

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH Affiliate Marketing

A simple, step-by-step guide for implementing this low cost, low risk business model.



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Making It Remotely

Get Started with Affiliate Marketing

Leveraging Affiliate Programs to Earn Full or Part Time Income

Introduction

According to [Mediakix](#), an estimated 80% of brands have affiliate programs. Additionally, almost 65% of affiliate publishers generate income by blogging. Bloggers and review sites are the leading channels for affiliate marketing.

In the United States, affiliate publishers make almost 40% of their income from articles and blogs. What that means for you is that if you have a blog or you can position yourself as a publisher, there are plenty of opportunities to use this business model.

Use this guide as a blueprint for launching your affiliate marketing business. Be sure to click on the images and links that will lead you to additional details, and videos about a particular subject.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us by sending a message via [our blog](#).

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Affiliate Marketing Definitions

Here are a few definitions:

- **Publisher** - a blogger or website owner who joins and is approved for a brand's affiliate program. The publisher promotes advertisements through sponsored text, videos and banners for a brand. They generate income when they send traffic and sales to the advertiser's website through the advertiser's links.
- **Advertiser** - also called sponsors or merchants, are companies that create affiliate agreements with publishers (bloggers, website owners). Once approved, bloggers and website owners promote sponsor's products and services.
- **Affiliate sales** - A sale that occurs when an affiliate link on a publisher's site sends a visitor to an advertiser's website and the visitor makes a purchase.
- **Affiliate commissions** - a fixed rate or percentage of an affiliate sale received by the publisher when visitors buy products and services on the brand's (advertiser's) website.
- **Affiliate Agreement** - This spells out the terms of your relationship with the advertiser's brand. For example, you might be an affiliate for Walmart or Amazon and they have tons of different types of products you can promote.

Affiliate marketing, when done well, is a great home based business idea that requires a very low initial investment. As a matter of fact, affiliate marketing is free, which means there is no charge to join an affiliate program. If you experience an affiliate program that costs money to join, run away as quickly as you can! 🏃

Affiliate marketing is an excellent way to earn [passive income](#) (income that doesn't require that you be present) that will enable you to stay at home with your kids, supplement or replace income, leave a job you hate, build your retirement nest egg or all the above.

Steps Needed to Start as an Affiliate

Affiliate marketing is a great fit for most new owners because it only requires a few simple steps:

1. [Select a Niche](#) - A niche is a segment of the market. People who have specific interests about topics that help them live their best lives. These consumers are looking to purchase specific kinds of products or services in the near future. Choose a niche that your product or service will provide a solution for.
2. **Find Great Merchants (Advertisers)** - Whose products, values and goals align with your company. Companies with products that support your hobbies, skills and chosen niche that you can promote to help your readers and community.
3. [Build a Blog or Online Store](#) - Your business will need a place that gives you a home on the internet and provides a platform that you can use to communicate with your audience to build relationships, answer questions, handle objections and promote your affiliate products and services.
4. **Write Great Content** - Research your market to determine which topics are popular in your niche. Write content and promote products that your readers are looking for.

5. **Promote Your Links** - When starting out, you need a platform that will allow you to promote your affiliate links. Social media is also a great free method to promote your affiliate products.
6. **Build an Audience and Drive Traffic to Your Links** - Traffic is a major component of affiliate marketing. You need an audience that is interested and engaged with your blog, that will share and engage with your content and purchase your products. Set up a sytem that takes potential customers on a journey.



How Affiliate Marketing Works

Affiliate marketing allows a business owner with a platform like a [website](#), [online store](#), [video channel](#) or [blog](#) to get paid to sell products and services for another company. The advertiser will provide the business owner with an

affiliate code and many of them will serve up images, banners and badges that you can place on your site.

When your readers click on those links and place an order on the advertiser's website, you will receive a commission. The more sales generated from your website, the more you will make.

While a lot of affiliate programs are free, many of them have criteria that your site will have to meet in order to join.

