such as Alta Vista) and Search Directories (such as Yahoo) provide you with the most qualified prospects and the highest possibility that those visitors will make a purchase. By targeting interested prospects, search engines/directories reduce the sales timeline. More prospects are ready to buy once the search has resulted in an applicable query.

Effective Internet marketing using search engines/directories requires a top ranking for the key phrases which will best target a particular prospect who has a need for your product or service.

From a search engine optimization perspective, search engines and search directories are two entirely different breeds of web site indexes.

Search directories rely heavily upon a subjective approach to indexing web sites and web pages. Actual humans review submitted web pages. As such, it is imperative that the web site or web page submitted is attractive; navigates easily; has no typos, grammar errors or misspellings; has valid links that have all been tested; is not still “under construction” or “coming soon;” and offers content of value to the visitor.

Since search directory ranking is subjective to each individual surf manager or editor, the most effective strategy to ensure that your web site is optimized for the search engines. This will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Search engines catalog web sites and web pages by using automated software programs, called “bots” or “spider,” to scan the web and gather information. For example, Alta Vista uses a spider called “Scooter” to crawl the web index and acquire data.

Search engines, using spiders or bots, follow links through a site into other linked sites. And this is how new sites are added to the search engine web index.

The key phrases determine what web sites will be pulled from the search engine web index and displayed as search results after an individual has performed a search on a search engine.

Indexing is based on a set of mathematical rules known as algorithms. The easiest way to remember how algorithms work is to think of them in terms of an abstract grading scale. No one, except each respective search engine, knows exactly how web pages are graded. In the end, however, the site with the highest “grade point average” earns the highest ranking.

Criteria used in the relevancy grading process include:

- 1) Where the target key phrase is located within the web page
- 2) The number of times the target key phrase appears on the web page
- 3) Weight of the target key phrase versus the total text on the page
- 4) The total number of key phrases on the entire web site.

Relevancy based on search algorithms is continuously evolving and changes frequently. This is why it is extremely important to review all aspects of a web site in which search engine positioning enhancement is desired, to ensure that once a top ranking has been achieved, the site maintains that ranking.

Search results on the first page are known as "premium" rankings and are often referred to as a "top 10 ranking." Most companies that are serious about search engine positioning (SEP) covet a first page listing because sites listed in the first 10 positions are statistically proven to have the highest probability of receiving volumes of highly-qualified traffic.

Results on the second page are equally critical to traffic, although research demonstrates that traffic significantly declines beyond the first page of search results. Nonetheless, a ranking in the top 20 (or second page) is still a major accomplishment.

Rankings on search result pages beyond the second page are of little value, as the average user is unlikely to click past the first two pages. In fact, rather than venture past the second or third pages of search results, the average user is more likely to perform a new search query.

Search engine optimization begins at the key phrase level of the web site. There are four (4) factors that influence a key phrase's ability to successfully rank in the search engines:

- 1) Prominence
- 2) Frequency
- 3) Density/Weight
- 4) Location

### **Prominence**

Prominence means "high importance." In SEP, prominence means the weight of key phrases at the very top of the page or at the highest level.

Consider that the title tag is at the very top of the page, as are the first 25 words of text on a web page. Secondary to the title tag and first 25 words of text are headlines, which contain the target key phrase.

### **Frequency**

Frequency refers to the number of times a target key phrase appears within a web page. It is extremely important that designers avoid the urge to "stuff" key phrases. Stuffing is defined as repeating a particular key phrase too many times.

The rule of thumb for key phrase frequency is 3 times on an average 200-300 word page.

### **Density**

Density is the percentage of keywords versus other text on a particular page. Be sure to keep the text to a minimum on a web page. The fewer the words, the higher the key

phrase density. Remember that the goal for key phrase density is between 3% to 15%, with the norm being approximately 3% to 10%.

## Location

In considering key phrase location or placement, first consider how closely keywords are to each other. This is known as key phrase proximity. For example:

Key phrase search query:  
*Georgia Peaches*

Site #1:  
*At Herb's Produce, we have the most juicy, ripe peaches in the state of Georgia! Call us at 800-555-1212 to receive a free sample.*

Site #2:  
*At Herb's Produce, Georgia Peaches are our specialty. Ripe, juicy peaches ready for shipment. Call us at 800-555-1212 to receive a free sample.*

In this example, site #2 would rank higher because the proximity of the words contained in the key phrase query is closer.

