CLICKBANK
AFFILIATE BLOGGING
Make Money
On Autopilot

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Using Reviews To Cash In With Affiliate Marketing

Writing reviews can put some serious cash in the bank if you make it work for you, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

I want to teach you to focus on ClickBank's marketplace as your source for content and cash when writing reviews for your blog. There are many excellent reasons to do this – both for your readers' sakes and for your own affiliate marketing success.

For one thing, ClickBank product quality can vary widely. People need a "guide" to get them safely past the duds to find targeted products they really need. Anyone who can deliver rapidly becomes an "authority" – which is the fast track to turning yourself into a sought-after super affiliate.

In order to do this, however, you need to know how to get past those duds yourself.

I cover more than just blog posts as a review delivery method in the report you are reading now. You can use other media too, to bolster your efforts, and that's just one of the topics I cover, too.

You'll need a checklist of all the ingredients to include in a review, in order to generate click-throughs that lead to sales. I don't stop there – I break each element in the checklist down to make sure you don't miss a trick. As you read you'll find out tips like:

1. 4 different but equally effective methods of creating that all-important review post headline

2. A simple way to get your readers to relate

3. How to handle images – where and how to place them (and when and why you should)

4. 3 ways to provide "proof" – and the way to tell your readers how the product you're reviewing works, without spilling all the creator's secrets

Mind you, one of the biggest complaints about ClickBank affiliate marketing lies in finding the right products, yourself! I'm going to share my easy, foolproof ClickBank product research secret – it's simple, instant and it won't cost you anything, unless you choose to upgrade (and you really don't have to, at all!)

It also includes my 9 secret strategy tips – such as creating backlinks within your own site, to your own archived content, to dramatically increase your review site SEO!

If review blogging is something you're just getting started in, why not specialize and give ClickBank review blogging a try.

The Most Important Component of Affiliate Marketing

Reviews are said to be the most important component of affiliate marketing. There are some subtle and not-so-subtle reasons for that.

1. **People like to feel you're in their "corner"**. When an affiliate marketer takes the time to nurture the members of her niche, solve their problems and look out for their interests, each member comes to trust the person who does good things for them – and consistently helps them succeed.

   How do you do all these good things?

   By finding them exactly the product they need to solve this week's problem or enhance their lives (or even just their hobby). You do this by focusing on their problem, not on the product. Strange as this may sound.

   After you've showed them the pros and cons of a product, directing them to your affiliate link should feel as if it's almost an afterthought, or – even better – as helpfully supplying the exact way to do what you've just been talking about.

2. **People don't like being "sold" to.** Nobody likes to be manipulated, and that's what the old-school style of aggressive selling amounts to, in most people's minds today. When you've shared a secret method of making money with your reader, it should feel as if you've truly shared a secret method, and helped them in the process.

This level of service is what online readers demand nowadays. Yes, "in your face" selling still works – but at the cost of your credibility, if your skills aren't quite at the level of Billy Mays or Anthony Sullivan. You're seen as the next best thing to a carnival hawker; and while these people do a unique and mesmerizing job and that comment is not meant to judge them, there's a reason most of them end their days as carnival hawkers, still living on a shoestring; and not living next door to another celebrity or otherwise enjoying their particular dream lifestyle.

But there's another, far simpler reason to avoid "hard sell" techniques, and it has nothing to do with your customers: Most affiliate marketers just don't have the "hard sell" personality. They don't enjoy manipulating and pushing people into buying. They actually enjoy finding products people rave about. And all of us love a good paycheck – one that allows us to comfortably live the lifestyle we've chosen, taking care of people we love. Writing reviews is a perfect way to:

- Recommend products you've tried that really work
- Show people how to solve a problem
- Make a connection, and enjoy a relationship with your readers

In fact, affiliate review blogging embodies this softer sell, service-based method of selling – as well as helping you comfortably maintain your integrity and ethics.

Amanda's Secret

Years ago, I had an opportunity to watch a friend at work in a "tack" (equestrian supplies) store. This happened on a busy Saturday, and it was a revelation to see how patiently and helpfully she matched customers and their horses with the right saddles and bridles. By patient questioning and listening, she focused on the areas of horsemanship each customer indulged in, taking into account their budget, and what would give them the best performance and comfort for their needs. She repeated the same focused, patient procedure for Western boots, specialty horse feed, hoof products, supplements, riding apparel, hoof picks and English safety-approved helmets, too. No product was too "small potatoes", if it would help her customer and his horse enjoy a better equine experience.

It was clear that my normally-shy, horse-loving friend, Amanda, was having an absolute blast – but there wasn't a shred of ego in it. She was not "showing off" her knowledge; all her efforts were 100% customer-focused.

During a rare lull, I couldn't help commenting: "Amanda, I thought you absolutely hated selling. I remember you trying to sell those vacuum cleaners, and quitting in tears, less than a week into it. You swore then you'd never sell anything again – and here you are today, you've made over $6,000 in sales,

right before my eyes, in less than a morning. I'm stunned at how well you do it, and how much you seem to enjoy it. You've got those customers avoiding the other two girls, lining up to wait just for you. They're eating out of your hand."

I'll never forget how surprised Amanda looked.

"But this isn't `selling'," she blurted out. "I'm helping them."

And that's how I've approached my own marketing, since, with every customer or client.

(It's a fun way to live!)

But Does It Really Make You More Money?

That is the million-dollar question. But think about it… how many vacuum cleaners would you sell, if you hated every moment knocking on doors? You'd procrastinate, chicken out, and present a miserable, half-hearted sales spiel (just as Amanda did) when someone did finally, grudgingly let you inside.

I also remember vividly that she didn't sell one single vacuum cleaner. That type of approach just didn't gel with her personality – or interests.

