



Module 3 - Direct Linking, Landing Pages, and Your Own Affiliate Site

A. Direct Linking

Direct Linking - Still Viable?

There's a big debate among affiliate marketers as to whether direct linking is still a viable way to make money as an affiliate.

My answer to that is, yes, direct linking is still a viable strategy.

However, you need to know what you're doing. It's much more difficult than it used to be in the past.

I personally know super affiliates who make up to \$10 million a year just with direct linking. And, in future modules, I'll talk about exactly how to make direct linking work.

However, I do not recommend direct linking as a long-term strategy, although I still recommend that you throw it in the mix when appropriate (I'll talk more about this below).

Let's start by talking about the pros and cons of direct linking.

Pros of Direct Linking

1 - Speed

The most obvious advantage of directly linking your ads to the merchant site is that you don't have to make a landing page. In one day, you can literally have a campaign up and running.

Finding profitable offers in affiliate marketing is ultimately a numbers game. The ability to go through and test offers very quickly will allow you to find winners at a much faster rate. This will give you a lot of momentum, which is critical to building up your affiliate income.

Going through the process of creating a landing page and adding substantial content to it (to obtain a good quality score) takes a lot of time. If your affiliate campaign then flops, you ended up doing all the work for nothing.

This is why I recommend that, if you're not absolutely certain you have a winning affiliate offer, TEST it with a direct linking campaign BEFORE you take the time to bust out a landing page.

2 - Learning the Ropes

The second major advantage of direct linking for newbies is the ability to learn PPC marketing quickly.

Back when I was a newbie, I launched about 15 failed direct linking campaigns in a period of 2-3 months. Although I didn't make any money from these campaigns, I learned an amazing amount about AdWords and PPC. These failed direct linking campaigns set the stage for my eventual success with landing pages.

Once you have a good handle on the AdWords side of the equation, you can then worry about how to set up an effectively landing page. Trying to do both in the beginning, in my opinion, can be overwhelming for someone who's just starting out.

The other thing to keep in mind is that as a newbie, your success rate with offers will be likely be low. Therefore, it's not worth building a landing page for an offer if it's unlikely to succeed and your objective is just to learn the system.

Caveat: With direct linking, you will most likely need to bid aggressively if you are competing against another affiliate for the same keyword. I'll talk about this in more detail in future modules.

Cons of Direct Linking

1 - "One-URL Rule" and Impression Share

Years ago, direct linking was an absolute gold mine. That was until Google instituted the One-URL Rule. **The One-URL Rule says that only one unique display URL may show up per keyword search result.**

What that basically means is that if two or more Zappos.com direct linking affiliates are bidding on "cheap Nike shoes," only ONE of those affiliates' sites will show up in the results, based on which affiliate has the best quality score and highest bid price.

As you can imagine, this creates:

*A bidding war between direct linking affiliates, which will hurt ROI and profitability for everyone.

*A drop in the number of impressions your ad will receive, since your ad will be rotated with the ads of competing direct linking affiliates. You can expect your impression share (the percentage of impressions your ad gets divided by the total number of available impressions) will be between 10%-20%. As a result, you're leaving a LOT of profit on the table.

2 - The Changing Landscape of Affiliate Marketing

The future for direct linking looks bleak in our industry. An increasing number of merchants are requiring that affiliates have landing pages. It's also uncertain whether search engines will allow direct-linking affiliates in the long term.

3 - Landing Pages Just Make More Sense

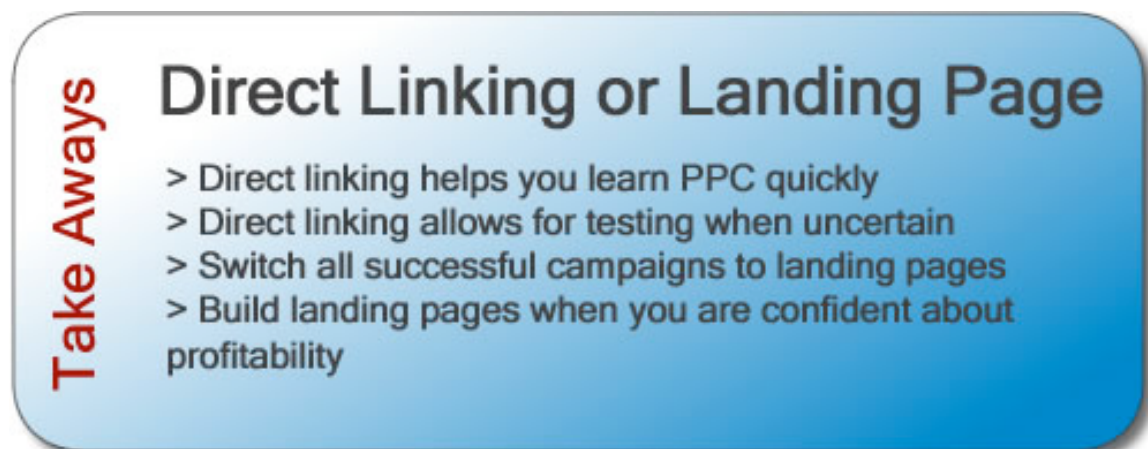
Ultimately landing pages really do make more sense because:

*You won't be in a bidding war with other affiliates, so you'll make more profits.

