

The Fundamentals Of Marketing

**A Beginner's Guide to the
Most Successful Marketing Strategies**



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Table of Contents

Fundamentals of Successful Marketing	2
Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing – Why Marketers Today Prefer Inbound	5
Social Media Marketing – Socialize with Your Fans and Followers.....	8
Mobile and SMS Marketing – Profiting from the Mobile Revolution	11
Content Is King – The Basics of Content Marketing	14
Email Marketing – Getting Your Message Straight to Your Prospect's Inbox	17
Direct Marketing – The Traditional Approach.....	20
Offline Marketing and Why It's Still Important	22
Search Engine Marketing – Climbing the SERPs	25
Selling Other People's Products with Affiliate Marketing	28

Fundamentals of Successful Marketing

There are many different approaches to marketing but all involve the same basic elements. With all the shiny objects and new technologies we have available to play with today, the fundamentals of marketing – online or off – are often forgotten. When you keep these principles in mind, marketing is much simpler and you'll be more successful in your results.

Your Target Market

Successful business all starts with your target market. Identifying and getting to know your audience is the first and most important step. Failing to define specific target customers is one of the most common reasons businesses never thrive. The mistake they make is that they start with a product, offer, or niche they think is interesting. Then they try to find a market for it. You have to work the other way around.

There are several ways to identify your target market. If you're already running a business, look at your current customer base or your competition's. If you haven't launched your business yet but you have an idea of the niche or type of product you'd like to work with, look at who is in that niche and what they are buying. Use the Internet to find out what kinds of people are participating in forums, groups, and social media sites in that niche.

Feed the Hungry Crowd

Once you know your market well, it's easy to get an idea of what they want. The second step in successful marketing is to either create or find products that they need. If you know how to listen, your target customers will tell you this. Look for

areas where there's demand but a gap in the market - where no one is providing a solution to people's most urgent needs.

Delivering the Goods

With a hungry crowd and the product they're desperate for, your next challenge is to figure out a way to put it in front of them. If you're marketing offline, you need to communicate with your target market and make your offer. This often involves face-to-face or physical contact. Online, you create a website. This is the 'home' of your product or service.

Before you can make your offer, you need to calculate the best price point for selling it. There is no easy way to do this. Most companies start by determining the production and delivery cost, and then adding the desired profit margin. Another method is to determine a set return-on-investment (ROI) and price it so that you can meet that amount in a certain period of time. You should also take into consideration the prices offered by your competition and the psychological value your goods have to your target market.

Promotion Methods

Up until now, we've covered the basics of marketing and these are fairly universal. When it comes to promotion methods, there is an endless array of options. This is where people get confused by the many different choices.

Offline promotion methods include advertising in print or on television, hosting or sponsoring events, promotional items, coupons, direct mail and networking in the community. To promote your product online, people usually start with search engine optimization (SEO) techniques. You may also build awareness of your brand through social media sites, an email list, promotions, blogging, or similar methods.

The Right Mindset for Successful Marketing

With all the options for promoting your business, try not to get overwhelmed. Simple is always best. The key to successful marketing no matter what methods you use or products you promote is to keep it focused on your prospects. Always start with what they need and want, and work your way back to your offer from there. If you know them well, provide what they want and promote it where they can see your offer, your success is assured.

Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing – Why Marketers Today Prefer Inbound

There are two basic types of marketing – inbound and outbound. The focus of each is different and they involve different techniques. Generally speaking, outbound marketing involves getting your marketing message to the largest number of people possible through advertising, cold calling, direct mail and other aggressive techniques. When you do inbound marketing, your message is more subtle. You attract people to your site who come because of a common interest or a desire to learn more. Today's marketers prefer inbound rather than outbound marketing for a number of reasons.

The Price of Inbound vs. Outbound

Outbound marketing can be expensive. It often involves printing and mailing materials or spreading your message through television, radio or other media. The cost of outbound marketing can put it out of reach for smaller businesses. Inbound marketing is cheap or free and anyone can do it. You create your website and it attracts prospects for you. You do most of the work on the front end building your site and traffic strategy rather than the continual daily work of outbound marketing.

People Tune out

Outbound marketing means putting your message in front of people whether they want to hear it or not. As a result, its techniques are often intrusive and annoying. People have begun to tune it out. Just think of all the junk mail you throw away on a daily basis. It's estimated that around 44% of all direct mail is never opened. We

have caller ID, spam filters, no-call lists and other ways to ignore marketing that comes to us.

