

HIGH PERFORMANCE AFFILIATE MARKETING

by **Jeremy Palmer**
Super Affiliate



Gain financial freedom
and tell your boss

“I QUIT!!”

Learn the insider secrets and proven strategies that I used to make OVER \$1,000,000 in commissions last year.

The secret ingredients on how to become a
successful **SUPER AFFILIATE**

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Introduction - The Opportunity of a Lifetime	9
How to Use This E-Book	9
Why an E-book?	9
Free Updates	9
E-book Support Forums	10
Expectations	10
Section 1: Affiliate Marketing 101 – Preparing for Success	11
1.1 - What is Affiliate Marketing?	11
1.2 - How Does Affiliate Marketing Work?	11
1.3 - The Benefits of Affiliate Marketing	12
1.4 - Separating Fact from Fiction	15
1.5 - How Does an Affiliate Earn Money?	16
Pay Per Sale:	16
Pay Per Lead:	17
Pay Per Action:	18
Pay Per Click:	18
Section 2: Finding Profitable Affiliate Opportunities	20
2.1 - What Interests You?	20
2.2 - Researching the Market	23
2.2.1 - Start with a High Level Overview	23
2.2.2 - Measure the Demand	24
2.2.3 - Check out the Competition	28
2.2.4 What is Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?	35
2.2.5 Market Research Summary	35
2.3 – How to Identify Merchants with Good Affiliate Programs	36
2.4 - Selecting the Best Merchants to Promote	38
2.4.1 If You Were a Customer	38
2.4.2 Does it make Sense for Your Website Visitors?	39
2.4.3 Sales and Reporting Considerations	39
2.4.4 How Many Return Days?	40
2.4.5 What is the Merchant's Reversal Rate?	41
2.4.6 Payment Considerations	41
Do They Offer Custom Payouts for Top Affiliates?	42
2.4.7 Check out the Merchant's Feedback	42
What are Their Customers Saying?	43
2.4.8 What Kind of Marketing Material Do They Offer?	43
Section 2 Resources	44
Tools to Measure Keyword/Market Demand:	44
Affiliate Networks:	44
Affiliate Forums and Blogs:	45
Keywords - The Foundation of Your Success	46
3.1 Understanding the Keyword Buying Cycle	46
3.1.1 Browse Keywords	47
3.1.2 Compare Keywords	48

3.1.3 Buy Keywords	49
3.2 Using Brand Names and Trademarks	50
3.3 How to Generate a Massive Keyword List	52
3.3.1 - Start with Products and Services	52
3.3.2 - Use the Google Keywords Tool	53
3.3.3 Advanced Keyword Tools	56
3.3.4 - Check out Your Competition.....	56
3.3.5 Ask Your Merchant Partners for a Keyword List.....	57
3.4 Keyword Tips and Tricks.....	58
3.4.1 Misspellings and Typos	58
3.4.2 Plural vs. Singular.....	58
3.4.3 Abbreviations and Acronyms vs. Spelled Out.....	59
3.4.4 Merged, Hyphenated and Separated Keywords.....	60
3.4.5 Geo Targeting	60
3.4.6 Domain Names.....	61
3.3.6 Summary	61
Section 3 Resources	62
Books:	62
Online Tutorials and Guides:	62
Web-Based Keyword Tools.....	62
Section 4 - Build a Website That Sells	63
4.1 Choose a Promotion Strategy.....	63
4.1.1 Content Website.....	63
4.1.2 Directory Website	64
4.1.3 Review Website	64
4.1.4 Shopping Comparison/Datafeed Website	65
4.1.5 Coupon/Deal Website	66
4.1.6 Incentive/Rebate Website	66
4.1.7 Hybrid Website	66
4.2 Plan Your Website	67
4.2.1 Develop a Content Theme	67
4.2.2 Plan the Sections of Your Website	68
4.2.3 Plan the Pages of Your Website.....	70
4.2.4 Plan Your Website Layout.....	71
Website Header	71
Navigation Scheme	71
Main Body	72
4.2.5 Creating a Website Template.....	73
4.3 Choose the Right Domain Name	73
Where to Register Your Domain Name.....	73
Select a Descriptive Domain.....	74
Choose a Domain that is Short and Easy to Spell.....	74
Register a .com Domain.....	74
Secure other Domain Extensions and Common Variations.....	75
Domain Tips and Tricks.....	75
4.4 Find a Dependable Web Host	76

Reliability and Speed	76
Customer Service and Support.....	76
Scripting and Database Access	77
Web-Based Control Panel.....	77
Access to Traffic Logs	77
File Storage and Data Transfer	77
My Recommendations	78
4.5 Options for Building Your Website.....	79
4.5.1 Build it yourself	79
Dreamweaver	79
XSitePro.....	80
WordPress	80
NVU	80
4.5.2 Resources for Building Websites.....	80
If you know absolutely nothing about HTML	81
If you know some HTML Basics.....	81
4.5.3 Use a Pre-built Website Template	81
4.5.4 Outsource Your Website or Project	82
4.6 Landing Pages.....	84
4.6.1 Landing Page Elements.....	84
Page Headline and Offer Summary	85
Supporting Product or Service Image	86
Product or Service Copy (Description/Benefits)	86
Call to Action.....	86
4.6.2 Landing Page Tips	87
Make Your Landing Page Look Easy	87
Make a Fast Loading Page.....	87
Customize the Headline, Summary Text, and Copy.....	87
Use an Image Caption.....	87
Use Testimonials.....	87
Test Different Versions of Your Landing Page	88
4.7 Web Usability Guidelines	88
Always Make Links Blue.....	88
Use a Readable Font	88
Web Pages Should Load Fast	89
4.7.1 Testing Your Website	89
Screen Size Test:.....	89
Web Browser Emulator:	89
Section 4 Resources	91
Webmaster Learning.....	91
Website Templates.....	91
Resources for Outsourcing Your Website	91
Web Usability	92
Books	92
5.0 Search Engine Optimization – Climbing Your Way to the Top.....	93
5.1 Organic Search (Search Engine Optimization).....	93

Search Engine Secrecy.....	93
Learning How Search Engines Rank Web Pages	93
Search Engine Optimization Summarized	94
What to Expect from Search Engine Optimization Efforts	94
5.1.1 Black Hat, White Hat, and Gray Hat SEO.....	94
Black Hat SEO	95
Black Hat Strategies to Avoid.....	95
White Hat SEO	96
Gray Hat SEO	96
What Hat Should You Wear?	96
5.1.2 Optimize Your Site	97
Where Should Your Keywords Appear	97
Title Tags	97
Meta Tags.....	99
Headings	99
Page Content	100
5.1.3 (Link) Building Your Way to the Top	101
Linking 101	101
Inbound and Outbound Links:	101
Reciprocal Links:	102
Anchor Text	103
Link Popularity	103
5.1.4 Getting People to Link to your Website	104
Start by Writing Good Content	104
Submit to Directories	104
Give Away Articles.....	105
Write Testimonials.....	106
Create Press Releases.....	106
Start a Blog	106
Be Active in Forums and Groups Related to Your Niche	107
Summary	107
Section 5 Resources	108
6.0 Paid Search Marketing.....	109
6.1 Writing Good Ad Copy.....	109
Make Every Word Count.....	109
Make Your Ad Unique.....	110
Use Keywords.....	111
Use Benefits	111
Appeal to Your Audience	111
Use Incentives	111
Use Brand Names	112
Summary	112
6.2 Tie-in Your Landing Page	112
Summary	114
6.3 Tracking Your Results	115
Return on Investment (ROI)	115

Setting-up ROI Tracking.....	115
Step 1 - Create Tracking URL's for Each Keyword	116
Step 2 - Create Affiliate Links with Tracking Codes	116
Putting it All Together	116
Keyword Tracking Tutorial	117
6.4 Google AdWords	117
Google Search Network.....	117
Google Content Network	117
6.4.1 How AdWords Works.....	118
Google Changes the Rules of Paid Search.....	119
Google Introduces Click-Through Rate (CTR) and Landing Page Relevancy.....	119
AdWords Discounter	119
Keyword Matching	120
Broad Match.....	120
Phrase Match.....	121
Exact Match	121
Negative Match.....	122
Geo Targeting	122
Ad Scheduling.....	123
Position Preference (Bid to Position).....	123
Summary	124
6.4.2 Strategies for Using AdWords	124
Ideal Bid Position.....	124
Bid at the Keyword Level.....	125
Use Dynamic Keyword Insertion.....	125
Create Multiple Ads.....	126
Google Quality Score.....	127
Summary	128
6.5 Yahoo Search Marketing	129
Sponsored Search.....	129
Content Match.....	129
6.5.1 How Yahoo Search Marketing Works	130
Ad Position.....	130
Click Index.....	130
Keyword Matching Options.....	131
Standard Match	131
Advanced Match	131
Excluded Keywords	132
6.5.2 Strategies for Using Yahoo Search Marketing	133
Improve Your Click-Through Rate in Yahoo Search Marketing	133
Enable Tracking URL's	135
Get 2 Ads for the Price of 1	135
Summary	135
6.6 Microsoft AdCenter	136
6.6.1 How Microsoft AdCenter Works.....	136
Campaigns.....	137

Orders.....	137
Ads	138
Ad Position.....	138
Keyword Matching Options.....	138
Bidding.....	139
Ad Targeting	139
Additional Notes about Microsoft Ad Center	139
Section 6 Resources	141
Paid Search (PPC).....	141
Google AdWords	141
Yahoo Search Marketing	141
Where to Go From Here	142
Continuous Improvement.....	142
Keep Learning.....	142
Appendix A – How to Implement Keyword Tracking on your Website	143
Prerequisites – Before you begin... ..	143
Step 1 – Assign Destination URLs to Your Keywords.....	145
Step 2 – Add PHP Code to Your Affiliate Link	146

Introduction - The Opportunity of a Lifetime

Welcome to **High Performance Affiliate Marketing**. This e-book will show you everything you need to know about making money online as an affiliate.

The format of this e-book is concise and to the point. I won't waste your time discussing unnecessary details or bore you with useless statistics. This e-book is all about practical hands-on information that you can use **right now** to start making money online.

Throughout the e-book, I'll be pointing to some third-party resources for further reading and learning. If you're unfamiliar with a certain topic, I encourage you to follow the link and learn more about it.

This e-book is not the encyclopedia of the Internet. This e-book has just one focus: To show you how to make money online, the easiest and fastest way possible.

How to Use This E-Book

This book doesn't need to be read cover to cover like a traditional book. You can skip to whatever sections you think will provide you with the most benefit. If you're new to affiliate marketing it may help you to follow the natural progression of each section. The sections are organized to build upon previous ones.

Why an E-book?

Nothing changes faster than the Internet. With an e-book, I'm able to update you with the latest information in real-time, while it's still relevant. If this e-book were published as a traditional book a lot of the information would be obsolete by the time it hit book shelves.

Free Updates

Unlike other e-books, which only get updated every couple of years; this e-book will be frequently updated with the latest and most important online marketing information. When new versions are made available you will be notified through e-mail. This will allow you to stay on top of the industry and keep a step ahead of the competition.

IMPORTANT - If you haven't done so already, make sure you add jeremy@quityourdayjob.com to your e-mail address book. This will ensure that my e-mails reach you and don't get blocked by your ISP or corporate e-mail filters.

E-book Support Forums

One of the biggest benefits of this e-book is the member support forums. If you have a question, or don't understand something, post it in the support forums, and either I or another forum member will try and help you out.

To access the support forums please reference the “Getting Started” e-mail that you received when you first purchased the book. If you can't find this information contact our support team (<http://www.quityourdayjob.com/contact/>) and we will resend you this message.

Expectations

The information in this e-book is only as good as your commitment. I could give you the winning lottery numbers, but it's no good if you don't go down to the store and buy the ticket. The same rules apply to this e-book. You won't be successful unless **you take action!**

If you are serious about quitting your job, and becoming a full-time super affiliate, you must combine this valuable knowledge with your own hard work and dedication.

Section 1: Affiliate Marketing 101 – Preparing for Success

In this section you will learn the basics of affiliate marketing. You will learn what it is, how it works, and most importantly, how you can make money as an affiliate.

If you are brand new to affiliate marketing, or just getting started, I recommend that you take time to read this section so that you can build a strong foundation for further learning.

If you are already comfortable with the basics of affiliate marketing, you can skip ahead to [Section 2](#).

1.1 - What is Affiliate Marketing?

In simple terms, affiliate marketing is where you refer visitors from your website to a merchant's website. A merchant is any individual or company that sells products or services online. Wal-Mart®, Home Depot®, eBay®, and Yahoo® are all examples of merchants with affiliate programs. These companies pay their affiliates to promote their products and services online. Merchants with affiliate programs range in size from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies.

You earn commissions when the visitors you refer complete some type of action on a merchant's website. For example, you may earn a commission if the visitor you refer makes a purchase, completes a lead form, or downloads some software.

1.2 - How Does Affiliate Marketing Work?

When a visitor comes to your website and clicks on one of your merchant's links, a tracking cookie is set on the visitor's computer. A cookie, in Internet terms, is nothing more than a small text file that is placed on a user's computer when they visit a website. This cookie tells a merchant that a visitor was referred by your website. When that visitor makes a purchase, or completes some other action on a merchant's website, the merchant gives you a commission. That's it!

You don't have to fulfill any products, handle customer service issues, or do anything else. All you're doing is referring visitors from your website to a merchant's website.

1.3 - The Benefits of Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing? What's in it for me? I'm glad you asked. Here is a summary of just a few of the benefits you can experience as an affiliate:

Flexibility - Business on your terms

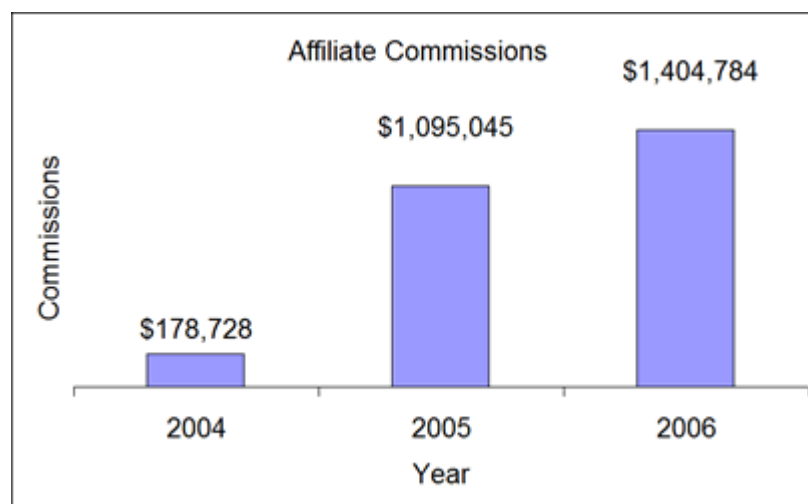
Perhaps the #1 benefit for affiliates is flexibility. I haven't had to punch a clock, report to a boss, or sit in rush-hour traffic since I quit my day job and became a full-time affiliate. I take vacations whenever I want. I never miss my kid's school or sporting events. And I've never been happier!

Money - The only limit on your earning potential is you

Almost as nice as the flexibility, is the money. **I don't consider it easy money; I've worked hard for every dollar I've earned.** However, I'm in control of what I make! When you own an affiliate business you're in the driver's seat. If you need to make more money, you just spend more time working on your affiliate business.

The nice thing about earning money from an affiliate business is that it can be residual. Wait! What do I mean by residual? It means that my websites make money even when I'm not working on them. This frees me up to build more money-making websites, which also earn residual income. As you can see this has a multiplying effect. In the last 3 years I have developed over 100 websites that have helped me to earn a substantial monthly income. For the most part, these websites are self-sustaining. If I take a week off and go on vacation my affiliate websites are still making money.

I've attached a graph that illustrates the power of residual earnings. Below you will see my affiliate commissions for the past 3 years:



I didn't attach this graph to boast, I simply wanted to demonstrate how you can grow an affiliate business year after year. I launched High Performance Affiliate Marketing in early 2006. Many people had assumed that I had cashed out and just wanted to make money selling e-books, but I'm a big believer in practicing what you teach.

My affiliate websites are not 100% maintenance free. However, I only have to spend a minimal amount of time each month maintaining them. This maintenance is mostly just reviewing reports and trying to determine ways to earn more money.

Low Start-Up Costs - You don't have to mortgage your house to launch an affiliate business

The costs associated with starting up a typical brick and mortar business range from tens of thousands of dollars, to millions of dollars. This presents a huge obstacle for most aspiring entrepreneurs. Even starting your own e-commerce website can be expensive and difficult.

You can launch a quality affiliate website that can start generating instant cash for just a few hundred dollars, even if you have little or no experience developing websites.

No Employees - Unless you count yourself

One of the biggest challenges facing business owners today is finding and managing good employees. Employees can cost a business a lot of money. When you add up the cost of an employee's salary, benefits, and other entitlements, it can add up quickly! There are also hidden costs associated with having employees. Consider the costs of unemployment if you have to lay off an employee. Consider the liability if an employee gets hurt on the job. What if an employee sues you for wrongful termination? What if an employee goes to work for one of your competitors?

As you can see it can be quite a burden to have employees working for your business. With an affiliate business you can run the business without hired help. Not only does this save you a lot of money, but it also eliminates risks associated with having employees on your payroll.

No Inventory - All you need is a computer and an Internet connection

No need for an inventory when you have an affiliate business. The only "goods" you're selling is information. You're delivering that information over the Internet, so there's no need to deliver anything either. That's the beauty of having an information business or becoming an infopreneur.

No Customer Service - Let someone else worry about it

Nearly every business has customers and therefore must provide customer service. An affiliate business is unique because you don't necessarily have customers, but rather

website visitors. You are merely referring these website visitors to online merchants who sell products and services. These merchants handle any customer service issues that may arise.

Unlimited Products and Services to Promote - The possibilities are endless

Online merchants range from Fortune 500 companies like Wal-Mart®, to small businesses like BackCountry.com, and everything in between. The selection of products and services that you can promote with your affiliate websites is unlimited!

Market to a Global Audience - They don't call it the World Wide Web for nothing

The number of potential customers you can reach through your affiliate business keeps growing every day. Millions of new users a month from all over the world are accessing the web. This means that the marketplace is growing too. In 2006 the Internet welcomed its 1 billionth user. The bigger the marketplace gets, the more opportunities you will have to make money online.

1.4 - Separating Fact from Fiction

There's a lot of hype right now about people making money online. You may have heard or read stories about Internet entrepreneurs making millions of dollars a year in their sleep, while their websites run on auto-pilot, only waking up to check their bank balances, and play golf. On the other hand, you may have heard that the market is too saturated, and that successes are few and far between. Don't believe the hype! This section will identify some of the most common affiliate marketing myths, and help you separate fact from fiction.

Fiction:

Running an affiliate business is easy.

Fact:

Running an affiliate business is easy when compared to the challenges of starting up a traditional business. If you were to open up a brick and mortar business, you would have to buy or lease a location, hire employees, carry inventory, and deliver products or services to your customers. It is very expensive and time consuming to start a brick and mortar business, and if you fail you have a lot to lose.

Running an affiliate business is also a lot easier than running your own e-commerce website. With an affiliate website you simply refer visitors to merchants, and let the merchants handle the transaction. Your job as an affiliate is over when the visitor lands on the merchant's website. It's the merchant's responsibility to secure the transaction, handle customer service, and deliver the product to the customer.

While it may be true that starting and managing an affiliate business is a lot easier than a brick and mortar business, or e-commerce website, it's not entirely easy. Running a successful affiliate business does require you to attract new website visitors and to get those visitors to click through and do business with the merchants you're promoting.

Fiction:

Get rich quick!

Fact:

Building a successful affiliate business is not something that happens overnight. It takes time to develop a good website with good content. It also takes time to build a constant flow of visitors to your website. While you can make a lot of money with affiliate marketing, don't expect to flip a switch and become a millionaire over night. Anyone promoting these "get rich quick" schemes is only making themselves rich, while their customer's only hope to one day become rich.

Fiction:

The affiliate marketing space is too crowded.

Fact:

The potential for affiliates to be successful has never been better. Consider these facts:

- The population of web users continues to grow month after month, with no end in sight!
- People are making more purchases online than ever before.
- More homes have broadband than ever before, making it easier to shop online.
- The web is the largest marketplace in the world. Reach hundreds of millions of users!

It's never been easier to carve out a niche for yourself in affiliate marketing.

1.5 - How Does an Affiliate Earn Money?

There are four basic actions in which affiliates are paid when they send their visitors to a merchant's website.

1. The visitor buys something from the advertiser (pay per sale).
2. The visitor completes a lead form (pay per lead).
3. The visitor downloads, installs, or uses some product or service (pay per action).
4. The visitor clicks on a link and visits the merchant's website (pay per click).

Below are detailed explanations of each action:

Pay Per Sale:

Pay per sale is the most common type of affiliate program on the web. With pay per sale you refer visitors to a merchant that sells products or services. You earn a commission when that visitor buys something from the merchant. In most cases you earn a percentage of the sale, but in some instances you may be given a flat dollar amount.

Most merchants that sell products online pay their affiliates a percentage of sales. Merchants that fall into this category include, Home Depot®, REI®, Dell® Computers, and most big e-tailers on the Internet.

Most of the merchants that pay their affiliates a flat dollar amount sell services. Merchants who sell web hosting, online dating, and other online services tend to compensate their affiliates with a flat dollar amount, rather than a percentage of the sale.

Advantages of Earning a Percentage of Sales

- You can earn a ton of cash on big ticket items.
(Example: You refer a customer who buys a \$2,500 computer).
- You can earn a ton of cash when your visitors buy multiple items at once.
(Example: You refer a customer who buys a pair of shoes, matching purse and jacket).
- Some merchants will pay their affiliates commissions on repeat purchases.

Disadvantages of Earning a Percentage of Sales

- Your visitor may buy a small ticket item.
(Example: The customer you referred buys a pair of socks, and never returns to purchase anything else).
- Your visitor may return the merchandise, which could result in your commission being reversed.
(Example: The shirt your visitor bought last week just doesn't fit right. They return it, and your commission is reversed).

Pay Per Lead:

Pay per lead merchants are some of the most desirable merchants to promote. With pay per lead you are compensated when your visitor completes an online lead form. Popular pay per lead programs include merchants in the insurance, mortgage, and service businesses.

Merchants will only pay affiliates for qualified and legitimate leads. For example, if you send a California insurance company a lead from New York where the company cannot provide insurance, that is an unqualified lead, and chances are you will not be compensated for it. Another no-brainer is that merchants won't pay their affiliates for leads with fake or incomplete data. A lead without a phone number or e-mail address is no good to a merchant.

Conversion rates on pay per lead programs tend to be higher than pay per sale programs because the visitor isn't buying anything; they're simply completing an online form. It's much easier to get visitors to fill out a form than to buy something online. However, the payout for a lead may be less than the payout for a good pay per sale program.

Advantages of Pay Per Lead Programs

- The conversion rate for pay per lead programs can be better than pay per sale.
- You can earn big commissions in industries like mortgage loans and insurance.

Disadvantages of Pay Per Lead Programs

- The commissions can be less than pay per sale programs.
- Some of the leads you send from your website may not be qualified.

Pay Per Action:

Pay per action programs pay their affiliates when their visitors download, install, or use some product or service. Many of the merchants in this space are software companies or web service companies that want customers to try their products or services.

Advantages of Pay Per Action Programs

- Your visitors don't have to buy anything. In most cases they just have to try some software or web service.

Disadvantages of Pay Per Action Programs

- A visitor you refer may not meet the minimum software or hardware requirements to install the software.

Pay Per Click:

Pay per click affiliate programs are almost non-existent now. Once a good idea, too many affiliates defrauded merchants by clicking on their own affiliate links, or by creating "click-bots" (software applications) that would automatically click on their links. The cost and time involved with monitoring the fraud had become cost-prohibitive for many merchants.

Advantages of Pay Per Click Programs

- Good conversion rates - The user simply clicks a link and visits the merchant's website.
- If you have a lot of traffic, you could make a lot of money.

Disadvantages of Pay Per Click Programs

- Merchants that offer this type of affiliate program are few and far between.
- The payout per click can be very small.

An Important Note about Pay Per Click Programs

While many advertisers with affiliate programs are moving away from this payout model, there are some popular contextual advertising networks such as Google AdSense, and the Yahoo Publisher Network that are thriving under the Pay Per Click model. Contextual Ad networks are outside the scope of this book, and will not be covered.

For more on pay per click (contextual ad networks) programs visit:

[Google AdSense](https://www.google.com/adsense/) - <https://www.google.com/adsense/>

[Yahoo Publisher Network](http://publisher.yahoo.com/) - <http://publisher.yahoo.com/>

[Kontera](http://www.kontera.com/) - <http://www.kontera.com/>

[AdBrite](http://www.adbrite.com/) – <http://www.adbrite.com/>

[Chitika](https://chitika.com/) - <https://chitika.com/>

If you want to learn how to make more money with contextual advertising on your website I recommend the following products:

Joel Comm's Instant AdSense Templates

<http://joelcomm.quityourdayjob.com>

Michael Cheney's AdSense Videos

<http://michaelcheney.quityourdayjob.com>

Section 2: Finding Profitable Affiliate Opportunities

It's impossible for me to overemphasize the importance of finding and selecting good merchants. As an affiliate your job is to **pre-sell** a merchant's products or services. No matter how good your marketing is the merchant still has to close the deal.

I've met several experienced affiliate marketers who seem to be doing everything right, but are unable to be profitable when promoting certain merchants.

In addition to selecting the best merchants for your website, you need to make sure that you are promoting the merchant's best converting products and services. **There's no substitute for experience**, but using some due diligence may help you filter out some poor converting products, services, and merchants in advance.

2.1 - What Interests You?

The easiest way to make money in affiliate marketing is by promoting products and services that interest you. You can make money in categories that you know nothing about, but it's always easiest to get started by promoting things you have an interest in.

For example, when I started in affiliate marketing I promoted online dating services. Before I began working as an affiliate, I owned and operated an online dating site. Because I was interested in online dating, and had a little experience running my own dating site, it was easy for me to promote other dating services. My previous experiences in online dating helped me to understand who the customers were, and what they were looking for.

No matter what your interests are, I can assure you that there is an affiliate program that caters to you. I went out to lunch with a friend of mine one time and he asked me what he should promote. I asked him what he liked doing in his spare time. He mentioned that he was really into playing video games. I suggested that he could create a gaming website with video game reviews and strategies for his favorite games. He could feature advertisers that sell video games like Amazon.com and WalMart.com on his site. After just a few short months he was pulling in over a thousand dollars a month from his hobby site.

Trying to promote products you don't have a genuine interest in is a recipe for failure. Too often new affiliates will ask me what products and services make the most money, which is the wrong question to ask. If you don't have passion and dedication your site will go nowhere.

I've fallen into this trap a few times myself. In the past I would get a call from a merchant telling me how much money I could make as one of their affiliates. I would spend the

next week building a site, doing keyword research, and launching campaigns only to be disappointed by the results. If I had more interest in their products and services I may have been able to figure out a way to make it work, but because I lacked passion my campaigns fizzled. In the end, I wasted a lot of time and money. I promised myself from that point on I would only promote products and services I was interested in.



Real Life Example:

You don't have to be an expert in your category. Simply having an interest or a desire to learn more about something is enough. For example, I didn't know anything about Voice over Internet (VOIP) a few months ago, but I was interested in learning more. So I spent a few hours checking out different Voice over Internet providers, comparing features, and trying to understand the benefits of using Voice over Internet instead of a traditional phone line.

I even took it one step further and decided to try it out for myself. By becoming a Voice over Internet customer, I really started to understand what the buzz was about. It was then very easy for me to create a website and start promoting merchants in this category.

It's not necessary to buy or use every product or service you want to promote. If that were the case, I would have dozens of credit cards in my wallet. However, it is important that you understand the key benefits of each product so you are able to accurately and effectively market the product.



Action Item:

If you haven't yet decided what you're going to promote take a few minutes to write down some ideas:

What are your hobbies?

What are you passionate about?

Do you use a particular product or service that you're always raving about to your friends and family?

Do you belong to any clubs, have professional affiliates, or participate in any communities? What products and services do you need to engage in these activities?

What products and services do you use that you might recommend to others? Write down any products or brands that you use in your own life. You can categorize them by home, personal, and work.

Have you recently searched for something online, but couldn't find good information or reviews about a product or service?

2.2 - Researching the Market

Once you have decided on a category to promote, it's time to start researching the market. What is the demand for the products and services you want to promote? How many competitors are there? These are just a few of the questions you must ask yourself before going any further.

2.2.1 - Start with a High Level Overview

I strongly recommend evaluating the overall market conditions of the products and services you are looking to promote. Keep your ears and eyes open to current news and events related to your category. See how some of the top merchants in your category are performing. Find out what industry experts are saying.

At this point you are just trying to gauge the overall health of the category you are interested in. You don't have to be a stock market analyst to perform this type of research. The only tool that you need is a good search engine.

Example:

The overall market for dial-up internet service is shrinking in the US. More people are switching to broadband because it's faster, more reliable, and more convenient than dial-up.

I'm sure this information didn't come as a big surprise to you. This information is widely available in the search engines and other media outlets.

You may still be able to make money by promoting dial-up internet service providers, but the overall demand is shifting to broadband. As an affiliate, which trend would you rather follow?

5 Tips for identifying Hot Products to Promote

1. **Subscribe to Magazines and Newsletters for Your Product Niche** – Stay a step ahead of your competition by getting information about upcoming product releases before everyone else does. I subscribe to dozens of trade publications, newsletters, and magazines in the product categories I promote. Often times I'll be the only person bidding on a new product keyword, which allows me to build a good click-through history before the product becomes mainstream.
2. **Read Industry Blogs** – Use a Blog/RSS reader like **BlogLines** (<http://www.bloglines.com>) or **Google Reader** <http://reader.google.com> to subscribe to the top blogs in your niche. For example, if you promoted tech gadgets you would want to subscribe to Engadget <http://www.engadget.com/> or Gizmodo <http://www.gizmodo.com/>

3. **Become a Customer** – If you want to get the latest coupons, promotions and product releases become a customer of the merchant's you're promoting. I also recommend that you subscribe to their customer newsletter, and read their press releases and corporate blog.
4. **Use Google News Alerts** – Google has a keyword alert service (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) that will send you an automated message anytime there is news or information about your selected keyword(s). I use this service to keep current on industries I work in and news about competitors.
5. **Participate in Investor Calls** – If you want to get the inside scoop on a company listen-in on the quarterly investor calls. During these calls company executives will often talk about top selling products and the outlook for specific product and service categories. To get a schedule of investor calls for your publicly-traded merchants visit Yahoo Finance <http://finance.yahoo.com>.

