Six Figure Blog Marketing

Proven Successful Blog Marketing Tips

Legal Notices

The Power of Blogging

A Brief History of Blogging

A blog is a type of website or part of a website. It gets its name from the term "web log" which originally referred to an online log of partner websites, personal updates and newsworthy items. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability of readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual; some focus on art, photographs, videos, music, and audio (podcasting). Micro-blogging is another type of blogging, featuring very short posts.

Before blogging became popular, digital communities took many forms, including Usenet, commercial online services such as GEnie, BiX and the early CompuServe, e-mail lists and Bulletin Board Systems (BBS). In the 1990s, Internet forum software created running conversations with "threads." Threads are topical connections between messages on a bulletin board websites. They are so named because they have an initial topic and then a string of follow-up comments in some type of chronological order. A forum could have many sub-forums with many topics and many strings of conversations and replies.

The modern blog evolved from the online diary, where people would keep a running account of their personal lives. Most such writers called themselves diarists, journalists, or "journalers." Justin Hall, who began personal blogging in 1994 while a student at Swarthmore College, is generally recognized as one of the earliest bloggers, as is Jerry Pournelle. Dave Winer's Scripting News is also credited with being one of the oldest and longest running weblogs. Another early blog was Wearable Wireless Webcam, an online shared diary of a person's personal life combining text, video, and pictures transmitted live from a wearable computer and EyeTap device to a web site in 1994. This practice of semi-automated blogging with live video together with text was referred to as sousveillance, and such journals were also used as evidence in legal matters.

Early blogs were simply manually updated components of common Web sites. However, the evolution of tools to facilitate the production and maintenance of Web articles posted in reverse chronological order made the publishing process feasible to a much larger, less technical, population. Ultimately, this resulted in the distinct class of online publishing that produces blogs we recognize today. For instance, the use of some sort of browser-based software is now a typical aspect of blogging. Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services, or they can be run using blog software, or on regular web hosting services.

Blogs and Money-Making

Blogging is more popular than ever these days and it's one of the most profitable advertising markets next to social networking websites. Blogs have the distinct benefit of being absolutely loved by search engine bots and offering easy link-back opportunities in the form of comment posts. Blogs are devilishly easy to update and customize and since they require very little maintenance they can be very inexpensive. Some very popular and very profitable websites are created only with blog software. The beauty of the software is that you can customize it to the point where it doesn't' look like "just a blog." Blogs are one of the most powerful tools an internet marketer has today.

One of the primary ways of profiting from blogs is through ad programs like Google's AdSense. This only *makes* sense if you have a lot of traffic so getting clicks is the absolute key. Another way to make even more money is to charge for direct advertising space. This bypasses Google's commission although it does make it a bit harder to get advertisers in the first places. Affiliate linking is also a great way of bringing in income. Instead of directly using your blog for advertising revenue you provide affiliate advertisement in the form of blog posts; you use a special link with a reference number that will give you a percentage of the profit if the person who used the link buys the product (You set these up with your affiliate websites). Of course how much money you'll ultimately make on any advertising paradigm depends on a number of factors.

You have to consider how popular your blog is, how many link backs you have and how many daily visitors you get. Your popularity, daily visitors and link backs depend ultimately on the overall value of your blog, which is controlled by the quality relevancy of your blog posts. So, as you can see, writing a good and effective blog goes hand-in-hand with using your blog to make money. A crummy, ill-formatted blog will not get you any daily visitors and with no daily visitors you're useless to any advertisers or affiliates. In this book we'll not only go over the various ways you can create income from blogs but we'll talk about how to make high-quality, easily manageable blogs that attract visitors.

Effective Blog Writing

There are a number of ways to write good, effective blogs. Not all of them involve you actually sitting in front of a computer and writing blog posts every day. There are a ton of blogging services that can actually do it for you if you choose. Personally I recommend creating a template and doing it yourself but you can choose whichever strategy best fits you. The key points here are brevity, information type, target-audienceand quality of content.

Brevity: The Secret Ingredient

Brevity, or briefness, is something that many commercial blog posters take for granted. Somewhere in their quest for the perfect keyword ratio and inserting the right amount of product links they fail to realize they're writing mini-novels instead of regular old blog posts. The average blog post is between 150 and 500 words. Anything below 150 can probably be considered a micro-blog and anything over 500 is really pushing your readers.

This depends, of course, entirely on the subject matter of the blog. If you have a science blog and you're discussing quantum physics or string theory then you might legitimately have 1,500-word blog posts. Those types of intellectual discussions require a certain amount of explaining and it's hard to write fluff for them. If your blog is about fashion trends, however, it's unlikely that you'll want to have extremely long posts.

Visual Cues

People in general do not have extremely large attention spans, especially when they're browsing content online. If your blog is visually a large block of text, many people will subconsciously find it insurmountable and avoid it because they don't want to read it. This is why it's good to keep your blog posts as short as you can. If you have a subject matter that requires a long post then you can increase the likelihood of it being read by visually splitting up the blog post.

You could separate it into two different posts for part 1 and part 2. If you separate it in just the right place you can make each blog post stand on its own and people will be intrigued to read the rest instead of afraid to try and read it all at once. Another thing you can do is adjust the spacing of your post. Use paragraphs and do a hard return after each one. If you have key points, use bullets. Try to keep your paragraphs at no more than 3-5 lines and avoid anything that looks like a large, rectangular block of text.

What's The Blog About?

