

ShareASale Affiliate Basics

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What Is Affiliate Marketing?.

At its heart, affiliate marketing is just an agreement, nothing more. A merchant comes along with a product, and they want to drive more sales, so they make an agreement with a website owner.

This agreement lays out terms that go something along of: I place ads in view of your site's organic traffic, if you can get people to interact with my ads, then I will pay you.

Exactly how the payment works is determined in the affiliate agreement, but there are a few common ones, such as pay-per-view, pay-per-click, pay-per-sale, and so on.

Affiliate marketing is performance based marketing. If the website owner wants to be paid, they need people to click on the ads or buy products.

The Four Pillars of Affiliate Marketing

This is affiliate marketing 101. The kind of stuff you rack up a massive student debt learning from some old guy in a striped, tucked in shirt. There are four pillars of affiliate marketing and simply put, they go as follows.

- Merchant
- Publisher
- Customer
- Network

It's pretty simple. Merchants have products or services to sell, publishers have blogs or other high-traffic websites they want to monetize, and customers are the target audience for the products.

The network is simply a means to link merchants to publishers, and enforce affiliate contracts to prevent one from scamming the other.

When everything is working as it should, the merchant has a product that the publisher can show to their readers, and the readers can enrich their life by purchasing the product, becoming customers.

Everyone wins.

This isn't always how it works, but in a perfect world (and for the best outcome for everyone involved) this is the model that you should strive for.

In this course, we look specifically at an affiliate marketing networks, because like most things that the stripy-shirt man teaches, the rest is self-explanatory.

An affiliate network on the other hand is exciting because they are a potential source of income for a blogger, or a website owner looking to monetize their site.

They also make it easy for marketers to reach websites and audiences that are perfect for their product, forging solid connections to grow their business.

An affiliate network acts as an intermediary between the publisher and merchant. They make it simple to find and communicate without cold-calling or sending unsolicited emails.

They typically have a payment system that benefits everyone, and makes internet marketing a little safer. ShareASale is a perfect example of a working system.

Affiliate Marketing Networks.

I have this analogy I will spit out to anyone that will listen...

Business is like life.

Anywhere it can exist, it will. Just like moss grows in the cool dark of a cave where anything else would die, and strangling figs warp themselves around other trees for resources, affiliate marketing networks feed on the agreement between merchants and publishers.

There is nothing stopping a merchant from contacting a publisher directly and engaging them in an affiliate agreement, but it is a lot harder – in all seriousness.

Affiliate networks have already set everything up for both parties, and they are so popular because they are easy to use, and they feel safer than entering an agreement with someone over the Internet.

Why Choose ShareASale.

ShareASale is an affiliate marketing network that has been in the business for 16 years.

They are a top tier affiliate network with over 3,900 available merchants spanning a wide range of categories, solid reporting features, and most importantly it is free.

Whether you are looking to monetize your site or blog, or you have a product to sell, and you are looking for the right market, ShareASale is a good place to start.

Their website might not look as new and shiny as some of their competitors, but they have established a reputation, and don't need to try build user confidence with pretty pictures.

The layout is simplistic but functional, and they are, in my opinion, the best marketplace for affiliate products out there. Some may disagree, but I say this in earnest because I use them myself, and not because I'm being paid to promote them.

ShareASale's Affiliate Payment Models

One of the great things about ShareASale is that they offer multiple payment models.

There are some affiliate agreements that only pay out when a sale is made, as simple as that.

While that could be good for merchants of certain products, sometimes getting your name in front of more potential customers is more important than hooking a sale that day.

This is *one of the problems* with Amazon's affiliate program, it's sale based, and offers no incentive to help merchants build their brand.

It can also be problematic for the publisher.

If you are driving the traffic, but your merchant has a bad product you won't see much revenue, but we don't want those kind of merchants anyway. In the worst case, the merchant gets a ton of attention from your site, but your readers don't make the sale that day.

They browse around the internet to get information from other sources, and return to the merchant later to buy the product.

