

YOUR QUESTIONS  
ANSWERED

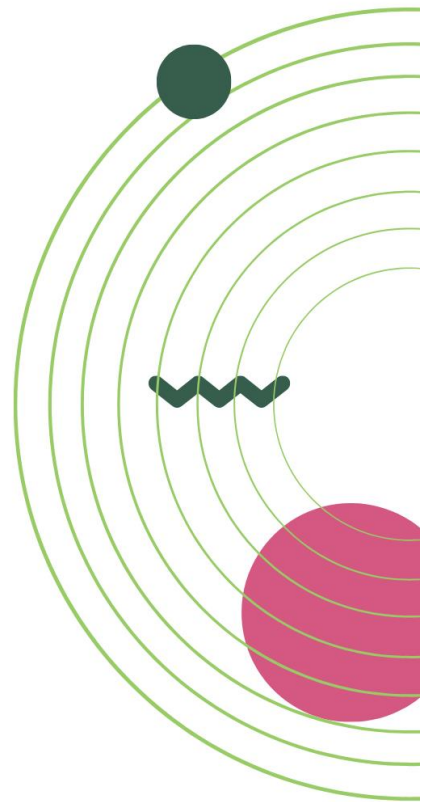
# Successful Affiliate Program Creation

From the Start

WITH SUSANNE MYERS  
& TRACY ROBERTS



# PIGGY MAKES BANK



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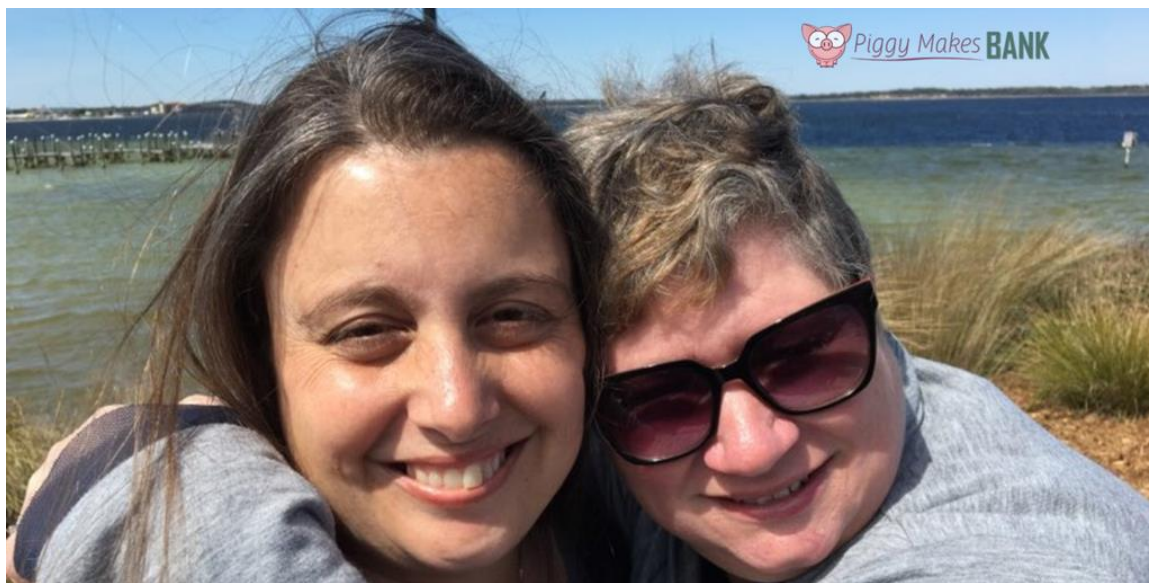
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## About the Authors

Tracy Roberts & Susanne Myers are best friends that- after many years of working separate websites alongside each other – finally decided to combine their skills to create a Private Label Rights business that allows them run a business that supports their lifestyles.

When you put the two of them together you get a powerhouse with over 20 years of experience in writing, marketing & customer service. And that's what makes PiggyMakesBank.com one of the best PLR sites available to you today.



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# When Should You Set Up An Affiliate Program?

