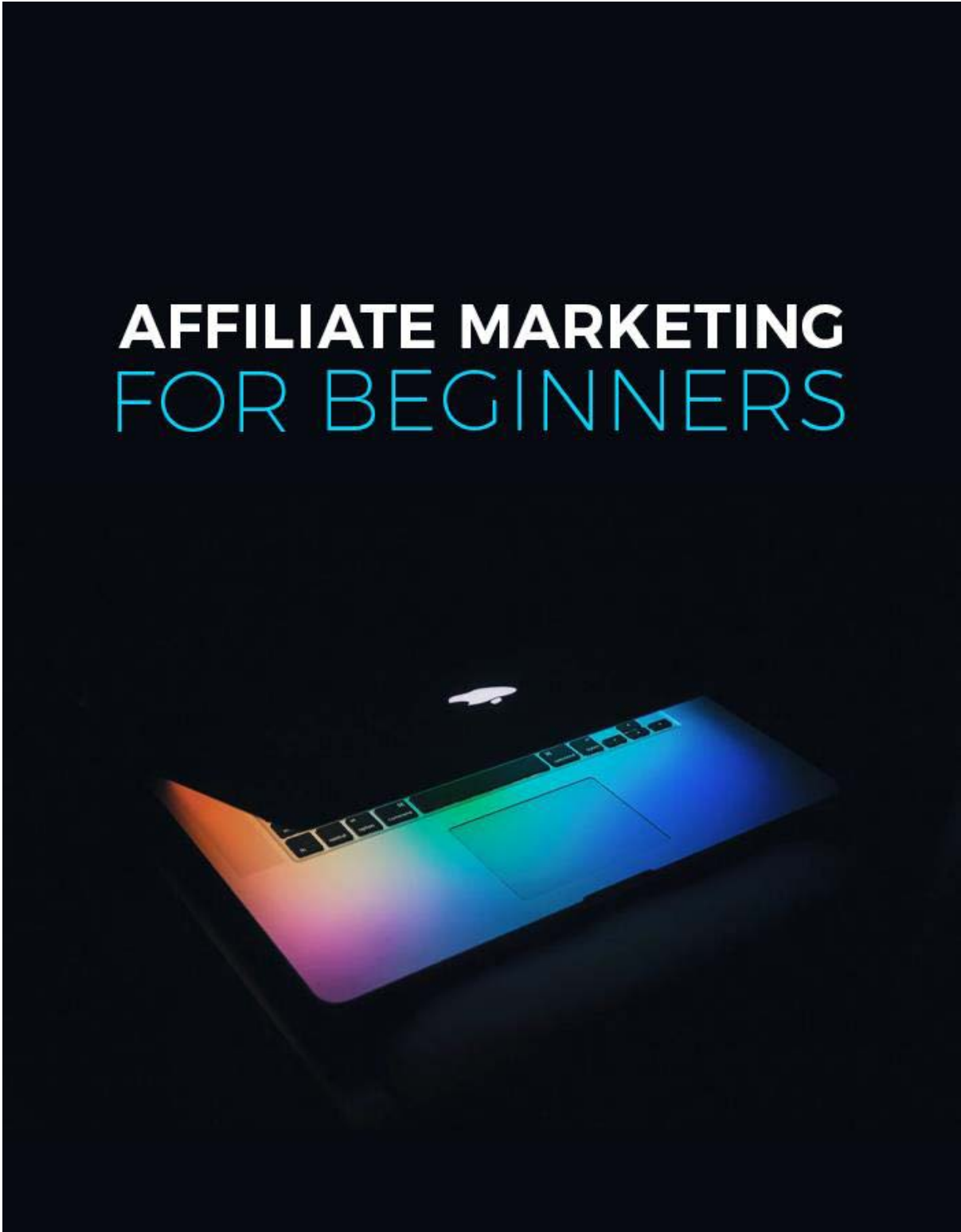


AFFILIATE MARKETING FOR BEGINNERS



COURSE BOOK & ACTION GUIDE

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Introduction

Many entrepreneurs and small business owners are intrigued by the concept of passive income – an income that takes little to no effort to earn. Beyond the initial setup, much of the business is automated, allowing you to “make money while you sleep.”

Though there are many ways to earn passive income, affiliate marketing is one of the best and most popular methods.

What is Affiliate Marketing?

Affiliate marketing is an arrangement where a business (the merchant) pays an individual or company (the affiliate) a commission for sales, clicks, or leads that the affiliate generates through their own marketing efforts. Affiliate marketing is performance-based: If you don't ‘sell’, you don't earn.

Affiliate marketing is all over the Internet, from multi-billion-dollar companies powered by affiliate marketing like Amazon and eBay, to blogs with affiliate links in their posts, to review sites centered on a specific topic or niche. But no matter how modest or massive the example is, what fuels all affiliate-merchant relationships and allows interactions to be tracked is the all-important affiliate link. This link contains a unique code that identifies the affiliate, so when a customer clicks that link and performs the required action (purchase, install, call, etc.), the affiliate receives a commission.

As you progress through this course, you will see how you can capitalize on this relationship and start earning income, even if it isn't completely “passive.”

“Passive” Income

Being a successful affiliate marketer requires effort and commitment. Much has changed since the early days of affiliate marketing. Before Google updated its algorithms, even hobbyist bloggers could share links to products within their content and a simple organic search on Google would direct people to them. But even this wasn't truly passive income, as these early bloggers put in hours creating relevant content that their audience loved and trusted. For many of them, the link income was just an unexpected bonus.

Now it takes more effort to earn income with a blog, niche website, review site, or social media post that contains affiliate links. You must establish a niche, build your target audience, continuously create valuable content, drive traffic to your site using SEO strategies, find products that people will want to click on, and then maximize the number of clicks that convert to sales.

But if you do take these steps, affiliate marketing can present you with the opportunity to earn a 'semi-passive' income by promoting other people's products and services.

The Benefits of Becoming an Affiliate

Low Startup and Operating Costs

If you were creating and selling products yourself, the initial startup costs would be significant: production of goods, labelling, advertising, shipping, hiring employees, etc. To launch an affiliate business, all you need is a computer, Internet access, and content. As you build, if you want to include a website or blog in your affiliate marketing plan, you may need to pay for a domain, web hosting, Google Ads etc., but overall, compared to other businesses, your initial investment is minimal.

This streamlined, low-cost business model extends into your day-to-day operations too. You can produce the content, set up free social media accounts, join forums, and build an email list all on your own. And there is generally no fee for affiliates to set up on affiliate networks or join affiliate programs.

The Ability to Earn Day and Night

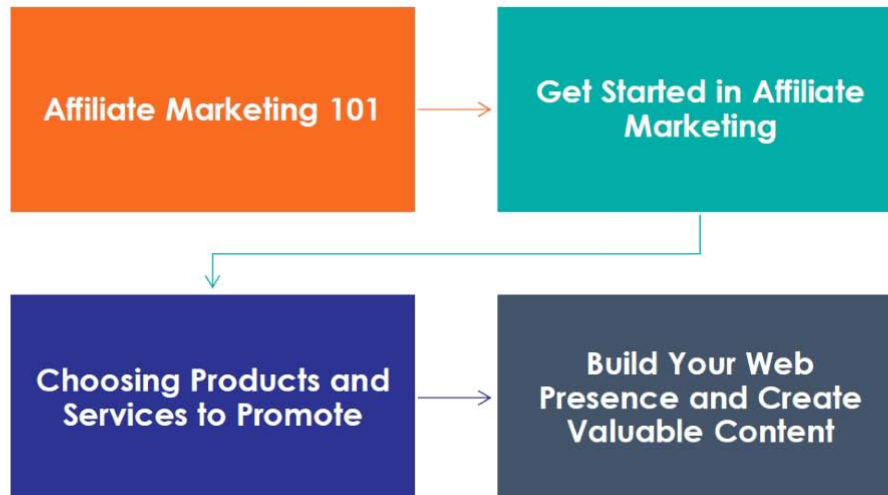
People will click links while you are asleep, so in this sense, yes: affiliate marketing can be an example of passive income. Everything is automated, so once you place the affiliate link in your content, you don't have to monitor it 24/7.

