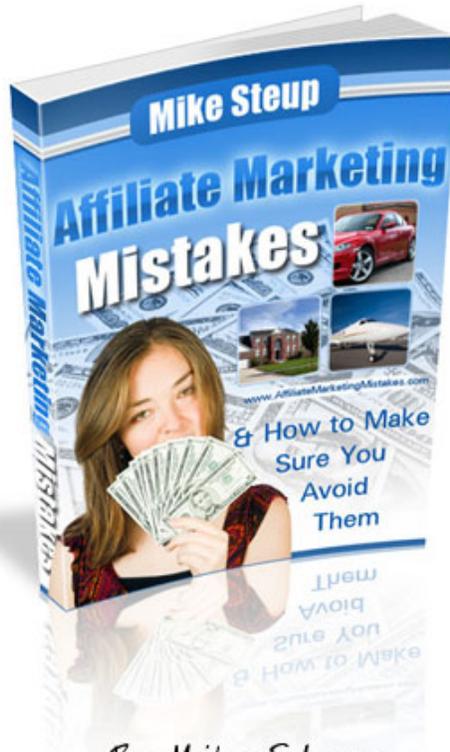Mike Steup's

Affiliate Marketing
Mistakes

& How to Make Sure You Avoid Them

By Mike Steup
www.AffiliateMarketingMistakes.com

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Table of Contents

Introduction

First off, let me thank you for taking the time to download and read this report. I hope you can get some good information from this, and get your Affiliate Marketing on the right track.

I'll be honest with you – it wasn't until this past year that my affiliate marketing really showed some great results. I could always sell my own products just fine, but it was always difficult to sell products from other people.

Now, I find myself finishing near the top of several high profile affiliate contests. I finished in 3rd place for Jason James' Membership Riches (behind Cody Moya and Mike Filsaime), and just recently I finished in 2nd place for Jeff Dedricks' Hidden Sales Project (behind Ewen Chia and ahead of Mike Filsaime).

I'm not telling you this to brag, I just want you to understand that I can actually do this, and I'm not just trying to teach you something that I can't personally do.

This guide is NOT going to teach you how I finished in the Top 3 of those contests – there honestly are better people to learn that from than me. But this guide will explore some of the most common mistakes affiliates make, and how you can go about avoiding these in the future.

This is a HUGE problem that many new affiliates make, and I hope that by bringing these to your attention that you can get ahead of the curve and start seeing some positive results quickly.

As I was compiling this list of mistakes, I found myself thinking back to my early days online, and all of the mistakes I made. I even found myself going back to one of my first sites and seeing how terrible it was and all of the mistakes I made :)

With all of that said, I really hope you can get something out of this guide – even if you just realize that some of the things you have been doing (or not doing) is the wrong way to approach it.

Good Luck!

Mike Steup
www.MikeSteupSupport.com

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #1

NOT Dedicating Yourself to One Before Starting Another

In affiliate marketing you can often be drawn in by the promise of operating as an affiliate for several different sites while making money from each one of them. This is a difficult thing for anyone to do successfully when they are first beginning. Not only is it hard to learn the basics of affiliate marketing but you also need to have time to grow your business. So if you don't dedicate yourself to one program before starting another, you will not be able to fully experience the potential that affiliate marketing can offer you.

Learning is Essential

Once you have decided on an affiliate program that you would like to work with, it is essential that you take the time to learn about that specific program as well as affiliate marketing in general.

Dedicate yourself to understanding the in's and out's of your program. Learn how others have been successful with this affiliate program in the past and find out their tips for your success. Most affiliate program owners will offer a forum or other way for people to exchange marketing ideas and information to help make that affiliate program the best it can be. Don't be shy. Jump in and start reading all the posts in the forum or blog regarding the affiliate program you are interested in. Post your questions and don't feel like you can't ask something. Most likely many other people have the same question as you and will appreciate you asking it.

Learning more about the company and product you will be promoting is essential. In the real world you would not take a job to sell a product if you did not fully understand it, so you should not do so in the marketing world either. Do your research and your knowledge of the product will help you become a successful affiliate marketer.

Moving on to Number Two

Many people are in such a hurry to make money with affiliate marketing that they don't take the necessary time to really understand their first program before becoming an affiliate with another program. But if you feel you have fully researched your program and have the time to dedicate to a second line of promotions then go for it.

