

1. Consider your Audience

It almost goes without saying – but it's worth putting yourself in your readers shoes and consider what they might be looking for as they surf by your blog. Are they shopping for specific products? Might they be looking for related products or accessories? What would trigger them to purchase? Start with your reader in mind rather than the product. If you take this approach you could end up doing your reader a favor as well as making a few dollars on the side.

2. Genuine Recommendations and personal endorsements always work best

There are literally hundreds of thousands of products and services for you to choose from to recommend to your blog's readers but making money from them is not as simple as randomly adding links to them from your blog. Your blog's readers come back to your blog day after day because something about you resonates with them – they have at least some level of trust and respect for you and perhaps the quickest way to destroy this is to recommend that they buy something that you don't fully believe will benefit them.

The best results I've had from affiliate programs are where I give an open and honest appraisal of the product – including both it's strengths and weaknesses. The most successful affiliate program I'm involved with here at ProBlogger is Joel Comm's e-book which I reviewed here. If you read the review you'll see that I not only tell readers who I believe the book is for but I also mention those it is NOT for. In a sense I critique it. On a surface level one might think that this wasn't a wise move and that I should have given a glowing review – however the sales that I've had through the program have proven otherwise. People want to know what they are buying first and even if they know a product has limitations they will buy it if it meets their particular need.

3. Link to Quality Products

We all like to make sure we're buying the best products money can buy – your readers are no different to this and are more likely to make a purchase if you've found them the best product for them. Choose products and companies with good reputations and quality sales pages. There is nothing worse than giving a glowing review of a product only to send your reader to a page that looks cheap and nasty.

4. Contextual Deep Links work Best

When I started using the Amazon Associate Program I naively thought that all I had to do was put an Amazon banner ad (that linked to Amazon's front page) at the top of my blog. I thought that my readers would see it and surf over to Amazon and buy up big – thereby making me a rich man. Nothing could have been further from reality – I was deluding myself.

I always says to bloggers that I'm consulting with that they should learn something from contextual advertising when it comes to affiliate programs. The secret of contextual ads like AdSense is that a reader is reading a post on a particular topic on your blog and when they see an advertisement for that same product they are more

likely to click it than if they saw an ad for something else. The same is true for affiliate programs. A banner to a general page on every page on your site won't be anywhere near as effective as multiple links throughout your blog that advertiser products that are relevant for readers reading particular parts of your blog.

So if you're writing a blog about MP3 players and have a review for a particular product – the most effectively affiliate program that you could link to from within the content of that page would be one that links directly to a page selling that specific model of MP3 player. This is how I use the Amazon program today. It is more work than contextual advertising because you're not just putting one piece of code into a template but rather need to place individual links on many pages – but I find that it's been worth the effort.

5. Consider positioning of links

One of the things I go on and on about with AdSense optimization is the positioning of ads. I tell bloggers to position their ads in the hotspots on pages (like the top of a left hand side bar – or inside content – or at the end of posts above comments etc). The same principles are true for affiliate advertising.

6. Traffic levels are Important

While it's not the only factor – traffic levels are obviously key when it comes to making money from almost any online activity. The more people that see your well placed, relevant and well designed affiliate links the more likely it is that one of them will make a purchase. So don't just work on your links – work on building a readership. Not only this, consider how you might direct traffic on your blog toward pages where they are more likely to see your affiliate links.

7. Diversify without Clutter

Don't put all your affiliate efforts into one basket. There are plenty of products out there to link to so there is no need to just work on one. At the same time you shouldn't clutter your blog up with too many affiliate program links. If you do so you run the risk of diluting the effectiveness of your links and could disillusion your readership.

8. Be Transparent

Don't try to fool your readers into clicking links that could make you money. While it may not always be feasible to label all affiliate links I think some attempt should be made to let people know what type of link they are clicking on. I also think consistency is important with this so readers of your blog know what to expect. For example here at ProBlogger usually put a note beside or under affiliate links to simply let readers know that that is what they are. On my Digital Camera Blog I don't do this because of the large number of such links make it clear by the text around the link that clicking on it will take them to some sort of shop or information where a purchase is possible (ie a link my say 'buy the XXX product' or 'get the latest product on XXX'.

9. Combine with other Revenue Streams

Affiliate programs and advertising programs are not mutually exclusive things. I've come across a few people recently who have said they don't want to do affiliate linking because it will take the focus off their AdSense ads. While there is potential for one to take the focus off the other – there is also real potential for both to work hand in hand as different readers will respond to different approaches. You should consider the impact that your affiliate links have on other revenue streams – but don't let one stop the other.

10. Track results

Most affiliate programs have at least some type of tracking or statistics package which will allow you to watch which links are effective. Some of these packages are better than others but most will at least allow you to see what is selling and what isn't. Watching your results can help you plan future affiliate efforts. Keep track of what positions for links work well, which products sell, what wording around links works well etc and use the information that you collect as you work plan future affiliate strategies.

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www.darul-ishaat.co.uk/affiliates