

AFFILIATE KICKSTART



Content Creation Guide

Affiliate Kickstart: Content Creation Guide



Now that you have selected your target niche and you have signed up for relatively high-converting, high-value affiliate programs catering to that niche, the next step is to get down and dirty and reverse engineer your competitors.

Why reverse engineering? When you look at what other people are already doing and look to learn from them, you are essentially letting them do your homework. You benefit from what they're doing right and you learn from them to avoid making costly mistakes.

In this case, just because they've started earlier than you, that doesn't put you at a competitive disadvantage. In fact, it gives you a tremendous advantage. You don't have to make the mistakes that they had to make as they built up their websites.

Look at how they set up their website and you can rest assured that they are doing business a certain way because, at some level or another, it works. Here's how you do it.

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Find All Your Competitors

Your first step is to get a massive list of all the keywords related to your niche. Go through each keyword. Make sure that it is directly related to your niche.

Input these keywords one by one into Google and find all the site listings for your niche. There are going to be a lot of false positives, so you have to filter those out.

But at the end of this process, you should have a very long list of websites. These are websites that directly target your niche.

Profile All Your Competitors

Now that you have a list of URLs, the next step is to visit each and every one of those websites. Now, this might seem like a pain if you are clicking on one link after another.

Here's a shortcut.

If you use Google Chrome browser, there is a plug-in called "sticky." Basically, you just need to copy and paste the list of URLs to your clipboard and click the "sticky" icon on your browser.

This will trigger Google Chrome to open many tabs. You then use the Chrome keyword command to switch from tab to tab to quickly check out these different websites.

What should you look for? When you're going through each tab and checking out your competitors, you're looking for some sort of "industry standard." In other words, do you see a pattern? Do they have a lot of things in common or are the websites really completely unique from each other?

Here's a spoiler. They won't be completely unique from each other. They will always have a set of common features.

However, as you go through the vast majority of the websites, these common features are actually quite long. These are your "industry standard" features.

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Pay attention to the following:

How do they convert traffic?

How does the website make money? Is it a blog and it makes money through the ads? Is it some sort of search engine and when you do a search, it shows an article and then there are ads with the article?

Or does it produce a list of products that are direct affiliate links and you click the product? Is it some sort of directory?

On the other hand, when you look at the site, is it really just a list of direct links that take you to the affiliate product?

How do they look?

How is the content laid out? Do they use ads? Are there very little ads? Do they usually use text links? How is the content presented for ultimate conversion?

What kind of content do they use?

Another thing you should be on the lookout for is the type of content being used. Do they use text, pictures, diagrams, slide shows or videos? Or a combination of any of these? How much content do they show?

Do they collect email?

This is a big one. Pay close attention to this one. Does the website collect email? Is there some sort of newsletter or a mailing list that they want you to join?

How exactly do they get you to join their mailing list? Do they offer some sort of free booklet or book or some sort of free software?

If they do offer an email list, try joining it. What kind of emails do you receive? Is it a simple newsletter or do they try to get you to join the list by giving you some sort of free book?

Pay attention to the updates that they send you. Are these just giant ads or do they actually give you useful content in your email?

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Identify the Industry Standard and Build from There

At this point, you probably have reviewed over 100, if not hundreds, of your competitors' websites. Congratulations. That's a lot of work. That's definitely a lot of material to filter through.

I hope that through each website, you were taking notes. In particular, you were paying attention to their traffic conversion model, their content layout, what kind of content they were using, and whether they collect emails. And if they do, how they collect their emails.

At this point, you should have a huge number of notes. The key here is to focus on the most common elements that you keep seeing over and over again, regardless of your competitor. This is your baseline. These are the narrow set of features that you're going to use.

Your first affiliate website will have these narrow range of features. How come? The fact that these features appear over and over again indicates that at least, at some level or another, they are successful enough. Otherwise, your competitors would not use these features.

I hope you get the logic in that. It may not be an astounding level of success, but it's successful enough to at least assure some level of survival. This is the "industry standard."

Now, please note that just because you are picking the most common denominator, it doesn't mean that you're going to start and stop there. This is just a starting point. Later on, you're going to fine tune and enhance your website so as to maximize its ability to convert your traffic.

At this stage of the game, however, you just want to learn from your competitors through reverse engineering, so you can have a baseline that will work at an affiliate predictable level. It may not be a very high level, but at least it's a predictable level of success.