Managing two affiliate programs is not impossible. But you have to do the same amount of research for each program. You also want to make sure you are dedicating yourself fully to each affiliate. If you cannot offer your full attention to two programs, you may actually find that fully dedicating yourself to one program will offer you more financial return in the end.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #2

NOT Concentrating on the Pre-Sell

Affiliates that try to sell the product to the client and tote all the product's positive and negative qualities does not truly understand the concept of an affiliate marketer. When you spend your time trying to describe every last detail of the product or answering all the questions of the client, then you are wasting your time. As an affiliate for a marketing program your job is to pre-sell the client.

You should not be offering ambiguous information that is confusing to the prospective client nor should you be offering all the little details that you think are necessary. Your job is simply to get the client interested in the product. You want them intrigued by what this product or service might be able to offer them. You want them to want to know more so they will go to your clients site and read more about it.

Your client will have all the details of the product covered so it is not your job to repeat those details. Instead concentrate on pre-selling the product to your clients. Making them want to buy it so when they get to the final purchase site they are ready to continue.

Too Little

Not offering enough information will prevent clients from continuing on to the sales page. If you cannot provide enough basic information about the product, then why would a prospective client want to click on another link that you give them?

Too little information makes you look like an amateur who does not really know about the product they are selling. You are not an amateur since you have done research about your product and understand fully what you are offering, so show your prospective clients that they can trust your research and buy the products you recommend.

Too Much

This is not often a problem with affiliates. But too much information can be just as deadly to a prospective client as too little information. You are pre-selling your prospects on a product by introducing it to them and offering up the positive aspects of that product.

Your job is not to identify all the products flaws or offer technical advice to downloading, installing, or generally using a product or service. Leave that job to the owner whose products or services you are promoting. They are much better versed in their product or service and will be better equipped to offer that information to the client.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #3

NOT Using the Product

How many times have you talked to an electronics sales person and asked questions about a product and felt like they really had no idea what they were talking about? When you are purchasing something from a salesperson you have more confidence in the person if they have tried the product or are currently using the product.

The same goes for affiliate marketing. You cannot possible be successful in selling a product if you have not at least tried the product. Maybe it is something that you know other people will like but you just don't need it? Or perhaps your affiliate program is geared towards computer gamers and you don't play computer games.

It doesn't matter what the product is. You should spend the time and money to try the product and use it the best you can. Find out what you truly think of the product and ask questions of others who use it already. The more questions you get answered the easier it will be for you to write your promotional material.

Knowledge is easiest to acquire if you are doing it from a hands on approach. Your potential clients will be able to see you are a genuine person who knows what they are talking about and is selling them from a point of knowledge and not a point of greed.

Anyone can just sign up to be an affiliate marketer and throw up a standard webpage and hope to get sales. But that is not how you will make money. Instead, you will become more and more frustrated and wonder why you are not bringing in the big sales like you thought you would.

Trying the product or service is an easy step that is often overlooked when people are getting started in affiliate marketing. Instead of making this mistake, take the time to become a customer of the product.

To increase your sales even more you should find a product that you truly find useful and can rave to others about. Affiliate marketing is not just about randomly selling other people's products. Instead, it is about you finding a product that you can put your time and energy behind to help market and sell. And this is much easier to do if you have a product that you understand and feel a passion to sell.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #4

NOT Understanding Pay Per Click

Understanding the advertising model known as Pay Per Click is essential to becoming a successful affiliate marketer. With pay per click, advertisers use search engines and other web pages to place their ads. But the advertiser only pays when a user actually finds their ad compelling and clicks on the ad to visit the advertiser's webpage.

By bidding on the keywords they would like to use for their market, each advertiser can customize their pay per click advertising to a specific market of potential clients. As users then type keywords in the search engine, they will be given a list of relevant content and the advertiser's ad will show up in the sponsored link section.

Search Engines

No matter which search engine you use it is nearly impossible to conduct a search without seeing some sort of results in the sponsored link section. Take a moment and search for anything you would like and you will see the idea behind pay per click advertising. Each one of those advertisers decided that they wanted ads for the keyword or keyword combination that you searched for.