Keeping your blog on topic is extremely important, especially when we factor in search-engine optimization. If your blog is all about editing videos then you should expand on that topic but don't wonder off too far. Related subjects might be: video editing software, editing techniques, effects training courses, cinematography books and colleges that offer video-related degrees. Try to find between 3 and 5 related topics within your blog's niche and stick to them. If you constantly write about a certain subject and have a lot of link backs and proper keywords, you become a lot more likely to be considered an "expert" by the search engines. If your video editing site becomes popular you could have prime spots in search engines for terms like "video editing" or "special effects." This is also known as becoming an "Authority" on a subject.

The main benefit of exploiting your niche, aside from search results, is to become appealing to advertisers within that niche. If your website has first-page results on Google or Yahoo for video editing results then you will be extremely desirable to any company who wants to advertise video-editing products or services. Your value goes way up within your niche and you can charge even more for advertising. You will also get a lot more affiliate purchases for products that have to do with a niche you are an authority of. People are more likely to buy a product if it's endorsed by a popular website that is considered an authority on the subject.

You may not have to "nichefy" your content if you have an extremely popular blog. You still need to keep your blog within a slightly-focuses section but you can

make it broader. For example, you could have a blog about visual art and in that blog you could discuss video editing, special effects, painting, drawing and 3D art. Your possibilities are greatly expanded but you still retain a major theme that all of your posts and updates will follow. This reduces your chances of becoming an authority on any particular subject but it increased the variety of advertisers you have to choose from. Sometimes having many different advertisers can be better than having many from a single niche. For instance, if DVD sales are in a slump and your blog is about buying DVD's then you will have much less advertisers. If your blog was about buying all types of Media then you could pick up the slack with advertisers from different companies like MP3 Distributors or Blu-Ray Player Manufacturers. What you sacrifice in niche-sales you make up in stability. A multifaceted blog is harder to start up and harder to get daily clicks but the added stability gives you better growth potential and more longevity.

Who is the Blog For?

This all plays into the target audience. Who exactly are you writing for? Knowing your target audience is absolutely essential if you want to get anything done with your blog. Some key points include: Their field of interest, their age, their gender and their educational background.

Field of Interest

The first thing you have to consider is what your target audience is interested in. Your blog could be about DVD's in the general sense but what readers are you targeting? Are you targeting people who want to buy DVD's, people who want to make DVD's or people who want to read DVD reviews? You can choose all three if you like and your blog can just be about everything DVD-related but you will probably get more return visits if you focus on one subcategory within your main topic.

It's also a good idea to pick two or three topics that go especially well together. For example, your blog could focus on reviewing computer parts and where to buy the parts for cheap. This is a perfect combination because people who are buying computer parts generally want to see a review before they buy

(Likewise people seeking reviews are generally seeking to buy). In this way you've taken your target audience's top two priorities and catered to them. What you want to avoid is posting off-topic with things that might fit into the broader category but don't actually make sense within the context of your blog. If you're targeting people who want to see reviews for and purchase computer parts then you really shouldn't have a random post about a new PC game. This fits within the broad category of computers but it's unrelated to your actual blog.

That's not to say you can't make off-topic posts; they just need to tie into your theme. Using our previous example, you might want to make a random post about a recall on a recently released computer part or a post about the exact computer set up that a celebrity or other person of interest is using. It's good to introduce newsworthy items that relate to your blog but aren't necessarily on-topic because they bring diversity to your pages.

How Old Are They?

It's never a good idea to discriminate or alienate a particular audience but that doesn't mean you can't target a specific audience and optimize your blog for them. If your blog's topic is dealing with menopause then your target audience is probably going to be women who are between 35 and 50 because they are the primary types of people who are affected by menopause.

Bearing this in mind, you don't want to use a lot of internet lingo that's popular with teenagers today. Your readers are not going to take you seriously if you sound like one of their children or grandchildren. Instead you should keep a mature tone and write with a slightly informal and empathetic voice. You can research other blogs that cater to your age range and see how writers focus their content to a particular group.

Teens and young-adults between 16 and 24 are generally people who grew up in an age where the personal computer was commonplace and relatively inexpensive. They understand internet slang and popular themes that get passed around on social networking websites. Adults ages 25-40 are generally more mature (if only slightly) and may or may not be familiar with internet slang etc.

This age group will have a higher income and many people in this age group will have families. Adults ages 41-60 quite often have families and will not be impressed by internet slang or sites that aren't family-friendly. Of course these are rather broad outlines; your blog's niche market may be senior citizens who ride around in baker gangs—anything's possible. You can do more extensive research on demographics and how to use them to your advantage for the best results.

<u>Does Gender Matter?</u>

In terms of marketing for a specific market: Sometimes. Generally the nuances that you'll adjust for gender differences are pretty subtle. There are a few instances where it makes all the difference. If you're website is about buying the right prom dress then your target audience is obviously women (specifically teenage girls) only. That's not to say women are the only people buying prom dresses but that is where the majority of your clicks and affiliate purchases will come from and that's who you are targeting with your blog. Unless your blog is related to a gender-specific product then you can pretty much decide for yourself if you want to market for a specific gender.

Sometimes it makes sense to market for a particular gender. Video games, for example, are classically geared towards males in the 12-24 age group. This has been an industry standard for years since research shows the most sales from that group. That being said, you might be alienating a whole market of potential readers and customers. In recent years the video game industry has found that they've lost millions in sales due to advertising campaigns that were considered to be misogynistic. If you think that targeting a specific gender will increase sales then go ahead but the general rule of thumb is to try and create a blog that both genders can enjoy.

<u>Are The Educated?</u>

Here's one that a lot of people overlook when they're thinking about their target audience. A blog is primarily just textual articles that people read so it's essential that you don't confuse your readers with content they understand or offend them

with content that's too simplified. So what is the educational background of your target audience?

Well, if your blog is about construction then think about the requirements of the job: for entry-level positions and even most management positions you only need a GED or high school diploma. For some management positions a person might need a degree in business or architecture. From here we decide who our blog appeals to: Upper management or entry-level and general worker positions?