You have to have a particular mindset to be an in-your-face, aggressive salesman. Most of us aren't hard-wired that way. And that's the beauty of review blogging…

It doesn't matter what your favorite topic is, or whether you like to review products via podcast, presenting yourself on video, or by writing. It doesn't matter whether you're in the business of internet marketing, insurance, electronics or any other specialty niche: Reviewing products your niche will find valuable is a made-to-succeed formula for anyone.

You're dealing with passionate people, when you're dealing with a niche. Help them find exactly what they need, and in their eyes, you're already a celebrity.

How Hard Is It?

Affiliate review blogging is something you can do full-time, or part-time. It doesn't take long to reach authority status, particularly once top marketers or professionals in a niche notice that your reviews bring them sales – and list members notice you always bring them good advice.

In fact, you really can work relatively short hours a day, once you've got your methods down pat, and no longer have to look up how to set up a WordPress blog or how to create an affiliate link redirect.

You can spend as much or as little time you like in promoting and driving traffic to those blogs, too – but you can do it in a way that fits in with your lifestyle and personality preferences.

If you hate making videos, you don't have to. If you've got no time for Facebook, work from Twitter. If the whole social marketing scene drives you insane, focus your efforts on press releases and article marketing instead (and you don't have to spend more time at these than you would on review writing, either, to achieve solid success).

Finding Partners

You may have heard of the power of JV (joint venture) reviews. This is when someone writes and asks if they can send a copy of their product to a "super affiliate" – someone who is one of the most prominent figures in their niche. If the super affiliate says "yes", and actually produces a favorable review of the product, it can vault marketers overnight from "unknown" status to heading firmly for the top.

Less is said of the reverse phenomenon – instead of sitting there waiting until you've become a super affiliate before top marketers approach you with first "dibs" on their products, approach them yourself, and ask if you can be the first to review their next product. (Make it clear you expect to purchase the product, of course.)

You probably won't hear back from most of them: Don't take it personally. Just remember most of the top guns don't even read their own emails – they have VA's to do that who apply a certain, impersonal set of criteria to what gets responded to. (And there may even be no time to answer all letters, if their lists are especially gargantuan.)

But eventually, one of them may actually say, "Sure, I've got this new product, and you can test drive it for me." You'll then have an "exclusive" to share with your list – ahead of the herd!

It may comfort you to know that the whole key to getting a "yes" answer doesn't lie in what a celebrity you are (or aren't) but in whether or not your review blog is a good fit for their list.

When a top professional in your field says "yes", and sends you that product ahead of the rest of the pack of review bloggers, that's your time to show how many sales you can generate for them. (In the meantime, it goes without saying that you have already purchased and reviewed their existing products anyway.)

Who do you approach first?

Simple. The people you've already made the most sales for.

If this sales amount is substantial, they will probably know who you are. If it isn't, spell it out for them. Tell them you've been in business X number of months (or weeks… or days) and that one review you did of their Product #65 generated you X amount of commission. Tell them you'd like to help promote their products more, and suggest that reviewing the next one straight out of the gap will help both of you reach your goals.

I should stop and stress here, you're not soliciting freebies – make very sure your approach doesn't contain even a whiff of that headspace. You're letting them know you are available to review and promote their products… because their products are perfect for your list.

Surprised by that "yes" answer? Don't be. Top marketers are all aware of the power of affiliate review blogs.

Just keep these key points in mind, and yours will become one of the sought-after sites sooner than you may be imagining.

Here's how to help propel yourself more quickly towards success:

1. **Follow a "formula"** (template), to give your reviews consistency and a distinctive style. (People psychologically love and align themselves to repetitive patterns.) And if you don't have a formula or template – create one, and stick to it for each review

2. **Listen to your readers** (or your niche market, if you're brand new). Find out which problems haven't yet been solved, and do your best to solve them by finding the right products – and telling they why it's right for their needs.

3. **Present yourself intelligently**. Study top affiliates, and see what little signature tricks or quirks they employ that set them above the "herd". While all the other would-be review bloggers are buying book after book, all telling them to do the same things, over and over, spend your time studying the super affiliate reviewers and their sites – to see what they do differently. (Hint: Lynn Terry always includes a graphic signature at the end of her post and a P.S.)

4. **Always focus on your readers**. This can't be said too many times. Remember, no one is really interested in your expert opinion, even while they're wanting you to be that expert. They're too busy focusing on "Is this going to show me how to do X at last?"

5. **Don't be afraid to be unique, and let people know who you are**. Both you and your readers will have more fun – and the sales you attract will be less likely to generate refunds, because they'll be more in line with your market's real needs.

Getting Started With Clickbank Review Blogging

As the economy in 2011 and internet conventions and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) rules change all around us, there is still one strong, enduring way to make an income off the net… and that is by creating a review blog. It's also one of the easiest methods – if you know what to do, how to do it - and why you're doing it that way.

The key to this incredibly low-cost way to start a lucrative online business lies in simplifying each step to its ultimate degree. One of the simplest ways to do this lies in focusing exclusively on ClickBank products

You're probably familiar with ClickBank. With over 714,000 visits per month, it's one of the largest affiliate marketplaces. Everything is right there, in one place. No hunting around, Googling products and wondering about the reputation and deliverability of the site owner and the safety of your commission checks. Clickbank pays out commissions regularly, twice a month, like clockwork.

But, of course, you do have to know a few small but important details…

ClickBank Review Blogging Overview

Let's take a clear look at the good, bad and ugly. We'll go through a quick overview, then zero in on each point you need to know in more depth. But first, let's zero in on why you shouldn't become a ClickBank review blogger…

The Bad – It's competitive! With thousands of products and even more affiliate marketers cruising the ClickBank marketplace like hungry raccoons, day in, day out, you've got a lot of competition.

