

Affiliate Classroom

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Get Your Money's Worth

Develop a Strategy

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Keyword Research Shortcuts

Affiliate Managers: Should You Blog?

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COVER STORY

How To Get Your Money's Worth From Natural Search

By David Long
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Good marketers don't concern themselves with just clicks. They think about behavior. You do have some influence over the behavior of searchers. When those searchers put in a keyword or two and scan the results, that's evidence that they are actively looking for you.

Every affiliate marketer's advertising budget is limited. But we often feel pressured to spend as much as possible on PPC and other paid forms that push the cushion past the safety zone. The idea of just "sitting and waiting" for natural search results to send us traffic makes us feel helpless, at the mercy of the whims of Google and fickle searchers. Taking control, by getting the brand name out there, makes us feel we are "doing something" to generate traffic.

But that attitude rests on accepting a false alternative, and a view of organic search that isn't exactly right. It is possible to take control of your "results destiny" and save a lot of money in the process. The secret consists of a combination of adjusting our attitudes and a series of practical steps to increase page rank without busting the bank.

Think about Behavior

Good marketers don't concern themselves with just clicks. They think about behavior. You do have some influence over the behavior of searchers. When those searchers put in a keyword or two and scan the results, that's evidence that they are actively looking for you. Over 90% will look for you on the first page or two before they give up and try again.

You can influence the odds of getting on that first page or two to a remarkable degree. And when you appear high in natural search results, you're likely to stay there for long periods.

By contrast, PPC results will fluctuate much more, based on factors outside your control (such as your competitor's budget).

So, how do you increase your odds to compensate for a small PPC budget? By substituting savvy for dollars. Cover all the basics and the bases.

Attitude Adjustment

First, consider some of the things that keep us from embracing natural search as a primary strategy.

Natural SEM seems unpredictable (and, to an extent, it is). Throw enough money at PPC and you'll get on Google's front page for your chosen keywords. Given the volume of traffic there, you're bound to get clicks.

The drawbacks are many and well known.

It's all too easy to slip off those paid results. Fail to get the clicks that Google or Yahoo think you should, and you'll soon be replaced by someone they think is more relevant to the searcher. Their focus, understandably, is on presenting websites that are of greatest interest to *their* customers. They may or may not agree that *your* potential customers are the same searchers.

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COVER STORY

Compensating for that possibility can require you to throw a big chunk of your budget at the problem. A limited daily budget can make your listing invisible a big chunk of the time. If your monthly Yahoo PPC budget is chewed up in 10 days, you disappear for the remaining three weeks.

That reduces the odds of those searchers seeing you when they're actively looking. If your competitor's ad appears instead of yours, the sale is almost guaranteed not to go to you. At least with natural search, you've got a shot — often a good one.

There's another aspect of the unpredictability of natural search that instills a fear of relying on it: the risk factor.

With PPC you know how much you're going to spend, and if you spend enough, you can reasonably predict the outcome a month ahead of time. With a natural search strategy, you can find out how good your methods are only after some time has passed. That makes it more risky, and tolerating risk — here, in the form of the time delay between effort and reward — is emotionally difficult for most of us.

The third sticking point involves both a psychological aspect, and a practical one. To generate good results with a natural search strategy requires making changes to our websites — sometimes, a lot of them over time. It means experimenting.

Experiment entails risk, but we've adjusted to that. (Right?) Still, there is an emotional pull that makes us reluctant to modify or even abandon a website design that we personally find attractive or functional. But, remember, the customer is always right!

You can't always be certain whether a particular design will bring traffic. But if week after week passes and you're not getting inbound links, if you have visitors that come, stay a few seconds, then bail without buying, one part of the cause is likely your look and feel. They're "voting with their feet," and the market is sending you signals that you need to change.

Practical Considerations

Change isn't just emotionally hard, though. It requires real work — time-consuming work. Affiliate marketers always have more to do than time to do it. (What entrepreneur doesn't?) Overhauling your site to increase rank and traffic may be far down on your list, unless you just happen to enjoy that sort of thing. Most marketers would rather be doing something other than tweaking HTML. But change it you must, if you want to change your income.