The purpose for this is to assess what knowledge they already possess. If you're targeting experienced construction workers then you need to either avoid talking directly about the semantics of construction or carefully check all of your facts; you don't want them to notice any misinformation and stop taking your blog seriously.

The other point of this is to deliver content that your audience will understand. Obviously if your blog is about tips for getting your GED then you're not going to want to write it with the prowess of a college English professor. Conversely, if your blog is about becoming a teacher then you certainly don't want to over-simplify it or have any type of grammatical mistakes. People won't take your blog seriously if they feel it's "below" them and they won't continue reading your blog if they can't understand it. You need to establish the educational level and background of your target audience and try to cater to it.

When in doubt, take a conversational tone and type as though you normally speak. Make sure you don't have any grammatical mistakes and avoid using slang words and colloquialisms (a word that only has meaning in a particular region). As I just did, you can define certain words in parenthesis if you think they're words that aren't common or are often mistaken for other words.

Content Quality Control

The quality of your blog content is one of the most crucial aspects of having a successful blog that draws in potential customers and clicks to make you money. If your blog is filled with inane or unorganized posts you won't be able to maintain a

user base. If your blog is filled with automated posts that don't feel human you won't get indexed by search engines and if your blog is just of an overall poor quality you're not even going to get visitors. How you handle the quality of your blog depends on how much time you personally have to devote to it.

The best way to control the content of your blog is to write it yourself. Nothing matches the freedom and control you have when your content is being generated by none other than you and if something goes wrong you only have yourself to blame. This is also the cheapest method of running your blog. If you're reading this book I can only assume you want your blog to make money for you and the best way to do that is to cut your costs as much as possible.

Once your blog does become popular you might find that it's actually beneficial and time-effective to hire someone to update your blog for you. This will probably be something that you freelance out to people on a weekly basis; it's not exactly something worth creating a part-time job for (and the costs of that would be astronomical). A good way to do this is to use a micro-project service like Amazon's Mechanical Turk service. This allows you to give out micro-projects where you pay a freelancer a small fee to write a single blog post. If you're keeping with my advice on brevity then you should usually only need posts that are under 500 words so you should be able to get those created for under $10 a piece which is an absolute steal. If the subject matter or post permits it you could separate a single blog post into 3 or 4 different 50-75 word micro-projects and pay as little as 50¢ a piece! Then you can pay another person a few cents to piece them together or do it yourself.

As nice as that option is, you have to determine if your blog really requires it. If the time it takes you to post the jobs on a freelancing website, describe them and then approve or deny them is going to take longer than just writing the blog yourself you might want to skip those services.

Basic Grammar Problems
The most basic, rudimentary thing to remember about writing your blogs is that you need to have proper grammar and spelling. You don't have to go crazy with

figurative language or use unnecessary advanced techniques but there's nothing less impressing than having a simple spelling mistake in a blog; this is especially damaging when you're writing about something intellectual like biology, architecture or grammar! Here are some common mistakes that you can be sure to check for before every post:

Word Confusion

This one is particularly annoying for me. People often confused words that are similar or words that are homophones. Homophones are words that sound the same but are spelled differently and mean different things. Here's a brief list of commonly mistaken words and how they *should* be used:

There: "I'm going over *there* today. "
They're: "*They're* my best friends ever!"
Their: "I borrowed *their* car last Sunday."

Your: "I like *your* shirt."
You're: "*You're* a nice person."

Whose: "*Whose* shirt is this?"
Who's: "*Who's* that knocking on my door?"

Its: "Don't touch *its* spikes!"
It's: "*It's* very hot in here."

Affect: "That doesn't *affect* me." (Verb)
Effect: "What are the side *effect*s?" (Noun)

Than: "Oranges are better *than* apples."
Then: "I saw a movie *and then* I went to the store."

Loose: "This belt is *loose*, my pants may fall down!"
Lose: "I didn't want to *lose* the game but I had fun."

Whole: "I have a *whole* candy bar all to myself!"
Hole: "There's a *hole* in my favorite shirt!"

There are many others but those are the most common mistakes that people make all the time. These types of mistakes seem minor but they really can have a detrimental effect on your return traffic. Another problem is when you use words that or just incorrect or simply don't exist. Here are a few prime examples:

- _Copywrite_: There's no such thing. A Copywriter is a person who writes copy; copyrights are the rights to a work.

- _Irregardless_: Again, this doesn't exist. There is only the word regardless.

- _Ironic_: Ironic usually means something that is unexpected or the opposite of what you would expect. Use of this word to mean "comically unfortunate" is ubiquitous so this is a fairly harmless mistake.

- _Deceptively_: While this is technically a word it has very little legitimate context. People will generally know what you mean but try to find a better alternative. (e.g. instead of "The water was deceptively shallow" you can say "The water was much deeper than it looked.")

- _Alot:_ This is incorrect. A and lot are two different words; this should say instead, "a lot."

General Quality Issues

Now that you've prepared yourself for writing quality blogs without embarrassing grammatical mistakes you should look over the general quality of the content. Are you using images in your blog? Make sure they're not too compressed and look good on your blog. Pick relevant images that are of decent quality. Make sure not to load your blog up with too many images or some users might experience slow load times and just avoid your blog altogether.

Keep a schedule of when you're going to update your blog and try to stick to it. If your blog develops a lot of regular readers they probably know your update schedule and visit your blog accordingly. Make sure your blog has an RSS feed and find the URL that you can use to advertise your RSS feed on other websites. Every

blog software is different so you'll have to do some extra research on yours and find out how to set up your RSS update feed.

