

THE COMMISSIONS HANDBOOK

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Your Free Guide To Online Commissions

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Introduction

AFFILIATE MARKETING.

You've probably heard of it. Maybe you've even tried it.

But even if you have some experience with affiliate marketing, how much do you know about doing it *effectively*? The answer for many folks, sadly, is “not much.”

I want to change that. And so, if any of the above describes you, I'm glad you're here! Stick around, because you're going to learn some incredibly useful things about affiliate marketing and how it can fit into your online business success.

What Affiliate Marketing Is—And Isn't

For the newbies out there, what exactly is affiliate marketing?

Quite simply, affiliate marketing is the process of earning a commission by promoting other people's (or company's) products. You find a product you like, promote it to others, and earn a piece of the profit for each sale that you make.

In essence, you're generating an income by sharing, recommending, and promoting another company's or person's product or service.

In other words, when you help another company generate sales, you get a cut!

Perhaps the best part is, you don't have to create your own product, because someone else has already done the hard work. That's the beauty of affiliate marketing: that you don't have to invest the time and effort to create something to sell. You can begin making money as an affiliate as soon as you have a platform to sell products.

All you have to do is send traffic through a link to that product, and everything after that is out of your hands . . . right?

I say “all you have to do,” but of course there's more to it than that—much, much more.

Like many things, it's relatively easy to get started with affiliate marketing, but more challenging to succeed.

Don't get me wrong—when done the right way, affiliate marketing can be a huge difference maker. But doing it right requires work and a smart strategy—and it especially means not putting the desire for short-term gain over the needs of your audience.

We'll talk more about all that in a second. But first, a little bit about how affiliate marketing has been such a crucial piece of my own business success—and what the right mindset has to do with affiliate marketing the right way.

Successful Affiliate Marketing Is About Mindset

Affiliate marketing is something I've been involved in ever since 2009 on my very first website. On that site, an architecture-related website, I promoted an exam software product that has generated more than \$200,000 in commissions over the years.

Since then, I've branched out and diversified my affiliate income sources. But much more than that—I've made affiliate marketing a cornerstone of my business strategy and my biggest single source of revenue.

In fact, my largest affiliate partnership, with a company called ConvertKit, has driven more than \$300,000 in revenue alone.



In [this video](#), I talk about how I've made more than \$300,000 from my affiliate relationship with ConvertKit.

In total, affiliate marketing has earned me *over \$3 million* in commissions over the years.

But it hasn't been smooth sailing the whole time.

Every time I've put money before serving my audience, I've failed.

And unfortunately, many people who get into affiliate marketing do so with the same

mindset: making money first, and thinking of their audience second (if they think of them at all!). That's a recipe for disaster—or at least lousy results.

They also think that because the product they're promoting isn't their own, that it doesn't need to be treated like their own—but they're plain wrong.

And let's not even get started on the outright scams that have been perpetrated under the guise of “affiliate marketing.”

Because of all these factors, it's not surprising affiliate marketing has gotten a bad rap over the years. But is that rap totally deserved? Definitely not.

You Can Do Affiliate Marketing Right—I'll Show You How

Yes, affiliate marketing has a bit of an image problem. But image isn't everything, and in this case, it obscures the truth that affiliate marketing can be done smartly, honestly, and in a way that serves you and your audience.

That's why I've made it a big part of my mission to change the perception of affiliate marketing, and to show people how to do affiliate marketing the smart way. I'm here to tell you that you CAN do it right, and even have people *thank* you for your product recommendations.

You see, when you go about things the right way and recommend products people really want and need, there's a virtuous cycle that comes into play. When someone thanks you for your recommendations, they're more likely to take you up on further recommendations you make down the road.

They're more likely to trust and value your advice and hopefully, eventually become *raving fans*.

They're more likely to become part of the core, devoted audience that forms the foundation of your online business success—in affiliate marketing and everything else you do.

Making that happen is exactly what this series of epic articles on affiliate marketing is going to show you how to do. Together, we'll learn how you can serve your audience and cultivate raving fans by tapping into the power of affiliate marketing.

Over the next 8 info-packed chapters, I'm going to share with you:

- **The truth** about what affiliate marketing is and how it works

- How to **get started** with affiliate marketing, even if you have no idea how to begin
- The **one-word key to success** with affiliate marketing (and all online business endeavors)
- A **behind-the-scenes look** at one of my high-level affiliate marketing partnerships (I'm talking 5 figures a month!)
- The **biggest mistakes** you need to know—and avoid—if you want to make it big as an affiliate marketer
- My **favorite affiliate marketing tools and tips** that will be game changers for you
- How to succeed on one of the world's **most popular affiliate marketing networks**

I know how powerful affiliate marketing can be when it's done the right way, and I know what a difference it can make for you and your audience when you're promoting products and services that can really help them out.

That's why I'm rooting for you to succeed, and it's why I put together this epic guide to affiliate marketing.

It's the guide I wish I'd had when I started my affiliate marketing journey way back in 2009.

Excited? Here's what's in store:

Chapter 1: How Affiliate Marketing Works

Affiliate marketing is one of the most powerful ways to generate an income online. But before we explore the huge potential of affiliate marketing, we need to understand what it is and how it works. This “affiliate marketing 101” chapter will lay the groundwork for everything that comes and set you up for affiliate marketing success.

Chapter 2: How to Start Affiliate Marketing

Once we've got the nuts and bolts down, I'll show you my five-step framework to getting started with affiliate marketing. You'll learn the importance of using trust as the foundation of all your affiliate marketing activities. Then, we'll break down the process of creating and running an affiliate marketing program into executable steps.

Chapter 3: Affiliate Marketing Tips

Now that you've got the basics down, we'll dig into the strategies and tactics that will help you accelerate your affiliate marketing success. We'll revisit some of the crucial basics, go over the must-dos of affiliate marketing, explore different promotion types, dig into

some advanced affiliate marketing strategies, and uncover ways to stay on track when the going gets tough.

Chapter 4: Affiliate Marketing Case Study: ConvertKit

The first three chapters focused on the “how” of affiliate marketing—now we’ll switch gears and show you what affiliate marketing looks like “in the field.” I’ll reveal my five-part approach to affiliate product promotion, one that’s helped me make ConvertKit my most successful affiliate relationship to date.

Chapter 5: Avoiding Affiliate Marketing Mistakes

Affiliate marketing is easy to do—and easy to do wrong. With all the focus so far on what you *should* do to succeed with affiliate marketing, we’ll inject some balance into the equation with some insight into what you need to *avoid* if you want to be successful in your affiliate marketing endeavors.

Chapter 6: 12 Tools to Accelerate Your Affiliate Marketing Success

Time to go shopping! To take your affiliate marketing to the next level, you’re going to need to fill your toolkit with some top-class tech. These are 12 tools I love and recommend, from apps to web services to physical products and more, to help you seriously up your affiliate product promotion game.

Chapter 7: Affiliate Marketing on Amazon

If you’re thinking about working with an affiliate marketing network, the world’s most popular marketplace can be a great place to start. We’ll cover how to sign up and start picking and promoting Amazon products, as well as strategies for success—the must-dos and must-don’ts that go into making Amazon a key piece of your affiliate marketing stable.

Chapter 8: Taking Your Affiliate Marketing to the Next Level

Now that you’re armed with some serious knowledge, tools, strategies, and possibilities to take with you on your affiliate marketing journey, what’s next? Well, I’ve still got a few more resources up my sleeve for you . . .

Ready to go?



How Affiliate Marketing Works

AFFILIATE MARKETING IS

quite simply one of the most powerful ways to generate an income online. Regardless of your niche, the upside with affiliate marketing is nearly limitless if you go about it the right way!

Part of the beauty of affiliate marketing is you don't have to invest time in creating the products that will be serving your audience—because, guess what? Those products likely already exist. Because of that, affiliate marketing is an opportunity anyone can take advantage of, and it's easy to get started.

But before we explore the many ways affiliate marketing can do wonders for you and your business, we first need to understand what affiliate marketing is. By laying that groundwork, you'll be making the right moves toward doing affiliate marketing right—in a way that truly serves your audience.

As we discussed in the introduction, affiliate marketing is all around us—and you've probably been involved in affiliate marketing without realizing it! If you've ever clicked on a link in a blog post to a product or service being offered on another website, there's a good chance the owner of the website where you originally clicked the link received a commission from your purchase.

Yes, affiliate marketing is everywhere—but here's the thing: few people understand how to take full advantage of it. In fact, I believe affiliate marketing is the world's most untapped source for generating passive income! It's a beautiful process that's completely underutilized, and I'm excited to share with you exactly how it all works.

In this chapter, we'll look at exactly how affiliate marketing works, including the pros and cons, whether you're a good fit for it, and how much you can earn from it.

Ready? Let's get to it. Here's what to expect in this chapter:

- So What Is Affiliate Marketing, Exactly?
- Who Is a Good Fit for Affiliate Marketing?
- The Nuts & Bolts of Affiliate Marketing
- Examples of Affiliate Marketing
- The Steps to Becoming an Affiliate Marketer
- The Pros and Cons of Affiliate Marketing
- Doing Affiliate Marketing the Right Way

So What Is Affiliate Marketing, Exactly?

As a brief refresher, affiliate marketing is the process of earning a commission by promoting another person's (or company's) product. You find a product you like, promote it to your audience, and earn a piece of the profit for each sale that you make. It's similar to a salesperson earning a commission, except you don't work for the company. Instead, it's like earning a reward for sending a new customer to the company.

There are two ways to be involved in affiliate marketing—either as a product owner or an affiliate marketer. In this series, we're going to focus on how to do affiliate marketing from the affiliate marketer side.

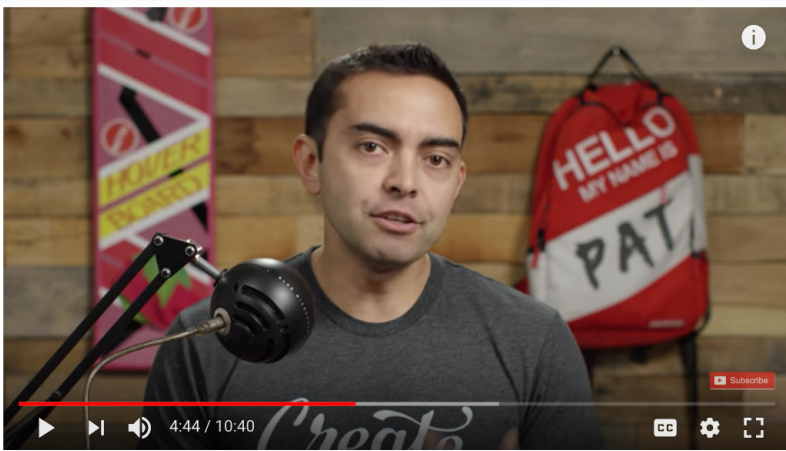
Who Is a Good Fit for Affiliate Marketing?

Affiliate marketing can be a great choice for online entrepreneurs, bloggers, and really anyone who has a website and is willing to build an audience they can serve authentically.

If this describes you, products exist right now that people in your target market are probably already buying, and if you can become the resource that recommends those products, you can generate a commission as a result.

Affiliate marketing can be an especially good option if you're not ready to create your own product or service, but you want to serve your audience by recommending products that may be helpful to them.

Affiliate marketing can also be a good fit for a wide range of people because you can apply a bunch of different marketing methods to promote affiliate products and services. These include the same marketing methods you may already be using—things like search engine optimization (SEO), paid search engine marketing (SEM), email marketing, content marketing, and display ads. You can even take advantage of other nifty ways to market products, like product reviews and unboxings.



Best Podcast Microphone (Under \$75 + USB)

6,946 views 320 likes 5 comments

Pat Flynn Published on Feb 12, 2018

SUBSCRIBED 120K

What's the best podcast microphone you can use to still sound like a pro? Which ones are easy to use (i.e. via USB) and won't cost you a ton? In this video, I'm going to unbox and demo 3 of the most popular USB microphones podcasters use that are each under \$75.

Also, if you're looking for an easy way to get started with podcasting, I have a free, 3-day mini course you can sign up for right now that'll walk you through each and every step to get your podcast published:

<http://www.howtostartapodcast.com>

The three microphones in review today are:

- Audiotechnica ATR-2100 USB Microphone (~60 USD)
<http://geni.us/audiotechnica2100>

In [this YouTube video](#), I review and demonstrate three USB podcasting microphones that cost less than \$75, with Amazon affiliate links to purchase each one in the description.

Finally, it's important to remember that affiliate marketing works best when you're sincere and confident about the product you're promoting. You'd only sell your own product if you knew it could help people, and it's the same with affiliate marketing. If you go in with a get-rich-quick mentality, you're not going to be impressed with your results.

The Nuts & Bolts of Affiliate Marketing

Let's get into the details of how affiliate marketing works. There are three main players in an affiliate marketing arrangement:

1. **You and your website**—the “affiliate.”
2. **The affiliate company (or network)**. In the simplest affiliate arrangements, you work directly with a single company to promote one or more of their products. There are more complex affiliate networks that provide an opportunity to earn affiliate revenue on a range of products, such as Amazon, Rakuten, ClickBank, and ShareASale.
3. **The customer**. This is a member of your audience who uses your affiliate link to purchase a product from the affiliate company or network.

A company that offers an affiliate marketing program may call it by a different name—these programs are also commonly called partner programs or referral programs.

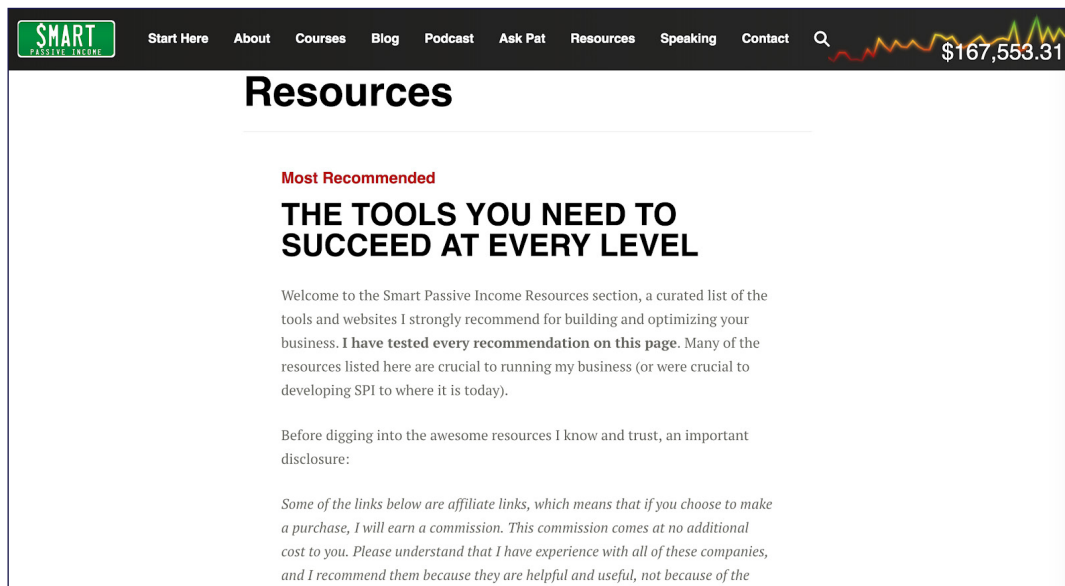
Here's how each party benefits from affiliate marketing:

4. From your recommendation, your audience learns about a product, course, or tool that may be useful to them;
5. From your recommendation, the company selling the product, course, or tool gets new customers they may not have found otherwise;
6. As a result of the sales to your audience, the company gives you a commission.

When done the right way, affiliate marketing can be a win-win-win. But at the center of this is one thing: **your audience's trust**. When your audience believes you have their best interests at heart and trusts your recommendations, then all three parties in the affiliate marketing relationship ultimately benefit.

Examples of Affiliate Marketing

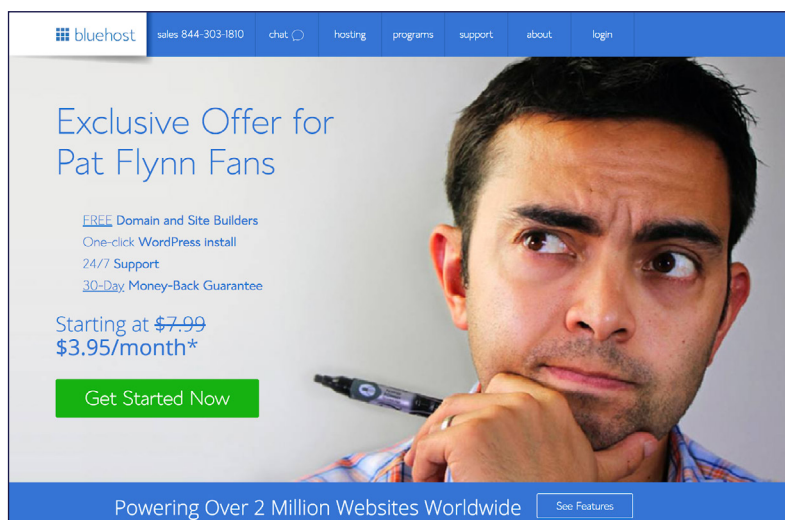
What does affiliate marketing look like? If you've visited my website, you may have come across my Resources page. This page contains a list of recommended resources—products, services, apps, and more—to help my audience build their own online businesses.



My Resources page, which contains affiliate links visitors can use to purchase products and services I recommend. These links take visitors to landing pages hosted by companies selling those products and services

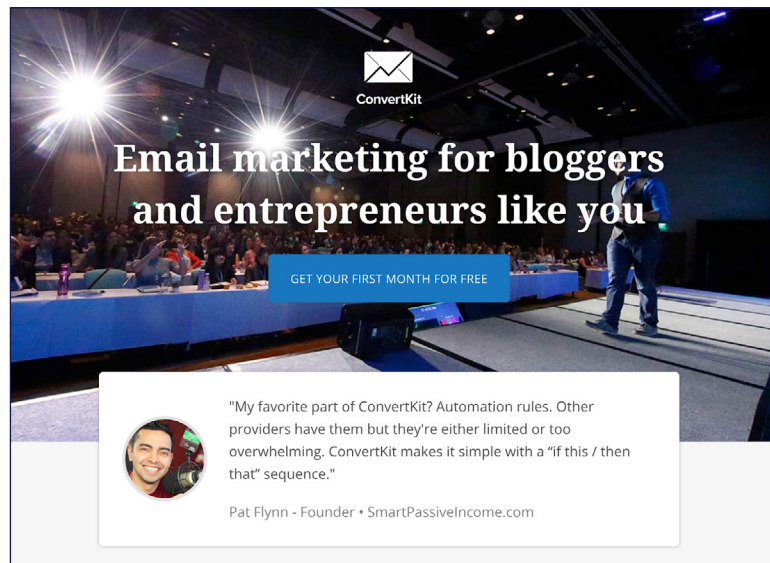
Many of the links on this page are affiliate links, meaning I receive a commission if someone clicks on the link and purchases the product or service it links to.

Here's what someone sees if they click on my affiliate link for Bluehost, the web hosting company I use and recommend:



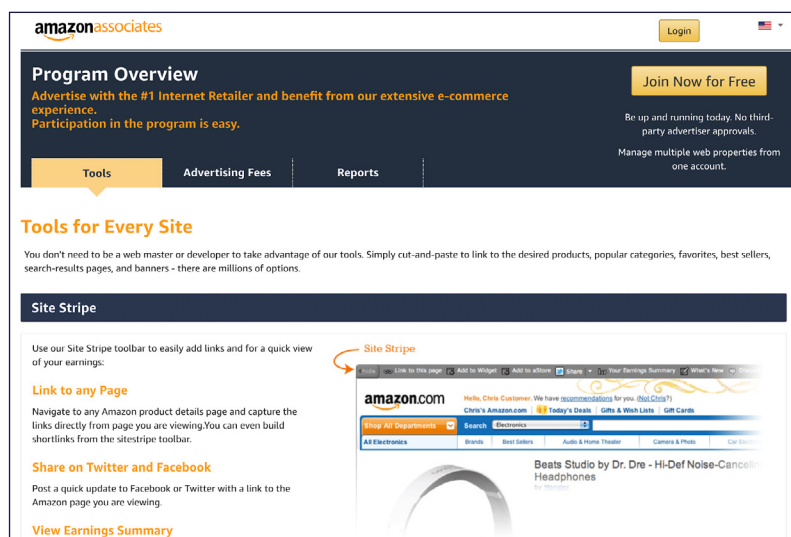
My affiliate landing page on Bluehost's website. If a customer purchases a web hosting plan from Bluehost after visiting this page, I receive a commission from Bluehost for the referral.

And here's what they'll see when they click on my affiliate link for ConvertKit, the email service provider I'm happy to recommend:



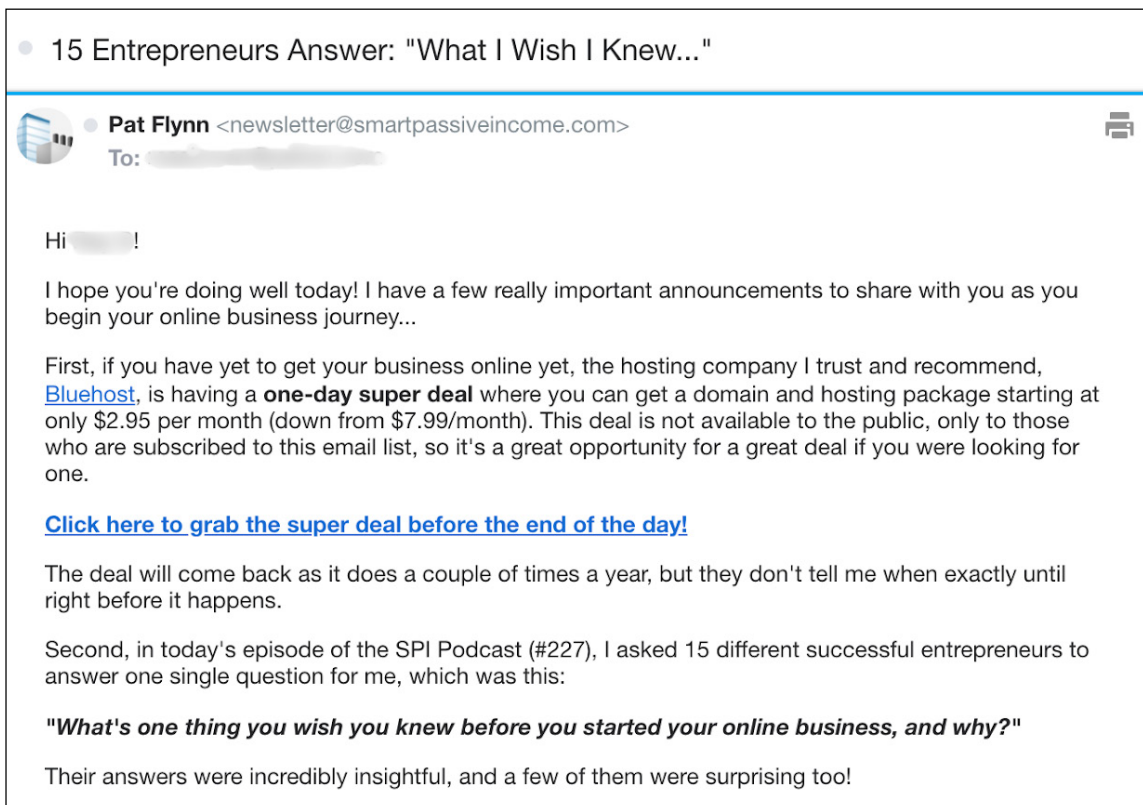
My affiliate landing page on ConvertKit's website.

As we discussed above, you can also earn affiliate commissions by signing up with an affiliate network. One of the most popular is the Amazon Associates program, which you can read more about in Chapter 8.



Screenshot of the landing page where you can sign up for Amazon's Associates affiliate marketing program.

You could easily find tons of other examples of affiliate marketing “in the wild.” That’s because affiliate marketing is essentially about sharing your affiliate links, so however you choose to share those links—whether on your website, on social media like Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube, or via emails to your list—well, that’s affiliate marketing in action!



In this 2016 email to my mailing list, I promoted a special deal offered by Bluehost, which people could sign up for using my Bluehost affiliate link.

Of course, there’s a whole lot more to successful affiliate marketing than just sharing affiliate links! That’s what we’ll talk about next, starting with the key steps you need to follow to get started with affiliate marketing.

