Hobby Blogging Profits

Turn Your Passion Into Profits

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Introduction

I'm a huge fan of blogging anyway - but do you know one of the best things about starting a blog based around one of your hobbies? You already know lots about it and as such you'll be able to create great content easily...

One of the biggest problems about blogging is constantly coming up with ideas in terms of what to blog about. It's not easy - and especially so if you're choosing to blog about subject which you don't really know much about simply because your research suggests it's a profitable niche.

You might have heard people saying that it's difficult to make money from a hobby blog, and that such blogs aren't really profitable because they only exist because the blogger is passionate about that subject.

Well, do you know what? Lots of hobby blogs make a great deal of money and it is very possible to make good money AND blog about something you enjoy researching and talking about.

I really like hobby blogs because it's a great feeling when you turn your passion into profits...

You know that hobbies can sometimes be expensive? I like gardening myself and let me tell you it's possible to spend a fortune on gardening equipment, accessories and gadgets... and other gardeners are exactly the same.

People spend a lot of money on their hobbies and it's possible to capitalise on this and make some money :) In this book I'll show you how to start a hobby blog and make some money from it. Let's get started...

How To Set Up Your Blog

One of the first decisions you must make is whether to set up your blog on a hosted solution such as Blogger.com or whether to host it yourself on your own website and domain name.

The latter is often the best option for several good reasons...

The main reason is that a Blogger.com blog is never really your own, so if they come along one day and decide that they don't like your blog or that it breaks their terms and conditions of service in some way then they can instantly shut it down.

Imagine working on a blog and developing content for a couple of years and then lose it all!

Wouldn't be a good feeling would it?!

Hosting a blog on your own website means that you are in complete control and you really own what you've created.

There ARE good things about Blogger.com - it's very easy to set up and use etc - but then so is a hosted blog too, as I'll take you through now.

If you're going to install your blog on your own website (as I recommend) then it's a good idea to choose a hosting provider that gives you access to something called C Panel and Fantastico De Luxe because these make the whole process a breeze.

But before you worry about hosting the first stage is to **register a domain name** for your blog.

This needs to be something that reflects the contents/subject of your blog and is pretty easy to remember (that's getting harder and harder nowadays though as good domains get taken)

You might want to incorporate your name into the domain name too...

For example joebloggsgardeningtips.com or joebloggsfishingtips.com

Doing this will make it easy to find a name that's available...

Or if just your name is available then why not register that too. joebloggs.com etc.

A .com domain can be registered very cheaply from a company such as Namecheap.com

Generally it is better to register a .com name but you shouldn't necessarily rule out another name such as a country specific name like .co.uk, although do be aware that doing so will limit the global appeal of your blog.

Be aware that some companies bundle a domain name with your web hosting but generally speaking it is often better to register them separately because this gives you more control.

Now that you've registered a domain name you want to sort out some web hosting.

As mentioned previously it is recommended that you choose a host that includes CPanel and Fantastico because these make it easy to install WordPress, which is the blogging platform we are going to be using.

You can buy hosting with a monthly or yearly fee, however monthly is by the far the most common, although yearly can work out cheaper if you're prepared to stump up the cash in advance.

The good news however is that web hosting is available pretty cheaply anyway. You can pick up decent web hosting for around $10 a month, so it really isn't going to break the bank.

Once you've sorted out your web hosting and a domain name then the next thing to do is to get them to effectively talk to each other by pointing your site to your host.

Don't fear - this is really easy to do...

When you signed up for your web hosting they should have given you your DNS details - and all you need to do is log into the place where you register your domain (e.g. Namecheap) and enter those details into the DNS boxes.

A DNS information will look something like the below:

ns118.hostname.com

ns119.hostname.com

Done?

Ok - so you've registered a domain name, sorted out some web hosting and connected the two together...

The next thing to do is to log into your hosting and install Wordpress onto your site.

Again this is really easy to do...

First of all we need to access your CPanel, so point your web browser to http://www.yourdomainname.com/cpanel

(obviously replace 'yourdomainname.com' with the domain name you actually registered.

