



Product Pipeline System Module #23

How To Get Free Traffic With An Affiliate Manager

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Introduction

Perhaps the best way you can get free traffic is to work with an "affiliate manager" who sets up and manages your own affiliate program.

This affiliate manager would be responsible for recruiting, equipping, motivating and assisting affiliates and joint venture partners to drive traffic to your site(s) in virtually all of the ways we've looked at so far ... and many others as well.

Let's look at how to find and work with an affiliate manager to get all the free traffic you will ever need.

I guess the best place to begin is to define what an affiliate manager is. I'm going to borrow a definition that my former affiliate manager, Nicole Dean, provided in an interview that I'm including later in this section.

Nicole defines an affiliate manager as...

"A Contractor, Employee or Consultant who is responsible for Recruiting, Training, Managing and Motivating a team of Affiliates for an online business."

Basically, an affiliate manager generates revenue for your business through the enlisting, equipping and educating of affiliate partners.

Now, that includes a LOT of different activities that I'll just briefly touch on here –

- **Recruiting.** An affiliate manager actively and continually seeks out new affiliates to join your affiliate program through personal contact, announcement services, directory submissions, advertising and a variety of other methods. With an affiliate manager in place, you don't have to spend time finding and engaging new affiliates – she'll do it on your behalf.
- **Training.** Of course, it's not enough to get affiliates to join your program. They need to be educated in various promotional techniques in order to generate revenue. A good affiliate manager will provide ongoing tools and training so affiliates are able to effectively market your products and services.
- **Managing.** A good affiliate manager takes the time-consuming duties of

overseeing your affiliate program off of you. Instead of answering questions, troubleshooting problems, setting up or modifying accounts, dealing with commissions and fulfilling other supervisory tasks, you can be doing creative work (or, if you're like me, playing more tennis☺) while your affiliate manager takes care of affiliate needs. Affiliates are directly accountable to your affiliate manager instead of you.

- **Motivating.** Finally, your affiliate manager will be responsible for turning passive affiliates into active ones by starting and sustaining relationships with your affiliates. By regularly communicating with your affiliates, using incentives, giving public praise, and so forth, your affiliate manager will motivate your affiliates to not only be more active, but to be more loyal to YOU and your program as opposed to your competition.

Some specific things Nicole did for my affiliate program (that you will likely want your affiliate manager to do for you) include –

- Distributing my ezine articles to directories and partners.
- Setting up and expanding my affiliate center.
- Formatting, branding and compiling marketing materials.
- Recruiting affiliates to join the affiliate program.
- Personally contacting major players on my behalf.
- Creating and running affiliate contests to boost sales.
- Creating training video tutorials and informative reports.
- Establishing and posting to our affiliate program blog.
- Answering affiliate support questions.
- Helping me plan for short and long term success.
- Giving me counsel on various affiliate program related decisions.
- Creating affiliate training pages for each of my products.

- Performing various behind-the-scenes tasks. (Uploading files, etc.)
- Submitting affiliate program to various directories.
- Distributing rebrandable reports to directories.
- Generating web site traffic to the affiliate program site and product sites.

I could go on and on, but this just gives you a brief look at some of the things that you can have your affiliate manager do on your behalf.

Basically, Nicole and I had an agreement –

She can do whatever she wants to grow the affiliate business as long as she does it with integrity.

I pretty much give her free reign to do what she feels is necessary to increase our affiliate program revenue.

She is an invaluable part of my overall business and I guess the two words that would best describe her are ... phenomenal and unavailable! 😊

Now, before I get to the interview with her that I'd like to include for you, let me talk through a few important things here about working with an affiliate manger.

- 5 Keys To Finding An Affiliate Manager
- 5 Keys To Succeeding With An Affiliate Manager

First, let's look at...

5 Keys To Finding An Affiliate Manager

1. **START** Within Your Own Circle.

Do you know someone who would make a good affiliate manager? Perhaps someone who already has experience in affiliate marketing or someone who is a quick learner?

When possible, it's a good idea to consider working with someone you already have an established relationship with since trust is an important issue. Ask yourself, *"Who do I personally know who is qualified for this position?"* If you don't have anyone in mind, that's okay...