Do Market Research

First, find out what searchers are searching for in your category. That means, for example, that if you sell wedding flowers, be a searcher yourself and examine what comes up when you look. Putting yourself in the customer's shoes is a tried-and-true method of giving them what they want.

Then, supplement your efforts with some good tools.

Use Keyword Research Tools

According to one recent survey, the top five keyword research tools are:
Keyword Discovery (18%)

Overhauling your site to increase rank and traffic may be far down on your list. Most marketers would rather be doing something other than tweaking HTML. But change it you must, if you want to change your income.

COVER STORY

Natural search is a numbers game, and your aim is to up your odds. If you use keywords that people naturally use to search for what you sell, you increase the chances of your site ranking higher in the organic results.

<http://www.keyworddiscovery.com>

Wordtracker (18%)

<http://www.wordtracker.com>

WordZe (15%)

<http://www.wordze.com>

Google Keyword Tool (14%)

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

SEO Digger (12%)

<http://seodigger.com>

If you have a favorite, go for it. The important thing is to find out which keywords people (including you) actually use, then tailor your website content accordingly. No need to go black hat and engage in keyword stuffing. That strategy often backfires, anyway. But let the science of statistics lend you a hand where possible.

Natural search is a numbers game, and your aim is to up your odds. If you use keywords that people naturally use to search for what you sell, you increase the chances of your site ranking higher in the organic results.

Adjust Your Content

That method will send you back to working on your website again and again. But refining your site helps improve your rank. Remember, Google is looking first and foremost for relevance. They're trying to deliver results to *their* customers that fit best what the searcher is seeking. Making "their" visitors and "your" visitors overlap as much as possible is the holy grail of natural search.

To implement that strategy will mean adjusting your copy to coincide more closely with those keywords. It's true that Google does a lot of synonym matching internally. That's how they bring up results containing "floral arrangements" when the searcher entered "wedding flower designs." But the closer you get to what most searchers type, the better your odds of appearing high in the organic results.

That point is especially important if you publish articles or tutorials and other lengthy copy on your site. Giving your visitors meaty content brings in the eyeballs. It gives the spiders lots to chew on and helps make your pages sticky for humans. So, while it's important to keep your articles sounding natural to a real reader, pay attention to the keywords and their placement.

Forcing keywords into the first sentence when the result sounds unnatural is overdoing it. But they should appear within the first 90 words or so, and again near the end. An additional mention in the middle is also a good idea. Here's where using keyword synonyms can really help; they give you an opportunity to cover a wide range of search terms and still deliver natural-sounding content.

Network for Backlinks

Along with relevant keywords, the search engines look for the number of backlinks. Remember that they are trying to judge usefulness. One measure of that is popularity. They assume, rightly so, that if lots of people found your site worthwhile — as evidenced by the fact that they made the effort to link to you — others will, too. In short, they're using those

COVER STORY

publishers as proxy votes and giving weight to their judgments. Studies show they are right to do so.

You can take advantage of that aspect of the search algorithms by getting links from high traffic sites to yours. Easier said than done? You bet. Publishers are busy, and they know that a link from their popular site is valuable. But giving them something they find worthwhile — products of interest to their visitors, useful content, sometimes just a polite request — can increase the number of "Yes" responses you get.

Just as with everything else about natural search (or paid search, for that matter), it's a numbers game, as we said before. You won't get every link you hope for. But the more the merrier, especially when those other sites have good traffic. Even when they don't, you have two things going for you. First, every link helps a little. Second, they can grow. (Even IBM was small at one time.) As they do, you benefit along with them.

You can use tools like Backlink Checker (http://www.iwebtool.com/backlink_checker) to find backlinks to a site.

If you want to trade your money for your time, you can buy (or sell) backlinks at a place like Backlinks.com (<http://www.backlinks.com>). How worthwhile purchased links are is a subject of ongoing debate, though. Like lots of things, the answer is: it depends (on what they are, how Google feels about them on any given day, and lots of other factors).

Get Listed in Directories

Article directories help, especially when they're of higher quality. Most article sites let you include a link back to your website, at least in the bio section at the bottom. Write a good article and you can definitely get lots of traffic this way. If you can't write, carve out some of that budget for some quality freelance or PLR content. It will pay off.