If this doesn't work then contact your web hosting provider to find out how to gain access to CPanel, but in the vast majority of cases the above will be the correct address.

You should then be asked for your login details - simply enter in the username and password you were given when you signed up for your web hosting.
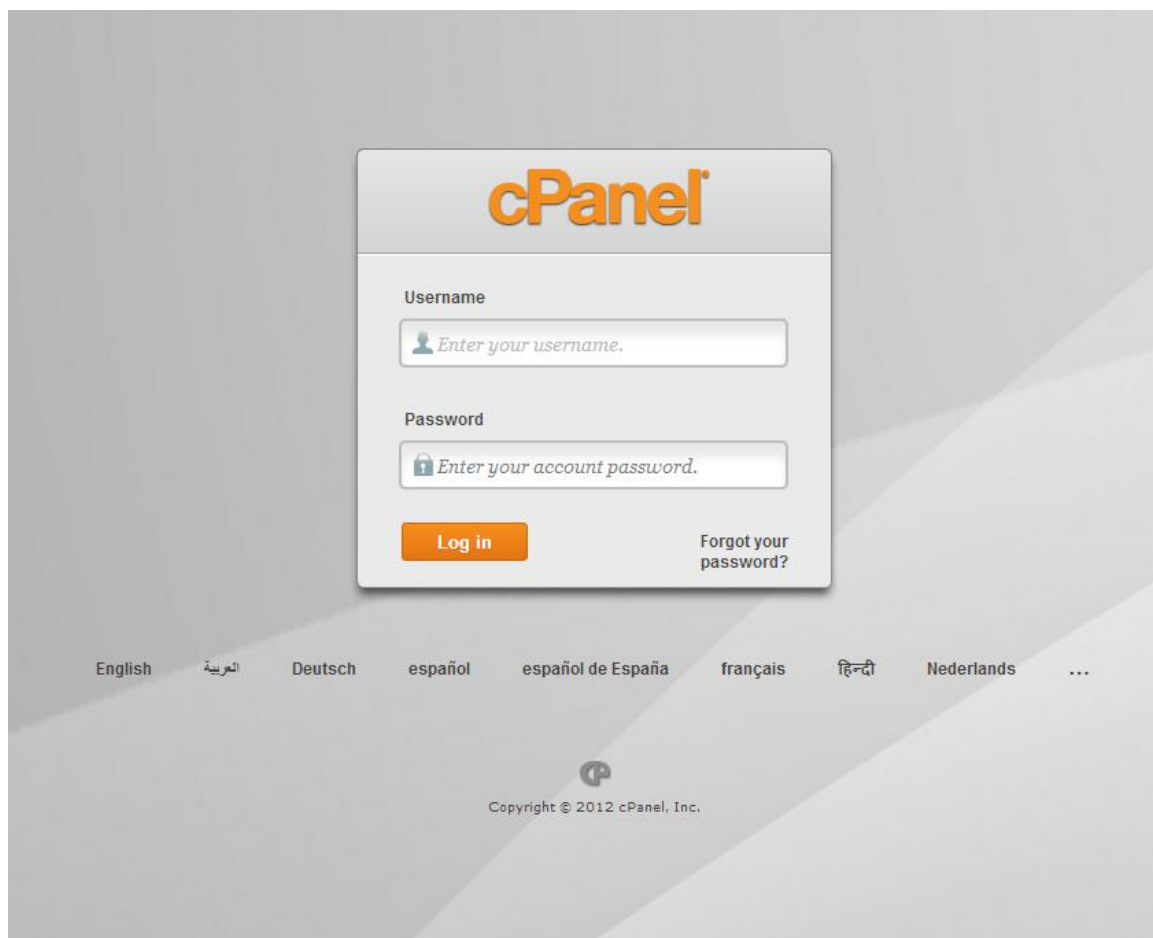
Once logged in, scroll down to the Software/Services section and click on
Fantastico De Luxe
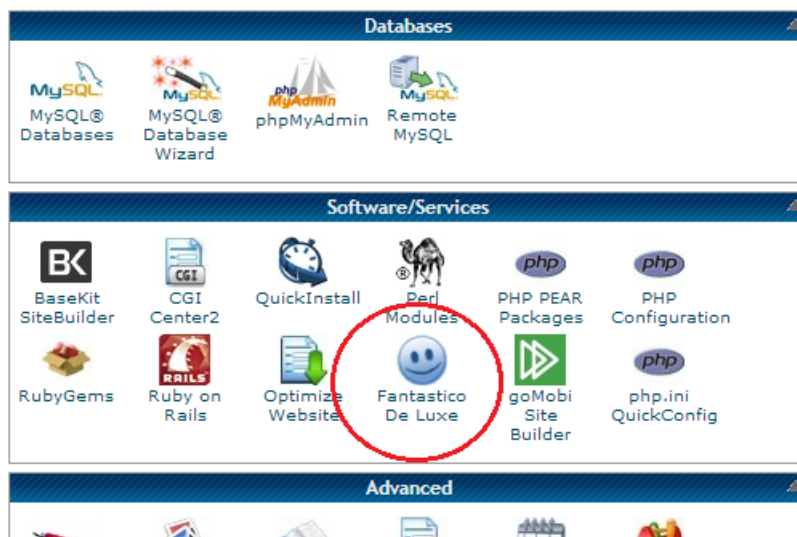