The second aspect of location is placement where the key phrases are located on the page. Search engines tend to favor the title tag and META tags, such as your description in your keyword META tags.

Another important factor of key phrase placement is where the key phrase is located in:

- Headlines (the <H1> to <H6> tags)
- Hyperlinks on the Page
- The first 25 words of Text on the Page
- The last 25 words of Text on the Page
- The domain name and file names which contain the target key phrase

While there are many services that offer to submit your web site to thousands of search engines, there are really only eight search engines/directories which power over 90% of all web sites on the Internet. These top search engines/directories are:

- 1) Alta Vista (<http://www.altavista.com>): Alta Vista offers a paid inclusion service. The charge is \$39 per year for the first URL to be added to their index, and \$29 per year for each URL submitted thereafter. Alta Vista also has partnerships with Looksmart and Overture.
- 2) Fast (<http://www.alltheweb.com>): Fast indexes all the words on your web site and you can currently add your web site to its index for free. It has partnerships with Lycos and Looksmart.

- 3) Google (<http://www.google.com>): Google is actually a directory, not an engine. It has partnerships with Open Directory and Overture. Google also provides the secondary results for Yahoo. In addition to its free index service, Google now offers the ability for paid inclusion based on a pay-per-click search engine model, similar to Overture.
- 4) Inktomi (<http://www.inktomi.com>): The stealth directory which powers multiple search engines and directories, Inktomi is the probably the most important search directory second only to Yahoo. Inclusion is free, however, Inktomi appears to rank sites higher if the site has paid for inclusion in the Inktomi directory. Paid inclusion service is \$39 per year for the first URL and \$25 per year for each URL submitted thereafter. Inktomi powers HotBot, NBCi, MSN, Overture, Looksmart and approximately 300 small search engines.
- 5) Looksmart (<http://www.looksmart.com>): Looksmart is one of the larger secondary search directories. To be included in Looksmart is \$49 per year per domain name. Looksmart powers secondary results for Alta Vista, iWon and MSN.
- 6) Northern Light (<http://www.northernlight.com>): While Northern Light is not a largely used search directory, it is difficult for a site to be included in its index.
- 7) Open Directory (<http://www.opendirectory.com>): A volunteer-staff search directory, Open Directory uses human editors who determine whether to include a web site or not in the Open Directory index. This is a critical directory because it powers AOL, Google and Ask Jeeves.
- 8) Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>): The granddaddy of all search directories, Yahoo is the most important search directory on the 'Net. The Yahoo inclusion service relies on a human evaluating your web site and determining whether or not the site is worthy of inclusion. There is a \$299 submission fee, however, this does not guarantee inclusion.

More resources on Search Engine Optimization include:

Search Engine Optimizer

<http://www.se-optimizer.com>

This site has lots of general tips and strategies on optimizing your web site for the search engines.

Web Site Secrets: Search Engine Strategies Ebook

<mailto:book@capturehits.com>

Provides inside secrets the pros use to optimize a web site and achieve a top ranking.

Pandia

<http://www.pandia.com>

Super resource site for search engine and search engine optimization techniques.

## **Pay-Per-Click Search Engines**

Because the Internet has multiple search engines, and being listed in their indexes can be rather complicated, pay-per-click, also called bid-ranked search engines, overcome the indexing difficulties.

Bid-ranked search engines work by referring a visitor to a web site based upon the amount of money the web site is willing to pay for the click thru traffic. The most popular and well known pay-per-click thru search engine is Overture.com (formerly, Goto.com) at <http://www.overture.com>.

To the visitor performing a search, the bid-ranked search engine functions the same as any search engine or search directory. The difference is that you determine not only how your site will be listed in the bid-ranked search engine, what key phrases are most important to your web site, and what you are willing to pay for each visitor who clicks thru to your web site, but you also determine your ranking based on how much you are willing to pay for each click thru.

Bid-ranked search engines function similar to any advertising campaign. You first must determine your per-click budget. The first step in this process is evaluating the average income you make per sale. Average income is calculated by adding up the total affiliate commissions you have earned over a given period of time, divided by the number of orders over the same period.

For example:

\$1000 total commissions over a period of 30 days  
divided by  
50 orders over the same time period  
-----  
Average income: \$20

Next, you must use your traffic reporting software to determine your sales conversion ratio. This is calculated by dividing the number of orders by the number of unique visitors over a given period. Your sales conversion ratio is a percentage such as 5%, 10%, etc.