Exposure to a Large Audience

By establishing a web-based affiliate marketing business, you aren't limited by geographic location – you have a much larger audience base and therefore more opportunities to earn commissions.

Whether you are a blogger looking to monetize your audience, or a marketer who wants to create a niche review website, or a small business owner who wants to integrate affiliate marketing into their existing business, this course will give you all the tools you need to get started.

Here is your roadmap through the course:



Learning Objectives:

By the time you complete this course, you'll be able to:

- Recognize what it takes to be a successful affiliate marketer, so that you can position yourself to maximize your affiliate income.
- Establish a niche you are passionate about, giving you the drive to continuously generate more commissions.
- Identify the products and services that your target audience will be most interested in, so you can choose affiliate marketing programs that are worth spending time promoting.
- Build your web presence with valuable content that's relevant to your target audience, so you can build the relationships that result in people trusting your recommendations.
- Learn how to analyze the performance of your affiliate marketing, so you can build your audience, increase conversions, and continue to grow your affiliate marketing income.

This course is broken down into 5 modules to take you step-by-step through Affiliate Marketing for Beginners.

The modules follow a logical order, so while you can skip around if you want, it's best to work through them one at a time.

As you go through each module, use your Action Guide to help you complete the Action Steps at the end of each.

Expectations

Before we start the course, take a minute to think about what you want to get out of it.

In the Action Guide, write down three skills you expect to gain.

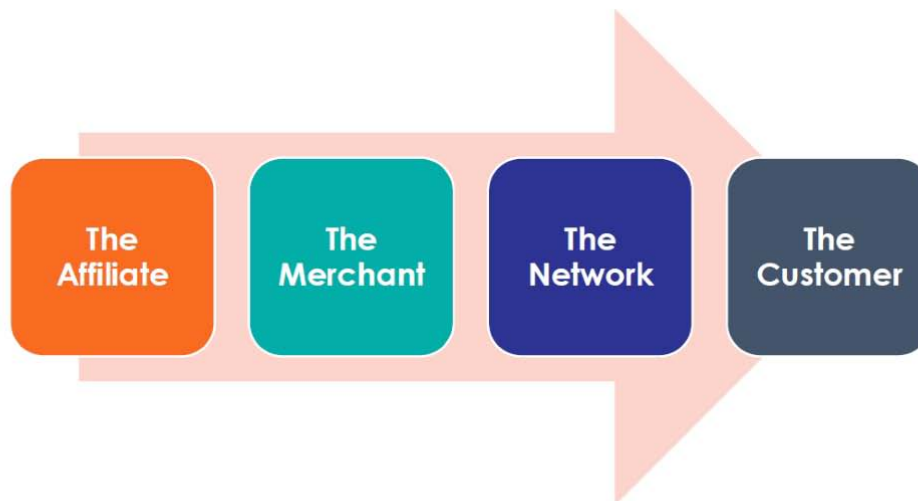
Now that you're clear about what you want this course to deliver, we can get started.

Module 1 – Affiliate Marketing 101

On paper, affiliate marketing is straightforward: A business (the merchant) pays an individual or company (the affiliate) a commission based on sales, clicks, or visits they generate. However, in practice, there is a bit more to it. In this module you will learn about the key players, the basics of how affiliate marketing works, the myths and misconceptions, how you can make money, and if you or your existing business is suited to the 'affiliate life'.

The Key Players

The affiliate relationship consists of four key players.



The Affiliate

An affiliate is the person or company that markets a product or service on behalf of a merchant, earning a commission for each click, lead, or sale. You'll also see the affiliate referred to as a publisher because they publish content that contains affiliate links to products and services.

Affiliates operate independently, with no sales targets or minimums – they earn a commission based on how much they sell, how many people they refer, or how many people click their link. For some publishers, affiliate marketing is their primary income, and they have a strong web presence which may include a website, blog, or social media following. Others use affiliate marketing to supplement their primary business income with targeted product recommendations sent to their email list, YouTube, or other social media following.

The Merchant (Advertiser, Retailer, Brand)

The merchant (also called the advertiser, retailer, or brand) is the business that sells a product or service and wants to promote it to a wider audience. The merchant can be part of a network of companies with offers on an affiliate marketing platform, or they can have their own in-house affiliate program, either by using their own software (e.g. [iDevAffiliate](#)) or through built-in affiliate options in their shopping cart (e.g. [ThriveCart](#)), or both.

The Network

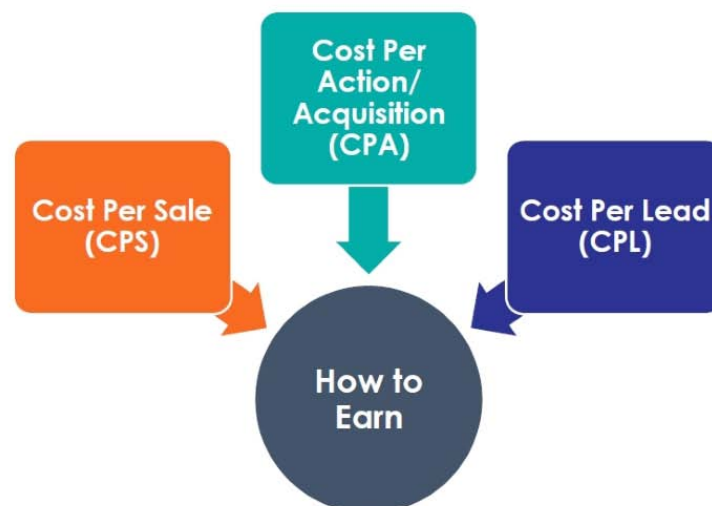
An affiliate network connects merchants and affiliates and coordinates payments between them. Affiliates can browse affiliate programs that feature products and services that complement their content and appeal to their audience. Merchants, in turn, gain access to a wider pool of potential affiliates. Some examples of affiliate marketing networks include: [AWIN](#), [ShareASale](#), [ClickBank](#), [JVZoo](#), [Hotmart](#), [Perform\[cb\]](#), [CJAffiliate](#), and the [Amazon Affiliate Program](#).

The Customer

The customer is the individual who purchases the product or service and is arguably the most important part of this equation. Without the customer, there are no sales, leads, or commissions.

How Affiliates Earn Commissions

Depending on the terms set out by the merchant, there are a number of ways an affiliate can get paid. The following are the most common commission structures.



Cost Per Sale (CPS): Merchants pay affiliates a commission for every sale. This is the most popular compensation method.

Cost Per Action/Acquisition (CPA): Merchants pay a commission for a specific action. This includes prospects filling out forms or surveys, calls, installs, downloads, free 30-minute consultation, and more.

Cost Per Lead (CPL): Merchants pay a commission for a sign-up or any kind of lead that provides them with a prospect's contact information.

How Conversions are Tracked

Affiliates receive a commission based on either CPA, CPL, or CPS commission structures – but how are these actions tracked?

It all comes down to the all-important affiliate link. Once affiliates are accepted into an affiliate program, they are provided with a tracking link that contains a unique ID. When any visitors click on that link, they are directed to the merchant's website. At the same time, a cookie is placed in their browser on their computer or mobile device. This cookie is what enables you to earn a commission. The visitor doesn't have to convert right away. If they purchase, make an inquiry, or perform an action later, you will still get a commission.

