

Affiliate Marketing Is Dead

Well I keep seeing all these posts in the forums about this and that is dead so I thought why not kill of affiliate marketing as well. The next article is actually about killing of the IRS (or Inland Revenue), so that should go down a treat lol.

Joking aside, Affiliate Marketing is no-where near dead, at least not in my book anyway. I think affiliate marketing just gets bad press from 'talk to much' marketers. There is certainly a snob factor in marketing, and affiliate marketers for some reason or another always seem to end up at the bottom of the status list but not for long.

Affiliate marketing can be a great source of income and the best thing about it is it's easy and cheap to get started, but to be successful at it, you need a strategy...

Building An Affiliate Business

First of all, I want to say that there is no one way to build an affiliate business, there are lots of different strategies out there and I will be covering different methods as part of the Immediate Edge, but what I want to show you today is a typical approach I take when entering a new market. It is this method that I will be using to start the second project.

Before I begin I want you to take a look at this diagram. (it's quite large so you may need to scroll around a bit)

<http://www.immediateedge.com/members/images/theaffiliatenetwork.gif>

Ok, it looks scary, but what you have there is a map of one of my businesses, the only thing that has been changed is the market. You can pretty much substitute tomatoes and winter vegetable for most products as long as they are related.

So to understand this better lets break it down a little bit.

I first started in this particular market when researching some long tail keywords for another project, the subject just popped up and I stuck it into my notebook to research later. This by the way is how I often find new markets, when browsing around the Internet I might see something interesting that I haven't researched before and I just write it down, then when I am looking for a new idea, I go through the list.

So anyway I was doing some research into new ideas, going through the list and the traffic numbers looked interesting, there was quite a bit of competition in AdWords for '*how to grow tomatoes*' but when I looked at the long tail I saw that most of the obvious search phrases were wide open, practically nobody was building content pages to target the long tail phrases, nearly everybody was using PPC to drive traffic. **This is a major mistake that most marketers make.**

I see this all the time, in fact its only been in recent months that people are starting to wise up a little, but even now there are lots of opportunities, and most people (your competition) only have a very basic strategy for attacking the long tail. At the Immediate Edge you are going to learn some killer techniques that will crush them. (insert evil voice here)

Starting Small

As you have seen before, I pretty much start small then expand as time allows and this is what I did for this project. The first thing was to find the best affiliate program, there were three main ones listed in ClickBank. All of them had good numbers (I will be explaining this soon) but one was doing a little better than the others, the trouble is, it had a very prominent squeeze form on its main sales page and as I want to build a list, I needed to be the one collecting details so I went for the second best product.

The next thing to do was to mine for the long tail phrases so I fired up WordTracker and started looking. This part of the process usually takes me a couple of hours and I get some

strange sense of satisfaction doing it. My final keyword list contained about 6500 entries which I narrowed down to thirty main long tail phrases to go after.

A Strategy For Creating Long Tail Content

The key thing about making money in marketing is getting up and running as quickly as possible and just getting something out there. Going after the first thirty long tail phrases would mean creating thirty separate pieces of content, which even if you hire someone, takes a bit of time. But there is a solution to this...

First of all, take your top ten (by traffic) long tail phrases. These are your main phrases and these are what the focus of your articles etc. are going to be about.

Secondly, from the remaining twenty, choose two phrases to go with each of your main phrases.

So what you eventually have is ten articles, each targeting three keyword phrases. Now this is not the most effective method for getting ranked highly for your secondary terms but it does work, and as time and money allows you can expand these into their own.

Getting Up An Running

So now I knew what phrases I would target, I just needed to get some content written. I had a quick search around for PLR material and bought a product for \$10 which gave me rights to ten articles and a twenty six page mini course, the content wasn't brilliant but it was a start. The next thing I did was post a job on eLance for ten articles and I provided the author with the PLR material to rip out sections as needed.

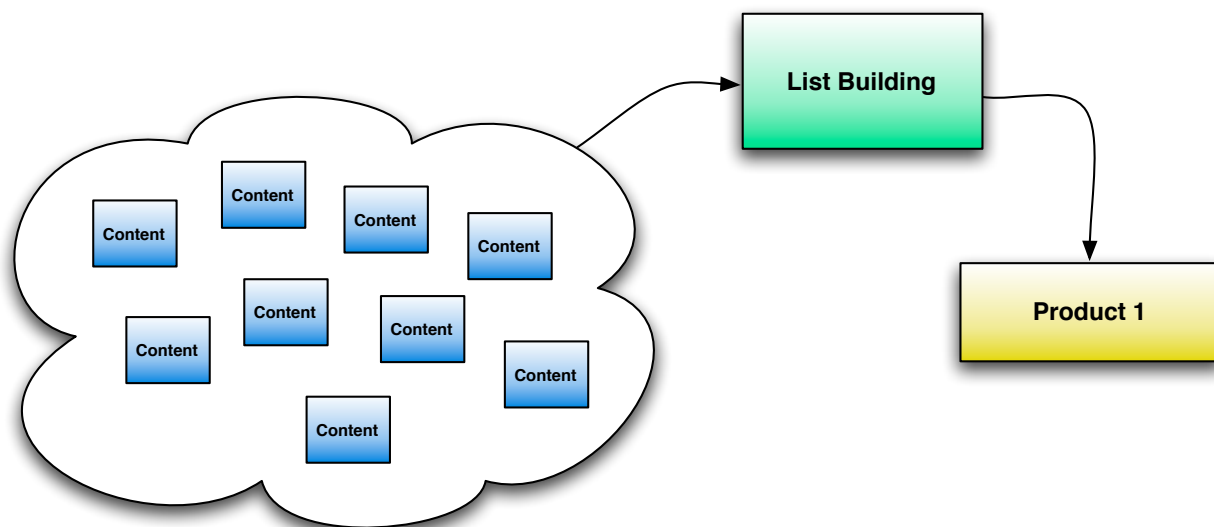
Because I was providing content to be re-written I got the work done for \$45 so my total out of pocket expenses were now \$55.