2.2.2 - Measure the Demand

One of the best ways to determine the demand for a category is by doing some keyword research using the Google Keywords Tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>).

To begin, I recommend coming up with a short list of keywords related to the product/service category that you're interested in.

Here are some examples of “seed” keywords you can research:

- Generic terms and phrases used to describe your niche
- Product or service names
- Company or brand names

Once you have a short list of seed keywords, enter them into the [Google Keywords Tool](#). While you're searching take time to record the keywords and the number of searches into a spreadsheet. This will allow you to add up the total number of searches for the keywords that you have researched.

For your convenience, I've included a “Keyword Research” template as an add-on to High Performance Affiliate Marketing. This template is available in the zip file bundled with your e-book. The file is called “keyword-research-template.xls”.



Digital Camera Exercise:

Let's say that you're interested in digital photography. You aren't really an expert, but 6 months ago you spent a lot of time researching and planning your own digital camera purchase. Imagine you went to some review or shopping comparison websites. Maybe you went down to your local electronics store and chatted with the Salesman. In any case, you probably know a little more than the average person does about buying a digital camera.

As you were researching your digital camera purchase, you stumbled upon several different camera brands. You probably learned a little bit about the various features and benefits of digital cameras too. Now, let's come up with a quick list of seed keywords we can use to evaluate the demand for digital cameras.

What are some popular digital camera brands?

- Canon
- Casio
- Fuji
- Kodak
- Nikon
- Sony

What are some of the features or benefits you were looking for when you bought your camera?

- 5 megapixel cameras
- SLR cameras
- Sleek and slim cameras
- Professional digital cameras

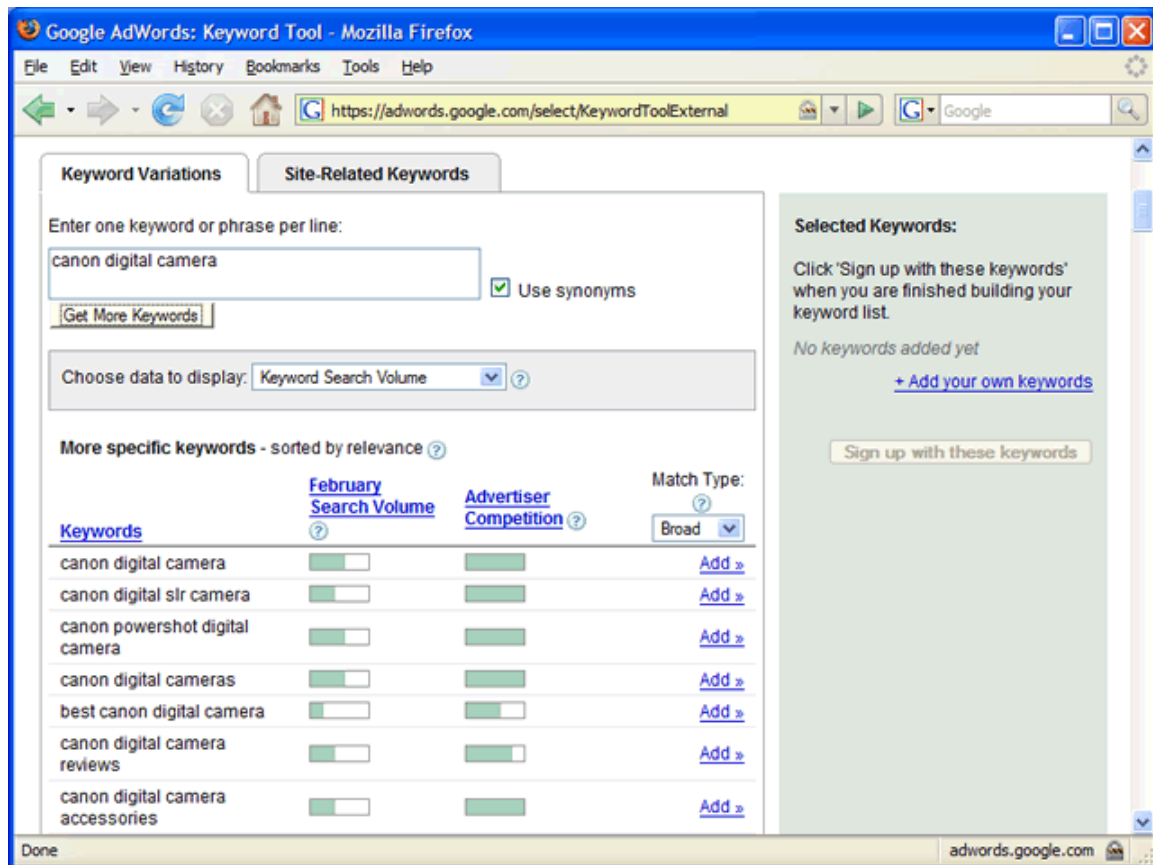
Did you purchase any camera accessories?

- Photo printer
- Photo paper
- Camera memory cards
- Spare camera batteries

As you can see, it doesn't take much effort to come up with a simple keyword list. Now you can enter these keywords into the [Google Keywords Tool](#). We'll start by searching for one of the brand name keywords: "**Canon digital camera**".

Here is a screenshot of the results:

Figure 2.2.2.a Google Keyword Tool



This screenshot shows you the search volume for the previous month, along with the advertiser competition for each keyword. The green bars represent a general low-to-high guide to help you determine how competitive a particular keyword is.

This tool will also show you variations and related keywords for the search terms you research. At this point you're not building a comprehensive keyword list; you're just trying to assess overall demand for your niche. For example, you may notice some of your keywords have a lot of competition. This doesn't necessarily mean you can't compete in this category, it simply means you will need to differentiate yourself and try to stand out from the competition.

Understand Seasonal Demand for Your Niche

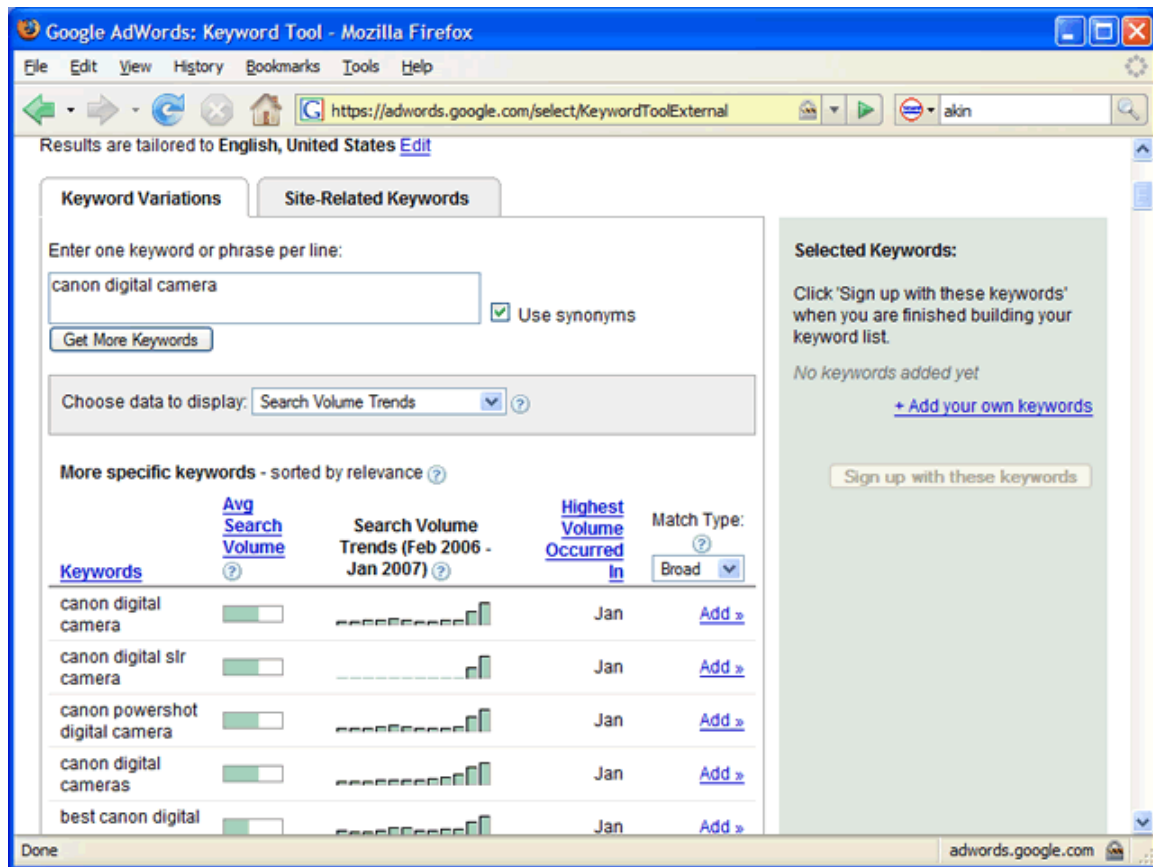
Many products and services will have periods throughout the year where the search volume will increase, stay flat, or even decrease. Some products may only be hot during certain times of the year. For example, trying to sell somebody tax software after April 15th is like trying to sell sand in the desert – there's just no need for it. However, if you're

selling tax software during the first 3 months of the year (January - March) it's more akin to selling water in the desert, the need is high.

Even products that don't have such a pronounced season will have spikes throughout the year. For example, PCs and notebooks tend to peak in August/September for the "back to school" season and again in November/December for the holiday season. I also discovered that search volume during spring months is surprisingly high.

To get a seasonal perspective on your niche I recommend using the "Search Volume Trends" within the Google Keywords Tool. When you select this option, Google will plot out the search volume by month. I've included a screenshot for our keyword "Canon Digital Camera":

Figure 2.2.2.b Google Keyword Search Trends



From this graphic you can see that searches for Canon Digital Cameras started to climb during the holiday season and peaked in January. You can probably make money promoting Canon's digital cameras year round, but this search will show you when demand is at its highest.

A Note about Keyword Volume

You will notice that Google does not provide you with the actual number of searches for your keywords; I guess they consider this proprietary data. As of this writing Yahoo still provides volume estimates on the Yahoo Search Network through the Keyword Suggestion Tool <http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>, however, this tool will soon be phased out.

Keyword research tools like WordTracker and KeywordDiscovery have search volume estimates built-in, but it's my opinion that this data is only a rough estimate of actual search volume. In some instances the search volume from these tools is much higher or lower than the real search volume on Google and other top search engines.

2.2.3 - Check out the Competition

After you have determined that there is adequate demand for your niche, it's time to evaluate the competition. There are two methods I use to evaluate the competition.

Method 1 - Check the Competition in Paid Search Listings

One of the best ways to check out the competition is to review the paid search listings in the top search engines ([Google](#), [Yahoo](#), and [MSN](#)). Paid search listings appear at the top and the right side of the search results page. They're generally marked "Sponsored Results".

To check out the competition in the paid search listings, take the keyword list that you used to evaluate the demand for your niche and enter these same keywords into the respective search engines.

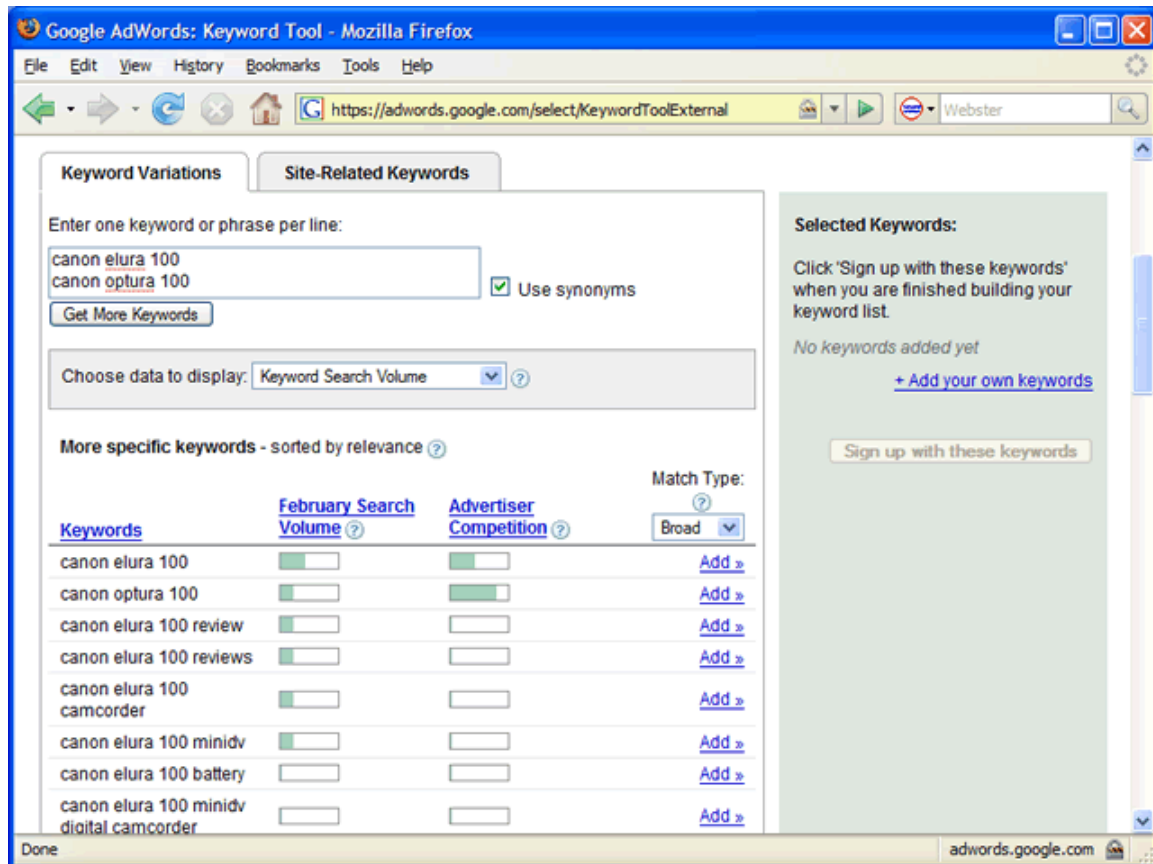
When you're sizing up the competition in paid search, think about the following questions:

What keywords are most competitive? What keywords are less competitive?

As you're doing keyword research take note of which keywords may be too competitive, and try to identify keywords with less competition. Remember if you're not on the first page of the paid search results your business doesn't exist in the mind of the customer.

I recommend that you use the Google Keywords Tool to evaluate the ratio of search volume to competition in paid search. In the example below I compare the search volume for two popular Canon camcorders:

Figure 2.2.3.a – Compare Search Volume for Camcorders



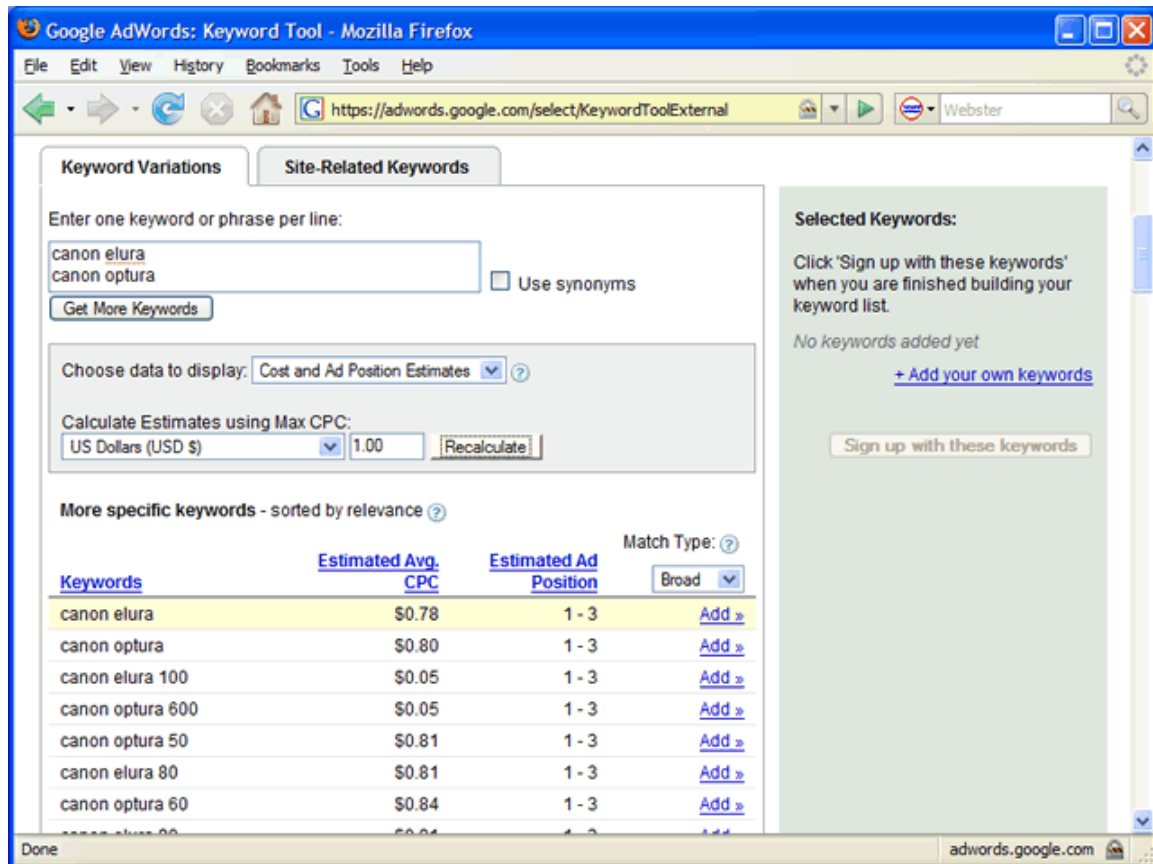
As you can see the keyword “canon elura 100” had more searches in February, but less competition. Conversely the keyword “canon optura 100” had fewer searches, but significantly more competition. This doesn’t necessarily mean that you shouldn’t target the Optura camcorder, but you do need to recognize that there will be more competitors bidding on that product.

What keywords have the highest bid prices? What keywords have lower bid prices?

While you’re surveying the competitive landscape you need to estimate average click costs for your keywords. Using the Google Keywords Tool you can get click cost estimates by selecting “Cost and Ad Position Estimates” from the drop down menu.

In the graphic below I used the keywords “canon elura” and “canon optura from our previous example.

Figure 2.2.3.b – View Keyword Bids



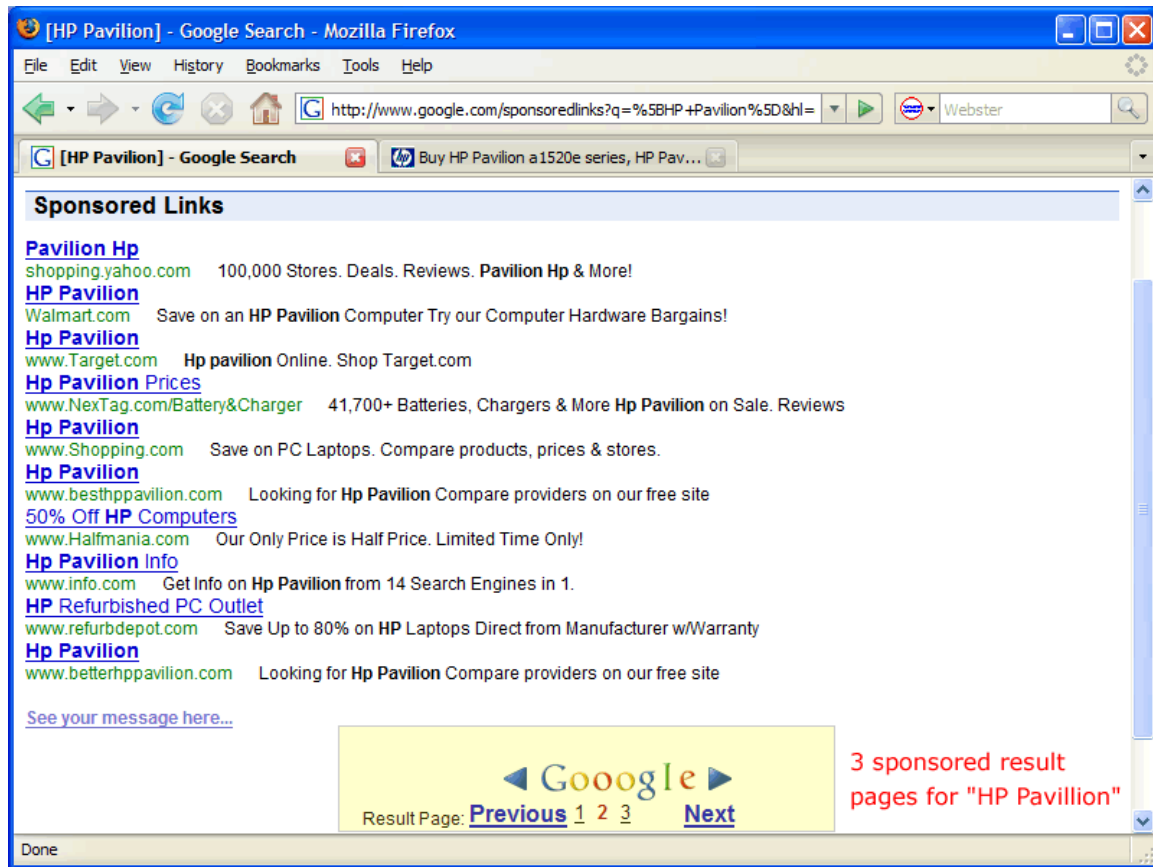
I've found these estimates to be fairly accurate in terms of click cost and ad position, but if you write poor ad copy or bid on keywords that aren't relevant to your website than your click costs will most likely go up as your ad position is lowered. It may seem counter-intuitive that your ad position would fall while your costs go up, but Google rewards relevant ads.

How many competitors are showing up for various keyword searches?

When researching a new niche I like to see how many competitors are showing up for various keyword phrases. General keywords containing 1-2 keywords will generally have the most competition and the most traffic. These words can be very expensive to bid on as an affiliate. Keyword phrases that contain between 3-5 words are more specific and in many cases have less competition. The traffic volume for these keywords tends to be lower, but in my experience they often convert better.

I've attached an illustration on the next page that demonstrates this:

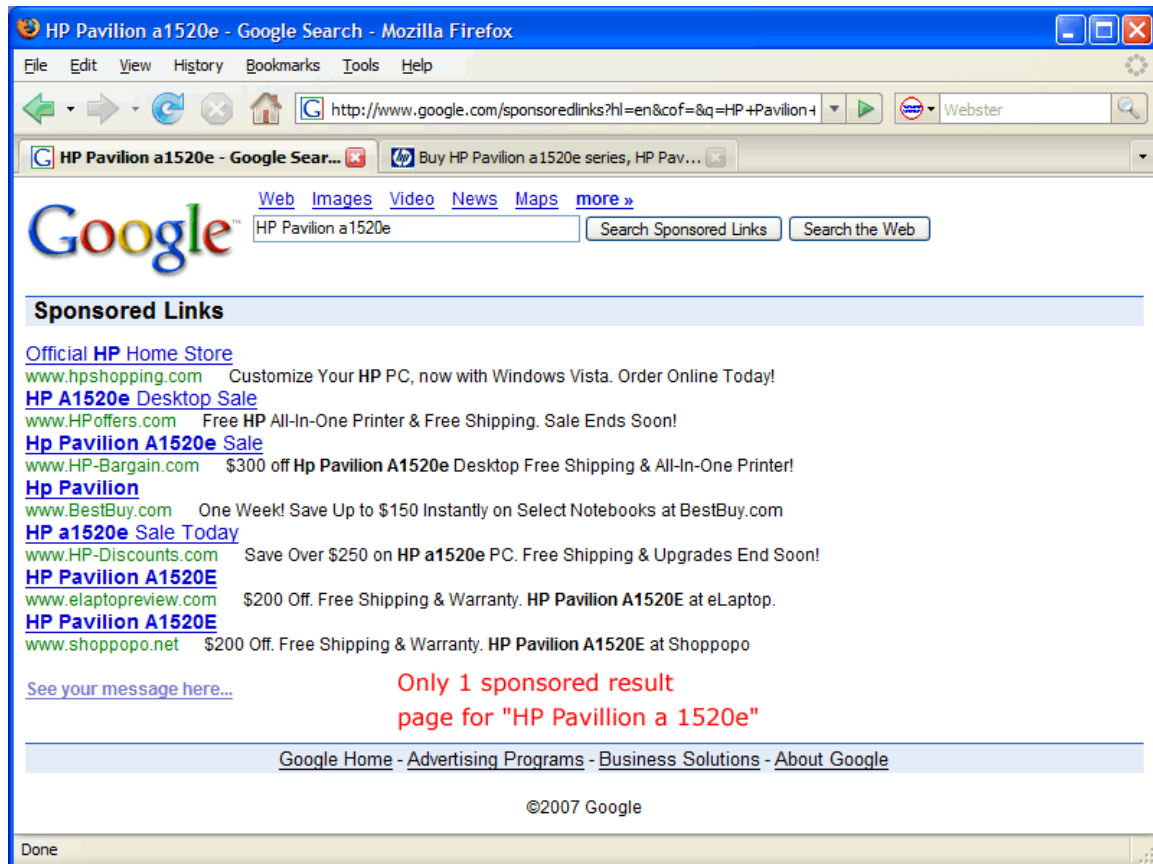
Figure 2.2.3.b – Sponsored Search Results for “HP Pavilion”



In this example you can see that there are 3 pages of sponsored links for the keyword “HP Pavilion”.

In the illustration below we’ll do this same sponsored search for the keyword “HP Pavilion a1520e”. (Image on the following page)

Figure 2.2.3.b – Sponsored Search Results for “HP Pavilion a1520e”



In this example the keyword “HP Pavilion a1520e” only returns 7 results, compared to 24 results for the more generic term “HP Pavilion”.

In some cases it may cost more money to bid on specific keywords, but that can be an indication that the keyword converts better for the advertisers bidding on it. For example, if you do a search for “personal injury lawyer” in Google you will note that it costs \$0.50 more to bid on the keyword “Chicago personal injury lawyer” than “personal injury lawyer” by itself. This is because the users search is more specific and targeted.

Tips for Researching Competition in Paid Search

When you do a search at www.google.com you get both paid and natural search results. If you want to filter the results to show only paid advertisers go to <http://www.google.com/sponsoredlinks> and enter your search phrase.

Which competitors are showing up consistently during your keyword searches?

There can be many different types of advertisers bidding on a particular keyword. As an affiliate you’re competing with manufacturers, resellers, vendors and other affiliates for

screen real estate. As you're doing keyword research pay special attention to the type of advertisers bidding on your keywords.

Take time to note if there are other affiliates bidding on your keywords. At first glance it may seem like a good thing if you don't see other affiliates, but it can also mean that others have tried and failed. This doesn't necessarily mean that you will fail, but you should try to understand what could be preventing other affiliates from bidding on those keywords. It's possible that you uncovered a niche with little competition, but it could also mean that bid prices were too high or the conversion rate was too low.

As you're reviewing your competitor's search listings and websites try to observe their strengths and weaknesses. Can you find any hidden opportunities? Where can you add value? What can you do to differentiate yourself from the competition?

Method 2 - Check the Competition in the Natural Search Listings

In addition to evaluating the competition through the paid search listings, it's also a good idea to see which competitors are showing up in the natural search listings. Advertisers cannot pay to be at the top of the natural search listings. Natural search listings are determined by the search engine's own algorithms. Natural search listings appear in the main body of the search results page.

Don't be alarmed, but there are going to be A LOT more results showing up in natural search listings than paid search. This is because the search engines are going to display every web page that mentions the keyword that you have typed in, including blogs, forums, classifieds and other non-commercial results. Most of these websites will not be competing directly with you, so don't be intimidated by the number of results returned.

Google Natural Search Example:

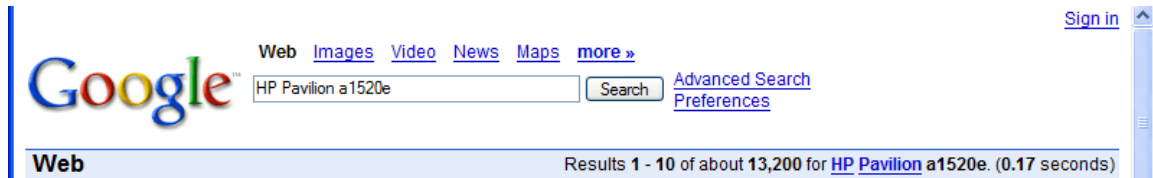
To determine how many pages are showing up in the natural search listings, all you need to do is type your keywords into the search box of your favorite search engine. If your keyword contains more than one word, you should place the entire keyword phrase in quotes, which will ensure that the results contain that exact keyword phrase and not just pages that contain any combination of those words.

Tip

Another way to determine how many competitors you have is to search for your keyword with [Google's allintitle operator](#) (allintitle:"keyword"). The allintitle operator will tell you how many web pages use your keywords in their page's [title tag](#). *The title tag is commonly used to optimize a web page for a particular keyword.*

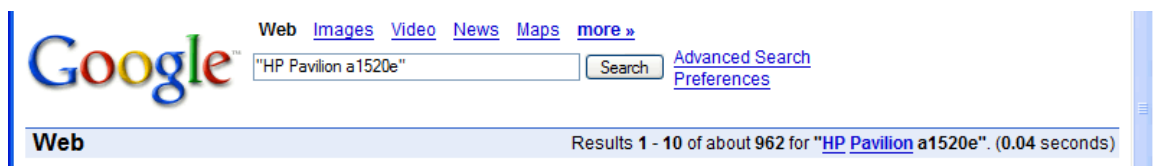
For this demonstration we'll use the keyword "HP Pavilion a1520e" from our previous example. Let's start by entering in the keyword without quotes:

Figure 2.2.3.f - Natural Search Results for "HP Pavilion a1520e"



From this illustration you can see that Google returned 13,200 result pages for our keyword phrase. Keep in mind that this search returns all pages that contain our keywords, regardless of word order. If we encapsulate this same keyword phrase in quotes there will be fewer and more targeted results because Google will only return pages that contain our exact keyword phrase:

Figure 2.2.3.g - Natural Search Results for "HP Pavilion a1520e" using phrase search



By limiting results to pages that contain our exact keyword phrase you get a better idea of how many competitors may be optimizing their sites for this keyword. Google lists 962 pages, compared to 13,200 when using broad search.

What You Need to Look for When Sizing-Up the Competition in Natural Search

One keyword search may return 1,000,000 results, while another only returns 1,000. Regardless of the number of results returned the only positions that really matter are 1-10. Your listing will be invisible to most users if you're site is on page two, and you can forget about getting any traffic from the search engines if you're on page 11.