The Steps to Becoming an Affiliate Marketer

In later chapters, we’ll cover the nitty gritty of getting started with affiliate marketing. For now, I want to give you the high-level overview of the steps involved. Many how-to guides for affiliate marketing suggest a series of steps similar to this:

1. Find a company and product you want to promote.

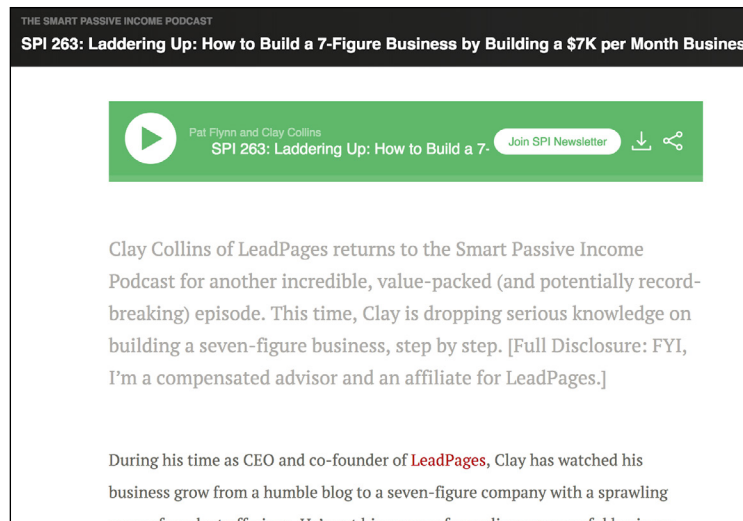
2. Sign up as an affiliate.
3. Get your unique affiliate link and add it to your site.
4. A visitor to your website clicks the link, which takes them to a third-party page.
5. If the visitor makes a purchase, you receive a commission based on the value of the item purchased.

Now, these steps are definitely accurate—you can't earn money with affiliate marketing without first finding a product to promote! But more importantly, you shouldn't be affiliate marketing without first establishing trust with your audience. Audience first, always.

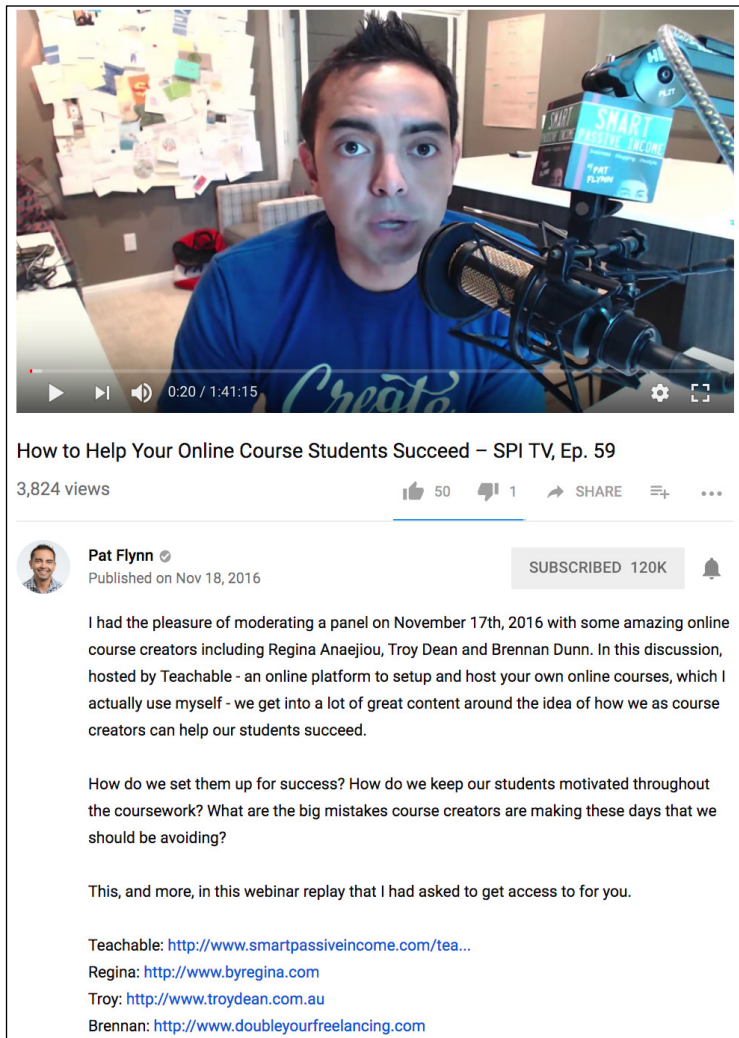
That's why *my* methodology for successful affiliate marketing goes like this:

1. First, build a relationship with your audience.
2. Then, identify a product that might fit your audience's needs.
3. Next, use and test the product yourself, to ensure it's truly something worth recommending to your audience, so you don't risk taking advantage of their trust.
4. Show your audience tangible proof that the product does what it promises via a blog post or case study on your website or YouTube channel.
5. Then—and only then!—you can start to promote the product to your audience and hopefully start earning some affiliate revenue when they purchase it.

This approach puts your audience's needs front and center, setting you up for success with affiliate marketing.



Another example of affiliate marketing in action, this time sharing an affiliate link in the show notes of an episode of the Smart Passive Income (SPI) podcast featuring Clay Collins, founder of Leadpages.



[This YouTube video](#) featured a panel discussion between me and several course creators, hosted by Teachable, an online course creation platform for which I'm an affiliate. Although I shared my Teachable affiliate link in the show notes, the primary purpose of the video was to deliver value to my audience, not promote the link.

In the next chapter, we'll go over my methodology for successful affiliate marketing in more depth, but for now let's talk a little more about the pros and cons of affiliate marketing.

The Pros and Cons of Affiliate Marketing

As with anything, affiliate marketing has its upsides and its downsides. In this series, I'll give you the guidance you need to go about affiliate marketing smartly so you can make the most of the opportunities out there and avoid the potential downsides. Here are the main pros and cons of affiliate marketing.

Pros:

- **Low barrier to entry.** Affiliate marketing is easy to get started with, and costs little. Most affiliate programs are free to join, and you don't have to create, stock, or ship products, which also means less hassle/responsibility.
- **Low risk.** You're not the product owner, so you don't lose anything if a customer doesn't buy.
- **Passive income potential.** Affiliate marketing provides the potential for passive income.
- **More freedom.** When you start earning passive income, you can work anytime and from anywhere, as long as you have internet access.

Cons:

- **Not a quick fix.** It can take time to generate the amount of traffic needed to result in substantial income.
- **Less control.** You don't own or control the product/service you're recommending, so you can't control quality or customer experience.
- **Competition and audience fatigue.** An attractive affiliate program means you might be competing with others for customers. Audiences can also get "offer fatigue" if they see too much ongoing promotion from you.
- **Not all affiliate programs are created equal.** While most companies that offer affiliate commissions are stable and ethical, there are shady companies out there too, some of which may not pay what they say they will. It's important to do your homework.
- **Risk of link hijacking.** Unscrupulous individuals may hijack your affiliate links, known as "linkjacking," potentially stealing your commission in the process.

How Much You Can Earn Via Affiliate Marketing

The beauty of affiliate marketing is that you don't have to invest the time and effort to create a product to sell. You can begin selling something as an affiliate as soon as you have a platform to sell it on. In this way, affiliate marketing can be a great way to earn some extra income without a lot of hassle or upfront cost.

That said, it's not a way to get rich quick. Like all passive income strategies, it takes time and effort to create a decent revenue stream. Although affiliate marketing has been my number one source of income for a while, it took me a while to get to where I am, including building close relationships with the companies I'm an affiliate for.

In my very first month doing affiliate marketing (Dec '08), I earned a whopping \$163.16:

Income Breakdown		DIFFERENCE FROM LAST MONTH	
GROSS INCOME	\$12,198.47	\$2,469.58	25.38%
AFFILIATE EARNINGS	\$163.16	+\$163.16	
Various	\$163.16	+\$163.16	+%
ARTICLE MARKETING	\$96.87	+\$76.85	+383.87%
eHow	\$96.87	+\$76.85	+383.87%
NICHE SITES	\$11,938.44	+\$2,229.57	+22.96%
Green Exam Academy	\$10,900.70	+\$2,302.19	+26.77%
Green Exam Academy Google AdSense	\$854.41	+\$152.38	+21.71%
Green Exam Academy Private Advertising	\$183.33	-\$225.00	-55.10%

My first month of affiliate revenue. Not terrible, but not exactly life-changing either!

Here's how I did in December 2009, the month that marked my first full year as an affiliate marketer:

Income Breakdown		DIFFERENCE FROM LAST MONTH	
GROSS INCOME	\$9,999.75	\$1,452.21	16.99%
AFFILIATE EARNINGS	\$4,957.78	-\$75.45	-1.50%
Various	\$4,957.78	-\$75.45	-1.50%
ARTICLE MARKETING	\$135.03	-\$51.87	-27.75%
eHow	\$135.03	-\$51.87	-27.75%
NICHE SITES	\$2,979.10	+\$503.99	+20.36%
Green Exam Academy eBook Sales	\$733.80	-\$342.37	-31.81%
Green Exam Academy Audio Sales	\$149.75	-\$59.90	-28.57%
Green Exam Academy Package Sales	\$2,095.55	+\$944.82	+82.11%

In one year, affiliate marketing had already become my biggest revenue generator!

As you can see, I've done really well with affiliate marketing in the past 10 years—but it's taken a lot of time and hard work to get to that point.

So, how much can *you* make once you're up and running with affiliate marketing? That depends primarily on how committed you are to making it work and how much time,

energy, and focus you're willing to put into it. It also hinges on a few other factors:

1. The commission percentage you receive for each sale of an affiliate product or service.
2. The size of your audience.
3. How successful you are at promoting those products or services to your audience.

Typical commission percentages vary depending on the affiliate company you partner with, and the types of products or services you're promoting.

Digital products and services typically offer higher margins due to their lower costs of production and fulfillment—there are no raw materials, manufacturing, shelf space, shipping costs, etc. These margins can be as high as 50 percent. On the other hand, because of all the aforementioned costs, physical products tend to offer lower percentage margins, sometimes in the single digits.

Thankfully, there is no real limit on how much you can make as an affiliate marketer. Affiliate marketing can be a great way to augment your existing income, or even become your main source of income if you're willing to make the commitment.

But in either case, if you're looking for long-term success with affiliate marketing, you have to be willing to do it the right way . . .

Doing Affiliate Marketing the Right Way

A lot of people worry about getting involved with affiliate marketing because it might make them look slimy or too salesy. That's why I've made it part of my mission to teach people how to do affiliate marketing in a way that makes it a win for everyone.

The biggest element to success with affiliate marketing? Trust. Earn trust from your audience first, and only recommend affiliate products that you've used yourself and know your audience will benefit from.

And you know what? A lot of people do it the wrong way by taking an *income-first* rather than a *serve-first* approach. These folks push random products and overpromote them without providing true value to their audience. This has given affiliate marketing a really bad rap in some quarters, causing many ethically minded entrepreneurs to be wary of affiliate marketing.

But thankfully, you CAN do it right, maintaining your audience's trust and having them thank you for your recommendations. In the next chapter, we'll talk about how to get started as an affiliate marketer and make sure you go about things the right way from the beginning.



How to Start Affiliate Marketing

AFFILIATE MARKETING IN A

nutshell involves promoting a product you know (and ideally use yourself) to an audience that trusts you and has a need for that product.

If you read through the previous chapter, you should have a solid understanding of how affiliate marketing works!

In a moment, we'll break down the process of creating and running an affiliate marketing program into executable steps.

But before we do that, I want to revisit a crucial element of affiliate marketing we touched on in the first chapter: **trust**.

Here's an overview of what we'll cover in this chapter:

- Put Your Audience First (Build Trust)
- The Soft Pitch Pipeline
 - Segment 1: Relationships
 - Segment 2: Products
 - Segment 3: Experience
 - Segment 4: Proof
 - Segment 5: Pitch

Put Your Audience First (Build Trust)

Affiliate marketing helps me generate over \$60,000 in affiliate commissions each month. My affiliate income has grown because I follow two major rules:

1. I only recommend products that I'm very familiar with. Preferably, these are products I've used before and that have helped me achieve something. If I'm not confident in the product and I don't feel it will help people, I will not promote it.
2. I never directly tell anyone to buy a product. I always recommend products based on my experience and in the context of what I've done or what I'm doing with it.

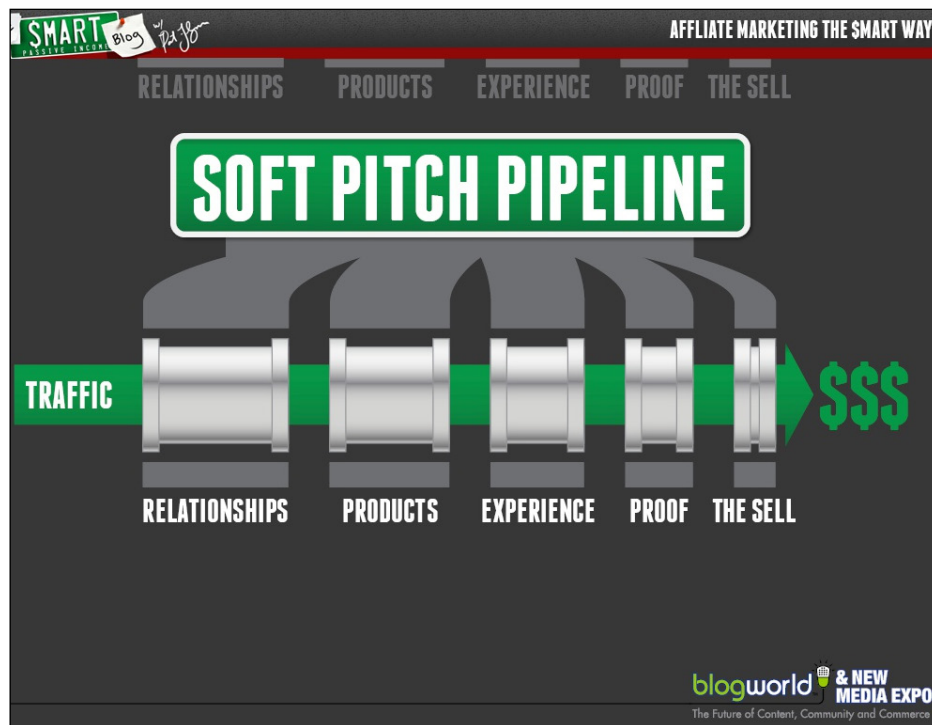
What does following these two rules achieve? **Trust**. By doing these two things, my audience knows that I only want them to buy the tools that they need, at the time they need them. They know that I've used and believe in the products I recommend. They know there's no pressure, because I'm only looking out for their best interests.

Many affiliate marketers choose not to follow these rules—and I think that’s why affiliate marketing has a bad reputation. We can do better, and so I hope you’ll join me in following these rules.

Every affiliate marketer needs to understand the importance of establishing and maintaining trust with their audience before they get started with affiliate marketing. Thankfully, my system for getting started has trust baked into the entire process. Let’s dive into it now!

The Soft Pitch Pipeline

My approach to affiliate marketing is built around something I call the “soft pitch pipeline.” This approach is designed to do two main things: build trust, and reduce the amount of “hard selling” needed to promote your affiliate products (hence the “soft pitch” part).



Imagine a series of pipes. These pipes represent the experience or “flow” people go through when they visit your site or are introduced to you and your brand. On one end is traffic entering the pipeline, and on the other “exit” end of the pipeline is the sale or conversion.

Between these two points, there are five segments that combine to make up the total experience of your brand:

1. The **Relationships** you cultivate with your audience
2. The **Products** you decide to promote
3. The **Experience** you have with those products
4. The **Proof** you share that those products work
5. The **Pitch** or “sell” of those products to your audience

These segments can vary in strength and size. For example, if you have an amazing relationship with someone, it doesn't take much to convince that person to do something for you. In this case, the relationship segment is extremely long, so the pitch segment doesn't have to be long at all. For example, say your wife is pregnant. It's two in the morning and she wants you to go to the store and buy a Little Debbie's Fudge Brownie. Well, you're probably off to the store to buy a Little Debbie's Fudge Brownie—there's not much pitch or convincing needed at all.

Now take the other extreme: a company you've never heard of before. Since you hardly have any relationship with this company, they're going to have to work a lot harder to pitch you—to convince you to try them out. And many companies pitch really aggressively, which can backfire and make people uncomfortable or even annoyed.

That's exactly what we try to avoid with the soft pitch pipeline. By focusing on the first four segments of the pipeline—the relationships you cultivate with your audience, the products you promote, the experience you have with those products, and the proof you can share with your audience that the products work—you can make the pitch phase shorter and less aggressive.

If you set up the first four segments of the pipeline the right way, hardly any pitch will be needed to get your audience to click through your affiliate links and make a purchase. Let's go over each of those segments now!

Segment 1: Relationships

Relationships are everything. Having a relationship with your audience is the foundation of trust. It also allows you to get to know your audience in depth, so you can understand their needs and pain points. That way, you can identify potential products that can help meet those needs and pain points.

Not too long ago, a lot of people were trying to do affiliate marketing by finding a product that offered an attractive commission, then building a site around it and selling it by driving traffic using Facebook ads and Google Adwords. That tactic used to work, but Google and Facebook have caught on and started clamping down on those ads, making it much harder to pull off.

But more importantly, on a strategic level, it's just not the right way to do things if you're interested in building a lasting business. Instead, you need to take a longer-term approach, one centered around relationship building.

What does that look like?

First, you need to identify a target audience that has a specific pain, issue, problem, or goal. By homing in on that target market and understanding exactly what they're going through, you can discover ways to help them achieve their goals and overcome their problems.

The key is to not go into it with the aim of finding an affiliate product, but to get to know your audience and find *solutions* they can use.

Start with the pain, not the product.

How do you learn what your audience needs? You need to become friends with the people who visit your site and interact with you on social media. Without that relationship, it's much less likely that meaningful transactions will ever occur. By meaningful transactions, I'm not just talking sales transactions—I'm talking about email list subscriptions, comments, clicks, likes, follows, shares, and retweets.

The hard part is, a relationship takes time to build. Thankfully, there are ways to speed up the process of building a relationship with your audience without compromising the quality of that relationship. So how can you connect with your audience more quickly? Here are three ways:

1. Be Personable

What would make YOU buy something from someone you didn't know, especially if they were selling a product they didn't even make themselves?

In a lot of my content, be it blog posts, podcast episodes, and even in-person presentations at large conferences, I try to share aspects of my personality and my personal life. As a result, most of my audience knows a lot about me—that I'm a family man, that I love *Back to the Future*, that I'm still working toward my goal to touch a regulation-height basketball rim...

The point is, they know me as a real person, someone just like them. They can relate to me. And as a result, they're much more connected to me than if I were to spend all my time telling them about the strategies and tactics that will help them build a successful online business.

What do my kids or my favorite movies have to do with affiliate marketing? Nothing, at least directly. But what do those things have to do with my brand? Everything, because building a brand is the equivalent of building relationships. People connect with people, and the more you can become a person in the eyes of your audience, the easier it is for them to connect with you—it's as simple as that.



I talk about my family on my website, because they're part of who I am. Doing this helps my audience see that I'm a real person, just like them.

2. Tell Stories

People are programmed to love stories. Think about the last time you were engrossed by someone's tale around the dinner table, or just watched a movie or read a book. When you tell a story, it's easy for your audience to put themselves into that story; stories put things in context and make them relatable. Stories are an easy and personable way to relate to your audience.

Now, you don't have to dedicate entire posts to stories about random things to create a meaningful connection. Instead, be creative and share little anecdotes and examples here and there to illustrate concepts, honest stories that relate to the message you're

trying to get across. Doing this helps you convey information and build those important relationships with your audience at the same time.

3. Practice RAOK

RAOK is short for “random acts of kindness,” and it’s one of my all-time favorite things to do. Why? Because when you do something unexpected and generous for someone, it leaves an amazing impression.

It can be as simple as replying to comments on your blog and social media. I do this, and it helps people see I’m a real person. If someone has a question, I answer it. It saves them time, and helps them remember who I am. Sometimes I even take it a step further and leave comments on the blogs of people who’ve left comments on my posts.

It’s small things like these that can help you quickly form a deeper relationship with your audience.

And you can do the same thing. So ask yourself, what kinds of RAOK can I do for my audience? What unexpected favors can I perform that will help me build a positive, lasting relationship with them?

Segment 2: Products

Once you’ve started to build your audience and develop a relationship with them, you’ll start to learn what that audience needs. The next step is to identify products you can recommend to meet your audience’s needs and help them in their journey.

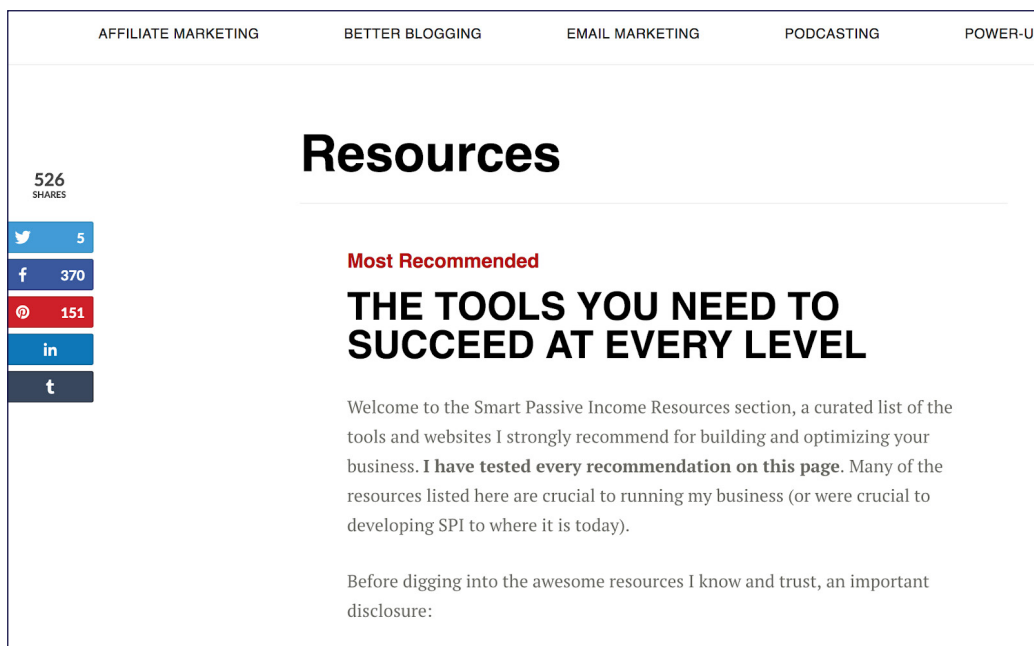
First, keep in mind that sometimes the products will be ones that allow you to generate an affiliate income—and sometimes they won’t. You never want start with a product or commission in mind. You want to start with the *problem*, then find solutions for it. And if the best solution for a particular problem is *not* an affiliate product, well, that’s what you should promote to your audience. Remember, trust and relationships come first, always. With that in mind, once you’ve gotten to know your audience and its needs and pain points, how do you select a specific product?

To help you get in the right frame of mind here, think about a brand new visitor who comes to your site for the first time—what is it you want that person to ultimately achieve? This might be a tough question to answer, but you need to know what you want your visitors to do, because if you don’t, then everything you recommend is going to seem random. You need your recommendations to be precise and targeted, so your audience can get what they need from you to reach their goals.

Once you've identified what you want to help your new visitor to achieve, think about how they're going to get there. What's their roadmap or path to success? Defining the steps on this path will help you determine exactly what kinds of products will help your audience at different points along the path.

Next, you need to think about the products that will help your audience along this path. One of the best places to start identifying these products is through ones you've used yourself. Whatever niche you're in, spend a little time making a list of the tools and services you use. Those things that you used to help you achieve your goals can help your audience achieve their goals too. Just about any product or service can work, including:

- Courses
- Books
- Physical products
- Software
- Coaching services



The [Resources page](#) on [smartpassiveincome.com](#) contains affiliate product recommendations across various product types.

Often, you'll need to look beyond the products and services you already know and use to find things that will be a good fit for your audience—which means doing some research! Thankfully, there are plenty of great places and resources to find new affiliate products, including:

- Google
- Word of mouth—your professional network, including masterminds, Facebook groups, etc.
- Amazon, to find books and products

Remember: don't start with the products; start with your audience's goals and pain points. Then find the products to help them get where they want to be.

It's also important to realize that by not promoting products and services that will help your audience along their "success path," you'll actually be holding them back. Remember, your knowledge and your relationship with your audience can help them filter through all the noise and find the right solutions, because you've put in the work to understand what's best for them.

Finally, it should go without saying, but if a product doesn't make sense to promote—if it's not a part of the audience's success path—then you shouldn't promote it, no matter how generous the affiliate commissions may be.

Segment 3: Experience

Okay. You've found a product that will help your audience achieve their goals. Now what? Do you immediately start promoting it to them with your affiliate link?

Not yet. The next important element in decreasing how much you need to pitch is the experience YOU have with those products.

I have two words for you: Experience sells.

On Amazon, we read other people's reviews—people we've never met!—to help us make a purchase decision. That's powerful stuff, so imagine how much more powerful your real-life experience with a particular product can be, combined with the relationship you have with someone in your audience already.

