

You Can Create

Money Making Websites

Steve Leedy



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Author Information

Steve Leedy is a local government webmaster and computer/network specialist who also owns and operates two successful affiliate websites: <http://www.pcmusicstuff.com> and <http://www.websitedoit.com>.

Both of Steve's sites are ranked in the top ten of search results for multiple keyword phrases in Google, Yahoo!, MSN, AltaVista and other search engines (as of 12/02/06).

Steve has done extensive, time consuming research (both on and offline) as well as experimenting with website design and search engine optimization techniques to find the most effective solution for ranking well in the search engines.

Now you, as a reader of this ebook, have the opportunity to apply this valuable information and create your own money making websites.

Introduction

This ebook has been written primarily with new or inexperienced web designers and webmasters in mind. The following chapters are to be used as a guide for constructing and positioning an online presence (website) that can offer some level of income to its owner through sales as an affiliate.

This is not a “get rich quick” guide and there is no “secret” knowledge involved. The amount of income that can be attained depends upon a great many factors, the top two being hard work and patience. The website owner should be prepared to learn much and to be patient if he is really interested in making money from the web.

As far as learning goes, this ebook is the place to start the process. Some of the information given can be rather general in nature but much of it is quite specific. For instance, I can't really tell you how to operate the particular website design software you might choose to construct your website. But, I can tell you how to go about designing your site after you have learned to use the software.

By following the steps outlined in this guide, the website owner should, in time, begin to realize an income while enjoying the satisfaction of seeing his/her site become successful.

Are you ready? Roll up your sleeves and get started!

Chapter 1

Affiliate Websites Explained

In Internet marketing terms, an affiliate is someone who sells products for and receives commission from another. An affiliate website is one which is set up to promote those products. Its pages contain links to either the product's website or to a third party ecommerce shopping cart system.

The product's link on the affiliate's website contains a special product code and affiliate number. When someone clicks the link and makes a purchase, the affiliate is paid an agreed upon commission that can be as high as 75 percent of the product's selling price.

Digital products, such as software and ebooks, make the most sense for affiliates to promote. The affiliate doesn't have to handle or ship anything, since buyers can download the products directly from the web.

While some software producers administer their own affiliate programs, many more use third party companies such as RegNow, ClickBank, and eSellerate to handle the programs for them.

These companies offer huge selections of digital titles. The vast majority of RegNow's products are software, while ClickBank's offerings include software, ebooks, music and movie download sites, etc. eSellerate features software and ebooks.

I don't really suggest mixing links from various ecommerce providers on the same website simply because purchasers will have to deal with multiple shopping carts. You should investigate the various ecommerce companies and determine which you would like to use for your first website. You can always create another website later on to promote products offered by a different company.

Determine the products you would like to sell, keeping in mind the amount of competition you'll be up against. You might do well to find products that fit into a niche. In other words, look for a product that offers something useful to a specific group of people. With proper search engine optimization techniques and promotion of your website you will likely find much more success selling a niche product.

I'll go into greater detail on setting up an affiliate account and adding products to your website in Chapter 10.

Chapter 2

Setting a Goal

Since this ebook was written primarily for beginners with a desire to build their own income producing affiliate website, the general goal would obviously be to make money. But how much money?

Let's be realistic. A short term goal of one hundred thousand dollars per year would be foolish. There are simply too many variables such as the kind of products or services being sold, the market for those products or services, the amount of competition, the prices being charged, the amount of time and energy spent and the techniques being used to promote the website, etc, etc.

Claims of quickly making huge sums of money are enticing, but those who actually manage to do this are far fewer than you might imagine. Of course, it's not impossible, but you'll need to test the shallow waters before going out into the depths.

Examples of a realistic initial objective would be, for example, to earn enough monthly income to pay the utilities or to make the car payment. This goal is achievable and once reached a new goal can be established.

As you become more experienced with website design, promotion and search engine optimization, you increase your chances of making money on the web. But we're talking TIME here. It isn't going to happen overnight.

Those who do get rich, whether on the web or on Main Street, have typically done so by working hard, studying their competition, doing something better than the next guy and simply not giving up.

Often, the toughest part of a project is simply starting it. I've been as guilty as anyone of failing to follow through on an idea or plan, and I usually ended up regretting it. So, if you're truly serious about earning additional money, read the rest of this ebook and put the information to use!

Chapter 3

Ten Things You Will Need

Before beginning your affiliate website project, let's take a look at what you'll need to complete it. Note: This information is geared toward PC rather than MAC users, although the same basic principles apply for both.

1. Computer system, preferably with Windows XP (depends on software)
2. Modem (either Dial-up, DSL or Cable)
3. ISP (Internet Service Provider - your access to the Internet)
4. Internet Explorer 6 SP1 and Mozilla Firefox Browsers
Free download - Mozilla Firefox at <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US> (click this end of link)
5. WYSIWYG website design software (see Chapter 5)
6. FTP software (most web design programs already have this)
Free download - SmartFTP at <http://www.smartftp.com/download>
7. Image editing software (most web design programs have limited tools)
Free download – XnView at <http://perso.orange.fr/pierre.g/xnview/endownload.html>
8. Domain Name
9. Web Hosting Service (don't use a free one)
10. Affiliate Account (your choice of ecommerce providers)

Chapter 4

Deciding What to Sell

Here comes your first big decision: choosing the products to promote on your website. You can view the products by category at each ecommerce service.

1. RegNow- <https://www.regnow.com/marketplace.cgi>
2. ClickBank- <https://www.clickbank.com/marketplace.htm>
3. eSellerate- <https://affiliates.esellerate.net/Affiliates/AvailableProducts.aspx>

You can view commission rates for individual product titles without having to register as an affiliate. Take your time and look through the many products that are offered. Does anything stand out to you? Did a little light just go on in your head? Be patient and let the ideas flow.

Here are a few thoughts on picking out products:

- Choose products that you truly believe will sell. Sounds simple, but ask yourself if there is a large enough customer base out there for the product. For instance, it wouldn't make much sense trying to sell shareware word processing software, since most pc owners already have either Microsoft Word, Microsoft Works or WordPerfect installed.
- Choose more than one product. It's a good idea to limit yourself to just one *category* of products, but give customers choices within that category. If you have only one piece of software or ebook for sale, you're needlessly limiting your ability to make a sale.
- Do some research. Find a category of products that will appeal to a specific group of people, one that you either have some familiarity with or that you're willing to learn about. Be sure the market isn't nearly monopolized by a few major players as in the example with word processing software above.

