

# HOW TO **MONETIZE** *Your Blog*



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This That and the MBA

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## Introduction

Before we delve into the notion of monetizing your blog, let's really look at the opportunity available to earn a sizeable income online. The Internet has been among the greatest resources any business in history has had to help increase sales. For a business today the online journey begins with a website or "blog" (a website featuring regularly updated posts organized chronologically, with the most current posts at the front of the website).

The step between producing a blog and earning an income is essentially the process we're going to review in this guide called "monetization." Monetization is the process that most online businesses and marketers seek to master. Achieving that goal takes some effort and dedication, but it really is not that difficult especially when working with a blog.

What makes a blog uniquely suited as a platform for monetization is its ability to facilitate the production of fresh, interactive content for readers. That's a formula for repeat visitors which is the goal of any business. Repeat visitors reflect well upon a blog publisher as it means that the content being created is meeting a need. As a smart business owner it would serve you well to take note of that need in your market and determine if there are not only content solutions but product or service solutions that you can sell to your audience to improve their satisfaction levels even further.

To illustrate, imagine if your local supermarket published a daily blog that offered daily updates on meat and dairy discounted specials along with new and unique freshly baked items ready for pick up that day. You might very well check that website every morning to confirm your meal plan for the day and to take advantage of any discounted food savings available.

If updated regularly with the kind of information shoppers appreciate, before long that supermarket website would attract quite a crowd of loyal readers, likely comprised of the people in your neighborhood who like shopping at that supermarket and who appreciate getting a heads up on specials that they can readily access any time of the day through their various computer devices (mobile and desktop).

The kind of relationship that can be developed by intuitive and committed blog publishers with and an intended audience is a unique relationship that is the basic requisite for building a lasting and profitable monetization strategy for your blog.

## Fresh Blogs: Fuel for Search Engines

The reason blogs should be updated regularly is two-fold. First - it helps to build a strong relationship with your customer base (which is good for sales). Secondly – Internet search engines are attracted to freshly published (and relevant) content on the web and that’s an important piece of knowledge to consider as you consider how to turn your blog into an income earner.

Remember, search engines are the tools that readers use to find information. As you may know there are millions of websites published every day on thousands of topics. That’s a lot of information and it would be almost impossible for anyone to work their way through that volume of information online without a device that could navigate through the billions of pages there to locate information relevant to a particular search.

Google, Bing and Yahoo are among the leading search engines used by audiences today. As a business owner you want to ensure that your audience can find your website using these search engines. One of the ways to make sure that your website is indexed by search engines and therefore easier to find online, is by regularly updating your website with fresh posts that utilize keywords and phrases used by your target market. Fresh updates are like food to hungry search engines looking for relevant, quality information to index.

The more current and relevant to your niche the information on your website is, the more likely it is that search engines will give your website a favorable ranking. A favorable ranking is a ranking that is ideally located on the first page of URL search engine returns for a word or phrase regularly used by customers in your segment of the marketplace.

With a blog you have a built-in platform that makes it easy to publish information regularly and in a format easily recognized by ‘human’ readers and search engines alike as “fresh” information. Some blogs are actually set-up to show the date with every new post. Other blogs don’t show the date but because they are blogs, the structure of the website still makes it easy for search engines and readers to recognize that new information has been published.

All you need to know at this point is that a blog is an ideal format for your online business because blogs make it easier for you to update regularly and regularly updated, well-written websites are more likely to show up in search engines returns than less current website. Ultimately fresh content that is liked by the search engines will send more traffic your way and as you’ll soon learn there are advertisers that will pay you higher rates based on your traffic volume.

Now let’s get onto the discussion of “monetization.”

## Building a Monetization Strategy

From preparing and publishing content to determining ways to attract new visitors and engage old ones, you have several opportunities to sell to your audience in ways that can complement the information being shared. Selling doesn't have to be a crass or distasteful. With a blog you have an opportunity to integrate selling activities seamlessly into the overall content marketing strategy used on your blog. If you're running a business to make a profit everything you do should support that goal or you won't be in business for long.

Sometimes we can get all too caught up in the work of relationship building with our audience that we begin to shy away from our job of promoting and selling a business or product. Ultimately your blog is your business and you've always got to keep that reality top of mind.