So, before you start promoting your product to your audience, you need to get to know it yourself, inside and out. Affiliate marketing works best when you treat the products you're promoting as your own. You need to know firsthand the experience your audience will have using this product.

Obviously, if you learn that the product is a dud, it's not going to make sense to promote it to your audience! And if it's great, then you'll be reassured that your audience is going to find it useful.

As a result, I really encourage you to use and test a product thoroughly before you promote it, for three main reasons:

1. For your protection

You have to understand what it's like to use any product you promote, because your audience's trust is the most important thing in the world. Anything you promote directly reflects on you and your brand, whether it's your product or somebody else's. If you're promoting it, your reputation is on the line.

2. To become a resource

By using and experiencing a product, you'll be able to answer specific questions about it much better, and become a helpful resource for an interested person in your audience who could become a buyer.

3. (Most importantly) To get rid of the mystery

By showing your audience exactly how a product is used, they'll be able to imagine themselves using it. You make that product a known quantity, and make it easier for your audience to imagine buying it and benefiting from it.

So, how exactly do you show your audience how a product is used? The key is to show the product *in action*—to show yourself physically using it. Why is this important? Science, and little things in our brains called mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are a special set of brain cells that respond when we see other people do stuff; they let us understand what it feels like to do something by watching other people do it.

As an example, take all the “unboxing videos” on YouTube—the ones where someone buys something like an iPad and records themselves unwrapping the plastic and taking out all the parts and firing it up—those video are extremely popular!

People like to see exactly what they're going to buy, so do yourself and your audience a favor and “unbox” the products you're promoting as an affiliate. Write extensive blog posts about products and everything there is to know about them. Record videos and podcast sessions with the products' owners with questions to popular questions about the product. You can even host live webinars with real questions from the audience about the product.

So, show them what it looks like, how to use it, and how not to use it. Share the good, the bad, the tips, the tricks, everything. Make it easy for them to picture themselves using it.

In every case, be honest and thorough. Give your audience enough accurate information to make a qualified decision about whether the product will work for them.

Segment 4: Proof

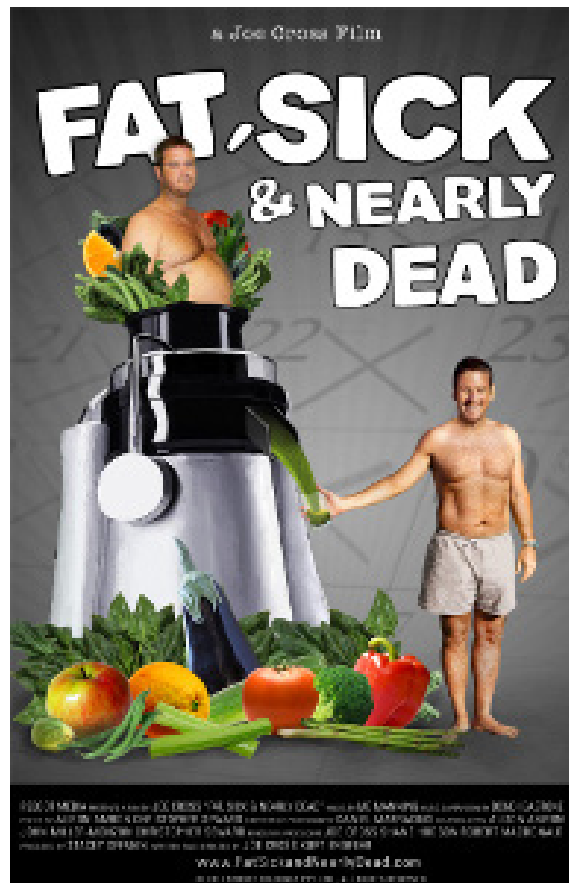
Next in the pipeline is proof. People want to see how a product can help them be successful at achieving their goals. I'm talking about real, tangible proof—undeniable results you can feel, taste, smell, and touch. You can't just *say* something will help your audience—you have to *show* them.

Proof is similar to experience, but it's about focusing on the positive outcomes of using a product. If experience is about *seeing the product in action*, proof is about *seeing it work*.

A few years ago, I watched a documentary called *Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead*. It's about a man named Joe Cross who was going through a tough time: he was really overweight and had a lot of skin problems, things he attributed to the food he was eating. The documentary covered his ninety-day juicing journey. That's right—all he consumed for ninety days straight was juice.

His transformation was remarkable, and you saw it happen over the course of the documentary. By the end of the ninety days, he was completely healthy—off his medication, no more skin rashes, happy and healthy and thin.

Only thirty minutes after watching that documentary, I had a receipt from Amazon in my inbox for my new Breville Juicer. All thanks to Joe Cross, whose documentary showed his remarkable transformation in a bold, personal way.



This documentary was an amazing example of proof—directly showing your audience the results they can potentially achieve for themselves. (Source: IMDB)

This documentary is almost the perfect example of proof—showing your audience the remarkable outcomes that are possible for them. After watching *Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead*, I didn't need to hear a pitch. The proof of Joe Cross's transformation did it all for me. If there had been an affiliate link mentioned at the end of that documentary, I would have been more than happy to use it. I was on the fence initially, but showing that proof sealed the deal and moved me firmly into the “buyer” camp.

If you can show the success you've had with a product, your audience will be excited about the possibility of achieving the same success. Joe's platform for showing his proof was a documentary—maybe yours is your blog, or a podcast, or video, or all of the above. Whatever it is, give your audience tangible proof—data and demonstration—that the products you're promoting can change their lives for the better.

Segment 5: Pitch

The last part of the pipeline, before you get to a conversion or sale, is the actual pitch or sell. There's a reason this comes last—because, as we've discussed throughout these first

two chapters so far, trust is key. You shouldn't start directly promoting a product until you've earned your audience's trust and know the product is something they will benefit from.

Here's the great part: If you've done things correctly to this point, the pitch phase should be the shortest and least aggressive part of the pipeline. The more you focus on building a relationship with your audience, recommending products that align with their success path, sharing your experience using that product, and providing tangible proof of that product's benefits, the less important it becomes to actually pitch the product directly.

So yes, you can reduce the amount of pitching you have to do by focusing on the first four stages of the pipeline. But at a minimum, you'll still need to enable the sale. You need to make sure people have a way to click on your affiliate link to buy the product! This means creating a point of sale where you insert one or more calls to action (CTAs) to click on the affiliate link and purchase the product. You have lots of options in terms of where to put these links and CTAs:

- Emails
- Blog posts
- Landing pages
- Podcast show notes
- Webinars
- Social media messages

So is it as simple as just adding your link to an email or blog post and watching the commissions roll in? Not so fast. There are a few crucial tips to keep in mind when it comes to adding your affiliate links at the point of sale.

1. Be Honest

When you provide a link, always be clear that it's an affiliate link that will earn you a commission for each sale. In fact, if you do everything in the pipeline leading up to this point, this will actually help you, because people will want to pay you back for everything you're doing for them. Some people may not know about affiliate links and commissions, and will sometimes open a new window to buy a product. By being honest and upfront that you're using affiliate links, you'll help ensure you're getting all the affiliate commissions you deserve.

2. Offer Support

In addition to telling them it's an affiliate link, offer to answer questions and provide support if needed. This is a great way to show your audience, right at the point of sale,

that there's someone there to help them if they need it. Yes, this also means someone to blame if things don't go well—but since you've already vetted the product and learned how to use it, you shouldn't have any problem taking on that responsibility.

3. Provide Multiple Opportunities

Give people more than one chance to click through your affiliate link. Take blog posts, for instance, since they're probably the most popular way to share affiliate links. A lot of times, business owners will just link the first mention of an affiliate product in a post. If their reader misses it—or keeps scrolling, intends to return, then forgets to scroll back up—well, you've lost your potential commission. Instead, add a link near the beginning, middle and end of a post.

Also remember that, beyond just blog posts, there are lots of ways and places to share your affiliate links, including:

- YouTube videos
- Emails
- Podcasts
- A “resources” page—in fact, my resources page here on smartpassiveincome.com is my *most profitable page*.

4. Offer a Bonus

Offering a bonus with an affiliate product is a great way to make sure your audience goes through your link and not someone else's.

Lots of people use the bonus technique, but many don't use it to its greatest potential. They'll throw in random things that aren't something the potential buyer needs. If you really want to knock bonuses out of the park, create a bonus that truly complements the product you're promoting. This could be something like:

- A quick-start PDF guide on how to use the product
- Access to something you have that complements the product—if you're selling a juicer, you can provide a recipe guide to go along with it.
- A coupon code or discount on a related product or service.

Get creative!

5: Remember Why

Finally, remember why you got into affiliate marketing. It's not for the commissions. It's for your audience—to help them achieve something. It's your responsibility, as someone with a platform and an audience that trusts you, to give them the products they need to achieve success.

Your commissions are ultimately a byproduct of how helpful you are to your audience. So aim to be incredibly helpful, and you will earn more in the long run. When you approach affiliate marketing in a way that keeps people around and doesn't rely on the pitch, but rather everything that happens before that—the relationship, the product, the experience, and the proof—you'll set yourself up for maximum success.

Remember: Use affiliate marketing as a tool to help your audience, and the commissions will come!

In the next chapter, we'll dive deep into some tips for affiliate marketing that'll help you take your success to the next level.



Affiliate Marketing Tips

AFFILIATE MARKETING IS SIMPLE

in concept. It's a relatively uncomplicated way to generate income online, and it's easy to get started.

It can also be a beautiful thing when it works—a win-win-win for all parties!

But! (There's always a but.) Affiliate marketing is not a “push-button” solution. It takes focus and commitment, and a certain choreography to make it happen the way you want it to.

Thankfully, there are things you can do to increase the number of people clicking on your affiliate links and buying the affiliate products you're promoting.

In this chapter, I'm going to go over 32 tips that will help you succeed with affiliate marketing. Some of these are things we've covered in Chapters 1 and 2, but they're very much worth repeating! Others will be new to you. But all of them are potentially important keys for you as you build your affiliate marketing business.

These top 32 tips for succeeding with affiliate marketing are spread across 5 categories:

- Laying the Groundwork
- [Must-Dos](#)
- [Promo Types](#)
- Advanced Tips
- [When the Going Gets Tough](#)

Laying the Groundwork

A great affiliate marketing strategy starts with a solid foundation. Here are the fundamentals you need to keep in mind as you're getting started.

1. Build trust first.

Surprise, surprise! My number one tip is to build trust! Trust takes time to build, and energy to maintain. This is why I wanted to give you this tip first because I want you to expect things to take awhile, and focus on building your community and the trust within that community first. The recommendations for products and the affiliate love you'll get from your community comes almost naturally after you EARN that trust from them.

Trust is earned through 2 things:

1. Giving—and giving away as much as possible. Content, information, freebies, high-value stuff, and sometimes even your own time. Online karma does exist, and the more you give away, the more you get back in return—and maybe not from the very same people you gave to, which is why the second piece of earning trust is . . .

2. Recommendations from others. Get on other people's radar and have them do the marketing for you. Not for the affiliate products that you're promoting, but you, or your brand. YOU. Trust is earned faster through the friends and relationships people already have with each other. That's why it's important to give to everyone, no matter how big or how small they may seem to your brand. Because you never know—they may know somebody who knows somebody who will become your biggest client, or a multi-product customer, or maybe the window to an opportunity that would have never happened otherwise.

Relationships with other people are extremely important to your success, and you won't have sustainable success with your affiliate marketing until you earn your audience's trust.

2. Know the product.

One of the biggest mistakes I see people make when attempting to sell a product as an affiliate is not knowing much about the product. This usually stems from a desire to push a product for the primary purpose of earning money from it, which is a no-no.

Don't get me wrong—it's smart as a marketer to take into account what the commission is and how much money you might make per sale, but the commission shouldn't drive the decision to promote a product. It should be just one part of the entire decision to promote a product. So, know the product. Why? Because if you really know the product, it will shape how you promote it, what you say to promote it, and the overall feeling people will get when you offer or recommend it.

So what's the best way to get to know a product? Use it. Get to know it.

If you're not extremely familiar with a product, don't promote it. It may not be a rule most affiliate marketers follow, but it's one I've followed for years with great success, because it helps with tip #1, building that trust factor with my audience.

All of the products I promote on my Resources page, such as ConvertKit for email marketing, Leadpages for landing pages, and Bluehost for web hosting, are ones I've used myself extensively. I know all about them, and I'm very comfortable with how they work, so I'm happy to recommend them to my audience.

This goes along with tip #3, which is . . .

3. Ask yourself: Can I trust the product will be good for my audience?

This is crucial. It's the idea that you should be sharing or recommending something that will actually help your audience. Do you trust that after you send people through your link that the sales page for that product, the product itself, and the customer service for that product, if any, will be good to them?

This is important, because the dictionary definition of affiliate is:

Officially attach or connect to an organization.

The moment you decide to promote something as an affiliate, you attach yourself, your brand, and your business to that company and that product, and if that product isn't going to be good for your audience, then it's going to reflect ultimately on YOU.

If it's an awesome product that totally helps them out? Awesome! You're going to look that much better and be thanked for it, and it'll be a win-win-win for everyone.

If it's bad? It's a lose-lose-lose for everybody.

I was once approached to promote a product I knew would sell well and make me a lot of money. But I didn't end up promoting it, because I didn't like the way the company managed the upsell process—it was very aggressive, and even ended with an *automatic* 30-day trial. That didn't sit right with me, so I didn't promote it. I may have lost some money up front because of that decision, but in the long run, it was the right thing to do.

4. Show your own results (proof).

One of the biggest ways I've been able to take my affiliate income to the next level is by showing people what I've gained as a result of using those products.

For example, I use a tool called ConvertKit to help me run my email campaigns to build an even bigger following. I then use these results as proof when I'm promoting ConvertKit as an affiliate product to my audience.

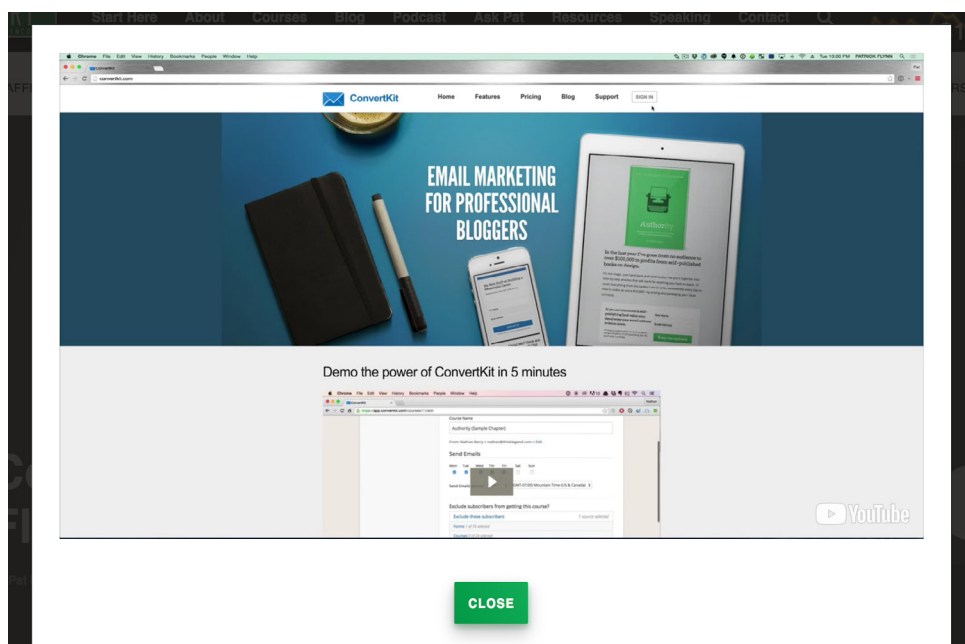
By showing that I've actually used and succeeded with a product like ConvertKit, it helps to build that trust and lessen the "I don't know exactly what this product is about so I'm not going to buy it" mentality among my audience. You want to show them as much as possible, which leads us to our next tip . . .

5. Help your audience learn as much as possible about the product (evidence).

So a person sees an affiliate link for a product you recommend on one of your sites. Big whoop!

Instead of just a paragraph or two explaining the product and what it can do for them, show them how it works. Tell them what it's like to sign up for the product, share some tips to make the experience of using that product even better, give answers to the most frequently asked questions about that product . . . show them everything.

The more you can show, the more comfortable people are going to be actually making a purchase.



My [ConvertKit demo](#) video is one of my most popular videos.

This is why my ConvertKit demo is one of the most watched videos on my website. That video shows exactly what the product looks like, how it works, and how to best use it.

Giving your audience thorough information about a product like this will help you to . . .

6. Become a source of information and support for a product.

The next level is to make yourself available to your audience as a source of information

and support for that product. To treat the product as your own.

This can help in the pre-purchase phase. If someone has any questions about a product before making a purchase, tell them to go through you (or maybe someone on your staff or a VA).

If a person is on the fence, it may just take an answer to a simple question to get that person to click through your link and make a purchase. Plus, they'll feel more secure with their purchase, again, since they know if they have any questions they can come to you.

The next thing you can do is provide support for it too. You don't necessarily have to be available 24/7 for customer service questions. But when you promote these products, you want to say, "Hey, if you have any questions about this, let me know. Because I know this product, and I want to show you how it can help you achieve your goals or address your pains and problems." And when you do that, your audience will automatically think, "This guy knows what he's talking about, and if in case I ever have any questions, he'll be there."

Now, if you're worried this means you'll be deluged with support emails, don't fear! You're not going to be buried with questions. In all my years of offering support for my affiliate products, I've never had an issue with receiving too many questions. But the value of offering this support is huge, and will help your audience trust your recommendations.

A lot of people think, "Oh, I don't want emails from people about my affiliate products." You should! Because the people who email you are the ones who are most interested in being successful with a product.

Must-Dos

These next 7 tips are things many affiliate marketers don't realize when they get started—to their detriment.

7. Use your website (or build one!).

There are many ways to build an audience today: on social media like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, or via your own website.

But when it comes to affiliate marketing, one of those is a must-have: a website. I know a lot of people who are generating an income via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube, without even having a website. Power to them—but if you want to set yourself

up for success with affiliate marketing, you absolutely need a website. What if Facebook or Twitter were to shut down tomorrow? That probably won't happen, but these sites can still make changes that can greatly affect your business. We've seen this time and time again, especially with Facebook. Facebook loves to make changes, especially since they went public and are trying to make money for their investors.

Affiliate marketing is your business, and so you need to take control of it, and if you put your business in the hands of something like Facebook, Twitter, or even Google, you're risking everything.

The smart approach is to create a website where you have full control over the experience of your audience and customers. Platforms like Facebook are limited when it comes to delivering a custom experience to your audience. Twitter is extremely limited. LinkedIn and YouTube are limited in customer experience, and you want those places to be the start of a conversation and always drive people back to your website. The website is where all the action happens. It's where people buy stuff. It's where people click and share things mostly, and it's where you can get the most leverage. It's where you can most easily build an email list.

Yes, there are tools available that allow you to do everything without a website, but if you're in it for the long haul and want to do affiliate marketing right, you need to have a website. Why would you ever put your business in the hands of somebody else?

8. Give people multiple opportunities to click on your affiliate links.

This next one is a pretty obvious tip that, sadly, many people fail to implement.

I say “sadly” because a lot of people are missing out on potential income as a result. When you only give your audience one opportunity to click on your affiliate link—by adding a single link near the top of a blog post, for example—you're losing out on potential income that could come with not much more work.

Of course, you should avoid the other extreme too. You can definitely go overboard with stuffing affiliate links into your posts. The best thing to do is just naturally place links where it seems like they work. For a blog post, this could be the first time you mention the product, somewhere in the middle of the post, and then again at the end.

You can catch the “low-hanging fruit” with that first link (since lots of people will click it just because it's there). But the people who continue to read the post are likely to be more engaged and take action. That's where adding links in the middle and at the end can come in handy, so these engaged readers don't have to scroll all the way back up the page.

Another quick and easy tip is to link product images with your affiliate link. Also consider adding affiliate links to other content, including YouTube videos, podcast show notes, and your Resources page.

Bottom line: make it as easy as possible for all of your visitors to use your affiliate links, without overdoing it.

9. Disclose that your links are affiliate links.

Most of you know I'm all about transparency and authenticity—and it's no different with affiliate links. So, I do my best to always reveal when links are affiliate links.

Why?

Well, for one, at least in the US, FTC regulations require that if you're receiving any compensation for promoting any other product or company, you have to disclose that relationship. There's a lot more to it than that, but the best thing you can do is just be honest and upfront with your links.

But more than that, people appreciate honesty. Along with that, if you give away enough information and really help people out, some of those people will likely want to pay you back for your generosity. If you disclose that you have an affiliate link they can click on, that right there is a good call to action for people to give back to you.

When you mention that you're using affiliate links, you should also say you're getting a commission, but at no extra cost to them, so if they are going to buy the product anyway they might as well buy it from you and help you make some cash too.

10. Keep track of your click-throughs.

One thing you should always do with your affiliate links is keep track of them—where they're located in your content, how many clicks are going through each one, and what your conversion rates are.

This takes time to set up, but you have to know what's happening to each of your links in order to understand what works and what doesn't.

If you have just one affiliate link for every location—your videos, podcasts, blog posts, webinars, etc.—then how do you know where you're getting most of your sales from? How do you know what campaigns aren't working and which ones aren't?

You don't, unless you track.

You can use a tool like Pretty Links, a WordPress plugin, to shorten your affiliate links into custom links that are trackable. Go to Chapter 6 to read more about Pretty Links and other tools I recommend to augment your affiliate marketing efforts.

11. Use your own language to promote your affiliate links.

When you sign up as an affiliate with a company, they'll often send you marketing language to use in your emails, blog posts, and social media messages to help sell the product. While this language can be helpful, I absolutely recommend not using it 100 percent verbatim. Instead, use it as inspiration to craft personalized language to sell the products. Why? Because of trust. Your audience wants to hear from you in your voice. It'll be obvious to them if you're just copying and pasting from somewhere else.

12. Thank people in advance for going through your affiliate links.

When I disclose affiliate links on my blog posts or videos, I will sometimes thank people in advance for going through them. Is this a small thing that probably doesn't make a drastic difference in sales? Yes. Is it something that's easy to do and people will appreciate it. Definitely.

With that in mind, here's the next tip, which is . . .

13. Thank people afterward for going through your affiliate links.

If possible, if the tracking system from the company you're an affiliate with should reveal the name and/or email of people who purchase through your link. If so, you should definitely follow up with those people and thank them. Maybe give them a surprise bonus if you want to, something you didn't mention they'd get in the first place. This will help make them want to make a purchase through one of your affiliate links again in the future.

Promo Types

Stuck for ways to promote your affiliate products? Here are 10 promo strategies you may not have considered.

14. Create an epic post.

One thing I like to do when promoting a product is create an Epic Post about it. What's an epic post? Think of it as a potential *one-stop shop* resource for this particular product—

not just a review of it, but a full-fledged introduction, how-to, FAQ, best practices, and troubleshooting resource for anyone who purchases the product. If you can show this much information to people before they make a purchase, they'll be more likely to actually make a purchase. At the same time, the epic post becomes an extremely shareable article, one with the potential to rank high for the particular product keyword in Google.

In this epic post, I'd go all out and . . .

15. Create multiple YouTube videos about the product.

These videos should be embedded in the epic post. This is an important strategy because YouTube is the #2 search engine in the world. You can get a lot of traffic coming in through your affiliate link on YouTube, and the videos themselves can rank in Google too. Plus, by shooting multiples videos about a particular product, you create even more SEO opportunities. Make sure to include your affiliate link in the video description, ideally in the first part of the description, so people don't have to click on "show more" or "read more" to see it.

What should you cover in these videos?

I recommend recording yourself from start to finish with it, then break it up into chunks. People like to watch shorter videos, so this works in your favor, and you get multiple opportunities to rank for various keywords related to that product. If it's a digital product, start at the moment of purchase and walk people through the entire process. And if you're doing a physical product, consider an unboxing video.

16. Host a webinar.

One way to take your affiliate product promotion to the next level is to host a webinar for it.

Webinars are an extremely powerful way to share a message with your audience. They're personable, they're live, and you can treat them like an actual event. That way, your promotion becomes a much bigger deal than just a regular affiliate link you dropped into a post.

Combine this with tip #25, and have the owner of the product share high-value information, and even answer people's questions directly on the webinar, and you've got yourself a winner.