If you have a hobby, you might like to sell ebooks or software associated with it. You already possess knowledge of the hobby, thus making it easier for you to write content for your site (we'll talk more about content later).

- After coming up with a couple of product ideas, think about keywords or keyword phrases that people would use to search for those products. Two and three word phrases are best. Using Google or Yahoo, type in the words and see how many results you get.

As an example, I tried the keywords “stamp collecting.” Google produced 1.4 million results, while Yahoo came in at 2.4 million. On a side note, I was actually surprised that there weren’t more results since stamp collecting is a popular hobby. If you enjoy this hobby, it looks as though there could be a good opportunity here.

If your first set of keywords result in, let’s say, 50 million pages, you’ll want to try a different set. For instance, the keywords “recording software” yields more than 63 million results in Google. Changing the phrase to the more specific “music recording software” drops the results to just over 19 million.

Narrowing your search can reveal some hidden gems for product ideas and keywords. Products, that when searched for using the most popular keywords result in many millions of hits, can still be found using alternate keywords that result in much less competition.

Here’s a link to a free piece of software called Good Keywords that can be helpful in finding those hard to come by phrases: <http://www.goodkeywords.com>
To find out how often a keyword phrase is searched, try the Overture Keyword Suggestion Tool at <http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion>.

Take your time and do the research. Finding the right products and the proper search terms are of the utmost importance to the success of your website.

Chapter 5

Choosing Web Design Software

Unless you are an expert at html coding I would suggest purchasing a good wysiwyg (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) web design program to build your website.

Difficulty levels vary with each program. Basically, the more you want to be able to do, the more difficult the software will be to learn due to the extra functionality included. You don't need a bunch of distracting bells, whistles or animation on your website anyway, therefore you don't need highly advanced or expensive software to produce it.

My websites were created and published with an excellent program called *SiteSpinner*, produced by Virtual Mechanics. It is a true wysiwyg design program. It allows you to set up a grid on the screen that the corners of a drawn or imported "object" can "snap to." This makes aligning text and images very easy. Drawing tools are included so you can make your own boxes and shapes, if desired.

As with most wysiwyg web design software, you can't directly import an html file into the program. You can, however, open an html file in Internet Explorer and drag and drop its objects/text directly onto the SiteSpinner workspace. This allows you to use html templates, albeit in a different manner, such as those you received as a free bonus with this ebook.

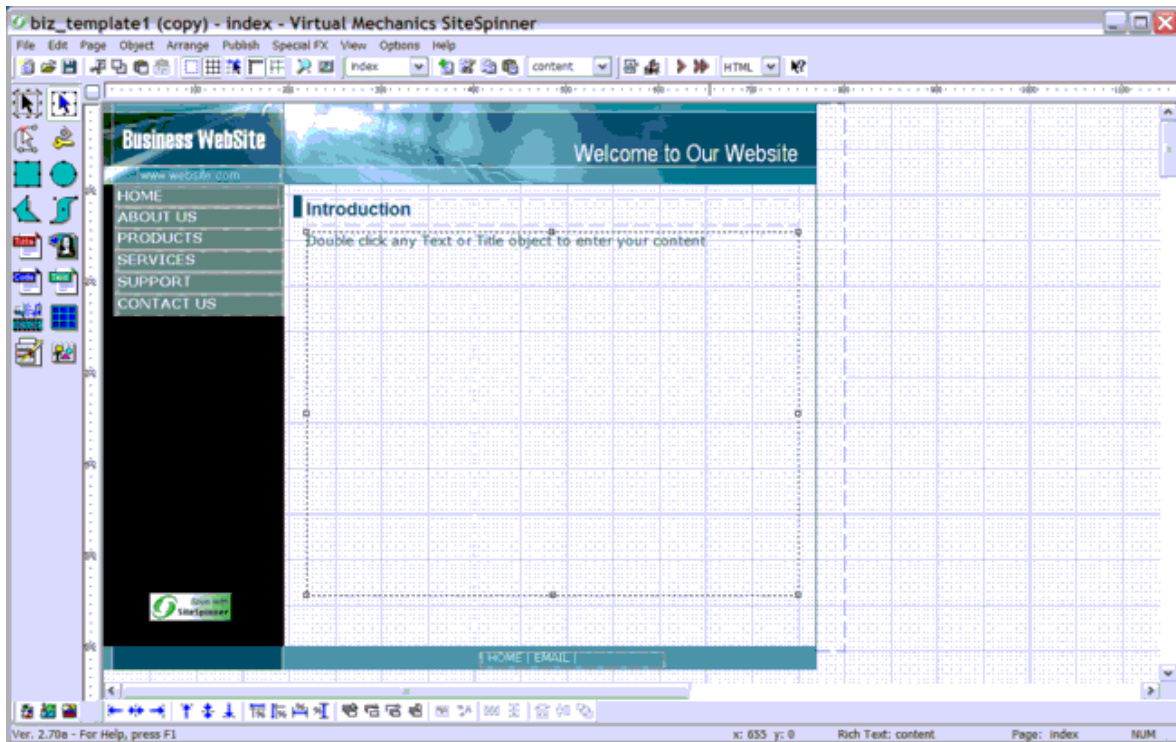
In addition to SiteSpinner, there are several other fine programs you can choose from on my website at <http://www.websitedoit.com>. Another excellent program, and one that has a free trial, is Web Page Maker. It operates very similarly to SiteSpinner.

The *html editors* featured on the website also have wysiwyg capabilities, plus you can directly import html templates into them. They are a little more difficult to use, but are great if you want to learn html coding too.

You can also try a free wysiwyg html editor such as Nvu (pronounced N view). It is an open source program with versions for Windows, Linux and Mac. You can import existing html files into Nvu and edit them, but the program is not all that intuitive and doesn't have any design drawing tools of it's own.

This means you can't create simple boxes and other objects that are basic to the look of your web page. If, however, you're just looking to edit an existing html template, the program may work well enough for you.

Here's the link for the Nvu website: <http://www.nvu.com>. Be sure to download the appropriate file for your computer's particular operating system.



Screenshot of SiteSpinner by Virtual Mechanics with template loaded

Chapter 6

Preliminary Web Design

This is where the real fun begins. I love the design process. It is, without a doubt, the most enjoyable part of the entire project for me.

At this time, you can't add any product promotional text or images to your site design because you don't have an affiliate account setup with an ecommerce provider. Problem is, you can't set up an affiliate account and choose products because you don't have a website. Sounds like a "catch 22", right?

