Super Affiliate Status

Make Money Selling Other People's Products

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Making Sure You Plan For Success

Getting affiliate links is the easy part. Having a place to host them—now that's a little more involved. Having a place to host them where people will convert to buyers—that's even more work. You need to create a place where people can find you, where they'll want to come for information or assistance, and where they'll leave only to go complete the sale (even though they may not realize they are 'leaving'). Nevertheless, it can be done. But before you do anything, you need to structure a game plan. You need to write the plan that gives you all the potential for selling that you need.

But first, your plan

We won't go into detail about how and where to get an actual website—that's information you can find out easily enough and quite possibly already have. We'll throw out a couple of names like GoDaddy and HostGator, but also know that there are numerous hosts and website building templates ranging from the freebie that came with your ISP to being your own host. The only point you need to know is that anyone can build a workable, attractive website; and even if it's not the best looking on the block, if it's built so that traffic can come, they will.

What we want to focus on more is the structure of your website and/or websites. First off, we'll talk about the individual sites themselves.

If you will be promoting more than one product—and to make money the way the Big Dogs do you will need to—each related group of products should have their own dedicated site; out of that group, you will focus on your one most promising product most of the time. This site doesn't need to be huge, it can be just a few pages in total—say between ten and twenty, depending on the number of products you'll be selling; but it does need to incorporate all the elements that will gain you attention from the search engines, and thereby from visitors and buyers (targeted buyers with a need!).

Eventually you will want to build a master website that directs to each of your smaller, product-focused websites. This will be the website you use to "clean-up" the rest of the traffic generated by the keywords you haven't targeted—those generalities that aren't necessarily on the verge of buying anything. But that can come later. First, build the sites that will sell and start making money sooner.

So initially, your plan will look something like this:

- Target markets and keywords
- Choose specific affiliate products
- Build a website around a specific group of products
- Build more product-grouped websites for each affiliation
- Create a master website that captures traffic, then links traffic to smaller product-specific websites

Let's try to put this into perspective and give you a real-world example.

Okay; let's suppose that you are selling fitness-related products—a variety of sorts from body-building supplements to fifteen minute workout routines. The buyers who are looking for muscle-building supplements and powders could probably care less about your crunch-time workout videos. And you don't look like much of a reliable authority by just slapping up one ad next to the other. So you break down each of those product types into groups, and market five or six or so together on one website dedicated to each. So instead of having a catch-all website with fitness products, you have two dedicated websites that specifically serve the needs of the visitors ready to buy. You have

- A 10-20 page website selling body-building supplements, and
- A 10-20 page website selling workout videos for the too-busy-to-exercise crowd

Each site gives your buyers what *they* need—not what the *other* needs. After those sites are established and doing their thing, you can go back to that model of the fitness-products store, and create sections and virtual "aisles" that point to these smaller dedicated sites.

Now here we need to clarify a bit. This structure is one of the number-one things that Big Dog affiliates do, and small players do not.

What you will see many times is that small players collect a number of products, usually related, sometimes not even, and group them all on one website. They market their affiliate site as a sort of one-

stop-shopping storefront for everything. And they create so much confusion and competition amongst their own affiliate products that they never maximize the potential of the sales traffic that is coming in.

What the Big Dogs do in contrast is start by focusing on the small sites. They build up products in a way that clearly sells each one. They create choice for buyers by comparing their own like-products against each other, so that whatever product is chosen, the sale is theirs. Genius, yes?
Then they get the traffic going to and buying at those sites. Later on they'll build something more akin to the storefront, and link to these smaller sites when visitors click to learn more, just to clean up the rest of the lookers.

In the end, eventually anyway, both the Big Dogs and small-timers both end up with catch-all parent sites, but the Big Dogs have that added layer of sales protection that gives the customers what they need to make the sale, and also brings traffic in at both ends.

Now build it and they'll come

What you most need to know, then, is how to build that small-niche site.

To reiterate, the purpose of this site is to develop a very consumer-specific website that provides information and resources for the person who is looking to buy a product of this type. That's from the buyer's perspective. But you have search engines to please,

too, so that content will need to do double-duty and also help you be found and ranked well for your target keywords and target audience.

There are two basic components to these small sites. Those are

1. Articles and buyer-centric information
2. Products

The pages of your website will be split amongst these two components. It probably should not be a straight 50/50 split. The division should be weighted more in favor of information than products. This will serve two purposes:

1. Information gives the buyer all the supporting information and details they need to decide to buy.
2. Information provides more feed for search engines so that buyers can find you.

However you decide to structure the actual website, it should have a simple division—information and products.

The product pages are simple. Create a page for each individual product that gives the specifics on the product (often the information provided by the affiliate). You need to give enough detail without overdoing it. Set up the product pages so that when the visitor performs the desired action—clicks a 'buy' button, or opts for a free sample or service—they are taken to the affiliate website, where they [hopefully] will order and purchase your product.

The informational pages require a little bit more work, but not too much. Each of these pages should host one piece of supporting information which helps your visitor decide to buy. It should be an article, product review, or product comparison. As you'll learn later, these are the things that will really draw the very specific and targeted *ready to buy* consumers that you want. This is the information that they are looking for just prior to purchase, and so it is the information that is most likely to net *serious* buyers, and not just curious visitors.

Back to our example, if we have five muscle-building supplements, we'll have five pages of products and perhaps ten pages with articles and comparisons. Use the articles to address the concerns of people in the market for supplements, and include topics important to them. They might be side-by side comparisons, reviews of specific powders, or topics such as "Five Tips for Building More Muscle."

Now you've given your already needy buyers the two things they need to decide to buy your products—additional information, and the place to make the purchase.

Tips for Tapping into Demand Markets

To be clear, these techniques can and do work to get you selling in any market, regardless of how in-demand and highly-competitive

the market may seem at first view. You see, the key is not in going for the most popular traffic, but in the most *targeted* traffic.