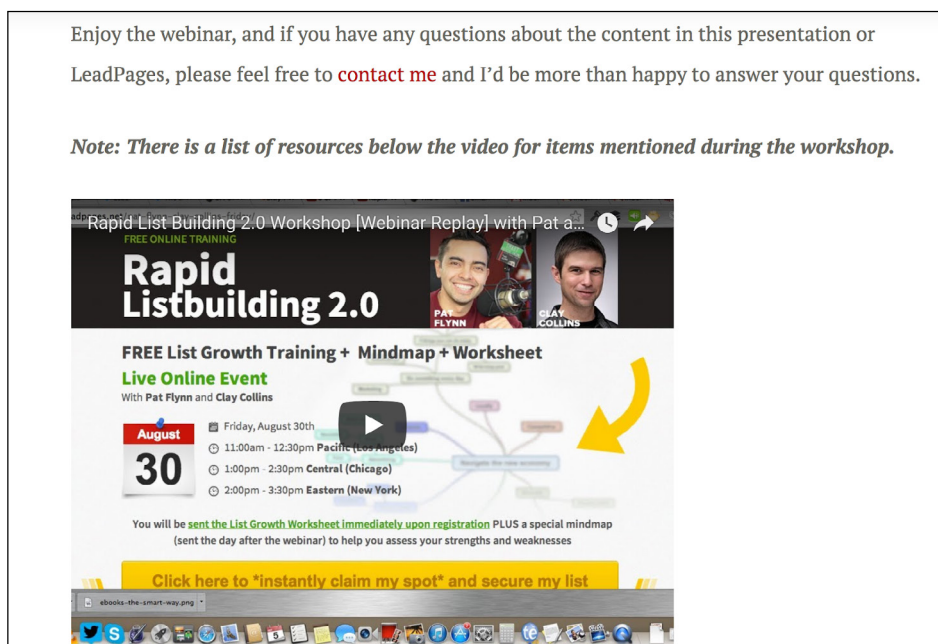
17. Publish a webinar replay.

Be sure to record your live webinar so that you can embed it on your website as a replay for those who didn't watch it live, as well as those who did watch it live but want to review the information.

To be honest, more people will probably watch it as a replay than live, and that's a good thing—you just have to give them the opportunity to do so.

I recommend recording using screen capture software like Camtasia Studio or Screenflow.

Here's an example of a [blog post on my site](#) containing a webinar replay—one I recorded with Clay Collins of LeadPages, a company for which I'm an affiliate:



Finally, make sure that in the webinar and on the post where you embed the replay, you give people multiple opportunities to click on your affiliate link.

18. Give away a bonus.

This is probably one of the more underutilized tips I have to share today—but probably one of the most powerful too.

In addition to promoting the affiliate product, give away a bonus to all of those who

purchase the product through your link as a thank you.

Chances are, you're not the only one promoting that product, so to get people to buy from you instead of the other guy, throw in a bonus that can only come with a purchase through your link.

Just have your audience members send you their receipt via email and then you can reply with the bonus, or information about how to access it.

So what could that bonus be?

Maybe it's a special webinar that shows people how to use the product with a Q&A session at the end of it. Imagine being able to purchase a product, getting familiar with it, and then a couple of days later having access to a webinar that shows you exactly how to use the product, with an opportunity to ask questions about it. How awesome would that be?

Maybe the bonus is another product or piece of software that you have that complements the affiliate product. Maybe it's a discount you work out with the owner of the product, one that provides incentive to purchase from you. Maybe it's a coupon code or discount to another product you own or have ties to. Maybe it's a PDF quick-start guide with instructions and best practices for that product, or access to a website with videos with the same guidance.

You're adding value to the purchase, making your buyers feel comfortable, and helping get those on the fence from "I'm not sure if this is right for me" to "This is exactly what I need, and more."

19. Promote your products indirectly on social media.

Although your website is the centerpiece of your affiliate marketing strategy, social media—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.—can play an important role in your affiliate marketing strategy too.

The thing about social media—at least in my experience and in the experience of many other people I know—is that if you directly promote on your social media platforms, you're not going to get a good response. People on social media are typically there to be social, not to be sold to.

But all is not lost in the affiliate marketing world, because you can do an indirect social media push, which means instead of directly linking to your affiliate links on Facebook or Twitter or any other platform, you're instead linking to something of value that includes the affiliate link, such as a video, an epic post on your blog, or a link to sign up for a webinar.

You're not linking directly through your affiliate link, but a resource that will engage people beforehand, earn their trust, and show them what the product is about before clicking on your affiliate link.

Yes, one of the cardinal rules of online marketing has long been that *the fewer gateways or clicks people have to go through before they get to the "buy" button, the better*. But I think that's been changing, and now it's closer to *the less information you give away, the less you're likely to make a sale*. The more trust you can earn beforehand, the greater the likelihood people will buy from you. You don't want someone to have to click 100 times before they get to where you want them to go, but a few clicks is okay, as long as you give them enough information beforehand to help them make their decision.

20. Run a giveaway to take advantage of "social proof."

Social proof is the idea that people will naturally gravitate toward what the masses are doing. As an example, say you're at the mall, and you see a huge crowd gathering around one store. You can't help but want to know what's going on—everyone else is there for some reason, and you want to know what that reason is.

Online, this translates to having other people do the marketing for you, except in this case it's through metrics like numbers of subscribers, likes, comments, and things like that.

Here's how this strategy can play out in the real world.

If you plan to promote a product as an affiliate, and if possible, work with the owner to get a few copies to give away to your audience for free. Also, if possible, get a discounted price for a limited time only, for your audience as well. This may not always be possible, but you can always ask and see what happens.

In a blog post, review this product—maybe it's your epic post, or maybe you just mention it at the end of one of your regular posts. Share that you have two or three copies of the product to give away for free, and that in order to be entered to win one of the copies, your audience members have to leave one comment about how they would use the product and why it would help them. Have them go through an affiliate link of yours to see what the product is all about first, and then come back to your blog to leave their entry as a comment.

What happens here is that you get tons of people leaving comments that become social proof for the greatness of the product. There's nothing more powerful than someone else's recommendation, and in this case, it's other people's recommendation for a product you're promoting as an affiliate.

Plus, you can follow up with the people who leave a comment on the post but don't win, to share a limited-time deal or an email saying thanks for the entry and giving them your affiliate link one more time.

I've used this strategy to great success promoting several products in the past, so I suggest you give it a shot.

21. Promote products indirectly via your email list.

Your email list is an integral part of any affiliate marketing campaign—and if you don't have one, you need to get started building one yesterday! Email is extremely powerful for marketing, which is why so many people say, "The money's in the list."

As with social media, I recommend indirectly promoting on your email list. I don't directly promote anything on my email list. If there are any links in my emails they point back to other content, usually on my blog, such as epic posts, videos, webinars, and the like.

Email should be all about giving people as much high-value content as possible, not direct selling. In fact, certain affiliate programs such as Amazon's don't even allow you to include affiliate links in emails.

You need to take great care of your email list and not to be too aggressive with it. Indirect promotion is a much better way to go about things, especially if you're focused on building trust with your audience (and you should be!).

22. Promote products indirectly on other people's sites.

This is another instance in which indirect linking is your friend. If you're interviewed for another person's blog, or asked to write a guest post, you can link back to a piece of content on your site that contains your affiliate link. As with social media and email, you don't want to hit people over the head with your links—and most of the time, if you try to link directly to an affiliate product through someone else's site, they won't allow it anyway.

23. Review and compare different products of the same type.

Another strategy is to compare different products of the same type. Compare and contrast, and if you give them your recommendation, make sure that link is an affiliate link.

The reason this works is because people like to shop around, but they also like convenience.

So instead of making them carry out their search all over the web, keep them on your site by reviewing each of the different products in one spot. If you've done a good job building up audience trust, then a well-written comparison review of different products of the same type can be a great way to drive affiliate purchases. This could potentially become an epic post as well, complete with videos and special deals just for your audience.

Advanced Tips

Here are 3 tips to consider once you're up and running with affiliate marketing, to take your promotions to the next level.

24. Establish a relationship with the owner of the product.

Imagine this: you're promoting a product and you get the owner of the product to answer some questions about the product, which you post in a blog post, or a podcast episode, or maybe a video interview. Or maybe you have that person on as a guest and he or she offers some really high-value content, with a small promo for the product at the end.

This does a couple of things. One, it starts to foster the necessary relationship and trust between your audience and the owner of the product, if your audience is ever going to purchase that product. Second, it helps the audience trust you even more, by showing them that you've established a relationship with the owner of the product—you're not just messing around when it comes to recommending this product. You're familiar with the product and the people behind it, which will help your audience feel even more comfortable with their purchase.

I've done this a few times here on SPI, and it's worked really well.

I have a great relationship with the team at Bluehost, even having gone to their offices to meet the team. Not just to get to know them, but to ensure they're A) on top of things and helping out my audience, B) learn about new product plans that might be coming up that I can help promote that could be a win for all, and C) see if there's anything else they can do to help make my life easier, such as creating customized landing pages (as in tip #27 below).

I have a great relationship with the team at ConvertKit as well. Because I've cultivated this relationship, I've had the chance to speak at their event, and they've let me offer a longer free trial period that my audience seems to really appreciate.

One other advantage of developing a relationship with the product owners is you might even be able to negotiate higher commission rates. It's always worth making a connection!

25. Offer special deals just for your audience.

This is the next step in building a relationship with the owner of a product you're promoting. If you can negotiate a special deal from the product owner just for your audience, that will give your audience an even better value and more of a reason to purchase from you. Try to work out a deal with the owner before you have them as a guest on your podcast. What's the worst that could happen? They'll say no, and that's it.

I've done special deals on several products here on SPI.com, and each time it has driven the affiliate sales through the roof. You can do a limited-time deal, or one that is evergreen.

26. Ask for a landing page on the owner's site.

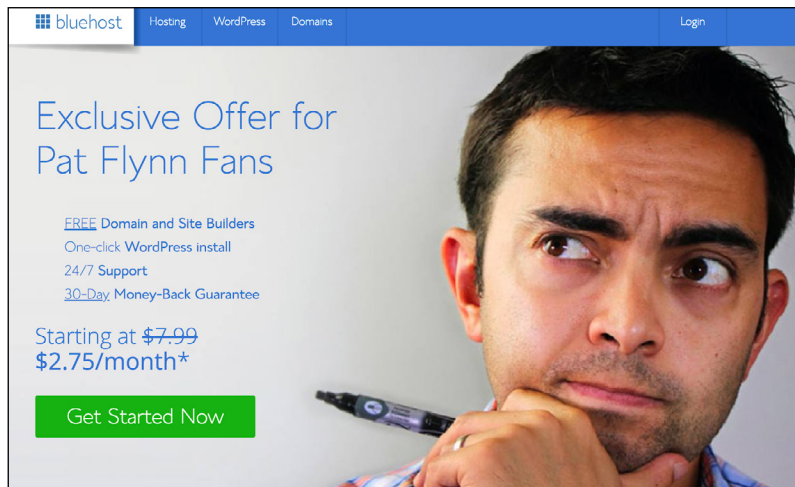
Most of the time, the actual sale of an affiliate item takes place on the website of the company that owns the product. Unfortunately, it's complicated to keep the entire sales process on your own site, so you'll need to be willing to send people to the company's site to complete their purchase.

By vetting the product and the company beforehand, you can help ensure that your audience will have a positive purchase experience. But you're still sending your audience into another company's "territory" where you usually don't have any control over their experience.

In some cases, you may be able to handle the purchase process on your own site, but that requires the company to agree to it, along with a lot of technical know-how.

But there's another, easier option that can help increase your audience's trust and comfort in purchasing: having your own branded landing page on the company's site.

When people click on your affiliate link, they're taken to a custom landing page on the company's site that has some elements from your brand on it. For an example of such a personalized landing page, see askpat.com/bluehost.



My custom landing page on Bluehost's website.

The huge benefit of this landing page is that it continues the conversation, and makes the customer feel like you're still there with them as they go through the purchase process.

The big caveat here is this will not always be possible, which is why it's an advanced tip. Some companies may not be open to creating a custom landing page for you, and even if they are, you may need to already be a successful affiliate with them before they'll agree to it.

When the Going Gets Tough

As with anything in online business, affiliate marketing will throw up roadblocks along the way. Here are 6 ideas to help you keep your head up when things get rough.

27. Focus on how it will help your audience (not features, but benefits).

When talking about the product to your audience, no matter what platform you're using or methods you choose to deliver your content, always focus more on the benefits for your audience. In other words, what's in it for them?

In each section of your blog posts, in your videos, in podcast episodes, don't forget to remind your audience exactly how the product will help them.

Features are good, but benefits are what people want.

"Sure, it's cool that this link building tool helps you get links from high Page Ranked sites, but the benefit is that your site will have more authority, so you'll rank higher in Google and get more traffic."

“Sure, it’s cool that this in-ear headphone comes with a flat, tangle-free wire, but the benefit is so that you don’t get frustrated trying to untangle the darn thing every time you take it out of your backpack or pocket.”

If you’re having trouble with the whole feature vs. benefit thing, it’s okay—a lot of people get confused, but the simplest way to understand it is to think of a feature, then add the words “so that.”

“We have this feature, so that you can blah blah blah.”

It works every time.

28. Believe in your recommendation.

If you really believe in the product, in your recommendation, then so will your audience. If you have motives other than trying to help people out or give them something they need—if it’s for the commission, or you’re just doing a favor for a friend who owns a product—then you’re not going to perform as well with your sales.

Believe in it, and your audience will believe in you.

29. If it doesn’t work out, try another offer.

Let’s say you have an affiliate product you’d like to promote. You’ve used the product, it’s great, and you know it will help your audience. You set up a promotion with links in your posts, create an epic post with videos, the whole 9 yards . . . and it doesn’t work out.

It’s not the end of the world. Sometimes you think your audience will respond one way, but they surprise you and go the opposite way. The campaign you thought was going to be a home run turns out to be a bust.

Why? Figure out why and evaluate the circumstances, and try again knowing what you now know from what you learned. Then use what you learned and try another offer!

It’s all a learning process, one that happens through taking action, and trial and error. That’s what affiliate marketing is all about. In fact, the more things don’t work out, the better, because the more likely you’ll be to eventually get to something that does work. And the more you’ll learn along the way.

Related to that . . .

30. Test, test, test.

As in the previous tip, test your offers, yes, but more than that—test everything. Test how you promote, to see what your audience responds best to. Test the placements of your links, the number of links within posts, whether they're bolded or italicized, whether images work better, whether interviewing the owner helps, whether Thursdays convert better than Tuesdays for webinars . . . test everything you can possibly think of.

Test, test, test.

31. Make your own product instead

If all else fails, but you know there's a market out there for a particular product that's perfect for your audience, and it doesn't exist—create it yourself.

Yes, this isn't affiliate marketing. And when you create your own product, you waive the benefits of affiliate marketing, such as not having to create the product, dealing with customer service, and other aspects of being a product owner.

But affiliate marketing doesn't always work out, and there are advantages to creating your own product. You get to keep people in your own brand. You get to keep all the profits. You can even set up your own affiliate program for other people to sign up and promote your product.

And lastly . . .

32. Be patient.

No matter how quickly people say you can make money online, realize that it's going to take time. Relatively speaking, yes, things can happen pretty fast—that's the beauty of online business. You can have a site up today and start sharing content with the world, but in order to make an impact and really make money online, you're going to need to get your message out there, and build relationships with people. In time, this will drive traffic to your site, and eventually clicks, sales, and affiliate commissions.

Learn, but take action and keep learning as you go. Things take time, but by following these tips, and everything else you learn in this series, you'll give yourself the best chance to make things happen as fast as possible for you with affiliate marketing.



Affiliate Marketing Case Study: ConvertKit

IN THIS CHAPTER, I'M GOING

to share a case study to show you what effective affiliate marketing looks like “on the ground.”

This case study is based on a product I've recommended for a long time that's also become one of my biggest drivers of affiliate income. From 2015 to 2017, it brought in a whopping \$315,000 in affiliate revenue.

ConvertKit is an example of a product I promote as part of a long-term strategy. It's a great example of an affiliate resource I promote to my audience that can benefit and serve them over the long term and hopefully I earn a healthy affiliate income at the same time.

Although I love and use ConvertKit myself (and the founder, Nathan Barry, is a good friend of mine), the point of this chapter is not to promote the product. Instead, I'm here to show you how I've promoted ConvertKit.

And I've done so in a very specific way: by **D-O-I-N-G**. This strategy has helped me be very successful in promoting ConvertKit as an affiliate. Those letters stand for:

- **D**emo the product
- **O**ffer answers to your audience about the product
- **I**nterview the founder of the product
- **N**ever recommend more than one of the same kind of product
- **G**et the product in front of your people

Before we get into the details of the D-O-I-N-G approach, here's a little background on how I got started promoting ConvertKit as an affiliate. ConvertKit wasn't my first email service provider. My first one, back in 2010, was Aweber. Aweber was great as an entry-level email tool, and I also promoted it as an affiliate, making up to \$2,000 a month at one point. And that income still comes in each month, because I get paid a recurring commission for every month a person I refer stays on, even though I'm not actively promoting the product anymore.

Eventually, though, I needed an email service that was easier to use with more advanced features. For a while, I turned to another tool called InfusionSoft, which was good, but still not exactly what I needed. Shortly after I started using InfusionSoft, a friend of mine, Nathan Barry, reached out to me to ask how I was doing with the new tool. Nathan had recently started a new email service provider, ConvertKit.

We met for coffee in downtown San Diego a couple weeks later. After catching up about personal stuff, the conversation turned to business. Nathan asked me a lot of questions about my needs, experiences, and desires as a blogger, podcaster, and digital marketer. He didn't try too hard to plug his new tool, except toward the end of our conversation when he said, "Hey, if Infusionsoft doesn't work out for you, let me know, and we can see how you might be able to use ConvertKit."

I didn't think much of his offer for a little while.

But over time, I started growing more and more frustrated with Infusionsoft. So I reached back out to Nathan to see how ConvertKit was doing. I wasn't surprised to hear that they were experiencing constant growth month after month. New features were being added on a regular basis, and after a couple of side conversations with other users, I was happy to hear extremely positive reviews.

That's when I asked Nathan to demo the current software for me over Skype—and I was blown away. I loved the intuitive user interface, along with the tool's segmentation and automation capabilities.

Seeing what the tool could do, it wasn't long before I decided to switch from InfusionSoft, and Nathan's team even helped me migrate my email list. I've been using ConvertKit very happily ever since.

That positive experience has shown up in terms of my affiliate revenue from ConvertKit too. Although I was happy with my AWeber affiliate income, since shifting to ConvertKit, I've broken into a new level of affiliate income and success. Part of that is because ConvertKit is an amazing tool—but a lot of it has to do with how I leveled up my promotional efforts with the **D-O-I-N-G** approach.

Let's learn all about it now!

Digging Into the D-O-I-N-G Approach to Affiliate Marketing

Let's start at the beginning, with the first part, D, which stands for demo.

D: Demo the product

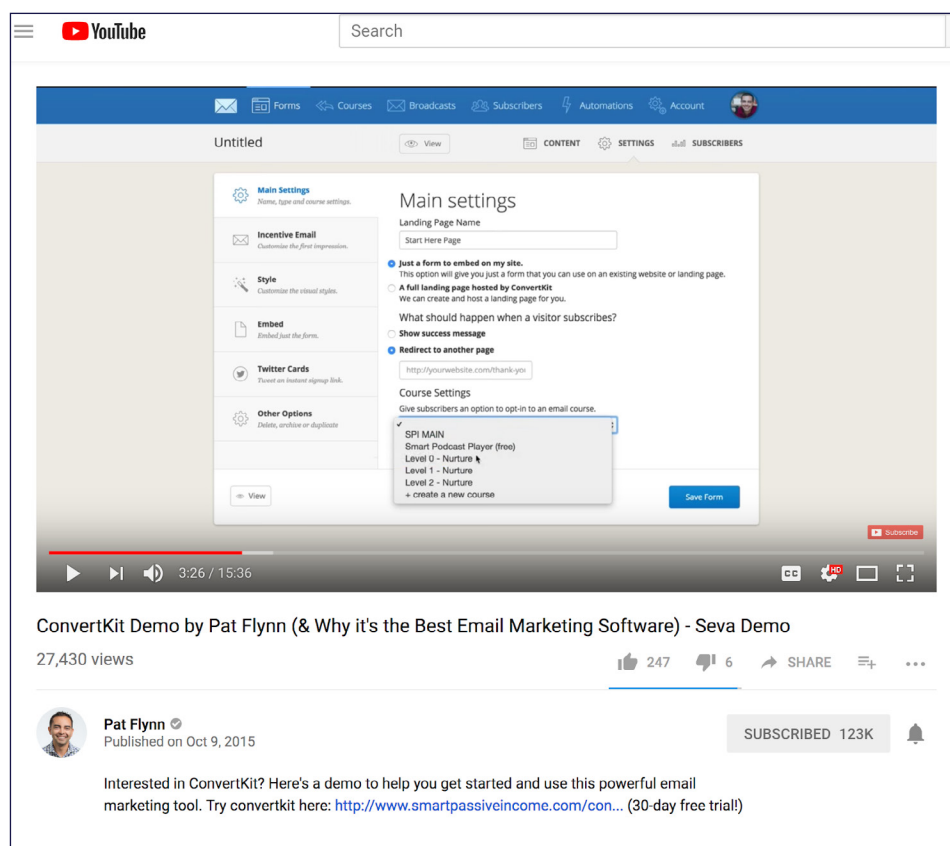
Affiliate marketing is technically easy to do. All you have to do is get your affiliate link and start sharing it with your audience. It's easy to stop there and think you've done enough.

But if you've been with us since the beginning of this series, you know that a crucial practice in affiliate marketing is to take products that are *not* your own and treat them as if they were your own. If you were selling your own product, you'd show people what they were going to get before they got it, right? But most people who do affiliate marketing just share a link and a couple of sentences and call it good.

Instead, as we talked about in Chapter 1, you need to show the product in action. That's where the demo comes in. People are more likely to buy when they know what they're getting and exactly how it will help them.

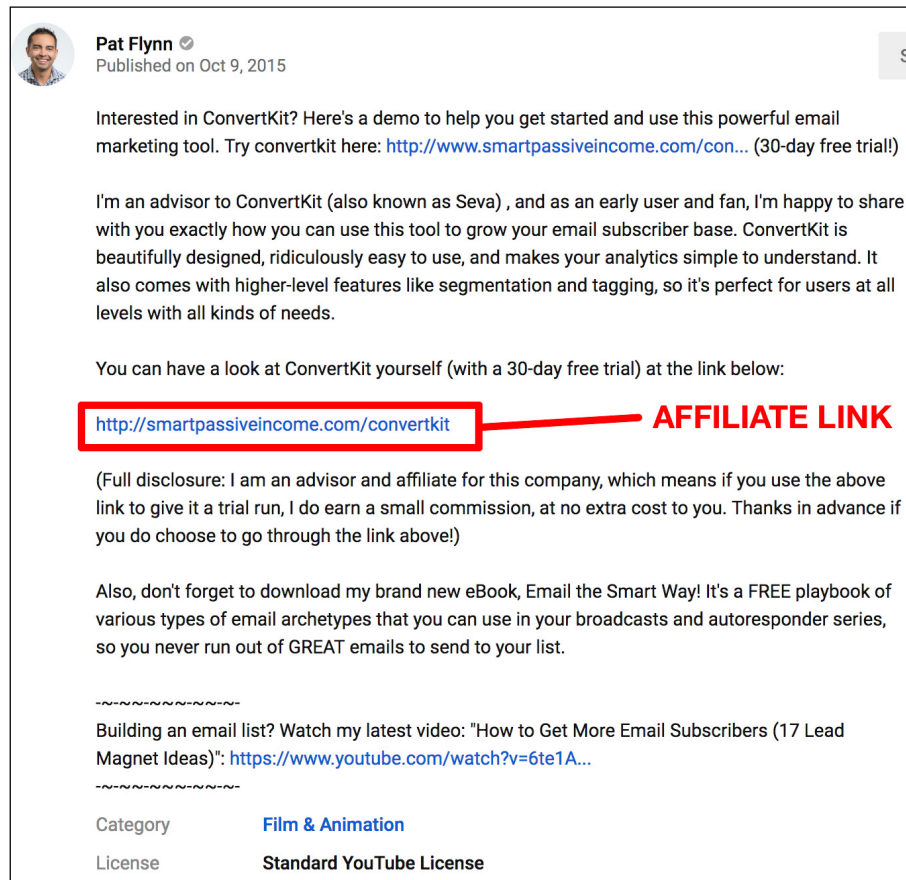
The best way to do this is with a **video** demo that shows people two main things: 1) how they can benefit from the tool and 2) how to use it.

In 2015, I created a [YouTube demo of ConvertKit](#). In the video, I talk about the benefits and features that made me fall in love with ConvertKit: ease of use and setup, beautiful design, powerful statistical analysis, segmentation and tagging, and a lot more. Along the way, I show screenshots of ConvertKit in action, so viewers can see exactly how to accomplish different things using the tool.



My [ConvertKit demo](#) ranks high in Google results for that search phrase.

When you search “ConvertKit demo” or “ConvertKit tutorial” on Youtube or Google, my demo is typically one of the top results. It’s been viewed nearly 30,000 times as of July 2018, and it’s driven a ton of traffic both back to my website and through the affiliate link mentioned in the video description.