Inbound marketing is more natural. You put your message in front of your target market and they're compelled by their own curiosity and interest to see what you have to offer.

Two-Way Communication

One huge advantage of inbound marketing is that it's a form of two-way communication. The customer interacts with the business in a dialog. They post on the company's Facebook wall, comment on business blogs, or take part in contests. When they participate, they become invested and engaged. People want to be in control of the information they get and this makes them more receptive to your message.

Marketing for Non-Marketers

One of the reasons anybody can do inbound marketing is that it doesn't feel like marketing. To market traditionally through direct mail or cold calling takes a certain amount of aggressiveness and sales skill. Not everyone can do that. With inbound marketing, you provide valuable content that helps people and they come to you. It's not "selling" in the traditional sense, so it's more appealing to those who hate the image of the pushy salesman and feel uncomfortable pushing their message.

The Downside of Inbound Marketing

The only real downside of inbound marketing is that there are so many things to learn. While the methods used in direct marketing are proven and established, inbound marketing online is largely new and constantly changing. You have to invest some time into learning traffic-building strategies and search engine

optimization. There's quite a bit of trial and error.

The best marketing campaigns use both inbound and outbound marketing techniques. You might create a website and drive traffic to it, while also generating leads proactively by contacting prospects.

Social Media Marketing – Socialize with Your Fans and Followers

Social media marketing involves using social media sites as part of your online marketing strategy. Social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Digg, Technorati, YouTube, Google+ and other sites where people create profiles and interact with friends. These sites are huge and they offer a great way to reach your target market, deliver your marketing message, and find out what your fans like.

There are two popular ways to use social media sites in your marketing. One is to post content or links to content on your social media profile. This content could be blog posts, pictures, videos or any other media. The other method is to place ads on social media sites using their ad networks.

What is Social Media Marketing Best Used for?

Any business whatsoever can benefit from social media marketing, especially local businesses. Geographic features on social media sites make it particularly easy for people in your area to find your profile through searches.

You can offer deals and promotions through your profile that are exclusive to your fans. In this way, your profile is similar to your email list. You can increase their loyalty to your brand by offering these exclusive bonuses.

The Advantages of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing allows you to interact directly with your customers. It adds a personal aspect to online communications that's unrivaled by other online marketing methods. When people feel like they can interact with you in a more direct way, it engenders loyalty and trust.

Using social media sites also allows you to reach a wider audience. You have access to not only your fans but your fans' friends. On sites like Facebook, whenever your fans interact with you, their friends see that interaction as well.

Because your customers can contact you easily through social media sites, you can get valuable feedback and learn more about your target market. You can look at your fans' profiles and find out what they're interested in. This is the kind of data that marketing firms have paid huge sums of money for in years past.

You also get SEO benefits by using these popular social sites. Your profile appears in searches. They give you a ready-made platform that already has millions of users.

The Disadvantages of Social Media

To use social media effectively requires constant maintenance. For each page or profile that you make, you'll need to set aside time for updating and interacting with your fans. For many small businesses, this quickly becomes a bit much to keep up with.

Since your social media profile isn't actually your own site, you have to abide by somebody else's rules. There are certain actions that can get you penalized or banned from social media sites.

Another drawback is that you don't have total control of your content. If someone leaves a nasty comment or insult in your blog comments, you can delete it. You can't do this on your Twitter feed.

How to Get the Most out of Social Media Marketing

It may sound like a lot of work babysitting your profiles, but it's well worth it. Many

businesses find that it's a fun and enjoyable daily task. Here's how you can make social media marketing work for you:

- Although it may seem like a chore, sign up for each new social media site that pops up that may be appealing to your target market. You never know which might be the next Facebook.
- Focus on interactivity and engagement. Try to get your fans and followers engaged in your profile as much as possible.
- Use tools like widgets and plug-ins to make profile management easier and foster interactivity.
- Connect all of your social media sites by linking them together. Include your site and blog as well.

The real key to success is to keep your involvement social. Don't create your profile and content and then wait for the fans and comments to roll in. Be proactive. Get out there and make friends. Comment on other people's profiles and join groups for increased visibility. This brands you as a friendly person with your own distinct personality that people will want to get to know better.