You can, most certainly, gain enough ground in any high-demand niche market to make Big Dog kind of cash. First off, you're not looking to net every sale the niche makes, you're just looking to net a percentage that translates into steady income for you. In high-demand markets, even a small percentage of overall sales can be highly profitable.

But moreover, you—as opposed to most other affiliates out there— are targeting the *right kind* of traffic. You are using the less-often searched, but more productive keywords to get your traffic, and so you've already slipped in under the radar of everyone else who has cornered the big-time keywords (but are making few sales with them).

In internet marketing circles, this is what is referred to as riding the 'long tail' of keywords. For every top keyword, there are many more (hundreds more sometimes) that are used by searchers and neglected by website owners because they are not the "best" way to draw in big traffic. But the key isn't quantity so much as it is quality, so for you that works just fine.

Basically, tapping in to the big-demand markets all boils down to this:

- Choose niches that have selling potential—not obscure interests where no one is buying (solve a need! Provide a product)

- Choose the products within that niche that are really selling and that meet the needs of your buyers
- Figure out what the top sellers of those products (your competition) are doing that serves the needs of your consumers; draft an outline of your target visitor
- Create product-centered websites to serve your target consumers
- Use the right keywords to attract the right kinds of consumers
- Create content that serves your audience, and also feeds the search engines

Follow this simple plan for tapping the in-demand markets that are selling and generating affiliate profits, and then you will be very well on your way to making money easily, just like the rest of the Big Dog affiliates do.

Get People To Buy

People often want to know—why does conversion matter? When in the end, conversion is all that matters. If your websites do not convert visitors into buyers, you're just not making any money. Period. Plain and simple. That is why conversion matters.

But to go a step further, conversion as it matters to you, the Big Dog affiliate marketer, isn't just about what one or two visitors do—it's about what the masses at your website do. For our purposes here, conversion really means what your site is doing as a

whole. We can't reasonably expect that every visitor to your site will convert into a buyer (but wouldn't it be nice if we could!). You do need to know that overall, however, what you are doing on your site is working.

Conversion is about rates and statistics and *sales*, and unfortunately there are no real solid rules that apply. You cannot make sweeping judgments because the rules will be different for each and every product that you have. Each product and niche has its own set of needs.

What you can do is maximize the profitability of your site. The way to do that is to test and change and tweak your content and your website until you have gotten the highest amount of sales and profitability that you can. There are ways to do that, and that's what we'll talk about next, but by and large there is a definite element of trial and error involved in converting website visitors into buyers.

In the end, we're left with exactly what we started with in answer to this question. Plain and simple, conversion matters because conversion equals sales. Learn the "art" of the conversion, and you'll have one more of the crucial pieces of the affiliate marketing puzzle.

How to make it Happen

First off, to understand how to make conversion happen, you have to understand your role in the grand scheme of things. Your role—your sole purpose for Big Dog survival—is to get your visitors to your parent affiliate's sales page—your merchant's sales page.

Many new affiliates, and indeed some seasoned affiliates who just don't 'get it', mistakenly think that their job is to sell the products themselves. Subtly, yes, in ways, that is true. But overall, that is not your job—the sales itself is the role of the product seller. What you need to do is warm your visitors up so that they can feel confident in taking that final step, and going on to seal the deal.

Again, this is where you need to realize that the merchant has done a lot of the work for you. They've constructed the sales pages and order processing mechanisms. They've written (or had written) the killer copy that will totally convince the buyer to buy. All they need you to do is get the seller there.

This is the part of the biz that is referred to as the 'pre sale' or 'pre selling'. This is the part where you work as the middle man—the liaison between the seller who has this great product and the buyer who really does want to buy, but needs that added little push, or the point in the right direction.

An important thing to remember, too, is this—your readers are *busy people*. They, like you and everyone else in the modern world, do not have the time for extensive reading and research.

That's why they're coming to you. They're hoping you've already done that for them. The lesson to take from that is that you should put up quality, product-supporting content, and you should make it valuable; but you should not kill your visitors with kindness. Make the whole process very easy.

- Give readers a piece of information they can use (a product review, a tutorial, et cetera).
- Show them that you understand their need (you identify with their problem, you see their need, you know how to fix it, you've been in their shoes).
- Point them to the place with the solution (link to your merchant's page).
- Let the merchant do the rest! (They've already done it anyway, why reiterate and waste your visitors' time?)

The whole process is done and over in about three simple steps. And out of those, the only one that really requires work is the providing of useful information—the converting part. You'll read more about some very specific methods for subtle conversions in the latter part of this chapter in the 'Tips and Tricks' section, but understand that whichever method you choose to use, it needs to fit within the needs and demands of the visitor's life. In other words, it needs to be simple, directed, and effective. And all the better if it is action-oriented. When people have to take an action (and we're not just talking about the action of buying), they feel they are being productive and proactive in fulfilling their needs, or solving their problems, whichever the case may be for your product(s); sometimes it could be both.

Focus is Everything

You've built your affiliate website and your pages for a reason. A very specific reason—to sell your targeted affiliate product! What is critical to your success as an affiliate—to barking with the Big Dogs, not just lapping up the trickle—is to stay focused on that central goal, that very specific driving reason for the very existence of your website.

To do that, you need to keep the eye on the prize, to use another cliché. You have to make your information and your product your number one focus; more specifically, the *only focus*.

All too often, affiliates are drawn by the prospect of easy money from simple to use monetization programs like AdSense or some such program. They'll fill up their sites with ads to make traffic-based money, *and they kill their chances at affiliate success!*

In effect what you accomplish when you fill up your conversion website with advertising and peripheral monetization strategies is inviting in all your competitors. Every ad or link that posts is one more opportunity for your crowd, which you've worked hard to get there, to leave and get consumed by the tangents. You drive your very own visitors straight into the waiting, wide-open arms of your competition!