The screenshot shows a YouTube video description for Pat Flynn. At the top is a profile picture of Pat Flynn and his name with a verified badge, followed by the text "Published on Oct 9, 2015". The main text of the description starts with "Interested in ConvertKit? Here's a demo to help you get started and use this powerful email marketing tool. Try convertkit here: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/con...> (30-day free trial!)". This is followed by a paragraph where Pat Flynn identifies himself as an advisor to ConvertKit (also known as Seva) and shares his experience. Then, he provides another link: "<http://smartpassiveincome.com/convertkit>". This link is highlighted with a red rectangular box, and a red arrow points from the text "AFFILIATE LINK" to the box. Below this, there is a full disclosure statement: "(Full disclosure: I am an advisor and affiliate for this company, which means if you use the above link to give it a trial run, I do earn a small commission, at no extra cost to you. Thanks in advance if you do choose to go through the link above!)". This is followed by a promotion for a new eBook, "Email the Smart Way!". At the bottom, there are two lines of text: "Building an email list? Watch my latest video: 'How to Get More Email Subscribers (17 Lead Magnet Ideas)': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6te1A...>" and a metadata section with "Category" set to "Film & Animation" and "License" set to "Standard YouTube License".

Pat Flynn ✓
Published on Oct 9, 2015

Interested in ConvertKit? Here's a demo to help you get started and use this powerful email marketing tool. Try convertkit here: <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/con...> (30-day free trial!)

I'm an advisor to ConvertKit (also known as Seva) , and as an early user and fan, I'm happy to share with you exactly how you can use this tool to grow your email subscriber base. ConvertKit is beautifully designed, ridiculously easy to use, and makes your analytics simple to understand. It also comes with higher-level features like segmentation and tagging, so it's perfect for users at all levels with all kinds of needs.

You can have a look at ConvertKit yourself (with a 30-day free trial) at the link below:

<http://smartpassiveincome.com/convertkit> **AFFILIATE LINK**

(Full disclosure: I am an advisor and affiliate for this company, which means if you use the above link to give it a trial run, I do earn a small commission, at no extra cost to you. Thanks in advance if you do choose to go through the link above!)

Also, don't forget to download my brand new eBook, Email the Smart Way! It's a FREE playbook of various types of email archetypes that you can use in your broadcasts and autoresponder series, so you never run out of GREAT emails to send to your list.