To help you to focus on strategies that will keep you on target with respect to serving the needs of your audience and the fulfilling the goals of your business plan, check your blog marketing activities against the following three guiding questions for business blogs:

Are the activities you are adopting to monetize your blog helping you to

- interact with your audience?
- build a relationship with them so that they come to trust what you have to say?
- educate your audience on the ways in which your product or service (or affiliate product or service) can help them?

By asking the questions above you help to ensure that in the midst of addressing multiple priorities in your business and on your blog that you do not overlook key opportunities and strengths of a successful blog and the feedback and needs of your audience.

### ***Website Traffic***

The amount of website traffic coming to your website will have an enormous impact on your ability to earn or increase your income. While the type of traffic and the nature of your product or service are factors that will determine your rate of sales, there's no disputing the fact that higher website traffic volumes increases your potential for higher sales volumes.

Additionally, should you choose to monetize your website with advertisements you won't be able to charge a competitive rate unless you can prove to advertisers that you have consistent and impressive website traffic volume figures. What's considered impressive depends on the level of traffic your leading competitors are able to generate.

That information isn't always readily accessible but you might consider some creative methods of accessing information regarding the website stats of your competitors. For instance website advertising rate cards (also known as "media kits" for advertisers) will often include information about website traffic, including monthly unique visitors and monthly page views data.

## Choosing a Strategy

When it comes to figuring out how to earn income from your blog one of the biggest challenges is simply choosing which strategy or combination of monetization strategies to implement. Some strategies will require more of your time, some less.

You might even come to the conclusion that an investment is needed in order to get your blog to the point where it is able to generate an income for you. The kinds of investments you might make include hiring an assistant to support your increased blogging efforts or paying a graphic designer to create images that will enhance the experience of visitors to your site. You might even want to hire a video producer to help you reach the over one billion users that are on YouTube.

You have a number of options you can take to increase the profitability of your blog but to increase your chances of success you should create a strategy that clarifies:

1. Revenue goals – How much do you need to earn?
2. Traffic goals – What are your daily, weekly and monthly web traffic goals?
3. Audience needs – What monetization strategies will satisfy your business goals without alienating the preferences of your particular audience?
4. Operational requirements – Can you provide the time and resources required to implement your strategy successfully?

Once you've considered your needs and available resource you can then determine how best to monetize your blog. Let's review the options...

## Blog Monetization Methods

### *Direct Ad Sales*

In the publishing world the traditional model for generating the bulk of revenue is to sell advertisement. The New York Times is filled with advertisement that provides millions of dollars in revenue to cover the costs of producing that paper and paying salaries. Of course revenue is also generated by subscriber sales, but that represents a small percentage of what the newspaper takes in as revenue.

Selling advertisement on your blog can be a big earner for you too...as long as you have decent market reach and website traffic. To illustrate what I mean, let's look at the advertising rates for the Sunday New York Times newspaper with a circulation of 913,850 and compare it to the advertising rates of the Sunday Cleveland Plain Dealer with a circulation of 403,000. A full-page ad in the Sunday New York Times would be about \$40,000. The same ad in the Sunday edition of the Cleveland Plain Dealer would be roughly \$6,000 – only 15% of New York Times rate.

What makes one newspaper advertising rate higher than the other? Answer: Circulation. The same concept applies to the online world. Instead of “circulation” figures we look at website traffic.

Before an advertiser agrees to pay your advertising rate they'll want proof that there are other visitors to your blog besides you and your mother! You'll want to create a media kit for advertisers that include the following:

- Number of unique visitors each month
- Number of page views per month
- Number of years your blog has been in existence
- Page Rank rating (a ranking system used by Google that indicates the level of popularity and relevancy of the website – the higher the number the better, 10 usually being the highest ranking)

Rates: Publishers usually charge web advertising rates on a monthly or weekly basis. What you charge depends on what the market will bear.

Based on a sampling of “new” blogger rates, as a blogger with lower web traffic volumes (fewer than 5000 unique visitors a month) here are some suggested banner ad rates:

125 x 125 banners: \$10/month

728 x 90 banners: \$15/month

300 x 250 banners: \$20/month

Based on a sampling of rates from more experienced bloggers, if you've got higher website traffic volumes (over 5,000 unique visitors a month) following are suggested banner ad rates:

125 x 125 banners: \$35/month

728 x 90 banners: \$40/month

300 x 250 banners: \$50/month

Remember these are just suggested rates and you always need to ensure you are charging whatever the going rate is for a website of your size and with your web traffic volume.