Direct Advertising

As I discussed earlier, one of the ways to monetize your blog is by accepting blog advertising from other advertisers, such as text-based or banner advertising. Specifically the most profitable way to do this is by directly selling your advertising space instead of using a third-party company to network your ads. Direct advertising is arguably the best method to monetize a website. Here are some of the key benefits:

Benefits

- Bigger Profits: The main advantage of selling your own ads is the fact that you will cut the third party out. This will increase your revenue potential. For example, let's say you sell text link ads on your sidebar through a certain company, and the text links sell for $80 monthly. Since you are using the company network to sell the ads they get maybe 50% of that price, and you will end up earning only $40 a month for each text link. Regardless of what you actually got to keep, someone was still willing to pay $80 for a text link on your blog. So why in the world should you share that with someone else?

- Freedom: It's true that large advertising networks have access to a wider pool of advertisers and they have more credibility to close the deals. That being said, if you have all the requirements in place and spend some time looking at the right places, you should easily be able to sell your own ads just as efficiently as the larger networks.

- Adaptability: Another great advantage of selling direct advertising is that you will have much more control over where and how the ads will be displayed (i.e., you can avoid intrusive advertising). Google AdSense is nice but, unless you blend it with the content, it's annoying some of the readers and you will get terribly low click-through rates.

- Credibility: Lastly, having sponsors and direct advertisers on your blog might help your credibility. Even small and poorly done blogs can stick some AdSense units here and there. Having established companies that are willing to partnership with your site, in contrast, can show users that your content has quality and that the site is somewhat professional.

Before you jump into selling your own ads you should be aware of some of the potential hazards and problems you could face:

Potential Problems

- Time: Selling your own ads has many advantages; however, it's not a cure-all. The biggest drawback of this advertising option is the time that it will consume. This time will be spent optimizing your website for the ads, finding potential advertisers, negotiating with them, and handling the administrative matters (e.g. making payments, tracking statistics, delivering reports etc.).

- A Lot of Rules: Selling direct adverting is not as easy as making money from Google AdSense. You will need to have a popular blog, a professional looking design, special software etc.

- Volatile Market: Unless you close deals for very long periods (which is unlikely) you will find yourself looking for new advertisers or optimizing your website to attract new ones every other month. The opposite is true for most advertising networks; for these you just need to plug some code and they will do the rest of the work. (If your site or blog is just a hobby, therefore, direct advertising might not be the best option)

If you've decided that direct advertising is for you then the very first thing you have to do is actually find advertisers who want to advertise with you. Before you start trying to get advertisers you should go over your blog and make sure it's really focused for this purpose. I've read many articles that said the general rule of thumb is 2000-4000 daily visitors before incorporating advertisements into your blog. That's actually quite a high number but you should definitely have an established customer base before you try to get advertisers. Here are some broad

guidelines for what you should already have in place before you start your advertiser search.

Before You Start

- **Be Popular**: Before landing direct advertising deals you will need to have a good amount of traffic on your site. I don't necessarily agree with that 2-4000 rule I mentioned earlier but in generally I recommend around 1000 daily unique visitors. If you are below that mark you should focus on building traffic instead of looking for advertisers (Or use a third party company until you gain enough traffic). Other factors like Google PageRank, RSS subscribers and Alexa rank might also help.

- **Know What You Want**: You might have one of the most popular sites on the Internet but unless your site also has a very clear niche and a defined audience, advertisers will not find it very attractive. We discussed this earlier in Effective Blog Writing but for those of you who may have skipped that section, I cannot stress this enough!You should avoid rambling about 100 different topics on the website; advertisers want to deliver a message to specific people, and the more specific the better (usually).

- **Look Professional**: If you are planning to monetize your blog through sponsorsyou really should invest some money into a professional looking design. Advertisers will be associating their product or service with your blog and not too many of them would be willing to get mixed with an ugly or amateur-looking site. If you know all about web design that's great but maybe, just for this project, hire someone with a degree and a guarantee.

- **Required Software**: In order to serve your ads, rotate banners and track statistics you will need to install an Adserver. If you are looking for a simple solution you should try [WP-Ads](). This WordPress plugin will serve ads for specific ad zones that you create. The only drawback is that it does not count clicks (only impressions). If you need a more sophisticated solution check

OpenAds. You will need to spend some time learning how to use it, but it offers virtually all the features you will ever need.

- **Clearly Define Ad Space**: It is very important to have an "Advertise Here" page. On this page you want to give some details about the website, like audience, traffic and any other factor that might be of the interest of potential advertisers. Don't just leave empty, blank spaces in places where you'll be accepting advertising. State clearly that those spaces are for sale. Create an image that says "Your Ad Here" or "Ad Space For Sale" and place it to the spot that you accept advertisements.

  It's also important that those spaces are clickable links. Then you make those links point to a page that clearly tells advertisers who they can get the space to advertise in. This means you'll need to create a specific page that is solely for listing all the prices, terms and conditions for different advertising spaces. Don't forget to add a contact form or an email address that allow people to contact you directly.
  Not all templates and themes will be suitable for selling direct advertising. Preferably you want to have an idea of what kind of advertising you will sell (468×60 banners, 125×125 banners, text links etc.) and design your website according to those objectives. Advertisers want visibility so reserve a good spot for them and cater to your specific advertisers.

- **Payment Options**: You might have everything in place, but if you are not able to cash payments – or more importantly, if advertisers are not able to pay easily – you will end up losing deals. PayPal is the best option here. Notice, however, that a personal account will not suffice. You will need at least a premier account to be able to accept credit cards.