Once you have clicked that you'll move onto the following screen. Simply select
the Wordpress option in the left hand column and then follow the instructions
to go through the installation.
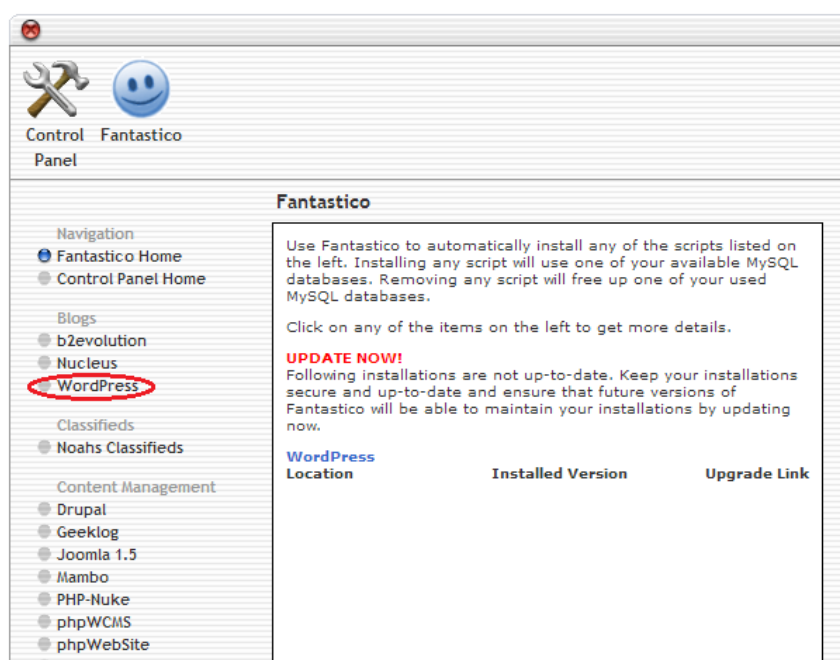
Again this is really easy, although you will be presented with some options such as where you want to install your blog. For example, do you want it to be installed in your root (e.g. http://www.yournamename.com) or do you want it to be installed in a separate sub folder (e.g. http://www.yourdomainname.com/blog)