You have an online business and you have your first product up. Now is the time to set up your affiliate program. Hopefully, you started to think about this type of marketing when you chose your shopping cart software. Take a look at the affiliate program portion of it and see if it fits your needs. If it doesn't, it may be easier to make a change now than after you have dozens of products and hundreds of affiliates sending you traffic, leads, and most importantly, sales.

You can start to recruit affiliates and get everything ready to go before you launch your first paid product. You do, however, need a finished product or a service you offer. Especially when you are new and don't have a reputation in your niche, it's helpful to have the product so you can offer review copies to potential affiliates. Reach out to people who have already established themselves in your niche and see if they'd be interested in promoting. Make it attractive and easy for them by offering a competitive commission (usually 50% for digital products, 10% or what your profit margin allows for physical products) and by offering them promotional swipe emails, graphics and the likes.

To answer the question posed in the title, you should set up your affiliate program as you set up your shopping cart and your first product. At the very least, you want the ability to have others promote you for a commission from the day you put your first product up for sale. It's much easier to do this up front than it is to retrofit something later. Plus, when you're first starting out in a new niche, it's the quickest, easiest, and most cost effective way to build your audience. Affiliates allow you to tap into someone else's audience without any up-front financial risk to you.

Tapping into the power of affiliates from day one allows you to bootstrap your online business. You don't pay them until after you've received money from your first customers and you don't pay them at all if they don't generate sales for you. After you've started making money, and have a proven product, you can start to test, tweak, and advertise. And of course, come out with the next product so your affiliates have something new to promote.

I hope you take this piece of advice seriously and start your affiliate program on day one. I can't tell you how many people I've spoken to who wished they'd started sooner once they see the power of affiliate marketing in action. This doesn't mean that affiliates will or should be your only source of traffic and leads. But if you ask me, they should be an important part of your overall marketing strategy. It's a great place to start and as long as you sell a good product and pay your affiliates on time, they'll be happy to promote you.

# Cookies, Tracking, Payments And More

There are a lot of little bits and pieces to setting up an affiliate program for the first time. It can seem overwhelming. But if you take it one step at a time, you'll be an affiliate program managing pro in no time at all. Let's start by going over some of the basic terms and what you want to consider when setting up your affiliate program.

## Tracking Affiliate Sales

The most important part of your affiliate program for the people who are considering promoting you is how you track affiliate sales. There are two basic ways to track. Cookies only, or cookie that then hard-code an affiliate to a particular customer. Not all shopping cart software offers this second option, but it's a nice benefit for affiliates if you have it. If yours does hard-code, be sure to point this out to your potential affiliates.

## Let's Talk About Cookies

Another important decision you have to make early on is how long you want cookies to track. Amazon, for example, gives their affiliates about 24 hours of tracking. This means that if someone clicks on your Amazon link and doesn't buy right away, but comes back (on the same device) and makes a purchase within that window, you'll get credit for the sale.

For most digital products, cookies from 30 days to lifetime seem to be common. Take a look at what your competition is doing and work on something along similar lines.

## Paying Your Affiliates

Next, you'll have to figure out how often you will pay your affiliates and how you will make payouts. A good place to start is with monthly payments, sent via PayPal. Most shopping cart software makes this easy to do with mass pay options. Refer to the documentation or help section of your shopping cart software on how to create the mass pay file. Or reach out to support. With the correctly formatted file in hand, it is quick and easy to pay your affiliates via PayPal.

One quick tip. You have the option to add a note to your affiliates with the payments. Use this to motivate your affiliates, keep them informed about upcoming launches, or give them a tip or idea to help them promote you more.

## **Staying In Touch With Affiliates**

Last but not least, let's talk about communicating and staying in touch with your affiliates. Sending them their commissions with a personalized note is of course a great place to start, but it shouldn't be the only one.

Make a plan to reach out to your existing affiliates on a regular basis. You can do this via email or social media. Check with your shopping cart software to see if you can send broadcast emails to your affiliates. If not, consider setting up a list for them through your autoresponder service. A Facebook group is another great place to stay in touch, answer questions, and motivate your affiliates to promote you more.

The easier you make it for them, the more likely your affiliates will be to mail for you, share for you, and make sales for you.

# How To Get Your First Affiliate

Your website is up. Your first product is selling. You're ready to get serious about this whole affiliate marketing thing. But where do you start? How do you find that first affiliate or the first few and get them promoting? Here are some ideas depending on where you are at in your online marketing journey. Try the ones that apply to you and grow from there.