Moreover, the inclusion of multiple ads and streams of information is down right confusing. You draw your visitors in with the promise of the information they've so desperately sought, and then you take them to a site so muddled with banner ads and links that they

can't tell which one is the piece they've come for. They become distracted and frustrated. And then they leave. They go back to their search bar to find a website that really delivers the goods.

Trust us when we say (and you probably know this just from being a web consumer yourself) that people have had enough of bogus sites that don't help them. They want the website that is straightforward, to the point, and helps them, rather than hinders them. They recognize the pretenders within a few seconds of landing on a site, and if you don't prove yourself to be helpful right away, they'll move on and not bother to scroll down for your article or product review to find out if it really is there.

How, then, do you create focus on your web pages?

- Stay away from advertising, monetization programs, and outward links that don't lead to your sales pages (at your merchant's site)
- Only include ads and links that go to your affiliate products (embedded, naturally, with your affiliate ID so that the sale is credited to you)
- Feature your promotional material and one link above the fold of the page so that it is readily available (seen immediately by visitors when they land on your page) keep the focus on the solution your readers seek

Remember that this focus is about helpful content. This isn't the place for the hard-sell sales letter. Leave that to your merchant. This is the place for soft-selling; the kind of selling a friend of yours might do by suggesting something that's worked for him or her.

Stay focused on your goal and focused on the product and solution at hand. By doing so, you'll help your visitors maintain focus, and move them on to where your real profits lie.

Blogging Decisions

What is the blogosphere, really? It's a place where anyone—man, woman, child, or automated feed scraper—can slap up templates or build a site of their own and update it with useful(?) information or tales of their weekly shopping trips to their hearts content. It's both a powerful tool utilized by businesses and websites on a daily (or more often) basis and a running personal diary put up online for all to see. The blogosphere is filled with experts and novices, and people who think they are experts who are really novices. It's a mixed-bag of content and expertise, or lack thereof. It's a community experience that knows no real bounds. Or boundaries.

As such, blogs can be a boon or a bust to your affiliate program. Nevertheless, they are being touted as the fastest, easiest, most simplistic way to promote affiliate products and generate sales. But are they? Let's explore both sides of this issue.

Why Blogging Might be a Bust

Many of the very things that make blogging a 'natural' choice for affiliate promotions are what make blogging the wrong way to effectively market as an affiliate.

First of all, let's take on the very blogosphere itself. It's a crowded place. It is true that the blogosphere is filled with a variety of interests, and holds something for everyone, but in the midst of all that interest, it's increasingly hard to be found. Even the best, most prolific, and most dedicated bloggers take months and years to build a solid following. A blog is absolutely *not* the place to go for instant traffic.

The community aspect of blogging can be great, but couldn't it also be a bust? All that commenting and free-for-all outside commentary might work against you and discredit you. And you need to think about how valuable that following is. This will largely depend on your spectrum of product offerings. If you have a variety of products that a customer might want to come back for, or an upgradeable product suite, staying in touch with buyers could be a great thing. If your product is more of a one-time-only purchase, there's probably no recouping the time investment you will incur.

Content refreshment is one of the biggest recognized benefits of blogging. You can post quickly and easily everyday and thereby please those search engines and hungry blog-followers with new content. There's no denying that. But you need to think this through—how much can you come up with to say about your products? Can you keep your products upfront on a blog? How many times can you spin it? And most importantly, *what happens when your well of topics dries up?* Those search engines and readers will be waiting for more, and you'll be grasping for new post ideas.

It's easy to get a blog started and keep it running for a few months, but Big Dog kind of income demands that you construct a more long-term plan. Theoretically a blog is a long-term prospect, but without something new to say, one can only live so long.

We also need to tackle the issue of being able to feature multiple products. This flies right in the face of the discussion we just had in the last chapter, doesn't it? By doing that, you're dividing your forces and taking the focus away from your top-seeded efforts. You've created a marketplace of confusion, and you've made it hard to figure out what the right—simple—solution is.

We also need to talk about blogs from a structural standpoint. Unless you can build your own blog (and even if you can this is tough…), blogs and templates do not allow for a high level of flexibility. There is a basic structure, and it is very hard to add the buttons and features in the places you need them to be. Consider, too, that sometimes the structure and design you've worked so hard for may be impacted (rearranged) by the length and amount of your postings.

Now it might sound like we're completely anti-blogging for affiliate programs, but that's not exactly the case. Let's wrap this discussion up by looking at how a blog might still be a useful tool.

Website & Content

The obvious choice would be to put that effort into your website and content. You can achieve the same results by simply

refreshing the content of your website. You can add to its archives and additional resources sections (without muddying the primary pages we established before), and still give current information and additional value to your customers and to the search engines.

Not only can you add additional content, but you can test and tweak and change the content you have and test it against past versions. As you'll learn, even very small, seemingly insignificant changes can really make a big difference to traffic and conversions. Spend the time you would spend posting on a blog to look for ways that you can tweak or enhance your website.

And don't forget—you've got that master site to build. Instead of devoting time to a minimal-return blog, why not get started on your big catch-all so that you can dominate your niche traffic?

Articles, Articles and More Articles

All the articles you write, or hire out to a freelance writer to have written, do not need to be posted on your website. In fact, they shouldn't be. Use those primary articles and tutorials on your site, add some new stuff now and again to keep everyone happy, and then submit to article directories. Utilize profile and link capabilities to link back to your website, the authority on Widgets. (You might know this method by other popular names, like "Bum Marketing" or "Article Marketing.")