The two top companies that provide pay per click advertising are **Google Adwords** and **Yahoo! Search Marketing**. Minimum prices start as low as $0.01 and go up to several dollars per click depending on the keyword chosen and its popularity.

Web Pages

Google and Yahoo offer another service besides just pay per click advertising in the sponsored link section of a search inquiry, they also offer a content based pay per click service.

In the content-based ad program, an advertisers' ad show on websites and blogs that have similar content to what the keyword indicates. The idea behind this pay per click advertising concept is that potential clients that are already interested in a similar content page will be more likely to click a related advertising link.

Understanding the differences between the two major types of pay per click advertising will help you optimize your marketing techniques as an affiliate marketer. It is essential to your success that you comprehend the importance of pay per click advertising.

Pay Per Click is a much more in-depth topic than can be covered here, so you should check a few different resources to better arm yourself to take advantage of this part of affiliate marketing.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #5

NOT Having Clutter-Free Web Pages

Filling one website with a variety of affiliate program ads may seem like a great way to save money when you first look at it. But it could actually cost you thousands of dollars in sales. Potential customers automatically get turned off when they see a webpage cluttered full of different sales products. It is too confusing for them and they move on to another website fairly quickly. If you are working with more than one affiliate program it is important to dedicate one page at least to your program. Even better would be to dedicate a domain name and site to each affiliate program.

Dedicated Web Page

By dedicating a whole page to one affiliate product you are showing your commitment to that program. Your page should be uncluttered and not full of Google Adsense ads, or ads for other programs or services. A small area on either the top or side of the page could be used for these type of ads, but don't clutter your page with them. I would recommend not using them at all on these pages. You don't want to give your visitor too many options on your page.

A good affiliate marketing sales page will be informative and positive. It will offer potential customers the chance to become intrigued about a program or product enough that they decide to click on the link and go to the main affiliate sales page of your program.

Dedicated Domain

Having a whole website dedicated to a specific product will provide instant credibility for you. Domain names are not very expensive and relatively inexpensive programs are available for maintaining the page. You do not need to be a computer whiz to get a basic website developed to act as your informative site for an affiliate program you are working with.

By dedicating a whole site to one product you have the expanded option of offering informative articles and other information on your site that will continue to entice your potential consumers to click on the main affiliate website you are working with. A dedicated domain name is by far the best way to inform your potential customers of the benefits that your product or service can offer them.

No matter if you decide to go with a dedicated web page or a dedicated domain, **the main idea is simplicity**. Don't clutter your pages with too much information, instead offer your potential clients a clean, easy to read, informative website. An aesthetically pleasing website will win customers over a cluttered, hard to understand site every time!

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #6
NOT Writing Your Own Copy

Does your affiliate program offer you pre-made web pages or email ads that you can simply copy and paste to make your own promotional campaign? Many programs offer this convenience to their affiliates as a way to make it easy to get started with their program. Unfortunately, these ready to post web pages will be of little help to you when you are trying to get your website seen and clicked on, or your emails opened by potential customers. Instead you should take the time to write your own copy or hire a professional writer to do it for you.

Original Copy

It is essential to have new and original copy for your website to even be seen by the search engines. If the search engines detect that your website is filled with information that is a duplicate of current information on the web then they will penalize you by pushing your website further and further down the search results.

Although it may seem like a good idea to copy and paste some existing information and make your own webpage, it will only frustrate your goal of making money through affiliate marketing. Take the time to put the existing copy into your own words or add your own twist to it. And if you absolutely cannot write the copy, you can hire a freelance writer fairly inexpensively if you only have a few pages of information that you would like written. Only with new and original information do you even stand a chance at getting your webpage seen, and getting the results you are looking for.

Fresh Perspective

Your writing, or the person you hire, will offer a great new perspective to the product. This could be a way for you to gain new clients that the original marketing plan did not even expect, or perhaps just capture more potential clients than you had originally expected. Since you will have tried the product, you will be offering the best possible

perspective on it from both a sales end and the consumer end of the product or service. Use this information to your benefit to develop your own customized web page or website that will gain your customers confidence and sales.