Once you have installed your blog (should only take you a few minutes) then you can now login to your blog admin area.

To do this simply open your web browser and go to the location you installed your blog and then add wp-admin to the end of the url.

For example http://www.yourdomainname.com/wp-admin

You should then be presented with another login screen:

Simply enter the username and password that you chose during the installation and you'll be logged into the Wordpress Dashboard where you can manage and make changes to your blog.
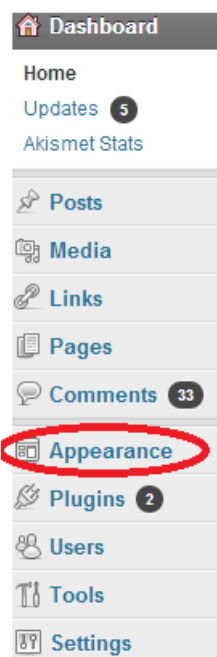
Personalising Your Blog

From the dashboard you can change the appearance of your blog, make and edit new blog posts, add and alter pages, change settings, install new plugins etc.
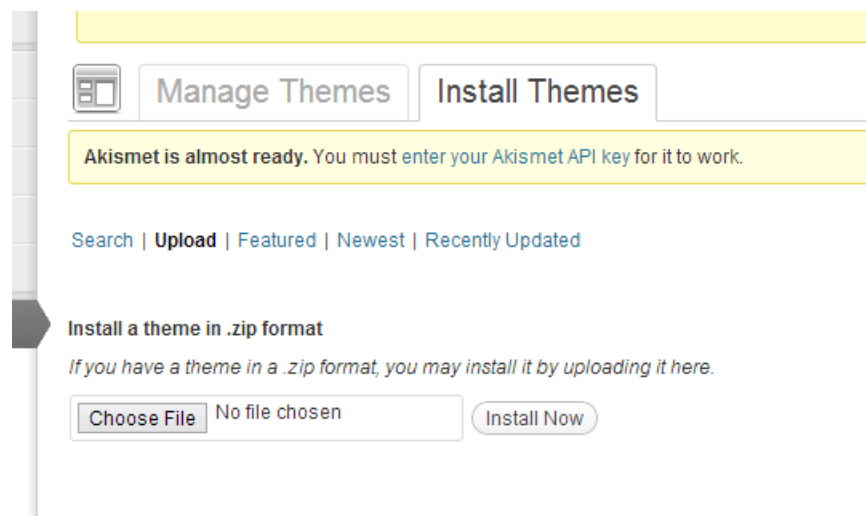
Theme

The first change that you'll want to make is to change the theme because the standard Wordpress one is quite frankly pretty boring.

On the left hand menu bar, click on "Appearance"

On the page that opens up click on the Install Themes tab at the top and then click on Upload on the menu that appears underneath.

Simply click on Choose File and select a theme from your computer that you want to use.

Unless you've used Wordpress before you might not already have a theme that you want to use.

There are literally thousands of Wordpress themes available on the internet - some are free and some are paid - but whatever you're looking for you should be able to find a theme that fits what you're looking for.

It's a good idea to choose a theme that fits in with the niche you're entering. For example if you're starting a gardening blog you could perhaps find a blog theme with outdoor or nature related graphics.

Where can I find Wordpress themes?

There are tons of different places that you can find and download Wordpress themes. Here are some potential places to look...
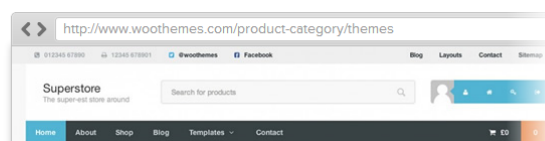
http://www.wordpress.org/extended/themes

http://www.woothemes.com

http://www.themeforest.net

http://www.elegantthemes.com

If you're struggling to find anything you like then just do a quick Google search for 'Wordpress themes' and you'll find hundreds of other sites offering them.

Sometimes it can be worth paying to get a good theme that does exactly what you want, but don't rule out free ones either because there are a lot of good ones out there.

Custom header

It's also worth personalising your blog with a custom header. You can either pay a designer to do one for you or you can design one yourself using something like Photoshop or GIMP (free alternative)

Just upload it into the appropriate place, which is usually wp_content/themes/theme folder/images

The header is usually called something like header.png, but this will differ from theme to theme. Just make sure that your new header image is exactly the same size as the one you are replacing otherwise the image will appear distorted on your blog. The default size is 760 x 200 pixels but again this will vary from theme to theme, so make sure you check.