The publisher in this case built the brand and instilled trust in a product, but they get nothing for the effort, because it wasn't purchased through the affiliate link.

ShareASale lets you partner with merchants that offer CPC payment models as such.

Cost per Click (CPC) is a simple model. The publisher is paid every time someone clicks on an ad, rather than when a sale is made.

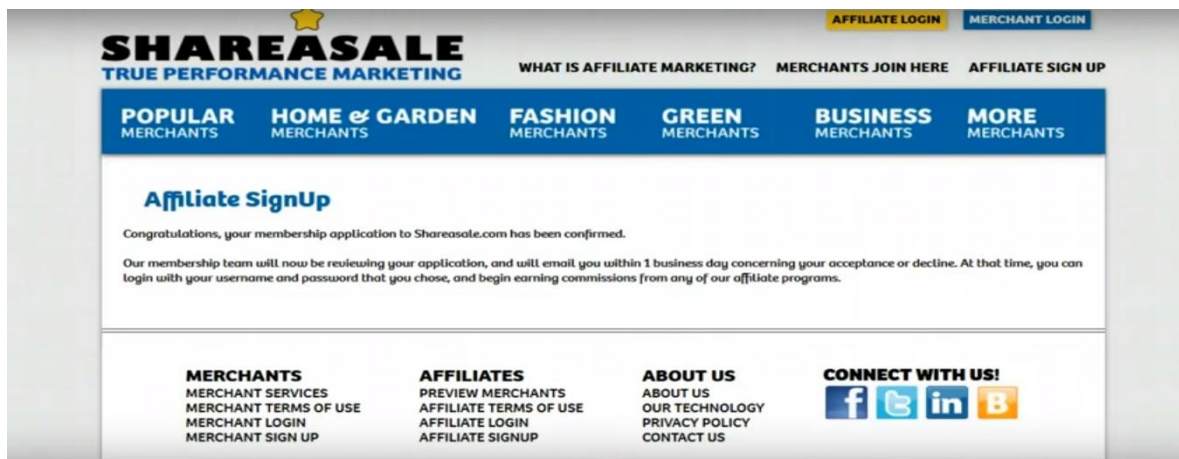
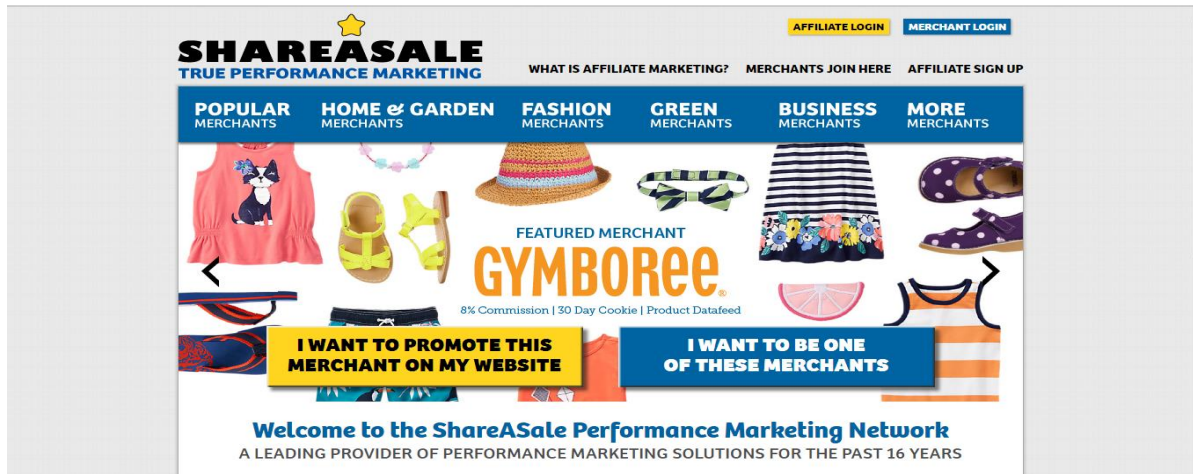
The commission is much lower per click, but with the right techniques, the publisher can drive more traffic, and help the merchant build up their brand, rather than simply cashing out on sales commissions. Once the link is clicked, it's up to the merchant to make the sale.