2. **SEEK** Recommendations From Others.

Ask for recommendations from those on your lists. (Heck, one of your subscribers just might be the one!) Post a request for a personal recommendation on your blog. Contact other affiliate program owners and ask if they have anyone who might be available.

One of the best ideas is to ask for recommendations at one of the major marketing/affiliate marketing forums.

It can be very simple:

"I'm looking for an affiliate manager for my XYZ site. Does anyone have any personal recommendations that might be interested in the position? Or, can you direct me to a site where I might find an affiliate manager?"

With just a bit of asking, a contact is probably forthcoming.

3. **SEARCH** Among Existing Candidates.

Just because an affiliate manager is already overseeing someone else's affiliate program doesn't mean they wouldn't be interested in working with you too. *Many affiliate managers only work part-time for an affiliate program and therefore have time to oversee several different programs at the same time.*

Join the affiliate programs of your competitors and the affiliate programs of those who offer products and services similar to yours and identify any existing affiliate managers. Contact those managers and inquire about their services.

At a minimum they can probably **put you into contact** with another potential candidate if they are not interested themselves.

4. SELECT A Top-Producing Affiliate.

Since the best affiliate managers are in fact affiliates themselves, identify top-producing affiliates within your own program (if you have one) or the programs of your direct or indirect competition.

Why would someone who is already making a lot of money as an affiliate be interested in becoming YOUR affiliate manager? It's simple: MORE money.

We'll talk about compensation later, but the bottom line is this: if they stand to make a percentage of ALL sales from the entire affiliate sales force as opposed to a percentage of only sales they are generating themselves, the reward is worth the effort.

5. SECURE A Freelance Professional.

If nothing else pans out for you, you can always hire someone who offers affiliate managing as a service. I'm not going to mention any specific sites or services, but you can search "*Affiliate manager*" at Google.com and find several services available.

Additionally, you can go to Elance.com and post a project for an affiliate manager and actually have people bid on filling the position.

It's like this: if you want to bring in an affiliate manager, there is someone available for you.

1. START within your own circle.
2. SEEK recommendations from others.
3. SEARCH among existing candidates.
4. SELECT a top-producing affiliate.
5. SECURE a freelance professional.

Okay, next up let's talk about a few keys for success...

5 Keys To Working With An Affiliate Manager

1. **COMPENSATE** according to performance.

I know that Nicole is going to tell you in her interview that it's best to have several different options available for compensation.

Generally this is going to include either –

- (a) Hourly Rate,
- (b) Commission, or
- (c) A Combination of both.

While I wouldn't dare argue with Nicole 😊, I will stress that a straight "commission" is the best option.

Why?

Because the more dedicated the affiliate manager is, the more money they make. By giving them a large percentage of the overall profit produced through the affiliate program you, in essence, give them a **partnership** in the business.

- It eliminates risk on your part: they only get paid if they produce.
- And it encourages hard work on their part: they only get paid if they produce!

Now, I will say that in order to attract a quality affiliate manager on a commission only compensation package, the percentage should be at **least 25%** of the total revenue produced.

You may also want to consider "revenue level bonuses". In other words, if X number of dollars are generated in revenue, the affiliate manager gets X number of dollars as a bonus.

That's another great way to attract a quality affiliate manager who will be dedicated to your project.

2. CONSIDER the duration of the partnership.

In talking with Nicole, most quality affiliate managers want at least a six-month contract if the arrangement is commission-based.

The reason is very simple: affiliate programs generate "popcorn" revenue. That is, sales often come in more frequently over time.

An affiliate manager wouldn't want to take the risk of working hard for your program for 3 months only to realize the most significant results of her work come in after she is no longer working with you.

In the early months, much of the affiliate manager's work is on establishing your program (Setting up the affiliate center, recruiting affiliates, training, etc.). While profit is generated during this time frame, the real harvest comes after the introductory period when the foundation is being laid.

So, you'll need to consider how long your affiliate manager partnership will be in place.

I know, I know: as long as things are going well, you plan on keeping the person in the position.

