

THE **5** Critical Tools for a Successful Affiliate Business



Brought to you by Mike Saunders

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Introduction

Affiliate marketing has long been publicized as one of the easiest and most effective ways to generate money online - in almost no other industry can you find so much information, how-to products, programs and just plain hype. Affiliate marketing has been touted as the way to "overnight success" and an "easy income opportunity" - but the truth is, it's not quite as easy as it appears.

You can make money as an affiliate marketer and it can generate incredible streams of income for you. But only if you understand - and use - these five tools that are critical to your success. If you don't have them and learn how to use them correctly - then chances are, you're going to go down in flames like almost 95% of affiliates who never make more than a few hundred dollars from their efforts.

The smart affiliate marketer creates a plan and implements every action according to that plan.

You can increase your chances of success and earning potential by making sure that you're using the right tools in your affiliate marketing business. What are those tools?

Critical Tool #1: Your Own Website

The first step to creating a successful affiliate marketing business is building a credible and professional looking website. Your website is the jump-off point of all your marketing efforts - it's your virtual place of business.

Remember that old saying in the Real Estate business that the number one thing that creates a successful business is "Location, Location, Location?" Well, the same thing applies to your online business.

So just like any brick and mortar business, it's important that your virtual office is easy-to-find, attractive to your customers and welcoming.

Since we're talking about your "virtual real estate" - you want to make sure that your affiliate website is user-friendly, attracts your prospects and motivates them to click on the links to the products and services you are promoting - and of course, make a purchase. Your Website should be as classy and professional-looking as possible...without being too flashy or high-tech for visitors.

But before you can build a website, you need to have two things - a domain name (the URL or "address" that someone types into their browser when searching for your Website), and a place to house or host your Website. Let's start with the domain name.

Choosing the Right Domain Name

When choosing a domain name, there are several options: for example you could choose a name that relates to the specific industry that you'll be selling to - for example if you're going to be selling affiliate products to horse lovers, then you'll want to try and find a name that relates to that.

However, it's gotten more difficult these days to find these types of domain names. So another option is to choose a domain name that is easy to remember and generic.

And still a third option is to choose your own name or the name of your business - this probably the easiest and probably the best of the three choices. (You can register a dot-com domain name for around \$8.88 per year - and it's tax deductible.) There are several good companies that will register your domain name - NameCheap.com is the company that I use and recommend.

Finding the Best Hosting Company

Next you'll need to choose a hosting company - this is where your virtual real estate will be located. Whatever you do, DO NOT choose one of the "free" hosting sites. Not only will it look nonprofessional (most of the time they put advertisements all over your Website) but they're also not the most reliable - and entrepreneurs have often found out too late that their Website is often "down" or unavailable - and you're losing money every time someone can't get to your site.

Try a good, solid company like HostGator - they guarantee your site will be up at least 99% of the time, and their fees are about \$6.99 a month.

Building Your Website

These days with simple WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) Website builders, ready-made templates and even the availability of freelance designers, there is no excuse for even the "technologically challenged" not to have a professional Website. In fact, you can pick up an excellent HTML editor at MyFreeWebsiteBuilder.com.

Critical Tool #2: Your Autoresponder Account

The second "must have" tool in any successful affiliate marketing business is a reliable autoresponder. Your autoresponder is the way that you'll keep in touch with your prospects, promote new products or services and build your credibility as an expert in your field - and it will do it for you automatically.

Your autoresponder is one of the lifelines of your business - it's going to be one of the most valuable tools you use - so don't settle for a cheap system. There are several different types of autoresponder systems - from web-based sequential autoresponders (such as Aweber and GetResponse) to proprietary scripts or software programs that run on your computer.

Once you've set up your autoresponder, and plugged in a series of pre-written email messages, your prospects will receive your messages on a schedule pre-determined by you. So, for example you can create a 5 or 7-part email course, a free report or other incentive, and they'll receive the information from you automatically over time - without your having to do anything else.

The two companies that I use and highly recommend are Aweber.com and GetResponse.com - they have the highest deliverability rate, and they each have different features that help me run my business successfully. You'll want to check them both out and decide for yourself which one is right for you.

In case you're wondering, the reason I use these two companies is that they both have a full-time staff who make sure that my emails get delivered - because you're not going to make any money if your customers aren't getting your emails!

Critical Tool #3: Your Squeeze Page

The third critical tool that every affiliate marketer must have is a squeeze page with a unique, compelling offer for their prospects.

The entire purpose of your squeeze page is to promote your free report or audio or video - and to collect the visitor's name and email address. It's called a squeeze page because the visitor can only take one course of action - to provide their information.

Competition can be a major problem whether you run an online or offline business - but doing business online has gotten increasingly more complicated - especially in the field of affiliate marketing.

A few years ago, offering someone a free report for signing up at your squeeze page was brand new and worked like gangbusters. Then everybody jumped on the bandwagon and as it became a regular "offer" it started losing its effectiveness. Then audio files were hot. These days it's videos. Who knows what it will be tomorrow?