The Good – I'd guesstimate about 82% of your competition are newbies. If you read this report and find out exactly what to do, you'll jump up towards the head of the crowd - and it is an easy way to create a solid business out of shoestring finances.

A little later, we'll uncover the secrets to choosing products with high returns – even within over-saturated niches.

Affiliate Marketing

What are you, when you make your money from ClickBank review blogging? You're an affiliate marketer. Plain and simple.

You're going to create sites reviewing products, memberships or services, and you're going to present them to your list and to the public, through the search engines.

People interested in your subject will find and read your reviews. Some of them will decide to click through, and purchase the product being reviewed. When that sale is made, you make a commission. Simple as that.

But the one thing you want to concentrate on as quickly as possible is becoming an authority reviewer. We're going to position you for that, too.

The Set Up Mechanics

You can review the products you want to promote in the pages of static websites, and in blogs. We're going to concentrate on using a blog format. It's easier than static site reviews by far, because it takes only minutes to add a new post – and you don't have to use HTML or CSS.

Most people prefer WordPress as their content management system (CMS) for blog setup and maintenance – but a word of caution: Don't host your blog on a "free" site – and particularly not

at Wordpress.com! Not only will you find you can't install any tracking metrics on WordPress.com, but their rules ban blogging for the purposes of cash generation.

Blogger.com will allow limited commercial use, but you really don't want to invest time and energy in your Blogger blog, building up a following only to discover that it has disappeared off the face of the earth, one morning! (That's the risk you take, with free hosting where you are not ultimately in control of your site.)

Besides, if you want to be known as a fine dining establishment, for example, you wouldn't dream of serving your gourmet meal on cheap paper plates, with paper napkins and condiments in plastic bottles, would you? Yet when you choose to use free hosting for your main review site or sites, that's basically what you're allowing yourself to do.

And there's a final, far more important reason: You want your domain name to be either a strong, targeted keyword or something relating to your brand (especially if you already have a "name" and a list).

Once you've chosen your niche and primary keyword and registered your domain, point your name servers (if the registrar is different from your web hosting company) to your server. If you don't know your name server addresses, ask your web host company tech support to tell you or check your "Welcome letter" from your original hosting information. The name servers will look like this:

ns1.yourwebhost.com
ns2.yourwebhost.com

Go to your cPanel, and set up a new WordPress blog through Fantastico. If you don't know how to do this, there are a multitude of books and courses easily available, providing step-by-step

video or illustrated tutorials on how to do this – you're sure to find one that "clicks" with your preferred learning method.

Another easy alternative is to buy hosting with Reliable Webs. Their support staff will actually set up review blogs for you (but not customized – already pre-loaded) – or blank blogs, if you prefer. And if you get the business account (currently around $12.95 a month) you can host unlimited blogs in their own separate domains – and even sell them (another reason for registering a separate domain name for each blog, rather than using add-on directories.)

How Many Blogs?

Some people set up multiple blogs, often using pen names. Others have a select few blogs (or only one blog) they focus on. But the good news is… you don't have to set up dozens of blogs.

One solid way to work towards success: Create a generic review site that allows you to review multiple products in **related areas** of your main niche.

For example, if your niche involves **garden water fountains** and **decorative pools**, you could register a domain based on the keyword "garden water fountains" – gardenwaterfountains.com. On that blog, you could review everything from books on water iris, low-energy pond pumps, algae-clearing chemical solutions, natural water plant management videos, "How To" manuals on creating a pond, unique garden sculpture lines and just about everything to do with garden water fountains and decorative pools.

However, if you came across a wonderful Clickbank video series on keeping chickens, you wouldn't squeeze a review and Clickbank link right into your water garden site – you'd be better to invest the time in creating a whole new blog around chickens, livestock or self-sufficient farming.

Home & Family : Garden

Showing ▶ 1 results / 1 unique Print Setup Help

Group By: Category Product Averages Text

Rank	Product	Earn%	Earn$	Chng	Mntm	Grav	Info
Home & Family: Garden							
10	Chicken Keeping Secrets - Guide To Keeping Backyard Chickens	75%	$17.98	3	30	2.72	

You might also want to use a pen name, so that people searching for information on unclogging pond pumps don't find your name linked to dozens of chicken posts, first.

If you're really uncomfortable with the idea of pen names, you don't have to create a whole secret identity, either – just a variation of your own name will work well. Like so…

- Stephen P. Marketer
- Steve Marketer
- S. P. Marketer
- Stevo
- Stevie P.
- S. Paul Marketer
- Stephen Paul

(NB: Also a good principle to follow when article marketing!)

How to Choose Subjects with High Returns

Once you start investigating, you'll quickly discover there are stand-out popular ClickBank products you can review. But rather than being like 90% of all review bloggers and focusing on which products make the most money, let's stop right here, and turn our attention to you for a few moments.

The mix between you and the product is the most crucial element: If you pick an area you absolutely don't understand, or are bored to tears by, chances are, you won't convince anyone else to get excited about it. Review blogging is absolutely about one-on-one believability, and the best way to be believable is to actually believe.

Okay, so that wasn't the prettiest sentence… but it does state a fundamental fact.

No, you don't have to be an expert on a particular subject: You just have to be interested in it, or intrigued by it. Chances are, if you're intrigued by it, and report your explorations, your readers are far more likely to be intrigued too.

And if you're downright passionate about it, you'll speak to passionate niche fanatics in a way that no one else could ever fathom or understand.

And "fanatics" are the ones who spend 90% of the money in that market.

