

Affiliate Marketing: What It Is

Affiliate marketing is different things to different people, but essentially, affiliate marketing is the act of marketing someone else's products or services for a portion, or commission, of each sale that you make.

Some people do affiliate marketing as their full time jobs. That's it. That's all they do – they market other people's products or services, collect their commissions, and live their lives as they wish. They do not have to deal with customer service, shipping orders, or anything else. All they do is promote other people's products or services, everyday.

Other people use affiliate programs in conjunction with their own products or services, using affiliate programs as front end products, upsells, and back end products. For example, if you had an information product about weight loss, you might want to market exercise equipment, exercise clothing, vitamins, or other items or services that are related to weight loss along with your weight loss information product – to increase your revenue.

Obviously you would not want to create these items, so you would find these related products or services, and sign up for the affiliate programs, allowing you to promote them. Some people even low cost information products, such as ebooks, in order to sell high ticket affiliate products or services. Alternately, some people just use inexpensive affiliate products to enhance their own high ticket products or continuity programs, such as membership sites.

Some people are confused about what affiliate marketing actually is. For instance, many people who have products and offer affiliate programs for those products might say that they sell their product through affiliate marketing. What they mean is that they have affiliates who sell the product for them, but they are actually merchants or affiliate managers, in affiliate marketing terms.

But basically, affiliate marketing is selling someone else's products or services through various means, for various reasons – either to earn an income, to enhance a product, or even to sell an additional product. In fact, many people use

low end affiliate products as lead ins, or entry level products, for higher end affiliate products – never actually creating or promoting a product or service of their own.

Is money being made? You better believe there is! If you include all products and services that are sold through affiliates, affiliate marketing is essentially a billion dollar industry, even though it isn't technically considered an industry in its own right. Many people don't even consider it a career, but they are mistaken.

Right now, at this very moment, there are thousands of affiliate marketers that you have never even heard of quietly promoting affiliate products and collecting huge commission checks every month. Why haven't you heard of them? You haven't heard of them because they are not in the Internet Marketing products market. They are in other 'consumer' niches, such as weight loss, healthcare, sports, gambling, education, financial products, etc.

Now, if you have an active interest in those things, or any other conceivable thing, you have probably searched for information or products related to your interest on the Internet. If this is the case, you have most likely come into contact with an affiliate marketer, without even being aware of it. You may have even purchased a product through an affiliate marketer without ever knowing it.

Even Google has an affiliate program. That's what Google AdSense is all about. It's an affiliate program, but it isn't technically called that. EBay has an affiliate program, as does Microsoft. There is an affiliate program available for just about any product that you can imagine, but not all 'brands' have affiliate programs – which of course is their mistake.

Affiliate marketing presents a win-win-win situation. The owner or maker of the product being sold is making money. The affiliate marketer is making money, and the customer is getting what they want or need. Everybody wins. Affiliate marketing has been around longer than you think it has as well.

Many people think that affiliate marketing started sometime after the Internet came into existence. This is wrong. Amway, Avon, Mary Kay – all of these are essentially affiliate programs, but the people who were actually doing the affiliate

marketing were called distributors or representatives – and they are still called distributors or representatives to this day.

Affiliate marketing can even entail network marketing. Affiliate marketing is the act of selling a product for a commission. Network marketing also involves selling a product for a commission, but also focuses on bringing other resellers (or affiliate marketers, distributors or representatives) into the program as well. Sometimes, however, affiliate marketing also allows and encourages you to bring other affiliate marketers into the program.

Again, affiliate marketing is different things to different people, but the goal is the same – to make money. Affiliate marketing offers you the opportunity and ability to make money without creating a product of your own.

Affiliate Marketing: Getting Started

Getting started in affiliate marketing is really quite easy, but too often, many people mistakenly think it's a lot easier than it actually is. In most cases, the only thing you need to do to join an affiliate program is to fill out a form. That's the easiest part that there is. But there is still work to be done if you are to be successful.

The first objective is to find a profitable market or niche. This can easily be done in Google or by reading magazines. Let's start with Google. Do a search for any topic that interests you. Interest in what you hope to sell is important, and later, you will learn why. Make a list of things that interest you, and do a simple search in Google for each thing.

Pay close attention to the sponsored ads. This tells you that money is being spent in this market. Now, do a little logical thinking. As a business person, would you spend money on advertising that is not making you money? Absolutely not. So, if

there are sponsored – paid - ads for a topic in Google, money is being spent in this market, which means that there is profit.

The same is true with magazines. Visit your library and look at the past three issues of a magazine that relates to your interest. Pay attention to the ads. Do the same ads keep appearing? If the answer is yes, this is a profitable market, and you are ready to move forward.

What about the competition? What about them? 90% of all people who sign up for an affiliate program will not do anything to market it at all. Of the 10% that will market the product, 90% of them will do it wrong, and won't make much money, if they make anything at all. The competition just decreased in size by leaps and bounds. Don't worry about the competition. Concentrate on promoting your affiliate products and services to the best of your ability – let the competition worry about you.

Once you've chosen your market, or your niche, you are almost ready to get started, but there are several other things that you need to do before you can call yourself an affiliate marketer. First, you need to make sure you have the right tools. Then, you must find the programs, understand the terms of the programs, and finally understand how to choose the right programs.