If you're considering using stock images (ie. using pre-made images rather than custom made ones) it's important that you have the correct rights to use the images on your blog.

The good news is that there are plenty of sites which offer stock images and graphics, for example http://www.freeimages.co.uk or http://www.freegraphicsworld.com

Add some plugins

There are thousands of different Wordpress plugins available that can enable you to do lots of different things with your blog.

Like themes, some plugins are free and others are paid for.

Here's a list of essential plugins you might want to install onto your blog:

- **Akismet** is already pre-installed on every new WordPress blog and all you need to do is activate it. This a great plugin that helps to prevent spam comments appearing on your blog (believe me, spam is a real problem on blogs and if you leave your blog running for just a few days without Akismet being activated you'll be amazed by how many spam comments you get!)

- **All In One SEO Pack –** This is a nifty plugin that does SEO on your blog and helps it to rank better in the search engines.

- **Google XML Sitemaps –** Enables your blog to be indexed faster by the search engines. It seems to work pretty well too and even a brand new blog can get indexed in a matter of hours.

- **Google Analytics –** Allows you to see how many people are viewing your blog, where they came from and what content they are looking at etc.

- **ShareThis** – A simple plugin that adds 'share' buttons to the bottom of your blog posts, so that your readers can share your content with people on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

- **Twitter Tools –** A cool plugin that links your blog with your Twitter account and automatically tweets whenever you make a new post, as well as showing new tweets on your blog.

- **WPTools –** Optimizes your blog so that it can be more easily viewed on mobile devices.

- **XCloner** – A great plugin for backing up your site.

How to install a plugin

Installing a new plugin is easy - just hover your mouse over Plugins on the left-hand menu bar of the dashboard and then click on Add New on the menu that appears:
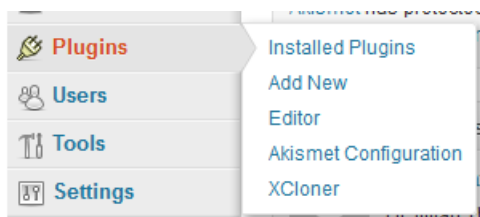
On the next page simply click on the Upload tab and click Browse to select the zip folder on your computer that contains the plugin, then click Install Now:
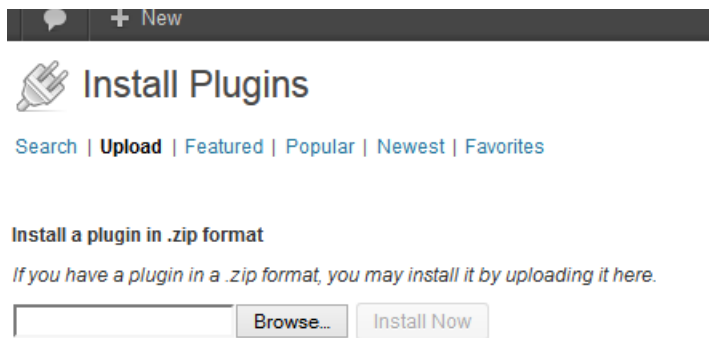
Once your plugin has upload you then need to activate it.

Just click Activate below the plugin to do this.

Adding content

Ok, so now you've installed Wordpress, chosen a theme, customised it a little and added some plugins...

The next thing to do is to add some content to key pages on your blog.

One of the most important pages is the **About** page.

Visitors to your blog are often a little curious about the person behind it, so let them know a little bit about yourself, your background, why you created the blog and why you first became interested in this particular hobby in the first place.

Believe me - a simple About Me page can do wonders for the popularity of your blog and make people want to return again in the future. Human beings like to feel like they are communicating with real people, so make sure your blog conveys that it is written by a real person and isn't just a random faceless online blog.

So what do you put on your About page?