Well, now is the time to begin taking care of that problem by building a web page. Whether you choose to design your site from scratch or use a template, be sure to design the page for expandability. In other words, leave a fair amount of free space everywhere so you can add more information or images later.

If you haven't learned to use your wysiwyg software yet, take the time to do so. Follow the tutorial and use the help file. Read the online forum if one is available. Experiment with the program's features. When you feel comfortable enough with the software you can move on to the next step.

For now, you'll want to design only the index (home) page. Look at the templates that came with your design software. If you want to use one of them, go ahead. You can also use one of the free html templates you received if you like one of them better. Lastly, you can design your own layout from scratch.

Following are some important design tips:

1. Design and write for your audience, not yourself.
2. Don't use too many colors.
3. Don't use too many images.
4. Use thumbnail (smaller) images to link to the full size versions.
5. Use short sentences by eliminating unnecessary words. Get right to the point.
6. Spellcheck your content.
7. Write about your subject in straightforward, layman's terms.
8. Put the most important text above the fold (the part of the web page that shows without scrolling down).
9. Don't make your pages too long. It's best to keep them under two full screens in length.

10. Don't use all capital letters for body text.
11. Don't use all italic or bold text except for headings or titles.
12. Use the standard link colors for any links in your content text: blue for unvisited, red for active, purple for previously visited.
13. Don't use blinking text, sounds, animations or pop-ups.
14. Don't put a visitor counter on your website.

Using the tips above will make your website look much more professional, not "gimmicky" or amateurish.

Decide on an attractive color scheme. If you're selling a product that, once installed, doesn't require the visitor to have newer technology to view it properly, you may decide to use browser safe colors. The browser safe color palette consists of only 216 colors viewable on both older MAC's and PC's. You can view the palette here: <http://www.websitedoit.com/web-colors.html> (click this end of the link to open it).

But, if you are selling a software product that should be viewed (after the buyer installs it) in 1024 x 768 resolution with 16 bit color (65,536 colors), then don't worry about sticking to the browser safe palette for your website. If the visitor can't properly view all the colors on your website, they won't be able to view those colors in the software either.

Keep the width of your page to 800 pixels or less. This will allow it to be viewed in 800 x 600 screen resolution without the need to scroll across.

Ease of navigation is an important design consideration. Although you won't have any more pages for a while, make sure you include some space for the navigation links that will come later. Determine the look and placement of those links. You want visitors to easily find them.

Typical locations for navigation links are on the left side of the page (a stack of links starting fairly close to the top) and horizontally along the top, bottom or both. A combination of all three can be used as well. You'll have to decide if you want text links, graphic links (buttons, for instance), or both.

Again, at this point you won't have any links to other internal pages. You should, however, put a *Contact* or *Contact Us* link near the top of the page that brings up your email client (you can set up an email address for the site when you obtain your web hosting).



Example of a simple web page design

Next, you're going to need some content. Write a few paragraphs associated with the kinds of products you'll be selling. Don't actually advertise the products, just put together an article with the subject matter based around the products.

For example, if your site is going to sell stamp collecting ebooks or software, write an article about stamp collecting. Give information on the hobby from a hobbyist's viewpoint.

If needed, you may want to take the time to learn some better writing skills or find someone with that ability to help you. A website with poor grammar and bad spelling is an immediate turnoff to potential customers.

Back to our example, it would be a good idea to add a few links to other stamp collecting websites. Remember, what you're creating right now is a simple web page that will give you an online presence when you join an affiliate program.

Use only text fonts that others should already have installed on their computers such as Arial, Sans Serif, Times New Roman, Verdana or Tahoma. Don't mix fonts on the page, as this makes the site look amateurish. It's ok to use bold or

italic for some titles, headings or specific words. It's best NOT to use italic text for the content in general, because it's hard to read.

All content text should be either dark lettering on a light background or vice versa. The greater the contrast, the easier text is to read. I'm a big proponent of black text / white background.

In the chapter "Ten Things You Will Need", Mozilla Firefox was listed under number 4. Firefox sometimes displays web pages a little differently than Internet Explorer, so it's a good idea to preview your web page in it. That way, you can see if you need to move an object (text or image) that could be obscuring another.

You'll obviously want your web page to be attractive, but don't put too much work into it at this time. After becoming an affiliate, you'll need to alter the page by adding other items such as images, additional links, etc.

Chapter 7

Choosing a Domain Name

After deciding on the products you want to sell on your new website, you can begin to think about a domain name. The domain name is the url (uniform resource locator) or website address, as in www.mysite.com.

You should attempt to incorporate a descriptive word associated with your products into the domain name. If, for instance, you're selling stamp collecting software, a good domain name would be *stamp-collecting.com* (since this is only an example I have not researched this name, but I suspect it's already taken).

Finding a great domain name is not as easy as it sounds, since the best domain names are already registered. You'll need to be very creative.

Start by going to a domain name registrar's website. A good one to try is <http://www.godaddy.com>. They are the number one overall registrar and sell domain names at very low cost. You can also host your website with them, which is something I recommend.

Type in the domain name you prefer and do a search to see if it's available. Since your website is a commercial endeavor, you should pick, in this order, **.com**, then **.biz**, and as a last resort, **.net**.

Using the earlier example, you may find that *stamp-collecting.com* has already been registered but *stamp-collecting.biz* is available. I personally am not a big proponent of using the same name as another site but with a different extension.

I would, instead, try a completely different name such as *collect-stamps.com*, and if that wasn't available I'd keep searching until I found a **.com** that I could live with.

Once you find the perfect (or at least acceptable) domain name, you may want to get it registered quickly. I have racked my brain to come up with an available name before, but waited a couple of weeks before attempting to register it. To my surprise, after going back to the site to register the domain name, someone else had already done so. I guess great minds do think alike!

When registering your domain name, you should obtain it for at least two years. It will probably cost you less than \$10 per year, so it's not a great expense. I believe locking in a name for multiple years lends an increased sense of legitimacy to the site.

I would definitely pick a registrar, such as the aforementioned GoDaddy.com, that informs you via email when your domain name is ready to expire. I used another registrar/ hosting service at one point and ended up losing a domain name because it expired. I hadn't even realized it was time to renew it.

You can also set up your hosting account at this time if you've picked a registrar that offers hosting plans. We'll cover this in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Setting Up a Hosting Account

If your domain name registrar offers hosting plans, you may as well set up your hosting account at this time to simplify things. Many registrars or hosting companies offer both services, so you'll get a price break on the domain name and get low cost hosting to boot.

