

Graham-Cox.com presents...

Super Affiliate Success Tips



with Rosalind Gardner

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GC: My guest for today's interview is super-affiliate Rosalind Gardner, who makes a half-million dollars a year using pay-per-click and niche blogging, and is the best-selling author of [The Super Affiliate Handbook](#), her guide to making money selling other people's stuff online. Rosalind, thanks very much for giving up your valuable time for this interview. It's much appreciated.

RG: Thank you for the invitation.

GC: You're welcome. Perhaps we could start with you telling us a little bit about your background and success you've achieved as an affiliate marketer.

RG: Basically I had worked as an air-traffic controller for 20 years and started a little website while I was working for the government. That was back in 1996 and based on the results of that website, I realized that it was a wonderful way to reach the whole world if you wanted to.

I figured there must be a way to make money at this. At that time I was getting a little bit sick and tired of the scheduling as an air-traffic controller so I was pretty bound and determined to make this work. I started a little site that promoted dating services as an affiliate.

What that means is that I made a commission every time I sold a membership. It took off and went absolutely nuts. It's still actually my primary site nowadays. That half-million dollars was from back in 2002.

GC: Things have progressed a lot since then, I imagine.

RG: They have.

GC: You say you started in the dating niche. When you started, how did you generate traffic?

RG: I started off with one product to promote and that was the one and only dating network, so it was really only a one-page selling site. The very first thing I did was got my site listed on Yahoo and later ended up buying a directory listing when those came about.

As soon as what is now known as Yahoo Search Marketing became available to do pay-per-click advertising, I signed up immediately because back in those days, it was like a penny a click and there weren't a lot of other pay-per-click marketers at that time so it was totally amazing.

On keyword such as "dating" and "dating services" quickly got full of other advertisers who were in the same niche, but it was still a fabulous way to do business and drive traffic to your site. Then there are a million ways to keep people coming back to your site for more once you've got them there.

GC: That was what used to be Overture.

RG: Right.

GC: So you started off in pay-per-click and you obviously saw the potential early on. How did you become skilled at pay-per-click? Was that something you just sort of taught yourself as you went along or did you do any research or get any training?

RG: There was no training when I started. There was no training on how to build a website or anything—it was Go2.com back then and they basically just had enough information for you to learn how to put together a listing with a title and a description and I just winged it. As you go on, you learn more about how to get people to click on your ad as opposed to other people's ads.

GC: That's amazing. Would you say the majority of the traffic you drive to your website still from pay-per-click?

RG: No, not at all. In some areas the price of advertising went up, in others it went down as the competition increased. I would say that now probably 40% or maybe even less comes from pay-per-click.

GC: Is that because you've gotten into blogging more as your main traffic driver?

RG: Absolutely.

GC: What would you say are the main advantages of the blog? Why do you think blogging is such a great driver of traffic?

RG: It's dynamic and the search engines like a site that is regularly refreshed. That means you're adding content to it on a regular basis. I guess if you're trying to drive free traffic, then having to do a little bit of extra work in the writing department will save you money in the long run.

It's kind of a tradeoff—you do a little bit more writing or get somebody else to do the writing for you—as long as your blog is relatively active. Some of these big bloggers now actually have networks that are all linked together and they have many writers on staff and blog several times a day. They generate tons of free traffic that way.

GC: How much do you write for your NetProfitsToday.com blog? Also, what about your niche marketing blogs—do you outsource much of the article writing for those?

RG: It's actually only recently that I've invited guest bloggers to blog on NetProfitsToday in particular. I've had a couple of guest articles on SageHearts.com, the dating site. I'd say that of the content on my site, it's 99% me doing the writing, but that, I think, will probably change over time.

I like giving new bloggers the opportunity to get a little bit of traffic to their sites and of course, I've got a big audience so it's a good way for me to get content and a good way for them to get traffic.

GC: Do you outsource any of your articles for your blogs other content?

