

ActionPlan.com

Affiliate Marketing Handbook

by Robert Middleton

The purpose of this handbook is to give you the tools you need to become a successful ActionPlan.com Affiliate. Being an affiliate and earning affiliate commission is not difficult if you know some of the tricks of the trade. I'll be sharing ideas you can implement easily that will earn you commissions as soon as possible.

Why an Affiliate Program?

Almost every week someone tells me, "I've referred so many people to your web site." In fact, I know that despite running a virtual business, the majority of my business comes from the referrals of satisfied clients, customers and subscribers.

Something I know is that people love to make a contribution. If they find something they like, they love to tell others about it. In my opinion this is one of the most positive things about human nature.

But wouldn't it be nice to be rewarded for this behavior? What if you shared something you were enthusiastic about and a certain percentage of those people checked it out and ultimately purchased it, and you got rewarded financially for doing something you'd do anyway?

Well, in a nutshell, that's what an affiliate program is. It rewards you for sharing. Here are some of the many benefits of being an Action Plan Marketing Affiliate:

A whole new stream of income - For many, affiliate commissions are like "found money."

A big return for your efforts - You don't have to come up with ideas for products and develop them. Believe me, it's a lot of work!

No back-end stuff to deal with - Ordering, fulfillment and customer service are all handled by Action Plan Marketing.

Very easy to set up and get paid - Once you're in the affiliate system everything is handled automatically.

Expands what you can offer your customers - It puts "products on your shelf" that you wouldn't have developed yourself and that your customers appreciate knowing about.

Increases your value in the eye of your clients - When you can offer more, you're seen as a more complete solution.

Our products can help your customers succeed - And if they have more success, you'll also get more referrals.

In short, being an Action Plan Marketing Affiliate can help your business grow and be successful. You can earn extra money every month without a lot of effort and you can also add value to your services. You may discover that affiliate marketing can be an important part of your overall business and marketing strategy.

I've created this Affiliate Handbook to make it easier for you to get results from being an affiliate. I'll explain exactly what you need to do to effectively share Action Plan Marketing with your friends and associates who also want to attract more clients.

Just take it step-by-step and you'll start to see results very quickly!

I Getting Started with the Affiliate Program

1. Sign up as an affiliate on the Action Plan Marketing Site

If you haven't done this already, the link is:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/SYS/?m=11489&c=s>

You'll fill out a simple form online and then you'll immediately receive a welcome email with your Action Plan Affiliate Link. It looks some thing like this:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?af=XXXXX>

(the XXXXX would be replaced by your personal number)

Later on in the handbook I'll explain in detail how to use this link most effectively to earn affiliate commissions.

2. Sign up for PayPal

This is how your affiliate commissions are paid. It's free and easy to do. Make sure to use the same email address for your PayPal account as you used when signing up as an affiliate so the payment goes to the right place.

PayPal is one of the best and most secure ways to make payments on the web. A balance builds up in your PayPal account which you can use to make other online purchases or you can transfer that balance into your checking account with just a couple clicks.

<http://www.paypal.com>

3. Place your affiliate link in your email and web site

I'll go into lots of detail below about how to promote Action Plan Marketing through our affiliate program below, but here I'll explain how the affiliate link works.

When you put your affiliate link in your email or on your web site and someone clicks on it, it brings them to the home page of Action Plan Marketing.

And then they get "tagged" by having a cookie placed on their browser. When the person who clicked on the link buys something from Action Plan Marketing, the shopping cart software recognizes that cookie (with your affiliate number) and gives you credit for that sale.

4. Earning Commissions

The commission I pay on most sales is 35%. This applies primarily to the Fast Track Program. A \$297 membership pays \$103.95. A monthly \$29 membership pays \$10.15 per month as long as the person maintains their membership.

In order to get credit for every sale, the person who clicked on your affiliate link must buy something from the same computer they used when they clicked on the link. If they buy something from a different computer, there will be no cookie to recognize and no credit will be given.

This is usually not a problem. Most people use the same computer for all their online ordering.

When your affiliate commission reaches \$40, you are paid your commission through PayPal. Payments go out around the 15th of every month and you will be notified by email.

5. Check your affiliate balance

All your sales and commissions get recorded and if you go into your affiliate control panel at this link...

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/SYS/?m=11489&c=l>

...you will see how many sales were made and how much in commissions you've earned. Just log in with your username and password and click on the "Reports" link below the Action Plan logo.