Exercise Caution

Some backlinks can hurt you, though, so beware. Linking from one of your sites to the next is an idea the search engines caught onto long ago. It may not hurt much, but it typically helps very little. Link exchange ("you link to me and I'll link to you") is another of those moves that long ago lost most of its value.

Getting links from spam sites is deadly. That's one reason tools like Backlink Checker are worth using. Beware getting involved with link farms. You really can't fool Google, Yahoo, et al. They're experts at the game and have seen every dirty trick in the book. Play by the rules and you'll be much better off.

Summary

PPC and other paid forms of search traffic generation are still viable and valuable, even for those with small budgets. But by exercising some creativity and good old finger sweat, you can take advantage of what's out there for free. And, hey, doesn't "free" sound like a good deal?

About the Author

David Long is a freelance writer and editor with over 20 years of experience. His PLR articles and eBooks have appeared on hundreds of websites. They cover Wine & Beer, Travel, Gardening, Health & Fitness, Pets, Stocks & Bonds, and dozens more subjects. He can be contacted for hire at JDavidLong@gmail.com

Publishers know that a link from their popular site is valuable. But giving them something they find worthwhile — products of interest to their visitors, useful content, sometimes just a polite request — can increase the number of "Yes" responses you get.

FEATURE STORY

Developing A Natural Search Engine Marketing Strategy

by Kathy Jackson



Natural search techniques cost a lot less than paid search (PPC) advertising, and that's important when you have a limited advertising budget.

Your website is your "place of business" on the Internet. Like places of business out in the brick-and-mortar world, the success of your online business is determined by three things; location, location, and location. Out in the real world, that means a high-visibility location on a main thoroughfare. On the Internet, it means location in the top search results of search engines.

There are basically two kinds of search results that a search engine returns in response to a query by a user; paid and natural (organic). The paid advertising results displayed by the search engines are located at the top of the page and on the right-hand side of the page. The natural or organic search results are located just below the paid advertisements on the top of the page and to the left.

Research proves that in 60.5% of searches, users clicked on a natural (or "organic" or "algorithmic") search result, and only 39.5% clicked on a paid search advertisement. That alone tells you that it pays to incorporate natural search in your affiliate marketing efforts.

The search engines use a mysterious algorithm to determine the order in which the natural search results are displayed. Search engines have spiders, or bots, that crawl the web looking at websites and determining their relevance to certain keywords, and this is the information used to determine placement in search results. The idea is to get your website listed as high as possible in the natural search results displayed by the search engines for a user who types your keywords into the search box.

Natural Search and SEO

Natural search engine marketing strategy requires you to optimize your site to attract the search engine spiders, and there have been volumes written on search engine optimization (SEO). Here we'll discuss the relationship between SEO and a natural search marketing strategy.

I'm a big fan of "free." I'm pretty crazy about "low-cost," too, and that's what a natural search strategy is. It's free or mostly free SEO techniques that you can use to attract the search engine spiders; this gets a high ranking in natural search results and thus generates website traffic at little or no cost.

Traffic results come much more slowly using natural search techniques, and they are certainly more "labor intensive" than paid advertising. On the other hand, natural search techniques cost a lot less than paid search (PPC) advertising, and that's important when you have a limited advertising budget.

NATURAL SEARCH

Keyword research is absolutely essential for a natural search engine marketing strategy to work.

Here are a few natural search marketing strategies:

Research and Choose Keywords Wisely

Keywords are spider bait. Keywords and key phrases are what spiders are searching for when they crawl the web. Keyword research is absolutely essential for a natural search engine marketing strategy to work.

You need to know how your target market uses language when they are searching for products that are related to the topic of your website. You want to choose and use keywords and phrases that your target market uses. Just some (uncommon) common sense is the first step. Think about the words that you use, that your friends use, that your parents use when searching for a specific product. Those are keywords.

There are also several really great keyword tools available. Make use of them and choose the best keywords and key phrases that you can.

These keywords and key phrases need to be used on your website. The best one needs to be in your heading. They need to be in your meta tags. They need to be used at least once (twice is better) in the opening sentence of the opening paragraph on your website.

It's important that keywords appear in every paragraph on every page of your website. You can find tons of material on the Internet about the use of keywords and phrases.