Pursue Your Advertisers

You don't have to just sit around and wait for the offers to come in. In fact that's probably a terrible idea; you can just as easily go after advertisers yourself. By seeking out advertisers instead of just waiting for them you can choose and accept advertisers that you like instead of just dealing with whoever shows up. When you're e-mailing advertisers to see if they want to advertise on your blog, don't forget to provide the following information:

- Introduce yourself briefly.

- Explain why you are e-mailing them.

- Tell them why you could really use their advertising.

- Explain the benefits and features of advertising on your blog.

- Include details on your price, terms and other information on advertising on your blog

- Tell them about what the theme of your blog is and how it related to what they might advertise there (and how it will land them clicks).

A great way to go about this is to create a standardized letter that you use for all advertisers with their contact information changed. Just follow the previous guidelines and make sure the letter is easily editable so you can keep a template and modify it for each different advertisers. After that information the advertisers should be able to decide if they are interested or not. If they reply, then you will fix the details. All of that information should be contained in 2 or 3 paragraphs. If you send a mini-novel to potential advertisers they will just skip it altogether. Remember what I said way back in Chapter 1? People have low attention spans!

Where to Look

Once you have your direct advertising program established, you will start to receive inquiries from people. In the beginning, however, you will need to hunt advertisers

down. Do not get discouraged if get turned down initially, provided you have all the aforementioned requirements, sooner or later you will find someone willing to take a shot on your site.

- **Link-Backs**: If a company is willing to link to your articles or to add your website under its "Links" or "Resources" section, it is also probably willing to discuss about advertising on your site. You need tokeep track of those incoming links. Link-backs are possibly the most important aspect of advertising your own blog. Google page rank and, more importantly, Google results are almost entirely based on links back to your site. If your site has a ton of link-backs then your potential advertisers will have a ton of clicks and your blog will be especially favorable (it all goes back to being "Popular").

- **Comments & E-Mails**: The same principle applies to people leaving comments on your blog or sending you e-mails. If you see an employee or the owner of a company among them that could be interested on your website then contact him or her and get the conversation going. You may have just found a potential advertiser!

- **AdWords Users**: Throughout your search for advertisers you will notice that most of the established companies are not aware of the benefits of online advertising. If a certain company is already spending money on Google AdWords, it is very likely that they would also be open to other forms of online advertising. Think about some keywords that are related to your topic and do a Google search for them. Check the sponsored links that will appear and contact them. (You can also check the advertisers that appear on the AdSense units of related websites.) An even more advanced tactic would be to use Google's AdWords Keyword tool to find a host of related terms to look up.

- **Other Ad Networks**: While Google AdWords is, by far, the largest advertising network there is, there are many others that could be useful. Check the companies that are spending money on AdBrite, Text-Link-Ads, BlogAds, SponsoredReviews, DoubleClick and similar companies.

- **Banner Ads on Similar Blogs**: Check out popular blogs and websites on your niche and see what companies are advertising there. This is a great tactic that we'll discuss in detail in the next section; the gist is that you can find out what they're advertising and offer them a better or comparable deal.

- **Bookmark Potential Sponsors**: Have a bookmark folder on your Internet browser and label it "Sponsors" or something similar. Every time you come across a company or site that could be interested in sponsoring your blog, bookmark it. It's always good to stay organized and this will allow you to queue up a list of potential sponsors that you can tackle whenever you have some free time.

Sponsorship and Research

Blog sponsorships are continuously becoming a trend online. It is because an increasing number of businesses have noticed the power of blog as an extension of their marketing campaign. Under blog sponsorship, you are going to work closely with your advertiser and actively promote their product and service in your blog post. Moreover, your blog will also carry advertiser's brand name and company logo.

By the way, you can close a sponsorship deal by separating a section on your blog that is solely for promoting your sponsored product. Such kind of blog advertising works very well if your blog is already very popular and has a lot of visitors who comes to your site regularly.

Another way to find blog advertising opportunities is by using keyword research. Keyword research is not only for affiliate marketing but also it can be used in finding blog advertisers. Here is the process:

- Start by doing a search based on the main keyword you art currently targeting in your blog.

- See if there are any ads that is currently posted under this keyword, if yes; find out those companies based on the web site URL.

- Contact them and see if they are interested in advertising on your blog.

Exchange Links

Other blogs that exchange links with you before may be also a potential advertiser. It is because if they find your blog and exchange links with you, chances are that they find your blog that is full of potential so that they want to exchange link with you. Therefore, you can send them an email and ask if they are interested in posting ads to your blog.

Determine Your Price

Before you get any actual advertisers you may want to think about you're your prices will be like. Unfortunately there are no standard pricing structures across the Internet. You will need to take a look around, do some research, and experiment on your own site to find the rates that will maximize your revenues. The thing to keep in mind is that your overall popularity will ultimately determine how much your blog is "worth" to advertisers. If you're getting in thousands of viewers a day and potentially hundreds of clicks, you're worth quite a lot. If your site gets only a few hundred viewers a day then you'll want to drastically reduce your prices to match.

A potential sponsor or advertiser will want to see some returns for the money he will be spending on your site, and this can be seen as visibility (impressions) and leads (clicks and possible sales). Make sure, therefore, that your advertising deals will deliver. There are some pretty cheap advertising options out there (e.g. Google AdWords), and you will need to be competitive. If you reserved a good spot for the sponsors (sidebar or header) you could start charging a 50¢ CPM (More on this in the next section). If your blog is generating 100,000 monthly page views a banner spot on your sidebar should cost around $50. Start low and build your way upwards. Popular blogs have a higher CPM (sometimes as high as $10) but that type of pricing requires a lot of credibility.