Cookie Time Limits

How long that cookie is valid is determined by the merchant, so read the fine print of your terms. For example, the merchant can set a 30-day cookie length. So, once a visitor clicks the link, they have 30 days to purchase or inquire or perform whatever action the merchant wants them to take. If they do so, you will receive a commission. A benefit of this is that older content, including posts and reviews, can still earn you commission well into the future. The clock starts ticking only from the moment the visitor clicks the link. The disadvantage is that if they decide to purchase on day 31, you won't get the commission – even if the only reason they know about the product is because they found your link.

Another potential issue is if your visitor decides to clear their cookies and site data to free up space on their device. Once they do that, the ability to track their purchase has also been cleared.

The Affiliate Life

Nothing in business is ever truly passive. Passive income is the dream that many people chase, but behind the most successful 'passive income' stories are hours of dedication and hard work.

What Makes a Successful Affiliate Marketer?

Being an affiliate marketer requires minimal startup costs and you can do it from home, mostly by yourself. But there are some key traits that will help you become a successful affiliate marketer and make the experience more rewarding, lucrative, and stress-free.



The ability to connect with your audience

People don't want to feel like they are being pitched by an expert salesperson. You need to make them feel like they are receiving valuable recommendations from a respected and trusted friend. You can't just push out links and wait for the commissions to roll in.

Perseverance

Getting to understand your niche, your target audience, and the products they want takes time and involves a lot of trial and error. Many experts recommend building a 'catalog' of content before you ever share an affiliate link. You need to be patient and establish a trusting relationship with your audience.

Adaptability

Audiences, products, technology, online marketing, demand for a product, and solutions are never static. You need to be able to quickly recognize when something isn't delivering results and adapt your approach.

Organization

On top of the actual work of affiliate marketing (consistent content creation, SEO, list building, etc.), affiliates need to keep on top of basic administration and communications. Depending on how large their audience is and how many programs they join, this could take up a few hours of their week. These small but important tasks include tracking payments, merchant relations, monitoring direct communications on social media, and more. This takes organization, planning, and prioritizing.

Should You Incorporate Affiliate Marketing into Your Existing Business?

Many small businesses or independent freelancers are looking for new ways to increase sales. Affiliate marketing may be the key to branching out and diversifying your income streams. You will be able to start generating clicks and conversions faster than somebody starting from scratch because you have already built a relationship with your audience. This is the step that usually takes the longest, and you will already be ahead of the game.

When You Should Avoid Affiliate Marketing

Some businesses do not lend themselves to affiliate marketing. The incorporation of an affiliate link may be intrusive, unwelcome, or unprofessional in some industries. Consider the following points and decide if you should build on your existing business and list, or if you should create an affiliate marketing website or web presence from scratch as a sideline to your existing business.

Will Affiliate Links Jeopardize Your Credibility?

If adding an affiliate link in your content has even the remote possibility of affecting your credibility, don't include it. If you have a traditional, formal, or professional service (e.g., law, medicine, accounting), affiliate links may be off-putting to your audience.

Are Your Existing Skillsets Compatible?

If your business is hands-on, or you have developed a specialized skill completely outside of the realm of marketing, then creating content, adding affiliate links, and building a relationship with your audience may not be worth the time and effort it would take to get up to speed, and could potentially shift the focus from your primary business. On the other hand, if you have a marketing, public relations, or advertising freelancing business and you have already created content, adding affiliate links to existing copy is an easy, natural progression.

Are You Restless and Looking for Something New?

If you have been operating your business for a long time and want to diversify and explore other interests, then affiliate marketing within your existing niche may not be a good idea. To be a successful affiliate marketer, you need to be passionate, creating a lot of content around a particular subject matter. If you are experiencing burn out within your existing niche, affiliate marketing will become a burden instead of something challenging and exciting.

Now that you better understand how the affiliate relationship works, how you earn your commission, and if you and your business are suited to affiliate marketing, you are ready to learn the hands-on steps you need to take to get started in affiliate marketing.

Action Steps:

1. Find examples of affiliate marketing in your everyday life and note these down in your Action Guide. Personal experiences and examples help us to cement our knowledge. Think about websites, social media accounts, and blogs that you interact with regularly:
 - a. Can you think of blogs or sites you regularly visit that you now realize are affiliates and are marketing to you? List 5.
 - b. Find 10 examples of links that motivate you to click and purchase. Consider looking on social media accounts, blogs, or review sites.
 - c. Does the person who is sharing the affiliate link influence your decision to click the link? If so, why?
2. Think about your work style. Is it compatible with affiliate marketing? What do you need to work on to improve your chances of success (e.g., organization)? List tools that can help. (e.g., productivity apps like [Serene](#) that help break down tasks and include features like a website blocker and session timers).
3. Brainstorm which 'affiliate marketing path' would work best for you, and your skillset: starting from scratch or building on an existing business, email list, or network. Write down the pros and cons for each in your Action Guide.

Module 2 – Get Started in Affiliate Marketing

After gaining a basic knowledge of affiliate marketing and starting to think about how you will apply it to your business, the first step is defining your niche.

It's almost impossible to earn money targeting a broad audience with affiliate links that feature random products. You need to get specific: Defining your niche is all about finding products or services to promote that will appeal to a small, specialized segment of the population.

Define Your Niche

To define your niche, you need to examine the two components that make up a niche: the audience and the product or service.

If you already have an audience, think about products and services that will appeal to them. The process is reversed if you are starting from scratch. Explore topics and products you are passionate about and build an audience around that.

Market to an Existing Audience

If you have a small business, blog, mailing list, or a large network, think about topics and their related products and services that generally would appeal to this group, and the one thing you all have in common. For example, you are a business coach and you have built a mailing list of small business owners who want to learn more about leadership.

Analyze Your Audience

However, your work isn't done. It's not enough to simply focus on 'small business owners' and 'leadership'. That is still very broad when it comes to affiliate marketing. You will need to dig deeper and analyze your audience and what content or shared interest drew them to you in the first place. The key to getting people to click on your affiliate links is understanding who they are, focusing on:

- **Demographics:** age, location, education level, marital status, occupation, etc.

- **Psychographics:** wants, values, needs, hobbies, goals, areas that they need help, etc.
- **The content, shared interests, or business offering that drew them to you:**
 - Examine why your audience follows you, signs up for your free content, or has purchased from you in the past.
 - What kind content appeals to them?
 - What is their level of expertise?
 - What types of questions do they ask and how do they interact with you?

Your next step is to put all of this information together. For example, let's say you observed that most of the people on your list are 25-34-year-old single males who want to launch an online business. They consistently sign up for free content about building leadership skills and supplement their income while growing their business. Many of them have university degrees unrelated to their current job and earn less than 50k a year.

At this point, you will be able to start building an audience profile and gain an understanding of what they want, which will give you the information you need to define your niche.

You Can Start from Scratch

If you don't have a business or established audience, explore niche possibilities by first looking at a topic that you are passionate about and related products, focusing on:

- **Products, services, or brands that are unique, new, or under-represented online.**
- **A specific product you are passionate about and have had success with.** For example, you joined an online fitness program and it helped you get into the best shape of your life. You are the perfect candidate to become a coach and get an affiliate link, promoting add-on products and memberships to the site, along with related fitness products from other brands.
- **A special interest or hobby.**

- **An area of expertise**, for example a subject you have researched extensively (from your educational background, previous career, personal experience, or even a health issue you are dealing with).

Narrow Your Audience

Once you've identified a niche that you are passionate about and have personal experience with (e.g., transitioning from a 9-5 job to a freelancing career), you need to start thinking about who you want to target: Recent college grads who were unprepared for a 9-5 job? Parents on parental leave who aren't ready to go back to work while balancing childcare? People who find themselves bored and dissatisfied mid-career?