II Setting Up Your Affiliate Program

1. Using Your Affiliate Link

The most important thing in your promotion plan is to make sure you have the right affiliate link. Let's visit the Affiliate Resource Center now and look around. Just click on the link below:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/SYS/?m=11489&c=l>

This will take you to the login page of your affiliate account. You should see your username and password. These get placed there automatically. However if your username and password are not there, simply put in your email address directly below and click on "send password" and you'll get your username and password immediately by email.

Once you are into your account, you'll see a number of links under the Action Plan Marketing Logo. Click on the one that says "Links and Tools" and right below you'll see your affiliate link that looks like this:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?af=XXXXXX>

And just below that you'll see a link for my banner ad. This code can be placed into a web site and the banner will show up. When you click on the banner, it will work just like the text link above and take you to the ActionPlan.com Home Page.

The question is, when should you use a text link and when should you use a banner ad? Below I'll be giving you many specific strategies for using your links. But first, let's talk about altering your text link.

2. Compacting Your Affiliate Link

One of the problems with affiliate text links that you put in email is that they are unwieldy. Many people recognize them as affiliate links and are reluctant to click on them. But if you alter or disguise your affiliate link, you'll get better results.

You do this by going to a site that will do this for you automatically. One of the best and easiest is <http://www.tinyurl.com>. All you do is go to the site, copy your affiliate link into the form where it says "Enter a long URL to make tiny:" and then press the "Make TinyURL!" button.

In a couple of seconds a new page will open with your new Tiny URL. Just copy it and use it as your new affiliate link. It will work identically to your original link. Of course, make sure to test it first.

3. Understand How Affiliate Sales Happen

Your primary job as an affiliate is to have as many qualified people as possible click on your affiliate link and visit the ActionPlan.com site.

First, let me explain how people tend to buy from ActionPlan.com. Usually people find out about the site through a friend, an article on the web or from a search engine. They come to the site and check it out. A certain percentage request a free sample of the Fast Track Program and few may sign up for the program on their first visit.

But most purchases happen as a result of revisiting the site later on. And they come back to the site later because of the More Clients eZine. It's the relationship of trust that is built through the eZine, the free content on the site and the various promotions that motivate someone to make a purchase.

So I've found that the best thing an affiliate can do is to get someone to click on your affiliate link in anticipation of getting my free First Module of the Fast Track Program, and a subscription to the More Clients eZine.

Once they are "in the system" they are likely, sooner or later, to order something from the Action Plan Marketing site. And no matter how long they have been in the system, your affiliate cookie will still work and give you credit for the sale.

Another way of looking at this: Your job is to provide the referral to the site and we take it from there. You don't need to do any hard selling. Your enthusiastic recommendation is usually all it takes. I figure that about 80% of my business is generated by referrals. By being an affiliate, you simply get to share in the income that those referrals generate.

There are also ways to direct people to a specific product page on the Action Plan Marketing site. I'll talk about that later and show you how to do special promotions for specific products. But first we'll get into the basics of how to promote Action Plan Marketing as an affiliate.

III Seven Proven Affiliate Promotion Strategies

Now you're ready to promote the Action Plan Marketing site. Below are eight specific ways to do this. I recommend following the instructions to the letter and using as many as you can. The more promotion you do, the better results you'll get.

1. Announce to Your List

Most people have an email list of several people they know and do business with. Some have extensive email and eZine lists. The first thing you should do is to introduce Action Plan Marketing to your list of contacts.

However you want to do it very personally. You don't want it to come across as SPAM. Since they know you and hopefully like and trust you, they will pay attention to your message.

You simply want to send a message that tells them about ActionPlan.com and encourage them to get the free sample of the Fast Track Program and the eZine.

Below is a sample email announcement. I suggest you take this and edit it so that you feel completely comfortable with it and then send it to the appropriate people on your list. Always personalize it.

Dear Jason,

I've recently discovered a web site that I really like that I think you'd like as well. It's called ActionPlan.com. It's a site for Independent Professionals like you and me who are not so good at marketing our services and want to be better at attracting clients.

The site contains a huge amount of free information and also sells some great products. I joined their Fast Tack to More Clients Program which is a complete system for attracting more clients.

I recommend you check out the site and make sure to get the free sample of the Fast Track Program. You can find the link to this on the home page of the site. This link will take you there:

<http://www.tinyurl/abcde> (not a working link)

Cheers - Estelle

Also note: if you use html email you can put in the actual link to ActionPlan.com: <http://www.actionplan.com> and link it to your affiliate link. The link will work like your affiliate link and give you credit but it will look like a regular web site link which looks a little better.