Flexibility is key. First of all make advertising agreements on a month-to-month basis. People don't like to commit to something they are not completely sure about. If someone proposes you a longer deal, offer a discount in exchange.Unless you have a very popular website, you will find potential advertisers reluctant to spend real money. If you are confident that the deal will create value for both parties, however, you can use that on your favor. Offer a free test period whenever needed. Some of the times the advertiser will turn you down after it, but other times they will confirm the deal. Either way you have nothing to lose.

Here are some methods that you can use to draw an initial price tag, and some specific places where you can look to cross check the numbers. Below we will cover them.

Determine the CPM

The cost of advertising depends on the traffic of your website. Let's say there are two websites charging different rates for banner ads. Blog A is charging $200 a month for a small ad and Blog B is charging $300 a month for the same sized ad.

Which one is the better deal? Well, given that information alone we can't really say. If both blogs get about the same traffic then Blog A is a better deal. If Blog B gets significantly more traffic than Blog A then Blog B might be the best deal; the increased traffic might just offset the cost and make it a worthy investment.

Companies pay small fortunes to advertise on big-hitter websites like Google, Yahoo, AOL and Facebook. The reason these companies are willing to pay is because the traffic for those websites is so immense that they get a lot more clicks and their revenue from purchases exceeds their cost of advertising.

Several standards could be used to define traffic, from unique visitors to visits and page views. Most publishers tend to use page views though. Moreover, it is a common practice to measure page views by the thousands, so one should talk about cost per 1,000 page views or impressions. CPM is the term for that, and it stands for Cost Per Mille (Mille being the Latin word for 1,000).

If we plug this into that example and say that Blog A had 2,000 views a month while blog B had 12,000 vies a month you'd find out that Blog A has a CPM of $100 whereas Blog B has a CPM of $40. That means that the more expensive blog is a far greater value because it gets 6 times as much traffic but doesn't cost 6 times as much.

This doesn't necessarily mean that you should tie your ad rates to the number of monthly impressions of your blog. Offering a flat monthly rate to

advertisers is usually the best way to go; advertisers like stability and will be reluctant to sign up for something that may become unexpectedly expensive .Keep the CPM numbers in mind because they will enable you to compare your prices with those of other bloggers (and they'll allow you to set your initial prices).

Cross Check for Accuracy

You can easily check if you are charging a suitable rate by using AdSense units on the places where you will sell direct advertising. Analyze how much you would gain with AdSense, and adjust your rates accordingly. Secondly, you can also check similar sites that are already selling direct ads.

Research Other Bloggers

The Internet behaves like a giant market place and all websites are subject to the laws of supply and demand. In other words, if you set a price that is significantly higher than the one used by other blogs on your niche, the advertisers will use other websites with more competitive rates.

The first thing you should do, therefore, is to take a look on blogs that sell advertising space to evaluate what rates they are asking.The format of the ad (e.g., 468×60, 120×600, 125×125) and the position (e.g., header, sidebar, footer, blended with content) are factors that will directly influence the final price, so in order to be consistent throughout your research you should pick a format and position that is popular. For example, don't compare footer ad prices with sidebar ad prices or prices for differently sized ads (120x600 vs. 125x125 etc.).

Among blogs selling direct advertising space the 125×125 button ad on top of the sidebar is arguably the most used format, and it should fit our research purpose.

Let's see what popular blogs on the online marketing sphere are charging, for instance. If you visit the Advertising page of Copyblogger, you will find that the blog generates over 1,000,000 monthly page views, and a 125×125 spot on the

sidebar costs $1,500. Divide $1,500 by 1,000 (remember that 1,000,000 is equal to 1,000 times 1,000 page views) and you get a CPM of $1.50.

Similarly, if you visit JohnChow you will find that the 125×125 button add costs $500 monthly, and the blog generates 300,000 page views. Again just do $500 divided by 300 and you get a CPM of $1.66.

As you can see a CPM of $1.5 for the 125×125 buttons is a good average. Even TechCrunch charges a similar rate ($10,000 for 6.5 million page views monthly, converting to a CPM of $1.53), so let's keep that number as a starting point.

Adapting to your own situation

All the blogs mentioned are viewed as authorities on their niche, which affects how much advertisers are willing to pay to get exposed to their audiences. If your blog is new or if you are just beginning to experiment with direct advertising, therefore, you probably should start with a lower CPM.

Start asking a $0.5 CPM, for example, and as your blog grows and more advertisers come along you can gradually raise it. If you have a blog generating 100,000 monthly page views this would translate into $50 monthly for each 125×125 button placed on your sidebar.

If you are going to use other ad formats or position the ads on other locations of your website just estimate how these factors will affect the traffic that an advertiser will end up getting. Placing a 300×250 banner on the sidebar, for instance, is similar to having 4 125×125 ads, so you could charge 4 times the price of the 125×125 ad ($200 monthly if your blog generates 100,000 impressions, converting to a $2 CPM).

Similarly, increase the CPM if the ad is on the header or blended with the content, and decrease it if the ad will be displayed below the fold or on the footer. Keep in mind that you should consider real page views for these evaluations. Most

web stats programs and software tend to overestimate the traffic on your site. Google Analytics is usually the most reliable one.

Experiment

In order to cross check the numbers with an external source you could join an advertising network (either CPC based like Google AdSense or CPM based) and use it on the spots where you plan to sell direct advertising.

If you are planning to sell a 300×250 banner spot below your posts, for instance, you could firstly put a Google AdSense unit there and measure the CPM that it will give. Most direct advertising deals should bring you more money that what advertising networks do, mainly because you are cutting out the commissions and negotiating directly with the advertisers.

The most important thing is to constantly test and experiment with what works. You're not likely going to get black listed for having slightly high prices so if you find that your prices aren't drawing in advertisers you can reduce them.