When you are first starting out in affiliate marketing, it is best to keep it simple. Think about your own story and why you chose this niche. Who would your story resonate with? Start out by targeting people who are like you. As you grow, you can expand your audience or product offering (or both) but at first, do what you know.

Important Factors to Consider When Defining Your Niche



Is the niche you are considering profitable?

Can this niche generate sales from a small, specialized segment of the population (not just follows)? You can find any number of groups on social media that bring people together around a common interest. But if that thing that brings you all together can't be monetized, then you shouldn't make it your marketing niche. For instance, your alien research group is enthusiastic, engaged, and passionate, but what products (that have an affiliate program) can you recommend that they purchase?

Does keyword research support choosing this niche?

A keyword or keyword phrase is what you type into a search engine, like Google, when you are looking for information. That's also referred to as "organic" traffic to a website and it's a great way to see if your niche will be profitable. Are people doing organic searches for your niche? Or is your niche too saturated, with lots of competition? You can use a tool like [Ubersuggest](#) to see how many searches there are for a keyword or keyword phrase related your niche ideas, and what people are paying to advertise inside those search results. When people are paying to advertise, it usually means the people who are searching the keyword are buyers. And that means it could be a profitable niche for you, especially if there isn't too much competition already.

What unique value do you bring to this niche?

In other words, why you? Why should you be the person to share these links? Your connection to the niche has to be authentic or else your audience won't take your recommendations seriously.

Can you generate enough content around this niche?

Are you truly passionate about the products and services within this niche? You may have experience and expertise within a particular niche, but do you love it? You will need to generate content around this niche consistently, for an extended period of time. Knowledge won't carry you through the difficult times, only a passion and love for the topic will.

Action Steps:

1. If you have an existing audience, use your Action Guide to conduct a review. Write down as much as you can about the following areas:
 - a. Demographics - age, location, education level, marital status, occupation, etc. Helpful tools include Facebook Audience Insights, Instagram's Insights, and Google Analytics for your blog or website.
 - b. Psychographics - wants, values, needs, hobbies, goals, areas that they need help, etc. Psychographic information may be more difficult to obtain, but take the time to read your comments section, make note of which blog posts have generated the most likes, etc.
 - c. Content, shared interests or business offering that drew them to you.

- I. Examine why your audience follows you, signs up for your free content, or has purchased from you in the past.
 - II. What kind of content appeals to them?
 - III. What is their level of expertise?
 - IV. What types of questions do they ask and how do they interact with you?
2. Make a list of subjects and topics that you are passionate about and related products and services.
 3. Reflect on the above answers and write down 5 niche ideas. Brainstorm at least 3 content ideas around each. If you find it easy to generate ideas, this is a good sign that you can produce enough content around it.
 4. Make sure your ideas will be profitable.
 - a. Search affiliate programs related to your niche ideas in Google. Search [idea] + affiliate programs and see what comes up.
 - b. Do some keyword research using a tool like [Ubersuggest](#) and take note of search volume and CPC (or "cost per click").
 5. What value do you uniquely bring to your niche ideas? List reasons why people would click an affiliate link that you share (e.g. "I am a fitness instructor whose transformation has inspired my audience so they would respect, and be excited by, my recommendation to join an online fitness program.")

Module 3 – Choosing Products and Services to Promote

Once you have determined your niche and defined your target audience, it's time to think about specific products that you can promote through your affiliate links. Start doing some research, keeping in mind the following questions:

Which brands, products, and services does your target audience talk about on social media, forums, or groups?

Who are the affiliate marketers in your niche linking to?

What products, services, or brands do you love and use regularly?

- Which brands, products, and services does your target audience talk about on social media, in forums, or in groups?
- Who are the affiliate marketers in your niche linking to?
- What products, services, or brands do you love and use regularly?

Brainstorm as many ideas as you can think of and keep a running list that you can add to when inspiration strikes. Take all of these ideas and Google the brand name or product + 'affiliate program' and see what Google returns. Visit the websites and look for an 'Affiliates' or 'Partners' link on the home page, which is usually in the footer. That will direct you to their affiliate page which will detail their program and provide contact information for an affiliate manager.

Important Factors to Consider When Choosing an Affiliate Program

Before choosing an affiliate program to join, ask yourself these questions:

- Is the product relevant to your target audience and niche?
- Is the brand and/or price point compatible with your target audience?
- Would your audience find this product useful and helpful?

- Is the merchant's commission rate acceptable and fair? Do they offer bonuses and increasing commissions to affiliates who reach a certain sales threshold?
- What is the affiliate program's policy on cookie life? Is it fair, and will it adequately reward you for conversions that may take time to happen?
- What is the merchant's minimum payment policy?



Many large businesses have an in-house affiliate program, but a significant portion will have their program on an affiliate network. An affiliate network is an online platform that connects affiliates with merchants. Merchants join the network in order to showcase their program to a wider audience. They provide information about their product and their program, including commission structure. Through participation in a network, merchants can also track how the program is performing and all payments are coordinated through the network.

Affiliates join these platforms for a number of reasons. The network acts as a one-stop shop where you can browse affiliate programs within your niche that would appeal to your audience. Through membership in an affiliate network, affiliates also gain access to exclusive offers and can connect with an affiliate marketing community that will help them develop their skills.

How to Join an Affiliate Network

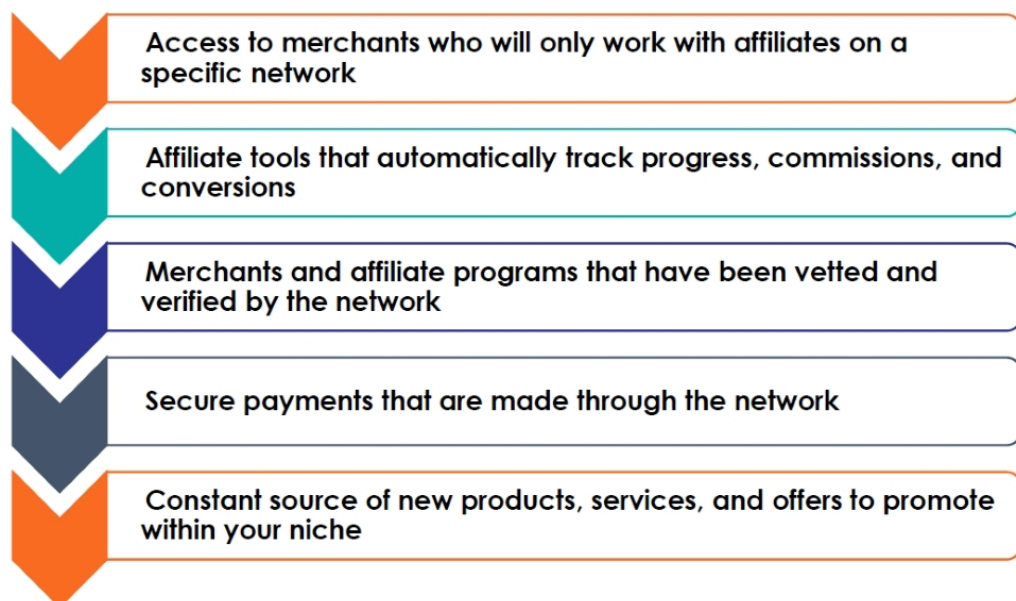
There is generally no cost for affiliates to join, but they must first meet the network's requirements before they are accepted. Networks add this application process to keep out spammers who lower the quality of the platform. At a minimum, networks will ask for your URL and require that you have an optimized website and relevant, quality content.

Make sure that you understand the network's terms of service before joining, specifically focusing on the payment terms. Some networks set a minimum payout amount per month. So, for example, if the network's minimum monthly payout is \$1050, and you only earn \$50, the network will withhold payment. Some even charge a fee to affiliates who do not generate commissions within a specified timeframe.