The analogy to life before the internet would be the best kind of advertising: **word of mouth sales...**

Your buddy comes to you with a problem (reader goes to a blog article), you help them solve it by telling them about a product or store (blog review on a product turns reader into customer), and they drop by the shop (click) that they would otherwise not know about, and get the product they need (sale).

Getting Started with ShareASale.

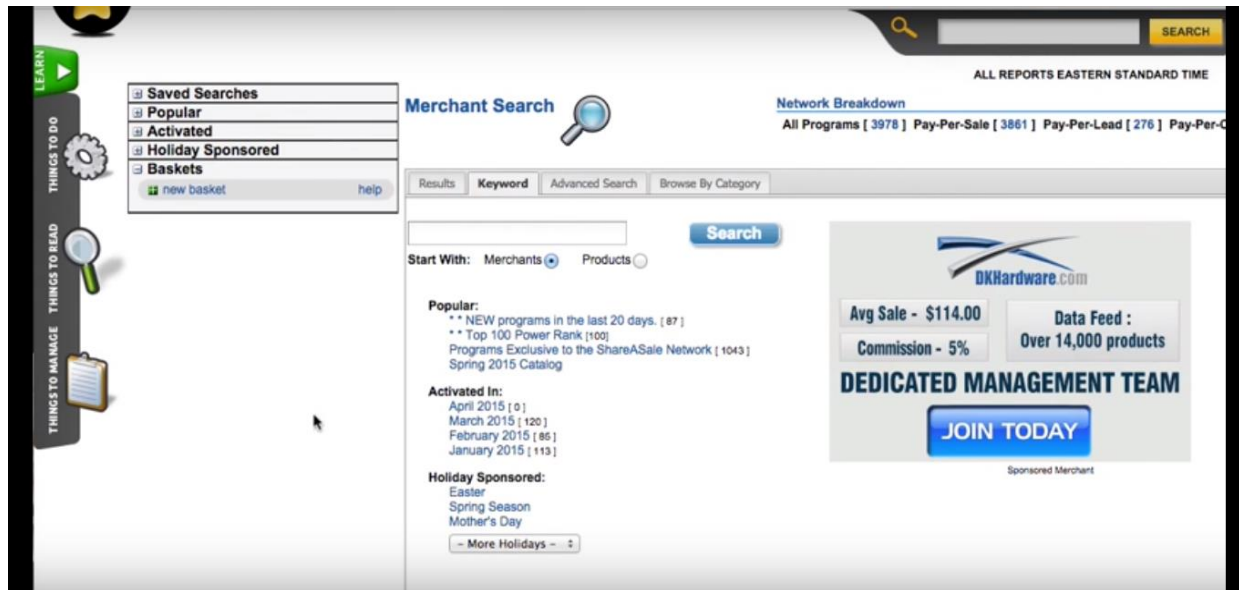
To get started with ShareASale, go to <https://www.ShareASale.com/>



Complete the forms to create your account. It will take a day or two for ShareASale to approve affiliate applications.

Bookmark the page, and read on. You may want to come back to this article again once the account is created for reference.

You are ready to throw yourself head first at the world of affiliate marketing. The first thing you will want to do after logging in as an affiliate is begin browsing merchants. You can even preview merchants before your account is confirmed.



I recommend going straight to the affiliate search for your merchant.

You might be tempted by the high paying commission structures of the most popular merchants, but you need to consider more than just the money – trust me on this one.

Your ads need to be relevant to your content. Your site’s visitors came to you for a reason.

Don’t pitch cupcakes to a gluten-free audience just to try for the big money. It is better to get 100 clicks at \$1 than it is to get 1 click at \$10. It’s better to give your readers what they want and need already, rather than trying to pitch something they won’t be interested in, or worse, will see as a scam and stop coming to your site.