Social Marketing

Social marketing is what is driving web 2.0. Instead of spending your time on a new blog people may or may not eventually find, spend it on the blogs of others who've already captured your audience. Become a contributing member of the community, make some friends, and use your wit and wisdom to get people to click on your name, link, or profile and visit your website. Do the same by creating pages on social websites like Squidoo and MySpace; frequent forums and other places where potential buyers may gather.

By engaging in social marketing, you're bringing your products to the masses, rather than waiting for them to find you. It's a much more active approach, and one that can be tailored to offer that all-important focus your affiliate plan needs. Not only that, but it's a lot more fun than talking to yourself on your blog, too, and you won't have to worry about maintaining it when you're off on vacation enjoying all that Big Dog affiliate cash!

Now that we've addressed the question of blogging, let's move on and talk about the one thing that dominates the internet—playing the web game to pull in the traffic. In the next few chapters, we'll talk about how to run with the Big Dogs that run the whole show— Google and its peers (if Google has a true peer….). Next, we'll get into the issue of search engines and optimizing to make them your friends. It's crucial to affiliate marketing, so don't miss these next few episodes.

The Big G

We can't be more clear. Without search engine traffic, you have no traffic at all; none worth mentioning and certainly not enough to sustain your affiliate business.

Ninety percent or more of the traffic to your website(s) will be from search engines, primarily the big-names like Google, Yahoo!, and MSN. These search engines are what will deliver hundreds or thousands of people to your virtual doorstep searching for products and information such as that you've provided.

Outside of search engines, websites generate traffic in only a few ways. These include

- Links from other websites or articles
- Links and addresses from traditional marketing
- The occasional word of mouth exposure

All of these combined, however, only equate to about 10% of visitor traffic. And while ten percent is certainly something worth grabbing, the absolute best expenditure of your resources is optimizing for search engine traffic. (Incidentally, your efforts to optimize will put more links and exposure out there for your site to be found through the above-mentioned means, making search engine-centered development even more important.)

More importantly, the traffic that you get from a search engine is *organic*. That simply means that the traffic that search engines

generate for you is traffic from real, live human beings out searching for a site like yours. They search for information and products to serve a need. That need may be buying, it may be learning, business promotion, problem-solving or what have you, but it all comes down to one thing—these are the people that are going online with the express purpose of finding someone like *you*.

Whereas those who click on links or enter your web address from a business card or some such means may just be curiosity seekers, the people coming from search engines started with a purpose, a goal in mind. And if you're good, even if that primary goal wasn't buying, you just might convince them that that's really what they were after all along, and you just might get that sale!

Some search engines matter more than others

We've established that the only way someone searching through the vast mounds of information on the internet can find you [without an address or link access] is by using a search engine. Ninety percent of visitors, perhaps more, will find you this way. But as most of us also know, there are many, many search engines out there, and not all of them are the same. A handful of search engines matter a whole lot more than the rest.

So who matters and who doesn't? In truth, everyone matters because every visitation generated by even the most obscure search engine matters. But for your purposes, you need to work to please the Big Dogs in the search world so that you get the lion's share of the searches for your targeted keywords and keyphrases.

Having said that, understand that there is only so much you can do. Follow the advice given in subsequent chapters here so that you rank well in the more popular search engine results pages (SERP's), and the rest will pretty much follow anyway.

Search engines that rule the web

Enough talking around it, let's take a look at who really matters in the search engine world.

According to reliablesoft.net, the top ten US search engines are:

1. Google
2. Bing
3. Yahoo
4. Ask
5. AOL

(Second tier search engines listed alphabetically, not in order of performance)

- Baidu
- Wolframalpha
- DuckDuckGo
- Internet Archive
- Yandex.ru

And according to data collected by reliablesoft.net from a Hitwise press release, the breakdown of traffic share by major search engines looks like this:

- Google—92.3%
- Yahoo!—2.51%
- Bing—2.28%
- Baidu—0.85%

Add these numbers up, and you'll see that approximately 98% of searches are generated by just four major search engines. Not only that, but of the second-tier performers, and even some in the first, several smaller engines are powered by the major engines. For example, AOL Search is powered by Google, as is Netscape; Alta Vista and Netscape are powered by Yahoo!

The lesson to learn, then, is to work to please the major players, and the rest should fall in line. And even if they don't, you'll be accessing the greatest percentage of web searchers, and that's your ultimate goal.

How it all Works, or Doesn't

Naturally, to understand how to please these search engines and rank well in the SERP's, or Search Engine Rank Pages, you need to have a basic understanding of how it all works (or, if you do it wrong, how it doesn't!). For now, we'll give you that basic understanding. Later on in the chapter on SEO (chapter 8), we'll talk specifically about the kind of keyword selection that will work to get you found and get you traffic.

Driving web search engines

What drives search engines are their own indexing programs.
Those indexing programs are fed information from programs which
crawl the millions of pages on the web and feed back essential
information to the engine. These crawlers are most commonly
referred to as 'Spiders'. The exact programs and algorithms used
by these programs are not disclosed, and vary from search engine
to search engine. But from practice and study, we can determine
the most basic, and even some of the more complex, practices
employed by the major search engines.

When spiders go crawling the web, they start with the most popular
pages. From there, they follow the structure and links from those
sites to other pages and websites, indexing the most often
occurring words as they go along.

What the spiders deem to be the more important keywords—and
for any given subject there can be many—they send back to their
database. There, those keywords and phrases are cataloged, and
information is kept to quickly tell the search engine where to find
the words and accompanying information again—such as when a
user enters those terms or similar terms into a search bar.

Based on a variety of factors, the pages that host the information,
or words, that the spiders find are ranked in importance and
relevance to a subject, or more accurately, a set of terms; if more
than one set of terms appears on a website, the site can be ranked

for those terms, giving the possibility to rank well for many related, but different sets of keywords or key phrases.