Once you are verified, you can start browsing the different affiliate programs featured on the network. Networks will help you sort through the opportunities, separating the programs by industry or category (e.g. travel, beauty, fitness). Plus, you can narrow down your search even further using a search tool. Once you find programs that look suitable, you can then apply directly to the merchant's affiliate program.

Some examples of affiliate marketing networks include: [AWIN](#), [ShareASale](#), [ClickBank](#), [JVZoo](#), [Hotmart](#), [Perform\[cb\]](#), [CJAffiliate](#), and the [Amazon Affiliate Program](#).

Benefits of joining an affiliate network include:



- Access to merchants who will only work with affiliates on a specific network
- Affiliate tools that automatically track progress, commissions, and conversions
- Merchants and affiliate programs that have been vetted and verified by the network
- Secure payments that are made through the network

- Constant source of new products, services, and offers to promote within your niche

Once you are part of an affiliate network, you still have to apply to each individual affiliate program. The criteria for joining these programs are similar to networks, but the process can be more rigorous.

What Do Affiliate Managers Look For?



A live, active website with a custom domain. For example, you would need to purchase a domain like ‘thebestfitness.com’ versus hosting your site for free on WordPress (thebestfitness.wordpress.com). Domains can be purchased from sites like GoDaddy and Namecheap. Don’t use a social URL as your web presence.

A valid domain email address. Use your domain name in your email address instead of a free email service like Gmail. For example, your email should be info@thebestfitness.com versus thebestfitness@gmail.com. Networks and managers need to be able to identify and verify you. When you use a domain address, it proves that you are the owner of the site and makes you appear more professional.

Quality design and content. Make sure to use a professional theme on your website or blog. Clean up your sidebar and remove excessive ads or widgets. Republishing old, popular blog posts related to your niche will allow affiliate managers to see the content relevant to their product that has generated page views up top. Find out what other people in your niche are promoting and follow their path, applying to the same networks and affiliate programs. Finally, make sure to fully understand their product and service and how you would promote it so that you can easily explain why your audience is their target and that you understand their brand.

By this point, you should have a clear idea of what your niche is, who you are targeting, and the brands, products, and services you want to promote. Now, you’ll be ready to establish your online presence and create valuable, relevant, and optimized content that will attract your target audience, build relationships with them, and establish trust.

Action Steps:

1. Research and identify 10 brands, products, and services your target audience is talking about on social media, forums, and in groups (yours or those within your niche if you haven't established your web presence yet). Use your Action Guide to write down your findings.
2. Take a look at the social media, blog posts, and websites of the competition – affiliate marketers within your niche. Identify 10 brands and products they link to.
3. List 10 brands, products, or services within your niche that you use regularly.
4. Take your favorite 5 brands, products, and services that you have identified and do a Google search on them (searching the product name + 'affiliate program'). Visit the websites and read the terms of their affiliate program. Take note of any actions you'll need to take to comply with terms and services.
5. Research three affiliate networks that are popular within your niche and take a look at their application. Do you meet the requirements? If not, take note of what you need to improve (e.g., optimize your website, create a domain email address versus using your Gmail, etc.)

Module 4 – Build Your Web Presence and Create Valuable Content

Before you dive straight into affiliate marketing, you first need to build your web presence. No matter how you decide to put yourself and your links out there (social media, YouTube, email marketing, blog, website, etc.) you will need to populate all of these spaces with valuable, relevant, keyword-optimized content. This content will need to attract your target customers, build relationships with them, and gain their trust.

In this module, you will explore different ways to communicate with your audience, determining which strategies will work best for you and appeal to your niche. You will also learn what kind of content you need to create and how you can incorporate affiliate links in a way that is helpful to your audience.

Website or Blog

Most affiliates decide to incorporate a website or blog into their affiliate marketing strategy, but it isn't always necessary. However, a website serves as a 'home base', helping the affiliate create an identity and build trust and a relationship with the audience. When you establish a connection with your audience, it gives them more incentive to click affiliate links and purchase from merchants. And, if you want to join an affiliate network, most require that you have an active, live website.

Generally, affiliate marketing websites fall into one of these two categories and you can choose the one that makes the most sense to you.

Affiliate-Focused Niche Websites

This involves developing a niche website specifically for the purpose of affiliate marketing and the promotion of affiliate links. This is a good route to take if you don't already have a following through your personal or business web presence. At this point, you have already chosen a niche (e.g. parents who hike with their kids) and figured out your target (suburban and urban Millennial parents who take weekend hiking trips with their young children). This website would feature reviews, comparisons, tips about taking road trips with children, how to select the best trails for all levels, and strategies to keep kids interested. As you build the content and gain an audience, you will start to add affiliate links, banners, and more. Again, the subject you choose should be something you feel passionate about because you will be talking about it – a lot.

Blogs

A blog can be the 'main attraction' or a section of an existing business website. Generally, if you take this route, you already have an established following or customer base and want to monetize this audience. You will most likely have already built a relationship with your audience and established trust and respect. You can start to include affiliate links right away and work them into older posts.

Forums or Online Groups

You have to be cautious with this, as many group admins are on high alert for spammy affiliates who use the forum as a way to push products. Here are some tips for sharing your affiliate links in these spaces:

Understand the rules of the group

Read the room

Work in affiliate links as recommendations

Have a genuine interest in the group subject matter

Build relationships

- Understand the rules of the group and make sure you don't get flagged by admins
- Read the room. For example, if you are in a dog group and somebody has announced the loss of a beloved pet, don't post your pet urn affiliate link
- Work in affiliate links as recommendations, and only where they would actually benefit group members
- Have a genuine interest in the group subject matter (this comes back to choosing a niche that you are passionate about)
- Build relationships that will encourage them to connect with you outside the group and join your list

eBooks

Develop an eBook about a popular, specialized topic within your niche and work affiliate links into the content. This will require research and possibly outsourced writing, but it is an excellent way to establish you as an expert. So even if people don't read the entire eBook or click your links, the fact that you now have a book on that subject matter will encourage them to click future links that you share in social media posts, groups, or other (shorter!) pieces of content.

Social Media

Social media sites can be a powerful way to promote products and services and a valuable tool to learn about your audience and find out what they're interested in. Put the focus on specific platforms based on your niche and target audience. For example, if you are marketing to a 60+ adult, Facebook is a good platform to focus on.

Things to keep in mind when posting affiliate links on social media:



- As in online forums, don't join a group on Facebook or LinkedIn in order to spam it with your affiliate links
- Build a relationship with your audience
- Create a shortened URL for your affiliate link using sites link [cuttly](#) or [bitly](#). It is more visually appealing and takes up fewer characters

YouTube Channel

Videos offer a dynamic, engaging way to connect with your audience and get them to click your affiliate links. Your affiliate link is included in the written description of the video.

It is important that the link doesn't simply go to a product listing on the merchant's site – there has to be a special offer or a giveaway. Hosting a YouTube channel requires effort (see, there is no such thing as truly passive income). You have to produce quality videos with great content, learn how to use keywords to get people to your videos, and build your audience of subscribers.

Online Publishing Platforms

You can use online publishing platforms (similar to online magazines) like [Medium](#) or [Imprint](#) to share your affiliate links. Medium has a large readership, analytics tools, and their domain authority will improve your stories' content ranking in Google. Most publishing platforms, including Medium, require that you disclose if you are sharing affiliate links.

Email Marketing

Send your list a weekly newsletter, update, or 'Top 5' roundup of your favorite products, including your affiliate links throughout. An email list allows you to communicate with your audience regularly, marketing to them directly with targeted affiliate links based on their interests and demographic information. Keep building this list by offering free content in exchange for their email address, using an opt-in form on your website or blog.