## **Start With Mentors And Peers**

A great place to start approaching people about joining your affiliate program is with people you already know like a coach, mentor, or other people in your niche that you've already been connecting with. These people know and like you and are much more likely to send an email for you. Of course, not everyone will do this, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

In the beginning it's helpful to reach out to people who are experienced affiliates. They can give you feedback on what works and what doesn't. Reach out to these early affiliates and ask them what tools and promotional materials they want or need.

## **Turn Your Customers Into Affiliates**

Hopefully you're not brand-spanking new to your niche and you've been building your audience as you started developing your website and your first product. If so, you should have your first few sales within days of launching your product. Why not leverage those customers by turning them into affiliates. It's a lot easier and more common than you think. Even in niches not well versed in affiliate marketing, people have heard of "refer-a-friend" programs. Let your customers know that they can make back the money they spent with you by referring two other friends (if you're offering a 50% commission).

Make it easy to promote you and offer to help. Everyone is on social media these days and people email all day long. If they can think of someone else who may benefit from what you have to offer, why not let them promote you and share in the profits?



## **Approach Someone With A Similar Audience and Product**

Once you have a few sales under your belt and get an idea of how well the product is selling and what type of conversion you're getting, it's time to start racing out to other online business owners. It helps to start with people who are at a similar level. For example, if you have a list of 500 subscribers, try to find someone with a list of up to 2,000 people instead of going after someone with a 10k list. As you grow and as you get to know others in your market, you can reach out to bigger and bigger players and have a good chance at getting them to promote you.

Another good idea is to look for someone with a complimentary product in addition to a similar audience size. The idea here is to reach out to them and offer to promote their product to your audience in exchange. Make it easy to say yes.

## **Reach Out To An Influencer**

Last but not least, don't be afraid to reach out to social media influencers. Here you also don't have to go after the big names. You'll have better luck in the beginning by approaching people with a smaller audience. Offer them a commission or a review copy of your product (or both). As you start to build your name, you can start to reach out to bigger names and leverage the network of fellow marketers and content creators you are building.

Setting up and running a profitable affiliate program takes time and consistent effort, but it is one of the best things you can do for your business and your bottom line.

# What Affiliate Tools Do You Need?

Affiliates love tools because they make it quick and easy to promote a product or service. The question when you're first starting out is: what tools do you need to create? Start with the basics, then branch out and create more as time allows. This also allows you to see what's working and what isn't. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Here's a quick overview of the different types of tools you may choose to create for your team of affiliates.

## **Simple Graphics**

The first thing affiliates ask about is graphics. Yes, banners and buttons are still a thing because it's easy to put them on their sites. But it goes further than that now. Graphics that can be shared on social media and prescheduled are another quick and easy way to share a new product or service.

Create a set of basic graphics using a program like Canva or Stencil and share them with your affiliates. Ask them if they need different sizes, different copy, or graphics for individual product offerings. Plan to build your graphics library as you go along. Throughout the year it's helpful to create seasonal graphics. Something in red and green for Christmas, or something in earth tones for the fall. And don't forget to create graphics when you come up with a new limited time offer or coupon code.

## **Text Ads & Social Media Posts**

I touched on the importance of making it easy for your affiliates to share your products on services on social media. Make it easy by writing some copy they can use in addition to or instead of graphics optimized for each social media platform. Take a look at what other people are posting and use something similar. Or recycle what you're using in your own social media marketing and tweak as needed for your affiliates.

Text Ads can work in a wide variety of ways. They can be used at the end of blog posts, in newsletters and of course on social media. Write up a few things for each product that your affiliates can copy and paste as needed to promote you.

## **Articles or Blog Posts**

The easier you can make it for your affiliates to promote you, the more likely they will be to do so. Writing articles or blog posts in the 400 to 600 word range with a strong call to action at the end to buy your product are a great tool. Affiliates can copy and paste them and publish them on their sites or share them in their newsletters.

Write a few for each product and each new launch or promotion and make them readily available to affiliates.