*NOTE: Overdoing the use of keywords is considered "keyword stuffing" by search engine spiders. It won't get your site indexed, and it might get your site banished from search results.

Submit Your Site to Directories

There are hundreds of directories, but there are four major directories on the Internet, and the visibility of your website in these human-edited directory databases (Yahoo!, the Open Directory, LookSmart, and Business.com) is an important factor in natural search strategy.

Each directory has its own "rules" that you will need to read and follow, and all of them refuse to accept automatically generated submissions. You must make each submission by hand.

Submit Your Site to Search Engines

Start with Google and Yahoo and work your way down. Submit to as many search engines as possible. Again, each search engine has its own "rules," and you need to abide by them. Automatic submissions are not allowed. These also must be done "by hand".

NATURAL SEARCH

Enhance Your Website Content

Constantly updated, keyword-rich, and relevant content attracts search engine spiders. The more often you update the content of your website, the more often the search engine spiders will visit. That means that your pages will be indexed more quickly and that you will get a higher page rank in natural search results.

High-quality, relevant content copy that is keyword rich (without being overly so) which is formatted in a user-friendly manner and is updated very frequently, is a major factor in a natural search strategy.

* NOTE: User-friendly formatting means that only short sentences and short blocks of copy (paragraphs) are used. Bullet points are considered "user-friendly" formatting.

Keep an Eye on the Competition

A website doesn't exist in a vacuum. Your website is only one of a great many on the Internet that are angling for the same group of consumers. You need to know what your competitors are doing and how they are doing it in order to keep your website competitive.

Take note of the keywords that your competitor is using and how he is using them. Pay attention to the layout of his website as compared to the layout of your own website. If he's doing something better than you are doing it, then take what he is doing, modify it, and use it yourself.

Your website needs to be better than your biggest competitor's website. The way to make that determination is to take the time and put forth the effort to visit your competitors' websites.

Write and Submit Articles to Article Banks

This is a tried-and-true technique for attracting traffic to your website at no cost to you. It is also one of the best methods for getting others to help you get higher rankings in natural search results.

The cost of writing and submitting articles to article banks in monetary terms is nothing, zero, nada. In terms of time, the cost can be high. It takes time and effort to write articles that others deem good enough to use on their websites, and submitting articles to article banks is also time consuming. But when your articles are used on other websites, the link to your website is included in the resource box, and search engine spiders really, REALLY like that.

There have been volumes of material written about writing articles and submitting them to article banks. In a nutshell:

**High-quality,
relevant
content copy
that is keyword
rich (without
being overly
so) which is
formatted in a
user-friendly
manner and is
updated very
frequently, is a
major factor in
a natural
search
strategy.**

NATURAL SEARCH

Take note of the keywords that your competitor is using and the layout of his website. If he's doing something better than you are doing it, then take what he is doing, modify it, and use it yourself.

- The article must be RELEVANT.
- The article must be keyword rich.
- The article must have an attention getting title that includes a keyword.
- The article must have a first line that causes the reader to want to continue reading and should also contain a keyword.
- The article should be about 400 words long.
- The spelling and grammar must be impeccable.

The resource box must contain your name and a link to your website.

Join and Post to Relevant Blogs and Forums

Internet marketers have known for years that their best customer prospects hang out on blogs and forums that are related to the topic of their own websites.

These blogs and forums do not allow blatant advertising, but you can include a link to your own website in your sig tag. Each time you post to a blog or forum above your sig tag, you are giving the search engine spiders one more link to count. You are giving them one more reason to place you higher in the natural search results. (You're also advertising to a pool of your best prospects if your posts are well thought out and well written.)

Conclusion

It's true that you can use only natural search engine marketing strategy, but it is best to use a combination of both paid and natural search engine marketing techniques.

Here's how natural and paid search strategies stack up:

- For position on search results page, the advantage goes to natural search.
- For results speed, the advantage goes to paid search.
- For user trust level, the advantage goes to natural search
- For difficulty in obtaining a top position, the advantage goes to paid search (if you're willing and able to pay for it.)

For cost, natural search wins going away!

There are advantages and disadvantages to both paid search strategy and natural search strategy, but when they are used together, you get the best of both worlds.