This initial email will usually get a pretty good response. Of course, the more people on your list, the more people will visit the site and sign up for the Workbook and eZine. Then eventually some of these people will order something on the site.

2. Personal Sharing and Referrals

Often the way people share ActionPlan.com is during an in-person meeting or telephone conversation. The topic of marketing comes up and you mention the site, the More Clients eZine and the Fast Track Program. The natural response from your friend is to ask for more information. You give them the web site address to ActionPlan.com and they check it out.

What's missing is that you did not use an affiliate link and you'll get no credit for that referral. So instead, you can say something like this:

In person: "Let me send you a link to the site by email so that you don't lose it." Then jot down their email address. When you get home, send them a quick note.

"Here's the special link to ActionPlan.com. Check it out. I think you'll find it really useful. The program is especially good and there's a lot of great free stuff on the site too. Make sure to sign up for the free sample program. <http://www.tinyurl.com/abcd>"

By phone you can do the same thing. You can often send them the link while they're on the phone with you, and your friend can click through right while you're on the line. You can even lead them to where to sign up for the eZine and show them around the site.

Of course, the more you know the ActionPlan.com web site and where to find everything, all the better. The site is pretty intuitive to navigate but there's a lot of stuff on there, so having a guide will be appreciated.

Remember, this is something you would do anyway to help your friend become a better marketer. I'd just like to reward you for taking the time and energy to do that!

The great thing about the personal referral and email approach to using the affiliate program is that everyone can do it. You're probably doing it already. The only difference is adding your affiliate link to the process.

3. Promoting Through Your eZine

If you send out a regular eZine or email newsletter, you can promote Action Plan Marketing at the bottom of every newsletter. This really works. I know because in my weekly eZine I promote several businesses and online products and services I really like. These are services I use and feel confident in recommending to those who get my eZine.

I simply put a short blurb at the bottom of the eZine with their affiliate link. Here are a few of them to give you a sense of how I do it.

OUR EMAIL LIST SERVICE: Many people ask me how I manage this email list. I use a great service called AWeber. Find out more about them at <http://www.aweber.com/?26421>

OUR SHOPPING CART: I also get lots of emails asking about how we do online transactions. I use an excellent shopping cart system called 1shoppingcart. Give it a test drive at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/cbvbz>

By the way, these are all working affiliate links. Feel free to check them out! These are great services and products. Below I'll show you how to use similar blurbs and links on your web site.

All you need to do is write a similar blurb for Action Plan Marketing, followed by your affiliate link. I'll give you a few examples that you can use as-is or edit to your own taste.

MARKETING FOR PROFESSIONALS - One of the best resources of the web for marketing your services is ActionPlan.com. Check them out and get your free sample of the Fast Track to More Clients Program. <http://tinyurl.com/92xmu>

ATTRACT MORE CLIENTS - If you've struggled to attract clients like I have, I recommend you check out the ActionPlan.com web site. It includes lot of free information and great products that help you be a better marketer. <http://tinyurl.com/92xmu>

BE A BETTER MARKETER - If you want to attract more clients more consistently I highly recommend the ActionPlan.com web site. It's specifically for consultants and coaches like you and me and has a wealth of free information and great products that can help you grow your business. Check it out at: <http://tinyurl.com/92xmu>

Get the idea? Each one has a headline and then a few simple benefit-oriented sentences that urge the reader to check out the site. This really does work. I earn affiliate commissions every month from my affiliate listings in the More Clients eZine.

I also recommend that you list other services and products as well. Find other good web sites and services that your subscribers will benefit from and place them at the bottom of your eZine like I do. It's a great way to generate a little extra income.

4. Promoting With Articles

Did you know that past articles from More Clients can be used as content on your web site or in your ezine? You can find articles from the past two years of More Clients at this link:

<http://actionplan.blogs.com>

If you use my articles in this way, include my "resource box" at the bottom of the article like this:

"© 2011 By Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing. Please visit Robert's web site at www.actionplan.com for additional marketing articles and resources on marketing for professional service businesses."

If the article is placed on a web site, just link the Action Plan URL you see above to your affiliate link. If you use a text link in your eZine, then use your TinyURL affiliate link instead.

Using a relevant article on your site is certainly more effective than doing a "promotion page" about Action Plan Marketing. Some people have tried this but it's not as effective. The idea is to give them something of value, which makes them want to know more, and takes them to my web site where they sign up for the eZine, etc.