For example:

Total number of orders: 50  
Divided by  
Total number of UNIQUE visitors: 3000  
-----  
Sales Conversion Ratio: 1.6%

You will also need to determine your net profit margin. Net profit margin is calculated by dividing your expenses by your affiliate earnings over a given period of time. Expenses include marketing or advertising costs, any charge-backs or returns made by customers, or any other overhead expense related to your affiliate web site or efforts.

For example:

\$150 in advertising and marketing expenses for 30 days  
divided by  
\$1000 in earned affiliate commissions over the same 30 days  
-----  
Net Profit Margin: 15%

After you've calculated your gross profit margin, you can calculate your average gross profit by multiplying the average sale by the net profit margin.

For example:

Average sale: \$20 x Net Profit Margin: 15% = Average Gross Profit: \$3.00

The average gross profit is the amount of revenue each unique visitor generates, whether or not a purchase is made. In the example above, the most money the example affiliate should spend per-click is \$3.00. However, for obvious reasons, no one should pay a per-click amount equal to or above the average amount of average gross profit per unique visitor. Doing so would simply not be good business sense.

Once you have a basic idea as to your per-click budget, you will need to determine your most popular key phrases. The simplest way to determine your most lucrative key phrases is to utilize Overture's search suggestion tool at <http://inventory.goto.com>. Simply type in your current key phrases and a listing of searches related to your key phrase along with the average monthly searches for that key phrase will be listed. Pick the key phrases that are most closely related to your web site theme and that have the highest monthly searches.

The next step is to determine the current bid for the key phrases you have decided to utilize. The easiest way to do this is to simply enter the key phrase as if you were doing a search. The current bid is defined as "cost to advertiser \$0.xx". The cost to advertiser is the per-click charge the advertiser is willing to pay per click-thru.

Since Overture has partnerships with AltaVista, AOL, MSN, NBCi, Ask Jeeves and many other search engines/directories, the sponsored results on these partnership search engines/directories are powered directly by Overture's index. To benefit the most from an Overture bid ranked listing, you should attempt to bid so as your site will be ranked in one of the top three positions for your targeted key phrases.

The two best bid powered search engines are Overture (<http://www.overture.com>) and Google (<http://www.google.com>). Both programs allow you to set a budget either daily or monthly which is a very cost effective way to honor your budget while generating affordable traffic to your web site.

### **Ezines, Online Newsletters/Magazines**

Electronic Magazines, known as E-zines, are the Internet's version of traditional newspapers and magazines. Ezines are transported by email to subscribers. While ezines are falling out of favor due to their over-popularity and often abuse by spammers, when used properly they can be a highly effective method of online marketing. In fact, the sales conversion ratio of a standard ezine ad or article with a hyperlink can be 10% or higher. The downside of ezines, however, is that they only provide traffic in waves lasting 1-3 days.

Ezine marketing is a process (just like any form of online marketing) that requires fine-tuning and strategies to be effective. A great online resource for tips and strategies for ezine marketing can be found at <http://www.ezinemarketingcenter.com/>.

To market your affiliate programs in ezines, whether yours or someone else's effectively, your target audience should be considered. For example, if your products are designed for sports enthusiasts, you will need to ensure that the ezines that you choose to utilize for your ezine marketing efforts are targeting athletes and/or sports fans. You can also see what additional factors are also related to your target audience.

For example, if you are an affiliate for products centered on waterfowl and hunting, you may also find that ezines targeting outdoor life, camping, and wildlife photography might also be valid options. On the other hand, you may also find that ezines dedicated toward fishing may bring in additional and well-targeted traffic. Then again, you might find that ezines dedicated toward adrenaline sports such as white water rafting may generate additional, quality traffic. The secret lies in testing over a period of time to see which ezines work, and which ones don't.

### **Marketing with Ezine Ads**

Start small and build over time. We've all heard the television infomercials that claim that anyone can "earn thousands of dollars from the comfort of their home with tiny, little ads." Most of the "tiny little ads" which are successful using traditional forms of print media (magazines, newspapers and so forth) are dedicated to 900, pay-per-minute services. Ezine ads, if properly written, can be even more effective. Ezines have a benefit which traditional print media marketing doesn't have—targeted subscribers!