If you start with the least expensive hosting plan you should expect to pay less than \$4 per month. This should be satisfactory, at least for now, as you won't need a lot of bandwidth. Remember, you won't actually be storing the digital products on your computer. When someone makes a purchase, the downloading takes place from the ecommerce provider's site.

To keep things simple, acquire your web hosting for the same length of time as your domain name, preferably two years. If you decide later on that you need additional storage space and monthly data transfer, you can upgrade your account. I still haven't needed to upgrade either of my websites from the cheapest account.

Your web host will either allow you to choose, or assign to you, a username and password to access your space on their web server. You can use the ftp software included with your web design program (or any other ftp software) to upload your files to the server.

The web host also provides free email accounts for your website. You can set up something like *webmaster@yoursite.com*. You'll be using this email address a lot in the near future for things such as link exchanges and other items of contact. You can also set up multiple email accounts for your site if you wish.

The hosting account will include a control panel. This is software on the web host's server that allows you to log in and check or edit specific settings for your domain name and hosting.

Chapter 9

Putting Your Web Page Online

After getting your domain name, you'll want to incorporate it into the web page you designed earlier. The domain name doesn't necessarily have to be the "name" of your website.

A lot depends on the domain name you chose. Once again, using the example of a website selling stamp collecting software and ebooks, the domain name *collect-stamps.com* could be used as the viewable website name because it's so descriptive.

If the domain name was *stampcol.com* instead, a visitor might wonder exactly what the name implied without reading further. In this case, a website name such as "Stamp Collector's Resources" could be shown at the top of the webpage in large text, with the domain name *stampcol.com* in small text off to one side.

Either example above would be absolutely acceptable, so if you can't find the "perfect" domain name, you don't have to use it as your site name.

When your web page is ready for publishing, you can use your ftp (file transfer protocol) software to upload the page to the web server. You'll have to provide the username and password you received when you set up your hosting account in order to access the server.

If your wysiwyg program didn't come with ftp software, you can use a free program such as SmartFTP (see page 8 for a download link). Here's how it works:

First, using your web building software, publish your web page to a folder on your hard drive. Your software may automatically publish to a folder it creates, but if not, create one yourself on your desktop called "mysite" and publish your page to it.

Within the folder you published to, you should see a file called *index.html* and another folder or two containing images and any other components that may be associated with your web page.

Now, open Smart FTP and enter your ftp website address in the address bar (for example ftp://www.whatever.com). Next, type your username in the *Login* box and your password in the *Password* box. Type the number 21 in the *Port* box.

Now, click on the green arrow next to your ftp address and the browser should connect to your ftp site. Open the folder where you published your website and simply drag and drop your published folders and .html files into the SmartFTP file window. That's it!

Note: Some web hosts may require you to upload your .html files into a specific folder on the web server, such as "public_html" for instance. You'll find out this information when you establish your account.

Once the files have been transferred, close SmartFTP and open Internet Explorer. Type your url into the IE address bar and click "Go". Your web page should now load. Congratulations!

Chapter 10

Setting Up an Affiliate Account

After your website has been put online, it's time to access your choice of ecommerce providers. At this time it would be helpful to point out some of the differences in the way RegNow, eSellerate and ClickBank handle products and transactions.

1. ClickBank

First you must sign up and create an affiliate ID. When you choose a ClickBank product and click on the link that reads *create hoplink*, a code will be generated that produces a "*click here*" link when added to your website. This code also contains your affiliate ID. It's very simple and there is no approval process by the vendor.

You will need to promote the product(s) on your site in some way, using text, images or both. Then, when visitors see your ad and click the "*click here*" link, they will be taken to the product's website and your ID will be recorded by ClickBank. If a sale is made, you will be credited for it and receive the agreed upon commission.

The only downside to the ClickBank system is if you promote multiple categories of products. Visitors may want to purchase several different kinds of products from your site, but since each link takes them to the vendor's website, they will have to make a separate purchase at each of those sites. They can't add several different products to a single shopping cart and make just one purchase.

Because of this it is best to promote only one **kind** of product on your website, even though you should offer multiple products of that same kind. This will give the prospective customer several choices. For example, if you want to sell spyware removal software, give the visitor a half-dozen or more choices.

Since the product's "*click here*" link on your web page takes the visitor to the vendor's website, you don't need to provide a large amount of information about the product on your site. Just add enough promotional text/graphics to entice the visitor to click the link.

ClickBank is a very popular option and can certainly make you money.

2. RegNow

First, you'll need to sign up as an affiliate and receive an affiliate number. RegNow gives affiliates the option of choosing to sell a product by "joining" with its producer or vendor.

Many RegNow vendors offer auto-approval, so as soon as you join you are approved to begin selling their products. Other vendors require affiliates to go through an approval process that can take a few days, and they may turn down affiliates for reasons known only to them. If this happens (and it sometimes does), just move on to another vendor's product and join with them. You'll eventually have plenty of products to sell.

After you're set up with the vendors, you must use the link code provided by RegNow to properly track the sale back to you. Two methods are provided:

1. Link code that takes the customer to the RegNow shopping cart. The word "item" is a part of the code. By changing the word to "items" the customer can add other products to the cart also. If you're selling several products, I recommend you make this change in all the links.
2. Link code that takes the customer to the vendor's website to make the purchase. The problem with this method is that many vendors don't use RegNow for their transactions even though they use them for affiliate relationships. In this case, you lose credit for the sale because it can't be tracked.

I use only the first method and create my own individual product pages. I place links to these pages on the home page of my site, with a short explanation of the product (a small image can be used along with the text). When the customer clicks the link they are transferred to the product page.

From there they can read information about the product and view screenshot images. If they wish to purchase, they click on a *Buy Now* link (or button image that you provide). This link contains the code mentioned earlier, which transfers them to the RegNow shopping cart. If the transaction is made, you get credit for the sale.

Some vendors offer affiliates a few images and promotional text for their products through the RegNow control panel. Some of the images can be beneficial for use on the product page, but I also like to go to the vendor's website and copy additional images and text to provide more information to the customer. The more information that's available, the greater the possibility of a purchase.

Some vendors also offer free trial downloads of their software. The RegNow control panel for that vendor again provides link code containing your affiliate ID. When a customer downloads the trial software, the affiliate ID is imbedded into the code of the product. If the customer later decides to purchase the product, you get credit for the sale.