## **Short Reports And Printables**

What do we all struggle with? Making the time to create a first or fresh lead magnet. Why not make it easy for affiliates by creating a short report or a set of printables that they can share with their own subscribers. They grow their list and you make sure that the first thing these new subscribers see is your products and services. It's a win-win situation.

## **Samples**

Let's not forget about samples. Depending on what product or service you offer, you can easily take out a small portion and offer it to affiliates. They can give it away to their own audience to offer them a taste of what you do. This can be a great way to get a foot in the door with potential new customers and clients.

## **Advanced Ideas**

Last but not least, you can go above and beyond for your best affiliates by reaching out to them and offering to go the extra mile for them. You can do email, audio, or even video interviews with them, offer to come on their podcast or write a chapter for their book. You can create custom bonuses for your top affiliates to encourage them to mail again, or set up JVs and joint products that you create and promote together. Let your imagination go wild and of course reach out to these people and tell them you're happy to help them promote in any way you can.

# Turning Customers Into Affiliates

Who are the people most qualified to recommend your product or service? Your happy customers, of course. They know the product inside and out and most importantly they know what it can do for others like them.

In the business to business world, it's common to recruit your customers as affiliates. Everywhere else not so much, but that's starting to change. Since everyone is active on social media in some way shape or form, and has an email address, it's become easier than ever for the average person to recommend the products and services they enjoy. Think about how often you've seen either a request for a recommendation or a review / testimonial about something one of your friends loved on social media?

Chances are good that your customers and clients are already familiar with refer-a-friend programs. They recommend their favorite mattress for free or tell their friends about the best little coffee shop in town in exchange for a free latte. Why not tap into that by turning your best customers into ambassadors for your brand and your products.

A great place to start is by asking your current customers what they think about your products. Have them share what they like about it. You can have this ice-breaker conversation do double duty by collecting what they share to use as testimonials (with their permission of course). Then ask them if they would recommend your product to others.

When they say yes (and why wouldn't they?), you start a conversation about having them become an affiliate. Tell them that you want to reward them for helping you spread the word about what you do. Then explain what an affiliate link is and give them one little task they can complete right away. Something simple would be sharing the link on Facebook. Give them some sample text along with the link and let them know they are free to use the text as is, change it around, or write something of their own. You can even reuse some of what they shared as their testimonial with you here.

Another great way to position your affiliate program is that it's a way to get the product essentially for free. Be careful and meticulous about how you communicate this. You don't want to mislead them. As an example, let's say you sell an eBook for \$10 on your site and offer affiliates a 50% commission. If a customer refers two other people who each buy the eBook, they will have recouped their original cost, essentially making the eBook free to them.

From here the sky's the limit. Some customers will never refer more than one or two people. And that's okay. Once you have your system set up, it will take little extra work to keep introducing new customers to your affiliate program. Others however may turn into your next super affiliate. Keep promoting, keep encouraging, and keep making more sales.

# Staying In Touch And Motivating Your Affiliates

To have a successful affiliate program, you have to have affiliates you are consistently promoting you. After all, you don't want to be stuck in a loop of constantly launching and finding new affiliates to make sure you keep sales coming in steadily. It's much easier to motivate existing affiliates and encourage them to promote all your products and services regularly. Here are some simple tips on how to do just that.

The first idea is to add a note to any affiliate payments going out. If you are using PayPal mass pay, you can easily do this and have one message going out to each affiliate you pay that month. Use this opportunity to tell them about something else of yours they can promote, your bestselling product, or simply ask them to reach out if there's anything you can do to help them promote.

When your affiliates sign up, make sure you get their permission to contact them with tips ideas to help you promote. You can set up a list similar to the one you set up for your prospects. Email your affiliates a few times a month to remind them of you. Share what's been working well for you along with their affiliate link and any tools you've developed to help them promote. As before, you can invite them to reach out to you with questions or if there's something you can do to help them, like an email interview or a guest blog post for example.

There are several things you can do to motivate affiliates to promote and to do so now. The first is to bump up commissions for a limited time on specific products. For example, you could offer them a 60% commission for a week to drum up more sales. Or if you have a funnel set up where customers are offered additional products to buy after the initial sale, you could even offer 100% commissions on the first product. By making it a limited time commission bump, you are encouraging affiliates to take action now.