An important recommendation for affiliates without a website:

Make it a priority to set up a hosted sign up/opt-in form through an online email marketing service like [AWeber](#) or [GetResponse](#). Using a template, you can create an opt-in form, or even a dedicated subscriber page. The form has a unique URL that you can share on social media, in your email signature, etc.

As you can see, there are many channels you can use to communicate with your audience. To be a successful affiliate marketer, you need to build your niche and create a community around it. The ideal approach is to use multiple channels to communicate with your target audience, and populate these channels with valuable, relevant, and optimized content.

Content that Converts

Affiliates can use several different strategies to promote their product links, as long as they follow the merchant's terms of service and branding guidelines. The following examples outline different ways you can communicate with your audience and add affiliate links. When deciding where and what content to create, always keep in mind your target audience.

You can refer back to Module 2 and review your answers about your target audience's demographics, psychographics, what they most want, and what products or services would solve their problems.

Product Reviews

Writing a product review is one of the most popular ways to integrate affiliate links into content. People click on reviews because they want to know more about a product, so they are already primed to purchase. Your job is to give them information about a product that will get them to click and commit. This is where establishing trust with your audience becomes very important – you have to give them a reason to seek out your opinion and then click your link, not somebody else's.

Product reviews are also great for attracting new people to your website or blog. Product reviews rank higher in search engine results because they contain product and brand keywords in multiple locations (page title, body copy, etc.). This will be even more effective if you have a much targeted niche.

Product reviews can be integrated into a blog, single topic website, or reviews can be the primary business of the website – providing product reviews and comparison around a single topic.

Here are some tips for writing a review that attracts new visitors and converts:

- Describe each product in detail, including features, benefits, and drawbacks
- Include multiple optimized images, along with the price and any discount
- Share your personal experience with the product – your regular followers value your opinion and new visitors may choose to join your mailing list if they liked how you delivered your review and the personal details you shared resonated with them.

Posts About Your Niche

Instead of the product being front and center, include a product mention within a blog post about a related topic. The product should be skillfully worked into the content, not just an abrupt product mention or link at the end of the post. For example, you could write about getting caught in the rain during a day of hiking and mention the rain gear your kids always carry with them. This can be included in a blog post or social media post. This type of post is beneficial because you don't have to write a full product review, simply include a great photo of your kid in her rain gear and a muddy trail,

with a funny comment about the day, and one benefit of the product. (“Hardly takes up any space in your backpack and keeps you dry.”)

Banners

Place your affiliate link as banner images on your website. The main benefit of a banner ad is it can be placed throughout your website on multiple pages. You don’t have to worry about working a text link into content, just place the banner image throughout your site. And if your site is specifically about hiking with kids, a banner ad with rain gear for kids works pretty much anywhere.

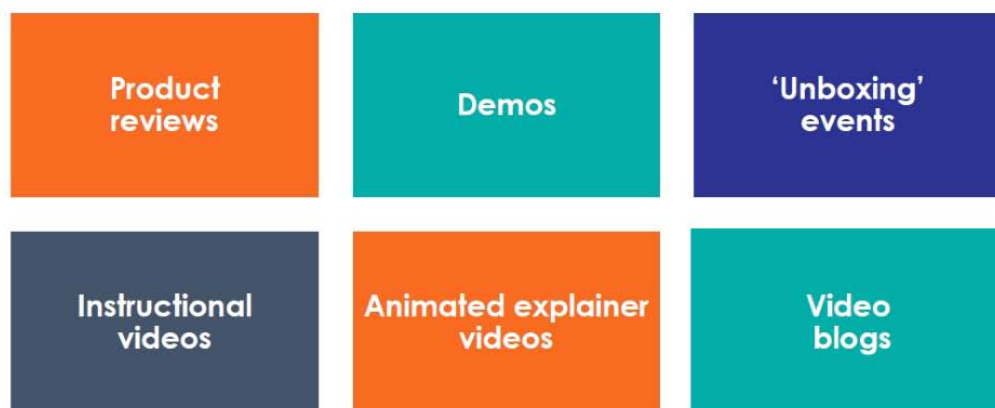
Video Content

In the world of digital marketing, the popularity of video content has increased exponentially — this holds true for the affiliate world too. In YouTube videos, affiliates will show the product and demonstrate its use. This increases viewer trust because they see you interacting and using the actual product. You can either purchase the product, or sometimes merchants will send influencers and reviewers a free product in exchange for promotion.

Video allows people to see the product in action and that is why it is such a high-converting method of sharing an affiliate link. Videos also allow the audience to build a relationship with the reviewer and feel like they know them, building trust and respect.

Affiliate links are shared in the description box. If you mention several products in the video, include the product name before each link.

Here are a few YouTube content ideas to get you started:



- Product reviews
- Demos

- 'Unboxing' events (you reveal a new product live on camera)
- Instructional videos
- Animated explainer videos
- Video blogs where you provide personal or professional updates

Content Rules to Remember

No matter how you decide to deliver your content, there are some rules that apply across the board.

Disclose Affiliate Links

Inform visitors when you are using affiliate links – users will appreciate this, especially if you have already built a relationship with them and they trust you. An important part of this equation is also providing content and information that doesn't always result in a commission for you. Don't flood your content and social media presence with affiliate links.

Be Authentic

Promote products you truly believe in – either something you have used yourself or something you know your audience would truly appreciate. And you should have a true connection with the audience: If you have a 'hiking with kids' site, you should have kids and like to hike.

Provide Value

Valuable content provides your audience with the tools to act and answers the questions that they have been asking. It also invites discussion and gets shared on social media, forums, and groups. You can find out what your audience has been searching for and answer their questions by using tools like [Answer the Public](#), which takes autocomplete data from search engines and provides a list of phrases and questions people are asking about your keywords or niche.

Keep it Relevant

Make sure the products you promote are always relevant to your audience. Don't add throwaway links.

Be Original and Creative

There are a lot of affiliates out there trying to promote the same products and target a similar audience. Weave in a story demonstrating why your website's recommendations are more valuable than others.

Drive Traffic to Your Content

You don't want to create all of this valuable content in a vacuum. You want your target audience to find you and your affiliate links. Understanding and incorporating SEO (search engine optimization) is major part of being a successful affiliate marketer.

Optimize Your Content

Optimizing your content with keywords is a necessary step to drive organic traffic from search results. Refer back to your keyword research related to your niche and what is popular with your target audience. Incorporate these keywords into the content you produce and test which ones not only drive traffic to your content, but also result in people clicking your affiliate links.

Use one main keyword for each piece of content

Don't overload a single piece of content with every keyword you brainstormed related to your niche. Search engines will direct people to valuable content that addresses specific search terms or queries. If you load up your content with every imaginable keyword related to the subject, the search engine may not consider it specific enough to be valuable.

You also need to test which keywords and keyword phrases work and which don't. If you load up on keywords, it is difficult to determine which one is driving people to your content and getting them to click the link.

Place your keyword/keyword phrase in several places within a piece of content

Add the keyword to the title, sub-headers, image alt-text, and main content. Make sure to do this as naturally as possible so the keywords don't interrupt the flow and make your content difficult to read.

Optimize Your Links

You can optimize your links by shortening and branding them – this will make them easy to remember and share. WordPress has a plugin called [Pretty Links](#) that allows you to do this, or you can use link shortening generators like [cuttly](#).

Invest in Paid Ads

Consider non-organic traffic, such as paid ads, when you are sure that keywords in your content are converting and you are confident that the expense is worth it. An ad expert can be valuable at this stage.

Building your web presence, creating valuable content, and driving traffic to your content (and therefore to your link) is an important part of affiliate marketing. But you need to constantly monitor and test what is working and what isn't so you can adapt and adjust. In the next module, you will learn how to analyze the performance of your links and your content and evaluate the effectiveness of your communications channels.