(And by the way, I'm not saying that you shouldn't offer free e-books, audio files or videos - they're still effective methods for encouraging people to sign up for your newsletter or other offer.) But what I am telling you is that whatever your offer is, you need to position it so that it's different from the rest of your competitors. Otherwise, you're going to look like everyone else, and your prospects are going to pass you right by.

Building an opt-in email list is one of the best ways to make money online. But you need to offer good incentives to your prospects to encourage them to subscribe to your list. You need to give away high-quality content such as software, online videos, access to exclusive services and other freebies that

are perceived as helpful and valuable to your prospects.

Remember that if you just send your prospects to an affiliate page, **the person who's selling the product ends up getting all those leads** and gets to sell other products to them - and they're lost to you forever. So what you want to do is create your own list - and build a relationship with them, so that you can continuously make money.

You can get a squeeze page system with a viral PDF report set up for you automatically at AffiliateCashSecrets.com

Critical Tool #4: Offers to Send to Your List

Once you have the first three critical tools in place - it's time to look for tool number 4 - offers to send to your list. Like the others, this tool is critical to the success of your affiliate marketing business - and it's one that, if you get it wrong, you won't be in business very long.

The best place to start looking for affiliate products to promote is the [ClickBank Marketplace](http://ClickBankMarketplace) - they have over 11,000 items for sale.

Another good place to look for affiliate products is PayDotCom. Look for products that pay at least 50% commission and have high-converting sales letters.

But high commissions and good sales letters are not the only things that matter... There are three additional elements to keep in mind when looking for the best affiliate products to promote to your list.

The first is your audience. You have to know what they want - what problem or pain do they have that you can solve? The easiest way to find out what your readers want is to ask. You could set up a survey and ask your readers, "What is your number one question about [topic of your newsletter]?"

There are several good places that offer online surveys that you can use. The service I use is over at OneMinutePoll.com

The most important thing to remember is that by asking your customers what they want, what they need or what their biggest struggle or barrier is, once you have the answers, finding the right affiliate products to offer is that much simpler and easier.

Another thing to keep in mind about your audience is their thoughts, their belief system and their worries. When you're presenting your offer - whether it's on a squeeze page, through your sequential autoresponder messages or even in an advertisement - make sure that you're speaking to them in their language. You need to enter the conversation that they're already having about what they're searching for.

Use the same words that they use. Talk about their pain - let them know that you understand and empathize with what they're going through; and then begin to show them how your affiliate product is the answer they've been looking for.

The second is demand. Some marketers claim that you can make tons of money in tiny niche markets - yet they're selling you a "how to make money" e-book and have probably never sold anything else. The fact is... it's a lot easier to get a small slice of pie in a large market of rabid buyers than it is to attempt to create demand in a tiny niche market.

What kinds of products have the highest demand? Think about what you want in your own life...if you're like most people, you're interested in "making money" "saving money" and health issues - perhaps weight loss, perhaps exercise or taking care of your health. Products that offer "how to" information - for example, homeowners are often interested in a wide variety of "do-it yourself" projects: adding a deck, painting, simple remodeling projects that increase the value of their homes, gardening, lawn care and landscaping, etc.

Another related niche to this market would be people who are interested in buying a home and those who are interested in selling their homes. You could create a specific and profitable niche in this market too. (For example, there are people who are interested in buying a farm, people who are interested in living off the grid, people who are interested in buying lakefront property and people who are interested in buying a vacation home or cabin.)

Parenting is also a big market - and one that lets you drill down to find a particular niche. You could specialize in home schooling, dealing with difficult children, children with behavior problems, gifted children, blending families, etc. Your choices are endless - just keep in mind that what you want is a niche market where you can make money - now and into the future.

And finally, the third element to keep in mind is positioning. Remember, if you've found the right product, you're not going to be the only person promoting it - so how are you going to differentiate yourself in the minds of your audience?

What makes you different - better - than someone else? Why should they choose to purchase through your link instead of the next guy?

Figure out what your USP (Unique Positioning Statement) or Value Proposition is. Be willing to spend the time necessary to come up with the right way to position your affiliate product or service, and it will pay off in big dividends in the long run, because this is something that you'll find not a lot of your competitors do. Here's something else to think about: Can you offer a bonus or some other incentive that sets you apart from the competition?

Critical Tool #5: Traffic

Let's face it - you can be in the right market, with the right audience selling the best product in the world - and if no one knows about it, you're still going to sink faster than a frigate attacked by pirates.

You've got to be able to drive traffic to your website, and convince that traffic to accept your offer and give you their information.

There are so many ways to get traffic to your affiliate marketing site, I couldn't possibly cover them all in this report. But basically, the most tried and true methods of generating traffic are:

PPC (Pay-Per-Click) Advertising:

You can create an advertising account with a company like Google or Yahoo and they post your ads on different Websites all over the net - and you only pay when someone clicks on one of your ads.

You've undoubtedly seen these types of advertisements when you've done any online searching - they're the small ads that are usually on the right side or located in strategic locations on the various Websites and Blogs that you visit.

Basically, it takes just a few minutes to set up an account, choose your keywords and create an advertisement. You can literally begin getting traffic and making sales within an hour or so - provided you've followed the suggestions given in this special report. (By the way, remember that I am not guaranteeing that you are going to make any money - I'm only giving you information about what I have done, and what some of my clients have done. Your results will vary.)