## ***Per Per Click (PPC)***

Pay per Click or PPC ads pay you a very small amount each time someone clicks on an ad on your blog. Google AdSense is a popular PPC option.

### **Google AdSense**

Google AdSense ([www.google.com/adsense](http://www.google.com/adsense)) is an advertising program created and managed by the search engine giant Google Inc. By providing you with access to the Google AdSense software tool, Google enables website owners to monetize their websites and blogs with Google AdSense ads.

What is really interesting about Google AdSense is that the ads that show up on your website are “contextual.” What these means is that the ads being displayed to your readers are relevant to the content on that page. Google’s AdSense software is able to analyze the content on your page, taking into consideration the message being shared, the language used the geographic location and other factors that help Google to serve up ads that make “sense” to the reader.

You can display ads anywhere on your page, but you’ll want to test locations to ensure your placement of the ad actually works. Google AdSense tutorials can be very helpful when it comes to understanding how to use AdSense effectively.

Income potential: many bloggers report AdSense as the biggest earner among other monetization tactics. Remember you’re not being paid based on sales but rather based on each and every time someone clicks on an AdSense ad on your blog. In this way you can see that websites with huge traffic volumes have the potential of earning a lot of money with AdSense.

## ***Advertising Networks***

An option to selling advertisements directly to advertisers is to join an advertising network or service that will manage your advertising sales for you. In most cases you can charge whatever you want to charge for your ads, but the network will take a commission (usually in the range of 30 percent).

One of the popular advertising networks used by bloggers is the IZEA Media Blog Display Advertising Network (<http://izea.in/>).

You will have to be approved to participate in the IZEA network but thresholds aren’t that difficult to meet and seemed to have been established in order to ensure that those participating in the network offer professional looking; quality produced online properties for advertisers. To be approved as a participant in the IZEA Media blog display advertising network the following criteria are considered:

- The quality of your written content
- Traffic volume and engagement of readers (minimum of 2,000 page view/month)
- The aesthetics of your blog design

The advertising sizes you can choose from for your blog include: 300x250, 160x600 or 728x90.

The company charges an administrative fee and splits ad revenue (50/50) with blog publishers. Payment terms may change at any time so you should contact IZEA to confirm.

## ***Sponsored Posts***

The idea behind “sponsored posts” is that a blogger would receive payment from a sponsor to write a post about a particular topic usually one having to do with the sponsor’s brand (product). This is an area that can become pretty tricky especially if you want to ensure that you’re not offending your audience with “paid” editorial.

**FTC:** Keep in mind that you are required to disclose to your readers anytime you receive payment to write a particular post on your blog. This isn’t just something nice to do you are required to do it according to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) requirements. It is illegal to do otherwise.

With these cautionary warnings in mind, take a look at the following companies who offer sponsored post opportunities for bloggers.

## **SocialSpark**

SocialSpark ([www.SocialSpark.com](http://www.SocialSpark.com)) is a network that connects bloggers to brands. There is an application process involved and you do have to have the kind of website traffic volume that would be appealing to advertisers. The amount you would be paid would depend on the size of the audience attracted to your blog. While some bloggers might receive \$25 for a post, others might receive over \$200 – it all depends on the reach of your blog and the volume of website traffic generated.

What’s really exciting about SocialSpark is that once you meet the threshold to participate you can then negotiate “opportunities” with brands. If one opportunity doesn’t suit you (rates or topic) you can search out another one.

Below is a screen-shot of the easy sign-up and submission form for SocialSpark:

**Publisher Signup** [Click Here to Sign Up as an Advertiser](#)

**1 Create Your SocialSpark Account**

First name  Last name

Username

The name you want to display to advertisers

**2 Tell Us How You'd Like to Log In**

E-mail address

You will be sent an email to confirm your new address

Password

Password Confirmation

Just making sure you're paying attention

**3 PayPal**

We pay publishers through PayPal. If you don't currently have a PayPal account, [sign up here](#)

PayPal e-mail address

already a member?  
• [Log In](#)

need help?  
• [@socialspark](#)  
• [get satisfaction](#)

## BlogFrog

BlogFrog ([www.theblogfrog.com](http://www.theblogfrog.com)) is a pretty unique company in that not only does it provide a convenient forum and opportunity for brands to target bloggers in their market, but it also provides a very a natural and comfortable way for brands to be placed before audiences.

