

Affiliate Best Practices

General Principles

There are several avenues to consider when starting off as a Volusion™ affiliate to help increase your payout. Stick to these basics to keep your affiliate site on the right track:

Have a plan

Just because you have a website doesn't mean people are going to come to it. And just because you place a Volusion banner on your site doesn't mean people are going to click on it and buy. Think about what you want to achieve and how you are going to get there. Place yourself in the shoes of your customers and manage your actions to meet their needs.

Know your audience

As much as we would like to, we can't sell to everyone in the world. This means that it is very important to understand customer behavior and site interaction. Are your customers small business owners? Young entrepreneurs? Stay-at-homers? Pick your target and give them what they want to see.

Also, it's important to cater the design and navigation of your website to your audience. If your site visitors are fairly new to the web, make sure the site is clean, simple and easy to use. If they are a bit more advanced, feel free to add some pizzazz. Consider your customers as guests to your site. They're the ones making you money so make sure they're happy.

Communicate with your audience

Make sure you have some sort of contact information visible so customers can reach out to you. They are much more likely to return to your site and trust your recommendations if there is an established relationship. Also, having a way for your customers to contact you creates the feeling that there really is a person behind the scenes.

At the same time, don't be afraid to ask for contact information from your customers. You can send them information about website updates, new Volusion promotions and continue building relationships that will help you grow.

Promote your site

Take advantage of the different ways that people communicate. Post a link to your site on all of your social networking pages. Promote yourself on blogs. Talk to people about your site. Don't be afraid to reach out to get your name out there!

Learn, Apply, Repeat

It is important for you to really understand how the overall concept of affiliate marketing works to become more successful. Get on the web, pick up some books, and talk to others to learn tips and tricks to maximize your online potential. Then, make sure you apply those lessons to your business plan. Continue with this learning/application process and things will run a lot more smoothly.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

There are billions of websites on the internet. In order to have customers interact with your site, they need to be able to find it. One of the best ways to do this is to optimize your site for the search engines, like Google™. Take a look at some basic ideas to get started.

Use keywords

Keywords are best created based on the content of your site. You'll also want to place those keywords in the headers, titles and copy. Also, make sure they are words that people will use when searching for your site.

Utilize PPC

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is a great way to bring additional traffic to your site. One popular program for this is Google AdWords. When using PPC, make sure that your site isn't stacked with more than a few affiliate links because you will be penalized by the search engines.

Increase your backlinks

In essence, backlinks are links from other sites that lead to yours. Search engines recognize movement from one site to the next, so make sure that you are promoting your website elsewhere. You will need to initiate this yourself. Some suggestions are to post your website on a blog or write an article featuring your site on an online network. The quality of these links is essential.

Submit your site to the search engines

Let the search engines know you exist! This process is free and painless. In order to submit to Google, use this link: <http://www.google.com/addurl>.

Learn, apply, repeat

Spend some time learning about best practices and make the proper adjustments to your site. SEO is a delicate balance. For example, using keywords is helpful, but using too many harms the ranking of your site. Also, SEO models are always changing as search engines constantly update their methods. Clearly, it is important to stay ahead of the curve for site optimization. The Volusion blog is a great place to start: <http://onlinebusiness.volusion.com/cats/marketing-promotion-ecommerce/search-engine-optimization-tips>.

Website Creation

Getting people to your site is half the battle. The other half is to keep them there. Use these principles when building your site to create a pleasant customer experience:

Design is critical

Multiple studies show that web users strongly consider site design when making online decisions. Make sure your site looks professional by keeping the overall aesthetic clean and simple. First impressions are huge, so design the site to make a good one. Also, create your pages based on principles from your favorite sites.

Create an intuitive user experience

Don't intimidate your customers by making it difficult to find information on your site. Think about how you want people to navigate your site by focusing on the user experience.

Banner placement

Consider where you would like to place your banner. We've provided several banners to choose from, all in various sizes. This is ultimately how your customer is going to come to the Volusion site, so make sure it is appropriately placed and stands out. According to research from Viget's User Experience Lab, the most frequently used areas are along the top and right sides of the webpage.

Don't have too many affiliate links

If someone comes to your site and sees dozens of banners for various companies, they are going to realize that you are simply advertising for others and leave. This is also bad for search engine results. Just remember to keep it simple with only a few links.