Well, you don't want to tell them your whole life story but you do want to mention a little bit about yourself - and especially stuff that relates to your hobby.

Try to keep your writing informal and add a photograph of yourself to the page too because your readers will often be curious as to what the author looks like.

Here's an example of what you might write on the page:

Hi there, my name is Joe Bloggs and welcome to my fishing blog. I love fishing and have been a keen fisherman since the age of 13 when I first went out to sea with my granddad on his trawler. I can still remember the thrill of getting my first catch, but today I take things a little easier and prefer to concentrate on gentle fishing by the riverbank.

I go out fishing most weekends with my two children Oliver and Harry, and I decided to start this blog to share with you my experiences and fishing tips.... etc.

Hopefully you get the idea :)

Another important page is your Terms / Privacy page.

It's important that you let people know that you might receive affiliate commissions if people buy a product through a link on you blog - or if you have an opt-in form on there that you respect their email privacy and won't pass on their details..... etc.

There are standard terms and privacy policy templates available online that you could use - but remember that these might not totally cover you legally. For total reassurance you would need to get one drafted up by a lawyer.

Find out the law in your country and make sure that you comply. Remember I'm NOT a lawyer and I'm in NO way giving legal advice :)

A Note About Making Blog Posts

At the heart of any blog is the actual content contained in it.

A blog without good content is pretty useless, as I'm sure you'll agree.

Good content is what makes people engaged with your blog. It's why they found you in the first place and it's why they'll keep coming back...

So - filling your blog with great content is absolutely essential - and that means making regular blog posts.

As we touched on earlier, the great thing about a hobby blog is that you should already have a got knowledge of your subject - and because you're part of target audience you should know the type of information YOU want to read, what people want to know, hot topics in your niche etc.

If you DO ever struggle to know what to write about then have a read through your favourite hobby magazine. That should give you plenty of ideas for blog posts...

Don't copy of course but take the idea, rewrite in your own words and add your own thoughts and opinions or experiences.

Another good place to look is online forums and even other blogs.

If you can, try to base each blog post around a particular keyword, which should go some way towards getting your posts indexed by the search engines.

Monetizing Your Blog

Ok, so obviously you're passionate about your hobby and you enjoy talking about it.

I reckon you're going to really enjoy running your blog and being a blogger...

But let's face it - we also want to make some money whilst we do it!

The good news is that there are a lot of ways to make money from a blog...

Google Adsense

Perhaps the most common way of monetizing a blog is through Google Adsense.

Essentially you sign up to Adsense, put some code onto your blog and then Google will display adverts on your pages.

Then, when somebody clicks on one of these adverts you get paid a small commission.

There are different types of ads that you can choose to display, for example text ads, image ads, video ads and link ads.

You can see an example below of Adsense on a blog:

Email Marketing Reach customers with professional- looking emails. 60-day free trial. www.ConstantContact.com
Advertise Your Business Promote Your New Business to the World with PRWeb. Free Sign Up! PRWeb.com
AWeber Email Marketing So Confident in our Software You Can Try it-$1 for 1mth, Risk-Free! www.AWeber.com
AdChoices ▷

or the one below which is from a car blog:

Before you can start running ads on your blog you need to get yourself approved by Google.

This actually isn't as easy as you might think because they can be quite picky over what they will and won't allow, so make sure that you thoroughly read through terms and conditions (and obviously make sure that you can comply with them once you've signed up).

To sign up to Adsense simply go to https://www.google.com/adsense/ or https://www.google.co.uk/adsense/ if you're in the UK.

Note that there are quite a few rules surrounding which sites they'll accept - so if your blog is still under construction or doesn't yet have any content on it then be aware that you will probably get rejected. It's best to wait until your site is up and running before you apply for Adsense.

Once approved the actual process of putting the code onto your site is relatively simple and Google provides full instructions, so there's not much point in me covering this here.

Amazon

Another common way to monetize a blog is by becoming an Amazon affiliate.