Picking the Winners

And of course, there's more to it than even this extra layer. You need fixed "check points" you run against every product you plan to review, in order to pick the winners. Next time you're planning to purchase a product – or have been given one by another marketer to try out – ask yourself these key questions:

1. "Is the ticket price high enough to make it worth my while?"
2. "Is the commission high enough to make it worth my while?"
3. "Did the product merchant provide affiliate resources and contact info?
4. "Are there any external links on the Sales Page?"

5. "Is it right for my list? Or is there a strong market searching for it?"

6. "What's the ClickBank gravity rate – and how old is the product?"

Let's go over these points in more detail.

1. **Ticket Price** - most marketers agree a product has to clear $17 to be worth your while to promote. (Take note: "Super affiliates" looking to promote products prefer the highest priced items.)

2. **Commission Rate** – A commission rate over 40% is worth considering; 60% and over makes it extremely worth a second, in-depth look.

3. **Able to contact the Merchant?** – a merchant who knows what he or she is doing will have contact information in place within their ClickBank info, where you can quickly reach them. When you ask the product merchant what resources he has to help you promote your product, he should be able to offer you banner and button ads, text link ads, graphics, FAQ sheets, information and many more resources.

If a merchant doesn't have these, it doesn't necessarily mean you shouldn't promote the product: But it will make your job harder – and it can also indicate they're not experienced (a fact that can work for you, under certain circumstances we'll explore shortly.)

4. **No External Links on the Sales Page** – Finding a sales page that has a huge flashing sign in the middle – "Affiliates Sign Up HERE!" – should be an instant disqualifier (as should lots of other external links on the sales page). Customers will most likely reach the sales page, and there's a big risk they'll decide to become affiliates themselves, forsaking your affiliate hoplink… which means you won't get credited for the sale!

4. **Is It Targeted to your List or Niche?** – If your list (or a particular niche market) is searching for your product, then it's worth promoting. Check your keyphrases in Google AdWords and make sure there are at least 20 strong keywords that turn up in your search results. (A niche can still be profitable if there are less than 20 keywords – providing there are a high enough number of "related" Google Adwords keywords.)

5. **Gravity Rate** – "Gravity" is just one of the terms on the ClickBank marketplace listing for your product. It refers to <u>the number of affiliates promoting the product</u>. It's not a strong indicator of a product's value unless you compare it against <u>the time the product has been in circulation</u>: Products that are just launched will often have an artificially high gravity rate that levels off, once it's been on the market a few weeks. You'll see products with astronomically high gravity rates such as these…

Product	Grav	Chng
phonesrch	553.96	+27.63
mikegeary1	450.71	-12.77
etvcorp	439.60	+3.78
theaffcode	387.90	+18.52
magniwork	367.05	-31.91

In fact, if a product's gravity rate is even over 30, it may be worth promoting. Weigh up all the other factors, before making up your mind.

What about Pay Per Click? – The world of Pay Per Click ads can often tip you off to lucrative niches. You need to look for where the most money is spent.

Some traditionally strong areas are:

- Forex trading
- Acne
- Insurance
- Mortgages
- Anti-Aging skin care
- Dating

Be careful: some of these areas are falling out of favor with Google and article directories such as Ezinearticles, which means you may not be able to promote them in arenas you're used to. For example, Ezinearticles blog has been discussing removing "dating" from valid Ezinearticles categories, lumping it into the same category as the by-now infamous "Acai berry" and Viagra. (The jury was still out on the "dating" issue, at time of writing.)

If your chosen product has lots of PPC ads and authority sites monopolizing Google's first-page positions for that keyword, you'll know competition is fierce and the marketplace most likely saturated. Perhaps a more narrow, related area of that niche would have lower competition?

To show you exactly what I mean, here's a Google AdWords example:

Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance		
water fountains	8,100	165,000
fountains	49,500	1,000,000
garden fountains	2,900	110,000
tabletop fountains	590	12,100
outdoor ponds	390	18,100
indoor fountains	2,900	60,500
solar fountains	590	40,500
stone fountains	170	9,900
ponds	49,500	823,000
garden ponds	1,000	74,000
water garden	12,100	450,000

Notice the AdWords competition – indicated by the amount of green color in the bars – is extremely high for the above keywords – as are the number of searches. If you tried to either bid or blog post using any of these keywords, you'd be (no pun intended) the tiniest drop in the ocean. Your post wouldn't stand a chance – and the cost of a PPC ad for such a popular term would be extremely high, if you were the one paying for it.

However, if you scan down the list (to way, way lower than the first few keyword examples I've shown here) you come to this:

bronze fountain	390	5,400
bamboo fountain	320	14,800
pool fountain	2,400	18,100
water fountains solar powered	36	1,600
solar water fountains	73	8,100

Wow! Note that "water fountains solar powered" has low (but not "no") AdWords competition – and 1,600 "Exact" global monthly searches!

Now, it would be pretty awkward and artificial to build a blog post around the keyword "water fountains solar powered" – it's not a natural phrase, and as a ClickBank review blogger, I'd recommend sacrificing a great keyword for a more natural phrase, when writing a post – but you can see if there's a product that fits this keyword in ClickBank… and if that product is already being promoted by one of those PPC ads in the little green bar. If it is, you may have yourself a real winner!

How To Find Niches and Products

Here we come to one of my favorite subjects – how to find profitable ClickBank niches and products.

You've already had a strong hint at my search techniques, above. Here it is, broken down.

First, remember our motto, "Keep it Simple!". No need for complex formulas or mental acrobatics: You can easily find good subjects to blog about just by using Wordtracker's free keywords tool.

