

What is an Affiliate Program?

An affiliate program is simply a commission or referral-based program that you can implement in your website. People can sign up for your affiliate program using a web-based form and they are automatically (or upon your approval) given a special referral link that tracks any sales (or clicks and leads, if applicable) they refer to you. There are a number of different types of ready-made programs that can automate the process for you. We'll talk about those later.

This guide will take you through the process of:

- Understanding what kind of affiliate programs you can run.
- Creating a more profitable affiliate program
- Making your affiliate program attractive to potential affiliates
- Finding and motivating affiliates into action

Starting an affiliate program is not something to be taken lightly or done on a whim. What you set up now will be the groundwork for powerful sales for long into the future. That's why proper planning now will help you avoid mistakes and hopefully keep from having to start over as your business grows.

This guide will help you make many of those decisions by educating you about your options. Let's get started!

Why Should You Have An Affiliate Program?

One of the most obvious reasons to start an affiliate program is that it is a terrific way to build a sales force that you needn't pay until they produce results. It's not like hiring an employee for an hourly wage... your affiliates only get paid when they make a sale (or send you a lead, click, etc. This depends on how you set up your program and we'll talk about that in the next chapter).

Advertising, search engines and other traffic methods are a great way to generate sales for your business, but an affiliate program gives you a more well-rounded approach to continuous selling. In addition, the buzz and great word-of-mouth that can be generated by your affiliates is often more powerful than any advertising campaign. We all know that consumers are suspicious of advertising, but when you can have people out there talking to your target market spreading the good word about your business, that can dramatically improve your sales.

For example, if you purchased an ad in a large target newsletter or ezine, you might see some good results. But imagine if you contacted the owner of that newsletter, let them try your product and instead of running an ad, they RECOMMENDED your product. The list owner has a good relationship with his readers and they trust his opinions, so what do you think will happen? You guessed it – you'll likely find yourself with a whole lot of extra sales.

Another interesting benefit is that when that list owner promotes your product, the email he sends out goes out to his subscriber, a number of which are likely website owners in the same target market as well. Those people might see your product recommended, check out your AWESOME affiliate program and get on board as well.

And it keeps going and going...

But just a word of honest caution before we dig in. Don't let me fool you into thinking that it's all a piece of cake and all you have to do is set up the affiliate program and you're all set. It's not so. Setting up a great and effective affiliate program takes time and plenty of hard work. Affiliate Manager Sweetie is going to help you with a lot of that work. And the great thing is, once that hard work is in place, things keep growing from there. The hard work you do today will pay off for a very long time.