Use a Blog Ad Network

Direct advertising is the most profitable way to advertise on your blog but what's the easiest? Well, as you probably assumed form the chapter title, it's Blog Ad Networks. These networks pretty much do almost all of the work for you; all you really do is provide the blog. The reason we discussed direct advertising first is because it's quite a bit more profitable IF you have a very popular website.

If your website gets less than 1000 daily unique visitors t hen you might consider using a blog ad network instead. Blog ad networks will get you advertisers for whatever budget your blog permits. They will take a percentage of the profits; it's usually 50% but it can be less or even more. If your blog isn't popular enough to justify creating your own direct advertising campaign then having some revenue from ads is better than absolutely none. Using a blog ad network is also a great way to start out; once your website reaches a much higher popularity level or gains "authority" status then you can switch to direct advertising when you're ready.

Blog ad networks bring in vast numbers of advertisers who search for blogs who cater to their market. Bloggers get advertisers easier than most other sites because it is well known that regular blog readers are a bit more passionate about the blogs they read than regular sites, by and large.This is what advertisers are banking on, and in a big way.

My particular favorite ad network is calledPerformancing. One of the best things about it is that it's free to join. You get 70% of the ad revenue generated and they automatically adjust the price for advertising on your blog based upon page impressions (they track them with the code you put on your site).As your site grows in popularity, so does your revenue.

Getting advertisers for your blog isn't as hard as it used to be with blog ad networks doing the heavy lifting. Just make sure when you are checking out different blog ad networks that most of the money is coming to you and that your involvement in the process is minimal after getting set up.

If you are publishing in a decent niche, advertisers want what you have: a dedicated market! Take advantage of some of your blog real estate by adding revenue-generating ad space to your mix of profit streams.

Other Great Ad Networks

Here are my picks for the top Ad Networks out there that you can use for your blog:

1. **Google AdSense**

This one is a free program allowing you to display interrelated Google ads on your site. They offer competitive filter which enables you to filter competitors or advertisers; contextual filter, which eliminates delivery of ads found inappropriate for the page; editorial review, which means all Google ads are reviewed and approved before being provided on the page; and customizable default ads wherein in the unlikely event that Google is unable to provide your page a contextual ad, they allow you to place a default ad of your choice. Consequently, it doesn't just add up volume to your site but definitely lets you earn money. How? It is very simple. You earn just through valid clicks or impressions. It is definitely plain and simple. Just visit their site by clicking Google AdSense. Apply. Once your application is approved, you can get started in a jiffy. You basically copy and paste a block of HTML to your site and voila! Google ads will now start appearing on your site.

2. **AdOn Network**

This one now is a subsidiary of PV Media Group, Inc., which offers a full set of online media solutions from leading companies in online advertising, SEO, and more to form a first-class Internet marketing powerhouse. AdOn Network guarantees an innovative contextual and behavioral advertising solution to both advertisers and publishers to deliver quality traffic from the US and Global sources. It allows publishers, that is, you site owners and bloggers, to monetize your traffic from multiple forms of display and search advertising.

Their turnkey, private-level ASP (Active Server Pages) solution, AdOn Direct, allows you to create, manage, and distribute your own advertiser account. AdOn Network fully handle keyword management allowing you to concentrate on marketing and advertiser attainment.

Simply sign up. Then you can now get started. Create your own codes with just a few simple click and then you can now display contextual Banner Ads, Pop-Under Ads, Search Listing Ads, and Background Ads on your site.

3. **Viral Ad Network**

This one is used by, BBC, Nokia, Sony, Greenpeace, Polaroid, and easyJetsHotel. Yes, you read it right, coming straight from their site. All the world-renowned companies mentioned use this ad network on their site. Viral Ad Network offers a great deal of earning an income the easy way. It provides you with a high quality content the readers will surely love. This network is run by seven people at Rubber Republic, a specialist viral and buzz marketing company. They deliver a great deal of "addictive, ROI-driven creative campaigns and effective viral seeding services for clients like JVC, Easyjet, Warner Music and Sony," Viral Ad Network. Again, simply sign up and it would only take you a moment to start earning out of showing ads on your site.

4. **Chitika**

This ad network assures you to be a full-service, on-line, easy-to-use platform for receiving daily ad revenue. Chitika is made for both advertisers and publishers and it allows views only from the U.S. and Canada. You can use it with AdSense or as an AdSense alternative. Like any other search targeted advertising, they assure you to be able to display relevant ads on your site. And just like the previous ad networks mentioned, you simply apply as a publisher and then you can now get started displaying contextual ads on your site in just a matter of seconds. No hustle.

5. **ValueClick Media**

ValueClick Media is made for both advertisers and publishers andpromises a leveraged "expertise, scale, extensive targeting capabilities and market leading optimization technology" to achieve both direct response and brand marketing goals. Publishers are further guaranteed that ValueClick Media serves as a strategic buddy "offering a national sales force" and a complete suite of tools and services. This makes these publishers get the chance to earn the maximum possible income from a variety of online advertising inventory. Moreover, they offer you a great arrangement of quality advertisers, advanced technology, and superior support. As usual, it's easy to start earning through them. Simply sign up and them you can now get started.

Other reputable networks worth joining include Interclick, TribalFusion and Technorati Media. These are actually some of the top paying websites right now (giving you good rates and high percentages). Remember, using a blog ad network is the easier solution. After you've gained acclaim and popularity it's really a good idea to use direct advertising techniques unless you're just too busy to be bothered. You can greatly expand your profits when you're making 100% off of every click instead of 70% or 50%.

Affiliate Website Programs

Affiliate marketing is a marketing practice in which a business rewards one or more affiliates for each visitor or customer brought about by the affiliate's marketing efforts. This could include rewards sites, where users are rewarded with cash or gifts, for the completion of an offer, and the referral of others to the site. The industry has four core players: the merchant, the network, the publisher (the affiliate), and the customer.