*You'll receive WAY more impressions and traffic, which also enables you to make more money.

*You can rest assured that you won't be affected should your merchant suddenly decide to fire all direct-linking affiliates.

What You Need to Take Away



Take Aways

Direct Linking or Landing Page

- > Direct linking helps you learn PPC quickly
- > Direct linking allows for testing when uncertain
- > Switch all successful campaigns to landing pages
- > Build landing pages when you are confident about profitability

Based on what we've talked about, here's a quick recap of my recommendations:

1. If you're a newbie, use direct linking as a way to learn PPC at first until you're comfortable with it, then start building landing pages.

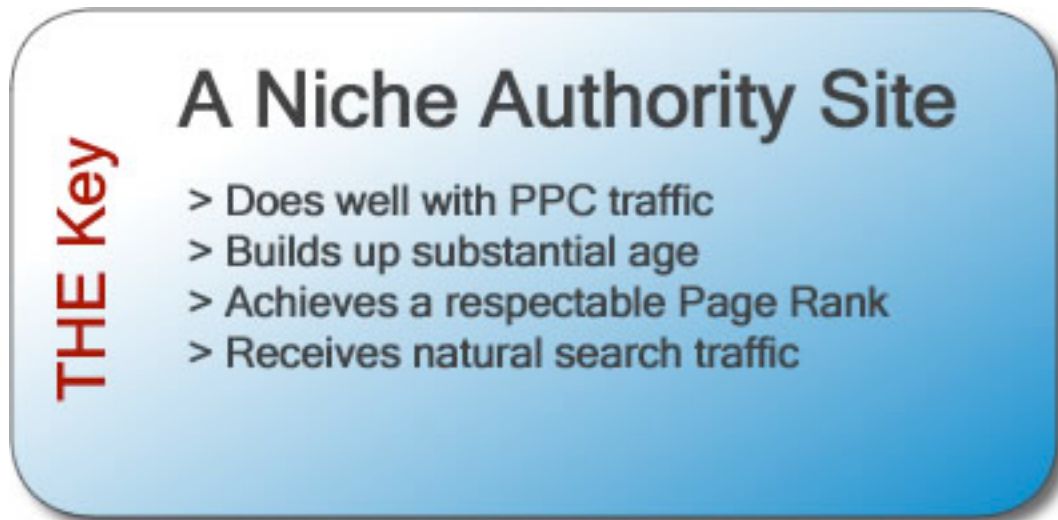
2. If you're unsure about a niche, test it with direct linking.
3. If you have started a campaign with direct linking and it's successful, switch over to a landing page ASAP.
4. If, based on market research, you're confident your offer will be profitable, and you're past the complete newbie stage (refer to point #1), then build a landing page right from the start.

These are just my recommendations based on my experience. If you have web design experience and feel comfortable building landing pages right from the start, then definitely do it and see how it goes.

B. Beyond Landing Pages: The Power of the Niche Authority Site

Why Your Own Affiliate Niche Authority Site is THE Key to Long Term Business Success

I want you to have the right mindset from the start to set you up for long-term success, which is why I'm talking about the importance of building a niche authority site before I even talk about how to make a landing page.



Ultimately, your goal should be to build out full-blown affiliate sites that are real assets. That is, sites that not only do well with PPC traffic, but also have build up substantial age, a respectable page rank, and natural search engine traffic.

If your site contains those aspects, you have a real web property that not only can you sell, but that has multiple streams of income from: PPC traffic, free search engine traffic, email marketing (if you add an opt-in box to your site), and even contextual ads (if you choose).

Such a site has WAAAAAY more value than just making quick money from PPC.

Your PPC profits in a hot market will allow you to hire the appropriate people to build up your affiliate site into a niche authority site.

You don't need to invest all your profits into this; you can invest \$1,000 per month to get things going and your site growing! If you're making \$1,000 per day in profits then it's a small investment into your long-term success.

Another Reason You Need to Build Your Success Affiliate Campaigns into Authority Sites...

From the direction I see this industry headed, I believe building value-added affiliate sites, and not just one-page landing pages or direct linking, is the KEY to sustained profitability. Why?

PPC search engines, especially Google, are moving increasingly towards a convergence between paid search (PPC) and natural search.

This means that if you want to rank well and have a good quality score on the PPC side of the equation, you need to have a site that will also do well on the free search engine side of the equation.

What does that mean?

In so many words, you need a niche authority site that has substantial compelling content that will bring people back to the site over and over and will want to link to it.

“But Amit, it will take years to build something like that!”

Well, you better get started then!

Your first step is to find a profitable niche in which you're making at least \$500-\$1,000 per day in profit through PPC, for a quality product or service that will be around for a long time.