Action Steps:

1. If you are creating a website, think about what approach will work best for you, your niche, and your target audience: a niche website or a blog? List 5 pros and cons of each in your Action Guide.
2. Analyze which social media platforms are the most popular with your target audience, and if you haven't already, set up an account and start populating it with relevant content. Don't worry about affiliate links right now, just focus on providing valuable and helpful content.
3. Research forums or groups that your target audience visits. Join these and start reading comments and interacting with group members.
4. Review the content suggestions in this module (eBook, blog posts, online publishing platforms, YouTube videos etc.) Brainstorm 15-20 specific ideas that are related to your niche, referring back to some of the preliminary ideas you started generating in Module 2. (E.g. for video ideas, think of a specific product review, instructional video, or comparison video you could record).
5. From the content ideas you generated, pick the top 5 you'd like to start with, and select and write down the keyword that you'll optimize it for, so that you can get organic traffic. Refer back to the initial keyword research you did in module 2 and also revisit [Ubersuggest](#), with the additional knowledge and information you now have. Consider where else you'll share content to drive traffic to it (e.g., your email list, social media groups, and posts) and come up with a topline idea for each.
6. Prepare to start building your email list. Brainstorm 10 ideas for free content you could provide to your target audience in exchange for their email address.

Module 5 – Conclusion and Next Steps

In this final module, you'll learn some tips to continue seeing the best results from affiliate marketing. You'll also have the opportunity to review the course and plan future action.

Analyze Your Performance

A critical part of the marketing process is analysis, and affiliate marketing is no exception. Monitoring and analyzing your performance to date gives you a clear view of what works and what don't, allowing you to adapt and adjust. When you first start out with affiliate marketing, there is some trial and error and 'best guesses' at play. You probably didn't have extensive psychographic information about your target audience, and you may have only had a vague understanding about what drives them to purchase.

However, as you start testing out platforms, content, and links, a clearer picture of your audience will start to emerge. Once you have that information, you can come up with an improved marketing strategy, switching your focus to what does work and testing out new, more creative ways to share your links and boost your affiliate earnings.

Your Platforms

When creating a web presence, you focused on putting your content in places that would appeal to your target audience: Facebook, YouTube, product reviews on your blog, etc. After 4-6 weeks of testing the waters and collecting data, analyze what has worked so far and what hasn't:

- Where are most of your conversions coming from? YouTube, Facebook, blog posts, email newsletters?
- List all of your platforms and rank performance from best to worst.

Within all of these platforms, use any analytics tools they provide to get more data on the audience that is visiting there (e.g., Facebook Audience Insights, Instagram Insights, and Google Analytics).

Your Content

Continue to dig deeper and analyze the content on these various platforms:

- What kind of content is performing the best? Reviews? Image optimized social media posts? Product demonstrations on YouTube?

- Get a sense of what genre of content your audience likes to consume. What tone they prefer – Lighthearted? Serious? Inspirational? Aspirational?

Your Links

Links are the centerpiece of your affiliate marketing strategy. This is why you have established a web presence and created content: to get your audience to click on your links and convert.

How are your links performing? Are people liking posts or videos that feature affiliate links but not clicking? Or are they clicking, but not converting?

Analyzing these three elements in isolation isn't enough. You have to put all the information together to get an understanding of how you can increase conversions. Focus on what the issue may be and what isn't resonating with your audience: the content, the products you are featuring, the specific product in a specific link, etc.

For example, if people like your posts but aren't clicking the link, is the affiliate link a bad fit with the content or does it feature a product or offer your audience simply isn't interested in? Or, if you are getting a lot of people to your site but they aren't clicking, maybe you need to adjust your traffic building strategies and keywords because they aren't attracting the right customers. Run each link through this analysis to get a better understanding of which products, promotions, and content perform best.

Evaluating your performance and adjusting your content and affiliate links is an ongoing process. Some things will work, some won't, and it will start to become apparent what is performing well based on the commissions you receive. That is one of the most exciting things about affiliate marketing – you get real time feedback about what is working and what isn't.

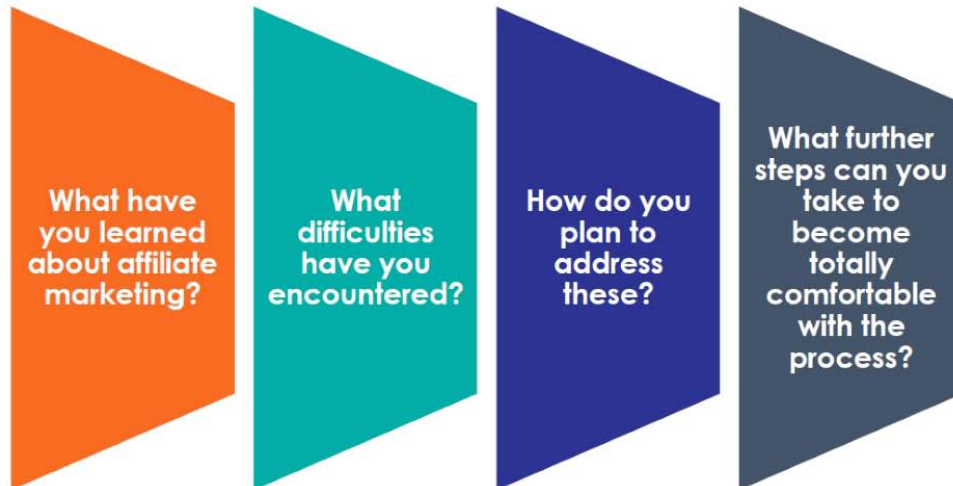
The steps outlined in this course are the foundation for your affiliate marketing efforts. You can refer back to the material when you are ready to expand your audience or product offering (or both) and work your way through the modules again.

What You Learned

This is a course you can refer back to time and time again. It's important to reflect on what you've learned, so answer these questions and complete the action plan table in your Action Guide.

- What have you learned about affiliate marketing?
- What difficulties have you encountered?

- How do you plan to address these?
- What further steps can you take to become totally comfortable with the process?



Action Steps:

1. Write down all of the platforms you use to share affiliate links (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, blog etc.) and using data from your affiliate network, merchant partners, and/or your own tracking system, rank how each platform performed from best to worst. Were the results what you expected? Write down what you found out in your Action Guide.
2. Using data gathered from affiliate network, merchant partners, and/or your own tracking system, write down the type of content that is performing the best. Reviews? Image-optimized social media posts? YouTube demonstrations? Write down five things you have learned from analyzing the data you received about your content.
3. Analyze the content that converted and write down the overall tone of the successful content. Is it lighthearted? Inspirational? Serious? Aspirational?
4. Answer the questions in the Action Guide on what you've learned from this course.
5. Review the course thoroughly and use the action plan in the Action Guide to record your goals and what needs to happen next.

How to Use Your Action Guide

You'll get the best results from any course you participate in by completing the Action Steps at the end of each module. They will help you apply what you learn directly to your business and your life, maximizing the investment you're making.

Use the following Action Guide to record your answers, insights, and other notes for the Action Steps, which are outlined in your Course Book. You'll want to refer to each module's content as you complete the related steps.

While we have left space in the guide for each action step, you may feel more comfortable using a separate notebook or digital application for your work. Use whatever method you feel most comfortable with and don't feel constrained to using the space in the Action Guide alone.

In addition, your course may have other Action Sheets, such as spreadsheets or planning templates, which are separate from the guide. Look out for those with your other course materials.

Finally, you don't have to complete all the steps at once. Instead, try setting a specific time on your calendar to work on them. And don't feel that you have to get it right the first time. Learning is a process that happens as you apply your new skills and knowledge. You'll want to return periodically to your Action Guide and both remind yourself of the work you've achieved and edit your answers as you see their impact.

