

Instant Ways to Monetize Your Blog



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Introduction:

Once you've got your blog in place and have added plenty of good-quality, search-engine optimized content, you may be wondering when the money will start rolling in.

If only it were that easy!

The thing about making money on your blog is that blogging is the vehicle for your actual business, not the business itself. Let's say you own a flower shop. You have the physical location, you decorate it all cute, you install a cash register and take out ads in the local paper. You even stand outside the door, handing out tiny blossoms and business cards to people who walk by. That's all well and good, but until you start actually providing value to your market, you're not really in business.

The same is true for your blog. Until you actually provide a product or service that people can pay money for, you're not in business.

This short report will give a brief overview of the top ten ways you can make money from your blog. Not every method may be right for you, right now – and that's okay. Read through all ten, make notes, and pick one or two to start with. Then you can add on additional methods until you're well on your way to making money from your very own online business – your blog.

Method #1: Sell Your Own Physical Products

Possibly the oldest business model of all-time is also the most familiar: Selling your own physical products. It's a concept we're all familiar with, and we see it play out from the corner lemonade stand to Mrs. Fields Cookies. I have something you want, so I sell it to you. Simple and straightforward.

When selling online, however, there are a few questions to answer:

1. What am I going to sell?
2. How am I going to accept payment?
3. How will I let people know about my products?
4. How will I handle fulfillment and customer service?

Let's look at each of those questions in turn.

1. **What am I going to sell?** Choose a product that is of interest to the majority of your readers. For instance, if you have a Hawaiian vacation blog, your readers won't necessarily come to you for the brand-new flea collar you invented. A few might be interested, but keeping synergy between your blog theme and your product is essential. Any disconnect will lead to confusion on the part of your blog readers, and confusion leads to distrust. Sell those Hawaiian vacation dreamers your own ukelele music CD, or your audio guide to the Big Island, or posters you've made from photographs you took on your last excursion to Maui.

2. **How am I going to accept payment?** Ten years ago, would-be online entrepreneurs would have had to dream up some complicated work-around for customers to get them cash. Now, we've got a number of options. The easiest is PayPal, which will allow your customers to pay using their credit card, debit card, or PayPal balance. Go to www.paypal.com and click on "Business" for more information. PayPal can help you create "buy now" buttons for your site, issue invoices, and more, and it is easily integrated into your blog.

If you outgrow PayPal, there are a number of shopping cart services you can check out, including 1shoppingcart.com, Americart.com, vshoppingcart.com, and many more. These services are more expensive than PayPal, but will add functionality you may eventually desire, such as affiliate management.

3. **How will I let people know about my products?** Marketing your wares is an essential part of your business plan. No matter how good your mousetrap, ukelele CD, or homemade cookies are, if no one knows about them, no one can buy them. You can spread the word through forums, search engine optimization (SEO), Google AdWords, Facebook advertisements, and a number of other methods. The key is to know beforehand how you're going to tell people about your

products.

4. **How will I handle fulfilment and customer service?** Unless you enjoy making numerous trips to the post office and answering calls 24/7, as you grow you will need to have a scaleable plan for shipping out orders and handling customer questions and complaints. You can outsource fulfillment to a local business or individual (try Craigslist.com), or through a service like Amazon's amazonservices.com. Likewise, you can outsource customer service to a virtual assistant, or to a company that specializes in customer service.

Selling your own goods online can be a profitable and satisfying way to make your mark on the online world – and to make money! Many businesses of all sizes incorporate a physical sales component to their offerings.

Method #2: Become an Affiliate

Affiliate marketing is a great complement to any other business model. Basically, you recommend products and services to your readers, and every time one of them makes a purchase through your referral link (a piece of code inserted in your blog), you receive a commission. Commissions can range from a few percent of the purchase price, to upwards of 50%. Physical products usually have a lower commission rate, while digital downloads have higher commissions.

The upside of affiliate marketing is that it's simple. If you're established as an expert in your industry, you likely already tell people what products and services you use in the course of your business. You'll continue to do the same... only now you'll get paid for it!

There are a number of widely-known programs online to find products and services to promote. Some of the most popular are:

- Amazon, <https://affiliate-program.amazon.com/>.
- Shareasale.com
- Clickbank.com
- CommissionJunction.com

You can also google the industry you're in, along with "affiliate programs," such as "scrapbooking affiliate programs" to see what other retailers and programs are available for you.