About the Author

Kathy Jackson is a Texas Rancher and freelance writer. She is also a contributing author for several farm and ranch publications. Internet marketing is one of Kathy's burning interests and she is just "tickled pink" to write for AC Magazine and Anik Singal, her marketing hero. On the Affiliate Classroom Blog (<http://blog.affiliateclassroom.com/>), you will find several articles by Kathy on various aspects of affiliate marketing.

FEATURE STORY

Key Words: Short Cuts To Natural Search Traffic

by Mark Thompson

www.income-academy.com



Focus on
keywords
that people
who want to
buy will use,
not keywords
that people
doing
research or
who are
generally
interested in
a product
would use.

Do you know what I love about natural search? I love that there is no hype, no “ifs” or “buts” attached to it. If a site ranks at #1 in Google, or an article is the most popular article in EzineArticles, it’s there for a reason. Once you know what those reasons are, you can replicate it and outrank it.

Another great benefit of natural search is that it doesn’t take any money. Once your site is indexed in a search engine, all the traffic that arrives at your site is free.

With AdWords or other pay per click programs, so many variables are involved in replicating someone’s successful campaign that you could spend months trying to track them all down. Which keywords are being used? Which keywords are most profitable? How many versions of the ad are being displayed? What is the daily budget? By the time you worked it all out, you would have spent a fortune on advertising, and there is no guarantee that the ads would still be profitable.

On the other hand, you can find what keywords a site at the top of natural search listings are using in a couple of seconds. Then you can quickly trace sites that link back to it. With careful choices, you can out rank it within a matter of weeks or even days if you are lucky.

Which Keywords Are the “Buying” Keywords?

Obviously you aren’t going to outrank major sites and conquer keyword phrases like “Lose Weight” overnight. However, we are Internet marketers, and all we should worry about is making sales of the products we are promoting as affiliates. So we need to focus on the keyword phrases we know are going to sell products for us.

The first thing we need to do is to cut down on all the keywords that we are focusing on and concentrate on ones that buyers would use.

Being intelligent Internet marketers, we know that we are wasting our time if we target a phrase like “lose weight,” because someone using this search term is almost certainly not a buyer. We need to focus on the keywords that people who want to buy will use, not keywords that people doing research or who are generally interested in a product would use.

So if we were selling a product called “weight loss widgets,” we would look at variations of this keyword that people might use when doing natural searches:

“review of weight loss widgets”

“Does weight loss widgets work”

Or even something like “best products to lose weigh fast”

KEYWORD SHORTCUTS

Tapping into the Right Keywords

I'm sure you get the idea now, but how do you find keywords like this? Let's look at some tricks you can use to get keywords that will help you rank high in the search rankings.

The first step is to go to the product sales page, right-click on it, and choose View Source. This will bring up the source code page; you are looking for the keywords meta tag here. Copy a list of all the keywords listed here. It is always worth looking at the affiliate page as well, as publishers often give a list of keywords for PPC campaigns.

How Keywords Are Used in Articles

Now that you have your initial list of keywords, it's time to check out one of the Internet's best research sites, EzineArticles.com. Like most people, you probably just thought of EzineArticles as a place to add your articles, but it's even more useful than that — much more. Under each article are three lists that show you recent articles, most viewed articles, and most published articles. The one we are interested in is the most viewed articles list.

This list contains the most viewed articles in a particular niche in the past 90 days. These articles are usually popular for one reason: they rank well in Google. This is exactly what we want to do, so let's find out why. This may get a bit confusing for a moment, but stick with me — it will be worth it!

If we look at the most popular article in the weight loss category on EzineArticles, we find that it is called "15 fat burning foods — eat and lose." By scrolling to the end of the article, we can see that it's been viewed 26,067 times since it was published in May 2008. Quite impressive! We can now right-click on the article and get another list of keywords that we can copy.

Checking the Google external keyword tool for the keyword, the average search volume for the keyword phrase "15 fat burning foods" is 1,600, but there is no data for June. This is a bit strange, as I wouldn't expect there to be much volume at all.

However, if we look at the Google External Keyword tool for the phrase "fat burning foods" there are 18,100 searches in June; and when we search Google for the same keyword we find that out of 560,000 broad matches and 141,000 exact matches, the article is listed in fifth place.