What You Need to Know About Getting Approved as an Affiliate

Many affiliate advertisers will auto accept your application and leave it up to you to promote as you see fit. Others will be more selective and take you through a process before approving you.

The companies that are selective will want to know that you have a following that matches their brand. They will also want to know if you have the means to represent their company in a way that aligns with their criteria. Basically, they may want to know how you plan to promote their products.

To make the application process flow smoothly, you might want to write out a short paragraph about your brand and what your business brings to the advertiser.

- Where are you in your business (marketing) journey (beginner, seasoned, or advanced)
- Your niche or the niche market you plan to target

- How the advertiser's products will help or support your audience
- The number of followers you have on various platforms
- The way you plan to promote their products

If your brand is brand new and you don't have a following, you can indicate things like the growth you've experienced over time and your willingness to learn and improve.

Places You Can Promote Affiliate Products

- Your Blog
- Social Media
- Video Marketing
- Your eCommerce Shop
- Paid Ads
- Mobile Apps
- Your Podcast
- Email Marketing
- Limited Use Sites

There is no rhyme or reason regarding a particular company's reasoning or selection criteria other than the information above. If you're rejected, don't let that stop you from applying for other programs.

If you're rejected, you might try emailing the affiliate marketing manager to find out what you can do to improve your site so that it may be accepted in the future. But by all means keep moving through your list of companies you would like to partner with.

Give it time, let your audience grow and apply again if you want, to any brands that may have rejected your application on the first try.

Things to Be Aware of When Applying for Programs

Some programs have limitations on the kinds of advertising you can use. For example it's a violation of Amazon's terms to use affiliate links in email marketing.

This makes it really important to read the terms and requirements for each sponsor (advertiser) to make sure you meet their criteria before applying. That will save you time and energy.

Affiliate programs are a great way to help the parent (advertiser) company drive traffic to their website, exposing customers to even more potential buying opportunities.

For example, a company that pays a 10% commission if a visitor to your website clicks on your affiliate link and makes a purchase on their site, will pay \$10 for a \$100 purchase. This would be a [pay per sale](#) transaction.

What Affiliate Pay Structure is Best for Your Brand?

The "best" affiliate marketing program is really an individual decision. It requires research to determine which options are available and which programs are best fit for your goals, audience and brand.

For example, the pay per sale model represents only one commission method.

There are many other types of affiliate pay structures including pay per lead, residual income, (also known as recurring commission, recurring income, lifetime commission and lifetime income) flat rate, percentage of the total sale and more.

There are also affiliate networks, CPA networks, two tier programs.

Learn more about how affiliates get paid in each type of program in our article, [How Affiliates Marketers Get Paid](#).

All of these companies will enable you to earn money, but the method you use to make the connection between the consumer and your blog or website is a great way to determine whether a particular program is a good fit for your company.

The amount you earn depends on how effective you are at converting readers into buyers, and the amount of effort you put into working with them.

Affiliate Marketing Tips

- Many popular brands offer affiliate marketing opportunities. Make sure that the companies you sign up with offer a great experience for your readers.

For example, make sure they have great customer service, a good return policy, brand recognition, and quality products/services.

- Learn how they compensate affiliates and whether the products/services they offer would be a good fit for your company. If they are a great brand, but their products don't fit your niche, it's probably best to pass on the opportunity.
- Another tip for affiliate marketing is to promote products that you actually use or companies that you have had interactions with.
- If you think a product/company is not above board, don't select their program because they offer a higher commission.

In the long run it will be a headache for you and a reflection on your business to involve yourself with a company that is not above board and fair with customers.

For example, we are part of the Amazon affiliate program and though we haven't purchased every single product they offer (that would be pretty difficult), we have purchased from them for years, so we're familiar with their policies and customer experience.

We know they have great customer service, product reviews for most every product and a return policy that will allow customers to send items back if they are not what they expected.

We feel very comfortable sending our customers to their website to make a purchase. They recently changed their commission structure for specific products, which is something they periodically do. Even with

the cuts, I think they are a great way to get started with affiliate marketing.