RG: No, I don't "buy" articles, if you will, for that—not yet.

GC: You obviously enjoy writing then. You must have times when perhaps you struggle for motivation or get writer's block. What do you do to help overcome that problem when it occurs?

RG: I do like writing about what I like and I think one of the reasons why my business has been so successful is because what I like about it is connecting with people and helping them learn to do what I've done.

Having done that with many, many people, so many people come up and say, "I've been reading your newsletter for years," or, "Your book was the first book I read," and having had that success, it really keeps you going.

Helping them learn is my biggest motivator. I just came back from a two-and-a-half-week vacation and found that I was having a little bit of difficulty getting set up. Working on my laptop it's different—my hands are closer together, it's more of a struggle—and it's not as comfortable as at home, where I've got everything on my desktop.

I just don't worry about it. It's like, "Okay, if I can get one post a week," or even just send a newsletter to my subscribers and say, "I've only posted once this week or I've got one guest blogger post and one post from me," and I'll tell them why, that, I think, deepens the connection. They realize, "This is just another person..."

GC: Sure—she's a real human being and you have the same problems that other people have when they're trying to market online.

RG: Exactly, yes.

GC: When you launch a new blog, how do you drive traffic to it initially? Is it through the article generation—just writing content for the blog—or do you start off with pay-per-click?

RG: I don't start off with pay-per-click anymore. I would have done that in the past if I were starting a new site. I don't have that many niches. I've actually started more in the last couple of years than I've done before. PPC advertising now is kind of secondary.

I started a travel blog in late 2006 called Roamsters.com and I don't do a lot of the social media marketing. I find that it's a big time suck so I just blog and drive natural search engine traffic that way. I basically will Digg an article or two and hopefully that will come up. I'll mention to my existing subscribers that I've started a new blog so I get traffic that way.

The search engines see that I'm getting traffic so they send a little bit more. Then at the point when I'm actively promoting specific products, what I'll do is create a campaign that goes to a specific blog post for a particular product, so I get really specific now.

GC: You mean in terms of the keywords as well as the articles that that pay-per-click ads link to?

RG: Yes.

GC: What would you say are the three best tips for anyone wanting to make money online? I guess that's a pretty trick question but it would be interesting to hear what your suggestions are.

RG: If you don't have an online business as such, I would say you've got to be really determined that this is what you want to do. You've got to be passionate about the niche you're working in. I see so many people who've never made a dime online, yet they start a blog about how to make money online. I'm thinking, "You so don't have credibility here."

Every highly successful Internet marketer that I know who is making money online did it the same way I did, in a niche outside of Internet marketing. Then you've got something to talk about—you've always got something to relate it back to and you also have proof, which is really important to get people to believe what you're saying and to actually buy from you.

So have some experience and some passion for the topic you're starting and then never give up. The hallmark of any successful entrepreneur is that they just keep working at it until they make money. My first paycheck was for \$10.99 and it was like, "Woo hoo, this really works and I can do more of this."

GC: It's a great feeling when you get your first check, isn't it? It kind of solidifies the mentality that it can work and you can make money. You've just got to keep doing more of the same to improve. Those are great tips. How would you go about keyword research? You mentioned that you still do some pay-per-click initially to drive traffic to certain blog articles.

RG: The very first thing I'd do would be go to Google and research existing sites, determining if they're running a blog, seeing how many comments they're getting. If there are lots of comments, then you know it's a good category to be in because there are lots of people interested.

To research specific keywords, I always use Wordtracker and I also use my Google AdWords account, but mostly it's through Wordtracker.

GC: What would you say are the biggest mistakes you see beginner Internet marketers making?

RG: I've kind of touched on it already—just not really being familiar enough with a topic; going for the money instead of going for the love of a particular topic, I think, is a really big mistake, because the first objective should be to help other people and that's how you make money, by helping other people. You don't make it by wanting money.