Compare this to coming up with some weird layout or content strategy for your website that may completely miss the mark as far as your audience is concerned. At that point, your chances of success is basically zero.

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By using an industry standard, your chances of success may be 5%, 10% or a little bit higher, but at least there is some baseline that you can work with, and then scale up from.

Come Up with a Competitive Advantage

Now that you have understood the basics of what your competitors are offering and you have come up with a master collated list of industry standard features you're going to be using for your website, the next step is to come up with a reason for your visitors to visit you.

Make no mistake about it, if you were just to take the industry standard, chances are, your website is going to fall between the cracks. Your website is basically going to be indistinguishable from everything else that is out there.

Remember, you're taking everybody's most common features and building from there. This is your baseline. But you have to do something more. You're starting there, but you're going to have to build something that will answer two questions.

First, why should your visitors pick you? In other words, you would have to come up with some sort of competitive advantage. You would have to come up with some sort of compelling reason why your visitors should check out your website and benefit from your content.

The next question you need to ask is why should niche fans go to you? In other words, the idea here is that when do a search, they probably will see your competitors first.

When they visit your competitors, they would gain some sort of familiarity with your niche. They're not completely wet behind the ears. They're not complete and total newbies.

So when these niche fans make their way to your neck of the woods, why should they stay?

The Answer

Come Up with a Good Answer

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The series of questions I asked above should be enough to stump you. That's precisely the point. I want you to get your mind's gears going because this is heavy mental work.

You have to understand that if you offer the exact same stuff that most of your competitors are offering, there's really no compelling reason for people interested in your niche to stick around.

After all, any search on Google will basically return the same kind of stuff. Why go with you when they can easily find that material elsewhere?

This is where your answer comes in. You have to articulate a key value proposition.

Basically, you will ask yourself, what will make them come back? What makes my website special? What kind of specific value does my website bring to the table?

This is not the kind of stuff that jumps out at you. I mean, it's not obvious. You have to ask yourself, how you can position your website based on the "industry standard" so your visitors will keep coming back for the following:

Your Content

Is your content interesting enough? Is your content compelling enough? Does your content present the same information that your competitors are presenting, but in a unique way or a personality-driven way? Are you offering basically the same content, but in a value-added kind of way?

In other words, when somebody has a choice of seeing the same content presented in the exact same way as everybody else, but they see yours, what makes yours stand out? What makes yours demand to be read or to be processed? Does your conversion platform stand out?

Now that you have a clear understanding of how your competitors convert their traffic, how does your conversion platform compare? What should you be doing that would maximize your chances of success?

Again, you are taking the industry standard, which is you're using the same conversion platform.

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For example, in your niche, most of the conversion platforms take the form of blogs. This means that you're going to build a blog. Simple enough.

But this begs the question, "Now what?" After you've set up your blog, what is going to make people pick your blog instead of other people's blogs?

More to the point, once you get traffic, how does your blog process your visitors so that your conversion platform performs better than theirs?

Your Traffic Choices

Another question that you need to focus on in terms of value proposition is your source of traffic. By this point, after you have studied dozens, if not hundreds, of your competitors, you should have a rough idea of where they get their traffic from.

How are you going to attract that traffic? How are you going to speak to that traffic's needs?

Again, this comes back to your key value proposition. It's all about positioning your content or the benefit people get from your website in light of the traffic source that you are appealing to.

Your Paid Traffic Channel Strategy

Finally, you also have to analyze how you will position your particular brand for traffic that you pay for.

If you're going to be taking out Facebook ad buys, how are you going to position your brand? What elements of your site would you focus on? How would you present your content?

Again, you will only know the answers to these after you've done a thorough analysis and review of all your niche competitors.

This is why it is crucial that your initial list of competitors must be very, very long. The longer the list, the more sites you process, the more information you can get to thoroughly answer the concerns raised by the value proposition positioning steps above.

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Only after you have answered these questions should you even think of putting together a site. Prior to that point, you have no business getting a domain name, getting hosting, installing WordPress, getting design, putting up content. Forget it. Don't even think about it.

You have to wrestle with the key foundational questions above first. Because by this point, you still have not established a reason why people looking for your niche should bother with your website instead of your competitors'.

You have to answer that question and the set of questions that is related to it in a very convincing way. All these must be clear before you even start thinking of putting up your site.