Also it is beyond the scope of this report to give you the complete information about this somewhat complicated process - my intention is just to give you the basics so that you can get started. If you want to learn more about using pay-per-click and creating profitable and traffic pulling advertisements, you can find out more at: GoogleCash.com

Advertising in trade magazines, online newsletters, associated Websites or with joint venture partners.

A good place to advertise is in trade magazines related to your niche market or industry. If the affiliate products or services that you're selling are related to a particular region or local market, then you can also look for local magazines, newsletters and the newsletters of joint venture partners.

If your product isn't limited by location, then your advertising choices are not limited either. You can find related magazines by industry rather than region.

And of course you've also got the option of local newspapers as well. Here's a great place to find trade magazines related to your industry or niche market: <http://www.tradepub.com>

Article Marketing

Don't forget about writing and submitting articles - this is another proven method of driving traffic to your Website or squeeze page. You can also submit articles to trade magazines or other magazines that are related to a specific niche, theme or affiliate program - just remember when submitting articles to these types of magazines (rather than ezines or article directories) - that your articles have to look professional and provide valuable content to the magazine's audience.

While it can be a little more difficult to get such articles accepted, once you've become a "published writer" - your level of credibility will rise considerably, and you'll be perceived as an "expert" in your field. These types of articles have a long "shelf life" and will drive traffic to your site long after the magazine publishes them - in fact, these days, most magazines offer an online article directory or an RSS feed, which means increased links pointing to your Website or Squeeze page and on-going traffic.

If you're nervous about submitting an article to an offline trade journal or magazine, there are always online article directories. One of the best article directories is called "ezine articles dot com". You can find it here: <http://www.ezinearticles.com>

Dylan Loh wrote an excellent report on article marketing called "[Secret Article Profits.](#)"

Press releases

Another often overlooked method of driving traffic to your Website or Squeeze page is submitting a press release to online press distribution companies. Two of the most popular are: <http://www.prweb.com> and <http://www.prwire.com>

Both of these services will give you excellent results, as long as you follow the basic rules about writing a press release. If you've never written a press release before and want more than the basic instructions given on the Web sites, I recommend you check out [Press Equalizer.](#)

Don't forget about your local press as well. If your affiliate product has a local scope, then a well-written press release may result in a write up in the business section of your local newspaper - and you can't buy that kind of publicity. (Or if you did, it would cost thousands of dollars!)

And if your product has a more global focus, you can still submit your press release to your local paper - just put a spin on the angle of "local business owner goes global."

Passive advertising

These days many affiliate marketers are finding they can get some exciting results from using passive advertising methods in online forums, social

networks, and other community sites.

Unless you've been living under a rock (or your Internet connection has been down for the last year or so) you've undoubtedly heard about [FaceBook](#).

Facebook is a social networking site that allows you to connect with other people who are interested in your niche market. This is a great jumping off place - but remember to target Facebook users with your affiliate product or service - make sure that the people you're connecting with are really going to be interested in buying your affiliate product.

If your affiliate product or service is more business-oriented, other social networking sites like [Squidoo](#) and [LinkedIn](#) may be more appropriate.

Forum Marketing

Another good place to advertise your affiliate products or services is on active forums.

And just as with the social networking sites, it's important to follow the accepted "social rules of etiquette" when it comes to posting on a forum and including a link back to your affiliate product or squeeze page.

Most forums have rules about blatant advertising - and you can find yourself quickly blackballed if you just rush in like a bull in a china shop and start trying to sell to the group.

Try "lurking" a little first. Get a feel for the posters and the type of posts that are the most popular. When you do start posting, make sure that you're giving quality information and answering questions that relate to your particular industry or market. Don't try to sell anyone anything - just give good information.

So how do you get traffic?

Most forums allow all posters to have a signature line that can include a link to your squeeze page or Website. After you've started building your credibility and reputation, people will naturally start clicking on your signature link, to find out more about you.

One of the most active forums that's also been around for the longest is the [Warrior Forum](#) - and whether you're looking for information and advice or you're ready to start dispensing a little, the Warrior Forum is filled with sincere, dedicated Internet Marketers and it's a great place to start.

If you don't have your own website, then I recommend you start at the [Digital Point Forum](#) because the Warrior Forum does not accept affiliate in your signature line.

So there you have it: If you use these five critical affiliate marketing tools - and use them the right way - your success as an affiliate marketer will be a

smooth and steady climb to the top of your industry.

Sincerely,

Mike Saunders

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Recommended Resources

Affiliate Programs

- [ClickBank](#)
- [PayDotCom](#)

Domain Hosting

- [NameCheap](#)
- [HostGator](#)

HTML Editor

- [MyFreeWebsiteBuilder](#)

Squeeze Page System

- [AffiliateCashSecrets.com](#)

Autoresponders

- [Aweber](#)
- [GetResponse](#)

Survey Service

- [OneMinutePoll.com](#)

Adwords Guide

- [Google Cash](#)

Article Marketing

- [Article Profits](#)

Press Release Software

- [Press Equalizer](#)