3. eSellerate

I have not used eSellerate, so I can't give you a detailed description of their system. However, from a reading of the information on their website, it appears that their entire process is very similar to that of RegNow.

So, the decision on which ecommerce provider to use is entirely yours. RegNow, Clickbank and eSellerate are all very popular and provide a wide selection of digital products.

Chapter 11

More Website Design

Now is the time to start adding pages to your website. The pages that your site should have include:

1. Home page (obviously)
2. Product pages (unless product links go to vendor's website)
3. Contact Information
4. Privacy Statement
5. Linking Information / reciprocal link directory
6. Reciprocal links pages
7. Information pages (articles)
8. Site Map (if you have 12 pages or more)

Let's take a more thorough look at each of these pages.

1. Home Page

Once you have your affiliate account in place you are ready to add the products/ product links to your website. At this stage, you'll be doing a slight redesign of your existing home page. This redesign will include some on-page search engine optimization (seo) techniques which we'll cover in-depth in the next chapter.

For now, you should figure on re-arranging and re-wording your existing subject text to contain keywords (next chapter). It's always a good idea to have a paragraph or two near the top of the page or in a column that gives an overview of the site. Then, each product's info and links can be placed below, or next to, this subject text.

The home page link for a product should send visitors to a page with a more detailed explanation of that product or to the vendor's website, depending on the method employed by your ecommerce provider.

Keep the design clean and well arranged. The small amount of promotional text you provide for each product needs to be keyword rich also, and any images should have alt-image tags with descriptions containing keywords (this is part of the seo stuff we'll talk about later). Be sure to add links to the other pages on the site in your navigation panel.

You may want to make room on your home page and/or any informational pages (but not the product pages) for *Google AdSense*.

AdSense for Content ads are available in various sizes and can be vertical or horizontal, depending upon the space available on your page. *AdSense for Search* will require a specifically sized area. I'll go into more detail on these in the next chapter.

2. Product Pages

If you're adding products from an ecommerce provider whose affiliate links take the customer directly to a shopping cart, you should create pages for each of the products. These pages should be linked from short descriptions on the home page. Your affiliate links from the ecommerce provider can then be placed on the product pages.

These pages should have a similar "look and feel" to the home page (as should all the pages), and the vendor's images and descriptive text should be arranged in a well-organized manner. I like to create my own *Buy Now* and (if applicable) *Try Now* buttons for the product page. The affiliate link code can then be added to the button images.

Each page you create should have its own unique meta title, description and keywords (more seo stuff). Do not use the same ones for every page. Your web builder software should allow you to add this information to each page.

3. Contact Information

Since yours is an affiliate site, you don't really want customers emailing you with questions about the software or requests for refunds. Your ecommerce provider will have information with support email addresses and/or phone numbers for customers. That information should be added to this page of your site.

Your email address should be on the page also, but it should be spelled out that it is only for comments or questions about the website itself.

Also, add information from the ecommerce provider about the secure ordering system they employ. This will give prospective customers a sense of security and give the site a more professional feel.

4. Privacy Statement

This is a simple notice to visitors that their email address (if, for any reason, they email you) will not be given out to anyone nor will it be used for any unsolicited emailings.

5. Linking Information / Link Directory

On this page you can make information available for other webmasters who wish to link to your site. Show your website title, description and url for them to copy as in the following example:

Title: Stamp Collector's Resources

Description: Your source for stamp collecting software, ebooks and information.

URL: <http://www.collect-stamps.com/>

Many webmasters will visit this page before requesting a link trade with your site. Be sure to add your email address so they can get in touch with you.

Also include on this page a directory for your reciprocal links (read next paragraph). The directory should contain links to the pages where your reciprocal links are located.

6. Reciprocal Links

Reciprocal links can be categorized by creating pages for computer software websites, computer hardware websites, web design sites, web hosting sites, etc. Only create categories for, and trade links with, sites that are relevant in some way to yours.

More detailed information on this subject can be found in the chapter 13.

7. Information Pages

If possible, you should add a few content pages to your site containing subject information related to the content of your website. Write from your own experience or do some research and put together a few interesting articles. These can be important to the success of your website in that others will want to link to it.

8. Site Map

There are two kinds of site maps, the Google XML site map, and the plain old html site map. The former will be covered in the chapter 13. The latter we will deal with at this time.

If you have a lot of pages, it may not be practical to try and link all of them from every other page of the website. Use a site map instead. A site map is basically a directory of the pages on your website. This allows visitors to see links to every page on the site (that you want them to see), allowing them to more easily navigate the site.

All the pages mentioned above are important, so design them accordingly.

Three more things to consider:

- Don't link to any pages you still have under construction.
- Make sure every page has a link to the home page.
- Keep all pages within three clicks of one another.

Chapter 12

Using Google AdSense

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Google AdSense can be added to various pages on your website. Typically, the home page, informational pages and even links pages are the best locations. I don't put the ads on product pages, as I don't want customers clicking them and leaving the page at that point.

The ads contain links to other websites selling products related to the content of the page they are placed on. You don't have to do anything to set up the content or links on the ads, it happens automatically.

There are actually two types of AdSense, *AdSense for Content* and *AdSense for Search*. You can incorporate either or both on your website.

To put AdSense on your pages, you'll first need to set up an account. Go to <http://www.google.com> and click on the link for *Advertising Programs*. On the next page, click on the *Google AdSense* link. Then, on the next page, pick the link button that reads *Click Here to Apply*.

Once your application is approved, you can login, click the tab for *AdSense Setup* and choose the ad layouts and/or search bar layout you wish to incorporate on your site. Choose the size, configuration and color scheme that best fits on the page(s) on which you choose to place the ads or search bar.

Once you make your choices, you can click a link that will produce the necessary code. Simply copy the code and paste it into your web design program (read how to insert code in the help section of your web software).

Once your site is online, whenever someone clicks on one of the ads or does an AdSense search and goes to the advertiser's website, you earn a small fee. The more clicks, the more you make.



Free Telescope Catalog Low prices on dozens of telescopes at Orion's web site.	Celestron Telescope Minimum prices for Auth. USA Dealer BizRate "Best of the Best" Shop Now	SkyOptics.com Binoculars, night vision, tripods, rangefinders and telescopes.	Telescope Eyepieces A large variety including eyepieces for astrophotography! MaxView
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Ads by Google

Example of Google AdSense horizontal ad

Chapter 13

Search Engine Optimization

Traffic is the lifeblood of any business website. Simply put, Customers = \$. More Customers = More \$.