If you're planning on getting traffic from search engine optimization efforts you need to determine how difficult it would be to crack the top 10.

At this point you are just trying to get a feel for the competition. Don't be intimidated when you do a search for one of your keywords and it returns 182,000 results in the natural search listings. This **DOES NOT** mean there are 182,000 competitors jockeying for top position in the search engines. It just means the keyword is mentioned in that many places on the web.

2.2.4 What is Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

In the previous sections I talked about finding a niche, how to determine if there is enough demand, and evaluating your competition in paid and natural search results. This is all important material, but it doesn't mean anything if you don't have a unique selling proposition (USP).

A USP is what makes you stand out from the crowd; it differentiates you from the competition. The content you provide your visitors is more important than the number of competitors in the search results, or click prices.

Your website has to fill a need and offer prospective website visitors some kind of value. Give people a reason to click on your ad and buy from your merchant partners.

A quick and easy way that you can offer value to your visitors is to write-up a personalized review on a product or service you've used. When you share your personal experience and opinion about a product you're giving your visitors a unique perspective they can't easily find at another website.

Another way you can add value is by writing up a tutorial or guide for using a product or service. I've produced articles and made screen capture videos showing people how to use software. Not only did this content give my visitors value they couldn't find anywhere else, but it gave them even more motivation to buy the products I was promoting.

2.2.5 Market Research Summary

Before you get too far into your project, it's important to do some initial research. Think about some of the consequences of skipping any one of these steps...

What could happen if you don't **do a high-level overview**?

- The product or service you want to promote could be on its way to becoming obsolete. Would you invest time and money into building a website that promoted film cameras? Sure there's still demand, but even Kodak, who invented the film camera, is moving away from film.

What could happen if you don't **measure the demand for your category**?

- Your category focus could be too narrow. You may think everyone is as passionate about "unicycle hockey" as you are, only to find out there's not enough money in the sport to pay your monthly web hosting bill.

What could happen if you don't **check out the competition?**

- You could invest time and money into a website that will never be profitable. If your website is focused on keywords that are too expensive or too competitive, you will never be successful. You can make money in **any** category online; you just have to focus on the right keywords within that category. If you decide to target a highly competitive niche you should identify a segment within that category that you can target and offer the most value.

2.3 – How to Identify Merchants with Good Affiliate Programs

After you have carefully researched your category, it's time to start finding potential merchants to promote. This section is dedicated to helping you find the best merchants within your category.

After you have found a list of potential merchants for your website, you will want to carefully evaluate each of their offers. As an affiliate, you want to send your valuable traffic to the merchant with the best conversion and commission rates. Your job as an affiliate, is to pre-sell the customer on a particular product or service. If your merchants can't close the sale, then all of your work is for nothing. Before I start promoting any merchant, I carefully consider all of the criteria outlined in this section. Once you're up and running with a merchant, you will want to continually monitor their performance.

There are three ways to find merchants with affiliate programs:

1. Join an affiliate network
2. Search online for affiliate programs
3. Go directly to a merchant's website

1. Join an Affiliate Network

Perhaps the easiest way to find merchants is by joining an affiliate network. An affiliate network is a trusted third party company that handles all of the transactions between affiliates and merchants. In addition to handling all of the transactions, affiliate networks provide detailed reporting, and handle payments between merchants and affiliates.

There are many advantages to partnering with an affiliate network:

- A trusted third party tracks all of the transactions.
- You get one consolidated payment, rather than individual checks from each merchant.
- Consolidated reporting allows you to run numbers on all of your merchants in one place.
- A single place to find and review merchants offers.

- Some networks allow you to compare merchant's performance side by side. This takes some of the guesswork out of finding good merchants.
- It's 100% free!

There are dozens of affiliate networks out there. The two biggest networks are [Commission Junction](#), and [LinkShare](#). These two networks attract some of the biggest and best online merchants. Some of Commission Junction's merchants include Yahoo, eBay, Home Depot, and Citi Group, and thousands more. Some of LinkShare's merchants include Wal-Mart, Dell, Avon, and Apple.

More Affiliate Networks to Consider:

- [Azoogles Ads](#) (www.azoogleads.com) – If you're looking for some of the top pay per lead offers in the industry Azoogles has some of the best programs. I've been very impressed by their willingness to help affiliates at all levels succeed.
- [Share a Sale](#) (www.shareasale.com) - The favorite network of many affiliates. They provide all of the enhanced functionality and reliability of the big networks. The only drawback is that they don't have a lot of big name merchants.
- [ClickBank](#) (www.clickbank.com) - If you are into promoting "info products", or software, ClickBank has thousands of merchants.
- [OneNetworkDirect](#) (www.onenetworkdirect.com) – If you plan on promoting software products I highly recommend OneNetworkDirect.

Go to [Section 2 Resources](#) to see more affiliate networks.

2. Search Online for Affiliate Programs

Another great way to find merchants with affiliate programs is to simply search for them using your favorite search engine. When I'm looking for prospective merchants to promote on my website, I search for terms like: "{Merchant} Affiliate Program", or "{Category} Affiliate Programs". {Merchant} represents a specific merchant and {Category} represents a specific category. By searching for merchants this way, you may have your eyes opened to some opportunities you never even knew existed.

The main advantage of using a search engine to find affiliate programs is that you're able to find merchants who run in-house or self-managed affiliate programs. I'll discuss the pros and cons of these self-managed affiliate programs later on in this chapter.

3. Go Directly to a Merchant's Website

One of the most straightforward ways to find out if a particular merchant has an affiliate program is to visit their website. Most merchants with an affiliate program place a link in the footer of their website. Look for a link titled "Affiliates" or "Partners". If you're unable to find a link to their affiliate program in the website footer, checkout their sitemap. In most cases, if a merchant has an affiliate program, you will be able to find it in one of these places.

If you're not able to find a link to their affiliate program anywhere on their website, you can try using their contact form to inquire about their affiliate program. Some companies don't like to advertise that they have an affiliate program. For example, Chase® Bank, which has a credit card affiliate program does not disclose anywhere on their website that they have an affiliate program. This is because Chase's affiliate program is by invitation only. This is the only invite-only program I have ever seen. Most of the time when you can't find a link it's because the merchant either overlooked it, or forgot to put links to their affiliate program on their website.

2.4 - Selecting the Best Merchants to Promote

Now that you know where to find merchants, you need to understand how to select the **best** merchants. There are several factors to consider when selecting merchants for your website. By using the guidelines outlined in this section you will know what to look for when sizing up merchants.

In addition to the criteria outlined in the following section I've attached a Merchant Scorecard that I co-developed with the training department at Commission Junction. This Scorecard will help you compare merchants side-by-side using objective criteria. The main objective of this tool is to get you to think about all the factors that go into selecting good merchant partners.

2.4.1 If You Were a Customer

The first thing I do when evaluating a merchant's affiliate program is put myself in the shoes of their customer. If you were a prospective customer would you buy products or services from this merchant?

Some things you may consider as a potential customer:

- Are they a reputable company?
- Do they have good pricing?
- Do they have a good selection?
- What is their return policy?
- Is their website easy to use?
- Is their website secure?
- What makes them stand out from their competitors?

Before I consider promoting a particular merchant, I visit their website and use it like a customer would. In many cases I'll even buy something from them so that I can evaluate their shopping cart and checkout processes.

Real Life Example:

In early 2005 I had considered promoting a skin care company. Before I invested time and effort into promoting them, I decided to checkout their website. Everything looked good initially. The site was easy to use, their offer was compelling, and the site was secure. I decided to take it a step further and actually order some of their anti-wrinkle cream. As I was checking out there was a big red message on their checkout page that read: "We do not currently accept Visa".

I was blown away! How could any website not accept Visa as a form of payment? Visa is the most popular and widely used credit card in the world. Why would I bother promoting a company that doesn't accept Visa?

As you can see, putting yourself in the shoes of the customer can help you eliminate problematic merchants up-front. Think of what may have happened if I had started promoting this merchant without first doing this important research.

Tip:

I highly recommend doing a test purchase with your prospective merchants. You don't have to spend a lot of money to perform a successful test, and the information is invaluable. If you're not planning on keeping the merchandise that you buy, I suggest you buy something ultra-cheap that can easily be returned or cancelled*. I didn't need the wrinkle cream that I attempted to purchase, but I had nothing to lose because it was a free sample. I only had to pay a small charge for shipping.

* Make sure that you're aware of the merchants return or cancellation policies.

2.4.2 Does it make Sense for Your Website Visitors?

Does the merchant offer products and services that your website visitors would be interested in? Are the merchant's products and services relevant to your website? The more relevant your merchant's offerings are to your content, the more likely your visitors will be to click through and buy.

2.4.3 Sales and Reporting Considerations

It's important to understand how a merchant will be tracking sales. Do they use a trusted third-party affiliate network like [Commission Junction](#)? Do they use industry-standard affiliate tracking software like [My Affiliate Program](#)? Do they have their own internal tracking solution?

What Kind of Reporting Do They Offer?

As an affiliate, it's critical to know detailed information about each of your merchants. Different merchants may provide different statistics. If the merchant belongs to an affiliate network or uses industry-standard affiliate tracking software, the reporting capabilities will be fairly consistent. The more detailed reporting a merchant provides, the more information you will have to make decisions about your campaigns. As an affiliate, I would rather have too much information than not enough.

It's also important that the reports are updated frequently. The faster you have information, the faster you will be able to take action. Some merchants offer real-time reporting, which is very helpful. Some merchants will batch their transactions daily, while others may batch their transactions weekly.

Real Life Example:

One of the challenges of promoting credit cards is the delayed reporting. Most credit card companies compensate their affiliates based on approved credit card applications. This can take anywhere from 1-6 weeks depending on the credit card offer. Imagine if you were spending money on a pay per click campaign only to find out 6 weeks later that you have been losing money the entire time!

Here are some of the most important statistics I look for in my reports:

- How many clicks did I send to the merchant?
- What time and date did the visitor make a purchase?
- What items did they purchase?
- How much commission did I earn?

2.4.4 How Many Return Days?

Return Days are the number of days after a visitor clicks on your affiliate link for which you will still receive commissions. Your website visitors may not always complete a purchase at the time they click through to a merchant's website. *Return Days* allow merchants to compensate you for sales that occur after a visitor's initial click-through from your website. The longer the *Return Days*, the more opportunities you will have to get a commission. *Return Days* are tracked using [cookies](#).

The length of a Return cookie varies by merchant. Some merchants only offer session-based cookies. This means that the visitor must make a purchase within the same session that they clicked on your affiliate link. Once they close their browser, the Return cookie expires. If the visitor were to return to the merchant's website the next day, you would not get a commission.

Other merchants have permanent Return cookies. Permanent Return cookies have no expiration date. This means that if a visitor clicks on your affiliate link you will get a commission no matter when the visitor returns back to make a purchase. The only exceptions being that the visitor deletes the cookies on their computer, or another affiliate is credited with the sale because the visitor clicked on their affiliate link more recently than yours. (*The affiliate whose link is clicked on last is usually credited with the sale.*)

I prefer to work with merchants that have a Return cookie that lasts 30 days or more. This allows me to receive commissions for visitors that are at the beginning of the buying cycle and aren't quite ready to make a purchase. The majority of your website visitors may purchase from your merchant's website within 24 hours, but many will wait a few days or a even few weeks to make a purchase. As a rule of thumb, I don't work with merchants that don't at least have a 7 day Return cookie.

2.4.5 What is the Merchant's Reversal Rate?

A merchant's reversal rate is not something that should be overlooked. Reversals can happen for a number of reasons:

- Products or services were returned by the customer
- The order was cancelled by the customer
- The order was fraudulent
- The order could not be fulfilled by the merchant (out of stock)

Unfortunately, reversal rates are not published by the merchants. I recommend that you either call or e-mail the Affiliate Program Manager to get this information. If you know another affiliate that is currently promoting a particular merchant, you may want to ask them too. Your reversal rate may be higher or lower depending on a number of factors, but it's nice to get a general idea before you proceed to work with a merchant.

Real Life Example:

Reversal rates vary by industry and merchant. One of the highest return rates I have ever witnessed is in the online shoes category. Return rates average between 20-40%. This return rate must be factored into your profitability calculations or you will be sorely disappointed when the reversals come through. This doesn't mean that you can't make a profit from shoes; I know several affiliates that do, despite the high reversal rate.

2.4.6 Payment Considerations

Almost as important as *HOW MUCH* you get paid is *WHEN* you get paid. If your merchant runs their affiliate program through an affiliate network, like [Commission Junction](#), you will be compensated when the affiliate network sends out payments. Most affiliate networks send out payments monthly. These payments generally include all of

the *prior* month's transactions. For example, if you made 10 sales in January for a merchant, you would receive your commissions the following month (February). This allows merchants to verify all of the transactions before a payment is issued. This is necessary because in some cases a sale may be reversed because of a fraudulent or problematic order.

If your merchant runs an independent affiliate program, you will be compensated on their time-table. Some merchants may pay their affiliates every 2 weeks, while others pay them once a quarter (Amazon.com). Generally speaking, most independent merchants compensate their affiliates on a monthly basis similar to the affiliate networks.

Many international affiliates (outside of the US and Canada) may experience additional payment delays. If you are an international affiliate, check with your merchant or affiliate network for more details about your payment schedule. In most cases the delay is minimal.

How Do You Get Paid?

Most merchants and affiliate networks will send you a commission check. Many merchants now offer direct deposit. This is my preferred method of payment. You tend to get your payment faster and it's more reliable than the postal service. Plus, I hate trying to track down checks every month; it's nice to know the money is in the bank!

Do They Offer Custom Payouts for Top Affiliates?

Merchants will often reward their top affiliates by offering them better payouts and commission rates. Look for merchants that offer bonuses and increased commissions for top performers. Some merchants will publish their custom rates in their program terms, while other merchants have unpublished commission rates. If you don't see anything published in the merchant's program terms, you will want to call or e-mail the Affiliate Manager to find out if they have unpublished payouts for top affiliates.

Tip:

It's worth talking to your merchants about custom rates. Some of the merchants I promote pay me **double** their published rate.

2.4.7 Check out the Merchant's Feedback

Before I join a merchant's affiliate program, I like to see what other affiliates are saying about them. Keep in mind that people are more likely to complain about a merchant than they are to give praise. When you are reading comments on a blog or a forum try to weigh the feedback objectively.

**See the [Section 2 Resources](#) for a list of affiliate forums and blogs.*

What are Their Customers Saying?

In addition to reading comments from other affiliates, I like to see what a merchant's customers are saying about them. Don't just take the merchant's own testimonials into account. Try and browse forums and blogs to get a general feeling for the overall satisfaction of the merchant's customers.

2.4.8 What Kind of Marketing Material Do They Offer?

Good merchants know how important it is to provide their affiliates with good marketing material. Some merchants only offer standard banners and text links. This type of marketing collateral is generally not effective. Banners no longer work because of [*banner blindness*](#). Banners are mostly ignored by users who are just looking for good content.

Examples of good marketing material:

- **Electronic product catalogs (datafeed)** - With a good electronic product catalog, an affiliate can market specific products and services for a merchant. Product catalogs should include pictures, good descriptions, and specific URL's that point to destination pages on the merchant's website.
- **Affiliate links with custom destination pages** - The worst place to send a visitor from your affiliate website is to a merchant's home page. Home pages are not optimized for sales conversions. Good merchants will provide their affiliates with [*deep links*](#) that point to specific areas of their website optimized for sales conversions.
- **Content links or web pages** - Many merchants will provide their affiliates with content for their website. This is an easy and fast way to start promoting a merchant. You may find that by customizing the content for your visitors, you will have more success. Plus, if several affiliate partners are using the same exact content, it will be hard to make your offer stand out from the crowd.
- **Keyword lists** - Some merchants will provide a recommended list of keywords for their affiliate partners. Sometimes the keyword lists are general, other times they're very specific and comprehensive.
- **Websites** - A few merchants are now providing their affiliates with entire websites. If the merchant provides a website, all you have to do is register a domain name, and point it to your affiliate website. In some cases the merchant may even provide you with a unique domain name. All you have to do is drive traffic to the website. You don't have to worry about hosting or updating the website because it's all handled by the merchant.

Section 2 Resources

Tools to Measure Keyword/Market Demand:

Use these keyword tools to evaluate the supply and demand for a particular niche or keyword.

Google AdWords: Keyword Tool - adwords.google.com

WordTracker - www.wordtracker.com (free trial)

KeywordDiscovery – www.keyworddiscovery.com

NicheBot – www.nichebot.com

Affiliate Networks:

Consider joining one or more of these affiliate networks to find merchants.

Commission Junction - www.cj.com

Linkshare - www.linkshare.com

Azoogles Ads – www.azoogleads.com

Shareasale.com - www.shareasale.com

ClickBank - www.clickbank.com

One Network (Digital River) - onenetwork.digitalriver.com

PartnerWeekly - www.partnerweekly.com

LinkConnector - www.linkconnector.com

DirectLeads - www.directleads.com

ClixGalore - www.clixgalore.com

MaxBounty - www.maxbounty.com

DarkBlue - www.darkblue.com

Affiliate Forums and Blogs:

See what other affiliates are saying at one of these forums.

BumpZee – www.bumpzee.com Social network for affiliates.

5 Star Affiliate Marketing Forums - affiliate-marketing-forums.5staraffiliateprograms.com

Associate Programs - www.associateprograms.com

Revenews - www.revenews.com

Affiliate Tip - www.affiliatetip.com

Keywords - The Foundation of Your Success

In late 2005 Pew/Internet, one of the most respected names in online research published a report about [search engine usage](#). Their report concluded that on an average day, nearly **60 million** people use search engines. Search is now the second most popular online activity, just behind e-mail.

Search engines have transformed the way people buy products and services both online and offline. Search engines represent a huge opportunity for affiliate marketers. In order to leverage the power of search engines, affiliates must first understand the importance of keywords. Put simply, keywords are the words and phrases people use to find what they're looking for in the search engines. Keywords are the foundation of every successful affiliate marketing campaign.

Before I register a domain name or build a website I spend a lot of quality time doing keyword research. This keyword research helps me to better understand the products and services I'm promoting, and helps me to plan my website and marketing strategy.

It's not only important to find as many keywords as possible, but it's also critical that you focus on the **right** keywords. **One of the biggest factors that have contributed to my success as an affiliate is keyword research.** The more (good) keywords you have in your list, the more opportunities you have to drive targeted traffic to your website, which will lead to more commissions.

This section will show you how to build and manage a highly-targeted and comprehensive keyword list.

3.1 Understanding the Keyword Buying Cycle

In order to find the right keywords you must first understand the ***Keyword Buying Cycle***. The *Keyword Buying Cycle* identifies the different types of keywords people use as they go through the process of researching and making a purchase online. There are three phases in the *Keyword Buying Cycle*:

1. **Browse**
2. **Compare**
3. **Buy**

There are specific sets of keywords associated with each phase. Being able to identify these sets of keywords and matching them up with the right offer, at the right time, is what successful affiliates do best.

When making an online purchase, a shopper may start searching with general keywords. As the shopper becomes more educated about a particular product or service they will begin using more specific keywords to find what they're looking for. Some online shoppers may know exactly what they're looking for, and immediately begin searching with specific keywords.

To better understand the *Keyword Buying Cycle*, I will use real keyword examples throughout this section.

3.1.1 Browse Keywords

During the *Browse* phase of the Keyword Buying Cycle, online shoppers look for products or services using general keywords. At this point, the shopper may not know the specific product features they're looking for and probably haven't committed to a particular brand.

The *Browse* phase is mostly used for gathering information. Some impulsive shoppers may be willing to buy during the Browse phase, but most are just window shopping.

Keyword Example:

Let's say that an online shopper is looking for a new laptop. They need the laptop for school, so they need a laptop that is durable and lightweight. They haven't decided on a specific brand yet, and are still undecided about what other features are important to them.

Here are some potential *Browse* keywords a laptop shopper might use:

- Laptops
- Lightweight laptops
- Ultra portable laptops
- Cheap laptops
- Laptops for school

As you can see, these keywords aren't very specific. These general keywords have a lot more search volume than specific keywords.

Affiliate Strategies for *Browse* Keywords

As an affiliate, I generally do not target keywords in the *Browse* phase. There are a few good reasons for this:

- *Browse* keywords are too general. Affiliates aren't interested in browsers, they're interested in buyers.
- *Browse* keywords are too competitive because of their high search volume. Trying to achieve a top-10 ranking (listed on page 1) in the search engines for general

keywords is nearly impossible. Attempting to run a profitable paid search campaign is difficult too, especially when you're competing with product manufactures and retailers who have higher profit margins.

If you do plan on targeting prospects during the browse phase of the Keyword Buying Cycle it's important that you try to capture that visitor as a lead. Once you've captured their contact information you can follow up with them through a series of e-mail auto-responders.

The main benefit of capturing a customer as a lead is that you can reach out to that customer after they've left your site. I'll discuss this strategy in more detail in [Section 4 – Build a Website that Sells](#).

3.1.2 Compare Keywords

During the *Compare* phase, online shoppers are more familiar with their options. They've narrowed their selection to specific brands and know more about the features they're looking for. At this point, the customer is interested in comparing brands and finding out more details about a product or service. Their keyword searches will be more specific.

Here are some potential *Compare* keywords a laptop shopper might use:

- Dell laptops
- Laptops under 5lbs
- Compare ultra portable laptops
- Best lightweight laptops
- Cheap Sony laptops

As you can see, these keywords are much more specific than the *Browse* keywords from the previous example. Online shoppers will attempt to narrow their search by using a **keyword qualifier**. A keyword qualifier is like an adjective, it describes the main keyword. Here are some sample keyword phrases with the keyword qualifiers bolded:

- **Sony** notebook
- Laptops **under \$500**
- Laptops with **512 mb of memory**

Affiliate Strategies for *Compare* Keywords

Compare keywords are some of the best keywords for affiliates to target. Affiliates can add a lot of value to an online shoppers experience by providing reviews and information about specific products or services. Here are some examples of *Compare* keywords you should target:

- Brand names (*if allowed by the merchant*)

- Keyword qualifiers that include price, features, comparisons, reviews, colors, sizes or anything else you can think of.

Many online shoppers will go straight from the *Compare* phase to making a purchase. This is why you don't want to overlook valuable *Compare* keywords.

In addition to providing your own review of a product or service you could add a comment form or rating system to your site that allows visitors to share their opinion. This encourages people to participate on your site and makes your review seem more authentic. It's also a great way to generate unique content.

Adding a comment or rating system to your site can range from easy to difficult depending on your experience level. If you're an experienced web programmer you could write and customize your own script using a platform like PHP/MySQL. If you don't have programming experience, but feel comfortable implementing third-party scripts on your site you could integrate a pre-built review and rating system like those found on HotScripts.com

http://www.hotscripts.com/PHP/Scripts_and_Programs/Reviews_and_Ratings/index.html

If you're a beginner and the thought of writing your own code or trying to mess with a third-party script is intimidating, I recommend using a publishing platform like **WordPress** www.wordpress.org, which has a comments system built-in. Some people still think about WordPress as strictly a blogging tool, but there are now thousands of sites using it as a full-blown content management system/website builder. The nice thing about using WordPress is that there are hundreds of ready-made templates and plug-ins available. In [Section 4](#) you can find out more about using WordPress as a web publishing platform.

3.1.3 Buy Keywords

During the *Buy* phase, online shoppers have settled on a specific product or service. At this point, they're just looking for the right website, with the right offer. *Buy* keywords tend to get less traffic than *Browse* and *Compare* keywords do, but are also less competitive and convert better. *Buy* keywords almost always include a brand name, and a keyword qualifier or an **action modifier**. Some popular action modifiers include:

- Buy
- Purchase
- Find
- Low cost
- Best price

Here are some examples of *Buy* keywords that a laptop shopper might use:

- Dell XPS M170 (model number)
- Toshiba Satellite Coupon

- Sony laptop free shipping offer
- Lightweight laptops on sale

Affiliate Strategies for *Buy* Keywords

Every affiliate should be targeting *Buy* keywords. As an affiliate, you want to position yourself as close to the *Buy* phase as possible. Here are some ideas for *Buy* keywords:

- Keywords with product names and model numbers
- Keywords that include a brand name and a keyword qualifier, or an action phrase

By understanding the keywords that shoppers use during each phase of the *Keyword Buying Cycle*, you will be able to better target potential customers.

3.2 Using Brand Names and Trademarks

As I mentioned in the previous section, brand names and trademarks are among the best converting keywords. **Consumers place a lot of value in brand names.** The company who owns the brand name has already invested significant time and money into their brand. As an affiliate, you can often leverage the power of a company's brand name to increase your appeal to online shoppers.

Some merchants **do not** allow their affiliates to use their brand names in keyword campaigns. Many merchants are very protective of their brand names for a number of reasons.

Here are some common concerns merchants have about their brand names:

- **Brand Dilution** - Some merchants work very hard to build brand prestige. The company may only want their branding message to appear in certain places at certain times. What would happen to a brand like Rolex® if they started appearing on Wal-Mart® shelves?
- **Brand Misrepresentation** - It takes a lot of time and money for a company to build a brand's reputation. Many merchants are afraid that their brand may be misrepresented by their affiliates.
- **Brand Confusion** - Sometimes consumers have a hard time discerning between a company's official website and an affiliate's website. This potential confusion could frustrate the customer.

In addition to these concerns, some merchants feel that affiliates who use their branded keywords don't add value. They may think it was the brand name that influenced the customer to make a purchase, rather than the affiliate's website or marketing efforts.

Tip:

Some merchants don't allow their affiliates to use their brand name (by itself) in a keyword campaign, but will allow their affiliates to use variations and misspellings of their brand names. For example, "brand name" may not be acceptable, but "brand name review" or "brand name comparison" may be acceptable with the merchant. Some merchants prohibit their affiliates from using any misspellings or variations of their brand names in their keyword campaigns.

It's important to understand that while a merchant may not allow you to use their brand name, you may still be able to use brand names of products and services that they sell. For example, Wal-Mart® does not allow their affiliates to use "Wal-Mart" or any misspellings or variations, but using the brand names of products that they sell is allowed. This makes perfect sense since Wal-Mart doesn't own these trademarks.

Brand names are a hot-button issue right now in search engine marketing. Some brand-conscience companies, like Geico®, have gone to extraordinary lengths to prevent search engines from allowing competitors, resellers, and affiliates from bidding on their trademarks.

This section only deals with brand names and trademarks as they relate to bidding on keywords in paid search listings. Most merchants encourage their affiliates to use their brand names on their websites and in marketing messages. We'll discuss more trademarks tips and strategies in subsequent sections.

Advice for Using Trademarks in Paid Search

Understanding when and how you can use a merchant's trademark is very important. I advise that you read the merchant's affiliate agreement to see what is and isn't allowed. If you need clarification, don't hesitate to call or contact the affiliate manager.

The most popular paid search platforms (Google, Microsoft and Yahoo) have their own policies and procedures for trademark issues. For example, on Google you can bid on just about any trademark, regardless of your relationship to the trademark holder, but you may need to request permission to use the mark in your ad copy.

Yahoo and Microsoft allow trademark bidding as long as you're not bidding on your competitor's trademarks.

I've included links to the trademark policies of Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo below:

Google's Trademark Policy for AdWords -

<https://adwords.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=6118>

Yahoo's Trademark Policy for Search Marketing –
<http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/legal/trademarks.php>

Microsoft's Trademark Policy for AdCenter
http://advertising.microsoft.com/Home/Article.aspx?pageid=708&Adv_Articleid=3216

3.3 How to Generate a Massive Keyword List

When it comes to keyword lists, size does matter. The more targeted keywords you have, the more opportunities you will have to bring traffic to your website. The more qualified traffic you bring to your website, the more opportunities you will have to earn commissions. As you may remember from [Section 2](#), I talked about different techniques and strategies you could use to build a preliminary keyword list. This section will show you how to build a comprehensive keyword list. I will also show you how to use web-based tools to help you explode the size of your keyword list.

3.3.1 - Start with Products and Services

To begin, you should make a list of all of the products and services you will be promoting on your website. Think of product or service names, model numbers, and other details used to describe your products and services. If you were a potential customer, what keywords would you use to find the products and services listed on your website?

When you first start brainstorming, focus on generating a list of general keywords. Using general keywords during the first phase of your keyword research allows you to uncover more specific keywords later.

Keyword Brainstorming Example:

Let's say that you wanted to promote credit cards on your website. What are some general keywords that could be used to describe the credit cards featured on your website?

- American Express cards
- Citibank cards
- Chase Bank credit cards
- Discover card
- Low interest credit cards
- Balance transfer cards
- Instant approval cards
- Cash back cards
- Airline miles cards
- Credit cards for bad credit

You will be able to find more keyword variations by focusing on general keywords first. After you have a list of general keywords, you can drill down and start adding more specific keywords to your list:

- Blue Cash from American Express
- American Express Rewards Gold Card
- Citi Platinum Select Card
- Discover Platinum Card
- Chase Ultimate Rewards Express

Keyword Tip:

As you are building your keyword list, make sure you take time to put these keywords into a spreadsheet program like Microsoft Excel. This will help you to organize your keywords. You can group your keywords in any logical way that makes sense to you. Some people do it by product/service category, others by product/service name. It's up to you. I typically organize my keywords by AdGroup.

3.3.2 - Use the Google Keywords Tool

As I mentioned in Section 2, one of the best tools to do keyword research is the [Google Keywords Tool](https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal), located at (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>). This tool is freely available and doesn't require you to sign-in.