For example, brands can choose other than the traditional advertisement banner to gain exposure and raise their profile within a given market. With BlogFrog advertisers can choose to sponsor conversations that take place in the unique blogger communities hosted by BlogFrog.

The BlogFrog network of bloggers and other social media “influencers” is at present 125,000 strong. Advertisers sponsor initiatives like conversations or unique promotions that are designed to create what they call “peer-trusted” content to attract and engage “target consumers.”

**Earnings:** Entrepreneur.com reported in a March 2012 article that BlogFrog paid out more than half a million dollars to its bloggers in 2011. Payment was based on the communities and campaigns led by bloggers.

The most influential bloggers were reportedly paid upwards of \$10,000 for the year. The added bonus is that bloggers who are active in the network have the opportunity of actually growing their website traffic as a result of participation on BlogFrog’s unique platform.

If bloggers fully utilize the widgets and networking features of BlogFrog their comment and conversational activity on BlogFrog ends up being promoted not only on BlogFrog but on the widgets placed on the external blogs belonging to any participating BlogFrog members.

Single conversations are then leveraged to reach wider audiences through BlogFrog's innovative platform. As the potential for increasing your traffic to your blog increases so too does your earning potential as an "influencer" on BlogFrog.

On the next page is a screen-shot of one of the "community" home pages on BlogFrog. In this image you can see in the center white section that there is a feed for the "Latest Conversation" and "Blog Posts." These areas highlight the kind of user and blogger generated content that advertisers can sponsor.



## SponsoredReviews

SponsoredReviews (<http://www.SponsoredReviews.com/>) is an advertising network that promises advertisers valuable backlinks to their sites to help increase their rankings on search engines. How the company achieves this is by creating an extensive network of bloggers that can write posts that offer a review of a brand's products/services and/or offer space on their blogs for the publication of advertiser news releases and articles. Essentially this network provides for the syndication of information about advertisers' products/services.

SponsoredReviews boasts a network of 40,000 bloggers. Bloggers can earn anywhere from \$5 to \$1000 per post. Those bloggers with very large traffic volumes may be able to earn even more than \$1000 per post. Like SocialSpark, once you are approved as a participant in the network you can negotiate with advertisers on the amount you wish to be paid per post. Keep in mind the amount you can demand will depend on the verified traffic you are able to attract with your blog.

For those of you with significant concerns about being authentic in your communications with your audience, SponsoredReviews states on their website that they appreciate honest posts and don't expect bloggers in their network to only write only good posts about brands that they review. If a blogger has constructive criticism to share about a brand, that viewpoint is appreciated and expected.

## **ReviewMe**

ReviewMe (<http://www.reviewme.com/>) is a sponsored post network that invites bloggers to review the products and services of the advertisers that subscribe to this service. Just like SponsoredReviews, this company promises advertisers increased exposure to audiences through the viral buzz and favorable search engine rankings generated through the publication of sponsored content on the thousands of blogs/websites in their network.

As you can see by the companies already surveyed in this guide, advertising to potential customers is taking on a new and sophisticated approach that is truly focused on the customer's experience. Take a look at the way in which ReviewMe describes the nature of consumer behavior with respect to online advertising:

*"People ignore ads. In much the same way that banner blindness set in, many publishers have noticed their contextual ad click through rates and earnings drop over time. Because our reviews are not formatted to look like ads, publishers are able to deliver more attention and value than through advertising via any other marketing channel."*

As this more influential way of connecting with audiences (through bloggers) gains popularity with advertisers, bloggers like you have increasingly greater opportunities to negotiate competitive rates for your services as a blogger.

Once again, it's important to note that acceptance in this network is not automatic. In order to increase advertiser confidence in these sponsorship opportunities a certain level of quality and audience delivery is required. ReviewMe uses a combination of link popularity, estimated readership (based on Alexa.com statistics), and estimated RSS subscribers to determine which blogs will be accepted into their system.

It's worth your while to get your blog into shape to be accepted into a sponsored post network like ReviewMe as reviews range from \$40 to \$500 per review. Advertiser "campaigns" (consisting of a number of reviews over time) start at \$10 per review. The

price an advertiser pays is again determined by the reach and traffic volume of your blog.