Mobile and SMS Marketing – Profiting from the Mobile Revolution

Mobile marketing can be defined as any technique you use to market to people through cellular phones and other mobile devices. The most common way to do this is through SMS, which stands for 'short message service.' It's a form of email marketing tailored specifically to phones.

How SMS Works

Just like PC-based email marketing, the first step in SMS is to gather a list of subscribers. The best way to do this is through an opt-in form on your website or through your offline marketing channels. You can also use short codes. These are short phone numbers that your customers call. Once they make the call, they're automatically signed up.

Once you have a list, you send them messages. The purpose of these messages is to build a relationship with them by sending them information and high-value offers, such as freebies, discounts, coupons or other special deals.

Who Can Use Mobile Marketing?

Mobile marketing is great for any kind of business. Offline businesses can use it just as effectively as online businesses. In fact, it's ideal for small local businesses since their customers are usually using their mobiles when they're on the go. For example, a local pizza shop can offer coupons to their subscribers. They send the coupon at the top of the lunch hour when their subscribers are getting hungry, and their shop becomes the natural choice for lunch.

The Benefits of Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing is wonderful because people always have their mobile devices with them and turned on. You can get immediate results. Most people consider mobile marketing to have a more personal touch than PC-based email marketing.

Virtually everyone uses mobile phones while not everyone is online. This means that you can reach a wider market that doesn't necessarily use PCs. Moreover, the number of people using mobiles is increasing each year.

Marketing surveys have shown that open rates are much higher on mobiles than on PCs. This is possibly because people are flooded with emails in their inboxes. Mobile marketing is still new and fewer companies are doing it, so your customers will be more responsive.

The Disadvantages of Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing is relatively new, uncharted territory and this has its perks. It also has its downsides. One downside is that mobile delivery systems aren't as reliable as PC email. Your emails may get lost somewhere on the way to your customers' phones.

Mobile devices have no standard platform like PCs do. This means you have to be extra careful to make sure your messages can be seen on a variety of devices. Screen size varies from one device to another, so it may be difficult to make your messages look right.

Navigation is also an issue. In addition to the smaller screen size, it's difficult to type on mobile devices. Scrolling, panning, and zooming are annoying to users. Buttons that you want your customers to press must be located in the right places and your content must be easy to read at a glance.

With SMS marketing, there's another challenge. Messages can only be up to 160 characters. This is around 40 words or less. Your messages have to get straight to the point and make their impact quickly.

Mobile Is a Whole Different World

The key to success with mobile marketing is to understand that mobile devices are completely different from PCs. Mobile web surfing behavior is also different. People have shorter attention spans and you need to grab their attention in a second. The challenge is to engage people and get them involved with your company through their mobile device. The more interactive your marketing campaign, the more effective it will be.

Content Is King – The Basics of Content Marketing

Content marketing is an umbrella term that refers to many marketing strategies in which you're using content to build a relationship with your audience. You share helpful information with your target market and establish yourself as an expert, and then you start making useful offers.

How Content Marketing Works

First, choose a niche that you're passionate about. Spend time getting to know people who are interested in that niche. Join forums and online groups so that you can learn what they want, how they think, and how you can benefit them.

The quality of your content is all-important. If you can't write content that's high-quality, original and engaging, you can hire a ghostwriter to create it for you. The important thing to consider when it comes to content creation is that it must offer tremendous value, whether it's information, problem-solving, or even entertainment.

The next question to ask is how you're going to publish your content. You have a number of choices. These include blogging, social media, article syndication (where you put articles on other sites) and video marketing. Each publishing channel you use has a link that leads back to your main site.

Remember that content includes more than just written articles. It includes images, photos, videos, audio files and anything else that your audience can consume.

When to Use Content Marketing

Content marketing doesn't get you quick sales. It builds a long-term relationship with your market. Gradually, they come to see you as a trusted expert. You become their go-to person for the information they need.

It works best for specific niches that are hungry for information and not already saturated. For example, it would require a mammoth effort to get anywhere with the weight loss niche. It would be much easier to choose a very specific group of people in the weight loss niche to market to. Go for small niches like snail farming, chakra meditation, fear of flying, getting over a breakup, or how to stop sweating. If you can find enough people desperate for information in small niches like these, then you have a potential target market for content.