Not good enough.

You need something solid in place. A quality affiliate manager wants some assurance that you're not just gonna dump him after he gets things setup for you or begins to generate sales before he's able to reap the profit from his effort. Decide on a time frame – the recommendation is six months minimum.

3. CONVEY your expectations up front.

It's important that both sides have an understanding of what the affiliate manager is expected to do going into the new relationship.

Ask yourself several key questions in developing a job description for all candidates –

- How many new affiliates do you expect the manager to recruit during the first 30 days? 60 days? 90 days?
- What are your sales goals for the same time periods?
- How much time do you expect the affiliate manager to invest in your project each week?
- What specific skills and abilities do you require the affiliate manager to possess?
- What specific activities and responsibilities will the affiliate manager be required to take on?
- How often will the affiliate manager need to "check in" with you?
- How will the performance of your affiliate manager be measured and evaluated?

It's important that you put together a simple 1-2 page overview of your expectations so you both are aware – and agree to – what the objectives for the position shall be.

4. CREATE a startup checklist and weekly activities.

Once you've made your selection of the affiliate manager, it's time to get her started quickly. There are two things you'll want to provide to get things rolling...

1. Startup Checklist.

This will be a list of tasks you'd like the affiliate manager to do in initially setting up your affiliate program and/or revamping it for maximum effectiveness.

A few activities include: setting up an affiliate center, submitting the program to directories, distributing articles and other content, creating training tutorials, etc.

2. Weekly Activities Checklist.

This will be a list of tasks you'd like the affiliate manager to do daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly to grow the affiliate program.

A few activities include: contacting affiliates, training affiliates, recruiting affiliates,

answering support inquiries, adding to the affiliate center, etc.

You'll need to provide her with a level of access needed – or, at a minimum, be available to perform "restricted area" tasks yourself. (I.E. Access to your admin panel, FTP details, sales reporting, etc.)

5. COMMUNICATE on a regular basis.

During the initial stage of your relationship, the affiliate manager will need time to adapt to your way of doing business. As she gets to know you and how you do things, she'll be able to do more and more without asking questions. Expect a lot of questions early on – and be patient.

I talked with Nicole on an almost daily basis, sometimes several times during the day. I say "talk", but it's actually "chatting" through Yahoo® Messenger, but you get the idea.

Your affiliate manager is your partner.

She is a vital part of your success and so it's important that you have a great working relationship with her.

- Plan things together.
- Evaluate progress together.
- Make decisions together.
- Review goals together.
- Brainstorm ideas together.
- Discuss problems together.
- Restate expectations together.
- Make money together.

The key is "together".

I can't stress enough how important it is to communicate with your affiliate

manager on a regular basis.

Now, there are just a couple of quick things I need to mention and then we're on to the interview with Nicole.

1. *Firstly, you'll want to put everything in writing. Get a contract drawn up that lists everything we've talked about so far. Have it signed. A legal document will protect you both.*
2. *Secondly, offer your affiliate manager some way to verify sales and pay them promptly. Whether you give them access to the sales panel, forward sales notifications to them, take screenshots of the sales totals or scan your check – let them SEE how much revenue has been generated through the account. And pay them promptly ... as soon as you are paid they should be paid.*

Okay, having said all of that, let's take a look at 10 questions I asked Nicole. This will give you a look at the position from the viewpoint of an actual affiliate manager .

Take it away, Nicole. 😊

- BEGIN INTERVIEW -

Interview With Nicole Dean, former Infoprofitshare.com Affiliate Manager

What is an "affiliate manager", and what specific duties does an affiliate manager perform?

The job of "Affiliate manager" is quite new, considering we're still in the infancy of the Internet Marketing Age.

This position was invented to fulfill a need. Where there's a problem, comes invention.

The problem in this instance is that most affiliate programs **stink**. Plain and simple. (Sorry, but if you have an affiliate program, odds are that it stinks. Most do.)

It's just that the focus of most online businesses is not on the affiliate program. In fact, the affiliate program is usually the most neglected part of any online business.