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Building an email list? Watch my latest video: "How to Get More Email Subscribers (17 Lead Magnet Ideas)": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6te1A...>

~~~~~

Category [Film & Animation](#)

License [Standard YouTube License](#)

Adding an affiliate link to the description area in my ConvertKit demo video has paid off.

When you’re thinking about creating your own demos, you want to show not just the features and benefits of the tool, but also make it fun and show your personality. In the ConvertKit demo video, although you don’t get to see much of me (it’s just my voice with a Screenflow video), I’m just being myself. I could have made a stiff, mechanical demo that was all about just conveying the relevant information—and it would have been shorter too—but who wants to sit through that? Instead, I’m relaxed and sharing my honest opinions, using words like “cool” and “powerful” (and yes, “nice”!) to convey my excitement about ConvertKit’s capabilities, in the hopes that excitement will be shared by my audience too.

You want to create a thoughtful demo that shows you care about creating informative content while also keeping your audience engaged and excited to try the tool. And of course, make sure you include calls to action (CTAs) to go through your affiliate link, as well as disclosing your affiliate relationship with the company.

You don't want to bombard your audience with these CTAs, though, and if you've provided enough valuable, engaging content in the demo, you shouldn't have to include more than one or two CTAs. In my ConvertKit demo video, I only mention my affiliate link and status twice very briefly, at the very end:

"Go ahead and check it out: smartpassiveincome.com/convertkit. And I look forward to seeing how you are able to use it. Like I said, ConvertKit's coming out with a lot of other stuff in the future too, to make our lives even easier. Hopefully this is helpful. Cheers. I appreciate you. That affiliate link one more time, which I do get a commission from if you do go through that link, is smartpassiveincome.com/convertkit. Thank you so much, and I'll see you in the next video."

In other types of content, such as blog posts, I might share my affiliate link a little more often, for instance at the beginning, middle, and end of a post. But in either instance—whether a video demo or a blog post—the content itself does the "heavy lifting" of sparking someone's interest in trying out the product, so I don't have to hit my audience over the head with my affiliate link.

O: Offer Answers

The next step is to offer answers to people's questions. This is huge, because if a person asks you a question about a product, they're likely already interested in it. They may just be on the fence, and if you can be the one to answer their questions, that may give them the final piece of the puzzle to go ahead and make a purchase, knowing there's someone there to provide product support if they need it.

That's why I always offer support for ConvertKit and the other affiliate products I promote. When questions come in, I'm quick to answer them because I want to make people feel comfortable with the idea of spending money on this thing I'm promoting.

The combination of the demo and offering answers is powerful. If you put together a thorough and helpful demo, you'll likely answer a lot of people's questions in the demo itself. But even if your demo covers all the bases you can think of, you should *still* offer to answer people's questions. Why? Even if they don't have any, just the fact that you're *offering* this assistance will make people feel more comfortable and inclined to buy the product through your link. Remember, you want people to trust you and feel secure in their investment.

Want an example of how you could offer support in this way? Here's what I say toward the end of the ConvertKit demo video I mentioned in the previous section:

"I'm here to answer your questions too. If you're watching this on YouTube, ask your question below; I'll do my best to answer it. If you're watching this on the SPI blog, go

ahead and leave your question in the comments section. Or, if you want to send me an email, that's totally fine too. Happy to help, because I really believe in this product."

I also offer to answer people's questions about my affiliate products via other channels, including email and social media. People often reach out to me on Twitter, because Twitter makes it easy for me to reply quickly. It helps that there's a character limit, too, because it forces both parties to get to the point.

Offering to answer questions also makes people feel secure about the fact that if they were to have questions later on, once they're up and running with the product, you'll be able to answer them. This is especially important if the product you're promoting is of a highly technical nature.

So, offer support and people will be more at ease about buying through your affiliate link.

I: Interview

When you're promoting an affiliate product, having other people talk about the product, and the story behind it, can be a powerful way to get people excited about it.

A great way to do this is to interview the founder of the product on your podcast. ConvertKit founder Nathan Barry joined me on episode 244 of the Smart Passive Income podcast, titled "Bootstrapping a Business." But here's the thing. We didn't actually talk about the product itself much at all! We talked about his story, and how he bootstrapped the company and grew it successfully. We talked about how I met him and built a relationship with him and his company, eventually becoming an advisor to ConvertKit.

Because the product itself—as well as my affiliate relationship with ConvertKit—was not the focus of the interview, listeners were able to focus on how much care and quality Nathan put into creating the product and cultivating the company's culture. As a result, in a way, they were able to start building a relationship with him too.

I only mentioned my affiliate link at the very end in a casual way, as almost a natural conclusion to the episode.

The ability to augment your affiliate marketing efforts by interviewing the founder of a product you're promoting is a great reason—among many—to have a podcast. Even though Nathan and I recorded the episode in 2016, people are still downloading and listening to it today. I also reference the episode a lot when I mention ConvertKit, which helps make it an active resource in promoting my affiliate relationship.

So, if you're planning to promote a new affiliate product, see if you can get the founder of that product on your podcast. If you can't get access to the founder for a podcast interview,

consider an email interview or maybe a video interview over Skype or Zoom. And if you can't get the founder, try for somebody who represents that company at a high level. If that's not possible either, aim for somebody who's used the product and knows it well, hopefully somebody your audience is already aware of and respects.

In Chapter 2, we talked earlier about the importance of promoting a product yourself, showing how much you know and love it and the great results you've gotten from using it—i.e., showing proof. When you're the only one doing the showing, there's always the risk, however small, that your efforts may come off as too promotional. On the other hand, as the Nathan Barry podcast episode showed, interviews are powerful because most of the selling that's done is indirect—and often, you won't have to talk about the product much at all.

N: Never Recommend More Than One of the Same Kind of Product


Next up, you should never recommend more than one solution for a specific type of problem.

This is a really important rule, and one that generates a lot of debate. And there are exceptions, which we'll talk about in a second.

But first, what exactly do I mean by never recommending more than one of the same kind of product?

Well, if I were to recommend ConvertKit, but also recommend other email solutions like Aweber or MailChimp, it would dilute the strength of my primary recommendation. You need to pick one, because otherwise people are going to be confused. I went the route of recommending multiple similar products once, and it didn't go well. People said, "Wait, I thought you were recommending this one. But now you're talking about this one? What's the difference? How is it better?"

You don't want people asking themselves even more questions about which product makes sense for them. That's why they came to you in the first place! So, yes, I've made my decision, and the only email service provider I recommend to people is ConvertKit.



CONVERTKIT
#1 FOR BUILDING EMAIL LISTS

ConvertKit is my number one recommendation for email list management.

ConvertKit makes managing your email list and setting up autoresponders so easy and user-friendly. Segmenting my email subscribers into groups so that they get content specific to their individual needs has never been more simple.

TRY CONVERTKIT

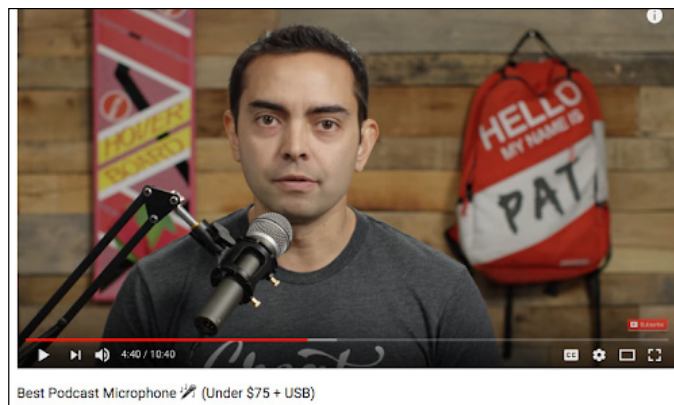
ConvertKit is the only email service provider I recommend.

Are you recommending more than one product right now that's essentially the same type of solution? If so, you're diluting your affiliate marketing efforts and reducing the amount of income you can make. Yes, sometimes it's great to give people options, but it can also work against you.

Now, if someone were to say, "Hey, Pat. I know you recommend ConvertKit, but what other solutions are out there?" then of course I'm going to be honest with them and tell them what other options they have. I'm not going to say, "Sorry, Dave. There are no other great options out there." That would be lying. There are other great email service providers out there. But the one I use, recommend, and trust will be there to help my audience is ConvertKit.

Plus, as with everything, there are exceptions to the rule. In this case, only having one recommendation doesn't make sense for some types of sites. For example, if you run a vacuum review site, you can't get away with promoting just one product, as that would go against the entire aim of the site. You can certainly highlight featured products and recommendations in different categories. But when people are searching for helpful comparisons of similar products, the N rule likely won't apply.

Here's another example from one of my own affiliate promotional materials. [In one of my YouTube videos](#), I review three different podcasting microphones:



Here's the key: Even though each of these products is very similar (they're all microphones), I use the review as an opportunity to differentiate them according to their best uses, then make specific recommendations about which microphone should be used for different scenarios. For instance, in the video, I end up recommending that you not use one of the microphones for podcasting at all—instead, I recommend another use case that makes more sense for this particular microphone. I'm comfortable including my affiliate link to each of the microphones because I've made the effort of differentiating them for my audience.

Pat Flynn Published on Feb 12, 2018 SUBSCRIBED 128K

What's the best podcast microphone you can use to still sound like a pro? Which ones are easy to use (i.e. via USB) and won't cost you a ton? In this video, I'm going to unbox and demo 3 of the most popular USB microphones podcasters use that are each under \$75.

Also, if you're looking for an easy way to get started with podcasting, I have a free, 3-day mini course you can sign up for right now that'll walk you through each and every step to get your podcast published:

<http://www.howtostartapodcast.com>

The three microphones in review today are:

- Audiotecnica ATR-2100 USB Microphone (~\$60 USD)
<http://geni.us/audiotecnica2100>
- Samson Q2U USB Microphone (~\$50 USD)
<http://geni.us/samsonq2u>
- Blue Snowball iCE Condenser Microphone (~\$50 USD)
<http://geni.us/bluesnowballice>

Full disclosure: the links to equipment in this description are affiliate links that take you to Amazon.com. I will be compensated (at no extra cost to you) should you choose to purchase anything from these links. Thank you in advance (I appreciate you!) and please note that the prices change and vary over time due to Amazon marketplace changes.

Other equipment mentioned in this post:

- NEEWER Microphone Suspension Boom Arm:
<http://geni.us/boomscissor>
- On Stage MY-420 Studio Microphone Shock Mount:
<http://geni.us/micshockmount>
- CISNO Studio Condenser Shock Mount and Wind Screen Combo:
<http://geni.us/cisno>
- Dragonpad USA Pop Filter:
<http://geni.us/dragonpadpop>

AFFILIATE LINKS

As you can see in the video description, I include affiliate links to purchase each of the microphones I review.

As you can see in the video description, I include affiliate links to purchase each of the microphones I review.

G: Get the Product in Front of People

This final one is a big one, and it represents a mindset shift I've undergone over the past few years. Often, people become timid when it comes time to put products in front of their audience. If that describes you, whether it's your own product or an affiliate product, then I want you to shift your mindset—to one of excitement about sharing something you know will help your audience. In fact, it's your obligation and your role to do that, and you should embrace it. Because if you don't, you're not serving your audience in the best way possible.

It's not about being pushy or aggressive; it's about being motivated to get the product in front of people. You've done the research, you've used the product, you're offering answers, you've created the video demo, you've recorded the interviews. You know the product can help your audience, so get it in front of them! Talk about it on your podcast, and on other people's podcasts. Share it in blog posts. Create additional videos about the benefits and capabilities of the product.

That's exactly what I've done and continue to do with ConvertKit. I believe in the product, and the company, so it's my responsibility to get it in front of my audience so they can benefit from it like I have.

I've used lots of methods and channels to get ConvertKit in front of my audience, including:

- Blog posts
- Videos (such as the demo)
- Social media messages
- My Resources page
- Podcast episodes (such as the interview with Nathan Barry)

When it comes to getting the product in front of your audience, it pays to be creative! On that note, I wanted to share one more pretty novel way I've gotten ConvertKit in front of my audience. In a March 2018 video, I congratulated ConvertKit for a huge milestone—hitting \$1 million in monthly recurring revenue (MRR). In the video, I also shared 8 important lessons for people looking to start and grow a business, ones that came directly from ConvertKit's example in becoming a \$1 million MRR business.

The video was a response to a single tweet by ConvertKit's founder, Nathan Barry, about the company's \$1 million milestone. But I built on that tweet to tell a much richer story about the company and how they were able to accomplish something so remarkable. You can see the whole thing [here](#).



The key in this video is that I didn't focus that much on the product itself—and especially not on my affiliate relationship with them—but on ConvertKit the company, and how they used 8 powerful and ethically minded principles to grow their business rapidly. These are principles anyone who's trying to grow their own business the right way can learn from and implement.

And you can do the same thing I did with this video. Ask yourself, *what can I learn from the success of a company I have an affiliate relationship with? How can I use that company's example, and the principles behind its success, to help my audience and deliver them value?*

When you do that, you're getting the product in front of people—but you're also giving them so much more.

Time to Get D-O-I-N-G!

Well, that's the D-O-I-N-G formula! I hope you find it as useful as I have in promoting your affiliate products. As a quick reminder, here's the formula again:

- Demo the product
- Offer answers to your audience about the product
- Interview the founder of the product
- Never recommend more than one of the same kind of product
- Get the product in front of your people

Once you start D-O-I-N-G, you'll start succeeding with your affiliate marketing. Here's to your success



Avoiding Affiliate Marketing Mistakes

AFFILIATE MARKETING:

It's easy to do—and easy to do wrong. Anyone can grab a link and promote it from behind the scenes. But successful affiliate marketing that delivers value for you and your audience in the long term? That takes work.

It also means knowing what *not* to do.

We've covered how affiliate marketing works, how to get started, and my top tips for succeeding with affiliate marketing.

Now, I'd like to give you some insight into what to *avoid* when it comes to affiliate marketing.

I'll start by sharing with you what happened to me the first time I ever tried affiliate marketing—and what I learned when I fell flat on my face. Then, I'll give you the four main affiliate marketing mistakes and traps you need to look out for as you're getting started on your journey.

Here's what to expect in this chapter:

- My \$300 Affiliate Marketing Mistake
- A Wake-Up Call for Doing Affiliate Marketing the Right Way
- The Four Biggest Affiliate Marketing Mistakes
- Serve First to Succeed with Affiliate Marketing

My \$300 Affiliate Marketing Mistake

First, let me tell you the story of my \$300 affiliate marketing mistake.

It was 2008. I had just been laid off from my job in the architecture industry. In the months leading up to my layoff, I had been experimenting in online business with my very first effort, GreenExamAcademy.com.

As I was building Green Exam Academy to help others in the architecture industry pass the LEED Exam, I discovered affiliate marketing and learned how others were making money with it.

So I signed up for an affiliate network and I picked a product I felt would be okay for my audience and got an affiliate link. (I didn't *really* know if it would be okay—unfortunately,

that wouldn't become clear until later.) I set up a Google AdWords account to start advertising it, and created my first ad. In the ad, I drove people to click on the affiliate link for the product I was advertising.

A couple hours after publishing the ad, I saw that it already had a few hundred impressions—i.e., views by a visitor. Not bad! After a few more hours, it was over a thousand impressions. But how many clicks had the ad gotten? Zilch, nada, none. I waited and waited until I finally got my first click, but that person didn't end up buying the product.

I had spent \$300 on a couple dozen clicks, and those clicks had amounted to zero sales.

I began thinking about those clicks, and the people on the other end of them. Who were they? What compelled them to click?

At that time, I was a terrible marketer and copywriter—but that wasn't the biggest issue. What I realized after a short while was that there was really no way for me to know the answer to those questions about who was clicking on my ad or why. I had created an ad based on a product I didn't understand inside and out. I hadn't spend the time getting to know the product and understanding how it could serve my audience. And in so doing, I was failing myself and my audience (small, at the time) who counted on me. I had left them behind while I panned for gold in the wrong place.

A Wake-Up Call for Doing Affiliate Marketing the Right Way

My \$300 mistake was a wake-up call. I decided right then and there I wasn't going to do that ever again. I learned how integral relationship building is to effective affiliate marketing. My learning process would continue from there, of course, but the building blocks were set.

Affiliate marketing isn't a quick, impersonal thing. It's the exact opposite. You need to start from an authentic place. Affiliate marketing is about fostering genuine long-term relationships with people you trust, products you love, and companies that align with you and your philosophies. And unless you truly know the product, have used it successfully for yourself, and can prove that to your audience, you can't expect others to just take your word for it.

Any healthy relationship takes time to build and a great deal of trust. And that's what we need to focus on in our affiliate marketing relationships. Too often, I see people wasting time and energy promoting products under the guise of affiliate marketing while ignoring

the relationship aspect of things. But affiliate marketing should be a natural extension of your authentic efforts to build and serve an audience—not a tack-on just to make a little extra money.

The Four Biggest Affiliate Marketing Mistakes

On the spectrum of affiliate marketing mistakes, my \$300 mistake wasn't too serious. You can chalk that one up to a beginner's lack of good judgment or experience.

But there's a bigger picture here we need to talk about too. Like everything, affiliate marketing has its positive and negative sides. And in fact, for a long time—and especially when I first started out in online business back in 2008—affiliate marketing has had a negative connotation. I've made it part of my mission to show that affiliate marketing *can* be done in a legit way, one where everybody can be a winner. But at the same time, because affiliate marketing is *technically* easy to do, it's easy to fall into an aggressive, income-first approach rather than one centered around serving your audience.

I want you to be aware of how affiliate marketing can be abused, or how your efforts can be derailed. My intent isn't to worry or scare you from going down the affiliate marketing route, because it can be a fantastic opportunity if done the right way—but I do want to arm you with knowledge about the traps to look out for as you build your affiliate marketing business.

I feel it's my responsibility to show you how to do affiliate marketing right—and that includes knowing how *not* to do it.

Whether you've just started learning about affiliate marketing, or you're already promoting other people's products via affiliate links and want to make sure you're going about it the right way, I'm going to share with you four rules to keep in mind in avoiding the dark side of affiliate marketing.

These are the four biggest traps to look out for, so that you have an even greater chance to succeed with this powerful tool that can help you better serve your audience, generate an income, and build relationships with the owners of the products you're promoting.

The four biggest affiliate marketing mistakes:

- Promoting a product that doesn't make sense for your audience.
- Not keeping an eye on the quality of your audience's experience.
- Not being honest about a product or promotion.
- Earning all of your income from affiliate marketing.

Okay. Let's talk about these four dangers you need to look out for on your affiliate marketing journey.

1: Promoting a product that doesn't make sense for your audience.

Perhaps the biggest affiliate marketing mistake people make is not promoting a product that actually makes sense for their audience. This often happens when someone takes an income-first approach rather than a serving-first one. You should look for solutions that can help your audience—whether there's an affiliate opportunity there or not. If there happens to be one, great. That's a bonus. If there isn't, but you know the product could still be helpful to your audience, it's your responsibility to share it with them.

Since my brand is focused on helping people build successful online businesses ethically, the products and services I promote are all things that support this focus: I recommend services that help people host their website (Bluehost), start an email list (ConvertKit), plan their editorial calendar (CoSchedule); audio and video gear to create great content; and books and courses, both mine and others, to help people learn and improve their skills. Most of these are things I recommend as an affiliate—but a good number of them are not. Even if I can't form an affiliate relationship with a company, if their product is the best one for my audience, I'm going to recommend it.

As your brand grows and you start to build an audience, you're going to get noticed. The affiliate marketing opportunities will start to trickle in, as companies see the traffic you're getting and the trust people are putting in your brand.

These companies will also know you're a human being who can potentially be swayed by a commission.

Sometimes, they'll offer you payments for simply sending them leads, because it's basically easy advertising for them. They know how much money they need to spend, and how many leads they need to collect, to convert a certain percentage of them to customers. Either way, as you grow, you're going to notice an increased number of those kinds of inquiries—many from companies you've never even heard of before.

At the start of my online business journey, every couple months I'd get an offer from a different company saying, "Hey, we have this new product. We think your audience would really like it. Promote it to your audience and we'll give you \$75 for every person you send our way."

I implore you, please: do not be persuaded by the dollar value of the commissions you'll be offered.

Sometimes when a new company reaches out to me with an affiliate offer, I'll look at the product and realize it's obviously not a fit for my audience. In those cases, it's easy to say, "No, thanks." But when you're just starting out, the promise of a commission can make it hard to see things clearly. You might think, "Wow, this opportunity is in front of me right now. Maybe I should say yes. What damage could it do?"

The damage it could do is potentially huge: the destruction of the trust you've worked hard to build with your audience.

That's why my recommendation is to stay on the safe side by always offering and recommending products you've used before and understand, so you know exactly the kind of experience people will have with them. You should also get to know the company itself, and ideally have a personal relationship with someone in a leadership role there. That way, you can be certain that the company behind the product you're promoting is one that will take care of your people.

Again, be careful. Often companies will reach out to you based on a simple algorithm—if you've reached a certain threshold of social media followers, for instance, they'll send you a message asking if they can pay to get in front of your audience. You may have even heard of these products, and know they have a good reputation. Sometimes those products may actually be a great fit. Still, don't immediately say yes to the opportunity. You need to be aware of this, because the vultures start to come out at a certain point once you start to gain some notoriety in a space.

In the early days, I'd get affiliate inquiries from companies every couple months. Now, almost every day, I get emails from companies I've never heard of that want to get in front of my audience. The nature of these offers also ranges more broadly now, probably because my audience is much larger.

For instance, I sometimes get offers from financial planning companies to get in front of my audience for tens of thousands of dollars. But it's not in my best interest to say yes, because even though those services *might* help my audience, financial planning isn't what my brand is about. Bombarding my audience and saturating my brand with stuff that doesn't fit would dilute the brand and confuse people's perception of what I stand for. I don't need to give my audience financial planning assistance to help them the best way I possibly can. There are plenty of great brands out there that focus on financial planning, but it's not my realm.

So, realize you have a choice, and that it's okay to say no. Opportunities will come your way, but your priority should be to protect your brand and your reputation. Choose wisely.

2: Not keeping your eye on the quality of your audience's experience.

This next one is similar to #1, but it has more to do with how things can change after you start promoting what seems to be a great product that you know is a good fit for your audience.

Let's say you recently started promoting a new product, and it's working out well. Everybody's happy—you, your audience, and the company. But then the company gets bought out, and new management takes over. This creates a ripple through the entire company, affecting your audience's customer support experience with the product.

Sound unlikely? It's happened to me before, with the web hosting company Bluehost.

I still recommend Bluehost, and in fact, they've been one of my top affiliates over the years. But it hasn't always been a smooth road.

I began recommending Bluehost in 2009, and was soon making a few thousand dollars a month from affiliate promotions. Even better, the company was taking great care of my audience. Everyone was happy. The next year, my monthly income continued to grow into the five-digit range. Things were looking good.

But then in 2013, I started getting a few emails from people who weren't too happy with Bluehost's customer support, especially when they had issues with the service.

The following year, things got a little better—the negative emails dropped off—but then they got worse again.

At that point, I started to really pay attention. I decided to fly out to Utah to meet with the company and share my concerns with them directly. I met with the founders and told them, "Hey, this is not okay. This can't happen."

The Bluehost team told me they were aware of the issues, and that they were making changes to address them. I said, "Okay, but these changes need to happen now." Of course, with a big company like that, I understood changes can take time, but I wanted to do as much as I could to move them along.

Thankfully, the Bluehost team took my words to heart and put together an action plan to address the issues. They also agreed to let me offer my audience a special connection to a customer support person who could take care of them more quickly than the company's traditional support channel.

During my visit to Bluehost headquarters, I also kept in touch with my audience about how my meeting was going, and what the Bluehost team was doing to improve things. I

sent an email to my list about what was happening during my visit, and wrote about the experience in my [May 2016 Income Report](#).



A shot from my visit to Bluehost HQ in 2016 to discuss customer support with the company's leadership.

Although this kind of situation may not occur with every company you partner with as an affiliate, you have to be open to it. Companies grow and evolve, and people come and go. You can't assume that if things are going well, they always will.

The lesson here, especially for affiliate relationships you'd like to maintain for the long term, is to keep close tabs on your audience's experience with the product. In addition, you should cultivate relationships with the product owners, so they know how important your audience's experience with the product is to everyone involved. In an ideal world, your audience's experience with a product should only improve over time—but if it's going in the opposite direction, you'll have to act to make things right, and having a direct line to the company leadership makes it easier to do that.

You also need to have a backup plan. Right now, I'm really comfortable promoting

Bluehost, especially knowing they have a customer support person I can send people to when things go wrong. But there's a point at which, if things were to go badly again, I'd consider promoting a different hosting provider. Most of my audience is still having an amazing experience with Bluehost, but it's important to stay aware and be prepared if things need to change.

3: Not being honest about a product or promotion.

When I recommend products, I'm always very honest about what the product can and can't do. But I've been on the other end of this before—and not in a good way. I won't name names or products, but let's just say I've been recommended products that came with certain promises, promises that didn't come to fruition. These were products that, shortly after I started using them, I realized they weren't at all what I'd expected.

When you're promoting your affiliate products, you need to make sure you set the right expectations for your audience. Otherwise, what happens? You lose the trust of the person to whom you recommended that product.

In one case, someone I knew and looked up to recommended a software tool to me. His recommendation also came with some lofty claims of how the tool could help me. I ended up buying the software based on his recommendation. But what I quickly found was that in order to take advantage of the capabilities I was promised, I would have had to pay more—more than five times the price I was paying already.

Needless to say, I wasn't happy about this. I shared my frustration with the person who'd recommended the tool to me, and he apologized. It was an oversight on his part, and we're still on good terms today.

Our story turned out okay—but this won't always be the case if you're not totally honest and upfront with your audience about the affiliate products you promote.

You have to be careful, because if you make a mistake that skews your audience's expectations, you might lose them for good. You need to be totally honest about what a product can and can't do, and make sure you're not recommending it to someone who's not a good fit for it.

What if you find yourself in a tricky situation where you've promoted a product to your audience, then realized later that it wasn't what you thought it was? Thankfully, I have a special "rule" that comes in handy here. I call it the **8 Mile Rule**.

[SPOILER ALERT] If you've never seen the movie *8 Mile*, Marshall Mathers (aka Eminem), plays the main character, a rapper named B-Rabbit. In the finale, B-Rabbit faces off against

another rapper in a huge rap battle. B-Rabbit decides to rap about all the weird things about himself, things his opponent would likely call him out for in his rap. Why does he do this? By calling himself out first, he leaves his opponent without any ammunition to use against him.

Do you see where I'm going with this? When you're promoting an affiliate product, take the *8 Mile* approach. If something goes wrong, be the first one to say something. If you make a mistake, own up to it. Perhaps you recommended a product you realized wasn't a good fit for your audience. The quicker you can say, "I'm sorry. That product wasn't the right fit for you. I hope you'll give me the benefit of the doubt and stick around," the more likely your audience will be to do that.



In 8 Mile, Eminem's character B-Rabbit wins the big rap battle by rapping about his own weaknesses before his opponent can. You can use the same strategy in affiliate marketing to earn people's trust. (Source: Bob Marshak, Universal)

This rule is handy for a lot of other areas of your business, too. It's all about taking ownership and being honest and forthright. This is not always *easy* to do, but always the *right* thing to do.

Being honest fosters trust, even if the circumstances aren't totally favorable. And if you're being honest and serving your audience in a way that's valuable to them, they'll often jump at the chance to help you back. This is where the *law of reciprocity* comes in—when you do something helpful for someone, they often feel compelled to do something for you in return—and affiliate marketing can be an amazing way to give your audience a way to pay you back.

So when you tell people upfront, “Hey, you know what? This is a product I’m promoting as an affiliate, so I get a commission if you go through that link,” I guarantee some of those people will be excited by the opportunity to click on that link. There are people out there you’ve served who are *looking* for ways to pay you back. So make it easy for them.

4. Earning all of your income from affiliate marketing or treating it like a get-rich-quick scheme.

This leads me to my final point related to the dark side of affiliate marketing. That is, you don’t want all of your income to come from affiliate marketing. Back when I started out—and this is still true today in some spaces—a lot of people were doing affiliate marketing by running promotions, not through a brand they’d created or trust they’d earned from an audience, but by using copywriting, targeting, and advertising techniques to get people to click on affiliate links.

Remember my \$300 mistake?

Before I ran that fated ad, I signed up with an affiliate marketing network. This is essentially a site that allows you to sign up and choose from a huge number of products you can promote. Once you pick a product, you get a link you can share with as many people as possible. Because most people who go this route don’t already have a brand established, they have to resort to advertising—things like Google Adwords—to get their link in front of people.

Unfortunately, there are several things wrong with this model. As you learned from my \$300 mistake, if you just throw a link up there hoping it’ll do all the work for you—well, it won’t. That’s not to say that you can’t make money with this kind of affiliate marketing. You can, if you go about it smartly.





But there are still two main ways you can go wrong with this model. First, as soon as you stop putting effort into it, the income stops flowing. It’s not passive. Second, because it doesn’t require you to build a brand, it means it’s not unique to you. Just about anyone could leapfrog you if they master the copywriting and targeting required to be successful with it.

As a result, this kind of affiliate marketing can become a very scary game to play.

That’s why I recommend instead that you take the time to build your own brand and grow an audience you can serve. Build that audience’s trust in you as the go-to resource in your area of expertise, not just someone they don’t know who’s only serving them ads.

This is at the heart of how I teach online business: to help people become recognized for

their efforts in serving an audience, whether that's through creating their own products, blogging, podcasting, building physical products, or affiliate marketing.

RANKING	NETWORK	COMMENTS	
INDUSTRY LEADERS 2017			
1	<p>Rakuten Affiliate Network</p> <p>GO TO WEBSITE</p>		Now our 6-time winner, Rakuten Affiliate Network, part of Rakuten Marketing, receives enthusiastic support from both advertisers and publishers.
2	<p>ShareASale/Affiliate Window</p> <p>GO TO WEBSITE</p>		As we went to press news came that Affiliate Window (part of zanox Group) has acquired ShareASale. Industry consolidation is accelerating.
3	<p>eBay Partner Network</p> <p>GO TO WEBSITE</p>		eBay Partner Network is incredibly well-respected by people who know the performance marketing industry. A great network.
4	<p>Avangate</p> <p>GO TO WEBSITE</p>		Avangate has been growing fast over the last few years and is our most popular "digital downloads" network by some margin.
	<p>Amazon Associates</p>		Amazon Associates remains the industry entry-point for

There are plenty of affiliate networks that let you quickly and easily get started with affiliate marketing—but not necessarily build a lasting brand or an audience you can serve. (Source: <https://mthink.com/top-20-affiliate-networks-2015/>)

Focus on building your brand and serving an audience. When you make this your primary aim, you'll find you have plenty of options to make money—with affiliate marketing being just one of those options.

Think about it this way: With whatever path you choose to generate an income, make sure you give the people you serve a way to thank you. If you're not thanked for the products you're promoting, you're doing affiliate marketing wrong.

In episode 9 of the Smart Passive Income Podcast, author and online business consultant Nicole Dean shared one of the most memorable quotes from the hundreds of interviews I've done. She told me the motto of her business was "to make the web and the world a better place." And when you approach your business like that, it trickles down to everything you do. It affects how you advertise and promote. It affects how you interact

with people. It helps you look beyond strategies and tactics, like affiliate marketing, and stay focused on the most important thing: making things better for others. So give your audience a reason to thank you, and the (affiliate) income will flow in.

Serve First to Succeed with Affiliate Marketing

As you've seen in this chapter, there is a darker side to affiliate marketing. But if you know what to look out for, you can avoid falling into the common traps and mistakes that befall so many aspiring affiliate marketers. As a reminder, here are the four keys to staying in the “plus” column with your affiliate marketing:

- Being careful to promote only products that make sense for your audience
- Keeping tabs on your audience's experience with your affiliate products
- Being honest and forthright about the products you promote
- Not relying solely on affiliate marketing or using it as an impersonal, get-rich-quick scheme

Use these four keys as your guiding light, and you'll be able to make the most of this powerful tool that allows you to tap into the incredible array products, services, and tools out there that can help your audience succeed.

12 Tools to Accelerate Your Affiliate Marketing Success

OVER THE YEARS,

affiliate marketing has helped me generate more than three million dollars online.

How have I done this?

By building my affiliate marketing strategy around one simple but powerful concept: trust.

Rather than trying to immediately promote affiliate products to new customers, I've focused on first building an audience, and getting to know their needs and pain points. Based on this knowledge of what my audience wants, I can then recommend products and solutions to address their issues and desires.

These recommendations are then woven right into the helpful content I produce for my audience—blog posts, podcast episodes, YouTube videos—and the conversations I'm having with them. Sometimes these product recommendations involve an affiliate relationship, and sometimes they don't. The key is to build and maintain that trust by promoting products and tools my audience will benefit from.

If you want to build a long-term affiliate marketing strategy for your business, this is the way to do it. I only recommend products and tools I've used and love, and I suggest you do the same. That way, your affiliate earnings will become a byproduct of how well you serve.

Done this way, I believe affiliate marketing is a fantastic way to serve your audience and grow your income.

That's why I want to give you all the information you need to succeed with affiliate marketing.

If you've been with me since the beginning of this article series, you've hopefully gotten a handle on the basics, started building your affiliate marketing strategy, discovered the secrets to success, and learned what to avoid in affiliate marketing.

So, what's next?

This article is going to get tactical, with 12 awesome tools you can use to help you optimize your affiliate marketing efforts.