The key to ezine marketing is really knowing your target audience and how to get them to click through to the affiliate web site so that you can get sales. A perfect analogy is in comparing an ezine to a resume. If you don't catch the reader's attention quickly, you



won't get the "interview" (or visit to the web site) and you won't get the job (or the sale). It's important to recognize that your readers will not have time to read through lengthy articles. Instead, focus on creating an ezine with teasers that prompt the reader to click the link to read more.

For example, a teaser might say:

*Affiliate generates \$10,000 monthly in commissions by utilizing ezine marketing. Use his tested strategies to immediately boost your affiliate revenue! Click here for more details.*

The main points to remember when developing ezine ads are:

- Be factual. Don't mislead the reader.
- Excite the reader. Remember the main objective is to get them to click through to your site, not to sell them your product or service. Your web site, or the site of your affiliate partner(s) should do a good job of pre-selling for you.
- Emphasize a Benefit. How will visiting your web site be of benefit to them? What will the reader gain out of clicking through to your web site?
- Create a Call to Action. Tell the reader how to get more information and urge him to act.
- Utilize a Sense of Urgency. Don't just ask the reader to act, ask them to act NOW!

### **Marketing with Ezine Articles**

Ezine ads aren't the only way to drive targeted traffic to a web site. In fact, many affiliates have found that marketing in ezines using articles is also very effective.

Superior ezine marketing starts with good, solid content. A strong ezine should pre-sell the reader by offering the reader something of value. Think about it. Good ezines should peak the interest of the reader and beg them to want more. Articles should provide just enough information to be of value to the reader. But, they should be brief enough to entice them to want more and motivate the reader to click thru to the affiliate web site.

If you're really not interested in starting or maintaining your own ezine, you can find ezines targeted to your audience by utilizing these resources:

- 1) Egroups <http://www.egroups.com>
- 2) Topica <http://www.topica.com>
- 3) Sparklist <http://www.sparklist.com>
- 4) Listbot <http://www.listbot.com>

Or, if you'd like to contribute articles to ezines, you can also post your articles to be used by ezine creators as they prepare their ezines. IdeaMarketters provides a free resource where writers can be connected with ezine owners and visa versa at <http://www.ideamarketers.com>.

To promote your ezine, utilize these resources:

- 1) Buy ezine opt-in/double opt-in subscribers targeted by your audience requirements
  - a) ListBuilder <http://www.profitinfo.com>
  - b) Email Newsletter Network <http://biznewsletters.com>
  - c) List World <http://www.listworld.net>
  - d) Zmedia <http://www.zmedia.com>
- 2) Utilize Ezine Promoters such as <http://www.newsletterpromote.com>

### **Usenet Groups**

Usenet groups are simply a group of individuals who share a common interest and who have developed a forum, discussion group or mailing list. Here they express comments and facts regarding a common interest by posting messages either to an online bulletin board or by a mailing list.

The main advantage to utilizing Usenet groups is that the information reaches a targeted audience. The downside to Usenet groups is that a standard Usenet post will remain on the bulletin board for typically 30 days or less.

Usenet groups can be most easily found for your topic by performing a search in your favorite search engine. A search string should resemble the following:

- + (targeted key phrase or subject area)+discussion+groups
- + (targeted key phrase or subject area)+bulletin+board
- + (targeted key phrase or subject area)+discussion+list

While each Usenet group has its own set of rules of conduct and posting, very few Usenet groups actually will allow blatant promotion. To avoid violating the rules of Netiquette, you should plan to lurk each particular Usenet group without posting for 3-7 days. Lurking will allow you to observe the overall happenings of a group as well as provide you with the dos and don'ts of each group.

In addition to the general rules established by each Usenet group, you should also utilize the general principles of Netiquette:

- 1) Keep your posts short and descriptive. Don't drone on and on without making a point.
- 2) Post something of value that is informative and beneficial to all members.
- 3) Keep your subject lines brief and to the point.