Apply for Merchants.

Depending on your site it can be a little difficult to get accepted.

Apply in bulk and you will be accepted, but it is still important not to stray from your niche. You are monetizing your site and turning it into a business. This will take time, and you need to be a little patient.

Merchants can send you invitations. You will send more than you will receive, but it is still worth checking on once in a while.

The screenshot shows the ShareASale dashboard with the 'MERCHANTS' tab selected. Underneath, there are several icons for different merchant-related actions: 'SEARCH FOR MERCHANTS', 'VIEW MERCHANTS WITH DATAFEEDS', 'VIEW COUPONS AND DEALS DATABASE', 'BLACK FRIDAY & CYBER MONDAY DEALS', 'INVITATIONS AND SETTINGS' (highlighted with a red box), and 'ENGAGE MERCHANTS'. Below these icons, there are radio button settings for 'Invitation Email Settings' and an 'Update Invitation Settings' button. At the bottom, there is an 'INVITATION HISTORY' table with one entry.

Invite Status	Merchant	Invite Sent	RSVP By	View	Relationship Status
Expired : No Action Taken	www.tomcoincinematheaters.com	May 15, 2012	May 28, 2012 11:59 pm EST	EXPIRED	Join Program

Remember, merchants are looking for the best markets for their products, so if your blog looks like a good bet, they will try to contact you. Again, be firm. Don't be afraid to say "no." Approve only the products your customers will want.

Obtaining Your Creatives.

Creatives is an affiliate marketing term for the ads that you put on your site. They are embedded with cookies, and buried in the link is code that tracks where a click came from.

If I go to your site and click on your ads, ShareASale knows I did this, and they can charge the merchant accordingly.

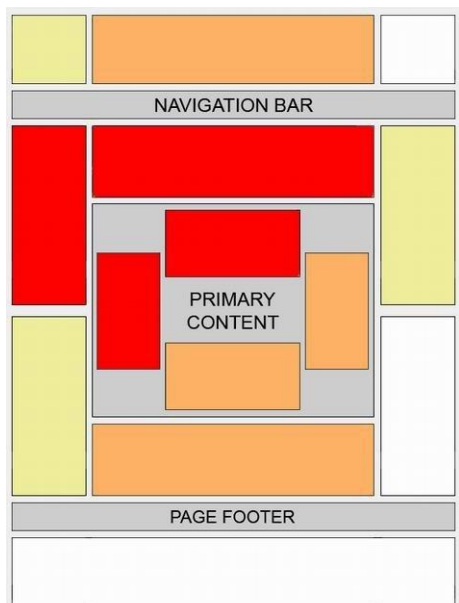
This is why it's important to use the proper affiliate link, or creative, rather than simply linking to the merchant's sale page.

To get the creatives, go to the links tab on the top toolbar of the merchant's invitation. They may appear in the form of banners, text links, or other kinds of linkable content.

Banners

Banner ads are a little old fashioned. If you think back to the internet of five years ago every site was jam packed with banners promoting this, that, and the other thing.

We become desensitized to certain types of marketing when we get used to seeing them, and this is what happened with banners.



You shouldn't give up on banners entirely just yet. You just need to be a little tactful and use them in good taste.

This is the Google AdSense heat map. Placing ads in the hot areas will result in more clicks.

The best place for ads are around the top left of the page.

Notice that three of the red areas are in the primary content area.

Text Links

I really like a well-placed link. There is a mystery behind a light blue, underlined word that, if used correctly, can drive traffic.

They are easy on the eyes, out of the way, and you can use a link without damaging the integrity of your content or impacting readability

In fact, you can design your content directly around the advertisement, through reviews and wish-list articles. Doing so shows that you aren't just a nameless promoter of random stuff, but that you want to push the stuff you believe in.

I often link to products that I'm not being paid for, because my content is all about helping my readers. The perception of a text link is much more trustworthy than other forms of marketing.