The vast majority of a website's traffic comes from the search engines. Google, Yahoo! and MSN are the big three. At the time of this writing, Google led the way in searches by a wide margin, yielding 59% of all searches. Yahoo! came in second at 22% and MSN third with 12%.

To get visitors, it is imperative that your site be indexed by a search engine and found in it's search results. Shooting for the top spot on a search engine is a lofty goal, but certainly one that can be reached. A more reasonable goal, however, is to be somewhere on page one of the results. Due to the sheer number of search results on Google, it's possible that page two may be marginally profitable.

So how does one achieve high search engine rankings? Well, that's where search engine optimization comes into play. There are two critical components of seo: on-page and off-page optimization.

1. On-Page Optimization

On-page optimization lies within the html code and can be broken down as follows:

- meta tags
- content (text & images)
- alt-image tags
- internal and external link text
- header tags

Any good wysiwyg web design software will allow you to enter all of the above except for the header tags (more on this below).

Let's start by looking at meta tags. These are a part of the <head> section of the html code and include a title, description and keywords.

Meta Title

The title is not the domain name, or www name of your website. It is actually a descriptive title, a short keyword rich name for your site. For example, if your site sells stamp collecting products, "Homer's Stamp Collecting Stuff" might be a suitable title (that is, if your name is Homer). Keep the title length to no more than fifty characters.

Meta Description

A short (fewer than 200 characters) description of what the webpage is about, such as "We sell software and ebooks for the stamp collecting enthusiast."

Meta Keywords

Keywords should be specific and should be words that people will actually use to search for the kind of content on your webpage. Having lots of keywords won't help if they don't target what your page is about. Besides, you don't really need many.

Some keywords for our example could be: stamp collecting, stamp, collecting, stamps, collector, collectors, hobby. Don't use any meta keyword word more than three times and be sure that all these words or phrases are actually used frequently throughout the text on the webpage they are associated with.

Now, let's go over some of the elements that will be a part of the <body> section of the html code.

Content

Content is comprised of the textual subject matter and associated images on the webpage. I also include the visible text title in this category as well. The text title is what a viewer will see as the name of your website at the top of every page. This can be the same wording (but doesn't have to be) as your meta title. Use bold text for this.

The body text should use keywords and key phrases liberally, but in a natural sounding way. You should place your key search phrase in bold or italic text near the beginning of the first paragraph.

The following is a good example of how **NOT** to word your text:

"Stamp collecting is a fun hobby for people who enjoy collecting stamps. Stamp collectors come from all walks of life and start collecting stamps at many different

ages. So if you like stamp collecting or want to start stamp collecting, we have ebooks and software that will help beginners get started stamp collecting and help experienced stamp collectors also.”

It's pretty obvious what's going on with wording like that above. Search engines could easily consider this spamming. Don't force keywords into the text, let them come naturally. I like to keep my keyword density to no more than 5%.

Once your site is up you can check the keyword density with some online tools. Try this one: <http://www.ranks.nl/tools/spider.html>. You may need to experiment with your text to get the best possible density.

Remember, adding interesting, well written content pages to your site creates an open invitation to others to link to those pages (more about this in the off-page optimization section).

Alt-Image Tags

Any image placed on a page should have a descriptive tag associated with it. The tag text should include a keyword or two. After the page is published to the web, and whenever a mouse cursor is placed over the image, the text associated with the image will appear in a small box.

Internal and External Links

Where possible, use keywords as part of the link text to other pages of the site or to other websites.

Header Tags

Most wysiwyg website software programs do not allow the user to designate specific text as H1, H2, etc. These tags are typically used to assign importance to headings, with H1 carrying the most weight.

Adding these tags manually can be done after publishing the wysiwyg page to html, although a little knowledge of html coding is needed.

There is quite a bit of debate as to whether these tags are still important for improving search engine rankings. In my experience, they are not. I have removed the header tags from my websites and they have actually risen in the rankings. I would not be concerned with them.

2. Off-Page Optimization

- one-way links
- reciprocal links

In chapter 11, you were shown the linking information you should make available for someone wanting to link to your site. This information is in the form of a *title*, a *description* and a *url*. These three components make up a typical one-way link as well as a reciprocal link. Let's look at these components.

Title: The title is the name of your website, and should contain one of your main keywords. The title is also the link text that will be clicked on by someone wanting to visit your site.

Description: This is one or two sentences that describe what your website is about in a concise, to-the-point manner.

URL: The url is the web address. Again, the title is assigned this url, creating a link.

Here is the example from Chapter 11:

Title: Stamp Collector's Resources

Description: Your source for stamp collecting software, ebooks and information.

URL: <http://www.collect-stamps.com/>

Here's how the actual link will appear when set up in your web design software:

[Stamp Collector's Resources](#)

Your source for stamp collecting software, ebooks and information.

The title and description for your linking info can be the same as the meta title and description of your site. Try to come up with two more titles and descriptions also (with slightly different keywords or phrases). Then, every few months, you can alternate them on your linking info.

Note: Do not change the website's meta information unless, after a few months, you are having no success in MSN or Yahoo!

One-Way Links

One-way links (actually one-way backlinks) are at the top of the list of off-page optimization factors. When someone is willing to place a link to your website on theirs without receiving a link in return, it says a lot about your site.

Here are some proven methods to obtain one-way links:

1. Provide good content on your site. The fact that it's an affiliate website with pages advertising software or ebooks doesn't mean you can't have additional pages with interesting articles and information (related subject matter, of course).
2. Write and submit articles to article distributors. A simple, well written, 200 word article with a topic related to your website content, can easily provide backlinks to your site.

Typically, your link can be placed in the "author" or "about the author" section of the article. After the article is distributed it may show up in quite a number of places across the web. A good, low cost distribution site is <http://www.isnare.com>.

3. Add your link to one-way web directories. Web directories normally allow you to place your title as the link, along with a description of the site. Here are some excellent (and very large) lists of directories to choose from: <http://www.seocompany.ca>. Click on the *Directories* link.

Be sure to submit your site to the DMOZ directory, as Google uses this info. It may take many months, or you may not even get listed in DMOZ, but it is worth the effort to try. Here's the link: <http://www.dmoz.org>.

While there are still some free one-way directories, most now charge a fee for your linking info. The fee can be anywhere from a couple of dollars to fifty dollars or more per link. The vast majority of these are permanent links although some are only for one year. Be sure you know what you're getting before you buy.