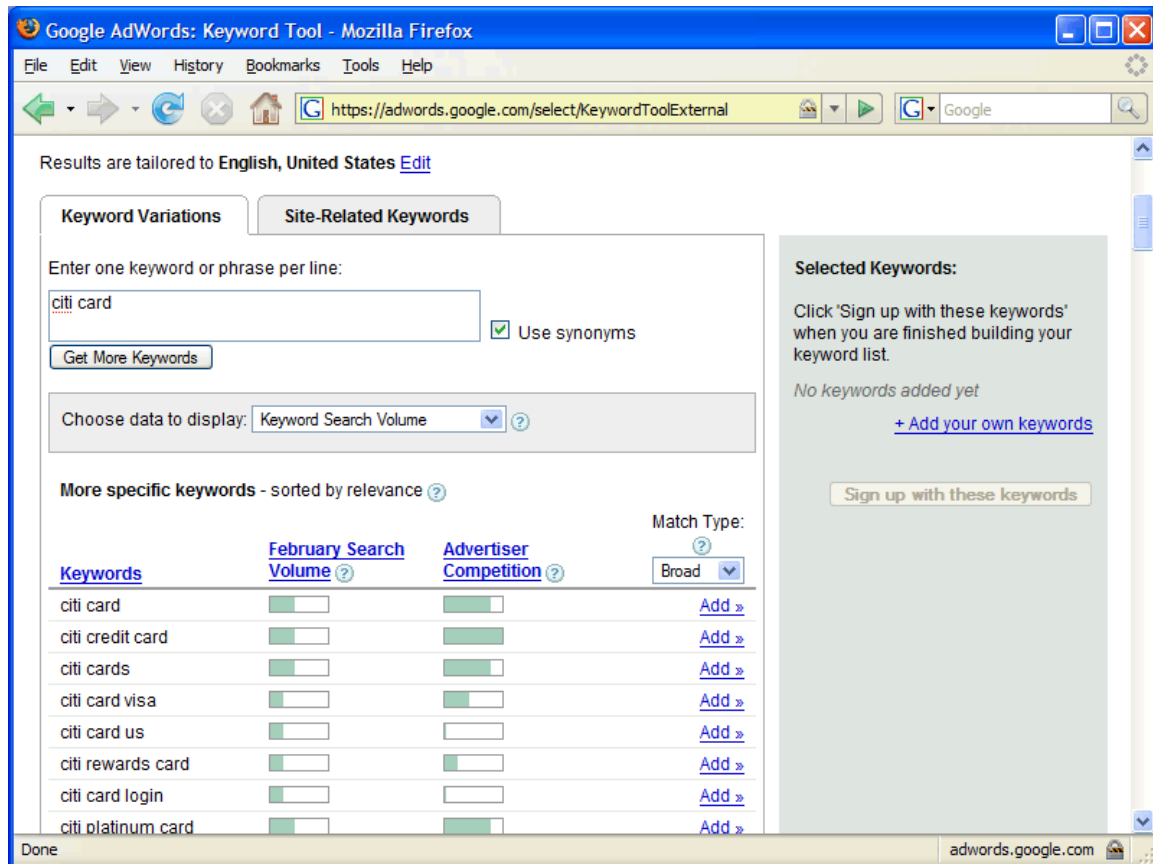
The Google Keywords Tool will not only return keyword variations, but will also suggest related keywords. When you do a search for a particular keyword the results are returned by relevance. The most relevant keywords will be at the top of the list.

Google Keywords Tool Example:

Using the preliminary keyword list from the credit card example above, we can start to build a more comprehensive list, and uncover new keywords we haven't even thought of yet. For this demonstration I'll start with a general keyword like Citi Card so you can see the process I go through when building a new campaign.

Screenshot on the following page...

Figure 3.3.2.a Google Keyword Tool – Building a Keyword List



This search returned 115 keyword variations of the keyword “citi card” and suggested 77 additional keywords. Most of the keywords returned are variations of our original keyword, however, Google also suggested some related keywords like “cash back card”, “apply for a card online”, and “chase card”. This synonym search is a very helpful feature because it reveals keywords that could easily be overlooked.

Save Your Keywords

Google will allow you to save the keywords recommended by the Keywords Tool. You can add them individually, or click “Add all”. This will save the keywords while you perform additional keyword searches. When you’re finished, you can export the list as a text file (.csv format). These files can be opened up in Microsoft Excel or any popular text editor.

Look for Negative Keywords

A negative keyword is a word or phrase that will prevent your ad from being displayed. In our previous example, you may notice that Google returned keyword phrases like “citi card **login**” and “citi card **account**”. As an affiliate you don’t want your ad showing up for these searches because you only make money when a new user completes a Citi®

Card application. If you were bidding on the broad matched keyword “citi card” and didn’t specify these negative keywords, you would receive several untargeted clicks from existing Citi customers, who are looking to pay their bill online or get in touch with customer service.

As you’re doing your keyword research try to find as many negative keywords as possible to ensure that your ad is only being displayed for relevant searches. In some cases I invest as much time looking for negative keywords as I do for new keywords.

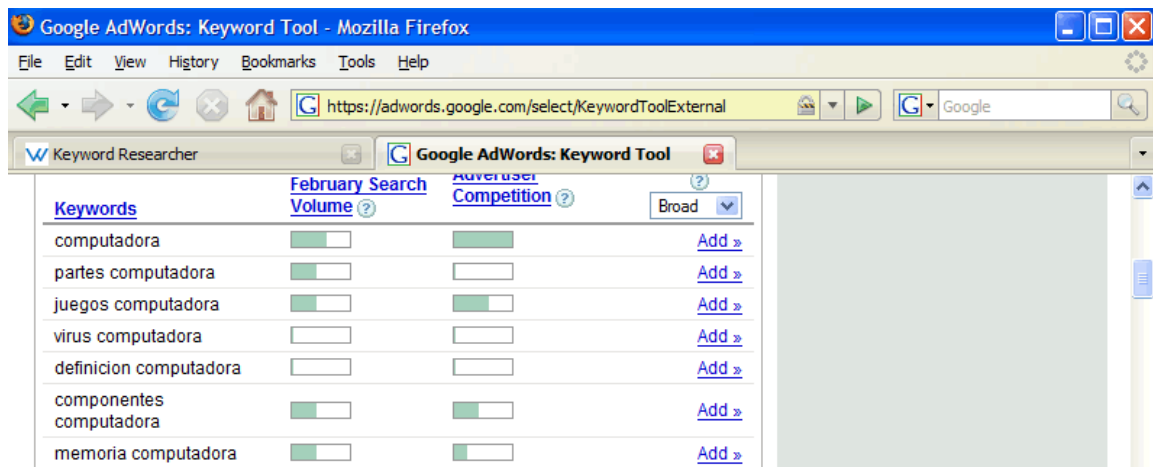
As I mentioned earlier, I prefer bidding on specific keyword phrases because it reveals more about the user’s intent. For example, if somebody just types in the word “citi card” by itself, it’s hard for you to determine if they’re an existing customer trying to pay their bill, or if they’re trying to apply for a new card.

When the user types in a specific keyword phrase like “citi credit card application” or “compare rates on citi rewards card”, you can more accurately predict what the user is looking for, and provide them with a highly-targeted offer.

Finding Keywords in Different Languages and Countries

If you’re planning on marketing products and services in other countries you can change the country and language settings to your desired location. For example, let’s say you were promoting computers in Mexico. You could change your country and language to Mexico/Spanish. This would return localized keywords and results. I’ve included an example below for the keyword “computadora” (computadora means computer in English).

Figure 3.3.2.b Google Keyword Tool – Change Your Country/Language



As you can see from this example, Google now returns variations of our keyword in Spanish, with search volume and competitive estimates for Mexico.

3.3.3 Advanced Keyword Tools

The Google Keywords tool is a great place for you to start looking for keywords, but when you need professional-grade keyword research you should consider a more advanced tool like WordTracker www.wordtracker.com.

With WordTracker you can setup “Keyword Projects” that allow you to create, manage and save multiple keyword lists. You can also perform more advanced and refined keyword searches.

For example, WordTracker has a wildcard search, which is helpful for finding misspelled keywords and plurals. WordTracker also has advanced syntax options that help you find the exact keyword, or show you phrases that include the keyword.

WordTracker provides search volume estimates for keyword results, but I’ve found that these estimates are sometimes very inaccurate. The best way for you to predict search volume is to use the Keywords Traffic Estimator in Google AdWords. You can learn how to use this tool by visiting:

<http://adwords.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=6270>

Yahoo Search Marketing also has a keyword volume estimator, but they’ve announced plans to retire this tool in the near future. As of this writing the Keyword Selector Tool is still live, but may not be by the time you read this:

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

3.3.4 - Check out Your Competition

One of the best places to find inspiration for new keywords is your competition. Your competitors aren't very likely to hand over their keyword list, but with a little competitive intelligence, you may be able to uncover some of their keyword gems.

A few years back, many webmasters used the Keywords Meta tag to help them rank in the search engines. The Keywords Meta tag can be found in the underlying source code of many web pages. In the early days of search, the Keywords Meta tag was used to help the search engines know what a web page was about. Webmasters would stuff their keywords into the Keywords Meta tag, hoping to somehow influence the search engines.

Modern day search engines no longer rely on the Keywords Meta tag, instead they rely on the actual web page content. The Keywords Meta tag is essentially useless, but many webmasters still use this tag to try and optimize their web pages for the search engines.

Website owners, who are a step ahead of the competition, can use this to their advantage. You can check and see if your competition is using the Keywords Meta tag by viewing their web page source code.

If you're not familiar with HTML, I recommend using the free [Keyword Research Tool](http://www.apogee-web-consulting.com/tools/keyword_tool.php) http://www.apogee-web-consulting.com/tools/keyword_tool.php , by Apogee Web Consulting. Simply type in your competitor's URL, and if they are using the Keywords Meta tag, a list of their keywords will be returned.

If you're already familiar with HTML, simply view the source code of the web page, and search for the tag that looks like this: <meta name=keywords>. If they are using the Keywords Meta tag, you will be able to view their keywords.

Your savvy competitors will probably know that the Keywords Meta tag is pointless, and will not use it on their web pages. Your less savvy competitors will stuff their most important keywords into this tag, in an unsuccessful attempt to influence search engine rankings. Take advantage of these less savvy competitors by gleaning potential keywords from their Meta tags.

3.3.5 Ask Your Merchant Partners for a Keyword List

Affiliate managers want their affiliates to succeed and will often provide their trusted partners with additional resources like keyword lists, unique creatives, and customized landing pages. Take advantage of this partnership and reach out to your affiliate manager through e-mail or over the phone. If you build a good rapport with your affiliate manager it opens the doors to new opportunities and information.

3.4 Keyword Tips and Tricks

Now that you're familiar with researching and building a solid keyword list, it's time to learn some of the more advanced techniques that keyword experts use.

By using the tips and tricks outlined in this section you will be able to increase the size of your keyword list dramatically. You will also be able to target keywords that are less competitive. These tips and tricks have given me the edge over the competition, and will do the same for you.

3.4.1 Misspellings and Typos

Don't overlook common misspellings and typos as you are building your keyword list. You would be surprised how many searches have misspelled words. In some cases, there may even be more searches for a misspelled keyword, than the correctly spelled version. Keywords with misspellings and typos are considerably less competitive too.

Here are some strategies that I use to come up with common misspellings and typos:

- Think of how a word is pronounced out loud, and think of all the different ways it could be spelled or misspelled. For example:
 - Their, there, they're
 - Sense, cents, scents
 - Weather, whether
 - Calendar, calender
 - Column, colum
 - Foreign, foriegn
- Think about common typing mistakes:
 - Common omissions (sports, sorts) - *The "P" and "O" are close together on the keyboard*
 - Double typing: (Google, Gooogle)
 - Wrong letter order: (search, saerch)
- Use the free typo generation tool provided by [searchspell](#)

3.4.2 Plural vs. Singular

It's always a good idea to consider adding both plural and singular versions of keywords to your list. If you wanted to get even more specific you could consider plural keywords with and without an apostrophe. Here are some examples:

Table on the following page...

Singular	Plural	Apostrophe
shoe	shoes	shoe's
valentine	valentines	valentine's
america	americas	america's

I generally don't take the time to optimize for the plural form of a word with an apostrophe, but if you find a good keyword that is frequently searched for with an apostrophe, go for it.

Note:

When it comes to paid search marketing, Yahoo will not always distinguish between plural and singular keywords, but Google does. When it comes to natural search, nearly all the major search engines distinguish between the plural and singular forms of a keyword.

Try these examples using variations of the keyword "*shoe*"

Yahoo example using the keyword "*shoe*":

<http://search.yahoo.com/search?ei=UTF-8&fr=sfp&p=shoe>

Yahoo example using the keyword "*shoes*":

<http://search.yahoo.com/search?ei=UTF-8&fr=sfp&p=shoes>

Notice that the paid search results are the same for both "*shoe*", and "*shoes*", but the natural search listings changed.

Google example using the keyword "*shoe*":

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=shoe&btnG=Google+Search>

Google example using the keyword "*shoes*":

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=shoes&btnG=Google+Search>

Notice that both the paid and natural search listings changed for "*shoe*" and "*shoes*".

3.4.3 Abbreviations and Acronyms vs. Spelled Out

Take time to identify common abbreviations and acronyms for your keywords. Here are some examples:

Continued on the following page...

Abbreviations Example:

- *1st Place* vs. *First Place*
- *Net* vs. *Internet*
- *Jan* vs. *January*

Acronyms Example:

- *CD* vs. *Compact Disc*
- *RAM* vs. *Memory*
- *TV* vs. *Television*

If you're not familiar with the common abbreviations and acronyms used for a particular category, I recommend using **Abbreviationz** (<http://www.stands4.com/index.asp>). At the time of this writing they had around 350,000 common abbreviations and acronyms in their database. You can browse for keywords by category, or search for a specific keyword.

3.4.4 Merged, Hyphenated and Separated Keywords

Examine your keyword phrases that have one or two words in them. Can any of them be merged, hyphenated, or separated? Here are some examples:

Merged	Hyphenated	Separated
email	e-mail	e mail
ebook	e-book	e book
webhost	web-host	web host

3.4.5 Geo Targeting

When people search online, they will often add a location to their keyword phrase to find local results. This is more common in service-related industries, than product-related industries. Here are some examples:

- **San Francisco** hotel
- **New York** health insurance
- **Chicago** mortgage lender
- **Paris** flights

Geo-Targeting Tip

If you're located in the United States I highly recommend downloading and using the Census Bureau's list of cities. It features 25,000 US cities, towns, and municipalities <http://www.census.gov/tiger/tms/gazetteer/places2k.txt>. Once you have downloaded the file, you can open it using Microsoft Excel, or your favorite text editor. Please see this page for instructions on using the file <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/gazetteer/places2k.html>.

3.4.6 Domain Names

You may be surprised, but some web users will type a domain name into a search engine, rather than the address bar of their web browser.

Warning:

Some advertisers don't like it when their affiliates target their domain name. A domain name can be considered a trademark, and should be used with caution. Remember to check your advertiser's terms and conditions when targeting trademarks.

3.3.6 Summary

The first step to generate a massive keyword list is to write down all of the products and services you will be promoting on your website. Think of product and service names, model numbers, and features that describe your products and services. Consider what keywords a prospective customer may use to find your website.

Once you have an initial keyword list, use the Google Keywords Tool and WordTracker to expand your keyword list.

Check out your competitor's keywords meta tags, to discover even more targeted keywords.

Finally, don't forget to ask your affiliate manager for a list of recommended keywords.

Section 3 Resources

Books:

[The Search](#), by John Battelle

[Keyword Research Guide](#), by WordTracker

[Google Hacks](#), by O'Reilly

Online Tutorials and Guides:

[How to Find More Keywords](#) (Flash Tutorial), by Yahoo Search Marketing

[Guide to Getting More Traffic](#), by Yahoo Search Marketing

[Selecting Keywords](#), by Google AdWords

Web-Based Keyword Tools

[Yahoo Keyword Suggestion Tool](#) (FREE)

[Google Keywords Tool](#) (FREE)

[WordTracker](#) (Free trial - and multiple subscription options)

[KeywordDiscovery](#) (Monthly subscription)

Section 4 - Build a Website That Sells

Despite what you may have heard, you don't need to be a graphic designer or a programmer to build a good website. All you need is a little knowledge and practice. Even if you don't have the time to learn how to build a website, I will show how you can use pre-built website templates to make a website in no time. I will also show you how you can hire a professional web designer for less than \$500 to build a custom website.

More important than your website design, is your website's content. Your website visitors want a website with good content that is easy to use and easy on the eyes. I will show you how to write content in a way that compels your visitors to click-through and buy.

Take your time to understand the concepts presented in this section. This is not a section you want to just skim through.

4.1 Choose a Promotion Strategy

Back in [Section 2](#), I discussed how to find and select the best merchants. Now you need to decide how you're going to promote the merchants you've decided to work with. Many affiliates, who already have a website, will simply add affiliate links and banners to their existing content. This may work fine if you have highly-relevant content, but if your content is not directly related to the merchant's offerings, you're missing out on a lot of potential commissions.

If you want to maximize your affiliate earnings, I suggest building a website around your merchant's products and services, rather than adding their links or banners as an afterthought. There are a number of different promotion strategies that you can use to pitch your merchant's products and services. These strategies will be discussed in detail in this section.

4.1.1 Content Website

A **content website** is one of the most commonly used promotion strategies. A typical content website will feature news, advice, and articles related to a specific subject. Some content websites also have blogs or community forums to generate fresh content and increase visitor loyalty.

An example of a content website that I have developed is the [Credit Repair Guide](http://www.creditrepairguide.org/) (<http://www.creditrepairguide.org/>). This site features articles related to credit repair. I have strategically embedded affiliate links throughout the site that promote a credit repair agency.

Suggestions for Building a Content Website:

- The website should focus on a single category or theme. Don't try and be all things to all people. The narrower your topic is the more high-qualified traffic you will be able to bring to your website.
- Embed your merchant's text links into your content, rather than using banners. Banners get ignored; links get clicked.

4.1.2 Directory Website

Another effective way to promote your merchants is to build a directory of their products and services. The products or services listed in your directory should be closely related.

An example of a **directory website** that I have developed is the [Online Dating Source](http://www.onlinedatingsource.com) (<http://www.onlinedatingsource.com>). This website features a directory of dating sites by location, ethnicity, religion, and special interests.

Suggestions for Building a Directory Website:

- Focus on a single topic.
- Allow users to browse for products and services in multiple ways. For example, don't just alphabetize your directory listings; sort them by product or service features, location, or other commonly used attributes.
- Consider adding a search feature to your website. This will allow people to find what they're looking for more quickly. You can tag on a free ad-supported search like [Google Free WebSearch](#) or [FreeFind.com](#). FreeFind also offers a commercial version without ads.
- Add value to each listing by supplementing them with reviews, ratings and additional information.

4.1.3 Review Website

As the name suggests, the primary purpose of a **review website** is to provide critical reviews of products, services, and merchants. In most cases you would write the reviews, but it's possible for you to let your website visitors write reviews too. For example, Amazon.com features an editorial review and customer reviews for most of the items they sell. The customer reviews add credibility to your website and give you fresh content.

Suggestions for Building a Review Website:

- Include easy-to-understand ratings alongside your reviews. For example, when your reading movie reviews in your local newspaper they're usually given a rating of 0-4 stars.
- Avoid writing the review like a sales letter. You want to try and appear objective.

- Provide reviews of similar products and services. This will give your visitors something to measure your review against.

4.1.4 Shopping Comparison/Datafeed Website

One of the more complex promotion strategies is a **shopping comparison** or **datafeed** website. A datafeed is an electronic product catalog that merchants provide their affiliates. This datafeed allows affiliates to build a dynamic website featuring individual products and services offered by their merchants.

A good shopping comparison website allows visitors to compare prices, features, reviews, and merchants side by side. Building a shopping comparison website usually requires you to have some programming knowledge, or to hire somebody that does. However, there are three tools affiliates can use to simplify the process of building a shopping comparison website. In most cases, it simply requires you to copy and paste some code into your webpages. Below is an overview of these tools, and what they do:

GoldenCan (<http://www.goldencan.com>)

With GoldenCan, affiliates can easily add merchant datafeeds to their website. The service features product datafeeds, coupon datafeeds, and product search capabilities.

Setup takes less than 5 minutes, and involves copying and pasting some code into your webpage. GoldenCan charges affiliates for their service through a revenue sharing model. Every 4th time somebody clicks on an affiliate link on your site, GoldenCan routes the visitor through their affiliate link. This basically means that GoldenCan earns 25% of the commissions you generate on pages you use their service.

DataFeedFile (<http://www.datafeedfile.com/>)

DataFeedFile works similar to GoldenCan, but has some additional functionality and flexibility. Like GoldenCan they charge affiliates on a revenue sharing basis.

WebMerge by FourthWorld (<http://www.fourthworld.com>)

Webmerge is a datafeed tool that will allow you to turn any electronic product catalog into static web pages. Anybody can learn how to use this tool, but it does have a slight learning curve. It comes with a fully functional free trial. The full version retails for \$99.

Suggestions for Building a Shopping Comparison/Datafeed Website:

- As mentioned in the previous examples, build a shopping comparison website around a single product or service category. Don't try and create the next [BizRate](#), or [Shopping.com](#). Unless you have hundreds of employees and millions of dollars you'll never be able to match what they're doing. In order to be successful, you need to narrow your focus.

- Make sure you update your website with the latest product catalog from your merchant. Sometimes items go out of stock, or get discontinued.

4.1.5 Coupon/Deal Website

Another great way to monetize your website traffic is by offering coupons and promotions to your visitors. Top merchants in Commission Junction, Azoogle and other networks consistently update their affiliate coupons. Many of these coupons are exclusive to their affiliate marketing channel, giving you a unique competitive advantage over other online retailers.

Some merchants will provide coupon updates through an RSS update or e-mail newsletter. Make sure that you are regularly checking your merchant partner's links to get the latest offers.

For an example of a popular coupon affiliate site visit Super Affiliate Connie Berg's site FlamingoWorld.com www.flamingoworld.com.

4.1.6 Incentive/Rebate Website

One way to get visitors to buy products and services through your affiliate website is to offer them some kind of financial incentive. Building a rebate site requires more work than a typical affiliate site because you need to build some kind of tracking mechanism to compensate people who buy through your affiliate links.

Most merchants who compensate affiliates for sending leads discourage incentivised traffic because the quality of the lead tends to be lower than a lead without financial motivation. For example, a visitor may happily accept your \$5 offer to complete a car insurance application – even though they have no intention of signing-up for car insurance.

Another thing you need to be aware of is product returns. If you issue payments before the affiliate commission is locked or paid to you, the customer could return the product, cancelling out your commission.

For an example of a top affiliate rebate site visit Super Affiliate David Lewis' site, CashBaq.com – www.cashbaq.com

4.1.7 Hybrid Website

There are no hard and fast rules about what your website needs to look like, or what content it should have. The examples above are merely suggestions. For example, you could do a directory website that features reviews and product comparisons. Whatever promotion strategy you use, just remember it needs to be focused on a single topic or category.

4.2 Plan Your Website

Before you begin building your website it's imperative that you have a well thought-out plan. Building a website without a plan is like a contractor trying to construct a building without a blueprint. Not only would it take forever to build, but the end result would be a complete disaster!

This section will take you through the necessary steps to plan your website. You will learn how to:

- Develop a content theme
- Plan your website sections
- Identify your website pages
- Design your website layout
- Create a website template

By following a website plan you will be able to build your website faster and better. In addition, you will be able to identify potential problems before they arise and become difficult to fix.

4.2.1 Develop a Content Theme

Once you have decided on a promotion strategy and have selected the merchants you are going to promote, it's time to start thinking about a **content theme**. A content theme tells visitors what your website is about. Your visitors should be able to understand what your site is about within 5 seconds of arriving.

When planning your content theme, I recommend that you review your keyword list and merchant offerings. Did you notice any market categories that were underserved? Did you happen to find a group of related keywords that would make a good content theme?

As an affiliate, I have had the most success by building niche websites, which are also known as **microsites**. A microsite is a website that is *narrowly focused* on a *small group* of *closely related* products or services.

As you may have guessed, the opposite of a microsite is a **macrosite**. I define a macrosite as a website that has a *wide focus* on a *large group* of *associated* products or services.

For example, a website about home furnishings would be considered a macrosite. Within the home furnishings category there are literally hundreds of *associated* sub-categories. Think about all of the diverse products that fall under the home furnishings category: beds, clocks, couches, rugs, lamps, and wall art, just to name a few! As you can see, all of these products are *associated* under the home furnishings category, but they **are not** *closely related*.

If you were to select any one of the sub-categories from the above example, you could build a microsite. For example, a website about rugs could be considered a microsite. Even though there are different rug sizes, brands, and textures, all rugs are *closely related*.

As you are thinking about different content themes to build a microsite around, be careful not to go too narrow. There is a difference between a microsite and a **microscopic site**. For example, an entire website about Silk Rug Cleaning Solution might not be a good idea. It may make sense to build a section or a page about Silk Rug Cleaning Solution within your website, but an entire site devoted to this product may not generate enough interest or traffic to make it worth your time.

4.2.2 Plan the Sections of Your Website

After you have selected a content theme, you can start thinking about the main sections of your website. This step requires you to group the products or services together with some kind of categorization. There are many ways you can consider categorizing the content on your website. I suggest you look at your keyword list and see which keywords are being searched most frequently and how they're related to each other.

Follow the example below using the keyword "rug". Look at each of the keywords in the list. How would you group these keywords together? Do any of the keywords fall into similar categories? I've made some suggestions below:

Screenshot on the following page...

Figure 4.2.2.a Plan the Sections of your Website

Keywords	February Search Volume	Advertiser Competition	
rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
shag rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
rugs	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
rug hooking	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
oriental rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
persian rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
wool rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
rug runners	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
rug runner	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
turkish rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
natural rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
rug contemporary	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
discount rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
sisal rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
rug decor	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
cheap rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
round rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
modern rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
kilim rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
karastan rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »
nourison rug	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	Add »

This screenshot is very insightful. Let's try and group some of these keywords into logical categories.

Keywords related to **rug styles**:

1. braided rug
2. shag rug
3. Persian rug
4. oriental rug
5. sisal rug

Keywords related to **rug locations**:

1. area rug
2. kitchen rug
3. bathroom rug
4. runner rug

Keywords related to **rug brands**:

1. Nourison rug
2. Karastan rug
3. Shaw rug

Keywords related to **price**:

1. cheap rug
2. discounted rug
3. cheap area rug

By scanning this list of keywords, I was able to come up with 4 categories (rug styles, rug locations, rug brands, rug prices). I don't know if this is necessarily the best way to categorize rugs, but this example shows you how you can use your keyword list to categorize your content.

In addition to using your keywords, I recommend reviewing your merchant's and competitor's websites to see how they categorize their content.

4.2.3 Plan the Pages of Your Website

Once you have come up with a scheme for categorizing your content, it's time to start thinking about the specific pages of your website. Below are some common web pages you should consider:

- Home page (Required of course).
- Category level pages.
- Product or service detail pages.
- Standard website pages including: Privacy Policy, Contact Us, and About Us. It's important to include these standard pages because visitors expect to find them on your website. It also increases your credibility. In addition to these standard website pages you should also add a disclosure policy to your site indicating your merchant affiliate relationships.
- Landing Pages (Pages specifically designed for paid search campaigns. I will discuss landing pages in great detail later in this section.)

The example above is a simple outline for a basic website. If you're building a bigger and more complex website you may have more pages to consider.

Tips for Your Website's Privacy and Disclosure Policy

Use the Direct Marketing Associations "Privacy Policy Generator" to create a privacy policy - <http://www.the-dma.org/privacy/creating.shtml>

To generate a disclosure policy for your affiliate site visit PayPerPost's "Disclosure Policy Generator" - <http://www.disclosurepolicy.org/>

If you're looking for more legal web forms visit AllBusiness.com

<http://www.allbusiness.com/internet-technology-forms/web-site-forms/3472250-1.html>

4.2.4 Plan Your Website Layout

Once you have selected a content theme and planned your website sections and pages, you can start planning your website layout. A website layout is like a blueprint for a house. At this point you don't need to worry about your website design; that comes later. You simply want to plan a framework for your website.

Nearly every website has 4 common layout elements:

1. Website Header
2. Navigation Scheme
3. Main Body
4. Website Footer

Let's talk about these layout elements in more detail.

Website Header

A website header sets the tone for your website. It typically includes your logo, website name, and in some cases a content-themed graphic.

Best Practices for Website Headers:

- **The header should not take up too much screen real estate.** If your header is too tall, it may push your important content too far down the page. The height of your website header should be 100 pixels or less.
- **The header should load fast.** It's o.k. to include a content-themed graphic in your header, but make sure the file size is small so your page can load quickly.

Navigation Scheme

The navigation scheme is one of the most critical elements of your website layout. A well-designed navigation scheme let's users find what they're looking for quickly. Your navigation scheme should be intuitive and follow common navigation conventions.

Best Practices for Navigation Schemes:

- **Don't use animated, flyout, or collapsible navigation menus.** These menus may impress your friends or other webmasters, but your website visitors could care less. When you design for the web, you have to design for the lowest common denominator. It may seem silly to you, but new web users don't understand these menus. They were taught how to surf the web by clicking blue links. Furthermore, these menus increase your page load time, and may display differently in various web browsers.
- **Top navigation** is generally used for linking to high-level category pages (global links). Make sure you don't have too many links in your top navigation or you may create a *horizontal scrolling effect*. The *horizontal scrolling effect* can kill your website's usability; people scroll up and down, not side to side.
- **Left/Right navigation** can be used for linking to category and/or detailed pages of your website. The left and right navigation menus are flexible because you can have more links than you can with top navigation.
- **Breadcrumb navigation** is like a compass. It tells your website visitors where they are in relation to your home page. This can be a helpful navigation tool if your website has several categories and pages.

Main Body

The main body is where your content goes and is the focal point of your web page. Your objective is to layout the content in a way that makes it easy to read and follow.

Best Practices for the Main Body:

- **Your most important content should be "above the fold".** This simply means that the most important aspects of your content should appear on the screen without having to scroll. The term "above the fold" is borrowed from the newspaper industry. The most important headlines in a newspaper appear above the fold. On the web you only have a few seconds to grab your visitor's attention. This is why it's critical that you have your most important content visible on the page without scrolling.
- **Use a fixed width column for your content.** Have you ever visited a website where the text stretched across 100% of the screen? It can be difficult to read, especially on high resolution monitors. Can you imagine trying to read a newspaper article if each column stretched across the width of the entire paper? It would be very difficult. That's why newspapers and magazines use fixed width columns for their articles. These columns are designed for easy reading. Your website visitors shouldn't have to strain their neck or their eyes to read your content.

If you use a fixed-width main body you should use a 780px wide area for your content. If you go any larger than this you may create a horizontal scrolling effect on machines running an 800x600 resolution.

Website Footer

Your website footer is generally reserved for links and information about your website. Here are some typical links you will find in a website footer:

- Contact Us - *(required - visitors will trust you more if you provide them with an easy way to contact you)*
- Privacy Policy - *(required - it enhances your websites credibility and is required by most merchants)*
- About Us - *(optional, but recommended - can enhance credibility)*
- Sitemap - *(optional - recommended for large websites with a lot of pages)*

It's also a good idea to put a copyright statement in the footer of all of your webpages.

4.2.5 Creating a Website Template

One of the smartest things you can do when planning your website is create a template. A template can be used as a starting point for each new page that you create. Standard website elements that don't change from page to page like headers, navigation, and footers can all be placed inside a website template. This will save you a lot of time when building new pages and will give your website a consistent look and feel.

Summary

Whether you're planning to build your own website or outsourcing it to another web developer, it's important to have a plan. A well thought-out plan allows you to think of all the opportunities and challenges you may face when building your website. Your website will come together much faster and with fewer problems.