What's indexed and what isn't

Speaking primarily of the major search engines, what are indexed are the more significant words on the site. Prepositions and 'filler' words—such as a, an, the, in, et cetera, are ignored. What the spiders look for are the words that appear on the site that actually mean something to the end user.

Those words can appear virtually anywhere on the site. The spiders will search content, headlines, sidebars, ads, and coded tags behind the scenes. Some of these words will add more weight if used properly. For example, titles and subtitles add weight to keywords, so it is a good idea to use your primary keyphrases in titles and subtitles and in the meta tags for the site.

There is something of an art to this, however. It didn't take long for the search engines to figure out that people were simply stuffing pages with keywords and keyphrases to get ranks and hits, and so they developed algorithms (undisclosed) to guide the spiders and tell them what is real content and what is bogus.

In addition, there are some types of content that spiders can't or won't index. They won't index information that you tell them to ignore (through your coding); content that is not accessible because it is restricted behind a password or security system cannot be accessed and so will not be crawled and ranked. This is part of the reason that squeeze pages have limited usefulness, at

least in terms of search engine rankings; if the spider cannot go beyond that wall, it cannot see what is behind it. Therefore, you have to have the bulk of your optimized content upfront where the spider can get at it. Also, spiders have stopped ranking a lot of squeeze pages because they do not offer actual value—they're just registration docs, and so you should not rely too heavily on these from an SEO standpoint unless you plan to add some content that will please the spider (and still be useful to the human consumer, too).

Plug-ins, non-HTML formats, and non-text content cannot be indexed by search engines. This means that if you are including any of the following, it may not be indexed.

- Plug-in programs
- Videos
- Audios
- Flash files
- Images
- Photos
- Frames
- Java applets

Of course, these elements can be important to the humans who use your site, and certainly do have a purpose that warrants using them, but from an SEO standpoint, they have little to no value. Therefore, the best advice for affiliates is to keep it simple, build it strong, and minimize the use of features that have limited return.

Summing it all up

To sum it all up, it all comes down to this:

- Search results rely on content and keywords.
- Content = Food for search engines/spiders
- Quality Content = Good Search Rankings

Since no human would have a prayer of completing such a monumental task as evaluating and indexing all the sites on the web, we have to rely on the best processes and programs the search engines can create. Those best programs rely on what amounts to an elaborate matching game that matches search words to words on a page. Very basically, if you have no words, or at least no words that matter to spiders and the people searching, you have nothing to match up to, and so you have no way for a search engine to find you. Your existence on the web, and the traffic to your site, depends on you having the words that people want to find.

To rank well in the major search engines, you need to center on a select group of keywords and keyphrases that you want to rank for. You need to use those correctly to prove to the search engines that you are one of the authorities in your subject, for your chosen phrases. As mentioned, we'll give you those details in Chapter 8 when we talk more about SEO. For now, understand the basic inner-workings of the web, and start thinking about how you can make that work for you.

Traffic For The Cheap

Viral marketing is one of the easiest and best ways to generate large amounts of inbounds links (which those search engines love) and traffic to your website. And the best thing about it is, you can employ viral marketing methods to gain *fast*, *easy* traffic for a very small investment—even free! If you learn how to harness this simple method for utilizing freeware, shareware, and other viral tricks of the trade, you'll have learned yet another of the Big Dog ways to make big money from the comfort of your beach chair.

What is Viral Marketing?

Viruses are not normally welcomed in either computing or human circles. A virus is an infection—a disease—a thing to be avoided at all costs. Indeed, viruses are to be strictly avoided. But we can learn from the habits of viruses, and make their ways ours to harness motivated web traffic.

At its most basic, viral marketing is nothing more than the spreading of information from one person to another. It is based on the concept that on average, a person will tell three others about a product that they like. So for every client you please, there are three more potentials following behind.

In web circles, this has been applied in a broader sense to include not just word-of mouth campaigning, but actual programs that get passed around and enjoyed; and when those mini-programs link to

another, more useful website or product, the viral effect continues on to eventually net the end-goal, which in this case is traffic to your website, and conversion of traffic into sales of featured affiliate products.

Using Freeware and Shareware in Viral Marketing Campaigns

People love getting something for nothing. That is why freeware and shareware are so popular on the web today. There are entire websites dedicated just to just giving away freeware and shareware, and they are making big bucks by doing it—and so are the people who own those programs.

By giving away a free version of a complimentary program that fits in with your affiliate product, you can generate a large amount of viral traffic into your site. What's great about this kind of traffic is that it is independent of web searches. In other words, the viral traffic from freeware is *in addition to* organic traffic generated by search engines.

Note—before you disregard this method as something beyond your expertise, understand that there are ways to build freeware without any programming knowledge at all. This is a traffic generation method that anyone can use!

The basic method that is employed here is this:

- First, you create or have created a simple software application that will appeal to your target consumer. This needs to be something that ties in with your affiliate product in some way, and that can enhance the product or help answer questions which lead the consumer to your product page.
  - o For example, going again with the fitness theme we started earlier, if you are selling bodybuilding supplements you might create a freeware product that helps your customers track their workouts and progress.

- Next, you create a website for your freeware product. This page will list the product features and will give download instructions to the visitor so that he or she can really get the freeware product offered. But it also links in some way to your affiliate product. There are a variety of ways you can choose to link out to your merchant's page. Your methodology will depend a lot on your affiliate product, and also on the freeware product that you are offering.
  - o In the case of the workout tracker, you may simply advertise your affiliate product site, or offer links to informational resources. For example, you might prominently display feature articles which detail useful information for bodybuilders. Naturally, the articles that are linked will be those hosted on your main product affiliate site, which is already set up to convert your visitor over to your merchant's page.
  - o If you have created something like a quiz or questionnaire-style diagnostic tool, the "solution" will

link directly back to either your affiliate website, or more probably your merchant's site—the real answer to the problem! So for example here you might create a diagnosis tool for bodybuilders designed to answer "Why can't I make gains?" You ask a few profiling questions about workout habits, show that you understand the trouble facing the user—for instance, no gains despite regular, planned workouts, and then suggest that a dietary need might be to blame, or that supplementation might help. To learn more about what your body needs, click next.