You should submit to a few of these pay directories, as this gives the impression that you're serious about your website's success. Look for some with a page rank of 3 or 4 and don't pay more than \$10 (pr 3) or \$15 (pr 4) per link submission at this time.

4. Participate in forums pertaining to your website content. If you are quite knowledgeable about the subject matter of your site, you can probably find a forum where you can post messages and add your website's url. For example: Try a Google search for *stamp collecting forum* and check it out. This will give you an idea of what to expect.

Reciprocal Links

Reciprocal links are easy to obtain. They are, basically, a one-for-one trade with someone else's website. You put up their link on your site and they put up your link on theirs.

A word of advice: trade links with related websites only. It doesn't matter if you have the opportunity to trade links with a page rank 7 website, if it has nothing to do with the subject of your site, don't waste your time.

Google has recently devalued reciprocal links, especially those that are unrelated. This makes perfect sense, really. If your site deals with stamp collecting, why would you have a link to, or why would your link be on, a website that sells bubble bath?

Yahoo! and MSN still give significance to reciprocal links, so it's still a good idea to have some reciprocal links pages. But again, keep them related.

Even though reciprocal links don't hold the importance of one-way links, your site's link at least gets spread around the web. Plus, you're offering your visitors a way to find more information related to your site's content by putting partners' links on your site.

Here's how to obtain reciprocal links:

- Join a link exchange program. There are lots of free link swap sites out there. Once you join and submit your site information, you can request link exchanges from other sites and vice-versa.
- Contact another site directly for a trade. A common approach is to first add the desired site's link information to your link page. Then, email the webmaster, telling him where you've placed his link and ask if he would be willing to reciprocate by adding yours.

Be sure to provide your site's linking info in the email, so the webmaster can add it to his link page. If you don't hear from him, check his link pages after two or three weeks. If you don't find your link, remove his from your site.

As mentioned in chapter 11, you should set up a resources page or link directory page inviting others to place your link on their site. Offer your linking information in the form of a title, description and URL. Then, use a method below to set up your reciprocal links pages.

Stamp Collecting Sites or Stamp Collecting Sites [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)
[page 1](#) [page 2](#) [page 3](#)

Reciprocal links can be categorized for site content, but If you only swap links with websites that are highly targeted to what's on your site, you won't need multiple categories.

Each links page should contain no more than 35 links to other sites. As with all your other web pages, each link page must be given a different name. You could choose to name your links pages as follows:

resources1.html or reciprocal1.html or partners1.html
resources2.html reciprocal2.html partners2.html

A few words of caution: don't try to obtain all your reciprocal and one-way links in a short period of time. Add them in a natural manner, let's say ten reciprocal links per week, and about half that many one-way links, if possible.

You could even double the amount above, but be consistent. You don't want it to look as though you're trying to manipulate the system.

Chapter 14

Search Engine Submission

Most likely, if your website is up and running and available for viewing, it will eventually be found and indexed by Google, Yahoo!, MSN and other search engines.

If you want your site to get indexed faster it's best to give it a head start by submitting the url (and other info) to the various search engines.

If you don't want to take the time, you can pay a small fee to a submission service to do the submissions for you or you can purchase software to do it do you..

You may have even seen pay services which advertise that they submit to thousands of search engines. That is a waste money and effort. There are really only a very limited number of good search engines that will bring traffic.

My suggestion is to use a free online service for most of the submissions, then manually submit to Yahoo! And MSN yourself since they require manual submissions.

Here is a good free service that will submit to approximately forty search engines:
<http://www.submitexpress.com>.

Also, I don't like the idea of submitting to the search engines every three months like some of the services recommend. Do the initial submission and then, if you're sure you aren't indexed six months later, submit again. You shouldn't need to keep submitting.

Chapter 15

Making a Google Site Map

Another thing you should consider doing is submitting a Google site map. This is not to be confused with the site map you created for your viewers. The Google site map uses XML language (a kind of extended HTML) to give Google information about each page of your website, thus aiding in properly indexing the pages.

You can create and submit the sitemap by going to the Google website and following the links. If you have already set up a Google account, you can use your existing login information.

There are other websites that will allow you to create the XML sitemap for free. Download the site map to your computer then, upload it to your site.

The site map contains information about each page including a numerical ranking of its importance (0 to 1.0), and frequency at which it's updated. These numbers are very subjective, and I'm not sure at this time how much weight Google really assigns to them.

You can edit the sitemap in a simple word processor, as the information is pretty straightforward. That way, you can assign different values of importance to each page as well as different update frequencies for each. Or, you can simply leave these values set at, for instance, *0.5* for importance and *monthly* for update.

The important thing is that Google can read the site map and see each page you want listed. Remember, the site map will show every page on your site, so if there are pages that you don't want indexed, you'll need to edit the XML sitemap and remove them.

Also, if you later add more pages to your site that you want indexed, you'll need to create a new sitemap or edit your existing one to include them.

The jury may still be out on the true importance of the Google site map, but why take chances? You want good rankings in Google, so give them what they want.

Chapter 16

Promoting Your Website

Promoting your website is another way of getting traffic to your site. And remember, the more traffic you get, the greater chance you have of making a sale. Some of the linking strategies mentioned in the previous chapter are, in effect, a kind of website promotion. However, two, more targeted methods are shown below.

eMail Campaign

An email campaign consists of sending promotional emails concerning special offers or informational articles to a customer base.

To begin an e-mail campaign, you must first collect e-mail addresses from customers and prospective customers. Once a good number of addresses have been accrued, you can do a mass emailing, consisting of special offers for certain products or interesting information (related to your website, of course).

To avoid having your emails considered as spam and possibly getting banned by the customer's ISP, you must have the recipient's prior consent to receive them. I'll explain how to do this a little later.

Since customer information (names, addresses, e-mail, etc.) from transactions is collected by the e-commerce provider after a sale, you, as the site owner, do not have access to the info. So, how do you get someone's e-mail address?

1. Contest

Hold a contest in which you give away a worthwhile product to the winner. If you're giving away a physical item, you can notify the winner, request their home mailing address, and send the product to them via mail or UPS, FedEx, etc.

The contest could, for example, consist of an emailed photo of something of interest to your visitors and related to your website content. For instance, a stamp collecting website could have a contest in which interested visitors could e-mail the judges (you) a .jpeg photo of their most interesting stamp.

Here's how to get the customer's permission to send them emails. The contest rules must explain that, by entering the contest, participants agree to allow emails from your website with special offers or information.