4.3 Choose the Right Domain Name

There are several considerations to make when choosing a domain name. This section will walk you through the steps of selecting and ordering a domain name for your website.

Where to Register Your Domain Name

A company that allows you to register a domain name is called a **domain registrar**. There are hundreds of domain registrars on the web. Many web hosting companies offer domain registration services to their clients as well. My preferred domain registrar is [GoDaddy \(www.godaddy.com\)](http://www.godaddy.com). I've registered over 250 domains with them and have never had a problem. They register more new domains than any other domain registrar.

Additional domain registrars to consider:

- [Yahoo Domains](http://domains.yahoo.com) (domains.yahoo.com)

The typical cost of registering a domain name is between \$8-\$35/year, and varies by registrar. If you are going to register multiple domains, I strongly recommend using the same registrar. It's much easier to manage your domains from a single location and you may be able to take advantage of bulk discounts.

Select a Descriptive Domain

It's important to choose a domain that contains keywords that describe your website. When your website appears in the search listings it can be advantageous to have a domain related to the keywords or subject the searcher was looking for. It's also been argued that having keywords in your domain name may help your search engine rankings for those keywords.

Choose a Domain that is Short and Easy to Spell

When selecting a domain name you need to remember that many of your visitors will type your domain directly into their address bar to find your website. If you choose a domain that is too long, it may be prone to typos. If you choose a domain that is hard to spell, visitors may misspell the domain and never find your site.

As a general rule, you should never use more than 3 words in your domain name. If you have more than that it will be difficult for visitors to remember. If your domain has multiple words consider using hyphens to break apart words. This will make your domain name more readable when searchers see your domain in the search engines. Think about this example: searchengineexpert.com vs. search-engine-expert.com. Which domain appears more readable to you?

Try and choose a domain name that is phonetic. A domain name that is spelled how it sounds is less likely to be misspelled. You may also want to avoid commonly misspelled words that sound the same, but are spelled differently. For example: their/they're/there.

Register a .com Domain

The most sought after domain names end with a .com extension. The .com extension is almost synonymous with the web. Other extensions like .net, .org, and .edu are also familiar, but lack commercial appeal. Domain extensions like .biz, .info, and most of the country-specific extensions are unfamiliar with many web users. This is why I highly recommend registering a domain name with a .com.

Secure other Domain Extensions and Common Variations

If you find a good domain name you should consider registering other top-level domain extensions like .net and .org. For example, if your domain name is mydomain.com, you may want to consider registering mydomain.net and mydomain.org.

In addition, you may want to consider registering common variations of your domain name like mydomains.com and my-domains.com.

The reason for doing this is to prevent your competitors and typosquatters from leveraging your marketing efforts and hijacking your traffic. If you don't secure these additional domains nothing will stop your competitors from registering and using them. You may be able to take legal action against a company that violates your trademarks, but I would much rather pay \$8/per additional domain than pay \$500 for a lawyer to draft and send a Cease & Desist letter.

A point of clarification: You don't need to register every possible domain extension and variation. Top level domains like .net and .org, and common variations like the plural and singular form and with and without the hyphen are most important. I only register additional domain extensions and variations for my most valuable domain names.

Domain Tips and Tricks

- **Auto-Renew Domains** - Most good domain registrars allow you to auto-renew your domain names. This will prevent you from losing your domain because you simply forgot about it or didn't have the time.
- **Lock Your Domains** - Domain registrars allow you to lock your domains. This prevents unauthorized people from transferring or stealing your domain. By default, your domain should be locked, but you may want to double-check to ensure this is the case with your registrar (GoDaddy.com automatically locks new domains).
- **Register Your Domain Anonymously** - For a nominal fee, a domain registrar will allow you to privately register your domain name. This prevents your private details such as your business address, phone number, and e-mail address from being made available in the WHOIS database. The WHOIS database is a publicly available database that reveals information about domain owners. It has become a popular place for spammers to extract e-mail addresses. Another good reason to register your domains anonymously is to prevent your competitors from knowing about your websites.
- **Use [WHOIS.sc](http://www.whois.sc) (www.whois.sc) and [DomainsBot](http://www.domainsbot.com) (www.domainsbot.com) to Find Good Domains** - If you've ever tried to register a domain you know how hard it can be to find a good domain name. You can spend hours searching for an available .com. I use WHOIS.sc and DomainsBot to help me come up with great domain names. Simply type in a few keywords and these tools will combine your keywords together in a number of ways to try and find the best available domain.

The tools also have a built in thesaurus to help you find similar words for your domain name.

- Use SnapNames.com to Backorder a Domain - If the domain you want is unavailable, but will be expiring soon, you should consider using an automated domain registration service such as SnapNames.com. This service will automatically try and register the domain for you once it becomes available. I've picked up some great domains through this service.

4.4 Find a Dependable Web Host

Choosing a web host is one of the most important decisions you will make for your website. Many website owners make the mistake of going with the cheapest web host, but are disappointed when they don't live up to their expectations.

Before you select a web host you need to decide what features or requirements you need for your website. This section will help you identify what factors are most important when selecting a web host and what considerations you need to make before signing up. I have also included my preferred list of web hosts at the end of this section.

Reliability and Speed

You should look for a web host with a guaranteed uptime of 99.9% or higher. For every minute that your website is down you could be losing money. That's why I would rather pay a little extra for reliability and speed, than try and save with a cheap monthly hosting plan.

Every professional web hosting company should be located inside a secure **data center** facility. These data centers feature the following: multiple and redundant connections to the Internet, power backups, climate-controlled rooms, and support staff that is on-site at all times. Most data centers are equipped to withstand natural disasters like earthquakes, tornadoes and severe storms. Some web hosting companies even offer [virtual tours](#) of their facilities for prospective customers.

A Hard Lesson to Learn:

Back in 2004 I was hosting several websites with a Florida based web hosting company. During the hurricane season their facility lost power on several different occasions. The company did not have adequate power backups and my websites went down for several hours on multiple occasions. This cost me thousands of dollars and caused a lot of stress. It was evident that this company did not locate their servers in a professional data center.

Customer Service and Support

A quality web host should provide 24 x 7 toll-free telephone support. If your website goes down in the middle of the night, it's reassuring to know there's a real person on the other line that can help you with your problem.

Scripting and Database Access

If you're planning on building a dynamic or database-driven website that requires server-side scripting (like PHP, Perl, and ASP), make sure to select a hosting plan that provides these services. For example, some web hosts have a "basic" or "starter" plan that may not include support for server-side scripting and database access.

Web-Based Control Panel

Most web hosts offer a web-based control panel for their users. This control panel allows you to login into your hosting account using a web browser from any location. A good control panel will allow you to:

- Upload, edit, or delete files
- Create, edit, or delete folders
- Manage your e-mail accounts
- Create, edit, or delete sub-domains (**shopping.yoursite.com**, **info.yoursite.com**)
- View your website statistics

A web-based control panel is especially helpful for new webmasters who are not familiar with the technical aspects of managing a website.

Access to Traffic Logs

Every time a visitor comes to your website, details about their visit are tracked and stored on your web host's servers. These visitor sessions are stored in a log file, which can be downloaded and analyzed at any time.

These traffic logs track a number of different statistics:

- Where the visitor was referred from (e.g. Google, Yahoo, MSN, or any other website).
- If the visitor found your website through a search engine your traffic logs will tell you which keywords they used.
- What pages the visitor viewed.
- How long the visitor was on your site.
- What web browsers your visitors use (e.g. Internet Explorer, Firefox).

File Storage and Data Transfer

Most web hosting companies provide more file storage than you will ever use. File storage is the amount of disk space allocated on the web host's servers for your website.

If your website consists of a lot of images, sound clips, or video files that occupy a lot of disk space you can add more file storage to your plan.

When a visitor comes to your website, all the text, pictures, and other files that make up your web pages are transferred to your visitor's computer. Data transfer is a measure of the total amount of information your visitors view each month. If you have large image, audio, or video files you may need more data transfer. High traffic websites that receive hundreds of thousands of monthly visitors may also need more data transfer.

My Recommendations

It's hard to find objective advice online about web hosting companies. Many of the review websites have affiliate relationships with the web hosts they review; their opinion may be financially motivated. I encourage you to visit several review websites, but analyze what you read carefully. If it sounds more like a sales pitch than an honest assessment, you may not be getting good advice.

Once you have a few web hosting companies in mind, you may want to research them further using Google. Remember that people are more likely to post complaints online, than to post praise. You may also want to check out the [Better Business Bureau \(www.bbb.org\)](http://www.bbb.org) for any unresolved complaints, or service trends.

In my experience, the best way to find a good web host is to ask a real customer. An existing customer can tell you a lot more about a web host than a brochure or promotional site. If you know another website owner, ask them about their experience. Would they recommend their web host?

I have used dozens of web hosts throughout the years. From my experience, a good web host is hard to come by. The recommendation below is based on my personal experiences as an affiliate with over 100 websites.

1 - [Yahoo Web Hosting](#)

I host several websites with Yahoo Web Hosting (including Quit Your Day Job). They are one of the fastest and most reliable web hosts available.

Pros:

- Best reliability
- Very fast, can handle heavy traffic loads
- Advanced scripting (PHP and Perl) and database (MySQL) tools.
- Easy-to-use web hosting control panel
- 24 x 7 toll free support

Cons:

- Some advanced PHP functions are not available for security reasons
- Advanced Apache modules like [ModRewrite](#) are not available for security reasons

4.5 Options for Building Your Website

As I had mentioned in the beginning of Section 4, you don't have to be a web designer or programmer to build a good website. You can develop a website with an existing template, site builder, or outsource the entire project to a professional web designer for a reasonable price. Regardless of how you decide to build your website, you will still need to learn a little HTML in order to copy and paste affiliate links into your web pages. It's also helpful to know a little HTML when you need to make simple changes to your website.

4.5.1 Build it yourself

If you're already familiar with HTML or know how to use a visual website editor such as Dreamweaver or Frontpage, you can simply build the website yourself. When I first started building web pages back in 2000, I hand-coded all of my websites. Back then, many of the visual website editors did a poor job of writing HTML code. This would cause your web pages to break or display inconsistently in different browsers.

Since then, website editors have improved tremendously. The HTML code they write is often better than that of a professional web developer. Plus, it's easier and faster to design a page layout using one of these visual editors than it is to code a page by hand. In some instances you may still find yourself digging into the HTML code to make minor changes, but it's possible to build a professional website without even looking at the underlying HTML.

Dreamweaver

My preferred website editor is [Dreamweaver](#) by [Macromedia/Adobe](#). I have been using it since 2001 and have found it to be an indispensable tool for building, editing, and managing my websites. I have developed hundreds of websites with Dreamweaver and have found it very easy to use. I can now build websites in a fraction of the time that it took me to hand-code sites.

Dreamweaver is somewhat expensive, but can be considered a good investment when you take into account how much time you will save when building your websites. At the time of this writing, Dreamweaver 8 (full version) retails for \$399, and is available online or at your local computer software store. There is a [student version](#) available for just \$199 through Macromedia's website.

If you have an older version of Dreamweaver installed on your machine, don't worry about upgrading it. The incremental upgrades made over the last 5 years are insignificant to most users, and can only be appreciated by advanced web developers.

XSitePro

Referred to as the Internet Marketer's alternative to Dreamweaver and FrontPage, [XSitePro](http://xsitepro.quityourdayjob.com) – <http://xsitepro.quityourdayjob.com> has quickly become one of the most popular web development platforms for affiliates. XSitePro has several built-in functions that affiliates and online entrepreneurs frequently use. The software also comes with a user-friendly guide to using the software, and a series of training videos to help you get the most out of the tool.

WordPress

[WordPress](http://www.wordpress.org) (www.wordpress.org) started out as a popular blog-publishing tool, but has since evolved into a more advanced content publishing system. Some of the things that make WordPress so attractive are that it's 100% web-based, has a large and active support community, and is 100% free.

There are thousands of freely available design templates and plug-ins that allow you to customize WordPress. Changing your site's design or adding a new feature is generally as easy as clicking a few buttons.

NVU

If you don't have Dreamweaver or FrontPage installed, and you don't have the money to invest in one of these tools [NVU](http://www.nvu.com/) (<http://www.nvu.com/>) is a nice alternative. It's not as user-friendly as Dreamweaver or FrontPage, but it gets the job done. NVU is an open source (free) web authoring tool that allows you to build websites using a visual page layout.

4.5.2 Resources for Building Websites

When you're ready to start building your own websites there are many great resources to help you along the way. HTML is surprisingly easy to learn. I was able to pick up basic HTML skills in just a few days by reading a few online tutorials.

Building a basic website with Dreamweaver or Frontpage is even easier than learning HTML. If you've ever worked with a word processor like Microsoft® Word or Corel® WordPerfect, you already have the basic skills you need to get started. There are several great online tutorials and books to help you master these programs.

Where you should start depends on your skill level and experience. Below are some recommendations:

If you know absolutely nothing about HTML

Start with the [HTML Primer](http://www.htmlgoodies.com/primers/html) at **HTML Goodies** (www.htmlgoodies.com/primers/html). This 7 part tutorial is a great introduction to HTML. At the end of the tutorial you will be building your own basic web pages. The course can be digested over 7 days, or as much as you can handle in one day.

Once you have finished the HTML Primer, check out the **HTML & GRAPHICS TUTORIALS** links located on the left side of the [page](#).

Another great resource for learning HTML is [W3Schools](http://www.w3schools.com) (www.w3schools.com). The website features HTML tutorials, quizzes, and references. Once you have mastered the basic tutorials, you can jump over to the advanced tutorials and learn even more about HTML.

If you need something more comprehensive than these tutorials there are several [HTML books](#) on the market.

If you know some HTML Basics

If you're already somewhat comfortable with HTML, I recommend that you start by learning how to use a visual website editor like Dreamweaver or Frontpage. You can get started with one of their built-in templates or build your page from scratch. Both Dreamweaver and Frontpage have tutorials featured within the "Help" section of the software. There are also several good books on the market ([View Dreamweaver Books](#)/[View Frontpage Books](#)).

If you prefer to learn visually, there are also some great online video tutorials available. If you're looking for Dreamweaver video tutorials, I recommend visiting the [Macromedia Developer Center](#), where you will find several free and informative tutorials.

4.5.3 Use a Pre-built Website Template

If you lack design skills, but want a professionally designed website at a reasonable price, I highly recommend using a pre-built template. These website templates come complete with home page designs, sub-page designs, stock photography, and fonts. All you have to do is edit the copy!

If you are going to use a website template, I highly recommend using an HTML editor like Dreamweaver or Frontpage. It's much easier to work with a template using an editor than it is trying to understand the underlying HTML source code.

When you buy a web template, you're allowed to modify it or customize it in any way. If you want to change the layout, colors, fonts or images, just use your favorite editor to make changes.

My favorite destination for website templates is [Template Monster](http://www.templatemonster.com) (www.templatemonster.com).

Template Monster charges between \$19-\$89 (USD) for professionally designed web templates. When you're previewing the templates you can see how many times a particular template has been downloaded. You also have the option to buy the exclusive rights to a specific template, which guarantees that you will be the last person to buy that template.

Template Monster currently has over 10,000 web templates available, and is adding between 150-200 new designs monthly. Template Monster has teamed up with a company called [Template Tuning](http://www.template tuning.com) (www.template tuning.com), which converts pre-designed web templates into unique web sites. Their rates vary by project and can range from as little as \$40 to as much as \$1,000, depending on the customizations that you make. A complete price sheet is available at <http://www.template tuning.com/prices.php>

I've used Template Monster's web templates on several occasions. I'm not a graphic artist and often struggle to build good looking websites. I use pre-built templates to save both time and money.

4.5.4 Outsource Your Website or Project

Graphic design, copyrighting, web programming, and database work can all be easily outsourced. There are hundreds of thousands of affordable and knowledgeable consultants available online through trusted websites like [eLance](http://eLance.com) and [Get a FreeLancer](http://www.getafreelancer.com) – www.getafreelancer.com

Whether you're outsourcing a small portion of your website, or the entire project, you can save a lot of time and money by hiring an expert. If you lack the skills or experience to develop a professional website, or just need help with a particular task, it makes more sense to use a qualified professional than to try and figure it out on your own.

No matter how big or small your project is you can find somebody anxious to do the work. To quote eLance's website: *"If you can describe it, you can get it done."* Prices range by project and provider. Most of the affiliate websites and projects I have had developed range from a few hundred dollars for a basic website, up to a thousand dollars for more complicated projects. eLance also posts [average pricing for projects](#) on their website (updated in 2005).

If you are going to outsource any of your web-related projects, I suggest following these outsourcing tips below:

- **Take advantage of eLance's [free project consultation](#).** If you're new to outsourcing web projects recruit the help of an expert to help you get started.
- **Start with a small project or task.** This will allow you to minimize your risks and costs if the consultant doesn't work out. If they do a great job, you can feel more comfortable giving them bigger projects.
- **Don't post detailed information about your project in public view.** Be somewhat vague in your title and description. You can always provide more details to consultants when they contact you through a private message board. This will help prevent competitors from scanning the listings and taking your ideas.
- **Read the eLance tips on [posting projects](#)** before you get started.
- **Don't necessarily select the consultant with the cheapest bid.** Sometimes you get what you pay for. It's more important for you to focus on their quality (portfolio) and feedback.
- **Give exact details to your consultant about what you want done.** The more details you provide the consultant, the less likely they will make mistakes or misinterpret what you want.
- **Use the free [standard forms](#) offered on eLance's website.** These include a [non-disclosure agreement](#) (NDA) and a [service provider agreement](#). Keep in mind that these agreements may be hard to enforce if you're working with somebody in a foreign country, due to the complexity of international law. However, it's better to have some type of agreement in place than nothing at all.
- **Avoid paying for work in advance.** Consider breaking your project up into smaller pieces and paying as each milestone as achieved. This is a good way to keep you and the consultant happy.
- **If you find somebody that you like, keep them happy.** It's much easier to continue working with somebody that has a proven track record with you than to take a risk on a new consultant.

4.6 Landing Pages

Landing pages are highly optimized web pages that encourage your visitors to take a specific action. Landing pages are most commonly used in paid search campaigns, but can also be used for natural search.

Landing pages are particularly useful when you're bidding on a set of keywords related to a specific product or service offering. Landing pages generally contain very simple navigation, if any, and focus on some type of [call to action](#). Landing pages are most effective when they closely match the ad text or description in your keyword ad or search listing, and have a clear call to action. Any element on the page that is not directly related to your call to action should be removed.

There are 4 basic elements that are essential to every good landing page:

1. Page Headline and Offer Summary
2. Supporting Product or Service Image
3. Product or Service Copy (Description/Benefits)
4. Call to Action

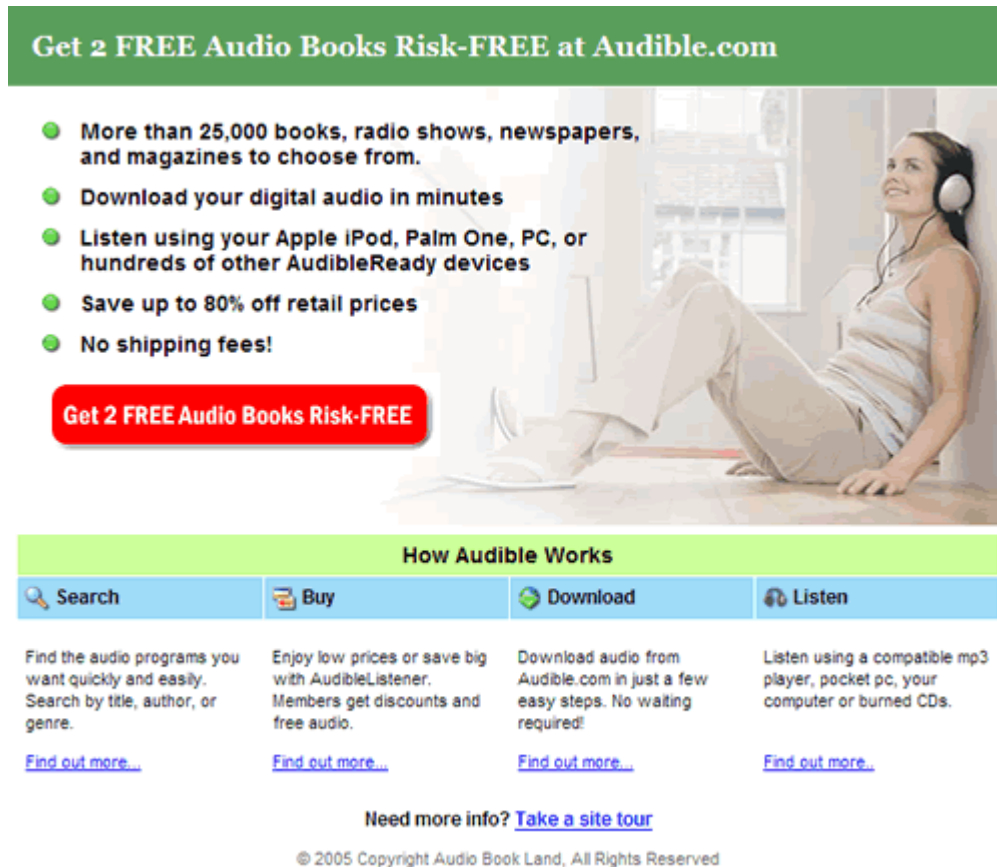
This section will show you how to create landing pages that convert. You will learn about the most important aspects of good landing pages, and what you should avoid.

4.6.1 Landing Page Elements

As I mentioned in the previous section, there are 4 basic elements essential to every good landing page. This section will focus on those elements in more detail, providing suggestions and tips for each element.

I have included a landing page from one of my live campaigns as an example. This will help to illustrate the landing page elements:
(Screenshot on the following page...)

Figure 4.6.1 Audible Landing Page Screenshot



Page Headline and Offer Summary

The page headline and offer summary should closely match the ad copy in your paid search listing and should be located near the top of the page. The **headline** should stand out from the other text on the page by being a larger font-size and possibly bolded for additional emphasis. Your **summary text** should be short and use a slightly smaller font size than your headline.

For example, in my paid search listing for the landing page above, I mention that the user can get 2 free audio books. In my headline text it reads **"Get 2 FREE Audio Books Risk-FREE at Audible.com"**. Notice how the headline font is larger than the other text on the page and is located at the top of the page.

You may have noticed that this page does not display any summary text beneath the headline. I did this because the headline already described the offer in enough detail.

Supporting Product or Service Image

The product or service image should appear above the fold, and provide the visitor with a good visual reference about what the product or service is. Using a supporting image for a tangible product is generally very straightforward. I recommend using a thumbnail image instead of a full-sized image so that you can also display copy describing key benefits next to the image. Make sure that you place your affiliate link in the image.

If you're trying to use an image to market an intangible service, consider using a screenshot of the service provider's website or an image that shows the service in use. For example, in my image above I show a woman listening to audio books through her headphones.

Product or Service Copy (Description/Benefits)

The landing page copy should focus on the primary benefits of the product or service offering. When you write the landing page copy, I recommend that you use short paragraphs (no more than 4-5 lines) and highlight or bold the most important benefits for impact. You should also consider using bulleted lists that summarize the benefits of the product or service.

Try and keep the overall length of your landing page copy short and use your affiliate links to deep link to more detailed pages on the merchant's website. Strategically embed your affiliate links to the product or service throughout your page copy.

Call to Action

Your call to action should be very obvious and appear above the fold. The call to action should have plenty of white space on all sides and should appear on its own line with no other text.

If you are using a text link for your call to action, make it stand out by using a large bolded font. If you are going to use an image for your call to action, make it stand out by making it look like a button that can be clicked.

Avoid using generic call to action statements like "Go", "Click Here", or "Visit Site". Instead use a descriptive call to action like "Click Here to Save 25%", "Download Your Free Trial", or "Get Your {Product/Service} Today".

In the example above, I use a red button with a bevel, which makes it stand out on the page. The red button calls attention to itself because of its size and color.

4.6.2 Landing Page Tips

As an affiliate, you can gain a serious advantage over the competition by improving your landing pages. You can also vastly improve your return on investment (ROI) with your paid search campaigns by making better landing pages. Here are some of the top landing page optimization tips I have learned as an affiliate:

Make Your Landing Page Look Easy

Most people don't like to read on the Internet, they prefer to scan. If your landing page looks like work, your visitors may abandon your page too soon. Make the content digestible by using short paragraphs, bulleted lists, and tables/charts.

Make a Fast Loading Page

Because you only have a few seconds to capture your visitor's attention, you must ensure that your page loads fast. Eliminate any unnecessary graphics or media objects that may weigh down the page.

You can test your webpage download time using the Web Page Analyzer located at <http://www.websiteoptimization.com/services/analyze/>. This tool will show you how long it takes to download your web page using various connections. Pay special attention to your page download time on a 56k modem. It may sound silly, but many Internet users in the United States still connect to the web using a modem.

Customize the Headline, Summary Text, and Copy

Don't use the same landing page for every keyword that you're targeting. Customize the visitor's experience by using the most relevant headline, summary text, and sales copy for each keyword. I know it sounds like a lot of work, but it's worth it, especially when you consider your increase in conversions. This can be done by creating a separate landing page for each group of related keywords. This can also be done dynamically by using a server side script.

Use an Image Caption

Consider using an **image caption**, which is the text that appears directly below an image that describes the product or service. When people scan a web page, the caption below the image is one of the most frequently read items.

Use Testimonials

Ask your merchants for relevant product, service, or company testimonials. Early on, I underestimated the power of testimonials. However, after implementing a few genuine testimonials on some of my websites, I saw an increase in conversions.

Test Different Versions of Your Landing Page

One of the best ways to increase conversions is to test different versions of your landing page to see which one converts best. This is known as split testing.

If you want to learn more about split testing I highly recommend Scott Miller's ConversionLab e-book <http://conversionlab.quityourdayjob.com>.

Google is currently beta testing a new tool called **Website Optimizer** that will allow you to perform split testing on your website. For more information visit <http://services.google.com/websteoptimazer/>

4.7 Web Usability Guidelines

When the Internet first became mainstream back in the late 90's, there was a lot of emphasis on web design and hardly any focus on web usability. The early (commercial) Internet was plagued by flash intros, sound loops, and graphic intensive design. Some of these issues still exist today, but thanks to the rise of web usability, webmasters are placing more focus on the user experience.

When designing a website, it's more important to use web standards than it is to try and be original. Assume nothing about your visitors; design for the lowest common denominator. This means that 99% of the web population should be able to view and use your website as it was intended, with no fixes or workarounds.

There have been volumes written about web usability in recent years. This section will try and summarize some of the most important aspects of web usability. For a comprehensive guide to web usability I recommend Jakob Nielsen's book [Designing Web Usability](#).

Always Make Links Blue

Back in 1995, when I was getting online for the first time, I was taught to navigate the web by clicking on the blue underlined text. Whenever you see blue underlined text you know it's a link. This is one of the most widely accepted standards on the web. Don't confuse your visitors by changing the color of the links.

Use a Readable Font

I highly recommend using a font-face that is optimized for the web. Here is my list of recommended font-faces:

- Arial
- Courier
- Georgia

- Times New Roman
- Verdana

Avoid using font sizes that are too small. People shouldn't have to squint to read your copy.

Always use a dark font on a light background. If you use a light font on a dark background it can be very difficult to read.

Web Pages Should Load Fast

Despite the fact that broadband is growing at a rapid pace, it still only accounts for 40% of US households. There are still millions of households using a dial-up connection to access the Internet. This means that you need to consider the load time of your pages when designing your website.

Many web experts advocate that your page should load within 10 seconds on a 56k modem. To test your website use the free [Web Page Speed Report](#). In order to speed up your page, I recommend that you use graphics sparingly, and try to reduce your graphics file size.

4.7.1 Testing Your Website

It's important that your website displays consistently in most web environments. You should consider testing your website on different web browsers, screen resolutions, and connection speeds.

If you don't have access to different platforms I recommend the following free web-based tools.

Screen Size Test:

To see what your web page looks like at an 800x600 screen resolution, I recommend AnyBrowser's [Screen Size Tester](#). By default, the tool will test your site at a 640x480 resolution, but this resolution is almost non-existent now. According to my traffic logs from over 100 different websites, less than a 0.5 % use 640x480. This data is also backed up by statistics gathered from other industry leading sites like [Browser News](#). 800x600 is now the most common denominator used for testing how your web page looks in different screen sizes.

Web Browser Emulator:

It's impossible to guarantee how your website will look in different web browsers without having the specific browsers installed on your machine. [AnyBrowser.com](#) does provide a

tool called the [Web Site Viewer](#), which is not an emulator, but will show you potential problems your web page display may have.

If possible, I recommend testing your website in these popular web browsers:

1. **Internet Explorer** - by far the most widely used browser. Accounts for over 80% of the market. [Download Internet Explorer](#) (free)
2. **FireFox** - the fastest growing browser. Approximately 10% of the market. [Download Firefox](#) (free)
3. **Safari/Konqueror (Mac/Linux)** - Covers approximately 2.5% - 5% of the market. **This is not available to test on Windows.** [Download Safari](#) (Mac's Only). [Download Konqueror](#) (Linux/Unix Only). If you want to test your web page in this environment you will have to have a Mac or Linux machine available. Obviously this is not practical for most Windows users. If you are concerned about how your page looks on this platform, I recommend asking a friend or colleague with a linux/mac machine to test your page.

There are dozens of other browsers out there, but most have failed to reach a critical mass. You shouldn't waste your time worrying about them. Just keep your website simple, and it should display just fine in most environments.

Section 4 Resources

Webmaster Learning

HTML Goodies - www.htmlgoodies.com

A great place to learn basic and advanced web development skills. It's where I learned the basics back in 2000.

W3Schools - www.w3schools.com

Several good tutorials about HTML, scripting, database development, and design.

SitePoint - www.sitepoint.com

This is probably my favorite resource for learning about website design, development, and the business aspects of the Internet. They have several great [books](#) too.

Website Templates

Template Monster - www.templatemonster.com

The best source for website templates on the Internet.

Helen Design - www.helendesign.net

They have hundreds of web templates available in several categories.

Boxed Art - www.boxedart.com

WordPress Themes - themes.wordpress.net

These themes are designed to be used with the Word Press blogging system, but can be used for any purpose.

Resources for Outsourcing Your Website

eLance - www.elance.com

The largest and most popular network of freelance workers online. Outsource design, development, copywriting, and more.

GetaFreeLancer.com - www.getafreelancer.com

A great resource for outsourcing web-related projects. Highly recommended.

Web Usability

UseIt.com - www.useit.com

Jakob Nielsen's usability website. Features case studies and other good resources for web usability.