How Affiliate Marketers Get Paid

Basic Payment Methods:

Most affiliate marketing programs use one of three basic types of affiliate program payment arrangements:

- **Pay-per-Sale (also called Cost-per-Sale):** Amazon.com's affiliate program is an example of a pay-per-sale arrangement.

I would recommend Amazon as a great way to get started with affiliate marketing because they offer so many different products that will fit almost any niche.

They are also a household name, which means there is a high level of trust. So even though they are not the highest paying affiliate program, being part of their program instills credibility for your brand.

In this arrangement, the merchant site pays an affiliate when the affiliate sends them a customer who purchases **something**.

Some merchant web sites, like Amazon.com, pay the affiliate a

percentage of the sale and others pay a fixed amount per sale.

- **Pay-per-Click (Cost-per-Click):** In these programs, the merchant site pays the affiliate based on the number of visitors who click on the [affiliate link](#) to visit the merchant's site.

In these arrangements, the customer doesn't have to buy anything, and it doesn't matter to the affiliate what a visitor does once he gets to the merchant's site.

- **Pay-per-Lead (Cost-per-Lead):** Companies with these programs pay their affiliates based on the number of visitors they refer who sign up as leads.

This simply means the visitor fills out some requested information at the merchant site, which the merchant site may use as a sales lead or sell to another company as a sales lead.

- You may find programs that use other arrangements as well. A company could set up an affiliate program based on more than one of the arrangements above or any action that would benefit them.

Once a merchant outlines a payment plan, they can manage the program themselves, advertise the program and hire affiliates to work with their company.

They can also work with an affiliate network, like Shareasale that will manage the program for them including payment, when affiliates send them customers that perform the desired action.

Variations on the Basics

Here are some popular variations on these basic payment plans:

- **Two-tier Programs:** These affiliate programs have a structure similar to multilevel marketing organizations (also known as "network marketing") such as Amway or Avon, which profit through commission sales and sales recruitment.

In addition to receiving commissions based on sales, clicks or leads stemming from their own site, affiliates in these programs also receive a commission based on the activity of affiliate sites they refer to the merchant site.

- **Residual (Recurring) Income Programs:** Affiliates in these programs can keep making money from a visitor they send to the site if the visitor continues to purchase goods or services from the merchant site.

Many online merchants who receive regular payments from their customers (such as monthly service fees, subscriptions or

memberships) run this sort of affiliate program.

- **Pay-per-Impression Affiliate Programs:** Companies running these programs, also called pay-per-view programs, pay affiliates based only on the number of visitors who see their banner ad.

Usually, this sort of arrangement is not structured as an affiliate program, but simply as a traditional advertising program.

The advantage affiliate programs have over traditional advertising is that in an affiliate program, an online merchant only pays its affiliates when they deliver a desired result.



Affiliate Marketing Strategies

It's important to not only think about how affiliate marketers get paid, but how to create **your own** strategy. You'll need a way to earn that will help you leverage the payment structures used by the companies you work with. You want to leverage it so that it works to **maximize** your income.

Here are some ideas:

- Only work with or prioritize affiliate programs that provide the residual (recurring) income structure. That way you will receive regular monthly income as long as the customer remains active in the membership or subscription program.
- Other affiliates prioritize only promoting products with a higher commission structure. So there's a limit on the kinds of products they will promote. These affiliates are choosy regarding the commission levels they are willing to accept.
- There are also affiliates who scale their business by pairing affiliate marketing with an eCommerce store, filling their shop with a variety of products to maximize their earning potential.

The great thing about affiliate marketing combined with eCommerce is that you can scale up an existing shop, adding more products or you can open a completely new shop in order to increase your income.

So instead of selling one item, you sell sets, boxes, packages or a combination of items that will appeal to your audience boosting the average order value (AOV) you will receive for each sale.

Combine Affiliate Marketing with eCommerce

Watch our [video training](#) on how affiliates get paid. In this video you'll also learn how to combine affiliate marketing with eCommerce to scale your affiliate marketing business. This method will enable you to earn more money by providing your audience a variety of products.