When promoting products through affiliate programs, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. **Only promote products you believe in.** If you start promoting any product under the sun, whether or not you've tried it yourself, you're going to lose credibility and trust with your audience. You want them to believe that you have their best interests in mind – and that means only recommending products you know and trust.
2. **Give value.** To have a viable business, you must offer value. How can you make it easier on your readers to buy the products they want and need? Can you give more details so they can make informed buying decisions? Can you offer coupons or tell them where to get the best deals? Or maybe you can perform a full review so they can evaluate products before they buy. Figure out a way so you're adding value to the purchasing process.
3. **Promote the products.** You can't just throw up a bunch of links or even review posts and expect to see massive traffic and sales. Instead, actively promote your affiliate links through social media, article marketing, and more. For instance, if you write a blog post comparing two popular vacuum cleaners, link

back to the post from other blog entries and promote it on Facebook, Twitter, and even YouTube.

Because of its versatility, affiliate marketing is the perfect addition to any blogger's repertoire of money-making methods. You can spend as much time or as little as you like, but it's a method worth considering.

Method #3: Promote Online Auctions

One of the very first ways for “ordinary” people to make money online was through eBay. Whether you were selling used maternity clothes, car parts, or collectibles, eBay promised millions of eyeballs, brought directly to your goods, allowing you to sell virtually anything with a minimum of hassle.

Adding auctions to your blog is a great way to make some extra cash, and eBay makes it easy with a plethora of simple tools. The best part: You don’t even have to create your own auctions! You can pull in auctions for items related to your topic or subject matter with RSS feeds, product feeds, or directly from auction listings.

The first thing you have to do is to join the eBay affiliate program (go to www.ebaypartnernetwork.com for more info). Then you can use eBay’s tools to pull specific feeds into your blog. You can include live eBay listing information, direct links to auctions that might be of interest to your market, and a host of other options.

Of course, if you have your own products to sell, all the better! Sign up with eBay, and then you can list your products and show the auctions in real time on your site, letting your readers know that your wares are going, going... sold to the highest bidder!

When promoting auctions as an affiliate, the advice to know your products, provide value, and promote your affiliate links holds true. And if you’re listing your own products and showing your auctions via your blog, it’s even more important to spread the word and drive traffic to your website and auction. More traffic will result in more action on your auctions, which in turn leads to higher selling prices.

Method #4: Sell Information Products

Information products are digital, audio and video based products, typically delivered electronically via download. Tens of thousands of people make their living online selling “virtual” products in industries as diverse as eldercare, test preparation, scrapbooking, and pet care. If there’s a group of avid people online and you can identify their needs, you can create a product to meet those needs.

Selling information products is a natural extension of blogging. You’re already building your audience and creating information for them, so sometimes creating a product is just a matter of pulling together information you’ve already written or recorded and repackaging it. Here are some of the most common information products:

- **Consolidate blog posts on a certain topic into an eBook.** For instance, Darren Rowse’s 31 Days to Building a Better Blog (<http://www.problogger.net/31-days-to-building-a-better-blog/>). This information was originally shared as a series of blog posts, and Darren repackaged them as a for-sale product.
- **Record a webinar or teleclass.** Hold a free call on your topic of choice, record the event, and then sell it as a digital download with a call guide or FAQ sheet.
- **Record an interview with an expert.** Take advantage of someone else’s expertise by interviewing them, recording the conversation, and then marketing the resulting audio to your readers. Bonus: If your interviewee has a rabid fan base of their own, you may be able to capture some of their market’s ears – and wallets!
- **Record screencasts.** Are you a Photoshop whiz or video editing expert? Record yourself showing your stuff with Camtasia or Jing and sell the tutorials in a batch or individually. How-to sells!

When selling your information products online, you have a variety of delivery options, including:

- Clickbank.com
- E-Junkie.com
- Directly through Paypal or another payment processor

Each of these has their advantages and drawbacks, so you may have to do a little bit of research to figure out which is best for you. If you’re new to information marketing, start small – don’t feel like you have to offer all the bells and whistles before you’re making the money to back it up!

Method #5: Join an Advertising Network

Back in “the day,” you couldn’t visit a website without being accosted with a number of blinkie, flashing, marching-across-the-screen pop-up ads. Yuck! Thankfully, advertising has changed significantly since then. Now, the majority of online ads are text-based or include photos rather than home-drawn neon images.

By joining an advertising network, you can reserve space on your website and allow the networks you join to serve ads directly to your site. Ad networks will then pay you per impression (how many people view your ad) or per click (how many people actually see and click on the ad).

Depending on the network, you can specify the size, shape, and types of ads you deliver. Some of the most common ad networks include:

- Google AdSense. <https://www.google.com/adsense/v3/app>. Probably the most well-known and versatile network.
- Kontera. <http://www.kontera.com/>. An in-text ad network that provides links directly in the text of your already-created content.
- Text Link Ads. <http://www.text-link-ads.com/>. Another in-text ad network.