The Benefits of Content Marketing

The greatest benefit of content marketing is that it builds trust. You brand yourself and your site as the place to go for answers. Once you're a recognized source of the high quality information people need, your offerings basically sell themselves.

Content marketing is great for people who don't consider themselves sales-oriented. There's really no hard sell involved. This is an inbound marketing strategy where you put the content out there and it brings people to your offer.

The Downside

The only real downside – and this can be quite a downside – is that creating content is not always easy or cheap. You have to become a true expert and create it yourself, which takes time, or you have to invest money in your expert writer. There are shortcuts to creating content, but the content has to be exceptional.

How to Succeed at Content Marketing

The key to success with content marketing is to approach it in the spirit of giving, not selling. Share your information with an audience that's hungry for answers. Focus on communicating and building a relationship. The more value you give, the better you can expect your returns to be.

Email Marketing – Getting Your Message Straight to Your Prospect's Inbox

Email marketing involves sending email messages to a list of subscribers that contain information, offers, discounts, and promotions. It's one of the most common and effective types of marketing used online today. There's a popular saying among internet marketers that states, 'The money is in the list.'

The Basics of Email Marketing

The first step in email marketing is to build a list. You can do this by either creating a website or using offline materials to collect names and email addresses. This is what's called an 'opt-in' list and it's very important that people have chosen to be on the list. If they haven't opted in, they won't be responsive to your offers.

The best way to get people to sign up is to offer an exclusive freebie or discount. Once they've signed up, you send them an email to confirm, and they receive the free offer or discount. A software program called an autoresponder is used to manage your list and automatically send messages to your subscribers.

Getting names and email addresses is just the beginning. You then have to nurture your list and build a relationship with them. You can do this by providing helpful information and high-quality content. They see you as an expert and friend, and this builds trust so that you can then start making offers.

Email marketing is useful for any kind of business, whether online or off. In fact, it's an easy method for offline businesses to increase engagement with customers. Email is also a great way to market to cell phones and mobile devices. You can

send coupons they can use at your bricks-and-mortar business.

The Benefits of Email Marketing

Email marketing is wonderful because it's cheaper and faster than direct mail. Instead of spending money publishing brochures and other print materials, you only have to compose email messages. Unlike direct marketing, you also get global reach.

It's easy to monitor and track the response of your prospects to your emails. The autoresponder service that you use to manage your list will handle your tracking for you, giving you detailed analytics. You can easily see which messages are getting opened and acted upon and which aren't.

The only real disadvantage of email marketing is that people might ignore your emails. With all of the spam people get, your messages may end up in their spam folder. Government regulations have also gotten stricter about how you do your email marketing.

How to Make Email Marketing Work for You

The first guideline for success with email marketing is that you should never buy or trade for a list. Subscribers need to opt-in and confirm their subscription. When you buy a list, not only are you getting untargeted prospects who are probably not interested, you're also spamming them when you send unsolicited messages. With new anti-spam laws like the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, you could pay dearly for this.

When you do start making offers, be careful about the products and services you promote. Don't pass off anything on your list that's less than the best quality. Nurturing your list is about building trust, and one bad product can destroy that trust quickly. Remember that people can unsubscribe by simply clicking on the link

at the bottom of the message.

Always be responsive to your list and treat them like gold. When they have comments or questions, listen and communicate with them. Pay attention to your analytics so that you know what works and what doesn't. Marketers who take care of their list keep their subscribers for the long-term.

Direct Marketing – The Traditional Approach

Direct marketing is the oldest marketing method known to humankind. It involves phone calls, mailings and advertisements that communicate directly with your target market to make your offer. A direct marketing campaign starts with intense research on the target market to develop a product line and delivery method. You need a long list of leads to contact before you can start.

When Should You Use Direct Marketing?

Direct marketing works best for very specific niches. Like most marketing methods, you need a narrow target market that you understand well. The people on your list should be looking for products or services that help them solve their problems. Direct marketing can be expensive so it needs to be laser-targeted.

The direct method works best with products that are simple and straightforward. Unlike online methods, such as content marketing, you can't afford to be subtle. You have to drive home your message succinctly and firmly. The easier your products are to understand, the better. Direct marketing methods don't give you a lot of time to communicate your message.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Direct Marketing

The best thing about direct marketing is that you get quick results. You can find out whether or not your market is receptive almost instantly. It's a great way to collect hard data about your target market.