## ***Affiliate Product Reviews***

One of the most common ways for bloggers and other website publishers to earn an income online is through affiliate sales achieved through “affiliate marketing” on a blog/website. Before we explore the potential for generating income through affiliate product reviews, let’s first be clear on the definition of an affiliate marketer.

If you receive payment in return for promoting through your own blog/website a product or service produced by someone else, you are an affiliate marketer. You don’t produce or deliver the product or service being sold and you’re not involved in processing the sale, but you are associated with the product/service because you’ve agreed to promote it on your website in return for a fee or commission based on sales related to your promotion. That makes you an “affiliate” for that product or service and the actions you initiate on your blog to promote it are essentially marketing tactics. Taken all together these actions qualify you as an affiliate marketer.

One of the main ways you can monetize your blog is by writing reviews for products that you represent as an affiliate. In these reviews you would include links to the product or service you’re recommending. Anyone clicking that link would be taken to an information page or shopping cart page located on the affiliate product/service owner’s website.

How you are compensated may be based on the number of leads or “clicks” you generate through your post or on the number of actual sales resulting from readers on your site who click on your affiliate link and eventually purchase the product or service.

The whole process of matching up the affiliate with the lead or sales generated is an automated one that is handled by various types of software that can be used by the affiliate product/service owner. That software creates unique links that are shared with affiliates when they sign up to be an affiliate marketer.

When bloggers insert a link to an affiliate product in a post they are writing, they will use the affiliate link assigned to them to ensure that they are appropriately credited when leads or sales are generated through that link.

What you sell and how much you get paid will depend on your preferences, the terms of the affiliate program and even what you are able to negotiate with the affiliate product/service owner based on the potential of your site to generate high sales.

For anyone who has ever hated the idea of face-to-face selling but loved the idea of generating an income based on lucrative sales commissions, affiliate sales may be just the ticket for you. If you believe in the product/service you are recommending and can

write about it in a way that appeals to your target market, you'll end up selling in a way that is painless and profitable!

Super affiliates are known to make well into the six-figure range based on their target market, the volume of website traffic they are able to attract and their skill at promoting various products or services through well-written content.

Here again, as mentioned earlier, the FTC requires full disclosure when publishing paid content. Affiliate product reviews are considered paid content since you expect to be compensated for leads and/or sales resulting from your blog post.

### ***Promoting Your Services and Expertise***

Given the more “personal” nature of blogs and the fact that content on blogs is presented almost like a conversation (complete with reader comment features to encourage interaction) blogs are an ideal platform for promoting one’s services or expertise.

Let’s say, for example, that you are a professional organizer and you speak at conferences and seminars around the world on the topic of personal and professional organization. You could use your blog as a means of demonstrating your knowledge on the topic. How you would achieve this is by regularly blogging about the topic of organization, providing relevant examples, current trends and personal experiences and insight you have to share to help audiences in their journey to better organization. The “personal” and interactive nature of blogs also helps your audience to get to know you better not just as an expert but as a likeable human being!

You might also include on your blog videos of your speaking engagements or maybe even guest blog posts written by high profile experts in your field who would be recognized by your target market. The purpose of doing all these things is to position yourself as a real and authentic leader in your field and to encourage your potential “customers” to choose you for speaking events, coaching and other services that you may offer.

Consider a well promoted blog with a growing audience as your very own newspaper without the huge costs associated with editorial and production staff salaries, printing and distribution. It will of course take a certain amount of your time and maybe even some investment, as mentioned earlier, should you choose to outsource some of the blog design work and writing and editing required to produce engaging posts on a regular basis.

The return on such investments, however, could be great as the larger your audience, and the greater the degree of trust you create with that audience, the more you can potentially earn as a well-paid author, speaker, coach and mentor in your given field of expertise.

## ***Next Steps***

One of the most common reasons that well-intentioned bloggers never really earn the full-time income they dream of isn't because of competition, cost or difficulty. The reason profitable blogging escapes many is that they don't follow through on the kinds of strategies articulated in this monetization guide.

The following quote from one of the worlds most successful and highest earning bloggers, Darren Rowse (Probloger.net), is one to stick on your monitor:

*“There are no magic wands, no hidden tricks, and no secret handshakes that can bring you immediate success, but with time, energy, and determination you can get there.”*

To your success!