- 4) Pay attention to spelling and grammar. No one wants to read a post filled with typos, misspellings and grammar mistakes.
- 5) Resist the temptation to post messages containing sarcasm or humor. Because people will read your posts, rather than hear the tone in your voice, posts can easily be misinterpreted.
- 6) Avoid profanity, racial comments and sexual innuendos. Granted, ad campaigners may boast that “sex sells,” but as a rule, comments about sex are to be avoided in this arena.
- 7) Don’t post unfounded or over-inflated claims.
- 8) Avoid the use of TYPING YOUR POST IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. It appears as if you are shouting. On the same note, remember to type your post in sentences starting with a capital letter and ending with some type of punctuation.
- 9) When responding to someone else’s post, summarize the original post and then provide your answer below it. Many Usenet groups don’t attach the original message to your response.
- 10) Avoid posting the identical message on multiple Usenet groups. Many Usenet members are members of multiple discussion groups.
- 11) Do not, under any circumstances, send flaming emails or spam messages to a Usenet group or to Usenet group members off list. Not only are these posts annoying, but they ruin your credibility, reputation and in some cases, cause you to be banned from further posts or the Usenet group all together.

One of the creative methods you can use to market your site by utilizing the Usenet is a technique called “baiting.” Baiting involves the use of multiple email personalities—some from Yahoo, some from Hotmail and others from your own email accounts. It works like this:

Original Post (posted by using an alternate email personality):

*Subject: Search Engine Optimization Book*  
*Original-author: [abcd1234@emailpersonality1.com](mailto:abcd1234@emailpersonality1.com)*  
*Date: Tue, 28 Dec 1999 09:00:02 GMT*

*Does anyone know any good books on  
the subject of search engine optimization?*

After you post the original message, wait a few hours to see what other Usenet members have posted. Then, when there have been several of them, respond to your original message, using another email identity and post:

*Subject: SEO Book <mailto:book@capturehits.com>*  
*Original-author: [12345fido@emailpersonality2.com](mailto:12345fido@emailpersonality2.com)*  
*Date: Tue, 28 Dec 1999 12:08:09 GMT*

*>>Book on Search Engine Optimization.*

*Try Web Site Secrets: Search Engine Strategies.  
I think it's about \$40 and you can order it by just sending  
an email to <mailto:book@capturehits.com>.*

For more specific information about marketing via Usenet groups, read Joel K. Furr's article, Advertising on Usenet, <http://www.shopsite.com/help/usenet.html>

## **Auction Sites**

Online auction sites are quickly becoming an effective method to sell products and services through the use of Internet technology. Auction sites are especially effective if your products or services reach the masses, although you can list any product or service on an auction site as long as it can be utilized by people who may not reside in your local community.

Auction sites function by connecting a buyer with a requested product or service. The advantage to affiliates is that you have serious buyers interested in your products or services. The advantage to the buyer is that they assume that they are getting a competitive price for a desired product.

Some products or services will sell better than others on auction sites, so you may want to consider the popularity of your product or service before listing them on an auction site. For example, a biography on Britney Spears may sell better than taxidermy services.

As the most popular auction site (eBay— <http://www.ebay.com>) generates over 2 billion page views each month, auction sites can generate a significant amount of traffic in a very short period of time. The disadvantage is that you will need to consider that the auction sites charge you a small fee to sell your products through their interface.

Since each auction site has its own reference material and overview of how the service works, you should spend 20-30 minutes familiarizing yourself with each auction site you wish to use.

The following auction sites are the most popular:

Amazon Auctions— <http://auctions.amazon.com>

Auctions.com— <http://www.auctions.com>

EBay— <http://www.ebay.com>

Onsale.com— <http://www.onsale.com>

Ubid— <http://www.ubid.com>

Yahoo Auctions— <http://auctions.yahoo.com>

### **Specialized Directories**

Specialized directories, or vertical portals, provide a great deal of exposure to a highly qualified audience. Typically, specialized directories are dedicated to in-depth information on a specific subject area. The main purpose of a vertical portal is to increase your web site's presence to a very targeted group of qualified prospects. In fact, vertical portals are really more about name recognition than about driving quality traffic to your web site.

To find specialized directories, simply perform a search in your favorite search engine using the following search string:

+ (targeted key phrase or subject area)+directory

Vertical portals are valuable assets to your online marketing campaign because you can often list your site 3-4 times. However, not all listings are free. Some listings may require a fee. One of the best vertical portal resources is 411Web (<http://www.411web.com>). 411Web functions very similar to the bid-ranked search engines where you will pay for a specific action (typically the number of unique visitors or the number of click thrus that visit your site).

Affordable and effective advertising on vertical portals consists of:

- 1) Message Boards/Chat Rooms/Usenet Groups
- 2) Targeted Banner Ads