Another great way to do this is by running an affiliate contest. Offer prizes for the most sales, or give away a prize to everyone that makes x amount of sales. Sharing the contest and rankings publicly is a great way to tap into your affiliate's pride and bring out their competitive side.

Long-term the best way to motivate affiliates is to provide them with great products, solid tracking and stats, and most importantly by paying them on time, every time. Do this and you'll build an army of loyal affiliates that will continually send you their leads.

# Tips for Approaching Super Affiliates

You may be tempted to approach the big names in your industry for your first launch. After all, they could give you the biggest bang for your buck, right? Resist the temptation. It may hurt you in the long run. First, you want to make sure you have a solid product and sales funnel that converts. You want to have numbers and proof that you know what you're doing when you start to approach bigger potential affiliates. These people make a living from their list and as a result they are very protective of them. Make sure you have everything you need before you approach them.

What do you do in the meantime? You start with affiliates who are in a similar position you're in and work your way up. You start testing, tracking and improving. And along the way, you take note of the super affiliates you would love to see promote you down the road. Get their names, their social media profiles, their emails. Create a spreadsheet or database.

Instead of approaching someone who doesn't know you from Adam, you will use the time you have to build a relationship with these people. Comment on their blog posts. Interact with them on social media. See if there's something small you can do for them. Maybe you notice a spelling error on their sales page or a link on their website that doesn't work. Reach out privately and let them know. If you see a cool article or video they posted, share it on social media. Become someone whose name they will recognize.

Then when you have the data, you know your product is solid and converts well, and you've gotten on this person's radar, it's time to reach out. Keep it short, be respectful of their time, and focus on what's in it for them. A super affiliate won't care that they can make a huge difference in your life. They may not even care about how much money they can make from promoting your product. After all, they can make just as much, if not more from promoting someone else.

What makes you different? Maybe your product is the better fit for their audience. Or maybe you can offer the super affiliate a bonus or a better commission, or early access to your next product launch. Find something that will sweeten the deal and make it worth the person's time to check you out. Then continue to nurture the relationship and use it to open doors to more super affiliates.

# Contests, Bonuses & Special Pricing To Keep Your Affiliates Excited

New affiliates are great. They are excited and can't wait to share your products with their audience. It lasts for a while, but sooner or later another product creator comes along. Someone with the new shiny product everyone can't wait to promote. And then the next, and the next. And even if you stay in touch with your affiliates regularly, the referrals start to slow down or dry up completely. Thankfully there's a lot you can do to keep your affiliates excited or to get them to engage again.

## Running Affiliate Contents

A great first place to start is by running an affiliate contest. This is something you can do occasionally to bump up affiliate sales, or every time you launch a new product. Be aware that it's more effective long-term if you use it sparingly. The idea is to offer prizes for first, second, and third place, or for anyone making a certain amount of sales. The prizes can be cash, gift cards, or actual products you order and ship to your affiliates.

To begin with, keep it simple. Set aside a certain amount of cash you can afford to risk and assign it for first, second, and third place. For example, if you have \$100 to spend on this, the first prize winner gets \$50, the second place \$30, and the third place \$20.

Next decide on how long your affiliate contest will run. Give it at least a week, but no more than a month or affiliates will lose interest. Share regular updates and who is currently in the running for each prize. The challenge and the competition will encourage affiliates to mail and to mail and share more often.

## Offering Affiliates Bonuses Or Encouraging Them To Create Their Own

The key to a successful affiliate program is to stay in touch with your affiliates and to give them plenty of reason to mail about what you have to offer. One way to get an extra email or social media promo is to offer affiliates a special bonus "just for their audience". This could be a short report, printables, complimentary content, or even an additional low-cost product you usually sell.

Contact the affiliate and offer them the additional bonus if they run an extra campaign. If you don't want to, or aren't able to do the work of creating the bonuses yourself, encourage affiliates to create their own. Let them know it's okay to do this. This second strategy works particularly well during a big launch or during an affiliate contest when various affiliates are competing for the same customers.

## **Special Pricing and Commissions To Create A Sense Of Urgency**

Last but not least, don't be afraid to add a little extra urgency with a special offer for this one affiliate. Reach out to two or three of your best affiliates per month and see who's interested in running a special sale. This could mean reducing the price for this one affiliate (by creating a separate product page). Or you could offer the affiliate a bump in commission for a particular product for a limited time. Play around and see what results in the most money for you and your affiliate.