Usability.gov - www.usability.gov

A government sponsored website that features hundreds of good articles about web usability and design. The site also links out to several other good web usability sources.

Books

- [HTML Books](#)
- [Dreamweaver Books](#)
- [FrontPage Books](#)
- [Web Usability Books](#)
- [Web Copywriting Books](#)

5.0 Search Engine Optimization – Climbing Your Way to the Top

There are several good ways to drive traffic to your website. This section will not only show you how to dramatically increase your traffic, but will also show you how to drive more **high-quality traffic** to your website.

One of the best and most cost-effective ways to drive people to your website is through search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft. There are two sources of search engine traffic: [organic search](#), and [paid search](#), which we will talk about in the next section. In this section you will learn how to successfully optimize your website for organic search in order to drive more traffic to your website.

5.1 Organic Search (Search Engine Optimization)

There have been volumes written about [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) over the last 5 years. Most of what has been written about SEO, in books, articles, blogs, and forums, is speculative. However, much of this information is based on the real experience of [Search Engine Optimizer's \(SEO's\)](#).

Search Engine Secrecy

Search engines closely guard information about how they rank websites. This is an attempt by the search engines to prevent webmasters from manipulating search results and to maintain the integrity and relevancy of their results. SEO's attempt to improve the ranking of their websites by making their web pages more "search engine friendly", and by getting other high quality and relevant sites to link to them.

Learning How Search Engines Rank Web Pages

A lot of what we know about how search engines rank web pages comes from SEO's reverse engineering the Search Engine Results Pages ([SERP's](#)). They essentially type in a keyword, review the results returned, and then closely examine the websites that rank well. They look for patterns and information that may indicate why a particular website has a high ranking. They then share this information with other SEO's through blogs, forums and other mediums to try and validate their findings. Once there is an informal consensus about a specific technique or strategy, it becomes widely accepted SEO Theory.

In addition to these SEO theories, major search engines companies (Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft) have published white papers, patent applications, and research projects, which give additional clues as to how they rank websites. These publications only provide a few pieces of the puzzle, but provide valuable insight.

Search Engine Optimization Summarized

Search engine optimization can be a somewhat complex subject, especially when you start discussing the technical details and algorithms that power search engines. However, some webmasters get lost in these details and forget that search engine optimization is really only about two things:

- 1. Writing quality content containing your keywords.**
- 2. Getting important websites with similar content themes to link to your website.**

These two things are much easier said than done, but I wanted to illustrate that search engine optimization is not overly complicated. If you get these two things right, your website will be 90% optimized. The remaining 10% comes from on-page optimization techniques, which I will discuss in more detail later in this section.

What to Expect from Search Engine Optimization Efforts

Achieving a good ranking overnight is not a realistic expectation. Search engine optimization takes a lot of time and patience. It could take anywhere from weeks to months to achieve a top 10 ranking. There are no shortcuts. You can't buy your way to the top or get instant results like you can with paid search. It's also important to understand that the search engines are constantly changing their algorithms in an attempt to improve their relevancy and filter out spam. You may rank well today, but could lose your position tomorrow after a search engine update. That's just part of the game.

Search engine optimization is a lot of work, but can pay big dividends. The traffic you receive from organic search doesn't cost you anything. The only investment required is your time.

To get the most out of your efforts, I highly suggest that you optimize your site for less competitive keywords, as mentioned in Section 3. By focusing on less competitive keywords, you are more likely to see faster and better results.

5.1.1 Black Hat, White Hat, and Gray Hat SEO

Search Engine Optimizers wear many different hats. The color of their hat is determined by their philosophy and the methods they use to optimize websites. There are Black Hat SEO's, White Hat SEO's, and Gray Hat SEO's. As an affiliate, it's important to understand what's black, what's white, and what's gray, and to understand the risk versus the reward for each approach.

Black Hat SEO

Black Hat SEO, also known as search engine spamming, is when someone creates web pages that have little or no value, that are intended to trick the search engines into offering irrelevant, redundant or low-quality search results.

Black Hat SEO's disregard the rules and the goals of the search engines in an attempt to lure visitors to their website through deceptive practices. They often take pride in gaming or outsmarting the search engines.

Black Hat SEO's will heavily leverage technology and automation in order to create tons of poor-quality pages and gain inbound links from other websites ([link spam](#)). Once the visitor has arrived at their site they will often use some kind of [cloaking](#) or [redirect](#) to show the visitor a "sales friendly" page.

Black Hat SEO's are all about getting fast results. The methods they use to optimize their websites will often propel them to the top of the search results very rapidly, but when the search engines catch-on their websites crash and burn. This is of little consequence to many Black Hat SEO's as they can easily reproduce their results with a new website.

I do not condone Black Hat SEO for affiliates. It can be especially damaging when used on a website that you have invested heavily in. I have listed some Black Hat SEO techniques below that you should avoid:

Black Hat Strategies to Avoid

- [Keyword stuffing](#)
- [Scraper sites](#)
- [Mirror/duplicate content](#)
- Tiny or unreadable text
- [Doorway pages](#)
- [Link Farms](#)
- [Cloaking](#)
- [Keyword stacking](#)
- Hidden text
- [Domain Spam](#)
- Hidden links

For more tips on how to avoid Black Hat SEO, I recommend checking out the following links:

- [Google's Search Guidelines](#)
- [Yahoo's Search Guidelines](#)
- [Microsoft's Search Guidelines](#)

White Hat SEO

White Hat SEO's focus on building quality content first and search engine optimization second. They like to play by the rules and tend to stay away from techniques that would jeopardize their website's search engine listing.

White Hat SEO's may use technology and automation to build their websites too, but they use it to accomplish different goals. They write content for people, not search engines. White Hat SEO's tend to rely more on their writing and marketing skills to achieve a top ranking, rather than automated programs.

White Hat SEO's understand that good search engine rankings take time and don't try to rush results. White Hat SEO's are able to get more inbound links from other websites because their content is considered valuable.

When you use White Hat SEO tactics you run absolutely no risk of being banned by the search engines. Visitors who come to your website will also be more likely to convert.

Gray Hat SEO

Most SEO's fall into the Gray Hat category. There are many shades of gray. Some Gray Hat SEO's tend to use more questionable tactics and take greater risks. Other Gray Hat SEO's may not do anything controversial, but may place more emphasis on optimization over content.

Gray Hat search engine optimization is all about risk vs. reward. Some Gray Hat techniques may be frowned upon by the search engines and White Hat SEO's, but are not necessarily against their rules, while other techniques may be more risky and should be used only after careful consideration.

What Hat Should You Wear?

The hat that you decide to wear should be determined by your goals and objectives. I would never recommend that anybody use Black Hat SEO strategies, which clog the search engines with useless pages, and provide a poor user experience. These strategies are short-lived and will almost always get you banned in the search engines.

Everybody should strive to be a White Hat SEO and focus on writing quality content. However, it may make sense for you in some instances to use Gray Hat SEO tactics to gain a competitive advantage. You have to measure the risk and reward of each strategy and determine for yourself if it makes sense for your website.

All of the search engine optimization methods that I use on my own websites would be considered either White Hat or Gray Hat. I've pushed the limits on a few sites and had them banned from the search engines. These were sites that I could afford to gamble with. I've never taken a big risk with my most valuable websites.

5.1.2 Optimize Your Site

Building a website that is both search engine friendly and user friendly is a balancing act. You don't want to over-optimize your site for the search engines and sacrifice the user experience. After all, search engines don't buy from websites, people do. However, in order for you to attract visitors to your website through the search engines you need to make your website search engine friendly too.

The best strategy is to build a keyword-rich website that is also appealing to your visitors. In order to do this effectively you must first determine what keywords you are trying to rank for, and build content-themed pages that include those keywords.

In Section 4.2, I discussed strategies for developing a content theme and how to plan your website's sections using your keywords. Now it's time to start thinking about how to optimize individual pages within your website.

It's important to know that each page within your website has the potential to rank for its own set of keywords; however, you should note that each page can only be optimized for 1-3 related keyword phrases. If you try and optimize your page for multiple keywords you can lessen the overall effectiveness of the page.

Where Should Your Keywords Appear

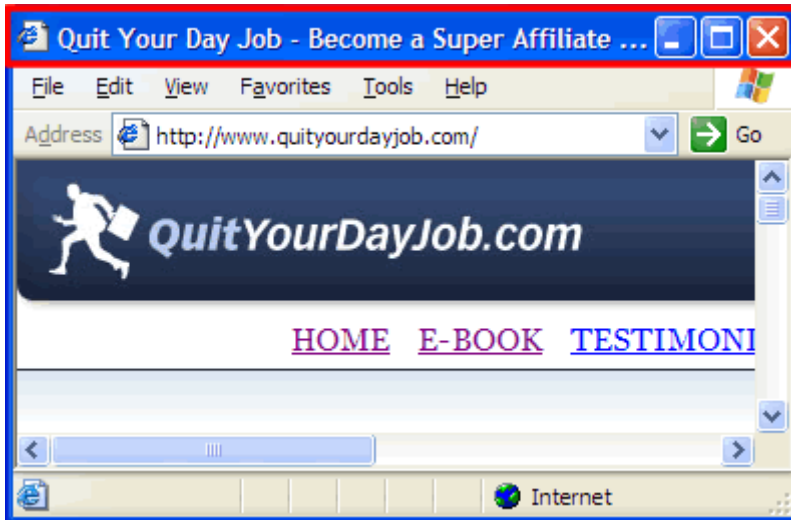
The placement of keywords on your web pages can have a profound impact on how your website ranks for those keywords.

Title Tags

Perhaps the most important place to have your keywords is in the <title> tag of your web page. The title tag identifies the content of your web page and appears at the top of the browser window as shown in the screenshot below:

(Screenshot on the following page...)

Figure 5.1.2.a Quit Your Day Job Page Title Example



The title tag is important because it tells search engines and users what your web page is about. The text in your title tag is also what the search engines use when they link back to you through the search results. See the example in figure 5.1.2.b:

Figure 5.1.2.b Quit Your Day Job Search Listing Example

[Quit Your Day Job - Become a Super Affiliate](http://www.quityourdayjob.com/)

Learn the insider secrets and proven strategies that I used to make OVER \$1000000 online last year through affiliate marketing.

www.quityourdayjob.com/ - 10k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

The text "Quit Your Day Job - Become a Super Affiliate" is the same copy that I use in the title of my home page.

Use a keyword-rich title to describe your page's content. Avoid using generic page titles such as "Home Page" or "Welcome to our Website ". You should use descriptive titles that include your most important keywords.

For example, let's say that you wanted to optimize your page for the keyword "utah car insurance". Which title from the examples below would be most interesting to your prospective visitors?

1. "Utah Car Insurance"
2. "Utah Car Insurance Page"
3. "Find the Best Rate on Utah Car Insurance"

If you chose #3 you were right. #3 includes the keyword phrase and clearly states the benefit of your page.

Meta Tags

As I mentioned earlier in Section 3.3.4, the Meta Keywords tag is no longer a factor in ranking web pages. However, the [Meta Description tag](#) is often used as the summary text in search results. If you look at figure 5.1.2.b above, you will see the following summary from my website:

Learn the insider secrets and proven strategies that I used to make OVER \$1,000,000 online last year through affiliate marketing.

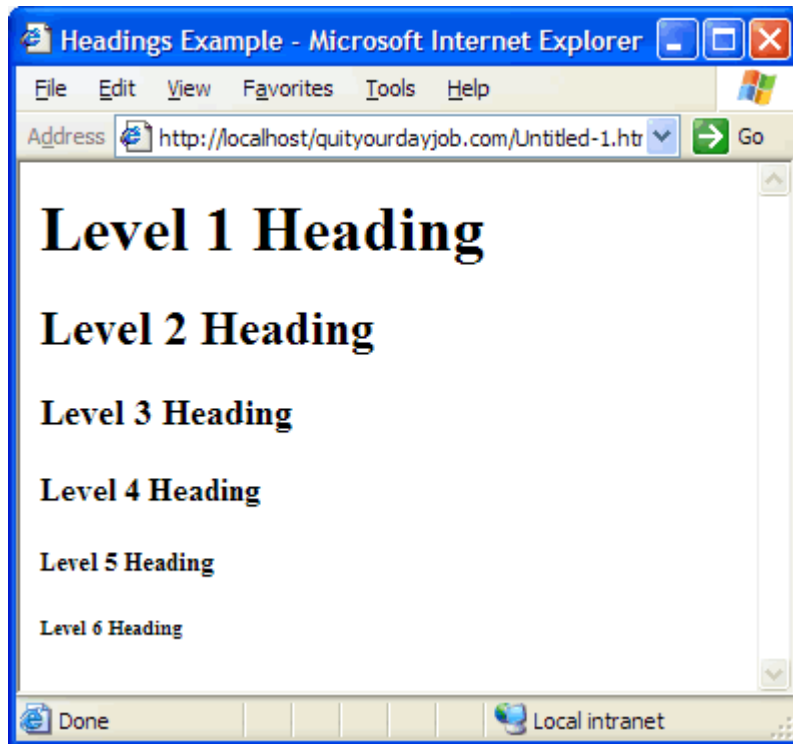
This exact same text appears in the Meta Description tag on my home page. Sometimes the search engines will not use your Meta Description for their summary. In some instances they may scan your page and automatically write their own summary based on your page content. There is no way to guarantee what summary text the search engines will use for your site, but if you use the Meta Description tag you can at least have some influence over how your listing is displayed.

Headings

I strongly recommend that you use your keywords in the headings of your web pages. A heading briefly describes the content of the section that follows it, similar to a newspaper headline. There are six levels of headings in HTML, with Level 1 Headings <h1> being the most important and Level 6 Headings <h6> as the least. Web browsers display the more important headings using larger fonts and use smaller fonts for the less important headings. The screenshot below illustrates this:

(Screenshot on the following page...)

Figure 5.1.2.c Headings Example



You should only use one Level 1 <h1> heading on each page. Use sub headings (2-6) to break up content on your web page and make it more readable.

Creating a good heading is not only important for the search engines, but it also helps engage your reader. The heading is one of the first things that pops out on the page. A good heading will help convince your visitors that you have good content that is worth their time to read.

Think about the two headings in the example below. Which one is more compelling to you as a reader?

1. "Review **Utah Car Insurance** Providers"
2. "Compare **Utah Car Insurance** Providers to Find the Lowest Rate"

The no-brainer choice would be #2. Why would I want to "*review insurance providers*" when I can "*compare them side by side and find the lowest rate*".

Page Content

Perhaps the most obvious place to use your keywords is within your page content. You should try and write naturally so that your visitors are drawn in to your content. Insert your keywords where it makes sense, but don't over do it. Instead of repeating the same

keyword over and over, I recommend that you use synonyms and variations of your keywords throughout your page.

In the past, many SEO's placed a lot of emphasis on techniques like [keyword density](#), [frequency](#), [prominence](#) and [proximity](#). They would spend hours analyzing content and search rankings in an attempt to understand the effect of each of these factors on a page. This also gave rise to several automated software programs like [Web Position Pro](#), which also attempted to "crack the code".

In the early days of search (prior to 2003), understanding and implementing these keyword techniques may have given you an edge in the rankings. The problem with these techniques is that they placed more emphasis on the search engine and less on the user experience. This often resulted in low-quality content and poor search results. Something had to be done...

In late 2003 Google released the famous [Florida update](#), which fundamentally changed the way they ranked pages. This update forced a lot of SEO's to throw out many of the ideas they had about search engine optimization. After this update more attention was focused on writing quality content and link building than to magic keyword optimization formulas.

There are still many SEO's today who fret about the ideal combination and placement of keywords on a page. These SEO's would be better served if they spent more time building quality content and getting inbound links.

5.1.3 (Link) Building Your Way to the Top

Inbound links are the single most important factor that determines your website's search engine ranking. Search engines use inbound links to assess the overall value of an individual page as it relates to a specific topic or keyword.

Linking 101

Before I begin discussing links in more detail it's important that you have an understanding of basic linking concepts and the different types of links.

Inbound and Outbound Links:

Search engines define a link from website A to website B as a vote, by website A, for website B. I have created an illustration below to clarify this point:

(Screenshot on the following page...)

Figure 5.1.3.a Inbound Link Example



In this example, website B has received an inbound link or a "vote" from website A. Conversely, website A has an outbound link pointing at website B. Any link that points to your website from another website is an **inbound link**, while any link on your website that points out to another website is an **outbound link**.

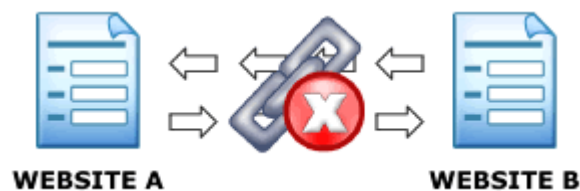
Reciprocal Links:

A reciprocal link, as the name implies, is where two websites link to each other. A few years back reciprocal links use to be a good way to gain inbound links to your website. I use to spend hours e-mailing other webmasters asking them if they wanted to "swap links". In essence, you were voting for each other's websites, hoping that both websites would receive a boost in the search rankings.

In recent years the value of reciprocal links has declined steadily. There is still some debate over whether or not reciprocal links can improve your position in the search results. Many SEO's now believe that instead of reciprocal links counting as a vote for each other, you are essentially canceling out each others vote.

For example, if website a links to website B, and website B also links to website A, the votes wouldn't count. Figure 5.1.3.b below illustrates this:

Figure 5.1.3.b Reciprocal Link Example



I don't spend much time pursuing reciprocal links and will delete many of the requests I receive. I occasionally grant a reciprocal link request, but only if the website has good content and is topically related to my website.

Anchor Text

The text that appears as part of a link is known as **anchor text**. When search engines evaluate links pointing to your website, they analyze the anchor text of the inbound links. The anchor text helps the search engine know what your web page is about. **It's good to have inbound links that contain your keywords in the anchor text because it will help you rank for those keywords.**

For example, if I were to link to Google like this: [Search Engine](http://www.google.com), the anchor text would be "Search Engine". Here is what the underlying HTML source code looks like:

Figure 5.1.3.c Anchor Text Example

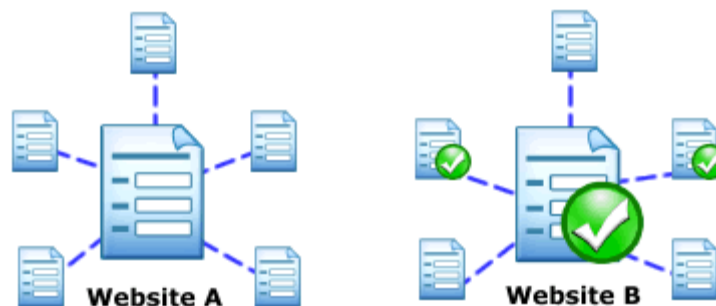
```
<a href="http://www.google.com">Search Engine</a>
```

 **Link Destination**  **Anchor Text**

Link Popularity

Link popularity measures the quantity and quality of the inbound links that point to your website. It's not enough to have a lot of websites linking to you; they must also be considered important websites. In other words, websites that have inbound links from important websites are also considered important. The graphic in figure 5.1.3.d illustrates this point:

Figure 5.1.3.d Link Popularity Example



In this illustration the important websites are marked with green checks. Website B has inbound links from other important websites, which makes website B important too. Website A does not have any important inbound links, which makes it less important than website B. All things being equal, website B would perform better in the search engines than website A.

There is no definitive way to know if a particular website is considered important by the search engines. However, the search engines do drop a few clues. Here are the two methods that I use to judge a website's importance:

1. **Google PageRank™** - The [Google toolbar](#) will display a ranking between 0 and 10 for each web page that you visit. Web pages with a PageRank (PR) of 10 are considered the most important, while websites with a PageRank of 0 are least important. Some SEO's discount the value of Google's PageRank, but I find this data useful when I'm evaluating a website.
2. **Search Engine Results Pages (SERP's)** - If a web page is ranked high in the search engines for a particular keyword, the search engine must think it's relevant or important for that keyword.
3. **Alexa Rankings** – www.alexa.com – Alexa offers traffic history and rankings for websites. The data is gathered using information from their popular toolbar.

Now that you understand more about linking basics we can move on to strategies for building inbound links to your website.

5.1.4 Getting People to Link to your Website

Perhaps one of the most challenging things about search engine optimization is getting other websites to link to your website. Webmasters will only link to websites that they think will be of value to their visitors.

Start by Writing Good Content

The easiest way to get other webmasters to link to your website is to write good content. You will find it much easier to write good content if you are promoting products and services that you know something about. You don't necessarily have to be the expert in your field, but being familiar with the landscape is important.

Another good way to generate content is to let your visitors contribute. For example, if you create a product review page consider adding a form where users can add their reviews and comments. This will make your site more interactive, and is a great way to get free and unique content added to your site.

If you don't have confidence in your writing abilities or don't like writing, consider hiring a [ghost writer](#) to create content for you. eLance has thousands of [expert writers](#) that can write about any subject. Hiring a ghost writer can be a cost effective way to create volumes of unique content. Most ghost writers will work on a per article basis, which allows you to evaluate their work before committing to bigger writing projects.

Submit to Directories

Submitting your website to a directory is a good first step to building link popularity and helping the search engines discover your website. There are literally thousands of directories online. Some directories are considered general topic, while others focus on a specific category. Some directories are free, but others may charge a review fee to be considered for inclusion.

Here is a brief list of some general topic directories that you can submit your website to:

- Yahoo Directory (<http://directory.yahoo.com>)
- Open Directory Project (DMOZ) (<http://dmoz.org/>)
- Joe Ant (<http://www.joeant.com/>)
- Gimpsy (<http://www.gimpsy.com/>)
- GoGuides (<http://www.goguides.org/>)
- SevenSeek (<http://www.sevenseek.com/>)
- Business.com (<http://www.business.com/>)
- Skaffe.com (<http://www.skaffe.com/>)
- Wow Directory (<http://www.wowdirectory.com/>)
- Microsoft bCentral Directory (<http://sbd.bcentral.com/>)

To add your website to one of these directories, browse to the category that is most relevant to your website topic. Once you are there, you should see a link that says something like "Add Site" or "Suggest Site". After clicking on the link you will be taken to a page where you can add your website to the directory.

Before you submit your website make sure that you read the listing guidelines for the directory. This will help you submit your listing correctly the first time and avoid unnecessary delays or having your listing declined.

If you are looking for a topical directory that is related to your website theme, I suggest that you check out the niche directory listings in [DMOZ](#) and [Yahoo](#). For a comprehensive list of general and specialty directories I recommend the [Internet Search Engine and Submission Directory \(ISEdb\)](#).

Give Away Articles

Another good way to get people linking back to your website is to give away free articles. Webmasters are always looking for good content to syndicate on their websites.

The best way to market your articles is by submitting them to an article submission site. Here are a few article submission sites to consider:

- Ezine Articles (<http://ezinearticles.com/>)
- Idea Marketers (<http://www.ideamarketers.com/>)
- GoArticles (<http://www.goarticles.com/>)

When your articles are syndicated on other websites it enhances your credibility and gives you valuable inbound links.

Write Testimonials

Consider writing a product or service testimonial for your merchants. If your testimonial is genuine and stands out, your merchant may feature it on their website.

You may also want to write testimonials for other products and services that you use. Companies are always looking to post fresh customer feedback on their sites.

When you submit your testimonial don't make it sound like you're doing it just to get a link. In fact, you should expect nothing in return. Just submit it with your contact details (including your website) and see what happens.

Create Press Releases

Create press releases to get your website syndicated by hundreds of major news sites like [Google News](#) and [Yahoo News](#). If you don't have anything newsworthy to report consider making your own news. You can announce a new website, a new article, or other information about your business. Creating a good press release is also a good way to generate good PR for your site.

Some press release sites are free, while others charge a small fee. Here is a brief list of sites to consider:

- PRWeb (<http://www.prweb.com/>)
- PRFree (<http://www.prfree.com/>)
- SBWire (<http://www.sbwire.com/>)

Press releases are often archived and can provide long-term value for your website.

Start a Blog

A blog can be a great way to attract visitors to your website. Search engines seem to value blogs because they tend to be updated frequently with fresh content. Most blogs are non-commercial, which makes it easier to get inbound links too. You can hook a blog in to your current website, or use a blogging service like [Blogger](#) or [LiveJournal](#). If you use a blogging service you can create a link back to your affiliate site from your blog, which may give you a small boost in link popularity.

If you are going to create a blog for your affiliate site you should be very passionate about the products and services featured on your site. For example, check out some of these blogs about Apple's Products:

- The Cult of Mac Blog (<http://blog.wired.com/cultofmac/>)
- iPoditude (<http://www.ipoditude.com/>)
- Playlist: The Ipod Blog (<http://playlistmag.com/weblogs/ipodblog/>)

You can create a blog for almost any product or service imaginable.

Be Active in Forums and Groups Related to Your Niche

One of the things that make the Internet great is communities. [Forums](#) and [groups](#) are a great way for people to get together online and talk about any subject. Consider becoming an active member of a forum or group related to your website's niche.

Be careful to use good [Netiquette](#) when posting or participating in forums and groups. You don't want to spam the boards with promotions or self-serving content. Just focus on being helpful and making positive contributions. **Here are a few tips for marketing your website subtly through forums and groups:**

- Use your website name as your handle (if possible).
- Create a detailed profile that includes your website address.

By making good contributions and being credible, you may get a few unsolicited links back to your site from other forum members.

Summary

As you can see, building quality links back to your site is no easy task. It takes a lot of work and dedication. However, inbound links are the single most important factor that search engines use to rank websites. The more quality, topic-focused inbound links you have, the higher you will rank.

Section 5 Resources

[Search Engine Watch](http://www.searchenginewatch.com) - www.searchenginewatch.com

Search engine expert Danny Sullivan weighs in on the latest SEO news and tactics. Check out the member forums too.

[High Rankings \(Forums\)](http://www.highrankings.com/forum/) - www.highrankings.com/forum/

An excellent SEO forum.

[Webmaster World \(Forums\)](http://www.webmasterworld.com) - www.webmasterworld.com

A great resource for all webmaster related issues, but especially helpful for SEO tips.

[Google.com Webmaster Tips](http://www.google.com) - www.google.com

Google gives you advice for getting into their search engine. The information is very basic, but helpful for first time webmasters.

[The Unfair Advantage in Winning the Search Engine Wars](#)

This book taught me a lot about SEO. The e-book retails for \$97. Its money well spent if you are trying to optimize your website for the search engines.

[SEOBook](http://www.seobook.com), by Aaron Wall - www.seobook.com

SEOBook is one of the better books about SEO on the market. It's very complete and informative. This book is helpful to mid-level and advanced search engine optimizers. The e-book is available for \$79.

6.0 Paid Search Marketing

With paid search marketing, also known as pay per click (PPC), you can start driving qualified traffic to your website in minutes. With paid search you have complete control over when and how your keyword-targeted ads are displayed. Paid search ads, or "Sponsored Listings", appear on the top and right side of the search results page when somebody performs a search. As an advertiser you bid on individual keywords and only pay when somebody clicks on your ad.

One of the biggest benefits of paid search is that you have an instant feedback loop. You can test different keywords, ads, and landing pages very quickly, which allows you to optimize your marketing campaigns in a fraction of the time it would take with other advertising mediums. This allows you to maximize your return on investment (ROI).

There are several Pay per Click Search Engines (PPSE) on the market. However, this section will only focus on the big three: Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft. These three search engines are considered the most important by most search engine marketers (SEM). When combined, they make up close to 100% of the overall search market. Some of the strategies offered in this section can be applied to all pay per click search engines, while others may be specific to just one.

6.1 Writing Good Ad Copy

One of the best and most cost-effective ways to drive more traffic to your website is by writing good ad copy. Good copy makes your ad stand out on the search results page and compels users to click-through to your site. Your ad copy can also be used to pre-qualify potential visitors so that you attract more buyers than browsers.

Make Every Word Count

Every search engine listing is comprised of three basic elements: a headline, a description, and a display URL. See the example below:

Figure 6.1.a

Headline: [Save on The North Face](#)
Description: Save 35-70% on Clothing & Gear.
Spring Sale: 3000+ items reduced 20%
Display URL: www.SierraTradingPost.com

When you're writing your ad copy you only have a limited number of characters to work with. Every word in your ad is important. In some cases you may need to use common abbreviations so you can fit more of your marketing message in your ad.

For reference, I have included a table that shows the size limit of the headline, description, and display URL for each major search engine.

Search Engine	Headline Limit	Description Limit	Display URL Limit
Google AdWords	25 characters	35 characters per line (2 lines total)	35 characters
Yahoo Search Marketing	40 characters	70 characters	35 characters
Microsoft Ad Center	25 characters	70 characters	35 characters

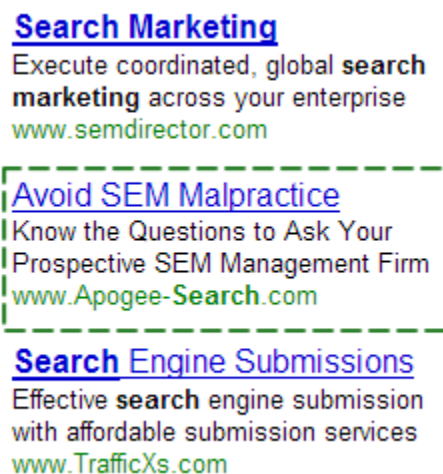
Make Your Ad Unique

In order to make your ad stand out from the crowd it has to be unique. I encourage you to review some of your competitor's ads. Do any of them stand out? If so, why?

Some marketers will use humor, fear, shock and other emotional responses to make their ad stand out. Whatever you decide to do, just make sure to differentiate yourself from the competition.

In the example below I did a search for the keyword "search marketing". Look at some of the results that were returned. Do any of them stand out to you?

Figure 6.1.b



In my opinion the 1st and 3rd ad are very generic, and boring. Ad #2 caught my eye because of the unique ad copy.

Use Keywords

You can dramatically increase your click-through rate by including your keywords in the headline and description of your ad. There are two reasons for this: 1) The ads appear more relevant to the searcher, and 2) The keywords are bolded, which makes your ad stand out more. According to [Yahoo Search Marketing](#), ads that include keywords are 50% more likely to get clicked on.

If you have enough space I also recommend that you use your keywords in the display URL. For example, let's say you're promoting a book site and plan on bidding on specific book titles. You could append the book title to your display URL. So instead of `www.BookSite.com`, your display URL would like this: `www.BookSite.com/DavinciCode` or `DaVinciCode.BookSite.com`. I have found that using keywords in the display URL can really improve click-through rates. It can also make your ad appear more official or authoritative for that keyword.

