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Affiliate Marketing – How Really Competitive Is It?

When you watch a football game on TV, you can easily see how games are won or lost in the battle that takes place on the line of scrimmage. Offensive plays are designed to protect the quarterback and/or to open up holes in the defense so that yardage can be gained.

Defensive plays are designed to sack the quarterback or close holes that would allow yardage to be gained. Quarterbacks and coaches get the credit for wins and blame for losses but the battle is won or lost in the trenches.

Affiliate marketing is a lot like a football game just without the bruises and sore muscles. An affiliate marketer must design offensive plays and defensive plays that will put him in a position to win the affiliate wars.

When you are one of many marketers who are trying to sell the very same product to the very same consumers, you had better have a plan to get at least your fair share of the market or more.

Every niche market on the Internet is highly competitive. If it isn't competitive then there can't possibly be much of a customer base to sell to. That is just the nature of all Internet marketing and in every niche.

Maybe you do have a long and impressive list of paid customers. That's great! It means you have already won several of the affiliate marketing contests and come out on top. The problem is there are always those up and coming marketers who want your customers on their lists.

Your list and your competitor's lists may well contain many of the same names and email addresses. Just having a list will not be enough to assure you of a victory when selling an affiliate product. You have to design some offensive plays that will assure that your customers buy from you and not from your competitors.

So, you ask, what is it that I can do that will assure that my customers will buy from me? The answer is just one word... **unique!**

You have to be unique. You have to offer something that sets you completely apart from your competitors. You have to make your offer for a product or service for which you are an affiliate more attractive to buy from you than it is to buy from your competitors.

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If you simply send out a marketing email advertising a product or service that you are an affiliate marketer for, you need to remember that there are dozens or maybe even hundreds of other marketers who are sending out marketing email advertising the exact same product or service and many of them are sending them to the same people that you are. You have to do something to make sure that your customers buy from you...you have to be unique.

There are several ways to achieve uniqueness. One way is to have established yourself as an expert in the field for which the product or service is being sold. You have to have become not only visible but credible, as well. This visibility and credibility is not easily achieved. It takes a lot of hard work, time and effort.

Visibility and credibility are established by taking such measures as writing and marketing articles and E-Books, posting to blogs and forums, appearing as an expert on teleseminars and webinars, etc. The fact is that when people know you and trust you, they buy from you. They will buy from you even if your competitors are offering a better deal or more incentives.

People do not like to buy from strangers. The Internet is a big impersonal and even frightening place to many consumers. They want to feel like they know and trust the people that they buy products and services from. The time, effort and energy that you put into becoming visible and credible is the best time, effort and energy investment that you will ever make. Reputation is everything in the world of Internet marketing. Credibility makes you unique.

Another very important thing that you can do to insure that your customers buy a product or service for which you are an affiliate marketer from you and not from one of your competitors is to give them a very good and compelling reason to make the purchase from you. Offer something extra or a lot of different extras that will enhance the value of the product that you are marketing.

No matter what the niche or what the product is that is being marketed, there are free gifts that you can find that will make the product a better value if it is purchased from you.

For example: if you are marketing an E-Book about Internet marketing, you could add several additional free E-Books concerning different aspects of the broad subject of Internet marketing.

E-Books can be downloaded from PLR sites or even from E-Book banks and repositories. Another free gift that people can't ever seem to get enough of is free utilities. There are many on the Internet and you can bet that there are some that will fit right in with whatever product or service that you are promoting.

While other marketers who are selling the very same product that you are, simply send out marketing emails that recommend the product to their lists, you will be adding value to the product and doing it for free to boot.

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Add extras! Add free gifts! Even better than extras and free gifts is additional help to use the product or service that is being sold. You can offer a free teleseminar for those who buy the product or service from you that will make the product or service better or easier to use.

You can most likely even get the producer or the product or service to speak at your event if you plan far enough ahead. People just love teleseminars... and they love free...when you add teleseminar and free together, you will have a winning play that might just score the proverbial touchdown for you.

Offer Your Prospects Bonus Incentives:

What usually happens when an affiliate marketer goes to ClickBank or Commission Junction and signs up as an affiliate marketer for a particular product or service that is relative to his affiliate marketing business topic?