GC: It's a mindset thing and easy to fall into the trap of chasing the dollar and promoting everything under the sun, but as you say, you've got to provide value to your blog readers or your customers so they're getting value and it's a reciprocal kind of thing.

How do you research niches to find out if they're likely to be profitable or not? You touched on that a little bit with looking at the Google results, but is there anything else specifically you might do?

RG: Checking out the products that are available, seeing if potential competitors are actually selling, finding out how much those products sell for, and then what the commission rates are. You can do that by getting a [Commission Junction](#) account or [LinkShare](#), or if you're going to sell information products, going into [ClickBank](#) and seeing how much those merchants pay.

That, I think, is the first consideration. The other one would be are there recurring sales, meaning, do people buy this product over time? Do they keep buying it? With dating services, a person doesn't just buy a one-month membership and meet somebody and marry somebody; generally speaking, they hang on to a service membership for between four and six months.

If the merchant pays commissions not only on the first month's membership, but on each of the subsequent months as well, that means you've only had to attract that customer once but your commissions are recurring month after month as long as they hold that membership.

Another thing I particularly like is any niche that is evergreen, like business opportunities being one thing that people are always interested in, dating is another one, travel is another one. I like to work in big markets. You know there are always going to be people interested in those particular topics.

Then you can hone it in by doing research by watching the news, reading the newspapers and magazines. See what other merchants are advertising and what gets advertised over and over and over again in the back of magazines? Those things are obviously making money because money is being spent on advertising.

GC: That's a great point. How do you manage so many sites? How do you manage to keep from burning out?

RG: I do actually have a virtual assistant and he helps me to deal with questions regarding sales of [The Super Affiliate Handbook](#); however, he doesn't do anything with any of my affiliate sites—it's just basically customer service. I don't run that many sites so there's no question of burnout.

I do what I want and what feels right at the time so I don't feel under a whole lot of pressure. I do it because I like to do it, so that's another way not to burn out. If you're keen on what you're doing, you can work 16 hours today and nothing for the next two days, or four hours today and two hours tomorrow.

I don't actually work all that much. I keep it really laid back and really simple. I don't have a lot of bells and whistles on my sites. My lifestyle has always been my primary motivator, so doing less work and having more fun is the objective and that's how I guide my working life.

GC: I notice on your blog at NetProfitsToday.com, you do take holidays during the year and you tell your readers about those holidays. As you say, you go away for three or four weeks or longer. How do you automate your business while you're away?

RG: That's the beautiful thing about being an affiliate marketer—once your site is set up, you can run a blog or you can run static pages and if you're driving pay-per-click search traffic to those specific pages that sell specific services, it doesn't matter whether you've got material going up; you've got traffic coming in and you're making sales.

The merchant handles all of the customer service from the point of purchase on, so that is the beauty of being an affiliate marketer. There really is no pressure for you to blog every day or to do anything.

GC: If you could pinpoint one thing, what would you say is the single biggest reason for your success as an Internet marketer?

RG: Persistence, I think, and sharing. I believe in karma and I believe in sharing my good fortune and my knowledge with other people. I think that has contributed greatly.

And not taking it too seriously—I think coming at something from the point of desperation is not good.

If that's the case, then maybe it's not the right time to start an online business. You want to make yourself comfortable enough and cover all the bills, and then say, "Okay, now I'm in a place where I can reasonably think, with a clear head, about all the things that I want to do with my online business."

GC: That's a great tip, to start off small and not put too much pressure on yourself, but just build up slowly and gradually. Then once you're earning enough to pay the bills, you can think about expanding and taking other things on. Ros, thanks so much for agreeing to talk to us here. It's been really great to hear all of your advice. Thanks again for giving up so much of your time.

RG: My pleasure, Graham.

GC: Thank you so much.

Before You Go...

Check Out Rosalind Gardner's Latest Edition of her Best Selling Ebook *The Super Affiliate Handbook* [Here](#)