Have fun with it and enjoy the progress and successes that will happen as a result of your work!

Introduction

Expectations

Before we start the course, take a minute to think about what you want to get out of it.

Write down three skills you expect to gain.

1	
2	
3	

Module 1 – Affiliate Marketing 101

1. Find examples of affiliate marketing in your everyday life. Personal experiences and examples help us to cement our knowledge. Think about websites, social media accounts, and blogs that you interact with regularly:
 - a. Can you think of blogs or sites you regularly visit that you now realize are affiliates and are marketing to you? List 5.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

- b. Find 10 examples of links that motivate you to click and purchase. Consider looking on social media accounts, blogs, or review sites.
 - c. Does the person who is sharing the affiliate link influence your decision to click the link? If so, why?

	Link	Does the person sharing the link influence you?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

2. Think about your work style and if you could use affiliate marketing.

Answer the following questions:

Is your work style compatible with affiliate marketing?	
What do you need to work on to improve your chances of success?	
List tools that can help	e.g., productivity apps like Serene that help break down tasks and include features like a website blocker and session timers

3. Brainstorm which 'affiliate marketing path' would work best for you, and your skillset: starting from scratch or building on an existing business, email list, or network. Write down the pros and cons for each.

Starting from Scratch	
Pros	Cons

Building on an existing business, email list, or network.

Pros	Cons

Module 2 – Get Started in Affiliate Marketing

1. If you have an existing audience, conduct a review by writing down as much as you can about the following areas:

Demographics
<p><i>Age, location, education level, marital status, occupation, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Helpful tools include Facebook Audience Insights, Instagram's Insights, and Google Analytics for your blog or website.</i></p>

Psychographics

Wants, values, needs, hobbies, goals, areas that they need help, etc. psychographic information may be more difficult to obtain, but take the time to read your comments section, make note of which blog posts have generated the most likes, etc.

Content, shared interests, business offering that drew them to you	
Examine why your audience follows you, signs up for your free content, or has purchased from you in the past	
What kind of content appeals to them?	
What is their level of expertise?	
What types of questions do they ask and how do they interact with you?	

2. Make a list of subjects and topics that you are passionate about and related products and services.

Subjects & Topics I am Passionate About	Related Products & Services

3. Reflect on your previous answers and write down 5 niche ideas. Brainstorm at least 3 content ideas around each. If you find it easy to generate ideas, this is a good sign that you can produce enough content around it. Make sure your ideas will be profitable.

Niche Idea	Content Ideas

4. What value do you uniquely bring to your niche ideas? List reasons why people would click an affiliate link that you share.

- a. Search affiliate programs related to your niche ideas in Google. Search [idea] + affiliate programs and see what comes up.

1	
2	
3	
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5	

5. What value do you uniquely bring to your niche ideas? List reasons why people would click an affiliate link that you share.

1	<i>e.g., "I am a fitness instructor whose transformation has inspired my audience so they would respect, and be excited by, my recommendation to join an online fitness program."</i>
2	
3	
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6	
7	
8	

Module 3 – Choosing Products and Services to Promote

1. Research and identify 10 brands, products, and services your target audience is talking about on social media, forums, and in groups (yours or those within your niche if you haven't established your web presence yet).

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
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7	
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10	

2. Take a look at the social media, blog posts, and websites of the competition – affiliate marketers within your niche. Identify 10 brands and products they link to.

	Affiliate Marketer	Brand/products linked to
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

3. List 10 brands, products, or services within your niche that you use regularly.

1	
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5	
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8	
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10	

4. Take your favorite 5 brands, products, and services that you have identified and do a Google search on them (searching the product name + 'affiliate program'). Visit the websites and read the terms of their affiliate program. Take note of any actions you'll need to take to comply with terms and services.

	Favorite brand/ product/ service	Affiliate Program: Actions to take
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

5. Research three affiliate networks that are popular within your niche and take a look at their application. Do you meet the requirements? If not, take note in the table below of what you need to improve.

Affiliate Network	
Requirements	
Notes: What You Need to Improve	<i>e.g., optimize your website, create a domain email address versus using your Gmail, etc.</i>

Affiliate Network	
Requirements	
Notes: What You Need to Improve	<i>e.g., optimize your website, create a domain email address versus using your Gmail, etc.</i>

Affiliate Network	
Requirements	
Notes: What You Need to Improve	<i>e.g., optimize your website, create a domain email address versus using your Gmail, etc.</i>

Module 4 – Build Your Web Presence and Create Valuable Content

1. If you are creating a website, think about what approach will work best for you, your niche, and your target audience: a niche website or a blog? List 5 pros and cons of each.

Niche Website	
Pros	Cons

Blog	
Pros	Cons

2. Analyze which social media platforms are the most popular with your target audience, and if you haven't already, set up an account and start populating it with relevant content. Don't worry about affiliate links right now, just focus on providing valuable and helpful content.

Social Media Platform	Notes: Setup and Content

3. Research forums or groups that your target audience is on. Join these and start reading comments and interacting with group members.

Forums and Groups	Notes: Join and Interact

4. Review the content suggestions in this module (eBook, blog posts, online publishing platforms, YouTube videos etc.) Brainstorm 15-20 specific ideas that are related to your niche, referring back to some of the preliminary ideas you started generating in Module 2. (E.g. for video ideas, think of a specific product review, instructional video, or comparison video you could record).

Idea	Content Type

- From the content ideas you generated, pick the top 5 you'd like to start with, and select and write down the keyword that you'll optimize it for, so that you can get organic traffic. Refer back to the initial keyword research you did in Module 2 and also revisit [Ubersuggest](#), with the additional knowledge and information you now have. Consider where else you'll share content to drive traffic to it (e.g., your email list, social media groups, and posts) and come up with a topline idea for each.

Idea 1	<i>Kids' rain poncho review</i>
Keyword/Keyword Phrase	<i>Kids rain gear</i>
Where You'll Share with Topline Idea	<p><i>Facebook post – Ask a question about kids' rain gear, with link to blog post.</i></p> <p><i>Forum – Start a thread about hiking in rainy weather. Add a link to a comment later in the conversation.</i></p> <p><i>Instagram stories – Post a photo of my kid in rain gear and link to blog post_____.</i></p>

Idea 2	
Keyword/Keyword Phrase	
Where You'll Share with Topline Idea	

Idea 3	
Keyword/Keyword Phrase	
Where You'll Share with Topline Idea	

Idea 4	
Keyword/Keyword Phrase	
Where You'll Share with Topline Idea	

Idea 5	
Keyword/Keyword Phrase	
Where You'll Share with Topline Idea	

6. Prepare to start building your email list. Brainstorm 10 ideas for free content you could provide to your target audience in exchange for their email address.

1	
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Module 5 – Conclusion and Next Steps

1. Write down all of the platforms you use to share affiliate links (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, blog etc.) and using data from your affiliate network, merchant partners, and/or your own tracking system, rank how each platform performed from best to worst. Were the results what you expected?

Platform	Performance

- Using data gathered from affiliate network, merchant partners, and/or your own tracking system, write down the type of content that is performing the best. Reviews? Image-optimized social media posts? YouTube demonstrations?

Best Performing Content

Write down five things you have learned from analyzing the data you received about your content.

1	
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3. Analyze the content that converted and write down the overall tone of the successful content. Is it lighthearted? Inspirational? Serious? Aspirational?

Notes

4. Answer the questions below on what you've learned from this course.

<p>What have you learned about affiliate marketing?</p>	
<p>What difficulties have you encountered?</p>	
<p>How do you plan to address these?</p>	
<p>What further steps can you take to become totally comfortable with the process?</p>	

5. Review the course thoroughly and use the action plan table below to record your goals and what needs to happen next.

	Action to Take	Action Deadline
1		
2		
3		
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10		