The next thing was to register a domain to host a landing page etc. (If you are every trying to find good domains then I would suggest nameboy.com to spark ideas.)

Finally I needed to write a few days autoresponder sequences, create a few lenses and articles with the content, and set it live on net.

Now there is one final step to this process and that is doing a little promotion for the lenses but I am going to cover that in an article next week.

Below is a picture of what stage one looked like



So in reality not a complicated setup. People find the lenses or articles in Google, they join the list (which offers them free tomato growing tips) and then they are taken directly to the affiliate page. Then every day they get some content and are asked to buy the product.

Now this might seem quite simple, not the greatest marketing idea in the world, but it works. The key thing here as always, is to build a list, and that is where most affiliate marketers go wrong.

Expanding The Empire

So once you have your foot in the door you need to start prising it open a little and at the same time get some more value out of your list.

There Is More Than One Affiliate Network

You can often fall into the trap of just looking at ClickBank for affiliate products, the high affiliate pay outs are very attractive and if you are trying to use PPC to drive traffic then you want to get as much out of each visitor as you possibly can.

What I tend to do is take the initial visitor to the highest paying program first then try and sell them on other affiliate programs in the autoresponder sequence. If I am getting good results then I might go ahead and set up new content pages directly for that.

So when looking around for other things to promote, you should definitely be looking through other affiliate networks such as Commission Junction, LinkShare, PrimeQ, and Hydra Media, and this is exactly what I did for the next phase of the project.

While searching through CJ I found a cost per lead promotion paying out at \$16 each. Now this wasn't exactly about growing tomatoes but it was in the same field so I thought I would test it out on the list.

As I was just testing I did a broadcast to the list about this promotion and the results were promising so I added it into the sequence permanently.

The next step here was creating a load of long tail articles and lenses about 'tomato growers insurance' and effectively doing the same thing as phase one but this time I didn't collect leads myself I just sent them directly to the affiliate (although I could have probably still collected their details first but I would have got a lower response rate... something to test in the future)

Now all this isn't necessarily quick, it takes time to get indexed and build traffic etc so if I think the project is going to work out I then look at building out a little bit in the meantime.

Phase III The First Content Site

Tomato growing is a pretty popular topic so I decided I would create a bit of a mini-site to cover the different types of tomatoes (and get in more long tail phrases). Over a period of a couple of days I added 18 pages to the site, each one focussing on a new long tail phrase and each one offering the free tomato growers guide.

On some of these pages I renamed the tomato growers guide to cherry tomato growers guide (i.e. the long tail phrase). I often do this, and even create new report covers and squeeze pages if I think I will get more signups etc.

Now as my site isn't an authority on tomato growing in Google's eyes I also linked from some of my lenses so that in time it should get passed some PR.

IMPORTANT: Most people make the mistake of linking directly to the home page. You should be linking to sub pages from your lenses and varying the anchor text you use when linking.

Now that I had a new content site I also decided to look at what physical products I could sell (think seeds, compost, fertilizer etc.), and to do that I headed back to CJ. There were a few sites that sold tomato products and I joined the programs which offered 10-12% of total sales. A couple of them also offered 10% on the lifetime of the customer so that they might buy something small now but if they came back in six months time and spent \$400 I would still get my \$40 cut. (this can be very profitable over time).

I also used my new content site to begin promoting another ClickBank Product (winter vegetables)

Phase IV Expanding Further

As you can see from the diagram, I added another content site on winter vegetables and this builds a list and promotes a couple of products. The first list now promotes the how to sell your vegetables at farmers markets and the soup making guide.

In total, the autoresponder sequence for list one now has over 40 days of different content, some days they get some valuable information or a video (hosted on a page with links to the affiliate products) but most days its just PITCH, PITCH, PITCH.

All that matters is trying to sell them stuff, that's it, the rest is just a waste of bandwidth, and you will be surprised at the amount of people who buy a couple of weeks in.

So looking at the diagram you can see that I have added PPC into the mix and that was because most of the existing affiliates got wiped out by the GoogleSlap and no longer advertise so I thought I might as well have that piece of the pie as well, and again I am going to be covering this soon.

So as you can see, from starting pretty small I have quite a large content network now all which brings in a regular stream of traffic to list build and generate a profit with.

Conclusion

I wrote this article to give you a bit of an overview of how I approach affiliate marketing before we get started on the second project. The whole network probably took me about two months to get it where it is today and I still add more long tail pages as and when I have time, but this wasn't two months of solid work, this was on and off when I was in the mood and if I had to replicate it quickly I could probably build it out in four or five days,

I have just started replacing the affiliate products with my own, I have two in development at the moment, both with audio interviews, video etc. and instead of getting 50% of \$37/\$47 I will be getting 100% of \$97 when they go live.

The content sites now have a respectable PR of 4 and 5 for most pages and appear in the top 5 for their long tail phrases. In total (apart from the new products) I have probably spent in the region of \$400 to get content created and that has long since been paid back.

Now this articles was only designed as an overview, when I start the second project I will be going into detail on each aspect of this, from research and building to promotion and autoresponder sequences. I just really wanted to give you an overview of how things will probably turn out.