- Now that you've created your application, you need to place it in systems where users can find it. Very simply, you will submit it to free download sites, such as freedownloadscenter.com, Tucows.com, or any of about 600+ other free download websites. The websites will offer a brief description and overview of the product (which you will create prior to submission) and then offer a link to the homepage where the free download exists. That homepage is the place where your sales begin!

You can use Shareware applications in much the same way, only instead of promoting an affiliate program you are promoting a program that you own or have created. It starts as a free version, but only works for a limited amount of time before it times out, or has limited functionality. The goal is to get your users to fall in love with your little program so that they do buy the additional features or purchase the program after the trial time (you'll recognize this as the MO of many leading software companies—get

them to rely on your product so that they have to buy the full version).

Useful tricks and tips for distributing Freeware and Shareware Easily

To try to submit your applications to all the major free download centers would be entirely unmanageable. You could reasonably manage a few manually and on your own, but that would not be enough to really capitalize on the traffic potential created by creating your own freeware and shareware programs and applications. The only way to really do this is to use a submission program of some kind.

There are different options out there, such as FastSubmit, PromoSoft, SharewareTracker and many more. These types of products help you submit to between 400 and 600 download sites automatically or semi-automatically, depending on the program you choose. You can research these programs, or simply search for mass-submission software to find a program that works well for you. Many of these rely on your having created a PAD file with the needed information the download sites will be using, so you should learn more about PAD files and creating them if you plan to use mass-submission software.

Since you now know the basics of how to utilize the viral capabilities of freeware and shareware, let's talk just a bit about generating the ideas that will make this worth your while, and

about how you can get started even if you are completely tech-ignorant.

Generating Winning Ideas

The one thing that you want to keep in mind is that your application needs to in some way appeal to your audience. It has to be something they will be happy to have for free. In other words, while they will not expect premium software for nothing (the possible exception being shareware programs), they will expect a nice little something for nothing—the only reason they'll be looking anyway!

There is something else to keep in mind, too. It has to fit with your product/niche! You can't just throw out a free loan calculator to sell your bodybuilding supplements; you have to have something that a bodybuilder will be interested in having. Something that solves a problem, enhances your product, or helps make his/her bodybuilding life easier.

To help you generate new ideas if you haven't any of your own, go ahead and search around the net and the download sites. See what other people are offering in your niche—especially those types of products that are getting downloaded often (you can see how often a program is downloaded when you click on it at most sites) or that have high user reviews (again, available on most download sites). Of course, you cannot simply take what someone else has

already built, but you can get some ideas and design one of your own.

Otherwise, a simple brainstorming session could generate some great ideas. Put yourself in your customers' shoes once again, and think about the things that you might like, or that might make your life easier.

Just understand that whatever it is you create, it needs to be something that both stands on its own as an actual interactive product, and one that links in somehow with the rest of what you are doing.

Why it works

Understanding why freeware and shareware give-aways work will help you as you generate ideas and construct your applications. What's most important to understand is this—freebies work because they are interactive and are of value to the customer. It's different than creating an ad! It has to be something real and useful!

What this means is that you cannot just go about designing an application as yet another wordy advertisement. Applications that are in actuality ads will only hurt your traffic; first because your customer will feel cheated, and secondly because they will be banned by the better download sites, and possibly even result in your website being banned. Therefore, the golden rule in creating

freeware applications is to make them something real and useful, capable of standing on their own.

A few basic tips for creating freeware that will net the desired results are:

- KISS—Keep It Simple, Stupid! Don't go overboard; create a simple application without extending your resources too far. That way if it doesn't get a lot of attention, you haven't lost much, and that way you also don't over-complicate the usefulness for your customers.
- Quality—make it something that is well-built and functional, even for its simplicity. Substandard products will either not be used or will be ignored by websites.
- Value—include some element of value for your customer, whatever it might be, so that you give them a real incentive to download your application and use it to get to you!

Getting the Freebie Ball Rolling

We did tell you earlier in the notation that it is possible to employ this technique with little or no programming knowledge. To show you how that is possible, we'll talk about just a couple of options for creating programming cheaply (or for free—even better!) and easily.

The most basic freeware applications we are talking about here are not much more than lists that link to the appropriate target. We're

talking about those quiz-style diagnostic questionnaires that go on for a few frames by clicking 'next', and then end at the solution to the problem—you merchant site. Otherwise, we could be talking about a links-finder or listing agent. You can construct these easily enough with just some creative writing in an HTML editor, some CGI script, and linking via a hidden redirect function to the URL of your choice. You can easily learn enough basics to do this on the web.

Of course, more complex applications might require a little more expertise and programming skill, but if you know where to find that for free, you can still construct a quality product without a degree in programming. Websites like Freebyte.com, NeedScripts.com, and HotScripts.com all offer free programming scripts and codes that can be easily plugged into HTML editors to create applications of a wide variety of sorts. These free source-codes in and of themselves can be a great way to generate freeware application ideas.

In addition to the free and low-cost programming options, there are also programs that can be used in template-fashion to build applications, such as customized toolbars designed to suit the interests of your niche audience. Again, there are many software applications that can be used for this purpose, like Site Pilot Toolbar Creator and Toolbar Studio. There are even free trial versions of ToolBar Studio and other similar programs available online.

As you can see, with the abundance of programs, free codes and scripts, and simple applications that you can build on your own,

there are a multitude of possibilities for even the most technologically impaired affiliate. So yes, even you at home can easily get the freebie ball rolling toward Big Dog profits!