5. Promoting on Your Web Site and Blog

Another way to promote ActionPlan.com is on your web site.

You can do this two ways: with a banner ad or with a text link. You have the banner link from the Affiliate Resource Center (under Get Links) and you could put that anywhere on your web site.

The problem with banner ads is nowadays the click-through rate is abysmally low. So it won't hurt to place the banner on your web site, but it won't help a lot if it's just by itself. A good place to use a banner ad would be at the top or bottom of a page where you had placed an article from my More Clients archives. Also use the resource box with the affiliate link at the bottom of the article.

Here are several web site samples:

Nick Osborne has written a review of the InfoGuru Marketing Manual on his site with an affiliate link at the bottom:

<http://www.freelancewritingsuccess.com/infoguru.php>

And here's a blurb about Action Plan Marketing in a page about Marketing resources on Francis Miller's site.

<http://www.business-plans.co.uk/consultancy-business-plan.htm>

Another way is to create a page with several affiliate products.

You could do a write-up similar to the ones above and put them on a page with other products. I've done this on my Partner page. Take a look:

<http://actionplan.com/advanced/marketing-partners>

However, I've found that most of my affiliate sales come not from my web site but from my links in the More Clients eZine.

It's simply more immediate. More people look at my eZine in any given week than my partners page. So go ahead and put in some promotion on your web site, but use other promotional methods as well - especially email to your list.

Some of my affiliates have blogs and on one side have links to various sites they recommend (mine included). Of course, these are affiliate links. They will usually be disguised when the blog is formatted. I think this will be a growing strategy for listing affiliate links.

6. Discussion Groups

If you're involved in discussion groups or regularly post to blogs, you know what powerful communities these can become. Blatant advertising to these groups definitely doesn't work. But if you're a member of the community, there's nothing wrong with sharing valuable links. In fact, they are usually welcomed.

For instance, if someone asks a question looking for marketing help, you can both answer the question and then say something like: "A great resource on the web for marketing is ActionPlan.com. Here's a link to their site." And put in your affiliate link as a TinyURL.

Be aware, however that some discussion groups do not allow affiliate links or TinyURL links. You're not going to have any luck

on these forums, I'm afraid. Better to follow the etiquette of these groups than raise their ire and get banned.

7. Host a TeleClass

If you have a big email list, a great way to promote Action Plan Marketing is through a specially sponsored TeleClass. If you can get 50 to 100 people to show up for a TeleClass, I'd be happy to do one for you. I've done this several times very successfully for affiliates.

First contact me amp@actionplan.com and set up a phone appointment with me. Then we'll work at creating an email and promotion for the TeleClass. The most important thing is to collect the names and emails of those who attend so you can follow up. I can help you do that and show you how to get the best results.

I'll do my standard TeleClass on key marketing principles for Independent Professionals. I'll talk about Marketing Ball and Marketing Syntax and Audio Logos and marketing activities. They'll leave with some very useful information; it won't be just a "pitch."

At the end of the call we'll announce that they will receive a link where they can find out more about Action Plan Marketing and get the free Marketing Plan Workbook. Then right after the TeleClass you'll send a follow-up email thanking them for being on the TeleClass with your affiliate link leading them to Action Plan Marketing. I've hosted similar TeleClasses with other businesses who offer services I recommend with very good results.

IV Making Your Action Plan Affiliate Program Succeed

The keys to making your Affiliate program work are very simple:

- 1.** Share ActionPlan.com based on your own natural enthusiasm, your own desire to share something and make a difference.
- 2.** Get the word out through various channels on a consistent basis, personal sharing, ezine, web site, discussion groups and teleclasses.
- 3.** Make sure you use ActionPlan.com yourself so that you can speak with personal experience when you endorse them.

- 4.** No SPAMMING. This will hurt both you and ActionPlan.com. And besides, it won't work. Use your own list, people whom you already have relationships with.
- 5.** Always test your links before you use them. Make sure they go to the page they're supposed to and test them periodically.
- 6.** Gather testimonials from your customers about the products you've referred them to, and use testimonials (with their permission) in your promotions.
- 7.** Don't get discouraged if your response rate is small at first. It can take awhile before people feel comfortable about ordering something online.
- 8.** Persist! Like any marketing, your efforts will eventually pay off. You'll discover the methods that work for you to earn affiliate commissions on a consistent basis.

Good luck with our affiliate program!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert M." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robert Middleton

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You are free to circulate this Affiliate Handbook to anyone you feel might benefit from it as long as you make no changes to it.