Affiliate marketing can be an excellent way to earn passive income while you do other things. With an eCommerce store, you set up your shop, set your promotions and move on to other aspects of your day. Don't overlook this model as an option when looking for a work from home solution.

Companies That Offer Affiliate Programs

A large number of businesses have affiliate programs, this list is just a small sample of the programs that are available. For a larger list and details about various affiliate programs, [click here](#).

Amazon

StudioPress

Apple iTunes

Walmart

Elite Marketing Pro

Network Solutions

Hostgator

JVZOO

Joann Fabrics	Rakuten	Macy's
TeeSpring	CriCut	Kohl's
Spreadshirt	Resumes Planet	Adobe Creative Cloud
Click Bank	Shareasale	Blue Host
	SEO PowerSuite	Creative Market

The Essential Elements Needed to Maximize Your Affiliate Income

1. An Affiliate Link

This is the most important element because this is how you will be paid. Once you're approved for a program you will be able to log into the advertiser's affiliate page and grab the links that contain your special code.

This is the code that will allow you to be identified as the affiliate responsible for the customer referral that resulted in the sale.

It's important to understand that affiliate links are usually long and ugly, and if you post them "as is" in your social media accounts, you may find that no one will click on them. Additionally it can cause your social media accounts to be limited or suspended.

That's why it's important to use a tool that manages ugly links. We use [Pretty Links](#), and we also hide them (create text links) behind the text contained in landing pages, sales pages and blog posts.

To learn more about managing ugly links and why it's important, read our [article](#) that shows you how to promote your links safely so your accounts are not limited or shut down.

To keep my affiliate links organized, I use a Google Sheet with the name of the advertiser, the way I get paid, my affiliate links and other important information.

2. A Landing Page

Having a [landing page](#) that is dedicated to the affiliate products you promote is optional. However, using a dedicated landing page paired with a [Pretty Link](#) is a great way to promote your affiliate products. It makes it easy for potential customers to learn about your products and it makes it easy for them to buy or sign up as a lead.

Landing pages are not always used, but they're a very important element to include when promoting affiliate offers. Using a landing page (also called a [bridge page](#)) has several benefits, including keeping your social media accounts safe from being banned or shut down.

Some social platforms feel that posting bare affiliate links will diminish the customer experience for their users. And while your account may not be totally banned, social platforms have been known to severely

limit your accounts when you make it a habit of posting affiliate links on their platforms. It's become a best practice among those who want to get the best results, to use a landing page for affiliate offers.

Using a landing page also helps your offer to look more professional to prospective buyers. To learn how landing pages work and how to build them, take a look at our article for a quick read.

Treating your blog or website as a sales and marketing platform that positions you as an authority and works to promote your offers, products, and services 24/7 will help you build trust with your audience.

3. An Opt In Form

Including an opt-in form on your landing page can be a game changer, giving you a huge advantage when running your marketing campaign.

These forms can make the difference between getting a one time sale, or having a loyal audience of people you can build a relationship with.

While an [opt in form](#) is optional, meaning that you don't need it to get your affiliate commission, it's a tool that can be used to obtain email addresses.

These email addresses can be used to build an audience of interested, ready to buy customers. What's even better is that you can build a relationship with people who are interested in your affiliate products that can result in repeat buyers and an increase in your affiliate income.

Adding an opt in to your affiliate landing pages is a double win because of the potential for new and repeat affiliate sales and the audience building capabilities you will receive. And this can happen on auto-pilot.

4. A Lead Magnet

A [lead magnet](#) is an item of value that you can add to your opt-in form that will give your audience an incentive to join your list.

This element is optional as well, but its ability to increase the number of opt-ins you receive to your email list can't be overlooked.

Increasing the number of opt-ins you receive can have a direct impact on the number of products you sell for your advertisers.

To learn more about lead magnets and how to create them, click the link above and read our article for a quick tutorial.

Embark on this transformative affiliate marketing journey today and turn your passion into a thriving online business!