2. Drawing

Hold a drawing for a free software download or ebook. To enter the drawing, participants again must agree to allow solicited emails from your website about offers, etc.

The winner can be emailed the prize as a file attachment or as a url where he/she can download the prize.

In both instances, be sure to spell out all the rules including the length of time the contest or drawing lasts. Be sure to remove the info from your site immediately after the offer expires.

You should create a special email account through your hosting company for this purpose. Most web hosts give you quite a few free e-mail accounts, so just go to their control panel and set up additional one such as *contest@stamp-collecting.com*.

Another tip is to create stationary for Outlook or Outlook Express that will give your contest/drawing related emails a more professional appearance.

Note: Holding a drawing or contest is not only a good way to collect e-mail addresses, but may, in itself, bring extra traffic to your website.

Pay-Per-Click Campaign

While some affiliates have had mixed success with this method using Google AdWords, I simply don't recommend it.

First, you must determine the keywords you wish to target in your ads. These ads will show up on related websites that are showing Google AdSense ads.

Obviously, larger companies, going for the same keywords as you, can afford to pay much more per click for popular keywords. The popularity of those keywords will determine the minimum amount you will have to pay each time your ad is clicked.

Another important but negative point is that click fraud is at an all time high. Remember, every time your ad is clicked, the website hosting the ad earns money from you. This fact has, unfortunately, resulted in unscrupulous site owners inventing creative ways to click the ads for their own benefit.

The vast majority of people looking for products use search engines to find them, so paying for expensive advertising doesn't make good financial sense for an affiliate.

Chapter 17

Maintaining Your Website

Keeping your website up-to-date with the latest information is essential to sales. Software producers often update their programs and information to include the latest technology and methodology. This includes occasionally changing the prices they charge.

Let's say you have an affiliate relationship with a software producer who retools a popular program, adding new features or even eliminating a flaw in one of the existing features. Even though you are an affiliate, that producer may not notify you of the changes.

If you aren't advertising the latest version of the software, you may lose a customer to another website that has already offered the newer version.

So if you aren't notified, how do you know if something has changed? That's Easy. Set up a schedule to go online to each of your product pages. Click your purchase links. This will take you to your ecommerce provider's order page where a summary of the product and the current price are located. If you see anything different, make changes to your pages accordingly.

There is nothing worse than receiving an email from someone who saw the product listed on your website, but after clicking the purchase link, found the price to be \$5 higher on the order page. Not only is that embarrassing, it can lose you several sales, too.

It's also a good idea to occasionally visit the software producer's website to check for any additional new information.

Here are some more tips:

- Make sure all your links are working correctly, both internal and external
- Remove old unused pages from your site as well as any links to them
- Be sure all your pages load properly
- When you add new content, be sure to check spelling and grammar
- Once per year, make small visual changes to the site to keep it fresh

Chapter 18

Keep Your Website Ranking Well

So, you've finally reached that elusive number #1 (or 2 or 3) ranking on the first page of search engine results. Now, the question is, how do you stay there?

While no one can guarantee what tomorrow will bring as far as the search engines are concerned, the best way to keep your site in good standing is to have good content.

Add content pages occasionally. They don't need to be products to sell. For instance, you could add a blog to your site as an outlet for your thoughts on various facets of you site's main topic.

It's still a good idea to add a few reciprocal links now and then, no matter how many you already have. Occasionally write and publish an article to acquire some more backlinks.

And remember, search engines go through changes. They may slightly change the algorithms they use to rank or index websites, temporarily causing some that were on the first page of results to drop out of sight.

This happened to me recently, but once things settled down and the re-indexing finished, my site worked its way back to the first page in all the search engines again. In all, this took a couple of months, so patience is very important. It's best to not do anything drastic to your website when something like this happens. Just give the engines time and things should sort out.

Chapter 19

Adding Up the Costs

One of the best reasons to start an affiliate website, as opposed to many other online business endeavors, is the low cost involved. Listed below are some typical costs involved in creating and promoting your affiliate site. This is, of course, assuming you already have a computer and internet service.

Approximate Costs in US Dollars

1. This ebook - \$35
2. Software - \$49
3. Domain Name Registration - \$9 /year
4. Web Hosting Account - \$39 /year (for two year plan)
5. Search Engine Submission – \$0
6. Advertising
 - One-way link directories - \$100
 - Article submissions for five articles - \$10

Total Cost - \$242.00

Obviously, the domain registration and web hosting costs have to be paid every year. The budget for purchasing one-way links can be lowered to \$50 for the second year and thereafter. Five article submissions should be enough for two years, so this shouldn't be an expense the second year.

It's important to remember that these costs are deductible business expenses (keep your receipts). You may also be able to take a deduction for your computer and office space if used solely for business purposes.

Chapter 20

Closing Thoughts

Well, now that you have read this ebook, are you still excited about starting your affiliate website? You should be! If you're thinking that this project seems too difficult or overwhelming, let me reassure you that it isn't. It's simply a matter of choosing to get started, then taking *one step at a time*.

You can't possibly do everything at once. You have to work in stages. The first stage is to purchase and learn web design software. Once you get that far, there's no turning back!

Here's how I got started:

After reading some web related material one day, I found out about ClickBank. My curiosity was aroused, so I visited their site. At that point, I was hooked.

I began to envision the possibilities of having my very own website where I could sell other people's digital products, all the while never having to ship anything, handle credit cards or do any accounting.

I was compelled to begin this project, but knew I had a great deal of work ahead of me. I purchased SiteSpinner web design software, learned to use it, and created my first website. I also did a tremendous amount of research on affiliate sales and search engine optimization methods. The research was very time consuming but, having done it, I can pass the results along to you.

Anyway, after getting the site online, it took about six months to start seeing income. That income has continued to increase month after month, year after year.

I've since created a second affiliate website, adding to the income potential. This is something you might want to consider at some point. Once you begin having success with one site, start working on a second. After the sites are online, it doesn't take a great deal of time adding links and maintaining them. You might even have time to get three or four affiliate websites running!

Before I forget, I want to tell you something else very important. Have fun! If, while you're working on the website, you feel like your brain is being overloaded,

stop for a while. If you feel you need to quit for the day, do it. There really aren't any shortcuts, so take your time, work at it, keep learning and enjoy yourself.

Getting your website to the point that it's making you money is going to take anywhere from a few months to more than a year. Much of that time is just waiting after the site is already online. But, don't get discouraged; enjoy the process! And remember, if I can do this, you can too!