Enter the phrase you think might be a likely one – contrary to what some marketers tell you, it can be as generic as you like, at this stage, if you don't have a strong keyword candidate in mind… (Think of it as "brainstorming". The truth is, it's harder than it sounds to come up with long-tailed keywords out of thin air.)

From the humble word "garden", my interest was caught by this particular batch of keywords…

60	build a garden fountain (search)	185
61	garden of life (search)	185
62	water gardens (search)	185
63	garden seeds (search)	182
64	flower garden (search)	180
65	garden ornaments (search)	178
66	garden tillers (search)	178
67	beijing olympic garden (search)	177
68	garden flags (search)	176
69	garden plans (search)	176
70	garden tractors (search)	176
71	solar powered garden fountains (search)	172

I then entered several of the above phrases – all the ones related to water garden features – in Google's search engine textarea box, and got results that were under 150,000 searches. This is the second "pass" to my "viable keywords" test (the lower the Google search results number

under 150,000, the better. Anything over that – and 150,000 is being generous – and there's too much competition. Find another phrase.

At this point, providing I could find a good, related product to promote, I could easily have stopped right there and started to write posts on "water gardens", "build a garden fountain", and "solar powered garden fountains" – it would have worked well to help my ClickBank review blog on water gardens - but I wanted to explore more, so I fired up Google AdWords' External Keyword Tool (again, free!) and you saw the results: That juicy little PPC campaign with low competition and a good number of searches in Google AdWords in my preferred 1,000 – 5,400 range.

Pen Names, and How to Use Them

Remember the "pen name" examples, a few pages earlier? Well, let's say my product was a book: A quick check showed me my Solar Powered Water Fountain book actually had one of these PPC ads, and the commission rate and sales page were acceptable – so I jumped to promote it! However, since my main claim to fame is internet marketing and I don't want to confuse my list – or disappoint them, when they arrive at my new blog expecting marketing advice – I set up my "Water Gardens" blog under a pen name, and wrote some articles to help drive traffic there.

So say the name my list knows me as is "Stephen P. Marketer": For my water gardens blog, I create a new contact email and use the name of "Stephen Paul".

It's as simple as that. And it makes good business sense.

Writing Clickbank Reviews That Sell

Once you've chosen a product, you need to review it. And that's where you will build your reputation as a blogging and review "authority site".

What's an "authority site?" Usually one that has been around a good while, continually refreshed with fresh content, feedback and reputable backlinks. For a great example, check out Darren Rowse's Problogger site. Notice the extraordinary number of comments to his posts and guest posts, as well as the powerful amount of content. These are both hallmarks of Authority sites.

The "been around a good while" is simply something you need to build for – but you can get going right away with continually refreshed ("new") content and a solid reputation.

The best way to do this is to concentrate on only one niche, if you haven't got your list yet, and start going out of your way to help them solve all their problems. It's especially important to start this way if blogging (and review blogging) is new to you – a common mistake would-be review bloggers make is to set up and try to serve too many new blogs at once.

You've heard it all before: "Write as you would to a friend", et cetera. Be honest in your reviews. Review only products that are of high perceived value to them. Never "fake" or force anything. And follow a blogging plan and review structure.

This doesn't mean you'll be imprisoned by plans and structure. It just means that having an overview and helping readers know what to expect from your reviews works better than haphazardly zipping off posts on everything that comes along. But the main thing to do? Make yourself an authority for one niche – and serve it well.

Review Blogging with Multiple Media

Don't think you need to confine yourself to written posts only: Certain subjects just naturally lend themselves better to video blogging – even if you're strictly doing reviews. Others do better with the written word. It's up to you to use your best judgment in deciding which subject needs a certain media. But even if yours is more of a "written word" site, always remember that the occasional use of a video review can liven up your content – and seeing you/hearing your voice, as you look your viewer in the eye and chat directly, face to face, is a wonderful way to make a much deeper and more personal connection.

Once people feel personally connected to you, they are more inclined to trust you. Trust is the single most vital attribute you can foster, when prompting others to come to you to find out the truth about a new product. If video is too stressful, providing the occasional auditory review in a downloadable .MP3 file is a very similar way to make a much more immediate connection and build trust.

Elements of A Good Review Post

Here is a checklist of all the elements that go into a great review blog post…

Blog Post Checklist	
Intriguing headline that makes the reader curious. **Use only one long-tailed keyword phrase per blog post. Don't "keyword stuff".*	If it feels natural to do so, put your keyword for that post in the headline
Introduction	- If it feels natural to do so, repeat your keyword phrase within the first paragraph - Let the reader know which product you are going to review
Image	**- Use only photos that are:** **A.** Original, and owned by you **B.** Have a public domain or Creative Commons license **C.** Royalty Free And check the licensing terms – even within Creative Commons licenses, terms can differ greatly. That being said, **screenshots of your product** in action and **promotional graphics provided by your product seller** work the best, for our purposes of Review Blogging
Pros and Cons	
How it Works (if applicable)	
Proof	
Conclusion	
Call to Action	
Include your Keyword!	(Don't forget this point!)

Let's go over these one by one, in a little more depth…

Your Post Headline

This is one of the most important aspects of creating strong review posts. Think back to all the most intriguing posts you've read. Why did they catch your attention?

Ask a Question – In many cases, you'll find they asked a question. Instead of just "Jean Solar Powered Fountains" as your post heading, change it to something along the lines of "How Long Do Jean Solar Powered Fountains Really Last**?**"

Number it – People like things they can quantify. "3 Things No One Ever Mentions About Jean Solar Powered Fountains" is far more likely to intrigue curiosity, too.