Since Amazon pays you a percentage of the purchase price for any sales you make through your affiliate link, there is great potential to make higher

commissions than through Adsense; especially since Amazon sells products up to several thousand Dollars in price.

To learn more about the Amazon affiliate program and to sign up then just visit https://affiliate-program.amazon.com/ or https://affiliate-program.amazon.co.uk/ (UK)

Amazon will display adverts on your blog and then if people click on those adverts and buy something you get paid a commission.

There are even plugins available for Wordpress that help you to monetize your wordpress blog with Amazon...

For example - WP Zon Builder:

Amazon also supplies their own tools to go onto your blog, for example the Amazon Wish List Widget.

You can see this in action on a blog in the screenshot below:

Go to https://widgets.amazon.com/Amazon-Wishlist-Widget/to learn more.

Review Posts

A great way of monetizing a blog is through writing reviews of products and posting them to your blog.

Just give an honest review of a product that's related to your niche and then put your affiliate links into the post.

Actually, this is a great way of selling Amazon products...

and the beauty of it is that your posts can get picked up by the search engines, and then people who are searching for that product might see your post.

Obviously someone who types "product name + review" into Google is obviously potentially looking to buy the product.

I'm sure you've done it too. You're interested in buying a product and you want to find out what other people think of it before you actually buy it.

Often you've pretty much made the decision that you ARE going to buy it but your just looking for some reassurance.

So somebody is looking for reviews, they come across your blog post, buy the product through your affiliate link and you get paid.

The most important thing in a review is that you give an HONEST review of the product.

So - let's say you are running a blog about golf and you're reviewing a book you bought on Amazon that teaches people how to improve their golf swing.

All you need to do in your review is explain a little about what's inside the product, why you decided to buy it yourself and what you really thought of it.

Don't be overly positive in your review because you think that will make people more likely to buy - all products have faults, no matter how good they are, and it's important that you tell people about the negatives as well as the positives.

Believe me - a couple of negative points in your review won't put people off buying it in the least because everyone expects to find negatives.

A review which ONLY talks about the positives and how great a product is will actually set off alarm bells for many people because they're going to think "hey, this isn't an honest review. The guy just wants me to buy this."

So - give an honest review and only recommend products that you actually truly DO recommend to people.

Before you write a review and promote a product, ask yourself "would I recommend this product to a friend?"

If the answer is YES then by all means go ahead and write your review and promote the product.

But if you wouldn't really recommend it to a friend then it's probably best to pass that product by and choose to review something that you WOULD recommend.

Then, at the end of your review make sure that you have a call to action.

You don't need to be overly pushy with this - just say something along the lines of

"In conclusion I would recommend this product to anyone who wants to learn how to improve their golf swing. Click on the link below to learn more about this and purchase "Product Name" today."

You get the idea :)

Banner Ads

Another great way of monetizing your blog is through banner ads.

We've already discussed Google Adsense, but you could also consider things like Clickbank banner ads too.

Remember as well that you could promote individual affiliate products on your blog - let's say a Clickbank course etc - and you'll often find that the owners of these products will have ready-made banners that they can supply you with.

You could also consider selling advertising space on your blog. You might struggle with this model at first but as soon as you have some decent traffic coming to your blog it should be possible to find people in your niche who would be willing to pay money to put an advert on your blogspace.

Conclusion

Hobby blogs are great because you will enjoy writing them AND you can make some money as you go.

As we discussed earlier, traditionally one of the big problems with blogging for profit is coming up with ideas for blog posts. It's damn hard to constantly come up with ideas and write about content about a subject which you aren't at all interested in (no matter how much money it makes you) - but with hobby blogs you can turn your passion into profit.

Like any online business model, blogging requires you to put the work in - and there is no guarantee that your blog will be successful.

Always remember that the actual content is at the heart of your blog. You've got to give people a reason to come to your blog in the first place and make them want to come back time and time again. Achieving this means writing good quality content on a regular basis and entertaining your readers as well as informing them.

Wordpress itself is a wonderful tool and blogging is FUN.

Go and start your hobby blog today :)