The advantages of advertising networks:

- They’re easy to incorporate into your existing structure
- Advertisers are brought to you; you don’t have to find them on your own
- You are paid regularly for work you’ve already created, making it a passive income stream

The disadvantages:

- Pay can be extremely modest unless you have high volumes of targeted traffic (it’s not uncommon to make \$.10 – or less! – per day).
- A chunk of the revenue is taken as a fee-for-service.
- You don’t have full control over what sites are advertised.
- You’re encouraging people to click away from your site.

Many people find ad networks an easy way to start including advertising on their blogs. As you grow your reader base and traffic, you may want to investigate approaching advertisers directly. But in the meantime, picking up some spare change for doing nothing more than adding a little code to your site might be attractive.

Method #6: Accept Paid Advertising

While placing AdSense ads on your blog can bring you a few dollars, or even a few hundred dollars, a month, many people prefer to sell their blog real estate directly to advertisers. By cutting out the middleman, you can keep more of the profits yourself and keep control over the types of products and services you advertise on your site

When considering opening space for advertising, here are some things to think about:

- **How much will you charge?** A good rule of thumb is to see what other blogs in your industry are asking, and price your spots accordingly. Keep in mind that in general, the more traffic (page views and unique visitors) you have, the more your ad space is worth.
- **What kinds of ads will you accept?** Will you take any ads, or do you want them to be directly related to your market? If you offer reviews on your site, do you want to refuse to accept ads from sellers of products you might review? What about adult sites or online gaming? What about competitors? Know beforehand what you will accept and what you won't.
- **Will you create the graphics?** If you have to create graphics, then it's going to take more of your time and energy. But if you don't, you could end up with – to put it bluntly – lame graphics.
- **How will you charge and accept payment?** Paypal is usually sufficient. You can even create recurring payments if someone books for more than one time period at once.
- **Where will you place ads, and what size will they be?** Sidebar and leaderboard ads are common. You can google “blog ad sizes” to see what standard sizes you might offer.

Once you've made these decisions, create a section on your blog where potential advertisers can click and easily see your rates and requirements, and the next steps for advertising. If the advertisers don't come, you can approach them directly with your offer of advertising space.

Method #7: Provide Paid Sponsorships

Many bloggers offer product and service reviews as part of their regular content. As companies want to leverage the power of bloggers, there are more and more opportunities to receive cash or products in exchange for blog mentions or reviews. Basically, you get paid to include a review or other information about the sponsoring company.

Sounds good, eh? Well, there are some guidelines to follow:

1. **Disclose everything.** If you've been paid to review a product, mention a site, or otherwise plug or promote a company, tell your readers! The trust you create with them is hard to replace and easy to damage. Many bloggers place disclosures in each sponsored post; others create a site-wide disclaimer. In either case, be transparent. (For more information on disclosure statements, go to <http://disclosurepolicy.org/>)
2. **Have standards.** Bloggers of integrity will not promote or give a good review to sub-standard products. If you cannot be honest in your assessment or review, it is not worth the money. Many sponsors will have guidelines regarding how you must talk about their product, site, or service. Pick sponsors who are a good match with your standards.
3. **Don't overdo it.** If every post you put up is a paid sponsorship, your readers may be wondering, "Where's the beef?" Balance paid content with unpaid content. Also, make sure the sponsorship opportunities you accept are in line with your market. You might get approached by a dating site or – the latest for me – an anti-meat movie. The money may be good, but will your audience resonate with the message?
4. **Be of service.** Even in a paid post, you can provide value to your readers. Honest reviews, additional information, hints and tips, and case studies are all great ways to put your own spin and unique value on paid posts.

Treat paid opportunities as you would your unpaid content. Make sure it's valuable to your audience and adds something to their experience. Then you'll be creating great content AND getting paid for it.

Method #8: Offer Coaching

As a blogger, you are in a position of authority. People come to your site to read about what you have to offer – whether it's fly fishing, vegan cooking, making money online, or paper crafting. A natural next step for making money is to offer your expertise in a "live" coaching format. Here are some questions you might have about coaching:

Do I have to have any specific certification or education? If you're an accountant, lawyer, doctor, or even personal trainer, you need to be certified in your particular field. But to hang out your shingle as a coach, no certification is necessary.

Who would come to me? If people are reading your blog, people would pay you to coach them. Not every blog reader will become a coaching client, of course, but a percentage will. That's why it's important to build up your readership before you launch your coaching program; the larger your list, the larger your potential coaching client base.

How much should I charge? It really depends on your field, what your competitors are charging, and the format of your coaching program. Typically, the more value you bring to a client and the more pressing their pain points, the higher rates you can charge. If you can help someone lose 20 lbs. in 30 days or make \$5000 in a week, you're going to be able to command more than you could for helping someone plan a beautiful garden.