Some of these tools will be helpful for you as you're starting out, while others will make

more sense once you've been up and running with your affiliate marketing program for a little while. But all of them can potentially help you save time, money, and headaches and be more effective with your affiliate marketing.

And as you'll see, many of these tools are not just “affiliate marketing tools”—they're useful for your online business in general. That's largely because affiliate marketing isn't something that exists in a bubble. It's woven into everything you do online and how you serve your audience. So a lot of these tools are simply great content creation tools, or great business tools. Because affiliate marketing is about creating awesome, helpful content, and building a business that serves people.

You probably won't need all of these tools, but perhaps one of them will be a major game-changer for you.

Here are the tools we'll be covering in this chapter:

- WordPress for building a website
- Pretty Links for cleaning up messy affiliate links
- Geniuslink for Amazon Associates international access
- Crazy Egg for affiliate link placement optimization
- Sony RX100 V Video Camera for product demos and unboxing videos
- Screenflow or Camtasia Studio for screen-capture video
- A content idea generator for creating awesome content
- CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer for crafting catchy content titles
- Speed Dial 2 plus LastPass or 1Password for affiliate tracking
- Buffer or Hootsuite for social media automation
- Google Alerts for affiliate product notifications
- Kit.com for a branded resources page

Okay, let's get to the list!

1. WordPress for building a website

These days, there are many ways to make money online. Some people have built their empires on YouTube. Social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook are valuable tools to grow your audience and have meaningful interactions with them. But when it comes down to it, nothing beats having your own website. Running your business from your own site allows you to control your destiny in a way you can't if you're handing over the keys to another platform you don't own, like Facebook—one that can change the rules of its platform at a moment's notice.

And as it goes for online business, so it goes for affiliate marketing. If you want to be an affiliate marketer, you need your own website.

If you don't already have a site, I recommend using WordPress to set one up. It's the world's most popular web design and blogging platform, and for a good reason. There are plenty of free and inexpensive themes out there, and plenty of developers and designers who are familiar with WordPress and can help you customize your site when the time is right.

And finally, if you're stuck getting started on this, check out my [Build Your Own Brand](#) course, a free five-day challenge to help you build a brand and website you can be proud of.

2. Pretty Links for cleaning up messy affiliate links

[Pretty Links](#) is a WordPress plugin that cleans up your longer affiliate links so they become shorter, easier to share, and much easier to remember.

This is especially helpful if you're mentioning affiliate links within podcast episodes or YouTube videos, or even in live situations on stage or while on a broadcast. Plus, the plugin keeps track of the number of clicks for each Pretty Link you create.

For example, I promote Leadpages from time to time on my website. Here's the affiliate link Leadpages provided me after I signed up for their affiliate program:

http://link.leadpages.net/aff_c?offer_id=6&aff_id=2216

There's a lot going on here in the link, and of course it would be silly for me to share it as is on a podcast or YouTube video. Even including it as is within an email can be a little off-putting for some folks.

But thanks to Pretty Links, I can shorten and customize the URL so it's easy to remember, share, and track:



The screenshot shows the 'Edit Link' interface of the Pretty Link plugin. It features a 'Pretty Link' logo with a star icon. Below the logo, there are three input fields: 'Redirection Type*' with a dropdown menu set to '301 (Permanent)', 'Target URL*' containing the long affiliate link 'http://link.leadpages.net/aff_c?offer_id=6&aff_id=2216', and 'Pretty Link*' containing the shortened and customized URL 'http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/leadpages'.

So now, the link becomes:

<https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/leadpages> *[Full Disclosure: As an affiliate, I receive compensation if you purchase through this link.]*

I have more than 1,000 links set up through Pretty Links.

Some affiliate links redirect through several Pretty Links urls so that I can keep track of where on my site certain links are converting (or not).

For example, I have the main LeadPages URL I shared with you above, but I also have:

<https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/leadpages-rp>

This is the link I include on my Resources page (hence the rp), so I can keep track of how clicks behave on that particular page. It doesn't matter if it's hard to pronounce or type, because I never tell people to do that—this is the one they simply click on when they're on that page.

The beauty of tracking on your end is that if no one clicks on the links, you know it's not an offer you need to keep, or perhaps you need to reframe it or incentivize people in a different way.

3. Geniuslink for Amazon Associates international access

This next one is similar to Pretty Links, but has a more specific use case.

[Geniuslink](#), formerly known as GeoRiot, is a heavenly tool for anyone who is a part of the Amazon Associates Program.

What Geniuslink does is, well, genius! If you're an Amazon Associate, you can promote any product on Amazon as an affiliate and earn a percentage of a person's total purchase within a twenty-four hour period after they click your link.

That means if the person buys anything after clicking on your affiliate link, you get a commission on all of it—even if they don't end up buying the thing you recommended.

But here's the thing: this only works if they live in the same country as you. If you're an Associate in the US, then you can only generate an income from people who purchase through your link who are also in the US. People outside the US who click on your link are automatically redirected to their respective country's Amazon page, and you lose out on a potential commission.

But with Geniuslink, that doesn't happen. A Genius Link determines what country the click is from, and redirects it through your affiliate link for that specific country.

Don't think that's a big deal?

After using Geniuslink for just two months, I had a lifetime reach of more than ninety-six countries through all of the Amazon links I'd shared!

Total Traffic

6.1K Clicks

Lifetime Reach

96 Countries

Commission Potential

97%
Excellent!

!

We see you are receiving clicks from **Japan** and you could be earning commissions on those sales! To start putting that money in your pocket, join [Amazon's Japan](#) program and then connect it to your GeoRiot account.

And here's the country breakdown for my site in those first two months. Obviously, the US has the most clicks, but the other countries in total isn't anything to shy away from:

Country	Total Clicks
United States	4,259
United Kingdom	411
Canada	333
Germany	249
Australia	192
France	116
Romania	112
Spain	105
India	97
Japan	69
Netherlands	62
Philippines	61
Ireland	48
Italy	48
Brazil	44
South Africa	44

You still have to sign up for the Amazon Associates program in each country to be able to earn a commission from that country, but that can be done with the help of the Geniuslink dashboard as well. I'd recommend checking your Google Analytics to see which countries are most popular in your audience, and then targeting those associate programs first.

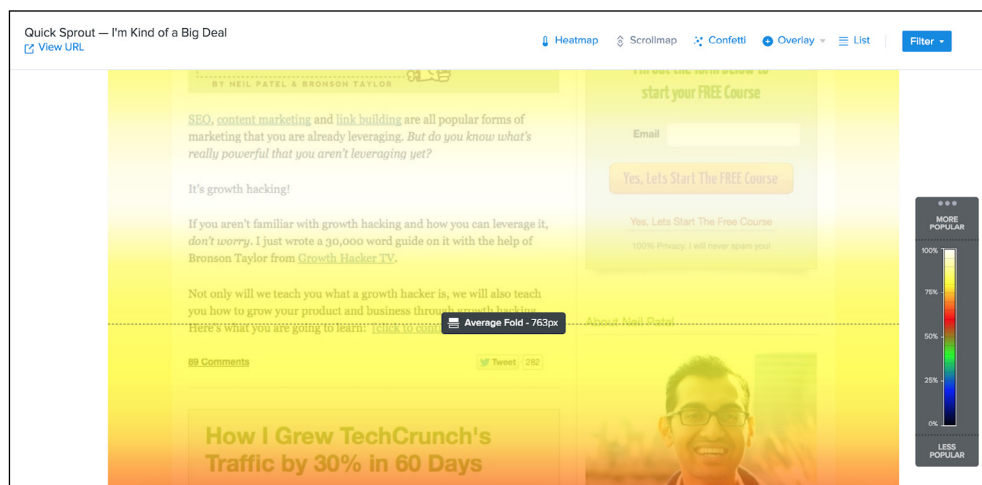
4. Crazy Egg for affiliate link placement optimization

This is another tool that's helpful for a lot more than just affiliate marketing. [Crazy Egg](#) allows you to create “heat maps” of different pages on your site to show you where people are clicking (and where they aren't). On the heat map, red areas show where interaction is “hot”—where lots of clicks are happening, while green areas are where people are not engaging. This provides a great way to see at a glance where people are connecting with your page and where they're not.

How does this come in handy for affiliate marketing? Think of it this way: if you want to increase the odds that people will click on your affiliate links, you want to put those links where people are already clicking.

Crazy Egg's heat maps are great because instead of having to sort through a bunch of data, you can see at a glance what parts of your page are drawing people to click.

So how exactly do you put Crazy Egg to work to help optimize your affiliate marketing? You can set it to run on pages where you already include affiliate links, or ones where you plan to. I use Crazy Egg to track clicks on my Resources page, for example.



Crazy Egg creates heat maps that show you where people are clicking on your site.

If you go to [SmartPassiveIncome.com/resources](https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/resources), you'll see a whole bunch of different items, tools, and other things I use and promote. Many of them are affiliate offers. What

I've found through Crazy Egg is that the offers near the top of the page tend to perform a lot better than the ones further down, so I put the really important offers at the top.

Crazy Egg can give you great data on what's happening on your site, and how to optimize the placement of your links. The data doesn't lie, so the key is to use the data Crazy Egg gives you and put it into action to optimize the placement of your affiliate links for maximum clicks.

5. Sony RX100 V video camera for product demos and unboxing videos

One of the best (and most underutilized) affiliate marketing strategies is to tell people in your own voice exactly what they're going to get before they get it. This is the first element in my D-O-I-N-G approach to affiliate marketing: demoing the product (i.e., the D in D-O-I-N-G) for your audience, so they can see it in action and understand how it works.

For physical products, this is pretty straightforward to do. Just take a camera and film yourself using the product you're promoting.

You can create a product demo, or an unboxing video, which have become very popular on YouTube in the past several years.

If you're promoting physical products as an affiliate, creating unboxing videos and product demos can be a great way to share a product's details, benefits, and drawbacks with your audience. More than that, videos are so powerful because of something called mirror neurons—when you watch someone unboxing a product, it's easy to imagine yourself doing the same thing.

To create these videos, you're going to need a camera, and my camera of choice is the Sony RX100 V.

It's the one I took with me on my first ever trip to Europe in 2017 to [speak at the DNX Global conference](#) in Lisbon, Portugal.



It's a great, versatile camera, and I love its combination of image quality, quick focus, and portability. Here's [me with the RX100 V](#) in an elevator in Lisbon:



If your budget is tight, then a high-end smartphone's camera should do the trick. Although you won't get quite the same video quality as something like the Sony RX100 V, most newer phones have pretty great cameras that will let you create something that's definitely usable, especially if you're just starting out.

6. Screenflow or Camtasia Studio for screen-capture video

If you're promoting software products as an affiliate, you're going to want to create walkthroughs and demos for your audience. With software-based products, though, it's a little more difficult to film a video. A regular old video camera isn't going to do the trick here, so you're going to want something that lets you create a video of your computer screen "from the inside."

That's where a tool like [Screenflow](#) (if you're a Mac user) or [Camtasia Studios](#) (if you're a PC user) can help.

(Yes, I realize Camtasia has a Mac version as well, but I prefer Screenflow over it.)

Using these tools, you can simply record whatever you're looking at on your computer, along with your voice. Whether it's your full-desktop view, or just a particular window, you can give people an insider look at programs, courses, and other things you use online and recommend.

This significantly increases the likelihood of someone clicking through your affiliate link, because like I said, people like to see what they're going to get before they get it.

Plus, as you walk them through the product, they're going to feel more comfortable knowing that you've used it too, and also they'll have an idea how to navigate it, so there are no surprises.

This strategy is simple, but very powerful.

Finally, if your budget is tight, thankfully there are some free screen capture tools you can try instead. These include QuickTime Player (comes with Mac OS X), GameDVR (comes with Windows 10), or [OBS/Open Broadcaster Software](#) (Mac/PC). These free apps let you record your screen, but keep in mind they're much more limited in terms of editing ability than paid options like Screenflow and Camtasia.

7. A content idea generator for creating awesome content

Affiliate marketing is about building trust and providing value for your audience, then promoting products that can help your audience reach their goals. I've talked about ways to promote your affiliate products, and including your affiliate links in blog posts is one of the main ways. But those blog posts need to be helpful and interesting to your audience.

What happens when you're running short on ideas for great blog content to promote your affiliate products?

That's where a content idea generation tool can come in handy, and I have two to recommend: Hubspot's [Blog Ideas Generator](#) and Quandary's [Content Idea Generator](#). They both work on the same premise: input information about your topic, and the tool spits back some content titles to jumpstart your creativity.

HubSpot's tool is a little more basic—you input up to three nouns, and it gives you back a list of five potential titles you can use for a blog post, tweet, or almost any other form of content you can think of. The Content Idea Generator requires you to answer more questions (eighteen of them) upfront, as well as hand over your name and email address—but it also gives you several hundred title ideas right away.

Hubspot's Blog Ideas Generator does promise a longer list of ideas if you're willing to share your name, email address, phone number, and job information. But if you'd rather not give up that much info, Quandary's Content Idea Generator seems like a good balance of sharing your email address to get some good content suggestions in return.

8. CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer for crafting catchy content titles

As we just talked about, if you want to drive clicks to your affiliate links, you need to provide value to your audience, and a perfect way to do that is through helpful content—things like blog posts and videos.

To get people to engage with this content, though, you need to draw them in. That's why it helps to make sure your headlines are as good as they can be.

Think of it this way. The headline is the first thing someone's going to see. And if they're not intrigued, they'll never see the actual content of that post or video! You can write the best blog post in the world, or create the funniest, most helpful video ever, but if your title falls flat, you're not going to reach nearly as many people with it.

That's where a tool like [CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer](#) comes in.

It's simple to use—just enter your title, click Submit, and the tool analyzes it and gives you a score based on how many of the following types of words appear in it:

- **Common words:** Words like “can” and “to” that make up the basic structure of the headline
- **Uncommon words:** Words used less frequently but that give the headline substance
- **Emotional words:** Words that stir an emotional response in the reader
- **Power words:** Words that command a reader's attention and action

The Headline Analyzer also looks at the sentiment of your headline—neutral, positive, or

negative. Headlines with a positive sentiment tend to lead to more clicks.

The tool also considers the length of your headline, since headlines that are longer than 60 or 70 characters may be less than ideal, as they take longer to read and can get cut off in search results.



CoSchedule's headline analyzer tool tells you how your headline "scores" on a set of metrics including the types of words used, length, and sentiment.

As you can see this tool is great for all of your marketing—not just affiliate marketing.

9. Speed Dial 2 plus LastPass or 1Password for affiliate tracking

One of the challenges if you promote a lot of affiliate products is keeping track of all your affiliate accounts and the income you're generating from each one every month. Thankfully, many companies with established affiliate programs provide a way for you to log in to your account on their website and view this data, so you can see which promotions are delivering revenue and which ones are falling short.

But if you do most of your affiliate marketing with individual companies, that could mean logging in to quite a few websites each month, which can be a laborious and time-intensive task.

I've run into this situation myself—which is why I suggest you check out a handy tool called [Speed Dial 2](#).

Speed Dial 2 is a Chrome browser extension that allows you to group websites into folders, then open all the sites in a folder at once in separate tabs with just one click. How does this help me track my affiliate accounts? With Speed Dial 2, I can open all of my affiliate sites super quickly, instead of having to type each URL into a new tab manually.

Speed Dial 2 can save you even more time when you combine it with a password tool such as [1Password](#) or [LastPass](#). These tools create a “vault” with all your web passwords that’s accessible via one master password, including the ability to auto-fill your login info on any site, as well as generate new, hard-to-remember passwords whenever you create a new account on a site.

If you have just one or two affiliate relationships, using Speed Dial 2 and a password manager may not make much of a difference for you. But if, like me, you’re up in the double digits in terms of affiliate programs, these tools can make a difference. I find the combo of Speed Dial 2 and 1Password saves me at least 15 to 20 minutes of not having to manually open and enter my user name and password on each site.

It’s worth it to me, and once you’re busy with lots of affiliate products, I think you’ll agree too!

10. Buffer or Hootsuite for social media automation

If you’re going to use social media to drive people to your blog posts and other content where you share your affiliate marketing links, you’re going to want a way to automate your posts.

I know how easy it is to fall into the trap of thinking you’ll be just fine managing all your posts manually across multiple platforms. But trust me, manually publishing all your tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram posts is going to get old really fast!

Thankfully, there are some great tools out there to help you schedule and automate your social media posts. I’m talking about [Buffer](#) and [Hootsuite](#), social media management platforms that allow you to batch your posts at one time, then sit back and let them do the heavy lifting.

Buffer and Hootsuite let you create a pipeline of social media content ahead of time, then schedule it to send whenever you like. This way, you can batch your content creation—say, all on a Sunday afternoon—then schedule it to send over the course of the next week.

11. Google Alerts for affiliate product notifications

If you’re promoting something, it’s crucial to stay up to date on what’s happening with that

product. This includes any changes to the product itself, news surrounding the company that makes it, and developments with any competitor products or companies.

Going out and searching for all those potential news items manually is a lot of work. What can you do instead?

If you're picking up on the theme of these last few tips, it's that automation is your friend.

One of the easiest ways to automate staying up to date on your affiliate products is to set up [Google Alerts](#) for all your affiliate products and the companies that make those products.

If there's been a negative development regarding one of your products, you'll want to be out ahead of it as much as possible. For example, if a software tool you recommend was found to contain a security flaw that could compromise its users' personal data, you'd want to know as soon as this information is made public. That way, you can research the impact of the flaw, alert your audience, and pause (or stop) recommending the tool until the problem is addressed.

On the other side, if there's a positive development about one of your affiliate products, you'll have more time to potentially capitalize on it.

With affiliate marketing, as with everything online, nothing is static. So the sooner you can get out ahead of those changes, the better!

12. [Kit.com](#) for a branded resources page

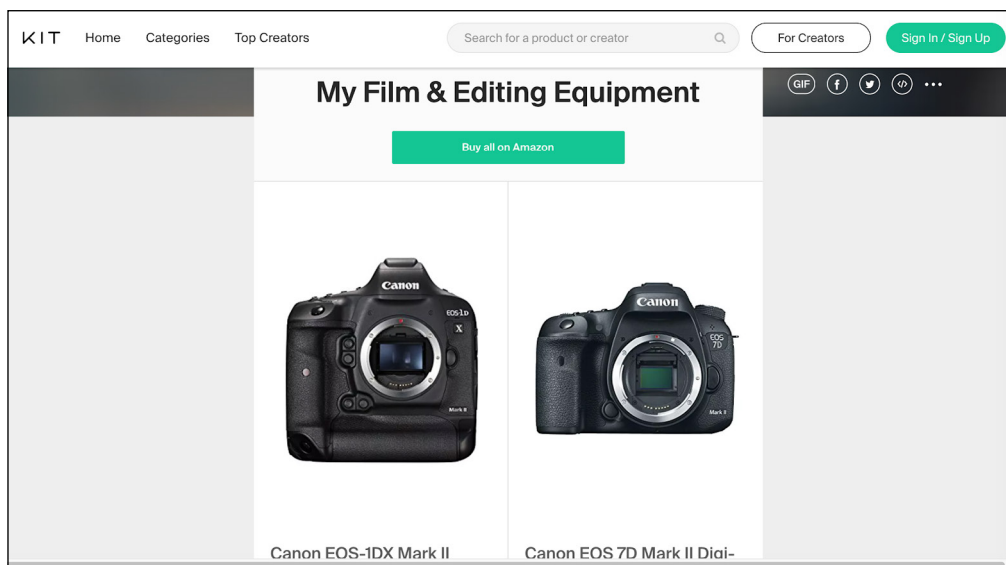
Half of my affiliate earnings—i.e., a good chunk of them!—come directly from the products and tools I recommend on my Resources page, a helpful one-stop shop that includes all of the best tools and resources my audience can use.

Without much promotion, this Resources page is visited more than 100,000 times per month. I highly recommend having a Resources page on your site that includes your favorite tools, books, products, classes—anything you know that will help your audience.

And if you're looking for an easy way to set up a great-looking and highly functional resources page, I highly recommend [Kit.com](#).

Kit.com is a site that lets you create what it calls “shoppable collections” of products you love and want to recommend, all linked with your custom affiliate links. Using [Kit.com](#), you can then group these products into “kits”—similar to a landing page—that you can share with your audience so they can purchase them and benefit from them as well.

You can even embed kits on your own site, so you don't have to send people to a different domain to click on your affiliate links.



[Kit.com](https://www.kit.com) lets you create “kits” or collections of products you can embed on your site and share with your audience to promote your affiliate links.

And there you have it! These are just a few of the tools out there that can come in handy to support your affiliate marketing efforts. There are plenty more out there—the key is to think creatively and find the tools that will help you better serve your audience by promoting products that will help them reach their goals—while also maintaining your sanity!



Affiliate Marketing on Amazon

AMAZON IS THE MOST

popular online shopping site in the English-speaking world. Chances are good that, even if you're not a regular Amazon customer, you've bought something from this site in the past!

In addition to being a huge buyer's destination, lots of people have also made money selling things on Amazon—but that's not the only way to generate an income from this popular shopping site.

Today, we're going to talk about the other way of making money on Amazon—by promoting products others are selling, through Amazon's affiliate marketing program, known as Amazon Associates.

We'll go into detail on how to get started with an Amazon Associates account, and how to get your first affiliate link! Then we'll cover the benefits and upside of using this platform as a source of some of your affiliate income, along with the downsides and challenges of using Amazon's affiliate program.

Finally, we'll go over some powerful tips to help you maximize your success earning an affiliate income from promoting Amazon products.

Here's what to expect in this chapter:

- [Why Choose Amazon for Your Affiliate Marketing?](#)
- [How to Sign Up for the Amazon Associates Affiliate Program](#)
- [How to Get Started Promoting Products with Your Amazon Affiliate Links](#)
- [Tips and Best Practices for Amazon Affiliates](#)

Why Choose Amazon for Your Affiliate Marketing?

There are plenty of reasons to choose Amazon as an affiliate marketing option—and we'll get to those in a moment. But I want to start by talking about maybe the biggest downside of using an Amazon affiliate link.

And that's that Amazon's commission rates—the percentage of the sale price you receive when someone purchases a product you recommend—are, well, not so great.

Amazon Gift Cards, Wine	0.00%
Video Games & Video Game Consoles	1.00%
Televisions, Digital Video Games	2.00%
PC, PC Components, DVD & Blu-Ray	2.50%
Amazon Fresh, Toys	3.00%
Amazon Fire Tablet Devices, Dash Buttons, Amazon Kindle Devices	4.00%
Physical Books, Health & Personal Care, Sports, Kitchen, Automotive, Baby Products	4.50%
Digital Music, Grocery, Physical Music, Handmade, Digital Videos	5.00%
Outdoors, Tools	5.50%
Headphones, Beauty, Musical Instruments, Business & Industrial Supplies	6.00%
Apparel, Amazon Element Smart TV (with Fire TV), Amazon Fire TV Devices, Jewelry, Luggage, Shoes, Handbags & Accessories, Watches, Amazon Echo Devices	7.00%
Furniture, Home, Home Improvement, Lawn & Garden, Pets Products, Pantry	8.00%
Amazon Fashion Women, Men & Kids Private Label, Luxury Beauty, Amazon Coins	10.00%
All Other Categories	4.00%

Amazon's commissions are not the most generous in the business.

There are other affiliate networks out there that offer higher commissions. Some, like ClickBank, offer rates as high as 75 percent for certain products. In comparison, Amazon's rates seem downright stingy.

So why bother with Amazon when there are seemingly much higher commission rates waiting elsewhere? Thankfully, there are some great reasons to do just that.

Advantage #1: It's where lots of people shop

First, Amazon has something that tops all the others. You could call it brand equity, or trust, or name recognition. People know Amazon, and they trust it as a source to buy stuff. In 2017, more people [started their product searches](#) on Amazon than anywhere else—49 percent compared to 36 percent for search engines like Google and 15 percent for retailers themselves.

But more than just that, [75 percent of shoppers shop on Amazon most of the time](#). And Amazon has awesome conversion rates—the rate at which a customer who visits the site actually purchases something. If you’re talking about Prime customers, as many as [74 percent of them convert](#). That’s compared to an average of less than 10 percent for most retail sites!

So what Amazon may lack in affiliate commissions, it makes up in awareness, conversion rates, and shopper loyalty.

Advantage #2: You get the whole cart

That brings us to the next, and perhaps the biggest benefit of using an Amazon affiliate link. That is, even if you have a link for a specific product, you can still make money on any product a person purchases after they click on your link.

That’s right! Let’s say your affiliate link promotes a book. Someone clicks on it, lands on Amazon, continues to shop, and decides to also buy a mattress. Guess what! You’ll get a commission for the book and mattress purchase.

And here’s perhaps the best part: you’ll get the mattress commission even if the person doesn’t buy the book! You see, when someone clicks on your link, Amazon adds a cookie to their browser that tracks anything they put in their shopping cart over the next 24 hours and gives you a commission if they purchase it.

As you can imagine, this can add up nicely for you.

So what’s the bottom line for you as an affiliate marketer? Is Amazon worth it as an affiliate revenue source?

My opinion is that you should definitely consider Amazon as you’re building your “portfolio” of affiliate marketing options. Despite the low commission rates compared to some other affiliate networks, there are a couple powerful benefits that “stack up” to help make Amazon’s a pretty strong affiliate network program.

Affiliate marketing on Amazon may not make you rich (at least right away), but it’s a really solid, reliable place to start. And even though the commission rates may not be as high as some networks, your likelihood of a sale is greater on Amazon. Plus, you can get a share of a customer’s entire cart if they click on your affiliate link—even if they end up buying something different from the original product you promoted. And the fact that it’s the most popular online marketplace in the Western hemisphere is nothing to sneeze at!

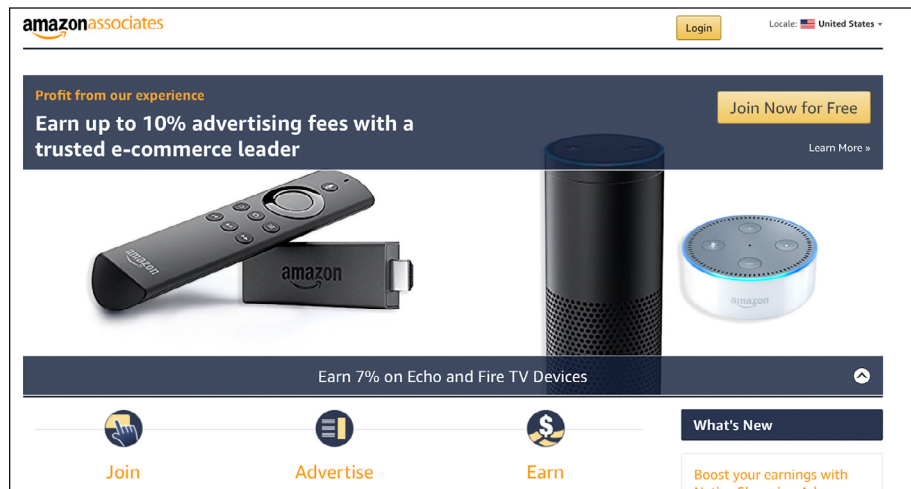
Now that you know the reasons to consider Amazon as an affiliate marketing option, let’s talk about how to get started with Amazon Associates!

How to sign up for Amazon Associates

Let's say you've decided to go for it and sign up with Amazon's affiliate program, which is called Amazon Associates.

We'll now walk through exactly how to do that, so you can get started on your path to successful affiliate marketing on Amazon!

First, go to <https://affiliate-program.amazon.com/> and click **Join Now for Free**.



You'll see a page that gives you the option to either sign in or create a new Amazon account.

A screenshot of the Amazon sign-in form. The form is titled 'Sign in' and has two input fields: 'Email (phone for mobile accounts)' and 'Password'. There is a 'Forgot your password?' link next to the password field. Below the input fields is a yellow 'Sign in' button. Below the button is a checkbox labeled 'Keep me signed in. Details' with a dropdown arrow. At the bottom of the form is a link that says 'New to Amazon?' and a button that says 'Create your Amazon account'. The form is enclosed in a light gray border.

Next, you'll start creating your account by providing your physical address where payments should be sent. If the main contact for your Amazon Associates account is

someone other than the person you list on the address, you'll need to select "Someone else" and enter their details at the bottom of the form.

The screenshot shows the first step of the Amazon Associates account creation process. At the top, a progress bar indicates five steps: Account Information (current), Website and Mobile App List, Profile, Identity Verification, and Start Using Associates Central. The main heading is "Your Account Information". Below it, an important note states: "Important: Please read these instructions before you fill this form." The primary question is "To whom should we issue payments?", with a subtext explaining that the primary Amazon.com account address is used for payments unless a different one is specified. A form field for the address is shown with a placeholder "My Address" and a "Select Different Address" button. At the bottom, a question asks "Who is the main contact for this account?" with two radio button options: "The payee listed above" (selected) and "Someone else - I need to enter their information". A "Next >>" button is in the bottom right corner.

Next, you'll enter the URLs of your website(s) and mobile apps (if applicable) you'll be using to promote your Amazon affiliate links. You need to enter at least one URL!

The screenshot shows the second step of the Amazon Associates account creation process. The progress bar at the top now shows "Account Information" as completed (with a green checkmark) and "Website and Mobile App List" as the current step. The heading is "Your Websites and Mobile Apps". An important note states: "Important: Please read these instructions before you fill this form." The subtext explains that the user must list all top-level domains and/or mobile apps where they plan to display banners, widgets, or other ads, and that they can add up to 50 websites or mobile apps. There are two input sections: "Enter Your Website(s) *" and "Enter Your Mobile App URL(s)". Each section has a text input field with an "Add" button. The website input field contains "example.com or example.com/myblog" and the mobile app input field contains "amazon.com/dp/B00AQLSVU4". Below each input field is a large empty box for additional details. A "Previous <<" button is in the bottom left corner.

Now you can choose an Associates Store ID. This is basically a user name that identifies your affiliate account. If your preferred name isn't available, Amazon will suggest a similar one later on.

Creating Your Amazon Associates Account

Account Information
Website and Mobile App List
Profile
Identity Verification
Start Using Associates Central

Profile

Important: Please read [these instructions](#) before you fill this form.

What is your preferred Associates Store ID? *

Your Website List

selfdestructive.com
amazoninfluencer.com

Your Mobile App List

What are your websites or mobile apps about? *

What can users do on your website or mobile app, who is it for, and what kind of products do you intend to promote?

You'll need to answer some questions about the type of site(s) you have and the kinds of Amazon products you plan to promote . . .

Which of the following topics best describes your websites or mobile apps? *

Select primary topic

Select secondary topic [Add Another Topic](#)

What type of Amazon items do you intend to list on your websites or mobile apps? *

<input type="checkbox"/> Books	<input type="checkbox"/> Clothing, Shoes & Jewelry	<input type="checkbox"/> Computers & Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Downloads	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronics	<input type="checkbox"/> Health & Beauty
<input type="checkbox"/> Home & Garden	<input type="checkbox"/> Kindle	<input type="checkbox"/> Movies, Music & Games
<input type="checkbox"/> Sports & Outdoors	<input type="checkbox"/> Tools, Auto & Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Toys, Kids & Baby

What type are your websites or mobile apps? *

Select primary type

Select secondary type [Add Another Type](#)

. . . as well as a few more details about your site(s), including how you drive traffic to it and why you want to join the Amazon Associates program.

Traffic & Monetization

How do you drive traffic to your website(s)? *

<input type="checkbox"/> Paid Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Display Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> SEO
<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Networks	<input type="checkbox"/> Blogs
<input type="checkbox"/> Shopping Portal	<input type="checkbox"/> Forums	<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Generation
<input type="checkbox"/> Offline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebate	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

How do you utilize your websites and apps to generate income? *

Select primary:

Select secondary: [Add Another](#)

How do you usually build links? *

Select:

How many total unique visitors do your websites and apps get per month? *

Select:

What is your primary reason for joining the Amazon Associates Program? *

Select:

How did you hear about us? *

Select:

You'll also be asked to confirm that none of the websites or apps listed are targeted at kids (those under 13), which is not allowed by the terms of the Amazon Associates program.

Next up is identity verification. Enter your phone number and Amazon will call you asking you to verify a PIN number that will appear on the screen.

Creating Your Amazon Associates Account

Account Information ☒ Website and Mobile App List ☒ Profile ☒ **Identity Verification** ☐ Start Using Associates Central ☐

Your Identity Verification

Important: Please read [these instructions](#) before you fill this form. Additional help for PIN related issues can be found [here](#).

Enter Telephone Number *

+1 ex: 555 123 4567

Identity verification is a 3 step process

1. Enter the phone number
2. Click "Call me now" to generate the PIN, after which you will receive a call
3. Receive the call and enter your PIN

Operating Agreement

☐ You agree to the terms and conditions of the [Associates Program Operating Agreement](#)

Click the checkbox agreeing to the terms and conditions of the Associates Program Operating Agreement, then click Finish.


Once your identity verification is complete, you'll see a congratulatory page.

The screenshot shows the 'Creating Your Amazon Associates Account' progress bar with five steps: Account Information, Website and Mobile App List, Profile, Identity Verification (current step), and Start Using Associates Central. The Identity Verification section contains a green checkmark and the text: 'Congratulations, your Identity Verification is complete. Please accept the Operating Agreement and submit your application.' Below this is the 'Operating Agreement' section with a checked checkbox and the text: 'You agree to the terms and conditions of the [Associates Program Operating Agreement](#)'. At the bottom are 'Previous' and 'Finish' buttons.

Click Finish, and you'll see a page with your new Associate ID!

The screenshot shows the 'Creating Your Amazon Associates Account' progress bar with five steps: Account Information, Website and Mobile App List, Profile, Identity Verification, and Start Using Associates Central (current step). The main content area says 'Congrats, [redacted]' and 'Thank you for applying to the Amazon.com Associates Program'. It then displays 'Your unique Associate ID is [redacted]'. Below this is a paragraph: 'You may occasionally need to provide your Associate ID to verify your account with us. Your application will be reviewed shortly after you've referred qualified sales to Amazon.com.' followed by 'In the meantime, you have been granted the full access to Associates Central 24 hours a day.' and 'If your affiliate links have not referred qualified sales after 180 days, your application and access to Associates Central will be withdrawn.' At the bottom is the 'Enter your Payment and Tax Information' section with 'Now' and 'Later' buttons.

Now you'll set up your payment details. You can choose to be paid via Amazon gift card, direct deposit (if you're in the US), or check.



Please note:
Any update to Payment Method in this month will be in effect, only from 1st of next month

Your Payment Method

Pay me by Amazon.com gift card

☐

\$10.00 minimum earnings

Pay me by direct deposit (United States Based Associates Only)

☐

\$10.00 minimum earnings

Pay me by check

☐

\$100.00 minimum earnings or choose your own threshold above the minimum.

Submit and Continue with Tax Information

Skip Payment and Continue with Tax Information

If you choose gift card, it'll be sent to your primary email address. If you opt for direct deposit, a space will appear on the page below to enter your bank details. And if you want a check sent to your contact address, keep in mind that the minimum payout is greater than it is for gift cards or direct deposit (\$100 vs. \$10), and a processing fee applies.

Then you'll fill out a tax interview to make sure everything is legal with the IRS. Make sure to double-check everything you enter on this form!

amazonassociates

Tax Information Interview

About You

Who will receive income from Amazon or its subsidiary?

Individual

Business

For U.S. tax purposes, are you a U.S. person?

Yes

No

Tax Identity Information

Name (as shown on your income tax return) ⓘ

Address ⓘ

Address

12345 Main Street
Suite 100
City, State 12345

Edit

Tax Identification Number (TIN) ⓘ

SSN or ITIN

XXX-XX-XXXX

Continue

Sign and Submit

☒ I consent to provide electronic signature for the information provided as per IRS Form W-9

i If you provide an electronic signature, you will be able to submit your tax information immediately.

Under penalties of perjury, I certify that:

- The number shown on this form is my correct taxpayer identification number (or I am waiting for a number to be issued to me), and
- I am not subject to backup withholding because: (a) I am exempt from backup withholding, or (b) I have not been notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that I am subject to backup withholding as a result of a failure to report all interest or dividends, or (c) the IRS has notified me that I am no longer subject to backup withholding, and
- I am a U.S. citizen or other U.S. person (defined in the instructions), and
- The FATCA code(s) entered on this form (if any) indicating that I am exempt from FATCA reporting is correct. (Amazon as a U.S. withholding agent does not request this information for the type of payments being received)

The Internal Revenue Service does not require your consent to any provision of this document other than the certifications required to avoid backup withholding.

Certification Instructions: You must cross out item 2 above if you have been notified by the IRS that you are currently subject to backup withholding. You will need to print out your hard copy form at the end of the interview and cross out item 2 before signing and mailing to the address provided.

Signature (Type your full name)

By typing my name on the given date, I acknowledge I am signing the tax documentation under penalties of perjury.

Date

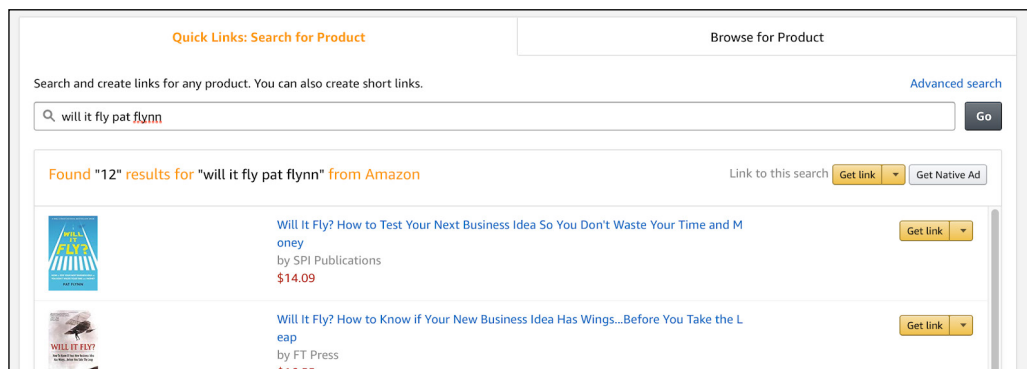
08-24-2018

Save and Preview

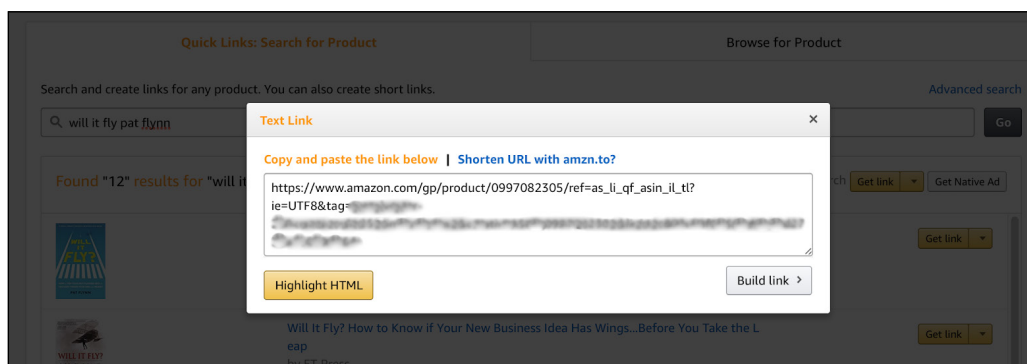
Click Save and Preview and you'll be given a preview of your W9 tax form.



There it is in the first result! From here, if you want to grab your affiliate link for this product, click on the down arrow next to the yellow “Get link” button to the right of the product name.



A window will pop up with your affiliate link. You also have the option to shorten the URL using Amazon’s link shortening tool, if you like.




You can use this URL to hyperlink mentions of the product in your content. However, you also have other options for adding your affiliate link to your content, including adding a thumbnail image of the product. You can access these additional options by clicking the yellow “Get link” button itself (instead of the down arrow).

Home > Product Links > Customize And Get HTML

PRODUCT SEARCH SELECT PRODUCT CUSTOMIZE & GET HTML

Build a link to a specific page from Amazon using the tools below. Tracking ID: raysylvester-20

Text and Image	Text Only	Image Only
<p>1. Customize Link</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Open link in new window</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Show border</p> <p>Background Color <input type="text" value="#ffffff"/></p> <p>Title Color <input type="text" value="#0066c0"/></p> <p>Price Color <input type="text" value="#333333"/></p> <p>Reset Colors</p>	<p>2. Live preview</p> <p>This link is served by us. You do not need to download the graphic. Just highlight and copy the HTML code provided below, then paste it into the code for your Web site</p> 	

From here, you can create a custom link with text, image, or both, plus custom colors for the background, title, and price of the item. The great part is, you just need to embed the code given to you, and all the correct product data (and formatting you selected) will be pulled from Amazon right to your site.

3. Get HTML Code For This Product Link

Highlight and copy the HTML below, then paste it into the code for your Web site