Product Pages

ShareASale is one of the best marketplaces for affiliate products out there. The Make a Page tool allows you to make a page of affiliate products and ad it straight to your site.

It is like dipping your feet into e-commerce without actually taking the plunge. You collect commission on sales without going through the hassles of manufacturing, warehousing, or shipping a product.

Comparisons

Put several products in one article through the use of a well placed table and gobs of information about the pros and cons of each.

At best, you are directing your traffic to a sale that day, by having the final word in their decision about which to buy. At the least, you are providing them with options they might otherwise not have.

Either way, it amounts to clicks, as they check the product page for each item themselves. This is also a good way to market several complimentary items as pieces of a "kit."

How To Avoid Mistakes.

I'll close this course by going over the most common mistakes affiliate marketers make and how to avoid them.

This is by no means a comprehensive guide, and you will continue to hone your skills as your business grows, but this is a good place to start, listing many of the pitfalls you could otherwise fall into.

Don't Let your Readers Down

Affiliate marketing works because as a publisher, you are an authority.

Your readers are coming to you for your expert advice. If you try to sell them junk to make some extra cash, they will stop reading, they'll stop coming, your reputation will be tarnished, your readership will drop, and you will find yourself getting no clicks.

That's the best scenario.

I'm not going to elaborate on what could happen if you piss off a fellow blogger who you share a bunch of readers with, but it's something to consider.

How do you avoid this? Be honest, be consistent, and only market products your readers will be interested in.

Do as much research as possible so that you don't accidentally lead them astray. If you can, try every product out before you push it. Betray the trust of your readers at your own peril.

Make Ads Your Own

You need to treat your ads like they are your content. You create value on your site by giving people information for free. You can do the same thing with an affiliate link.

Identify the problems that "your" product can solve, and introduce it in context. Tell them how it helped you.

One of my proudest affiliate marketing moments was when I wrote an article about the dangers of tangled extension cords, and I included a link to an extension cord detangler that I used. I included clickable pictures of my own workstation.

You create the need for your ad and sell it like it is your own product. If you are working on a pay per click commission structure you don't even need to make the sale. You are just getting people interested, and helping them solve a problem.

Grow Your Audience

We have all been there. Your site is a week old, and you are staying up until the early hours of the morning playing with it.

The 12 visitors who found it by accident have you running imaginary numbers in your head, and you are going to be a millionaire by the time you wake up.

Slow down. It is the advice that no one wants to hear, but if you start too early, all that is going to happen, is you will be discouraged.

To be a successful affiliate marketer you need consistent, organic content. You need to have the audience built and ready to ship. You don't need 100 visitors a day, but you do need a consistent following and trusting readers.

Build the readership first, test the market by tracking the links you already have, and when you are ready, explode onto the market with helpful products for your readers.

Don't Forget About Mobile Users

More people use their phones to access the internet than any other device. You need to think about mobile users when marketing.

If it can't be done with a thumb, then it can't be done.

The research shows that if your links are not optimized for mobile users, they won't get clicked. If your banners don't fit on the screen, or they move to another place, or you have only text links because "they are the best," then you are missing out.

Include clickable pictures and some large text links. Test your ads on your phone. If you struggle at all to click the link, assume it's dead and nobody cares, because that will be the result for over half of your visitors. Yeah - seriously!

Conclusion.

Affiliate marketing can be a profitable endeavor, and sites like Sharasale.com make it easy and effective for everyone.

But the basic rules that apply to all advertising, from a kid shouting about your store on the street to viral marketing campaigns, still apply all across the board regardless.

Think like a user. Know who your readers are.

The best way to get more clicks is by genuinely trying to help your readers, rather than advertising to them.

It's been proven time and time again that the organic method always results in the best promotional campaigns, and it will help you develop your business as an affiliate marketer.

I hope you found this short report useful, and it has opened up some possibilities for you on how to see more success online

If you would like to get more affiliate marketing resources and training, 100% free, click the link below now...

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