We now know that if we write an article about "Fat Burning Foods" and add it to EzineArticles, we will rank well in Google. Linking to your article in EzineArticles is usually a great way to outrank the current article in the Google rankings. A few well-placed links work wonders on EzineArticles rankings, since not many people link directly to their articles.

EzineArticles is a place to add your articles, but it's even more useful than that. Under each article are three lists that show you recent articles, most viewed articles, and most published articles.

KEYWORD SHORTCUTS

Another great way to ensure that you rank well in Google is to buy domain names based around keywords.

Obviously the keyword we focused on isn't necessarily a buying keyword, but it does illustrate just how simple it is to find phrases that will rank well in Google.

Buying Keyword-Based Domain Names

Another great way to ensure that you rank well in Google is to buy domain names based around keywords. I currently have a number of sites ranking in the top three of Google for keywords I am not even targeting yet, simply because I bought keyword-based domain names. Many of these are search terms that have over 10,000 exact matches.

Once again, the Google External Keyword tool comes in handy here. Type in a keyword phrase and copy all the resulting keywords to the selected keyword box.

Once you have done this a few times and have a list of 200 or more keywords, download them as a text file and copy them to your clipboard. Now all you need to do is to copy this list to a bulk domain checking tool like the one at GoDaddy and it will return you a list of available domains. Then you just choose the one with most traffic.

I did a demo of this on my blog recently and found that HowToLearnThePiano.com was available. This keyword is much more useful for natural searches than LearnPiano101.com or something similar. Had I bought it, I would now have a site that ranks highly for a keyword phrase that gets about 500 searches per month; not bad for five minutes work!

Tools to Use

Several great tools will help you to conquer any niche and get to the top of Google. For instance, Link Diagnosis (<http://www.linkdiagnosis.com>) will display all the linking information for a site—not just where the links are, but which are “no follow” and what anchor text is being used. It will then display it all in an easy-to-read pie chart.

The second tool I like is Tracking Guru (<http://www.trackingguru.com>). This will display how sites are ranking for specific keywords. Using both of these tools together will allow you to target specific positions in the search engine rankings and know exactly what you have to do to get there. The information it provides is invaluable!

I hope I convinced you to spend some time to try to get good search engine rankings and enjoy all the benefit of free traffic. It's incredibly easy to find keywords to target, and the rewards can be excellent.

About the Author

Mark Thompson spent many years working in IT consultancy in London. Following a re-evaluation of his goals and lifestyle in 2004 he sold everything he couldn't fit into the family car and moved to rural Spain where he now pursues a variety of online ventures. See: www.income-academy.com

MISS MANAGEMENT

Dear Miss Management: Blogging For Affiliate Managers

by Debra Rabin
debra.rabin@yahoo.com



A blog is an excellent way to communicate directly to your audience of affiliates, merchants, or venture capitalists who will read your blog and want to invest heavily in your company.

Miss Management has a suggestion for all her affiliate manager readers out there — start a blog! Many of you read blogs on a daily basis for information, gossip, tricks of the trade, and valuable tips, so why not give that gift to your affiliates? Blogging is big business, and adding a blog to your website is a great way to market yourself, your company, and your affiliate program.

The Big Deal behind Blogs

Dear Miss Management:

My boss decided our company needs a blog. I think he's just trying to make work for us. Who reads blogs anyway?

Signed,
 Lazy and Illiterate

Dear Lazy and Illiterate:

Maybe you're right, and your boss just wants to make you miserable, or maybe your boss is your boss because he's smarter than you? A blog is an excellent way to communicate directly to your audience of affiliates, merchants, or venture capitalists who will read your blog and want to invest heavily in your company.

Don't just take my word for it — BlogWorldExpo.com, the hosts of the upcoming Blog World and new media expo, have several impressive stats on blogging for you to consider:

- ✦ 22 of the 100 most popular websites in the world are blogs.
 - ✦ Over 57 million Americans read blogs.
 - ✦ Over 12 million American adults currently maintain a blog.
- 51% of blog readers shop online — did your boss know this already?