Writing original copy for your site or email ad is not an option - it is absolutely necessary. You are not saving time or money by copying and pasting the information into a pre-made web page. Instead you are actually costing yourself the opportunity to gain as many customers as possible.

Think back to all of those mega-launches where you get 10-20 different people sending you emails about the launch. How many did you get with the same subject line, and the same copy when you open it up?

I'll bet that the ones who took the time to write their own subject line, and their own emails got much better results than those who used the 'canned' copy that was provided by the product owner.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #7

NOT Choosing the Right Products for You

Every affiliate program may not be right for you. Although it is nice to find the highest paying program or the program that offers a product you have used for years. Those things may not actually make the program right for you. When choosing your program you should keep three things in mind: Time, payout, and usability.

Time

Before choosing an affiliate program, it is important to find out how much time you will need to dedicate to it in order to make yourself successful. Some affiliate programs just lend themselves to needing more of your time than others. Be honest when looking at the amount of time you are going to be able to offer the program. If you truly can only offer a few hours a week, then find a program that you think you can comfortably work within that time frame. Being honest and upfront with yourself in the beginning will help make you successful in the end.

Payout

We have all heard the saying that money isn't everything, but when you are looking at affiliate programs it is hard to say that. We all tend to look at the money part of things first, but just because a program offers the largest payout does not mean you are going to be able to sell people on the program.

When choosing the right affiliate program for you, make sure you are balancing the payout per sale with the amount of work that will be required to get the customer in the door. Usually these two items go hand and hand, so it is important to understand that before choosing your affiliate marketing program to begin with.

Usability

Make sure the affiliate program you choose is something that you believe is truly usable and a great service or product for people. Your enthusiasm about the product will come through in the people you talk to and even in the web page copy you write. Being passionate about the product or service will make it a usable affiliate program for you and the perfect fit for your first time around.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #8

NOT Capturing Incoming Email Addresses

Your job is simply to get potential customers to the sales page for the product you are promoting…right? **WRONG!** Don't waste the chance to get your customers email addresses. These will be invaluable to you in the future as you begin working with other affiliate programs. By gathering their email addresses up front, you set it up so you continually will be adding to your own marketing list, which will help you in all your marketing endeavors in the future.

Why Should You Do This?

Because email is the quickest and easiest way to communicate with new and existing customers. If you continue on with affiliate marketing and begin working with other programs you could easily send out a mailing to people who previously showed an interest in a product or service you were working with. Once you have established yourself as someone who knows about all the top products, your customer list will look to you to provide them with the inside scoop on the up and coming products that will work for them. Gathering email addresses and maintaining a database is your opportunity to continue to grow your business - no matter what the product or service is that you are working with.

How Do You Do This?

The absolute best way to do this is to give them a free gift, via a squeeze page, and then after they sign up to get the gift send them directly to the sales page using your affiliate link. You can easily set it up to do this from your autoresponder account.

The key to making this work is the free gift MUST be of high quality, and it must be related to the product you are promoting. Use your own knowledge about the subject area to put together a short article or ebook that you can offer to your potential customers. This will make it a win win situation for both you and the customer.

Capturing incoming email addresses can help you make sales from customers that were not ready to make a decision initially. Those same email addresses can also benefit you as your company grows and you begin working with other affiliate programs. Being a successful affiliate marketer requires you to maintain your own database of customers; so starting with your very first affiliate webpage you should be capturing those email addresses.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #9
NOT Believing in Yourself!

If you don't think you are going to be successful as an affiliate marketer, then you probably will not be. It is normal to feel a bit of apprehension as you begin a new program and try to navigate all the new information involved in affiliate marketing, but it is essential that you believe in yourself and your ability to make a success at this business.

Your excitement needs to translate into confidence in yourself. Once you are confidant and belief you can be a success, it will be a burden off your shoulders. You no longer will have to waste time wondering if you are going to be able to make this work and instead can use that time to concentrate on the other steps necessary to becoming a successful affiliate marketer.

Although success is not fully based on your believe that you can be successful, it is a necessary quality that all people who are making money in affiliate marketing posses. So take the time to understand the programs and understand the mistakes you should avoid; then believe in yourself and your ability to have fun while making a living with your affiliate marketing business.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #10

NOT Committing Yourself to Your Affiliate Marketing Program

There are thousands and thousands of different affiliate programs out there. Some are widely known and some are not known at all. Once you have taken the time to research the various affiliate programs and you have found the ones that are right for you, make sure and give it time to work. Most programs will not be able to make you an instant millionaire. They require time to build up a customer base. Be patient and be committed to growing your affiliate program.