Diss it – What are people really looking for, when they search for reviews on the net? They're looking to see if anyone has gotten scammed by the product creators. So play along with it – honestly, of course. If there's one feature you didn't like or that didn't work for you, don't be afraid to let people know about it: Doing that will set you far apart from other reviewers who only gush. Human nature being what it is, "The Single Biggest Drawback of using Jean Solar Powered Fountains" will catch people's attention quicker than "The Single Biggest Advantage…"

Be Controversial – don't do this just for the sake of doing it or being obnoxious, but if there's something relevant to your product review that goes against popular practices, don't be afraid to hint at that in your headline (but make sure you follow through). For example, "The One Time You Shouldn't Use Jean Solar Powered Fountains".

Your Introduction

A good introduction should have a strong "hook" to make the reader want to keep reading. You want a show stopper of a sentence – but don't forget, show stoppers aren't always the most sensational sentence. They are, however, sometimes the most unexpected.

Relate the introduction to your reader. One way is to use "you" words. "Where were you, when internet marketing began online?" But however you start your post, quickly introduce your product – "Search tools have come a long way since the 1990's, and Handy Dandy Niche Tool is about as far from its roots as you could get."

Most of all, however, your introduction needs to quickly summarize for the reader which product you're going to review, what it does, and who makes it.

Do this – and then make doubly sure you cover each one of these promises.

Putting Images in your Posts

The latest data suggests strongly that images enhance a blog's readability and attractiveness – but there are some small but important "do's" and "don'ts" you'll want to keep in mind.

Don't make the image huge, and do make it relevant.

In a product review, usually your image would be a screen shot or a graphic provided by the product merchant: However, if you can come up with another relevant image – especially one that's unexpected or unusual (but still really appropriate even to the dimmest of readers) – go for it.

If you can't create visual interest with an image, then do it instead with white space. Break up your text with subheads and bullets. Make it visually easy to scan for information – internet users are turned off by dense chunks of text.

But the most important image to use on your review blog?

Yours.

Seriously, people will come to identify you with the good information they're reading.

Get a gravatar, if you haven't got one already (those images of people you see in blog comments, linked to one of their email addresses).

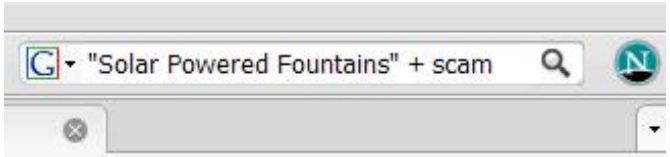
And make sure your name is on the post, if you've got yourself logged in as "admin". You can do this either by including a by line, or a resource box for yourself at the beginning or end of the post. (It does improve "branding" of your persona as an authority figure. Otherwise, people often forget who is writing what they're reading!

TIP: If you use a professional theme such as DIY Themes' famous Thesis theme for WordPress, you can include **bylines** and **signatures** really easily.

Pros and Cons

Of course you want to include the pros – but don't be afraid to tackle the "cons" too. To find out what sort of problems people are worried about, with similar products, try to figure out extra terms they might be searching with in Google, and work from that.

A word of warning, however… It's true people will input the word "scam" beside any product they're not sure about, when searching in Google, like so…



But if a product isn't actually scamming someone, resist the temptation to make that word part of your post, just for SEO purposes. If you ignore this suggestion and go for the easy catch, and your reader clicks on your link, and sees instead of an honest scam report, glowing praises of your product, with the careless disclaimer, "Jean solar powered fountains are no scam", you will rapidly and completely lose all credibility in her eyes.

Some other words that people use in searches that you may be able to substitute for "scam"…

- Review
- Flaw
- Drawback
- Problem
- Not worth it
- Rip-Off

Use Wordtracker's free keyword tool and try out your own potential search terms, relating them closely to how you, yourself, feel about your niche tool product. Feel that it's got a flaw? Look to see if there are any searches in the free keyword tool for "niche tool flaw". Feel that it's more of a glitch? Try searching with "niche tool glitch". The best way to figure out what your niche customer would search for is to literally put yourself in his place!

A final word about reporting flaws in a product – always remember flaws can actually be seen as an advantage, to some people.

Example: "It's true that the Handy Dandy Niche Tool is ridiculously easy to use – but this is offset by the fact that it's not highly customizable for those who need a more in-depth statistical analysis. It is definitely the "for dummies" version of a niche finding tool – only simpler!"

Now, if your entire target market is composed of complete newbies, this "flaw" is likely to appeal to them greatly! You weren't being dishonest – but you were **positioning** your flaw to actually become a benefit.

Of course, if your review blog was called "Advanced Marketing Techniques", this wouldn't work at all – its simplistic, foolproof operating mode really would be a disadvantage – but if you're running a blog called "Marketing for Newbies", you're home free.

How it Works

Most products benefit from a brief description of how it works.

This doesn't mean you have to spill all its creator's secrets. It does mean you should focus in on one aspect you're particularly pleased about, or hit what you consider are a number of high points. ("The first benefit that sets Handy Dandy Niche Tool apart from its competitors is…")

What you are doing is drawing a vivid mental sketch for your reader of the reasons this tool will work for him or her. You really don't need to provide a step-by-step manual, and take all the mystery out of it.

Proof

Anything you can do to provide proof of the benefits you're revealing will go a long way to solidify the impact of your review on your reader. Be very careful, however, about income claims – the new FTC rules are very specific. If you mention how much money you made using a system, not only have you got to be able to prove it with actual documentation, you also need to provide an overview of what the average user can expect – and that representation has to be provable too.