Your products may be fantastic. You may invest time and money into providing quality customer service. And, you may invest resources into a web department and even SEO firms.

Then, you sit with no affiliates, under-performing affiliates, or just un-happy affiliates who aren't even a bit loyal or motivated to do much of anything.

Obviously, this is a fatal flaw. And, at first, many companies did not see the value in investing any money into their affiliate programs because, in their view -- they'd have to not only pay their affiliates, but they'd have to pay a Consultant, as well.

And, so they focused elsewhere. This is pretty short-sighted, if I do say so, myself -- not that I'm biased or anything! ;)

You see, when I get a new client interested in hiring me as their affiliate manager, the first thing I have to do, oftentimes, is to teach the company some basic math.

I ask them, "Would you rather have 100% of **nothing** or a percentage of

something?" Because that's what an affiliate program means.

Can you see how silly it is for some companies to view their affiliates as competition? And, they grumble when they pay out HUGE checks each month to their affiliates, *"I can't BELIEVE how much I have to pay these people."* Again, flawed logic. ;) If you're paying your affiliates a bunch of money, that means you're making a big, fat profit yourself.

I digress. My point here, is that, because Affiliate Marketing is in its infancy, many highly successful online businesses don't know how to recruit, train, manage or motivate an affiliate team.

That's where I come in. Affiliate manager to the rescue!!! My short definition of an Affiliate manager would be –

"A Contractor, Employee or Consultant who is responsible for Recruiting, Training, Managing and Motivating a team of Affiliates for an online business."

Short, simple, and to the point. ;)

What do you think makes a good "fit" for an affiliate manager and an affiliate program?

For me, I look for programs that I'm excited about working with. The products have to be something that I feel are quality. ☺ Basically, I can only work for a program that I would feel proud to be an affiliate of before I can RUN that affiliate program.

In addition, for me, personally, I mostly work with programs that reach a certain target market, because I've built a solid infrastructure in my business. I have connections in that field so I can easily contact people who I know and get them on board with the affiliate program. For instance, I wouldn't accept a client that sold fly-fishing supplies. It just wouldn't be a good fit for me, and I don't think the client deserves any less than 100% enthusiasm.

Example

I turned down a position as an affiliate manager of an online Credit Card application company, even though it would have been quite lucrative. For me, I'm very deeply entrenched in the Internet Marketing and Work at Home Mom markets. It just made no sense for me to take the position. I knew it wouldn't be a

good fit for me, and I just wasn't excited about it.

However, when I was approached about being an affiliate manager, I jumped at the chance. I actually couldn't sleep because I had too many ideas in my head that I needed to get onto paper! And, I was absolutely giddy to dig in.

THAT's the kind of Affiliate manager you'll want to find.

It's like hiring any other position in your company. You'll want someone bright, motivated, excited, knowledgeable and loyal. Once you find that person, grab them before someone else does.

What are some keys to SUCCESSFULLY hiring an affiliate manager?

From the company's standpoint, it's crucial to make sure the person enjoys what he or she does. This is oftentimes a self-motivated, highly-paid, consultant position. You want the person you hire to look forward to doing the work.

Talk on the phone with the potential affiliate manager to see if you get along. Ask what his or her action plan is. Talk over the terms of the contract and come to an agreement.

Some questions you'll want to ask are:

- What is your action plan? (What ongoing tasks will you be doing?)
- What kinds of projects need to be done?
- Will you work directly in the website or with my web department?
- How many hours per month will you be working? •Is there an hourly fee or a percentage or both?
- Is there a term for the contract? (monthly, 3 months, 6 months, etc)
- When is the invoice paid and how? (check, paypal, etc.)

One thing I do with my service is provide an initial consultation where I actually go through the company's entire affiliate program step by step and give them a report outlining my recommendations. Each section includes an action plan. I charge for this report, of course.

From there, the company has the option of either hiring me to do the work for them, bringing me on as a consultant to train their staff, or having me and my staff come in so they don't have to handle a thing. Whichever option they choose, they'll walk away with a solid game plan.