The first thing he does is usually to place a logo for the product on his website and send out a marketing email to his list advocating the value of whatever the product or service happens to be. If this average affiliate marketer has any zip at all, he will make his sales letter as good as he can make it.

It will address each member of his list by name and there will be bullet points listing the advantages provided with ownership of the product or service. Then he will sit back, cross his fingers and toes, and hope to make a few sales. Well, that IS a plan but it isn't a very good one.

If this average affiliate marketer happens to get lucky and be included in the launch of a new product, he does pretty much the same thing. He notifies his list of the upcoming launch (the average affiliate marketer usually only sends one preparatory email) and then he sends out the marketing email at the launch.

He will make a few sales...very few. Of course, he won't be working very hard either and maybe he is very happy being an average affiliate marketer. There is a problem, however, with being average. Average is a very crowded place.

Average! Why would anybody want to settle for average anything? Doesn't 'average' mean 'common or ordinary...nothing special'? If you are not happy with being an average affiliate marketer, then you need to keep reading.

What puts one affiliate marketer above the average affiliate marketer?

The answer is uniqueness.

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Being unique is a quality that sets one apart from all of others. If you want to be better than just average, you will need to develop some uniqueness in your marketing techniques that will set you above just an average affiliate marketer.

Average affiliate marketers just don't grasp the idea that in order to sell a lot of product, their offer needs to be more valuable than the offers their competitors are making. Most affiliate marketers won't offer any incentives to their lists for buying a specific product from them rather than buying the same product from some one else.

Some affiliate marketers will offer some bonus incentives but they will be pretty ordinary and things that are really not of much value or even unrelated to the product that is being promoted.

The really GOOD affiliate marketer will offer bonus incentives that are BETTER than anything that is being offered by any other marketer and are directly related to the product that is being promoted. The really GOOD affiliate marketer will give his customers a very good reason to buy from him.

Actually, the whole idea of offering better incentives to customers is just plain old common sense. If you can buy 2 ears of corn from vendor A for 20 cents or 2 ears of corn from vendor B for 20 cents and vendor B throws in some butter to go on the corn free of charge, which vendor are you going to buy from?

Affiliate marketing is the very same thing.

You have to offer bonuses and you have to offer better bonuses than those that other affiliate marketers are offering.

For example: Let's say that there is an E-Book about Email Marketing that you are an affiliate marketer for. It's a very good book that has been written by an Email Marketing Guru. It is selling for \$100 and your commission is going to be \$50 per sale that you make. There is an elaborate live launch for the product. Your competitors are offering an additional E-Book or two as bonus incentives.

How can you get an edge here? The only way that you can possibly get an edge is to offer something that your competitors are not offering. You could have set up a free teleseminar that will take place within a few days of the launch for those who buy from you or you could offer a free 30 minute downloadable audio tape that further explains certain points in the E-Book.

The people who buy from you will be getting a better deal than they could get from your competitors. The product will always be the same...but the bonuses that are offered is where you get the edge.

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Tip: Never underestimate the power of ‘free’.

Everybody loves getting something for nothing or getting something extra. They especially love getting something that everybody else is not getting. And that brings me to another, finer point of offering bonus incentives.

If you can offer something such as a free teleseminar that is related to a product launch, you need to limit the number of people who will receive the bonus. That makes it more exclusive and thus more desirable.

This is tricky.

You don't want to make customers mad but you do want to make those who get the added bonuses feel like they have gotten something others have not gotten. You might phrase your offer to say that the first 200 people who buy the product from you will be allowed to join the teleseminar live and others will receive a transcript of the teleseminar. Like I said, this is tricky but it can be done.

The bottom line is just this: if you want to be a better than average affiliate marketer you are going to have to offer more and better bonus incentives than your competitors offer. All affiliate marketers for any product are all trying to sell to the same basic customer base and that base is not unlimited.

In order to get an edge and rise above what is common, ordinary and average you will need to get really creative with the incentive bonuses that you offer with your affiliate product or service.

Did you become an affiliate marketer so that you could just barely scratch out a living or did you plan on making a very nice annual income that would provide a very nice life style for you and your family? I doubt that scratching out a living was the top reason that you chose to become an affiliate marketer.