But there are other ways to provide "proof" too. You can do things like:

- Quote the number of sales since its release
- Show screen shots of some wonderful benefit (e.g., a great keyword phrase turning up in your Handy Dandy Niche Tool)
- Quote the complete lack of refunds (providing your figure is accurate)

Conclusion

This is just a short paragraph wrapping up the other end of your "parcel", and mirroring or echoing your opening statement: For example, tying back to our fictional opening statement: "Where were you when internet marketing started online?", we might conclude with something like: "You may not have been even aware of the internet when marketing online started, but sales aids with advantages of Handy Dandy Niche Tool can certainly help you get ahead of the pack now."

Your Call to Action

But you're not quite done yet. Now comes the most important part of your post – your "Call to Action".

As marketers, we're all familiar with this principle – yet it's surprising how many people actually fail to include it!

What is a call to action? In the particular case of review blogs, its simply making sure your reader knows how to instantly access the product, if he wants to purchase it – in other words, you provide a link. And don't forget to tell him, even though it may feel like stating the obvious, to go visit it.

If you've written a "non-review" post – something just to provide your readers with really valuable information about their niche – you can finish with a different type of call to action: One which positively invites comments.

This concluding statement can be as simple as:

- "Comments, anyone?"
- "Like what you've just read? For more reviews as they happen, subscribe to my RSS feed below."
- "For more information on [your review's topic], check out [affiliatelinkname.com]."

No matter what you're posting about – even if it isn't a review – always include that call to action. (If nothing else, it's 50% more likely to generate comments – and comments are good!)

More About Keyword and Niche Research

The one thing that is probably dawning on you, just about now… There are tips about how to do things, when you're creating ClickBank reviews: But there are no absolute rules. Parameters and alternate methods of writing about a product are flexible enough that a strong element of personality creeps in. The effectiveness of this will all boil down to your own openness, skill and finesse.

You may not be "perfect" immediately, or write reviews that flow as naturally as super affiliates like Lynn Terry, Rosalind Gardner or Nicole Dean – but these are there super affiliates whose posts it is well worth while to study.

But one thing is for sure: The old cliché about "practice" making "perfect". You'll need to use the "checklist" at first – but if you post regularly (a vital strategy for any blog) you may be surprised to find how easily including all these elements become – and how much faster your reviews flow.

We've spoken about using a strong keyword for each post. While this is a good, solid guideline, it's not a hard and fast rule. Sometimes you'll come across a keyword that has almost no commercial value, yet in your tiny sub-niche, it's the "buzz" topic of the moment.

How do you find these "buzz" topics? More crucially, how do you become the first one to clue on to these "buzz" topics?

One suggestion is to take full advantage of Google Alerts. If you have a Google account, with a gmail address, you can set Google to notify you – immediately, daily or weekly – whenever your keyword phrase, name, subject or web URL is mentioned. Many top marketers use this as an invaluable aid to "predicting" the next topic.

Using **social media** such as Twitter, Facebook, Digg, Stumbleupon, et cetera, is also a proven way to see where people's attention is turning in real time. You can also monitor hash tags and keywords via platforms like Twitter, using RSS searches.

Finally, instead of relying on free keyword tools alone to find profitable niches and products to mine, you can invest in paid products. Some of these carry a hefty price tag, but are stuffed with all the bells and whistles you can imagine – and more.

Surprisingly, not all of these are perfect for helping you in your ClickBank review blogging career – even those paid products which actually link to suggested ClickBank products. Some are complex to understand and use effectively (especially if you are a "newbie").

Let me introduce you to my favorite secret weapon – CBEngine. The reason it's my favorite? It's the easiest one to use!

The screenshots you saw earlier (with the exception of Wordtracker and Google AdWords screenshots) all came from CBEngine. Remember what we were saying about "keep it simple"? Well, you can't get it much simpler than simply sticking your selection in a search box and immediately getting back suggested ClickBank products that fit all your criteria.

Let's re-examine one of the earlier screen shots I showed you…

Product	Grav	Chng
phonesrch	553.96	+27.63
mikegeary1	450.71	-12.77
etvcorp	439.60	+3.78
theaffcode	387.90	+18.52
magniwork	367.05	-31.91

You don't even have to input anything here… Results like this instantly appear over your search box with the latest ClickBank product top trends/products of the day showing both the gravity rate and the increase or decline in sales.

Of course, there'll be fierce competition for these suggested products – but if it looks like a product that's highly relevant to your market, and you can offer one or more great free bonuses that none of the other sellers are offering, don't be afraid to recommend it anyway.

And after you've inputted your keyword search term, here's a typical, unique result:

Home & Family : Garden

Showing ▶ 1 results / 1 unique Print Setup Help

Group By: Category Product Averages Text

Rank	Product	Earn%	Earn$	Chng	Mntm	Grav	Info
Home & Family: Garden							
10	Chicken Keeping Secrets - Guide To Keeping Backyard Chickens	75%	$17.98	3	30	2.72	

Granted, it may not have been the result you were expecting – but if the gravity were a little higher (over 20) you might want to create that niche around it, as I mentioned earlier.

But instantly, without having to watch videos or remember complex combinations or instructions, CBEngine allows you to see:

- The product rank
- Its name
- Commission rate
- Price
- Change stats
- Momentum
- Gravity

You can group your results by **category, product, averages or text**.

And you can instantly click on any of the three “Info” icons to find out product info, visit the website, or get an affiliate link.

(On the left-hand side of the page, there is an array of extremely helpful links. Cbengine's list of recently-removed, new and re-listed products is a real bonus – as is the "CB Insider" link, which instantly introduces you to new products and trends that are heating up.)

You also have a great degree of control over the search boxes on the right hand side of the CBEngine site, as you can see from the screenshot on the next page…

There is a free 14 day trial, after or during which time you can choose a yearly subscription of $39.95 or a lifetime membership of $57.00 (at time of writing).