This can be a perfect "testing-ground" if you find someone you're interested in working with. Pay them for an initial review of your existing affiliate program, and use that review as an indicator of whether or not you want to bring the person on for more work.

Where can an interested affiliate program owner look to find an affiliate manager?

Here are a few ideas:

Look for go-getters in the industry. Some of the jobs I've gotten have been just from someone asking "Do you happen to do affiliate managing?"

You may check out places like www.warriorforum.com where you'll find oodles of people who enjoy learning about Internet Marketing, and who want to find a way to make money.

Network with others in business and ask them if they recommend anyone. If you get approached about joining someone else's affiliate program, take note whether that person works for the company or owns it. If they work for the company, you may have just found your next affiliate manager.

Top affiliates can make great affiliate managers. One quality I feel is a necessary requirement of any affiliate manager is that he or she has actually done affiliate marketing. Perhaps it seems obvious, but... it isn't. ;) As someone who has done affiliate marketing, and has run her own affiliate program, I can see things from both sides of the fence. I do think this is a requirement for anyone you're considering hiring. If they haven't been an affiliate (and a successful one, at that), then how can that person really step into an affiliate's shoes and create what an affiliate wants and needs? So, logically, if you can find someone who is a successful affiliate marketer, you may want to connect and ask him or her a few questions about being your next affiliate manager.

Keep an eye out for a great Virtual Assistant who's really on the ball with Internet Marketing. If he or she has the right stuff, see if you can get that person started doing basic affiliate management like promoting your affiliate program and doing some recruiting for you.

And, of course, if you see someone who's a fantastic affiliate manager, then ask if they have openings. If not, ask if they have any recommendations for other affiliate managers.

How can an affiliate owner convince an affiliate manager to join the team?

There are a few basic areas of motivation that apply across the board for hiring employees. (Motivation 101). Can you offer a potential affiliate manager these things?

1. Job Satisfaction (ie. Feeling like you're doing something that makes a difference). If you can present your company to a future employee in the right light, it can make all the difference. Show the benefits you're providing for others and it may be enough to interest a potential affiliate manager. What is your company's mission? Do you make life better for a group of people? Do you solve a problem? Is your product special in some way? (I sure hope your answer is "yes" or you'd better go back to the drawing board!) ;)
2. Appreciation (Make them feel special) Flattery DOES get you everywhere. If you are honest and appreciative and warm towards your potential affiliate manager, that may give you an advantage over some other company that's all business, and no fun.
3. Moola. Of course, money talks. However, giving options of an hourly commission versus a percentage is always nice. I've been given several options by potential clients for compensation. They've seen the rates at my website and came up with some innovative payment options. If you can't pay as much hourly, then come up with a generous percentage (of all sales) that'll make their jaw drop.

For instance:

Option 1: \$50/hour + 3% of all sales (10 hours minimum per month) Option 2: \$35/hour + 10% of all sales (20 hours min. per month) Option 3: No hourly compensation, but 40% of all profits (as many hours as you'd like)

You'll have to run the numbers for your company. Figure out your profit margin and your current sales to come up with an appealing compensation plan that the affiliate manager you're courting can not refuse.

4. Lifestyle. If your affiliate manager wants to work from home and spend time with her family, then make sure that fits into your business model. If she works at night, while her kids are in bed – these are definitely assets for some people. (Like me.)

How much responsibility and access should you give an affiliate manager?

This is absolutely your call. With some of my clients, I have absolutely no ftp information, no passwords, and barely any access to the programmers. In my opinion, this makes it quite difficult for me to do my job since I have to jump through hoops and then wait for others to do what I could have done in the first place. It's simply creating extra work.

With other clients, I have access to everything and can just roll ahead whether it's 6 am. or 11 pm. I have free reign, basically, to move the project ahead.

It does come down to trust, and to knowing the person and their capabilities. It also kind of depends on how much a new affiliate manager can really screw things up.

If your risk level is low (you have an affiliate program that's been completely neglected or one that is brand new), and you trust the person, give them full access.

On the other hand, if you have a rocking affiliate program and a very well-trafficked site – then you do have to be more careful. Also, of course, you'll want to have backup systems in place like mozy.com – just in case.