Signed,
 Miss Management

MISS MANAGEMENT

There are lots of simple, fast tools to help you establish your blog....So getting started with a blog is neither time-consuming nor expensive.

From the Other Side of the Spectrum

Dear Miss Management:

As an account manager at a small OPM, I really want to start a blog — we don't have one yet and we really should! We're all spread pretty thin here, so I'm not sure how I can make the case for blogging when we're all so busy. Do you have any suggestions for how we can start a blog without making it a huge time-consuming project, and some compelling business reasons for blogging about our programs that will persuade my management that this is a good idea?

Signed,
Short on Time, Long on Ideas

Dear Short on Time, Long on Ideas:

I agree, you need a blog! There are lots of simple, fast tools to help you establish your blog. WordPress is the largest self-hosted blogging tool in the world, and you can download it to have the blog on your own site or get a free blog on WordPress's own site. Another inexpensive alternative is Typepad, which accommodates multiple blogs and authors for about \$15 a month. So getting started with a blog is neither time-consuming nor expensive. As for compelling reasons to persuade your management that a blog is good for business, check out the bullet points from my response to Lazy and Illiterate, and for good measure, add these bullet points and submit them to your boss:

- ✦ Blogs get you more web exposure — and increase your natural rankings!
- ✦ You can find future employees on blogs.
- ✦ You can get feedback from your clients and prospective clients who comment on your blog.
- ✦ Investors read blogs, and your blog could help find your company investors!

Unless your boss is Lazy and Illiterate, they know your company needs a blog, and that having a blog will be a business necessity in the near future, like having email and a website were in the 1990s.

Signed,
Miss Management

I Don't Know What to Say!

Dear Miss Management;

I'm a new affiliate manager for an independent program. I'm not sure what the deliverability rate is on the emails I send out to my affiliate base, so I'm thinking of using a blog with RSS to stay in touch with my affiliates. But I confess I'm a little intimidated by having to write blog posts every week; I seem to run out of ideas and get writer's block! Any ideas for things I can write about regularly — at least once a

MISS MANAGEMENT

week — that will be of interest to my affiliates?

Signed,
Blog Writer's Block

Dear Blog Writer's Block:

Your company may already have resources for your blog entries. Placing your latest corporate communications, like emails and press releases, on your blog makes great sense. Your affiliates will thank you for making it easy for them to find out what's new on your affiliate program by instituting a blog with RSS. I understand the fear that feeding your blog will take up precious time, and the worry that you'll get Blog Writers Block (has anyone started a support group for this yet?), but it's really not a problem. If you send out a weekly email with updates to your affiliate program, why not just add that same information onto your blog? No changes necessary, just preface the entry with a title like "Here's our June 1 Affiliate Update Email for our Blog Audience." That way, your blog readers can skip the entry if they read the email, and if they didn't get it, you can add a link to have them sign up to get your regular blogs — good idea, huh?

Does your company have a regular press release program? Summarize your press releases and add links to them in your blog. This way anyone wanting more information is able to click the link and read the entire press release, while the summary is an easy way for you to keep adding to your blog. In case this idea hasn't set off a light bulb on top of your head, here it is in all caps:

ANY CORPORATE COMMUNICATION CAN BECOME A BLOG ENTRY!!!!

Signed,
Miss Management.

A Note to My Dear Readers

Miss Management would like to assign homework project to her readers: When you start your blog (now would be a good time), be sure to read all the responses that you get to your entries. The purpose of a blog isn't just to put your communications and ideas out there; it's also a great way to get feedback and information from your blog audience. A savvy affiliate manager always wants feedback!

About the Author

Debra Rabin is a recent recipient of Affiliate Classroom's Honorary Affiliate Manager Certification. Mrs. Rabin writes on topics pertaining to insurance, affiliate marketing, and current timely topics. Formerly with LinkValu Affiliate Network, Mrs. Rabin was a senior member of their Business Development team. Prior to LinkValu, she headed Marketing and Sales for MarketingJobs.com. Mrs. Rabin is currently focusing on writing and reviewing new opportunities in the pay per performance marketing industry.

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**Thanks for reading! Next month we'll focus on email affiliates and email marketing.
As always, AC Magazine is free - no squeeze page, no email address required!**

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