Look at it like this: every time that you accept less than you could get for a product, you are giving away the lifestyle that you have been working for and you are settling for less than you deserve not only for yourself but for your family as well.

It really is never necessary to settle for less. It just isn't necessary to offer a large rebate or a deep discount to sell a quality product or service.

People need, want and will pay for the products and services that they need. It isn't necessary to give away your profit if you will just work harder and finding incentive bonuses that will entice your customers to buy the products and services that they need from you.

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Don't discount the product or offer a rebate. Increase the value of the product instead. Remember this; increasing value is better than cheapening the product or service that you are trying to sell. People don't always see a discount or a rebate as value. They sometimes see it as an attempt to entice them into buying a product that wasn't worth the full price in the first place.

Only the cheap customers will go for a rebate or discount. The good customers will be shopping around to see what the best incentives being offered are. If you make your bonus incentives the very best, then you will attract the best customers and you can charge the full asking price every time and for every product or service that you promote.

How To Win The Affiliate War:

Winning the ongoing affiliate war isn't easy but (unlike some wars) it IS **winnable**. The affiliate wars cannot and will not be won by lazy affiliate marketers. The affiliate marketing wars will be won by the aggressive strategists who are willing to work hard and long.

Affiliate marketing is not for the faint of heart. If you had really known how tough the competition is in affiliate marketing would you have joined the fray? It doesn't matter. You are in the midst of it now and quitting simply is not an option for a true warrior. The only option is winning...and winning BIG!

Winning the affiliate marketing wars means winning the small daily battles and minor skirmishes one at a time and winning them decisively.

You want to become one of those super affiliates. You want to become one of those big earners that make an annual income that has more than one comma in that number on the bottom line, right?

Then you need to be prepared to work hard. You need to be prepared to do more than what is required. You need to be prepared to go that extra mile.

First and foremost, reputation counts in affiliate marketing. There are thousands of affiliate marketers out there but the ones who make the big bucks are the ones who have established high visibility and great credibility for themselves.

Establishing credibility and visibility go hand in hand and establishing both are critical to your success and your victory over your competitors.

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Credibility and visibility are established in several ways. Two of the most important ways of establishing credibility and visibility are by writing and marketing articles and E-Books that relate to the products and services that you sell. You must establish yourself as an expert...a guru, if you will.

You need to become the guy or the gal that others go to when they need information or need questions answered. Writing articles and E-Books (or having them written for you by a ghost writer) is one of the very best ways of establishing your reputation as a person who has answers.

Articles that you write or have written for you by a ghost writer will be uploaded into article banks for other website owners of E-zine publishers to download and reproduce free of charge. At the bottom of each 300-400 word, key-word rich article you will include a resource box that has your name and your website address in it. This helps to spread your name and news of your knowledge around the Internet to those who are the most likely to be your customers.

E-Books should only be 10 to 12 pages long but a link to your website needs to be included on every single page as well as in the resource box at the end. E-Books are uploaded to E-Book repositories where others may download them and reproduce them just like articles.

Because it is required that E-Books cannot be altered and that resource box information must be included when E-Books are downloaded and reproduced, your reputation as an expert in your field will be enhanced each time anyone chooses to use them.

Another way to build your visibility and your credibility on the Internet is to post to blogs and forums that have topics related to the products and services which you sell. It is a very simply matter to find these forums and blogs. Simply type your related key word into the search box of your favorite search engine followed by the plus sign (+) and the words blogs or forums. You will get many hits.

Choose the three or four of the ones that have the largest number of active members and join those blogs or forums. Be careful here. Posting to blogs and forums effectively is going to take several hours of your time every week so don't choose too many.

Once you have joined three or four blogs and forums do not go in with guns blazing posting blatant advertisements. The idea here is to build visibility and credibility. Introduce yourself and behave as though you had just moved into a new neighborhood. Your signature tag that appears at the bottom of each and every post that you make should have your name as well as a link to your website.

Take you time to get to know the other posters in the community and become a valued member of the group. You will be building a good reputation, visibility and credibility.

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It takes time to build your visibility and credibility. While you are building them, you will also be promoting and selling products and services and you want to establish a good relationship with those who buy products and services from you. Be sure that you provide good information, good service and a guarantee if one applies.