What format should I use? Coaches have been early adopters of online technologies such as webcasting, teleseminars, and more. With services like UStream, Freeconferencecall.com, and Skype, you can transport yourself virtually to anywhere in the world. Some coaches work strictly via email; it's going to depend on your market.

For beginner coaches, one of the most effective first steps is to offer a low-price, fixed-term (4-6 week), group coaching environment for 6-10 people. You could offer one structured call followed by a Q&A session each week, covering a certain segment of your topic, such as, "Planning your organic garden," or "Financial planning for retirement." Use the experience to test your materials and gauge interest and response.

At the end of the time period, evaluate your process and either change things up or offer the same coaching program again. Over time, you'll be able to better target your offerings and raise your rates as you know – and deliver – exactly what your audience wants.

Method #9: Restrict Access to Premium Content

We've gotten used to thinking that everything online is free. But businesses are learning that while "free" is a great way to drive traffic, it's not so good for making money. And consumers are learning that while "free" is great for the pocketbook, it's not always so great in terms of quality. More and more online, people are being asked to pay for "the good stuff," and you can do the same on your blog.

What can you ask people to pay for?

- Videos
- Deeper, more sophisticated content
- Replays of interviews or Q&A calls
- Step-by-step tutorials
- Access to training materials such as worksheets, planning guides, spreadsheets, etc.
- Audios

Here are some hints for offering premium content on your blog:

- **Give a taste.** If you're offering recipes, show an image of the completed dish to encourage people to pay to access the full recipe. If you are selling audios, list a few bullet pointed "takeaways," or provide a sample of the audio, like iTunes does. Give people an idea of what to expect and they'll be more likely to want to "pay to play."
- **Keep it simple.** Too many options confuses people, and a confused mind does nothing. Don't offer too many bells and whistles or packages; just keep it basic, especially at first.
- **Educate people.** Particularly if you are in a non-technical field, people may be hesitant to purchase something they think they can get for free. Emphasize the benefits of your material – convenience, quality, exclusivity, etc. Point out how your product is superior to others, or how it will save them time or money.
- **Include testimonials.** Give people a reason to trust you, and to say "Yes." By including testimonials of satisfied customers on your blog, you can help potential purchasers over the hurdle of making the decision to purchase. Video testimonials are especially effective.

There are a number of WordPress plug-ins to allow you to restrict access to certain areas of your WordPress blog – or you can keep things very simple and just password-protect specific posts or areas. In any case, just as a velvet rope at the entrance to the hottest nightclub in town indicates that something good is going on inside, barring entrance to certain areas of your blog will make visitors very curious – maybe curious enough to pay!

Method #10: Sell Technology

Many of the technological advances in the blogging world have come about as a result of a blogger needing a way to do something more quickly, more easily, or more completely on their blog. Wordpress plug-ins, blog themes, graphics, apps, and the like are all examples of ways inventive bloggers have turned their need into a profitable revenue stream.

You may think that there's no way you could sell technology because you're not technologically minded yourself. Not true! Not even Bill Gates does his own coding. Here's how to identify and create technology tools your market will flip for:

- **Make a list of problems you have.** When his wife Jess needed a better way to keep track of her knitting patterns and yarn stash, Casey Forbes started what would soon become a knitting world phenomenon, Ravelry.com. They didn't intend to create a social site for over a million users; it happened as a by-product of a problem. You can do the same thing in your own market. What tools do people need to help them accomplish their goals more easily? Write them down.
- **Seek out competition.** A little competition is good – it lets you know that there is indeed a market need.
- **Improve on what is.** If there's already a Wordpress plug-in for pulling Flickr images into your blog, but it's not working well for you, figure out what you'd do to make it better.
- **Find a tech hack.** Sites like Odesk.com, rentacoder.com, and even Craigslist are great places to find people with the skills you need to make your dream a reality. Read the requirements carefully, and get several bids – and several recommendations!
- **Test, test, test.** After you've got a solution, try it out on your own site, and ask anyone you can to test it for you as well. Maybe that new plug-in works great on IE but makes Firefox crash; you won't know unless you test!

Once you have a workable “widget” in-hand, take it to the masses. Go to forums, write about it on your own blog, and strut your stuff. The best advertisement is your own blog! You might also give away a copy of your app or plug-in to some other bloggers, asking them to provide you with a testimonial or review on their site.

You don't have to be a tech whiz to sell your own great device. Instead, you can be the brains behind the operation and pay someone else to do the pixel-pushing and byte-budging.

Conclusion

The number of ways to make money through your blog is limited only by your imagination. This short list is just the tip of the iceberg. I hope by reading through these descriptions, the floodgates have been opened and you have a better idea of how you can begin to monetize your own blog.

If you've got an idea that isn't listed here, all the better! The online world is changing and morphing all the time. Put yourself at the front of the next wave, and you can reap the monetary benefits!

To Your Success!

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