That's just the access portion of things. As for responsibility, that, again, depends on your situation. If your affiliate program is new or your level of risk is low, then give the person a chance while you focus your energies on other things (the things that make you money!).

If you have a big affiliate program with a lot to lose, then have everything run by you or another person in your company before it goes live.

What are some realistic short-term and long-term results from hiring an affiliate manger?

In the short term, you will need to focus time on the admin side of things, like getting an email address set up, training, and helping your affiliate manager get familiar with your program and how you do things.

During that time, a very easy task that can be assigned is affiliate recruitment. Have your affiliate manager start contacting people about your affiliate program

(assuming it's up and running). This can pay off for years to come, so there's no reason to wait.

Another immediate task that can be done is getting the affiliate center whipped into shape. This is something that does not pay off immediately, but is essential to any affiliate program. Add a variety of tools for your affiliates to easily copy and paste:

- Text ads
- Email ads
- Banners, buttons, covers, graphics
- Articles
- Reviews of your Product
- Product graphics (if you have an online store)
- Brandable reports
- Tele-seminars that the affiliates can link to

In addition to that, long term goals would be recruiting more affiliates weekly, providing more affiliate tools, offering ongoing support, motivating the affiliates with contests or incentives, submitting the affiliate program to affiliate directories, and providing reminders to the affiliates in the form of a newsletter and/or blog.

An affiliate manager should also be an advocate for the company and be watching for any ideas or improvements that can be made overall. If the website is not using proper Search Engine Optimization, not submitting articles regularly, not submitting press releases, or has any errors on the website – your affiliate manager should be staying on top of this stuff and offering to handle it for you. Find a team player!

What is the #1 activity that you should get an affiliate manager to do weekly? How?

Staying in contact with current affiliates and providing them with more tools. This is a key part of building the relationship.

Other areas are highly important, like recruiting new affiliates, but you don't want to neglect those affiliates that have already signed up, are loyal, and are promoting the site!

If you had to sum up the process of hiring an affiliate manager in 5 steps, what would they be?

I've got 6 steps for you. I couldn't leave any out.

1. Determine what your needs are. Whether you want a Consultant to come in and teach your employees or whether you just want the affiliate manager to handle everything for you and run with it.
2. Start putting out feelers and find a few people who might be right for your company.
3. Call each person you're interested in, or talk extensively via email, to get a feel for their personalities and processes.
4. Once you find someone you think will be perfect, pay that person to do a review of your affiliate program, critiquing and putting together an action plan for improvement and growth.
5. If you're pleased with the review, then work through the terms of the contract. Make sure everything is agreed upon.
6. Once the contract is signed, provide an action plan or checklist of items you'd like done immediately, so your affiliate manager isn't stuck spinning her wheels. If she can get right to work and make a difference, you'll both be happy with the arrangement.

What's your top advice concerning the subject of affiliate manager?

Having someone dedicated to growing your affiliate program is a great asset for any online business, and it can really get you boosted ahead of your competition. However, many companies do not have the resources to bring someone on staff.

My #1 piece of advice would be "Don't Wait". Every day your affiliate program is neglected is another day you're not profiting and building a team of salespeople. If you're strapped for cash, you may wish to find a Virtual Assistant (VA) that has

a lot of potential (but is affordable) and also bring on an Affiliate Manager as a Consultant just for a few hours to train that VA. The Consultant can then leave and you can continue to pay the VA for a few hours each week at an affordable rate. Or, negotiate a percentage of all sales. I've seen Affiliate managers make anywhere from 5% of all sales to 50%. It really depends on the number you're starting from.

But, no more excuses. Where there's a will, there's a way. Start networking, and keep your eyes open for that perfect person that'll boost your affiliate program to make it one less affiliate program that stinks! ;)

- END INTERVIEW -

Conclusion

Working with an affiliate manager may very well be the ONLY traffic generation strategy you need for your business. A good affiliate manager can recruit and train affiliates and partners to drive an unlimited amount of traffic to your site.

Get started looking for the right affiliate manager for your business.

And get ready for traffic to hit your site(s)!