Use Benefits

Put yourself in the shoes of the customer. Why should they go to your website over all the others? How does your website or merchant **benefit** them? Will it save them money? Will it make them look younger or feel better?

Don't just list generic benefits, be specific. Instead of using copy like "huge selection", use something more specific like "over 15,000 widgets in stock"

Appeal to Your Audience

You should write ad copy that appeals to your target audience. Know what's important to them and what they have in common; write an ad that speaks to them.

For example, when I'm marketing a dating site, I try to understand what their target demographic looks like. I then customize my marketing message based on what's important to that demographic.

Use Incentives

One of the easiest ways to get people clicking on your ad is to use some kind of incentive. People love to save money. If your merchant is offering any kind of a discount or promotion, make sure to include it in your ad copy. Not only will it increase your click-through rate, but it will also increase your conversions.

Use Brand Names

When allowed, consider using brand names in your ad copy. For example, if your website features mp3 players, you may want to list some specific brands that you promote in your ad copy.

Google does not allow you to use some trademarked terms in your ad copy. In some cases you may be able to get around this by having your merchant fax a Trademark Approval form over to Google. Yahoo and Microsoft do allow you to use trademarks in your ads.

Summary

Every affiliate marketer should strive to become a good copywriter. Being able to write good copy can set you apart from the competition and increase your sales dramatically.

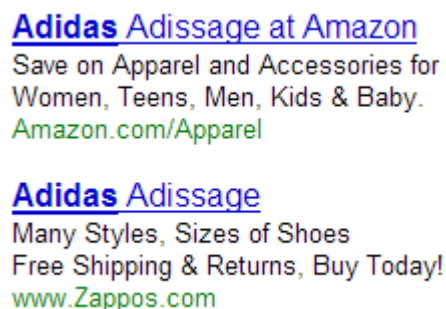
6.2 Tie-in Your Landing Page

If your landing page doesn't follow through with the copy in your ad its game over. You only have a few seconds to capture a visitor's attention once they arrive at your site. If they can't instantly find what they're looking for, you will lose the customer. It's that simple.

The best way to illustrate this point is with an example. Let's pretend that you're a customer looking for a pair of sandals. You've already researched your options and have settled on a specific brand. Now you're just looking for a store that has what you need.

You decide to buy a pair of "**Adisage Sandals**" by Adidas®. Let's go to Google and do some shopping:

Figure 6.2.a Google Paid Search Example



The image shows two search results for the query 'Adidas Adisage'. The first result is from Amazon, with the headline 'Adidas Adisage at Amazon' in blue, followed by the text 'Save on Apparel and Accessories for Women, Teens, Men, Kids & Baby.' and the URL 'Amazon.com/Apparel' in green. The second result is from Zappos, with the headline 'Adidas Adisage' in blue, followed by the text 'Many Styles, Sizes of Shoes Free Shipping & Returns, Buy Today!' and the URL 'www.Zappos.com' in green.

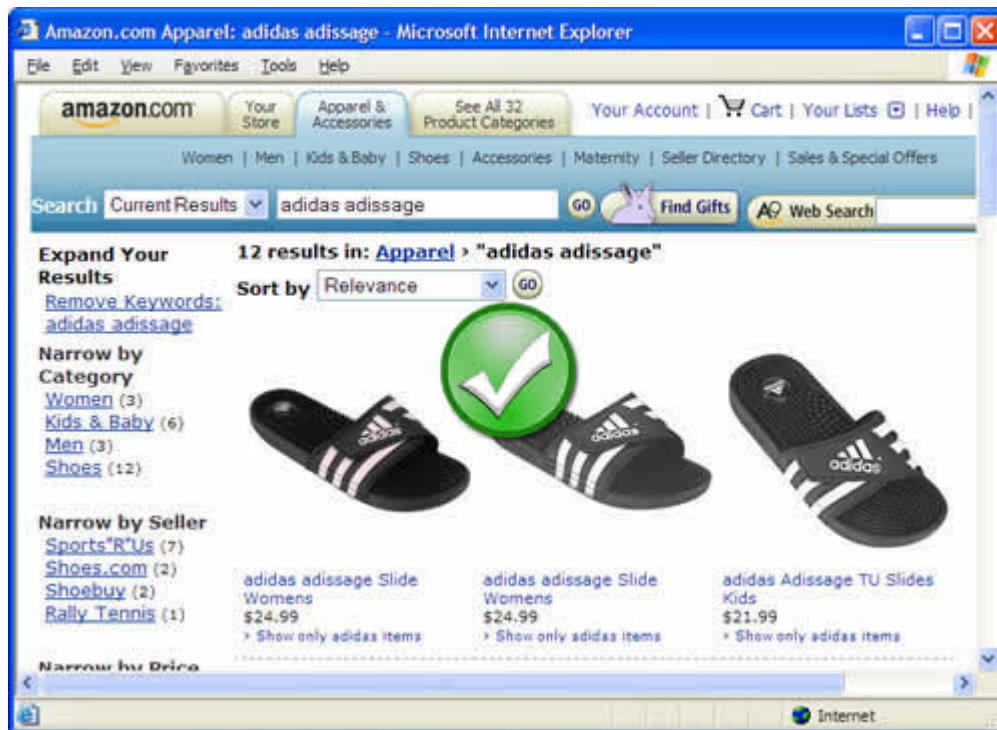
[Adidas Adisage at Amazon](#)
Save on Apparel and Accessories for
Women, Teens, Men, Kids & Baby.
Amazon.com/Apparel

[Adidas Adisage](#)
Many Styles, Sizes of Shoes
Free Shipping & Returns, Buy Today!
www.Zappos.com

From this screenshot we can see that there are at least two merchants offering what we're looking for. Now let's click-through to each site and see what we find.

We'll go to Amazon.com first:

Figure 6.2.b Amazon.com Screenshot



It looks like Amazon.com has what you need. You searched for Adidas Adisage, clicked on a relevant ad, and arrived at a page that sells these sandals. This is a good example of how to tie your landing page into your paid ad.

Illustration on the following page...

Now let's check out Zappos.com:

Figure 6.2.c Zappos Screenshot



Uh oh! What happened? Didn't you search for **Adidas Adisage**? The ad you clicked on mentioned Adidas Adisage, but you were taken to a page that makes no mention of these sandals. This landing page did not tie in to the paid ad that we clicked on.

Summary

It's imperative that your landing page is tied into your ad copy. If you send visitors to a generic landing page that doesn't compliment your ad, you dramatically increase the odds of them leaving your site. Your goal is to prevent the user from clicking their back button and to click through to your merchant's website. The best way to achieve this goal is by creating a good landing page that ties into your paid ads.

For more landing page tips visit Section 4.6

6.3 Tracking Your Results

"What gets measured improves..."

In order to be profitable with paid search you must track your results. Affiliates who take the time to analyze their campaigns and make the necessary adjustments will make the most money. It's easy to track your paid search campaigns and well worth your time and effort.

By tracking your results you will know what's working and what's not. This will allow you to focus your budget on the keywords that are most profitable and eliminate poor-converting keywords. The result will mean more sales with less cost.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Return on Investment (ROI) is the profit you make after accounting for your advertising expenses.

Figure 6.3.a ROI Calculation

$$\frac{\text{Advertising Profit}}{\text{Advertising Cost}} \times 100 = \text{ROI}$$

For example, if you spend \$50 and make \$100, your ROI would be 100%. To increase your profits, you need to be tracking the ROI for each keyword that you're bidding on. I know this sounds like a lot of work, especially when you manage a lot of keywords, but it's worth it. If you're not tracking ROI at the keyword level you could be leaving A LOT of money on the table. By closely tracking my keyword ROI each month, I'm able to save thousands of dollars.

I've included a new spreadsheet (keyword-roi-estimator.xls) with this book update that will help you estimate your keyword costs and show you the minimum conversion rate required to make money your keywords. This file is included in the original zip file with the e-book, but you can also download it anytime by visiting <http://www.quityourdayjob.com/members/keyword-roi-estimator.xls>.

Setting-up ROI Tracking

In order to track your keyword ROI you need to setup your marketing campaigns to track this data. This involves two things: 1) create tracking URL's for each keyword, and 2) create affiliate links with these tracking codes. Let's go over these steps in more detail.

Step 1 - Create Tracking URL's for Each Keyword

I strongly recommend that you use a tracking URL for each keyword that you bid on. This will help you determine what keywords are generating sales. To add tracking just put the following at the end of your landing page URL:

`/?source=Keyword`

For example, if your URL is: `www.your-website.com`

Your tracking URL would be: www.your-website.com/?source=Keyword

I've included a supplemental keyword tracking spreadsheet with this book update. The spreadsheet can be found in the original .zip file that you downloaded. The filename is **keyword-tracking-sheet.xls**.

You can also download the spreadsheet on the web by visiting <http://www.quityourdayjob.com/members/keyword-tracking-sheet.xls>. You must have Microsoft Excel on your computer to use this file.

Step 2 - Create Affiliate Links with Tracking Codes

Most affiliate networks and affiliate tracking software will allow you to put tracking codes in your affiliate links. These tracking codes help you to identify where your sales are coming from. Affiliate tracking codes are like promotion codes; they help marketers identify the source of a lead or sale.

To determine what keywords are generating sales just add the keyword from your tracking URL to your affiliate link. Once you have done this you will be able to see what keywords are generating sales.

Each affiliate network and affiliate software program has its own implementation of tracking codes. To find out how to use tracking codes with your network or provider, check out their help section, or contact their support department.

Putting it All Together

To calculate your keyword ROI you will need to download your keyword cost reports from each pay per click search engine, and your detailed commission reports from your affiliate networks or merchants.

Your keyword cost report will show you how many clicks you received, your average cost per click, and the total cost, for each keyword that you're bidding on.

Your detailed commission report will show you the commission amount, the product or service purchased, and the affiliate tracking code, for each transaction.

I've included a sample spreadsheet (keyword-profit-report.xls) with this update that you can use to calculate your profitability at the keyword level. The spreadsheet is included with the original zip file. If you need to download it again visit <http://www.quityourdayjob.com/members/keyword-profit-report.xls>

Using this spreadsheet example, I can quickly see what keywords are making money and what ones are losing money. I can then take action and adjust my keyword bids accordingly.

How often you decide to run a Keyword ROI report is up to you. If you're spending a lot of money on pay per click advertising it may be worth your time to run this kind of report daily; at least for your most expensive keywords. If you don't spend much on pay per click, you may be able to get away with running this report weekly, or even monthly. It's up to you; however, I would recommend that you *at least* analyze your keyword ROI monthly.

Keyword Tracking Tutorial

I have included an in-depth tutorial for implementing keyword tracking on your website. The tutorial can be found in Appendix A.

6.4 Google AdWords

The largest pay per click search engine is [Google AdWords](#). In less than 5 minutes you can be driving traffic to your site through Google. To be successful with Google AdWords you must first understand how their system works, and how it differs from traditional pay per click engines. In this section I'll give you an overview of the system and give you specific strategies to help you get the most out of your Google AdWords campaign.

Google Search Network

When you advertise with Google, your ads appear alongside the organic search results on Google.com, they also appear on syndicated partner sites like: [MySpace](#), [AOL](#), [Ask.com](#), [Lycos](#), and [iWon](#). Together, these sites make up what is known as the **Google Search Network**. Your ads will appear on the Google Search Network when somebody *explicitly searches* for a particular keyword. Google claims on their website that with the Google Search Network they reach over 80% of US Internet users every month.

Google Content Network

In addition to the Search Network, Google offers the **Google Content Network**. The Content Network is made up of thousands of sites, large and small, professional and personal, in every category imaginable. Your ads may be displayed on the Content

Network when Google finds web pages that have content related to your keywords. I have included a screenshot below that shows what these ads look like and where they can appear:

Figure 6.4.a Google Content Network Screenshot

CHOOSING CREDIT CARD

www.acceptmycard.com

1 Exclusive credit card applications
Unique Rewards

2 Find credit card bank
Bank or Card Name

Looks like you've been directed to our website. Well, you've come to the right place! Our system has generated a list of credit card products that match the exact credit card offer or feature you're looking for (based on hundreds of excellent unsecured and secured credit cards (your decision), including cards with Rewards, No Annual Fees, balance transfers and purchases, No Annual Fees, etc.).

Rewards Credit Card Rebuild Credit with Our MasterCard. Apply Online Now—Instant Decisions!	American Express Blue Cash® for Business Card Up to 5% Cash Back - 0% Intro APR	0% Balance Transfer Visa® Chase Platinum® Card balance transfer 0% for 12 months. Apply now
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Ads by Google

With the Content Network you have less control over your ads than you do with the Search Network. Conversion rates tend to be lower because users aren't looking for something specific like they are with search. Instead, they are simply browsing web pages of interest and clicking on contextually relevant ads that appeal to them.

Affiliates who are new to paid search should avoid using the Google Content Network until they gain experience. Contextual advertising is completely different than search advertising and needs to be monitored more closely. When you are setting up your advertising campaigns you can select to opt-out of the Content Network.

For those who decide to try the Content Network, I recommend that you setup separate bids for your ads. The value of a click in the Content Network is almost always worth less than a click in the Search Network; adjust your bids accordingly.

6.4.1 How AdWords Works

Rather than spend time going over every feature within Google AdWords, this section will highlight some of the most important features you need to be familiar with. I will also point out some of the main differences between Google and other pay per click search engines.

If you are interested in free in-depth tutorials to help you get started with AdWords, I highly recommend the [Google AdWords Learning Center](http://www.google.com/adwords/learningcenter/), <http://www.google.com/adwords/learningcenter/>.

Google Changes the Rules of Paid Search

When Google AdWords came out in 2002 it completely changed the paid search marketplace. With traditional pay per click advertising, your ad's position was determined by your bid price. For example, if three people were bidding on the same keyword, the bidder with the highest bid would be in the first position, while the bidder with the lowest bid would be in the third position. If you wanted to claim a specific position on the page all you needed to do was outbid your competitor.

Google Introduces Click-Through Rate (CTR) and Landing Page Relevancy

Google changed the ad ranking equation by including your ad's [click-through rate \(CTR\)](#) and landing page relevancy as variables. So instead of being able to bid your way to the top, your ad needed to have a good click-through rate, and your landing page needed to be relevant to the keyword. Google calls this your [quality score](#).

$$\text{Google Ad Position} = \text{cost per click} \times \text{quality score} \\ (\text{relative to the competition})$$

Google did this for two reasons: 1) to make more money and 2) to show more relevant ads at the top. Their reasoning was that if an ad has a higher click-through rate and a good landing page, it must be more relevant to what the user is searching for.

AdWords Discounter

With Google you set a maximum bid price or cost per click. This ensures that you will never pay more for a click than your maximum bid. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that you will have to pay the maximum price every time. In many cases, you actually pay less per click because of Google's built-in [AdWords Discounter](#).

With the AdWords Discounter you only pay one cent above your competitor's maximum bid price. For example, if you're bidding \$0.50 on a keyword and your next closest competitor is only bidding \$0.25, you only pay \$0.26, or one cent above their max bid price.

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing what your competitor's maximum bid price is as Google does not display bid prices. So that means there is no way to accurately predict how much you may pay for a click. The only thing that is guaranteed is that you will never exceed your maximum bid price.

Keyword Matching

Google's Keyword Matching feature allows you to control how broad or specific a user's search must be to display your ad. This feature, when used correctly, can save you a lot of money and can also improve your website's conversion rate.

Google includes the following matching options:

- Broad Match
- Phrase Match
- Exact Match
- Negative Match

Let's go over these matching options in more detail.

Broad Match

By default every keyword in your account is enabled for broad match. With broad match your ads are triggered anytime a user's search query contains any variation of your keyword.

For example, let's say that your keyword was "office chair". Your ad would appear for all of these different search queries:

- **office chair**
- cheap **office chairs**
- used **office chairs**
- return my **chair** to **Office Max**
- herman miller **office chair**

As you can see from this example, these search queries are very diverse. Chances are your website does not cater to all of these different search requests. You should disable broad match for all of the general keywords in your account.

When you are bidding on very specific keywords it may make sense to leave broad match on. For example, the keyword "black herman miller chair" is very specific. If you disabled broad match on this keyword, you would not show up for searches like "buy a herman miller chair in black".

The rule of thumb for broad match is this: If it's a general keyword - turn it off, if it's a very specific keyword - keep it on.

Phrase Match

Phrase match is similar to broad match with one major exception; word order. When you have phrase match enabled, your ad will be displayed anytime a user's search query contains your keywords in the same order you specify.

To enable phrase match for a particular keyword, simply add quotation marks before and after the keyword phrase. For example: "keyword phrase" or "office chair".

For our phrase match example, let's continue using "office chair".

The following search queries would trigger your ad:

- buy **office chair**
- rent **office chair**
- powell **office chair**
- best **office chair** website

As you can see, additional words can appear in front of and behind your keyword phrase.

These queries would not trigger your ads for the keyword "office chair":

- return chair to office max
- chair bargains at office depot

These search queries would not trigger your ad because the word order is different than your keyword "office chair".

Exact Match

With exact match, your ads are only displayed when the user's search query precisely matches your keyword. If somebody uses words before or after your keyword, or types your keywords in a different word order, your ad will not be displayed.

To enable exact match for a particular keyword enclose it in square brackets, like this: [keyword phrase] or [office chair].

For example, if your keyword was [office chair], it would not show up for any search queries other than *office chair*.

Using exact match helps you to better define your [keyword ROI](#). If you're using broad match extensively with your keyword campaigns, it is hard to determine what specific keyword phrases are resulting in conversions.

Bidding Tip

With Google AdWords you can specify different bid amounts for each match type. For example, let's say you that you were bidding on the keyword phrase *Herman Miller chair* by match type:

Broad Match - Herman Miller Chair - \$0.50

Phrase Match – “Herman Miller Chair” - \$0.60

Exact Match – [Herman Miller Chair] - \$0.75

You may find that you can pay more for the exact phrase [Herman Miller Chair] because your ad wouldn't be displayed for searches like “how to adjust lumbar support on a Herman Miller chair”.

Negative Match

Using negative match is probably one of the best ways to improve your profitability. With negative match you specify a list of terms that suppress your ad.

For example, if you wanted to bid on the keyword *office chair*, but didn't want to target variations like *used office chair* or *discount office chair*, you could add the terms *used* and *discount* to your negative match list.

To use negative match put a minus (-) sign directly in front of the negative term, like this:

-used

-discount

Be careful not to put a space between the minus sign and the keyword or it will not work.

It's important to understand the various keyword matching options and how to use them in your campaigns. If you're looking to drive more traffic for a particular keyword, consider broad match. If your goal is to eliminate extra costs, consider using exact match or adding negative terms. I encourage you to test each of these methods with your own keywords to find the optimal balance of traffic and quality.

Geo Targeting

When you're setting up your campaigns in Google AdWords you have the option of selecting what countries, states, and cities your ads are displayed in. This feature is especially helpful to affiliates who are promoting merchants with location-specific products and services.

For example, many insurance companies with affiliate programs can only offer insurance services in specific states. Any marketing done outside of those states is useless because

they can't serve the customer. With Google, you could create an ad campaign that would only run in those states where they have service available.

Ad Scheduling

With Google's new ad scheduling feature advertisers can specify exactly when they want their ad to appear. By default Google will show your ads 24 hours a day/7 days a week, but with ad scheduling enabled you can turn your ads on or off depending on the day of week or time of day.

For example, imagine that you had a campaign that converted well during regular business hours, but conversions dropped off after 5 p.m. With ad scheduling you could pause your ads every day at 5 p.m. to reduce your costs and optimize your conversion rate.

The other advantage that ad scheduling offers is that you can raise your bid by a certain percentage during specified hours or days. For example, let's say that you noticed your conversion rate on Monday was better than any other day of the week. With ad scheduling you could increase your bid by 10% on Mondays in order to improve your ad position and receive more clicks.

For more information about ad scheduling visit:

https://adwords.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=33227&hl=en_US

Position Preference (Bid to Position)

In Google AdWords your ad position is determined by your maximum cost per click (max CPC) and quality score (click-through rate and ad relevance).

$$\text{Google Ad Position} = \text{cost per click} \times \text{quality score} \\ (\text{relative to the competition})$$

You may notice that if you run a Google AdWords campaign your ad position may fluctuate up or down depending on a number of factors. With position preference enabled you can indicate the exact position(s) or range that you want your ads to appear.

For example, let's say you never want your ad to appear in the top position because you notice that your return on investment for position 1 is too low. With position preference you could specify that you only want your ad to appear if it's ranked in position 2 or lower. By using position preference you could decrease your costs and possibly increase your ROI by only showing your ad when it appears in certain positions.

Please note that this is an advanced feature. I don't recommend using it until you fully understand the benefits and potential pitfalls of using position preference. For more information please visit: <https://adwords.google.com/support/bin/topic.py?topic=8335>

Summary

Google AdWords is the clear market leader in the pay per click space. With its unique ranking system, geo targeting, and advanced matching capabilities it offers online marketers a unique opportunity to customize and track their campaigns.

If you're an AdWords beginner I highly recommend their [free multimedia tutorials](http://www.google.com/adwords/learningcenter/), <http://www.google.com/adwords/learningcenter/>. These tutorials will walk you through every aspect of setting up, managing and optimizing your AdWords campaigns.

Now that you're familiar with some basic AdWords concepts, let's move on to some more advanced strategies.

6.4.2 Strategies for Using AdWords

Once you have mastered AdWords basics, you can move on to some of the more advanced strategies to optimize your campaigns and improve your ROI. As I mentioned in the previous section, AdWords rewards smart marketers. The more you know about how AdWords works and how to use it to your advantage, the more you'll be rewarded.

Ideal Bid Position

Many new online advertisers assume that the best position for an ad is at the top (#1 spot). This may be true if your goal is to get the most clicks, but if your goal is to maximize profits, you should consider lower ad positions.

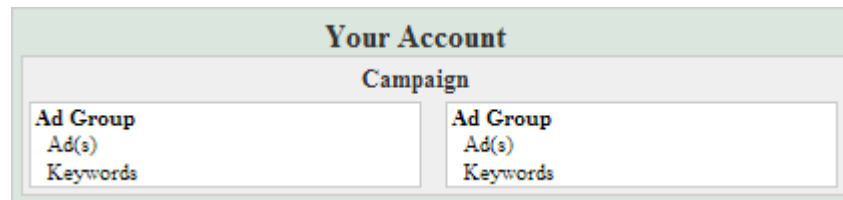
The problem with the top ad position is that you will often attract more browsers than buyers. This is because people will often click on the first ad without even reading it. They assume that the first result returned is the most relevant to their search. I refer to this as being "click happy". When your ad is in a lower position there is a better chance the user will actually read your ad copy first; instead of indiscriminately clicking on your ad.

Another good reason to avoid the top position is that it costs more. In essence, you're paying more money for less value. Positions 2-10 cost less money and often convert better.

Bid at the Keyword Level

When you're setting up your campaigns in Google, you create groups of related keywords known as [Ad Groups](#). Each Ad Group has its own ad copy, keywords, and maximum cost per click (CPC). Here is an example of how a Google account is structured:

Figure 6.4.2.a Google Campaign Setup



After you have set a maximum CPC for your Ad Group, you'll have the option of setting a maximum CPC for individual keywords within the Ad Group. Most advertisers overlook this and use the default maximum CPC for all their keywords.

I highly recommend that you specify separate bids for each keyword in your Ad Group. This will allow you to more accurately control your costs and determine your ROI.

To enable separate keyword bids; navigate to the Ad Group, select your keywords, and click on the "Edit Keyword Settings" button. You should see a screen that looks like this:

Figure 6.4.2.b Google Separate Bids Example

Keyword	Status [?]	Search Bid Max CPC	
auto car insurance	Active	\$ 0.25	<input type="button" value="v"/>
auto insurance oregon	Active	\$ 0.05	
best car insurance company	Active	\$ 0.10	
car insurance	Active	\$ 0.18	
car insurance coverage	Active	\$ 0.14	
car insurance dallas	Active	\$ 0.08	

Update the "Search Bid" for each of your keywords, and click the "Save Changes" button. If you don't specify a bid for a particular keyword, the maximum CPC for the Ad Group will be used.

Use Dynamic Keyword Insertion

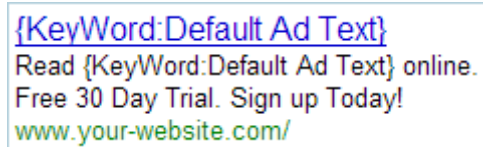
To increase the click-through rate of your ads, I recommend that you use dynamic keyword insertion. When you set up your Ad Groups, you write one ad for an entire

group of keywords. The problem with this is that since you only have one ad, you can't use all of your keywords in the ad copy; this then negatively affects your click-through rate.

To get around this problem, Google created dynamic keyword insertion. This allows you to dynamically insert your keyword into your ad copy when a user's search query contains that keyword.

To use dynamic keyword insertion use the following syntax in your ad:

Figure 6.4.2.c Google Dynamic Keyword Insertion Example



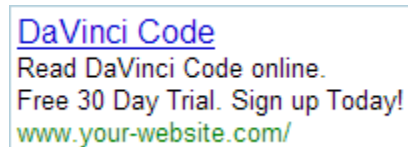
{Keyword:Default Ad Text}
Read {Keyword:Default Ad Text} online.
Free 30 Day Trial. Sign up Today!
www.your-website.com/

Let's break this example down a little further:

{Keyword:Default Ad Text} acts as a place holder for your keyword. When your ad is triggered for a keyword in your Ad Group, {Keyword:Default Ad Text} is replaced with your keyword. If your keyword exceeds the character limit, the Default Ad Text is used (you specify what the default ad text is).

For example, if you were using dynamic keyword insertion and somebody searched for DaVinci Code, {Keyword:Default Ad Text} would be replaced with the keyword DaVinci Code as shown in this example:

Figure 6.4.2.d Google Dynamic Keyword Insertion Example



DaVinci Code
Read DaVinci Code online.
Free 30 Day Trial. Sign up Today!
www.your-website.com/

Many new advertisers will create separate Ad Groups for each keyword, rather than use dynamic keyword insertion. This creates unnecessary Ad Groups, and also makes your account difficult to manage. For large groups of related keywords you should always use dynamic keyword insertion.

Create Multiple Ads

Google allows you to [create multiple ads](#) for each Ad Group. This is a very powerful feature that allows you to simultaneously test different versions of your ad copy.

By running multiple ads you can quickly determine which ad copy has the best click-through rate. You can also run tests to determine which ad copy results in more sales.

Rather than delete old ads that you have created I recommend that you just pause them. This allows you to review the click-through history for all of your ad variations and also gives you the opportunity to restart them without having to be resubmitted to the Google editorial team.

Google Quality Score

In addition to your ads click-through rate, Google also weighs the quality of your landing page when determining your quality score. If your landing page and ad copy are closely related to your keywords, and your page offers value to the visitor, your ad could be rewarded with a better position and lower click costs.

Many advertisers have been stumped by Google charging as much as \$5-10/per click for their keywords, not realizing that they have been penalized by Google's quality score algorithm.

Keywords can have one of three Quality Score states:

Great: Your keyword is very relevant and your Quality Score needs no improvement.

OK: Your keyword is relevant, but you can still benefit from a higher Quality Score.

Poor: Your keyword isn't very relevant to users and Google suggest you replace it with a more specific keyword, or update your ad copy and landing page to make them more targeted to the keyword.

I've attached an illustration that shows what this looks like in your AdWords account:

Figure 6.4.2.e – Google Quality Score



<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword	Status ?	Quality Score ?	Current Bid Max CPC	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. Pos
<input type="checkbox"/> dating review		Great Minimum bid: \$0.05	\$2.00	9	330	2.72%	\$1.41	\$12.62	2.3
<input type="checkbox"/> online dating review	Active	OK Minimum bid: \$0.10	\$2.00	7	576	1.21%	\$1.59	\$11.09	3.2

To improve your quality score you need to make sure that your ad copy and landing page are closely related to your keyword. You can improve your quality score by following these optimization tips:

1. **Improve Your Ad Copy** – Categorize your keywords and put them into closely related ad groups. Use your keywords in your ad copy; especially your ad's headline.
2. **Bid on Specific Keywords** – It's much easier to optimize ad copy for specific keyword phrases than general keywords. For example, if you were bidding on the word "*television*", it would be difficult to write ad copy that would satisfy the needs of everybody searching for that word. On the other hand, if you were bidding on a keyword like "*LCD HD-Ready TV*" you could write a specific ad targeting that user. In addition to offering better ad copy, you could customize a page that featured *LCD HD-Ready TVs*.
3. **Create a Landing Page with REAL VALUE** – If your landing page is nothing but a headline, picture, and snippet of promotional copy Google may penalize your page. Make sure that you take time to put valuable content on the page that will truly benefit Google's users.

I've also found that it's beneficial to put links to other important pages on the site somewhere on your landing page (preferably the footer). For example, I put links to my home page, privacy policy, disclosure policy, contact us page, and sitemap in the footer of my Google landing pages. Not only does this help your quality score, but it builds confidence in your site visitors when they know a real person is behind the site.

Summary

I encourage you to try all of these strategies on your own campaigns. Test each one and analyze the results carefully. Remember that even small improvements to your campaign can make a big difference to your bottom line.

6.5 Yahoo Search Marketing

Yahoo Search Marketing, formerly Overture, was one of the first pay per click search engines on the market. Their reach extends to over [90% of active Internet users](#).

Yahoo Search Marketing Advertising Credit

I worked out an exclusive deal with the [Yahoo! Search Marketing](#) to offer my readers a free \$25.00 credit. This offer is only available to new advertisers.

To take advantage of this special offer visit

<http://yahoo.quityourdayjob.com>

Sponsored Search

When you advertise with Yahoo Search Marketing your ads are displayed on popular sites like [Yahoo.com](#), [CNN](#), and [AltaVista](#). These websites comprise what is known as the Sponsored Search Network. Your ads are triggered when a user types in a search query that matches keywords in your campaign. This puts your ads in front of customers who are already looking for you.