Go to great lengths to never appear to be a cheapo or corner cutter to your customers. Always treat your customers like they are your most valuable asset...they ARE your most valuable asset.

Never discount products or services or offer rebates. You don't want to build that kind of reputation or that kind of customer base. Instead of offering discounts or rebates take the time and put forth the effort to add bonus incentives to the products and services that you promote to give them added value.

The winners of the affiliate wars are the men and women who go to the trouble and take the time to build excellent reputations as experts and as fair and honest merchants.

People buy things on the Internet from people that they feel like they know and can trust. People buy things on the Internet from affiliate marketers who have the reputation as an expert or a guru and one who actually cares about the people to whom he sells products and services to. A positive and hard working, fair-dealing reputation will help you win the daily battles and, ultimately the affiliate war.

Don't Cut Yourself Short With Offering Rebates!

Rebates! Rebates seem to be all the rage in today's market place. Rebates are everywhere. Out in the brick and mortar world there are 'mail-in' rebates and instant rebates offered on every product imaginable from computers to home appliances to cars. In cyber space the rebate is everywhere. Rebates are offered on all kinds of programs, software, products and services.

A rebate is simply **a discount in fancy clothes**. The principle is exactly the same. The customer pays less than the list price for whatever the program, software, product or service might be. The customer is getting a bargain. That's true. The question, however, is what exactly is the seller getting?

The answer to the question, what is the seller getting, is pretty simple.

The seller is getting less money than he is entitled to get on every sale he makes.

If the seller is giving a 50% rebate that means that he will have to sell twice the number of programs, software copies, products or services to make the same amount of money he would have made had he not offered the 50% rebate.

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The seller is giving away his profit especially if the seller is an affiliate marketer because any rebate an affiliate marketer offers his customers comes out of his commission. For example: if you are marketing a product that sells for \$197.00 and you earn \$98.50 from it, offering a rebate of \$50 means that your commission is only \$48.50 per sale.

You aren't going to be earning very much per sale. That can't be a good thing. There has to be a better way than offering big rebates...and, fortunately, there is.

One of the big problems with offering big rebates is that **the offer attracts what is known in the business as 'cheap customers'**. Cheap customers are those who never expect to pay the full price for anything, ever or under any circumstances. They expect to get something for nothing and that something for nothing expectation will always come out of your pocket. You are simply better off without cheap customers.

The answer to the rebate question is just this: give your customers a good reason to buy from you at the full price. Even if you have to pay something for incentive bonuses, it is better than offering a rebate to the customer.

You will attract a better class of customers who will continue to buy from you. Many affiliate marketers think that offering incentive bonuses that are valuable enough to entice people to pay full price for an item is just too much trouble. They will tell you, that it is easier, quicker and just a lot less trouble to simply offer a rebate or a discount than it is to find bonus incentives.

Okay. I agree. Offering a rebate or a discount is certainly easier, quicker and a lot less work than finding bonus incentives that are of enough value to make a customer pay full price for a product or service. However; it is simply not the best thing to do.

The customers that will be attracted by deep discounts and 50% rebates are the cheap customers and once you discount or offer a rebate they are going to expect you to do so with every product or service that you ever offer them. You are going to be working for peanuts when you could be working for the whole peanut gallery.

Don't waste your time worrying about lazy affiliate marketers who offer deep discounts or big rebates. They will attract the cheap customers that you don't want anyway and those lazy affiliate marketers will never be any competition for you.

If you are willing to go to the trouble, put in the work, and make the effort to find incentive bonuses that make it possible for you to sell products at their full price to your customers, you will leave those lazy affiliate marketers eating your dust.

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Before you even consider offering a rebate or a discount on a product or service think about the reason that you became an affiliate marketer in the first place.

Resources:

The FRED67 Free E-Library - <http://fred67.com/library>

[The Affiliate Power-House](#) for more information & resources relating to this E-Book

[FRED67.com](#) is the entry to what is –

A Labyrinth of information + Local - 'Trusted Trades & Services' You Can Depend On.

[Socrates - O – Socrates](#) - A Review Of The Hugely Successful WordPress Theme That Makes Building Niche` Blogs & Websites a Cinche`.

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