# When And How Should You Pay Your Affiliates

Often the first big stumbling block for new online marketers is figuring out how to pay their affiliates. If this is what's been keeping you from setting up your own affiliate program, I have good news. It's a lot easier than you think. Once you have it set up and send the first batch of commissions, you'll be wondering why you waited so long.

Start by looking at your shopping cart software, reading through the documentation, or talking to customer support. Most software with an affiliate program component makes it quick and easy to calculate commissions and pay your affiliates. It collects data all month long as sales come in, attributing them to affiliates. When you're ready to pay them, all you do is run a report.

The most common way to pay your affiliates is via PayPal. To be more specific, most shopping cart software creates a csv file that you can upload via PayPal's Mass Pay feature to pay everyone in your affiliate program at once. There is a small fee you will pay PayPal each time you send the Mass Pay, but it's very affordable and as an added bonus, your affiliates won't be charged any processing fees. Why is this important? Because it makes your affiliate program more attractive and to be honest, it's what most affiliates are used to and expect.

Now that we have the "how" covered, let's talk about the when. The most important part here is to set and meet your affiliate's expectations. If you say you'll pay them every Wednesday for any sales made the previous week, make sure you deliver. If you tell them you will pay them within the first five days of the month for what they've earned in the previous one, make sure that gets done. There is nothing worse than knowing you have \$400 coming your way, counting on that money to pay your bills only to be stuck with an overdraft fee because someone didn't remember to make affiliate payouts.

Set a schedule, put it on the calendar, set yourself a reminder on your phone and make sure it gets done. Down the road this is something you can outsource to a VA (a virtual assistant) if you'd like. For now, realize that paying your affiliates on time every time is a big part of earning their trust and making sure they will promote you again and again. And it goes without saying that you should always - ALWAYS - have the funds held back to pay your affiliates. Nothing will kill your reputation faster than having people think you can't pay them.

# Keeping Your Affiliate Dashboard Organized

When is the last time you've logged into your affiliate dashboard? More specifically, when is the last time you saw it the way your affiliates see it? The easiest way to do this is to create a dummy affiliate account for yourself. Use it to regularly check in and see how things are working from that end. You'll see things you don't see from the admin view and you'll get a chance to experience how easy or difficult it is to get the tools and links your active affiliates need to continue to promote you.

Lots of tools and links are great, but you get to a point where things get cluttered. It can make it hard for affiliates to find the links to your most profitable products and promotions. Thankfully, there's a lot you can do to keep your affiliate dashboard organized. And it all starts with logging in and seeing what your affiliates see.

While you're there, browse around, keeping a piece of paper and a pen nearby. Write down anything in your affiliate dashboard that's outdated or could use improving. Do you have links, copy, and even graphics for old promotions that are no longer running? Make a note to delete them.

Is it easy to navigate and find what you're looking for? If you're very familiar with your affiliate dashboard or interface, it could be helpful to ask a newer affiliate if they are running into any stumbling blocks. Take note when you receive emails from affiliates asking for help when they can't figure out how to get a link or check stats for example. Sometimes you can't see what's making things harder than they need to be because you're too familiar with the setup.

With this list in hand, see what you can fix and what you can reorganize. While you are working within the limits of your shopping cart software, you can tidy things up and only keep the links and affiliate tools in your dashboard that your affiliates actually need and use. You can always archive additional graphics and promotional materials outside the dashboard, available upon request.

The second thing you can do is create video tutorials for your new affiliates that help them find their way around your affiliate program. Create a tutorial page and reference it often. Send it to every new affiliate who signs up for your program. Going the extra mile here will help you build a solid relationship with all your affiliates.

Let's wrap this up by quickly discussing why it is important to listen to your affiliates, what they struggle with and do what you can to make promotions as easy as possible. Here's the thing. For every affiliate that reaches out for help finding a link, many others simply give up. If it's too hard to promote you, people will move on to someone else. They will promote a different product or service, because they know how to find their links and track their stats. Make it easy for them. Help your affiliates where you can. They will help make both you and themselves quite a bit of money down the road.