The basic idea is that you provide special advertisements or links to a particular website and if the referred person buys from that website you get a commission on the final sale. This is usually between 10% and 50%. For example, you could provide a post about a particular online game that just came out and provide a link; when people sign up and pay for the game you get a percentage of that purchase for referring them.

Affiliate marketing overlaps with other Internet marketing methods to some degree, because affiliates often use regular advertising methods. Those methods include organic search engine optimization, paid search engine marketing, e-mail marketing, and in some sense display advertising. On the other hand, affiliates sometimes use less orthodox techniques, such as publishing reviews of products or services offered by a partner.

Before You Begin

Before I really get into this one I want to give you an few important warnings regarding all types of affiliate programs for blogs and websites.

U.S. Federal Law

Recent changes to federal laws prohibit certain practices while advertising to the U.S. Here's an official statement:

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Federal law prohibits deceptive acts in or affecting commerce (15 United
States Code Section 45). The Federal Trade Commission is charged with
interpreting and enforcing that regulation. 2009 updates to the FTC's Guides
Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising (16 C.F.R.
Part 255) make clear that the agency extends its application of the law to
blogging and affiliate marketing.
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Section 255.0 of the Guides defines an endorsement means "any advertising
message . . . that consumers are likely to believe reflects the opinions,
beliefs, findings, or experiences of a party other than the sponsoring
advertiser, even if the views expressed by that party are identical to those
of the sponsoring advertiser." A product review or blog discussion can
constitute an endorsement.
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What that basically means is that you should always disclose affiliate links and, specifically, avoid anything that could be construed as "deceiving." A good example would be a website that reviews the "Top 10 best web hosts" but in actuality just lists the web hosts by whoever pays the most for their affiliate link. This deceives users by making them think they're getting a genuine review when they're really just seeing the companies that offered higher affiliate commissions.

If you decide to use an affiliate program make sure that you disclose that you're making a percentage of the profit from those links. Many people will appreciate the honesty anyway.

<u>Free Blog Hosting</u>

The other caveat I have for you is to avoid free hosting websites for your blog if you're going to run an affiliate program. Why is this? Well, just read the terms and conditions very carefully before you sign up. Most free blogging websites like www.blogger.com and www.wordpress.com do not allow ANY type of affiliate programs of any kind. Even putting a single affiliate link on your blog could get your entire blog account completely deleted along with all the content and with absolutely no chance for recovery beyond your own personal backups.

Getting an Affiliate

Becoming an affiliate is relatively easy. Go to an affiliate network site like Commission Junction, LinkShare, ClickBank or Google Affiliate Network and fill out an online application to become a member. The application will ask for some personal information, information on your site and will have you agree to a service agreement. Most affiliate networks are completely free for affiliates.

If the affiliate network approves your application, you can begin picking affiliate programs that interest you. Because so many affiliate programs are free to the affiliate, it's probably in your best interest to steer clear of programs with a charge. Once you've chosen some affiliate programs, the online merchants running these programs will have the opportunity to review your site. If they approve you, the affiliate network will walk you through the process of posting the appropriate links, which come directly from the network's site. They will also establish payment arrangements with you.

Because the amount of money you earn per action can be extremely small, most affiliate networks have a set minimum payout amount. This means you won't receive a check until the total money owed you reaches a certain amount. After you have set all this up and the affiliate network has explained its system to you, you can get back to work on your Web site's content and wait for your money to come in.

Effective Affiliate Marketing

The most effective way for a blog affiliate to generate targeted traffic is through articles marketing. By writing a couple of promotional articles, whose objective will be to direct traffic to the blog, a blog affiliate can end up with lots of highly targeted prospects at their blog. However it is important to note that articles marketing is a special skill that you will need to learn. The good news is that once you've acquired the relevant skills and knowledge, there will be no limit to the sort of income that you can earn from your blog.

It is also important to understand that text affiliate links planted right in the middle of your content will work best to help you maximize on your blog affiliate income. People are more likely to click on text links within an article when considering purchasing whatever the article is about. A banner ad might just seem like any other advertisement and won't necessarily draw their attention.

Reaping the Benefits

If you've been following the guide up until this point then you should have all the basic information you're going to need in order to start your blog's advertising campaign. Sometimes it's a good idea to try all three of these major advertising schemes either in a step-by-step process or even by using them in conjunction. Affiliate programs, for instance, could work just fine with direct or networked banner ads. You probably won't want your banners to contain affiliate ads anyway so your text ads can make up the bulk of your affiliate commissions and you can supplement them with paid banner ads.

If you're worried that your blog isn't entirely established with a big user base just yet then definitely go with an affiliate/ad network campaign. This allows you to make some profits and when your blog grows in popularity and makes more money for your advertisers and affiliates then your reputation and renown with grow as well. Your goal should be to eventually have a direct advertising campaign where you reap 100% of the profits and supplement it with quality affiliate programs that are relevant to your blog and don't discourage customers.

Remember to keep on top of laws, rules and regulations. If you're insistent on using free hosting or a free blog website then make sure you read the terms carefully about how they accept affiliate linking and paid banner advertisements. Don't even think that you're too popular or not popular enough to slide by without paying attention to the rules. These websites have automated systems AND paid individuals who seek out and take action against bloggers who break the rules.

Remember to re-invest some of your ad income into your own advertising ventures so you can increase the traffic to your website. The more traffic you get the more income you'll get and the more you can advertise; it could become "Viral" rather quickly if you play your cards right. Follow the guidelines and stay on track and in no time you'll be able to turn your regular old blog into a veritable virtual goldmine!