THE COMPLETE WEB DEVELOPER COURSE

How to make **$10,000** while learning to code

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Chapter One: Building Affiliate Websites

What Is An Affiliate Website?

Affiliate schemes have been a core part of the internet almost since its inception. Essentially, it works like this: you build a website that attracts traffic, such as a blog or a free online tool. You then join an affiliate scheme for an e-commerce site such as Amazon. You can then get special links to products on Amazon, which you put on your site. If someone clicks on one of those links and buys *anything* from Amazon on that computer within a certain time period, you get a cut of the sale.

Affiliate websites are unlikely to make a huge amount of money. But if you have a knack for it revenues of $20-50 per month are fairly common, and if you build ten or twenty of them…well, you can do the sums. It's not quit-your-job cash, but it's a nice supplementary income and the sites usually need very little maintenance once built.

If you're serious about building affiliate sites, I'd recommend looking at www.affilorama.com. They have a lot of free information for affiliates, as well as tools and guides that go well beyond the scope of this book.

Which Affiliate Scheme Should You Join?

I won't go into the relative merits of all the affiliate schemes out there, mostly because it will depend on your niche. You'll want to find a site that is relevant to the users you are targeting, and converts well. If in doubt, amazon.com is always a good choice - their affiliate scheme is reasonably generous, and they have great name recognition amongst internet shoppers.

Again, you can get much more detailed advice on the schemes available at www.affilorama.com.

Ideas For Affiliate Sites

As with the previous chapter, finding a good niche is critical to creating a successful affiliate site. The niche should be:

- something that people are searching for on Google

- uncompetitive (ie. there are not many other sites ranking well for that niche)

- easily matched to specific products that people might buy

If you have particular experience in that niche, all the better, as you are more likely to understand the people searching for it.

You can use the Google Keyword Planner (http://adwords.google.co.uk/KeywordPlanner - requires a free Google Adwords account) to find keywords that have large numbers of searches but low competition. Do Google searches for those keywords and see what the top sites are like. Are they relevant to what the searcher is looking for? Are they high quality sites or are they spammy and unmaintained?

As a quick example, a year ago I was looking to buy a home video projector. I soon realised that the 'throw distance' of a projector is particularly important if your projector needs to be far away from your screen. Calculating the 'throw distance' required for your room is straightforward, but it took me a while to find a site that explained it. I searched for 'throw distance calculator', but the top sites were not quite what I needed. So I purchased throwdistancecalculator.com and built a simple site to calculate a user's throw distance. Once the user has used the calculator, a link to purchase projectors on Amazon appears.

This niche was certainly uncompetitive, and easily matched to a purchase (almost everyone calculating their throw distance will be looking for a projector). The

number of people searching for it, however, is very low, so even though the site is the #2 result on Google for 'throw distance calculator' and it converts fairly well, it only brings in around $15 per month.

Challenge: Find 5 Niches

Brainstorm areas that you are familiar with that might work well as niches. Use the Google Keyword Planner to examine the competitiveness and popularity of keywords related to that niche. Finally, google the keywords to see how relevant the results are. Try to come up with 5 sets of keywords that might work well.

Building Your Affiliate Site

You need to offer something of value to your potential users. In the case of throwdistancecalculator.com, this was a simple tool to help them calculate their throw distance. You might consider building a site to help people with their taxes (I can never find the right tax information when I need it). Or a site that tells people the time of high and low tide in their area. Keep it very simple and specific.

An alternative to a tool is to provide information. Perhaps a list of the best places to visit in your home town. You could build a web scraper to collect information

from a site such as imdb.com, and make film suggestions for specific genres. Whatever you choose, your site should have a very simple, single purpose, with an obvious set of products to purchase once the user is finished.

Ideally, choose a domain name containing your top search term, such as throwdistancecalculator.com. Make it a .com domain if possible, or country-specific if your site is related to a particular country.

Keep your design simple and focused, with a very obvious 'call to action' - a button to click, or a text field to fill in. If your information or tool is particularly valuable, you might want to ask the user for their email address so you can keep them updated about your site, but that is not the primary goal here.

Once your tool works well, or your information is clearly set out, integrate your affiliate links in an unobtrusive, natural way, ideally so that the user clicks the link immediately after they have got the information they came for.

Challenge: Build An Affiliate Site

Take your most promising niche from the previous challenge, decide on the keywords you will target and purchase a domain name. Then build your tool or upload your content, and post a link to it on the course forums for feedback.

Marketing Your Affiliate Site

Website marketing (or SEO - Search Engine Optimisation) is a hugely complex business, but I'll cover the basics here. To rank well in the search engines, you need to do two things: have relevant website content, and build links to your website.

Hopefully, you should already have relevant website content if your site is useful to your users. If you are building a tool that doesn't require much explanation, put a few paragraphs of text describing what your tool does in more detail underneath the tool itself. Make sure you include your keywords and related words there. Ensure the website title contains your keywords, and that your website description is clear and relevant.

Building inbound links is a bigger challenge. If you have built relevant websites, put links on those to your new site saying 'We support abcd.com' or 'Check out abcd.com'. Post on relevant forums, explaining why your tool is useful and posting a link asking for feedback. You could offer to write a 'guest post' on a relevant blog, giving their users some useful information in exchange for a link back to your site. There are myriad other ways to build inbound links, and I've included a number of articles with a range of suggestions in the bibliography for this chapter.

Monitoring Your Affiliate Site

Make sure you sign up to Google Webmaster Tools and Google Analytics for your site, and keep an eye on your search rankings and traffic levels. Beyond that, there's not much to do other than sit back and wait for the dollars (or possibly cents!) to roll in.

If you have some success, build another site and slowly you'll build up a potentially significant income that requires no maintenance or upkeep.

Progress Update

We're getting close! I'm assuming conservatively that you've only done 4 website jobs in the last two months, that you've had 1 moderately successful affiliate website, and that you've managed 1,000 downloads of your app across the App Store, Google Play and the Windows Store at $1.99 each.

Activities	Total Income ($)

Month 1 10 small freelance jobs at $20 each	200
Months 2/3 10 small freelance jobs at $30 each 4 website jobs at $100 each 2 full website jobs at $300 each	1200
Months 3/4 5 small freelance jobs at $40 each 4 full website jobs at $500 each 2 users on your web-based startup at $20 each per month	2280
Months 5/6 5 small freelance jobs at $50 each 4 full website jobs at $500 each 5 users on your web-based startup at $20 each per month 1,000 downloads of your app at $1.99 each Affiliate income from 1 website at $20	4460
TOTAL	**$9,460**

Further Reading

Introductory guides to affiliate marketing

http://uk.cj.com/what-is-affiliate-marketing

http://www.problogger.net/archives/2009/07/07/what-is-affiliate-marketing/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRiYsuJJuHc

http://www.seanogle.com/entrepreneurship/how-to-build-a-niche-site

http://www.2createawebsite.com/money/affiliate.html

Finding ideas for affiliate sites

http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/niche-selection-tips/

http://www.affilorama.com/blog/cooking-affiliate-programs

http://sugarrae.com/affiliate-marketing/finding-a-niche-in-affiliate-marketing/

http://www.business-online-guidance.com/affiliate-marketing-ideas.html

Affiliate company comparison

http://affiliate-marketing-services-review.toptenreviews.com/

Marketing your affiliate site

http://marketingland.com/7-big-mistakes-new-affiliate-marketers-make-19195

http://www.theguardian.com/money/2011/may/21/affiliate-marketing-lucrative