Another advantage is that it's a tried and true method that's been used successfully for years. There are proven techniques you can learn from direct

marketing veterans which are known to get results. Unlike more recent marketing methods, direct marketing will probably always be around in one form or another.

The main drawback is that many prospects hate direct marketing. This is why the softer approach of content marketing is so appealing. People are annoyed by phone calls and junk mail, and they've started to tune them out. There are no-call lists and increasingly strict regulations about what marketers can and can't do. Many people see direct tactics as an invasion of privacy.

Direct marketing also requires more of an investment of time and money. Printed marketing materials can get expensive and it takes a larger sales force to collect prospects by phone.

The Keys to Direct Marketing Success

There are three keys to direct marketing that can make it work for you:

- Detailed knowledge about your target market and what they're looking for. The most successful direct marketing campaigns are those that carry out painstaking research and gather lots of hard data.
- A clear message that emphasizes the benefits of your product. The most important things you want your prospects to know need to be stated clearly up front with no guesswork involved.
- The ability to get people's attention. The exact same tactics that make direct marketing annoying to some people are also what bring its success. There's no room for subtlety and the best marketers are good at grabbing attention.

Many marketers believe that the direct approach is old hat. Inbound marketing techniques that can be done online on a shoestring budget are preferred. However, this doesn't mean that direct marketing is finished. Its techniques change with the times and it still gets results.

Offline Marketing and Why It's Still Important

The Internet makes it easy to market your products and services online, but traditional methods are still used offline because of their continued effectiveness. The best approach is to combine online and offline marketing to maximize your results.

Offline marketing is basically any marketing you don't do on a computer. These methods include:

- Taking out ads in print and on TV or radio
- Direct mail marketing campaigns
- Getting new customers through referrals and incentives
- Co-branding with other companies that share your market
- Cold calling
- Taking part in offline events

On the Internet, marketers find out where their target market hangs out (Facebook, online forums, etc.) and put their offer in front of them or draw them in through their content. The same goes for offline marketing but instead it's done in shopping malls, on TV, at local events, and in the local community.

Should You Use Offline Marketing?

Offline marketing works well together with online methods. For example, you may run an offline promotion in the local community to get people to your site. You may gather names and email addresses offline for your email marketing campaign.

One thing to consider, however, is budget. Online marketing can be done completely on a shoestring budget. Offline methods always cost a bit more in terms of money and resources.

The Pros and Cons of Offline Marketing

The biggest benefit of offline marketing is that it can be a much more personal approach, depending on the methods you use. There's simply nothing you can do online that compares to meeting your prospects face to face. This personal contact is what many businesses lack today.

It also gives you a huge credibility boost. People are somewhat wary of businesses that only operate online. When you see them offline, people have a chance to see your products and services with their own eyes and not through a computer screen.

Offline marketing is really the foundation of online marketing. The same fundamentals apply. Unlike online techniques, these are proven methods that have been used effectively for decades.

As mentioned above, the major drawback is the cost in terms of money, time and resources. Offline marketing strategies are not feasible for many small local businesses due to the expense and their limited marketing budgets.

It's also tougher to establish yourself as an expert offline. Online, you can do it quickly and easily through content marketing. This is where you provide valuable content to your target market that establishes your authority.

Finally, offline you can only reach a limited local audience. With the Internet, you've got a worldwide reach and you're open for business 24 hours a day.

Why You Need to Learn Offline Marketing

Even if you focus your marketing efforts online, it's a good idea to learn offline marketing since it involves the traditional techniques that form the basis of online marketing. Online marketing is essentially offline marketing plus technology. These proven sales techniques and principles can give you an edge in your online business.

Search Engine Marketing – Climbing the SERPs

In online marketing, you often hear people talk about dominating the search engine results for certain keywords. What they're talking about is search engine marketing (SEM). This is a broad term that includes everything you do to increase your site's visibility within the search engines, such as Google and Bing.

Many people mistakenly mix up this term with SEO (search engine optimization), but these are two different concepts. SEO is part of SEM, but there's much more to it. SEM also includes using the search engines' ad networks and other forms of advertising to target search engine users.

Advertising on Search Engines

Your SEM campaign starts with choosing the right search terms. These are keywords and key phrases your target market is using to search for sites like yours. It's important to choose keywords that are relevant and have a high number of searches per month. You can use an online keyword tool to do this.