Content Match

Similar to Google, Yahoo has a contextual advertising network known as [Content Match™](#). When you enable Content Match, your ads appear on partner sites that have contextually relevant content. I have included a screenshot that shows you what the Yahoo Ads look like alongside a content website:

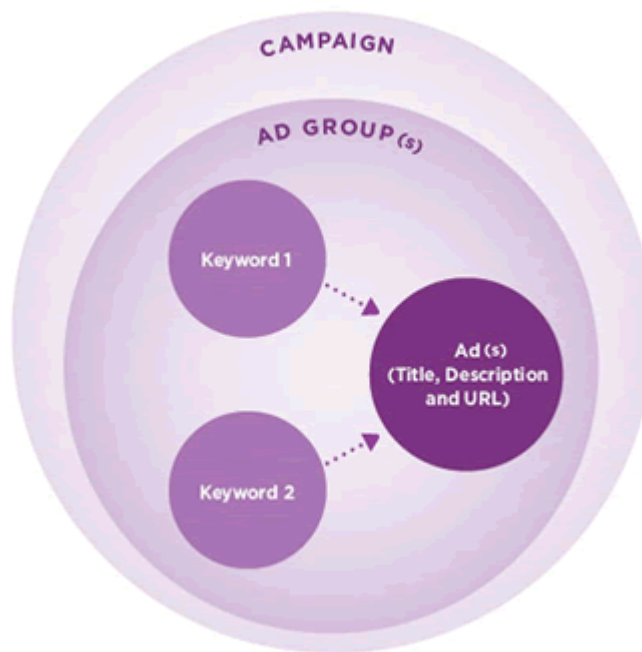
Figure 6.5.a Yahoo Content Match Example on CNN.com



Yahoo does offer more control over their content bids than Google. Unlike Google, you can set separate bids for each keyword, and even remove individual keywords from Content Match. Because of this enhanced functionality you may want to consider trying Content Match to broaden your reach. However, keep in mind that a contextual click is always worth significantly less than a click that comes from search.

6.5.1 How Yahoo Search Marketing Works

If you're familiar with Google AdWords, it will be very easy for you to figure out Yahoo Search Marketing's account structure. Each account contains Campaigns, AdGroups, Ads and Keywords just like Google. The graphic below (from [Yahoo Search Marketing's website](#)) illustrates this:









Ad Position

Yahoo Search Marketing ranks ads similar to Google AdWords. Your ad position in Yahoo is a combination of your ads click-through rate and your maximum CPC. The main difference between Google and Yahoo is that your ad's position is not affected by your landing page quality like it is in Google AdWords.

Click Index

Yahoo refers to your ad's click-through rate as your **click index**. The click index is a relative score that shows you how your click-through rate compares to the competition; relative to your ad position. Your click index is based on a score from 1-5.

Bars	Meaning
	Well above average
	Above average
	Average
	Below average
	Well below average
	Not enough data to determine click index

When your click index is set at 1, it means that your ad is under-performing and may be pulled. Your click index could be low for a number of reasons, but most of the time it has to do with your ad's relevancy to the search or poor ad copy. To improve your click index follow the tips in *Section 5.2.1 Writing Good Ad Copy*

Keyword Matching Options

Yahoo offers two keyword matching options: 1) Standard match, and 2) Advanced match. These matching options allow you to control how broad or specific a user's search query must be to trigger your ad. Standard match functions similar to Google's Exact match, while Advanced match functions similar to Google's Broad match. Let's discuss these matching options in more detail.

Standard Match

Standard match will display your ads when somebody types in a search query that matches your exact keyword. Additionally, Standard match will show your ads for:

- Singular/plural variations of your keywords
- Common misspellings of your keywords

For example, if you were bidding on the keyword *monitor*, your ad would be displayed for the queries *monitor*, *monitors* (*plural*), and *moniters* (*misspelled*). It may seem illogical, but Yahoo considers these keywords and variations to be the same.

As you can see from this example, you have less control over matching options with Yahoo than you do with Google.

Advanced Match

By default, Advanced Match is turned on for all of your keywords. With Advanced match turned on, your ads will be triggered anytime a user's search query contains your keyword.

Advanced Match and Specific Keywords

Using Advanced Match for specific keywords can be advantageous because you can target minor variations of your keywords that you may have overlooked.

For example, if your keyword was *Samsung SyncMaster Monitor* your ad would be displayed for search queries like:

- **Buy** Samsung SyncMaster Monitor
- **Compare** Samsung SyncMaster Monitor
- Samsung SyncMaster Monitor **Review**
- Samsung SyncMaster Monitor **Support**

With Advanced match turned off we would have missed some of these valuable keyword variations.

Advanced Match and General Keywords

I highly recommend that you turn Advanced Match off for general keywords; otherwise you may receive a lot of unqualified traffic.

For example, if your keyword was *monitor*, and you had Advanced Match turned on, your ad would be triggered for all of these different search queries:

- Monitor
- **Broken** monitor
- **Baby** monitor
- **Television** monitor
- **Heart-rate** monitor

You could probably filter out a lot of these clicks by writing clear ad copy, but you would still receive thousands of untargeted clicks.

Excluded Keywords

When you have Advanced Match enabled for a particular keyword, you can add a list of excluded keywords, which will suppress your ad from being displayed. This is identical to [Google's Negative match](#).

You can apply excluded keywords to an entire ad group. Yahoo also allows you to add a list of excluded keywords to your entire account.

Here is a list of excluded keywords I commonly use in my advertising campaigns:

- free
- support
- cancel
- customer service
- return
- problem
- error
- warranty
- repair
- used

By using excluded keywords with Advanced Match you will be able to target more qualified visitors.

6.5.2 Strategies for Using Yahoo Search Marketing

This section will show you how to get the most out of your Yahoo Search Marketing campaign, and how to avoid some costly mistakes.

Improve Your Click-Through Rate in Yahoo Search Marketing

As I mentioned earlier in this section, your ad position in Yahoo is based on your maximum cost per click (cpc) and click-through rate. If you write good ad copy, take advantage of ad testing, and setup your ad groups correctly you can pay less money for more traffic and improve your ad's position.

Perhaps the biggest mistake new search advertisers make is to compensate for a low ad position by raising their bid. It is more advantageous for you to improve your ad quality than to pay more per click.

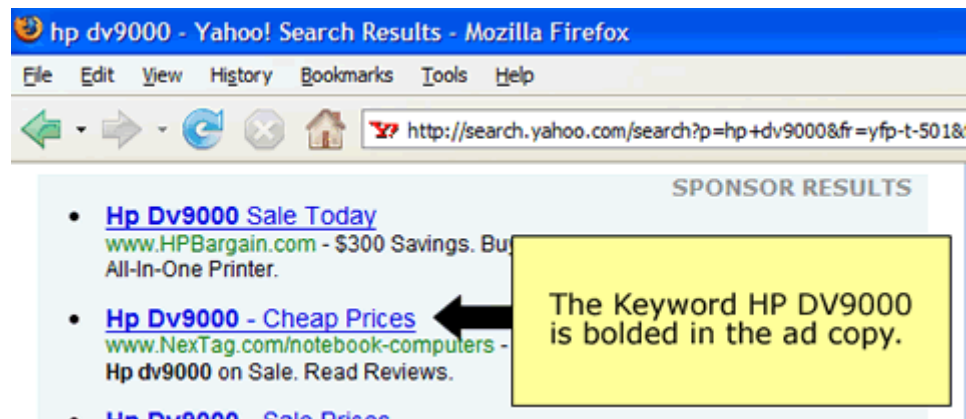
There are a number of things you can do in Yahoo to improve your ad quality. It all starts with targeting keywords that are relevant to your landing page and merchant offer. If you're not doing this, good ad copy and low click costs will not help you.

Use Keyword Insertion

One of the easiest ways to improve your click-through rate in Yahoo is to use their new keyword insertion feature. Keyword insertion allows you to insert your keyword into your ad on the fly when a user's search contains that keyword. This has two advantages –

1. Keywords from the users search will be bolded in your ad, which calls more attention to your ad.

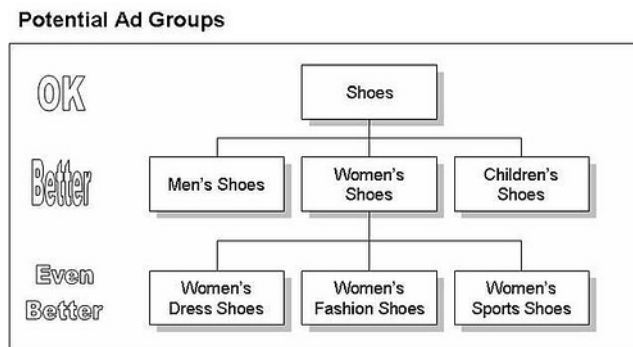
Figure 6.5.2.a Keywords Bolding Example



2. When a user notices their keywords in your ad it makes your ad appear more relevant to their search. For example, if the user's search is "Buy a HP DV9000" and your headline reads "Deals on **HP DV9000** Notebooks" – your offer appears more relevant.

Group your Keywords into Logical Ad Groups

To ensure that your message is always on target, make sure that you group your keywords into logical Ad Groups. The best way to do this is to categorize your keywords in advance. I recommend that you create several narrowly focused keyword categories. This picture from the [Yahoo Search Marketing Blog](#) illustrates the point best:



I also recommend that you create landing pages in a similar way. A landing page about "Women's Dress Shoes" is always better than "Women's Shoes" or "Shoes".

Test Your Ad Copy

One of the best ways to improve your click-through rate is to use ad testing. With ad testing you can run two or more versions (up to 20) of your ad copy simultaneously on Yahoo Search and choose the one with the highest click-through.

When you're performing a split test with different ad versions I recommend that you unselect the "Optimize Ad Group" feature in your ad group settings. This will prevent Yahoo from displaying certain ads more frequently than others and give you better test results.

When testing make sure you don't test too many variables at a time or it will be difficult for you to understand what resulted in your success.

Enable Tracking URL's

Tracking URLs provide information such as the source of the click and the search query. When you use Tracking URLs, the destination URL in your ads is appended with information such as the search query, keyword, and match type for each click.

To enable tracking URL's login to your account and go to the "Administration" tab on the far right. From there just click on the "Tracking URL" tab in the sub-navigation select "Turn Tracking URL's on".

Get 2 Ads for the Price of 1

If you are looking to get the most screen real estate with a single ad, I recommend bidding on the 4-6 positions. When your ad appears in the 4-6 position it appears on the top right side of the results and may also appear at the bottom of the page. This gives your ad more exposure and could potentially increase your click-through rate.

Summary

Yahoo Search can be a valuable source of traffic for advertisers. Their distribution network is comprised of the #1 (Yahoo), and #2 (MSN) most visited sites on the Internet, along with many other top web properties. Their reach is huge and extends to 90% of active Internet users every month.

Managing a Yahoo Search campaign sometimes involves a lot of work, but despite some of the unique challenges, it can provide a great return for advertisers. In fact, many of my Yahoo Search campaigns have a significantly better ROI than their Google counterparts.

6.6 Microsoft AdCenter

This last May (2006) Microsoft released their much anticipated paid search program dubbed **Microsoft AdCenter** (<http://adcenter.microsoft.com>). The launch of AdCenter represented the end of a multi-year syndication deal that Microsoft had with Yahoo Search Marketing.

Microsoft had been somewhat of a sleeping giant while Google and Yahoo were building their search engine empires. Once Microsoft fully recognized the potential of online advertising they began working on their own search engine and advertising platform. Since Microsoft arrived late to the market, they were able to evaluate the competitive offerings and come up with a few features ahead of Google and Yahoo.

Microsoft AdCenter \$50 Advertising Credit

I've arranged an exclusive offer for new Microsoft AdCenter customers to receive a \$50 credit when they sign-up for a free AdCenter account.

To take advantage of this special offer visit:

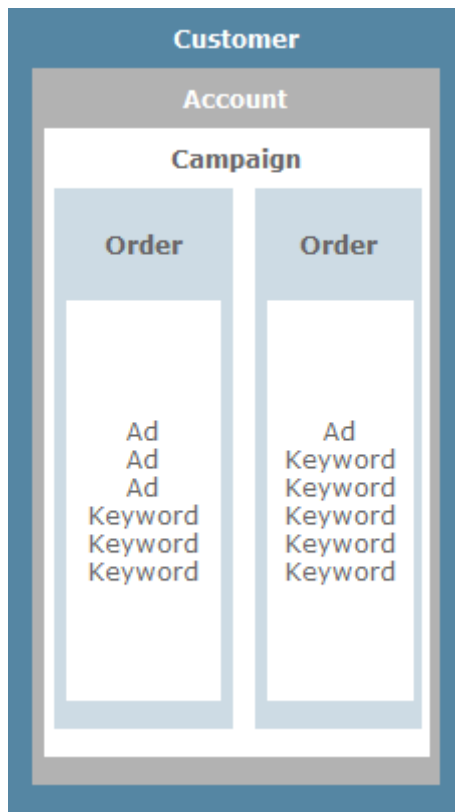
<http://adcenter.quityourdayjob.com>

6.6.1 How Microsoft AdCenter Works

Microsoft AdCenter is comprised of Campaigns, Orders, Ads, and Keywords. The illustration below explains the relationship and hierarchy between these parts:

Screenshot on following page...

Figure 6.6.1.a Microsoft AdCenter Account Structure



As you can see from the illustration on the previous page, Campaigns contain orders, which contain ads, which contain keywords (Campaigns > Orders > Ads > Keywords). If you are a Google AdWords advertiser this structure is probably somewhat familiar to you.

Now that you have a basic idea about how an Microsoft AdCenter account is structured, let's discuss these parts in more detail...

Campaigns

Campaigns are at the top of the AdCenter hierarchy. It's at the campaign level that you specify time-zone settings, budgeting, and language settings for your orders. When you make a change to a campaign, it affects all of the orders within that campaign. For example, if you pause a campaign, all orders within that campaign would also be paused.

Orders

Orders give you complete control over when and where your ads appear. Orders allow you to specify what countries, regions, states and cities you want your ads to appear (geo-targeting). You can also decide what days of the week you want your ads to run, and what time of the day (day parting). Microsoft was the first to introduce day parting among the major paid search engines.

Ads

Your ad consists of four basic parts: a headline, a description, a display URL, and the destination URL.

Microsoft AdCenter allows you to dynamically insert your keywords into your headline, description, and display URL. AdCenter also allows you to use a separate destination URL for each keyword.

Like Google, you can run and test multiple ads at a time (up to 20). This allows you to test new ad copy so you can optimize your click through rate and improve conversions.

Ad Position

Your ad position on Microsoft AdCenter is determined by your maximum cost per click (CPC), and click-through rate (CTR).

Ad position = Maximum CPC x CTR – relative to the competition

Like Google, Microsoft rewards advertisers for writing good and relevant ad copy by factoring click-through rate into their ad ranking formula.

Keyword Matching Options

Microsoft's keyword matching options allow you to control when your ad will be displayed for a user's search query. Microsoft has 3 match types:

- **Broad Match** – your ad will be shown any time your keywords appear in a users search query, regardless of the order of the words and whether other words are present or not.

For example, let's say you are bidding on the keyword *dell laptop* using Broad Match. Your ad would be triggered for queries like *dell support for laptops*, *dell laptop drivers*, and *compare dell laptops*. If you decide to use Broad Match it's important to use **Excluded Keywords** in your campaigns to avoid sending untargeted traffic to your website.

Broad Match keywords tend to get more traffic than Phrase and Exact Match.

- **Phrase Match** – your ad will be shown anytime your keywords appear in a users search query in the same order you specified – even when other words are present in the user's search query.
- **Exact Match** – your ad will only be displayed when the user's search query matches your keyword exactly. If there are other words present in the users

search, your ad will not be displayed.

- **Excluded Keywords** – if you are using Broad and Phrase Match types it's important to use Excluded Keywords in your campaign. Excluded Keywords allow you to specify words that will prevent your ad from being displayed. For example, if you are promoting Dell laptops you don't want your ad to be displayed for queries that include words like support, problem, and drivers.

Bidding

Microsoft AdCenter has one of the most flexible bidding systems in the paid search marketplace. With AdCenter you can set separate bids for broad match, phrase match, and exact match keywords.

In addition to placing separate bids for each match type, Microsoft allows you to set a **base bid** and an incremental bid for each of your keywords. By default, your keyword costs are determined by your base bid, however, Microsoft allows you to use **incremental bids**, which allow you to increase your bid by a percentage in relation to your base bid in order to boost your ad's chances for exposure to potential customers who meet specific target criteria, such as date, time, location, age or gender (*see Ad Targeting section on the following page*).

Ad Targeting

Microsoft Ad Center gives you complete control over when, where and to who your ad will be shown. Microsoft's ad targeting feature allows you to target customers by location (geo-targeting), time of day/day of week (day parting), age, and gender.

Not only does ad targeting allow you to control when your ad is displayed, but you can also use incremental bidding to improve your ads position for certain customer types. Incremental bidding is useful because some customer demographics may be worth more to you than others. For example, let's say that customers are more likely to purchase through your website on Friday's between 12-4 p.m. Eastern Time. With incremental bidding you could raise your base bid by 25% during this time so that your ad is in a better position when customers are more likely to buy.

Additional Notes about Microsoft Ad Center

Microsoft paid search results are only displayed on Microsoft Search

(www.msn.com). Because Microsoft does not currently have any syndication partners, you can expect considerably less traffic from Microsoft AdCenter than Google AdWords and Yahoo Search Marketing.

Microsoft AdCenter still has some bugs to work out. At the time of this writing (June 2006), AdCenter still has several known bugs. If you spend much time using the system

you are likely to see a few error messages and system timeouts. According to conversations I have had with my ad representative, Microsoft is aware of these system problems and is actively working on fixing them.

I'm a little surprised that Microsoft released the product so early. Based on my own testing and evaluation I figured they would release the product in early fall. I think they were rushed to launch the system because their syndication partnership with Yahoo was ending.

Despite the bugs I have encountered while working with Microsoft AdCenter, I'm actually very pleased with the return on investment (ROI).

Video Tutorial

I've included a free video tutorial explaining Microsoft AdCenter in more detail. To download this video visit: <http://www.quityourdayjob.com/webinars/adcenter/>

Section 6 Resources

Paid Search (PPC)

[Search Engine Advertising: Buying Your Way to the Top](#), by Catherine Seda

A great book about paid search marketing. A little outdated, but has some good fundamental strategies that will never grow old.

[Pay Per Click Search Engine Marketing For Dummies](#), by Peter Kent

Goes into more detail about some of the 2nd tier pay per click engines like Kanoodle, Miva, and others.

Google AdWords

[Making the Most out of Your AdWords Account](#), by Google - www.google.com

An excellent free resource offered by Google.

[Google AdWords Learning Center](#) - adwords.google.com

Learn everything you need to know to become a Google AdWords Professional. Interactive flash tutorials and text-based lessons.

[Winning Results with Google AdWords](#), by Andrew Goodman

A comprehensive guide to AdWords. Learn about some of the most advanced bidding strategies, and keyword techniques.

Yahoo Search Marketing

[The Yahoo Search Marketing Advertiser Workbook](#), by Yahoo

A comprehensive guide to this popular pay per click search engine.

[Yahoo Search Marketing Handbook](#), by Mona Ellesely

If you're frustrated with Yahoo! Search Marketing, turn to this guide for help.

Where to Go From Here

By reaching the end of this e-book, you have taken the first step towards quitting your day job. It's now time to put your new-found knowledge to work. The key to being successful is to make a little bit of progress each day.

I recommend that you start with a small project first. Don't overwhelm yourself by taking on too much at once. Follow the simple formula outlined in this book:

1. Pick a product or service category and find good merchants.
2. Create a comprehensive keyword list focusing on very specific keywords.
3. Create a simple and intuitive website to promote a group of closely-related products or services.
4. Use the search engines to drive highly-targeted traffic to your site

If you need help anywhere along the way use our free [support forums](http://www.quityourdayjob.com/members/forums/) <http://www.quityourdayjob.com/members/forums/> for guidance. Don't allow yourself to get stuck in a rut.

Continuous Improvement

Once you're up and running with your website and start generating commissions, take the necessary time to analyze your website and ad campaigns. Never assume that you have reached your full potential. There is always room for improvement.

Keep Learning

You could take nearly any section or sub-section out of this e-book and write a completely new book about that one subject. This book has covered a lot of ground, but there's still more you can learn. I have a vast collection of books and e-books about subjects like search engine optimization, landing pages, affiliate marketing, and paid search. I recommend that you expand your learning and investigate each of these topics further.

Remember to periodically check www.quityourdayjob.com for new information and book updates. The PDF version of this e-book will be updated monthly. You will receive an e-mail notification when new updates become available.

I wish you all the best and look forward to hearing your success story.

Appendix A – How to Implement Keyword Tracking on your Website

When I published the first edition of High Performance Affiliate Marketing there were many questions left unanswered about tracking keyword performance on paid search campaigns. In response to those questions I have created a mini-tutorial that will explain these concepts in more detail.

You don't have to be a web programmer to implement keyword tracking on your website. All you need is a basic understanding of how a URL is formatted and how to copy and paste a small snippet of PHP code into your web page.

Prerequisites – Before you begin...

The following examples show you how to implement keyword tracking on your website using the PHP scripting language. The reason I chose PHP is because it's the most widely-used server-side scripting language on the Internet, and it runs on both Windows and Linux/Unix platforms. Nearly every major web hosting company offers a web hosting plan with PHP enabled.

Before you can use the keyword tracking examples in this section, you must ensure that you can run PHP scripts on your web server. If you are not sure if PHP is enabled on your web hosting account, I recommend that you upload a sample PHP file to your website and try to run it.


How to check if PHP is enabled on your web server:

1. Create a new file in your favorite website or text editor, and save it to your local website folder as `phpinfo.php`
2. After you have saved the file go to the first line of source code in the document and enter the following code (**exactly as it appears below** – remove any code that may appear above or below) :

```
<?php phpinfo();?>
```

3. After you have copied and pasted this code into your file, save it and upload it to your web server.
4. After you have uploaded the file to your website, open up your web browser and navigate to that page on your website. For example, if you uploaded it the root folder of your website you would type in:
<http://www.YourWebsite.com/phpinfo.php>
5. If you have PHP enabled on your website, you should see a screen that looks something like this screenshot below:

Figure A.1



System	Linux gator117.hostgator.com 2.6.17.1hg #1 SMP Sat Jun 24 18:18:34 CDT 2006 i686
Build Date	Jun 22 2006 10:45:52
Configure Command	'./configure' '--prefix=/usr' '--with-xml' '--enable-bcmath' '--enable-calendar' '--with-curl' '--with-dom' '--with-dom-xslt' '--with-dom-exslt' '--enable-ftp' '--with-gd' '--with-jpeg-dir=/usr/local' '--with-png-dir=/usr' '--with-xpm-dir=/usr/X11R6' '--with-gettext' '--with-imap=/usr/local/imap-2004g' '--enable-mbstring' '--enable-mbstr-enc-trans' '--enable-mbregex' '--with-mcrypt' '--enable-memory-limit' '--enable-magic-quotes' '--with-mysqli' '--with-mysql=/usr' '--enable-discard-path' '--with-pear' '--enable-sockets' '--enable-track-vars' '--with-ttf' '--with-freetype-dir=/usr' '--enable-gd-native-ttf' '--enable-versioning' '--enable-wddx' '--with-xmlrpc' '--with-zlib'
Server API	CGI
Virtual Directory Support	disabled
Configuration File (php.ini) Path	/usr/lib/php.ini
PHP API	20020918
PHP Extension	20020429
Zend	20050606

This PHP page shows you information about the installation of PHP on your web server.

If PHP is **not** enabled on your website you will most likely see a blank page.

If PHP is not installed on your web server, you can either contact your web hosting company to see if you can upgrade to a plan with PHP, or move your website to a host that supports PHP like [Yahoo Web Hosting](http://webhosting.quityourdayjob.com) – <http://webhosting.quityourdayjob.com>.

Once you have determined that PHP is enabled on your website you are ready to implement keyword tracking on your website.

Important Note:

In order to use keyword tracking your landing page must be saved as a PHP file (file.php). If you save your page as a regular HTML file (file.htm or file.html) keyword tracking will not work.

Step 1 – Assign Destination URLs to Your Keywords

In order to track what keywords are generating sales, you must first assign a unique **Destination URL** (or query string) to each keyword in your campaign. Please note that this does not mean you must use a separate landing page for each keyword, it simply means that you are adding something (a query string) to the end of each URL. The URL examples below from *Dating Site Critic* illustrate this:

http://datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=dating

http://datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=singles

http://datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=personals

In the example above, all three URL's point to the same page on my website called [landing_page.php](#).

After the page name you will notice some additional text `?keyword=`, which is known as a **query string parameter**.

Following the query string parameter is a **query string value** – `dating`, `singles`, and `personals`. The query string values represent the keywords from my list.

Before you create your paid search ads, I recommend you take a few minutes to put your keywords and Destination URLs into a spreadsheet. When you are creating your ads, you can simply copy and paste the Destination URLs from your spreadsheet into your paid search campaign.

Here is an example of a spreadsheet I created for this campaign:

Keyword	Destination URL
dating	http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=dating
singles	http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=singles
personals	http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=personals
online dating	http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=online+dating
meet men	http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=meet+men
meet women	http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=meet+women

You can download this sample spreadsheet by going to:

<http://www.quityourdayjob.com/members/ebook/demo/keyword-tracking-urls.xls>

You may have noticed that a few of the keyword phrases from this spreadsheet example contain two words (*online dating*, *meet men*, and *meet women*). Whenever your keywords consist of two or more words you must combine the words with a + sign in your Destination URL. This is because URLs should not contain spaces.

For example, the keyword *online dating* goes to this Destination URL:

http://www.datingsitecritic.com/eharmony/landing_page.php?keyword=online+dating

Notice that the words *online* and *dating* are combined using the + sign.

Once you have assigned a Destination URL to each of your keywords, you can add them to your paid search campaigns.

Google AdWords and Destination URLs

To learn how to use unique Destination URLs with your keywords in Google AdWords, follow the instructions on Google's website:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/powerpost.html>

Yahoo Search Marketing and Destination URLs

To learn how to use tracking URL's in Yahoo Search follow the instructions below:

1. Open the Campaigns page > Campaign Details page > Ad Group Details page.
2. Identify the keyword and click its link. The Keyword Details page opens.
3. In the Custom URL field at the top of the page, click edit. The Enter a Custom URL dialog box opens.
4. Enter a custom URL in the dialog box.
5. Click Submit.

Microsoft Ad Center and Destination URLs

To use unique Destination URLs with Microsoft AdCenter follow the instructions in this [video tutorial](#)

Step 2 – Add PHP Code to Your Affiliate Link

After you have assigned a unique Destination URL to each of your keywords, you need to add some PHP code to your affiliate link(s). **Please note that each affiliate network implements keyword tracking differently, and that some networks may not support it at all.**

Contact the Affiliate Manager or the Technical Support team of your affiliate program or network to determine if keyword tracking is supported, and how it is implemented.

It would be impossible for me to show you how to implement keyword tracking for every affiliate network or individual affiliate program. In the following example, I'm going to show you how to add keyword tracking to your Commission Junction. I chose Commission Junction for this example because they're one of the largest affiliate networks.

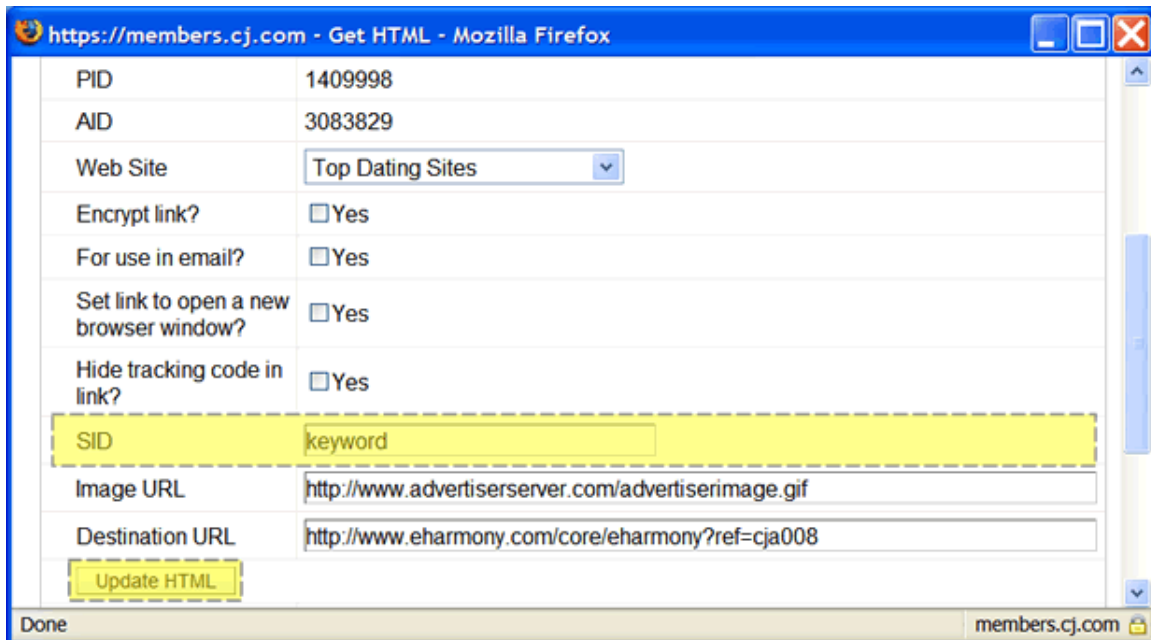
Commission Junction Example:

To use keyword tracking with Commission Junction you must add the **SID (Shopper ID)** field to your affiliate links. The SID field allows you to track keywords and variables up to 64 characters long.

For more information about the SID field login to CJ and reference the [help section](#)

You may have already noticed the SID field while you were generating affiliate links for one of your merchants. The graphic below shows the page where you generate links in CJ (The SID field is highlighted)

Figure A.2



PID	1409998
AID	3083829
Web Site	Top Dating Sites
Encrypt link?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
For use in email?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Set link to open a new browser window?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Hide tracking code in link?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
SID	keyword
Image URL	http://www.advertiserimage.com/advertiserimage.gif
Destination URL	http://www.eharmony.com/core/eharmony?ref=cja008
<input type="button" value="Update HTML"/>	

To use the SID field, enter a keyword into the *SID* form on the get links page and click the *Update HTML* button. When you do this CJ automatically adds the SID field to your affiliate link. *See the link example below:*

<http://www.tkqlhce.com/click-1409998-3083829?SID=keyword>

As you can see CJ appended **?SID=keyword** to the end of my affiliate link.

After you have generated your affiliate link with the SID field, you can copy and paste the link into your web page.

For this example, we will continue to use my Dating Site Critic website. Below is an affiliate link for eHarmony:

```
<a href="http://www.tkqlhce.com/click-1409998-3083829?SID=keyword">Go  
to eHarmony</a>
```

If somebody were to click on this link and buy a subscription to eHarmony, the text “*keyword*” would show up in my sales report, so we need to replace `SID=keyword` with something more meaningful. This is where PHP comes in...

We can use PHP to pull out the keyword value from our Destination URLs and put those keyword values into our affiliate links. To do this you replace `SID=keyword` with this PHP code snippet:

```
SID=<?php echo $_GET['keyword'] ;?>
```

This little snippet of PHP code will extract the keyword value from our Destination URL and insert it into our affiliate link.