Search Engine Optimization

Remember earlier when we said this?

- Search results rely on content and keywords.
- Content = Food for search engines/spiders
- Quality Content = Good Search Rankings

Well the Ins and Outs of SEO are not much more complex than that. To that, the only thing we might add is the importance of links:

- Search results rely on content and keywords **and links**
- **Links plus** Content = Food for search engines/spiders
- **Links plus** Quality Content = Good Search Rankings

So to summarize this chapter before we even get going, if you have good content that your customer is searching for, and you gain some good links back to your content, you will rank well in the search engines, and you will tap into that organic traffic which will result in 90% of the traffic to your website.

As we said when we talked about how search engines work, the entire business is ruled by matching terms to terms—terms on your page to terms visitors are looking for. These, and you probably

already know this, are what we refer to as keywords and key phrases. Now, as you can imagine, not all the words on your page will really matter because no one is out there searching for meaningless words that are everywhere. What you need to do is figure out which of the words people *are* searching for in respect to your niche and target a select group of them. These will be the words that you strive to optimize for, the words that hopefully will gain you SERP ranking near enough to the top to get traffic.

These words and phrases will be ranked first and foremost by the content on your page. That is what is given the most weight and relevance by search engines and by people. And since site popularity, traffic, and linking all weighs in, too, content is the most important factor in SEO.

Aside from SEO efforts, there is another, more important reason to write content that is useful and relevant. Your customers! Consider this—no one cares if you rank first but have nothing to offer after the click. All that the humans care about is whether or not you are serving their needs. After they find you, if your content is good they'll stay and have a look around, use your site for a while. If it's nothing more than a pile of keywords stacked one upon another, they'll just leave for the number two-ranked site that actually has real content.

Therefore, if you understand nothing else from this chapter understand this—the focus of all your SEO efforts must first be—above anything else—the quality of your content! If you do nothing more than put up good, [humanly] digestible content, you've

already done more than half of what it takes to develop a site that will generate traffic.

Nevertheless, there are other factors that weigh in on your ranking that can be optimized to increase your popularity with the search engines. These include both on-site and off-site factors.

On-Site SEO Components

Three basic components will decide the bulk of your search engine rankings. They are

- Content
- Tags
- Link structure

We've pretty much covered the content factor. You need quality content that includes those keywords at a reasonable density to please the spiders (somewhat elusive, but between two and four percent keyword density for each term is generally accepted as the norm and a good target); that content needs to be pleasing to your humans more importantly, so write for them and where it makes sense to add in your targeted keywords, do so, but if it detracts from your content and makes it unreadable, let it go.

Tags are the other important component, as they work as a bit of a guide-system to search engine spiders; not only that, but when you include eye-catching keyphrases, your visitor's interest will be

piqued as well. However, much of what exists in tags is never seen by people, so there is a bit more leeway here.

Tags are attached to all sorts of content to explain it to the spiders. There are tags for images, titles, keywords, and more. Title tags are the most crucial of these, as they have a direct bearing on your rankings. Title tags serve as a description of the content on the page. Also, the information in the tag appears in the search results, giving that at-a-glance information that the searcher will use to decide which site they want to click on. Therefore, title tags are something you want to know about and use as part of your overall SEO campaign.

Meta tags are a couple of sentences that describe the content. Meta tags help place your content amongst the other sites, sort of explaining it to the search engine; they also appear in some searches to describe the site to the visitor. They may bear on SEO, although the argument is that their impact is negligible. It is worth the few seconds to use them, and perhaps enter your key terms there, but you should be most concerned with other aspects of SEO.

The third factor in on-site SEO is your internal link structure. From the standpoint of search engines, the better websites have multiple pages of worthwhile content, and they create navigable internal link structures so that their visitors can get around easily and find the information they need. That is what you need to build for both your visitors and your spiders.

The internal link structure should be logical and usable. Humans will use it to read all that is of interest to them, and spiders will follow them to see where you can take them. Give some consideration to this as you build your website, and think about how you can use your structure to help all involved, and also to direct visitors and search engines where you want them to go.

In addition to just having the basic static components in place, you also need to attend to the dynamics that affect your page ranking. For all intents and purposes, those dynamics are new content creation. Search engines like sites that are up-to-date and well-cared for. And from their point of view, sites that are up-to-date and well maintained are sites that change with the times. Therefore yes, updating content is important.

This does not mean, however, that you should go about changing your basic content every day—just that on a regular basis (and some say daily is best, but what a lot of work that would be! And Big Dogs aren't into creating more work for themselves!) you need to add some new content. The easiest way to do that is throw up a new article for the spiders to chew on. A blog attached to your website can be very useful for this purpose. Targeted visitors seeking assistance, however, will often prefer the formality of an article.

Off-Site SEO Components
That covers the meaningful on-site SEO components; now we need to take a look at those off-site factors that bear on your search engine popularity.

Search engines like popular websites. They let the use of others show them which sites are most worth going to. That is not to say that you will not be indexed by spiders before you have in-bound links established, it is just to say that you will rank better when search engine crawlers can see that others are pointing towards your site, too.

You can think of it this way. The content on your site provides the food for search engines—this we've said before. And the links from others outside your site help search engines qualify that, or assign a value to your site.

The moral to the story is that good links mean good rankings. You need outside links coming into your site to gain good ranking and search-generated traffic.

But what makes a good link?

The way the crawlers see it, links should follow a natural order. That order goes something like this:

- A website is created
- The website is found by a few chance visitors
- Those visitors like your site, and recommend it to others (by linking, such as this is the way of spreading good news on the www)
- Those interested parties tell other interested parties, and soon there is a navigable path of links from one happy user to another, back to your website

Now the thing of it is that spiders are smart. They know a natural link-structure does not happen instantly, and it is not all centered around one point. So while you can get the ball rolling by scattering some links around the web yourself, or trading a link with someone else (reciprocal links), you can't just flood a few locations with tons of links back to your website.