Schedule Your Time Commitment

Take the time you have allotted to your program and spend that much time no matter what is going on with your affiliates. Even if your business is growing and you do not feel you should be adding more or marketing more it will help your business continue to grow. Don't let good sales camouflage your commitment to your affiliate program. Because just around the corner is a lull in business that you will need to be prepared for.

Set up a schedule of time that you would like to commit to your affiliate program and find something to do with that time every week. You could write additional copy for your site or manage your email database or even just spend time on blogs and message boards, just commit yourself to your affiliate program every week and you will make it a success.

Your commitment will shine through in the web pages you develop and the content that you provide to your customers. It will also show through to your customers as they continue to come back to you over and over to see what new program or service you have the inside scoop on.

Common Affiliate Marketing Mistake #11
NOT Having the Right Tools

What tools does an affiliate need? For starters, you need to track your stats - how many clicks you send to the sales page of the product you are promoting. If you are not tracking that stat, you could make two sales and think you are doing a great job. However, the reality could be that you have sent 3,000 visitors to that sales page, and that work only resulted in two sales.

That is not a very good conversion percentage, and you are basically wasting your time and efforts. Either the sales page is not converting well, or your source of traffic is very poor. Either way, something needs to be done – and if you are tracking your stats you will have realized this already.

Likewise, if you make those same two sales, but only sent 50 visitors to the site, you need to know that so you can keep up with that source of traffic – that is converting at 4%, which isn't too bad at all.

By tracking your stats, you know what works, and what needs to be changed.

Another thing you need to do is "cloak" your affiliate links. If you don't know what this means, it is best to show you an example to explain it. Say your affiliate link looks like this:
http://www.salessite.com/cgi-bin/affiliates/refer.cgi?r=3572&p=17

This has a few problems associated with it. First, it is obvious that this is an affiliate link, and many people do not like clicking on affiliate links (this is more of a problem in the Internet Marketing niche than it is in other niches). Many people will simply cut off most of the URL and just go straight to the sales page.

The easy solution to this is to "cloak" your link so that cannot be done. Your new link will look something like this:

http://www.mysite.com/info/ebook.htm

That is much more attractive than the first link I showed you, right? And it won't cost you any lost commissions.

That's two tools you need, but there are many more that can help you. My new **Affiliate Software Pro** takes care of those two, and much more. Here's what else it can do for you:

- **Link Tracking** – Like we discussed earlier, this is absolutely imperative so you know which campaigns are working, and which campaigns need to be dumped.

- **Link Cloaking** – This was also discussed already, and is needed to protect your affiliate commissions.

- **Link Branding** – This allows you to put an additional message at the bottom of any page you are promoting. This can be any bonus you are offering for those who purchase the product from your link, or it can highlight any features of the product that are beneficial to the reader.

- **Covert Linking** – Is the product owner using a squeeze page, but you don't want to send your traffic to a squeeze page? With the Covert Linking tool, you can send your traffic to any page on that website, and still get credit for the sale.

- **Covert Cookies** – This allows you to earn affiliate commissions without your visitors seeing any visible traces that you are promoting an affiliate program. In fact this solution actually plants your affiliate cookies completely independently of the visitor clicking on your links.

- **And More** – Check it out at **www.AffiliateSoftwarePro.com**

These tools can drastically increase your chances of making a sale (multiple sales, actually), and it is all very easy to implement. For more on my new Affiliate Software Pro, check it out here:

www.AffiliateSoftwarePro.com

Now Get to Work!

Did you catch anything that you are doing that maybe should be changed? If so, be sure to take the steps to change what you are doing so it will be more effective.

Remember, you can read this guide – and all the other guides out there – but none of them will do you any good if you don't do anything with the information you now have. You have taken a critical first step by reading this guide, and now it is time to **Get to Work!**

I truly hope this has been valuable to you and your learning process – thanks for taking the time to read **Affiliate Marketing Mistakes!**

Mike Steup
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