I can't even begin to describe all the highly useful features you'll find at the CBEngine site –if I did, we'd have a whole different report! There are other free search engine tools floating around in the blogosphere – but not one that is so exclusively tailored to ClickBank products as CBEngine.

(Take that free trial, and find out for yourself.)

So What about the FTC?

There's been a lot of furor over the "new rules" brought in December 1, 2009, by the FTC. Although, strictly speaking, these rules only apply to the U.S., if you do business with the U.S., it's a wise precaution to respect them. These new rules were meant to put an end to wild claims of 6-figure incomes in an impossible number of days, and curtail or monitor the practice of reviews that were actually 100% paid for, while masquerading as spontaneous, independent reviews.

It's your responsibility to have pages on your blog such as:

- Disclosure pages
- Disclaimers
- Privacy Policy
- Contact information or contact page
- Terms and Policies, if applicable

You can find the new FTC rules about endorsements on the FTC website. You will particularly have to be on your guard about:

- How you disclose financial results from using the product you're reviewing – or even just telling your readers generally what to expect, income wise. You can no longer get away with "disclaimer" statements like "results will vary".
- Not disclosing your affiliate link straight away

You may want to download the FTC's new PDF, Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.

What it boils down to, however, is that as long as you the correct disclaimers and disclosures, this should not affect you as much as some people would have you believe. Using a WordPress Privacy Policy plug in and generating your own policy at http://www.disclosurepolicy.org should do the trick.

But remember – seeking legal advice, checking out the new FTC rules for yourself and including the necessary disclosures is your responsibility.

ClickBank Secret Strategies

Here are a few of those extra little touches that can help your ClickBank review blog outperform everyone else's…

1. **Look for the products that demonstrate high demand in the search engines – but have low gravity obviously because their owners don't seem to understand how to promote**. Contact the owner and make sure it's okay to write your own sales page (you can position it tactfully). Then promote it properly.

   Remember, the first person to "discover" a fantastic product just ripe for a particular tight niche is going to pick up the most affiliates – and the most commission through sales.

2. **Create backlinks within your own site**, to your own archived content. (It really does help with SEO.) And there's even a WordPress plug-in, "Link Within", to help you do this.

3. **Don't lecture**. Remember, when you're reviewing a ClickBank product, you're just talking excitedly or enthusiastically to a friend. In fact, it even helps sometimes if you admit you don't know all the answers (as long as you can show how your product helped you figure out one more step).

4. **Use a mix of high gravity and low**, when promoting ClickBank products. That way, you're covering all your bases (but make sure other criteria make that product a good choice for you to promote.

5. Most people have a "Most Recent Posts" category in their side bar. **Add a "Top 5 Posts"** to the mix – if people like your content, they'll want to read more of what you have to say. This is perfect – the longer you keep them reading your content instead of somebody else's, the more likely it is that they'll subscribe to you. (And then they're on your list!)

6. **Format your Permalinks properly**. Set them up for maximum impact in your settings, and make sure each post title is represented by your keyword. (This will provide key assistance with attracting organic search traffic.)

   To do this, when you're in your blog Dashboard, go to "Settings" on the left lower side, and click "Permalinks". Select "Custom Structure and enter:

   /%postname%/

7. Always keep your focus on helping your reader – not on how much money you're going to make, promoting a particular product. It's a paradox, but this is one case where the more money you try to make, the less successful your efforts will be. Instead, focus on providing great tips, products and information for your readers to help them in their hobby or online career. Talk to them – not at them – and you'll create devoted readers who buy products strictly because <u>you</u> are the person recommending it.

8. **Be yourself**. There's a saying in the art world: "Artists leads, others follow"… which is true. Who would you rather be – Picasso, or a Picasso copy-cat wannabe, churning out stuff that is just not *quite*? Besides which, people who aren't afraid to stand out, put their name on things, live by their ethics and walk the walk have the greatest credibility mojo in the world.

9. **Answer your reader's questions**. That's what you are really doing, when you review a product. You are not giving that reader your magnificent, exalted opinion – that's SO not what he's reading your blog to find out. You are answering his questions about that product.

   Do that, and **you've made the sale**. (If you get nothing else out of this book, absorb this one fact and principle – because it's the one that will move you further ahead than all the other hints, tips and techniques combined. Think of this, in reference to ClickBank product reviews – to marketing in general – as [*you'll have to imagine the fanfare and Heavenly, booming voice coming out of the clouds*] – "**The Secret of Life**!")

There's one more strategy that isn't the slightest bit "secret" at all, but we haven't mentioned it yet. And that is actually putting your money where your mouth is, and **purchasing the product**.

Invest your hard-earned cash. It's precisely that – an investment that will bring returns. **Purchase and use the product**. Many marketers skip this step, and are still able to promote the product effectively by profiling instead of reviewing – but nothing gives your voice the ring of authority more clearly than having actually used and tested an item or method.

And what do you use that ring of authority for? Nope, not for showing how smart you are, and what a lot you know…

… To answer your readers' questions, of course. That's the main reason for actually purchasing a product.

And what better way to help your reader than by providing genuine, real-life, honest-to-goodness reviews?

Now you're ready for the last piece of the puzzle. Use this as a "checklist" template when preparing to write every review…

Product Review Cheat Sheet	
My overall impressions of [*Product Name*] _____ From [*Name of Marketer/Company*] _____ Price: _____	
What level is this product geared to?	
Its main promise…	
Did it fulfill its promise?	
Where there any "gaps" that needed to be addressed?	
Any technical issues or glitches?	
Do I have to purchase anything else, in order to achieve the promised results?	
What was the most important benefit you received from this product?	
Was the benefit worth the purchase price?	
Have I seen any concrete results in my trial? If so, what were they? If not, what was blocking me?	
How Many Stars?	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