Hence, there are some disqualifiers for the links coming into your site.

- Off-topic links don't make a lot of sense. Limit links from places that do not share your interests.
- Reciprocal links just look like a trade-off, so all of your links cannot be gained in trade (some weight will be given to shared links, so they shouldn't be discounted, but don't put all your eggs in this basket).
- Having all your links from one or two sources looks just like what it is—you out there linking back to yourself, and not moving around the web to do it. Start some links through social sites like Squidoo and MySpace, but also use these for their intended purposes of informing others about your website.
- Paying for links from the top websites (because yes, you can pay popular people to "like" you) looks equally contrived. Your link pattern should be from the jocks' table as well as the nerds'. Paying for a couple of high-hit links is a good fire starter, but don't group your eggs in just this basket, either.

Basically, you just need to utilize link opportunities from each category (link type—one way, reciprocal…). A strategy to employ to establish links from the outside in might look like:

- Establish one-way links from quality sites
- Establish reciprocal links
- Submit your site to directories
- Use free article submissions (nicely suited since they'll scatter across the web and draw in links from all over)
- Engage in social networking on topic-specific niche forums and blogs, etc
- Create social networking pages and lenses at Squidoo, Zimbio, and other similar sites

This may seem virtually impossible, but there are such things as paid links and link networks. One that has worked well for many affiliates is Jonathon Leger's 3WayLinksNetwork. There are others, too, and you can research this online. Just know that the fastest way to build links that will count is to utilize all available resources.

And as a last note, know this. Do not be scared that you might break one the rules of pleasing the crawlers with your links. You can't really do it wrong. By that what is meant is that while the right mix of links boosts your performance, the 'wrong' mix doesn't really hurt it. If you end up with a link structure that is too heavily weighted in one area, the worst that will seemingly happen is that the links will be discounted, but they will not subtract 'points' from your ranking. In essence, they just become neutral. Try a few things, build up some links, and then go from there to tweak your external linking.

What Will Work and What You Should Forget About

This is where we've chosen to place this all-important conversation, although by some rights perhaps it should have come much earlier in the book. At any rate, this is where we are going to talk about the keywords and key phrases that you are to choose to target your very willing and able buyers—the people who really want to buy, that are just a step before purchase, that are right on the verge and just need that last little push!

The best free thing you can do is choose the right keywords that will target the right buyers. But those keywords are not what so many others have told you need. The big push on the internet is to get ranked for the most popular keywords. If you accomplish that, you'll have so much traffic nothing else will matter. There are a few things wrong with this methodology and logic.

- It is too hard to break into the high rankings for the most popular search terms.
- Traffic doesn't matter as much as conversion does.
- Most searched does not equal motivated buyer.
- It ignores the long tail of keywords that collectively means bigger and better traffic than a single top keyword.

The most important factor that we want to consider is that by basing your keyword searches on what the most popular search terms are for a niche, you are not specifically targeting those people who are willing, motivated, on-the-cusp buyers. You're simply collecting everyone out there with an interest in widgets or

bodybuilding powders, who could be everyone from kids researching school papers to people who hate widgets or some actual consumers looking for widgets and supplements to buy.

Secondary and long-tail keywords/phrases are actually the traffic that you want most. The reason is simple—because if you figure out what the *motivated buyers* are using as their search terms, as opposed to everyone else looking up your niche, you will weed out the fluff, and just net in the traffic you want. It may not be as impressive as bringing in visitors by the thousands, but who cares if those visitors are more likely to be buyers?!

Choosing the right—profitable—keywords is easier than you think. You just need to know what buyers search for. This will vary depending on what you are selling, but as a general rule buyers will look for information about a product before they will just look for the product. They'll look for the advice of others on the web. They'll look for opinions and information offered in specific types of content like product reviews. For these people you want to choose keywords that include things like

- Product x **review**
- Product x **opinion**
- Product x **comparison**

And so on.

The problem-centric consumer might also be looking for an answer. These types of buyers are easily targeted with tutorials that offer the solution they need. With this you have one of two options—

either provide complex tutorials and point to a better way, or end your tutorial with your product, or otherwise include it as essential to the fix. For these people you would want to include keywords such as

- X **How to**
- **How to** do x
- **Repair** problem
- **Fix** problem
- Problem **fix**
- **Cure**
- **Clean**
- **Problems**

By now you should see where we're going with this. The people who need you are not just going around wasting time in broad searches; they are very specifically addressing their needs and concerns with their search terms. Therefore, what you want to do is give them what they are looking for, and optimize using the terms that the people you really want visiting are using.

This is the keyword and SEO strategy that you will use for each of your small, product-centered websites. By doing this on multiple websites for different products, you will, over time, capture a great deal of the traffic rankings for your niche collectively. That's when you use your parent site to clean up. On your parent site, you start optimizing for the bigger, more general keywords. You can now do this because you have a large enough link structure established outside in the secondary keyword markets to support the larger site, and therefore you've established enough power to rank well

with the parent site in short time. Eventually, the roles reverse and it is the parent that feeds the smaller sites, but the roles don't really matter. All that matters to you is that by one turn or another, the traffic is controlled by you.

This is, by far, one of the most effective strategies employed by the Big Dogs. Big Dogs love internet marketing for its simplicity and profitability. They are looking to make big money with limited output. So they concentrate on what will bring in the most buyers, most easily. And this is it. If you do not learn anything else from this book, learn how to target a buying audience like the Big Dogs do. Learn to choose the keywords upon which everything else will be based, and enjoy higher conversions and interest simply by default.