```
<iframe style="width:120px;height:240px;" marginwidth="0" marginheight="0" scrolling="no"
frameborder="0" src="//ws-na.amazon-adsystem.com/widgets/q?
ServiceVersion=20070822&OneJS=1&Operation=GetAdHtml&MarketPlace=US&source=ac&ref
=qf_sp_asin_til&ad_type=product_link&tracking_id=
raysylvester-20" show_border=false&link_opens_in_new_window=false&
price_color=333333&title_color=0066c0&bg_color=ffffff">
</iframe>
```

[Highlight HTML](#)

Note: Your Associates ID `raysylvester-20` is already embedded in the code.

Now your affiliate link is ready to be used in your content!

Tips and Best Practices for Amazon Associates

Now that we've covered the basics—why to choose Amazon for affiliate marketing, and how to get started—let's dig in to specific ways you can increase your chances of success as an Amazon Associate.

As we talked about earlier, one of Amazon's biggest advantages as an affiliate network is

the trust factor. People know and trust Amazon, so you shouldn't have to spend too much time convincing them that the site is worth buying from.

But that doesn't mean you can just sit back and watch the affiliate sales roll in.

There are several tips and tactics you can use to improve your affiliate marketing on Amazon, to increase your conversion rates and income and create a better experience for your audience when they purchase products through your Amazon affiliate links.

In this section, we'll talk through some of the things you should do as an Amazon Associate, along with several things you should definitely avoid doing if you want to succeed.

Must do #1: Get to know the Amazon product you're promoting

This tip is a must for any affiliate product or service you're promoting. Ideally, it's something you've used yourself, have benefited from, and know inside and out.

I talk about this a lot, and it comes back to trust. What makes people want to buy from you, or purchase a product you're promoting as an affiliate? It's not a slick sales pitch. That may work for a little while, but what will get you lasting results is building a relationship with your audience based on trust.

And only promoting products you know and have used and benefited from is a great way to establish trust, because it shows your audience that you're not going to try to sell them on something you don't already trust yourself.

It's like that old commercial where the guy says, "I'm not just the president of Hair Club for Men. I'm also a member." (Okay, I'm probably dating myself here, but hopefully you get the point!)

This point is especially important when it comes to affiliate marketing on Amazon. Why? One of the things about Amazon affiliate marketing you need to watch for is that once you're up and running as an affiliate, the barrier to entry to promote a new product is pretty low.

Because Amazon has a huge selection, and it's so easy to generate an affiliate link for just about any product, it can be easy to fall into the trap of promoting an Amazon product without getting to know the product first. As a result, it can be really easy to start promoting something you don't know very well, and risking the trust of your audience in the process.

Must do #2: Show people what they're going to get—unbox the mystery

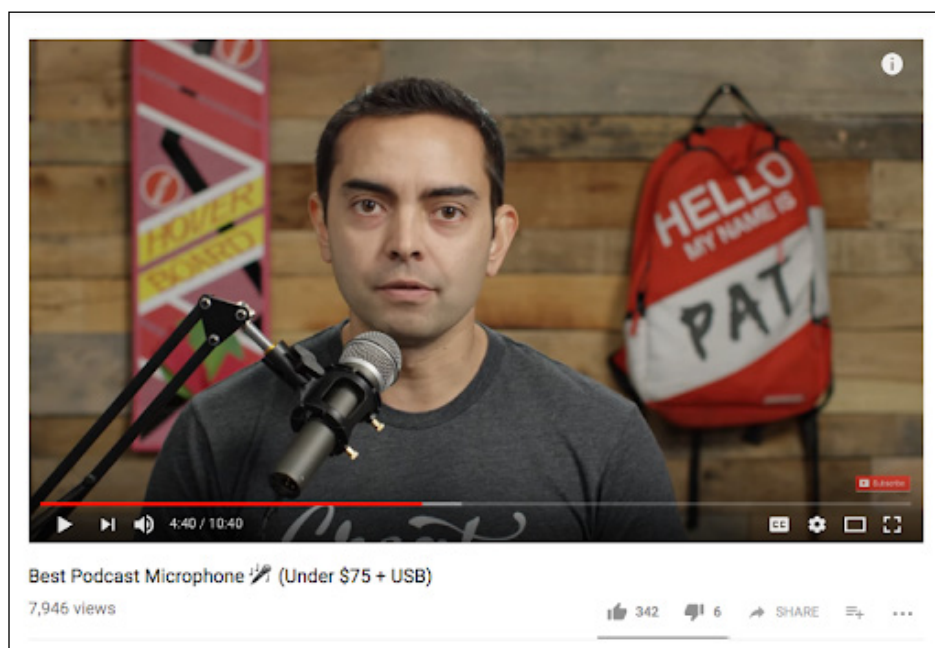
This next one is not exclusive to Amazon, but it's probably going to give you the biggest bang for your buck with Amazon. That is, showing people what they're going to get before they get it. Instead of just talking about the product or sharing a little information about it, then posting your affiliate link and leaving it at that, you can give people a much richer preview of their potential experience with a given product.

A great way to do this is to go into deep detail about what the product is and how it works, by shooting a video.

The unboxing videos I've created for products I promote, both physical and digital, have worked really well for me in terms of driving purchases and affiliate income.

Videos are a great way to show the ease of use of a particular product, and give your audience a chance to imagine themselves using it.

I've created unboxing videos for a number of Amazon products in particular, like the one where I [unboxed three different podcasting microphones](#) under \$75:



Videos also make it easier to build a relationship with your audience; you can talk right to them, and they can hear your voice (and see your face, though that's not always necessary). Plus, not only are you sharing what the product looks like and how it works, since you're the one who's showing your audience how it works, you're also building your authority with them as an expert they can trust.

And the best part? No pitch is even required! Just show people how the product works, be honest and thorough, and the power of video will do the rest.

Must do #3: Be honest

Here's another tip that doesn't just apply to Amazon affiliate links, but is crucial to remember if you want to be successful promoting Amazon products: be honest. This may sound like one of those "d'uh!" tips, but trust me when I say that it can still trip people up.

The first place where honesty is crucial in affiliate marketing on Amazon is in how you represent the product itself. This may go without saying, but if you oversell or flat-out lie about what a product can do for someone, it's going to backfire, big time. And not just in terms of your affiliate sales for that product, but in the likelihood people will continue to trust you at all. You can always find new affiliate products to promote, but once you've lost your audience's trust, it's hard if not impossible to gain it back. This is why using a product yourself and getting to know it inside and out is extra important, because the chances you'll misrepresent the thing you're promoting are much, much lower when you're an expert on it.

The second place where honesty is crucial is in how you represent your affiliate links themselves. I always recommend being honest with the fact that you can earn a commission when people use your affiliate links to purchase a product. In fact, the FTC requires that you disclose when you're using affiliate links, but beyond even that, it's just good practice to let people know that you'll make money when they purchase via a link on your site.

This can be as simple as adding a single disclaimer at the top of a blog post in which you're sharing affiliate links. I've had people tell me it feels odd to tell visitors that you're making money from an action they're taking, and I get it, but the truth is this: it doesn't cost those visitors anything to use your link (beyond the cost of the product), and once you help them, they'll often look for ways to help you in return. And providing affiliate links is an easy way to let them do that, at no extra cost to them!

Must do #4: Offer people support for Amazon products they purchase through your links

Finally, when promoting an affiliate product on Amazon to your audience, offer to help them with the product. Be a source of support. If people have questions or people want to know more about the thing you're promoting, make their decision easier and offer them that support! But, you might think, am I going to have people beating down my door asking for help with the product? I'm too busy for that! Here's the thing. Very few people will actually take you up on that offer. But a lot more people will see your offer

of assistance and appreciate it. They'll see you as an authority figure, and someone they can trust to help them out if they need it, someone who stands behind the products they promote, even if those products aren't your own.

Plus, if somebody does come to you with a question about the product you're promoting, that means they're probably interested in buying it, and by being there in a support role, you can help move them closer to a purchase decision. That's a win for them, and a win for you.

Must do #5: Use Geni.us to optimize your Amazon affiliate links internationally

Earlier in this article, I showed you how to sign up for an Amazon Associates account on Amazon.com, which is the company's US-based site. But this is not Amazon's only affiliate site.

In fact, it has affiliate programs in 11 other countries, including [Canada](#), [the UK](#), [Germany](#), [France](#), [Italy](#), [Japan](#), [China](#), [Spain](#), [India](#), [Mexico](#), and [Brazil](#). And in order to earn affiliate income from those sites, you need to set up an account on each of them—your US affiliate account doesn't automatically “cover” you on the international sites.

That's right: if you promote an affiliate link for a podcasting microphone on Amazon.com, you won't get paid if someone in England clicks on your link but buys the microphone from Amazon.co.uk.

So what can you do? Create an account on the US site plus all 11 of the different international Amazon sites, and create 12 separate affiliate links for each product you want to promote . . . then add all 12 links to each mention of that product in your blog post? Phew! That sounds exhausting, and unlikely to be effective either.

That's where Geni.us comes in. This tool lets you do two powerful things that can make your international Amazon affiliate marketing much simpler and more effective.

First, Geni.us lets you identify where a website visitor is in the world based on their browser's geolocation, then send them to a specific page based on that location.

Second, it allows you to create a universal link for each of your Amazon affiliate products that uses a visitor's geolocation to determine which international Amazon store to send them to.

Translation: Geni.us lets you use one link (not 12!) for each Amazon affiliate product you're promoting in your content. Then it does the work on the back end to send the person who clicks on your link to the right Amazon site for their location in the world.

This is super useful, and will help you make more money as an Amazon Associate by tapping into customers around the world.

In fact, it's so useful that I recommend it as one of the 12 tools you need to help you optimize your affiliate marketing efforts overall—not just on Amazon! So check it out.

Must do #6: Take advantage of the holiday season

This next one is a short one, but it's a big one. As you probably know (and have experienced!), the holiday season is a huge shopping period—which means it's also potentially a great time for affiliate sales. The lead-up to the holiday shopping period is an important time to promote your affiliate links, so you might want to think about doubling down on your promotional efforts in the fall.

At the same time, you'll want to be careful not to overpromote your affiliate products this time of year—people are expecting a lot of marketing, but you still want to be careful not to oversaturate your audience.

Plus, it can be especially tempting this time of year to “catch the wave” of holiday shopping excitement and—as we talked about earlier—start promoting products you don't know well and haven't even used personally. While that may lead to some extra sales in the short term, in the long run you risk your audience's trust by promoting products you don't know and can't stand behind.

So take advantage of the holiday shopping period, but don't get carried away!

Must do #7: Read the fine print

Okay, so far we've talked about some of the key strategies for success as an Amazon affiliate, focused mostly on the positives—the what to dos—along with a few things to avoid. Now let's talk about a few more things on the negative side of the equation: the practices you need to avoid if you want to grow your affiliate income (and yes, avoid getting in trouble with Amazon).

Amazon is known for sometimes coming down hard on sellers, affiliates, and other partners who don't follow the rules. This is maybe the other big downside of being an Amazon affiliate—Amazon is big enough to boss you around if you step out of line, and there's usually not much you can do about it. I've heard stories of affiliates having their accounts closed without any chance for recourse or appeal when they went against one of Amazon's affiliate policies.

Usually, Amazon will give you a warning if you're not following one of their policies, but in any case, it's always better to be safe than sorry!

A big part of this is reading and understanding the fine print in [Amazon's affiliate policies](#).

So, to make things super clear, I'm going to focus on several excerpts from those policies that you should be aware of. I'll share the exact language from Amazon's policy documents, followed by my own comments.

The first policy has to do with what kind of website you use to promote your affiliate links (and yes, you need to have a website if you want to be an affiliate marketer!). Amazon has a list of what it calls "unsuitable sites" that they won't allow into the Associates program.

Amazon's language: "Unsuitable Sites include those that:

- a. promote or contain sexually explicit or obscene materials;
- b. promote violence or contain violent materials;
- c. promote or contain false, deceptive, libelous or defamatory materials;
- d. promote or contain materials or activity that is hateful, harassing, harmful, invasive of another's privacy, abusive, or discriminatory (including on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age);
- e. promote or undertake illegal activities;
- f. are directed toward children under 13 years of age, as defined by the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (15 U.S.C. §§ 6501-6506) and any regulations promulgated thereunder, or otherwise knowingly collect, use, or disclose personal information from children under 13 years of age;
- g. include any trademark of Amazon or its affiliates, or a variant or misspelling of a trademark of Amazon or its affiliates in any domain name, subdomain name, in any "tag" or Associates ID, or in any username, group name, or other identifier on any social networking site (see a non-exhaustive list of our trademarks here); or
- h. otherwise violate any intellectual property rights."

Translation: Amazon won't let you join their affiliate program if your site is involved in anything illegal, deceptive, violent, or hateful. But even if this doesn't describe your site (and I hope it doesn't!), keep in mind that sites of an "adult" nature may not be allowed either. Also, even if your site is totally family friendly, if it's focused on kids it may not be allowed, as Amazon says it won't accept sites directed toward kids who aren't teenagers yet.

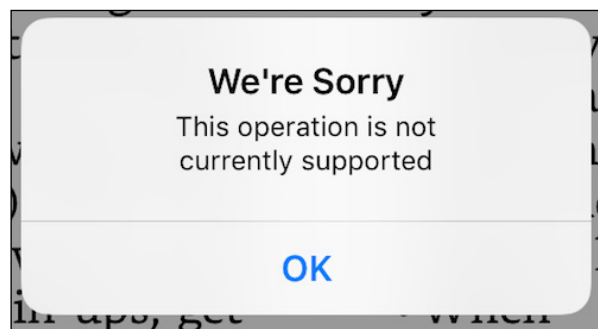
Next, Amazon's policy on where you can use your affiliate links (what Amazon calls "Special Links") and where you can't.

Amazon's language: "... you will not engage in any promotional, marketing, or other

advertising activities in any offline manner, including by using any of our or our affiliates' trademarks or logos (including any Amazon Mark), any Content, or any Special Link in connection with an offline promotion or in any other offline manner (e.g., in any printed material, mailing, SMS, MMS, email or attachment to email, or other document, or any oral solicitation)."

Translation: Don't put your affiliate links anywhere except on your website, blog posts, or online videos. Period. That means no links in emails, lead magnet PDFs, printed flyers, ebooks... if it's not a blog post or web page, don't use your affiliate link there.

In fact, if you try to add an Amazon link to a Kindle ebook, you'll get a message like this:



Which is actually pretty helpful, if you think about it. But you won't get a friendly warning like this if you try to use your affiliate link in an email, so just remember: blog post or web page only.

The next policy covers the importance of being honest about the Amazon products you're promoting using your affiliate links.

Amazon's language: "You must not make inaccurate, overbroad, deceptive or otherwise misleading claims about any Product, the Amazon Site, or any of our policies, promotions, or prices."

Translation: Don't lie about the Amazon products you're promoting. This seems pretty obvious, but this also means not overpromising or misrepresenting the products you're promoting, even in a small way. (For instance, don't say the camera you're promoting has 20 megapixels when it really only has 15.) Now, of course innocent mistakes and typos can still happen to anyone, so double-check everything you write about the products you're promoting to make sure it's accurate.

Finally, something you shouldn't encourage your audience to do with your affiliate links.

Amazon's language: "You must not encourage customers to bookmark your Special Links."

Translation: This one's pretty self-explanatory. Don't ask people to bookmark your affiliate link for later use.

Those are a few of Amazon's affiliate marketing policies I want you to be aware of as you're getting started, but that's definitely not all of them. That's why I still recommend you review all of the [policies](#) for yourself too.

Must do #8: Don't put all your eggs in the Amazon basket

Last but not least, don't make Amazon your only affiliate marketing option. I'm a huge proponent of diversifying your income sources, and doing so has been a big reason for my own success.

Part of the reason I recommend diversifying is because, as we talked about earlier, Amazon commission rates tend to be lower than they are from other affiliate income sources. I've seen this in my own affiliate marketing, where my commission rates and overall income from Amazon are not as high as they are for many of the products and services I promote on other platforms and from other companies.

Amazon is not my biggest source of affiliate income. But for some of you out there, it might be (or might someday). It's just as important for you to diversify—maybe even more important—for the simple reason that relying too heavily on one source of income could leave you in a tough spot if that income source were to dry up for any reason.

I've seen too many folks in the online business space “bet it all” on one source of income, and when that income source didn't pan out the way they wanted to, they didn't have a backup plan in place to weather the storm.

If you become wildly successful as an Amazon affiliate, hopefully using the tips I've shared in this article, then great! But I still recommend you not put all your affiliate eggs in the Amazon basket—or any single basket.

Affiliate marketing success on Amazon is about trust

Amazon is the most popular marketplace in North America, and it's growing worldwide too. It's the single biggest place where US shoppers start their product searches, so it's definitely a smart option to add to your affiliate marketing repertoire.

To be successful as an affiliate marketer on Amazon, you need to understand a few important best practices specific to Amazon, including how to maximize your affiliate

income potential across Amazon's international sites, and how to promote your affiliate links correctly so you don't go against Amazon's strict policies.

But beyond these specific points, promoting affiliate products on Amazon really involves the same ground rules that apply to affiliate marketing in any form or on any other site or network. That is, know the products you're promoting, be honest in how you represent those products, and give people enough information to make an informed decision about the product.

Perhaps most importantly, though, successful affiliate marketing on Amazon is built on the same foundational principle that all affiliate marketing, and all online marketing and business, is based: trust. In the end, Amazon is another tool that helps you help your audience and build their trust further, by promoting products that will help them achieve their goals.

If you want to dive deeper, check out how to get started with affiliate marketing, my affiliate marketing tips, and handy tools I recommend to improve your affiliate marketing on Amazon and elsewhere.

And finally, if you're interested in diving even deeper on how to do affiliate marketing the right way—to know what works and what doesn't—then visit Chapter 8 below to learn about a course I created especially for that purpose.

Taking Your Affiliate Marketing to the Next Level

MY BUSINESS—

Smart Passive Income—wouldn't be what it is without affiliate marketing. In fact, for the past several years, affiliate marketing has been my single biggest source of passive income.

It hasn't always been that way. I've had my share of affiliate marketing fails and struggles. But the process of overcoming those obstacles has taught me how to do affiliate marketing in a way that makes it a win-win for my audience and my business.

I've learned so much over the course of that journey, from the dangers of doing affiliate marketing the wrong way, to the best approach to choose the products you want to promote, to the importance of fostering trust with your audience to truly succeed with affiliate marketing.

And I want to share what I've learned with you! That's why I've gone in depth to show you how affiliate marketing works, how to get started with it, tips to succeed, a case study of my best affiliate relationship, mistakes to avoid, tools to accelerate your efforts, and how to optimize your affiliate marketing on one of the most popular affiliate networks.

Wherever you may be in your affiliate marketing journey, my goal is to give you everything you need to succeed.

And that's why I also want to share two more incredible resources I've created to help you become the affiliate marketer of your dreams.

My Affiliate Marketing Ebook Guide: Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way

After lots of trial and error with affiliate marketing—starting, failing, and eventually succeeding—I've learned a lot, and I've come to believe that there's a “right” way to approach affiliate marketing.

That's why I created my free ebook guide to doing affiliate marketing right, [*Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way*](#).

Sadly, there are a lot of misconceptions about affiliate marketing out there. In [*Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way*](#), I address these misconceptions by tackling some of the most common questions about affiliate marketing rules and strategies, including:

- What specific mediums work well for affiliate product promotion?
- How do I find my number one affiliate product or service?
- How do I make my affiliate product stand out in a crowd?
- How I can improve the relationship I have with the product owner?

At only 11 pages, [*Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way*](#) is jam-packed with insights I've learned through years of real-world experience in affiliate marketing—insights I'm excited to pass on to you.

Here's what a couple readers have to say about how [*Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way*](#) has helped them:

"Pat's guide, *Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way*, really lives up to its name. Soon after implementing his tips, I saw a sudden \$500/mo rise in my income. Reading it was enlightening!"

—Mike Martyns

"I gained a lot in the 30 minutes it took to absorb such valuable information. It was precise and to the point—a tool that is ready and available for any newcomer to GET STARTED."

—Louisa Barzey

[*Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way*](#) is filled with all of my best advice on the topic, and makes a fantastic free "pocket" companion to this article series.

But the support I can give you on your affiliate marketing journey doesn't stop there.

My Free Affiliate Marketing Training

With the help of the information and guidance in this article series, plus the *Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way* ebook, a lot of you will be able to hit the ground running with affiliate marketing.

Others might need a little more help getting off the ground—and that's totally cool!

That's why I also regularly host a free affiliate marketing training to help you lay the groundwork for a successful career as an affiliate marketer.

My free *Affiliate Marketing Masterclass* shows you how to monetize the brand you've built without being salesy or sleazy. You'll learn the steps you need to take to finally begin generating an additional passive income stream using authentic affiliate marketing strategies.

Here are some of the key concepts and strategies you'll learn in this training:

- The three key differences between a successful affiliate marketing campaign and an ineffective campaign.
- How to maximize your campaign so that you can get clicks and generate income.
- Two dead-simple strategies for finding affiliate products to promote to your audience.
- A 5-point product test to determine if it's worth your time to promote a particular product (so that you stop wasting time on the wrong products).

But that's not all you'll get in this free affiliate marketing training. You'll also learn:

- The number one strategy for increasing your affiliate marketing campaign results.
- The rules of affiliate marketing, especially when it comes to Amazon.com product promotion (so you don't get in trouble or lose your account).
- How to increase your earnings once you find a product that seems to be working for you.

And last but not least, when you attend you'll also receive a ***special bonus***: a sample "recipe" from my Affiliate Marketing Recipe Book that you can take home with you (so you can copy the steps of one of my own successful promotions for yourself).

To learn more and register for the next training, go to smartpassiveincome.com/affiliatewebsinar.

The Sky's the Limit

If you've been with me for this whole article series, then you've taken an exciting journey into the heart of affiliate marketing! And you've hopefully emerged from that journey armed with some serious knowledge, tools, strategies, and possibilities to take with you as you strike out into the wide, exciting world of affiliate marketing.

As with anything, what you get out of affiliate marketing is about how you approach it and what you put into it. If you treat it as just another tactic, then you're not going to be very successful with it. But if you treat it as a way to build more trust with your audience and serve them better, then the sky's the limit.

So now that you've made it this far, what's next? Hopefully this article series has given you a great starting point, along with a wealth of resources to support you as you strive to become a pro at affiliate marketing. This series will always be here for you as a free affiliate marketing resource, along with my Affiliate Marketing the Smart Way ebook and my Affiliate Marketing Masterclass.

And beyond those resources, I'd love for us to stay connected as you go down this exciting path.

I cover affiliate marketing-related topics often on [my blog](#) and in my [podcast episodes](#), so stay tuned there. And if you ever want to send me a note, whether it's a question about affiliate marketing, a success story you'd like to share, or anything else related to online business and entrepreneurship, you can reach me at pat@smartpassiveincome.com. I'm here to support you on your journey, so let me know how I can best do that!

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat Flynn". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "P" and a cursive "Flynn".