Once you've chosen your keywords, you optimize your site for them (SEO) and take out ads that target these keywords. Search engine ad networks let you bid on keywords and decide on your budget. They place ads on people's searches depending on these factors.

Why Place Ads?

SEO offers a way to draw traffic to your site for free or very close to free. Why use SEM and pay for ads? The reason is that ads get you highly targeted traffic quickly. The results are immediate, whereas SEO takes time. It's a good choice for limited

time offers or new sites that either don't have traffic yet or don't employ SEO techniques.

SEM also helps you when you want to dominate the search engine results pages (SERPs) for your chosen keywords. By basing your SEM campaign around those keywords, you can make sure that the search engines place you at the top.

The Pros and Cons of SEM

SEM is an essential part of any online marketing strategy. If you build a high quality site and employ no SEM whatsoever, it's possible to build a strong fan base over the course of several years through other types of promotion, but SEM gets you there much faster.

The main drawback of SEM is that it takes constant attention, maintenance and budget. Everything changes quickly online. The search engines (and especially Google) update their algorithms constantly, and you have to stay on top of these changes. If you rely too much on search engines for your traffic, one of these changes can seriously impact your business.

The Keys to SEM Success

How do you run a successful SEM campaign? Best practices include:

- Split testing by taking advantage of all of the tools available to see what works and what doesn't
- Clearly defining the goals you want to achieve with your SEM campaign
- Taking time to choose the right keywords and changing them if necessary
- Using the highest quality content possible to provide value for your visitors
- Giving visitors a clear call to action.

Finally, it's important that you don't put all of your eggs in one basket. While SEM is important, you should employ other methods as well to get human beings to your site. The best strategy includes marketing to both search engines and real human Internet users.

Selling Other People's Products with Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a type of performance-based marketing where revenue is shared between online merchants and website owners. In its simplest form, a publisher has a website where they promote affiliate products. They get a commission for each sale made.

How to Do Affiliate Marketing

If you want to use affiliate marketing as a publisher, you create a website and build traffic to it. You should also create a list of subscribers and build your relationship with them. You then join an affiliate network and choose someone else's products to promote based on what your readers and subscribers like. The network gives you an affiliate link, and whenever customers click it, you get paid.

Pay Per Action

Affiliate marketing is performance-based. This means that you get paid when a certain action occurs. There are many types of actions and they don't have to be sales. With Pay Per Click (PPC), you get paid each time visitors click on your link. Companies may pay you for each link you publish, each phone call from a prospect, or each person who signs up for their list. In these cases, you're helping the merchant by harvesting prospects for them.

When to Use Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is great for all kinds of products and services, but it's best used for niche marketing. Instead of casting the net wide, niche marketers focus on a very specific audience. It's easier to build a relationship with a small,

laser-targeted niche and they're more likely to buy products and services that are customized to their needs.

Affiliate marketing is not a way to make a huge amount of cash quickly. It usually starts out bringing in a few dollars here and there, and then gets bigger over time. Many successful affiliate marketers manage multiple campaigns at the same time to maximize their earnings. This can get you a decent passive income but not necessarily a fortune.

The Pros and Cons of Affiliate Marketing

One of the most attractive benefits of affiliate marketing is that you don't have to create the products yourself. You just sell the products of others. Affiliate marketing offers an easy way to monetize a blog or website that already has a following. All you have to do is start writing about products or services that your visitors would like.

Affiliate networks are usually free to join and you can run an affiliate campaign with very little money up front. All you need to pay for are web hosting and any tools you'll use. Networks offer all kinds of support and security, and they often give you other resources to work with. It's as close to 'plug and play' as any online business can be.

The main downside is that affiliate marketing income is usually fairly sporadic, even if you have a site with plenty of traffic. It's not a way to quit your day job. There are also many affiliate marketers who rely on spammy or unethical tactics, so search engines like Google don't particularly always like affiliate sites.

Keys to Affiliate Marketing Success

If you want to do well, offer something original and unique that nobody else is offering and which is helpful to your audience. Fill a gap in the market. Really zero in on your audience and give them exactly what they want. Like most forms of marketing, affiliate marketing is all about long-term relationship building. If you have a hungry crowd that knows you as someone who offers quality, you'll make good sales and a sustainable income.



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