

Monetize your SEO

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Introduction

In a lot of cases, web development certainly doesn't end with some efforts for search engine optimization. Quite often websites will be made to earn a steady income. So if that's the case for you, after your SEO efforts you'll need to research how to achieve this.

We'll discuss some of the prominent ways that give you the opportunity to convert your SEO efforts into an additional income. We will be talking about contextual advertising and affiliate marketing and explain why these techniques could earn you some extra income generated by your own website.

Contextual Advertising

What is contextual advertising?

The principle behind contextual advertising is actually quite simple. In most cases the publishers of a website paste a given snippet of Javascript code somewhere on their website, which results in the display of highly relevant advertisements. The snippet will be scanning the specific page searching for several criteria that describe the content of the page. Based on the title, the page url, the text content, the keywords, ... the snippet will discover what the page is really about, and matching advertisements will be shown.

At the moment, contextual advertising is undoubtedly the most commonly used SEO monetization method used on the internet. This widespread use of contextual advertising is caused by the easy implementation and the win-win situation for both parties (advertiser and publisher). Website publishers are given an opportunity to generate some extra income for their site in a very easy way, and the advertisers get a lot of potential customers interested in buying their products. That's because the advertisements that are displayed are always very targeted to the right product niche.

Contextual advertising is usually performed based on a pay per click or pay-per-mille (thousand) impression basis. The method used will vary according to the preferences of the advertiser whose products you're trying to promote. In the case of pay-per-click (PPC) you'll get a specific amount each time one of your visitors clicks a certain advertisement. This will be measured by the cost-per-click (CPC), representing the value of one single click on the ad. This in contrast to the pay-per-mille system where rather than an absolute cost, you'll get an amount each period the advertisement reaches thousand views. This amount is also known as the cost-per-mille (CPM), the cost of thousand ad impressions.

Although, it may seem possible that contextual advertising forms will be replaced with other advertising methods by most webmasters in the future. That's because customers get accustomed to internet advertisements little by little, so steadily the effectiveness of these advertisements drops. However, we think the use of contextual advertising will still stay profitable for some time because of the convenience and the fact that's it blended well into the site content.

Popular contextual advertising advertisement networks?

1. Google AdSense

a. What is it?

Before starting off we'd like to mention another product of webgiant Google, namely Google Adwords. Google Adwords and AdSense are very closely related, but the first is targeting advertisers as the seconds target audience are the web publishers. Only advertisers who bought ad space through Adwords will see return their ads on web pages that are signed up via Google AdSense.

Google AdSense is by far the most popular and widely used contextual advertising on the internet right now. Google provides web publishers a very easy way to earn money with their own website. Signing up and creating advertisements to publish on a website is very straight forward and simple but we'll give some basic information

The only requirement you need to match before signing up for a Google AdSense account, is you need to have disposal of an own finished website. Also, the topic of the website may not be against the AdSense Terms of Service (more information in next part). What follows is similar to when signing up for a basis Gmail webmail account.

In general you'll then have to wait a couple of days, as Google will be spidering your website and evaluating your sites content. If all goes well, you'll then receive an e-mail from AdSense with the message you got approved to their ad network and can get starting to earn money with your website.

The next step is creating an advertisement you want to publish on your website. You have the opportunity to choose out of a wide array of possibilities. First of all you will be asked whether you want to publish an ad unit or a link unit.

Ad unit Text ads only (default) ▾

Ad units contain either text ads, image ads, or both. The ads are targeted to the content of your page using contextual and placement targeting.

Ad Title
Ad text
www.ad-url.com
Ads by Google

Link unit

Each link unit displays a list of topics that are relevant to your page. When users click a topic, they're brought to a page of related ads. ?

Ads by Google
[Bicycle parts](#)
[Bicycle training](#)
[Bicycle shops](#)
[Cycling news](#)

As the screenshot displays the difference between these two formats is quite obvious. Ad unit blocks display advertisements accompanied with a short description and an url of the advertisers website. Link blocks will only be displaying hyperlinks (four or five), which make them a good pick to display them close to your proper navigation menu.

Next step will be to choice your ad format and the different colors you want to implement in the advertisement. In the last part of the chapter we'll give some details about which ad formats and which color combinations in general have the highest CTR and subsequently will earn you the most profit.

Hereafter Google will ask to which channel the ad should belong to. This is not necessary but could come in handy if you're planning to track the performances of individual advertisements. Then you'll need to create a new channel each time you create a new ad.

To finish you can give the ad a particular name to quickly recognize it when you want to make some changes to the appearance of the ad afterwards.

Google will then create the advertisement code for you. The only thing that will be left to do is paste this code into the area of your website. Your website will now be displaying relevant ads and you can sit in your chair and let the money roll in.

300 x 250 Medium Rectangle ▾

Recommended

- 300 x 250 Medium Rectangle
- 336 x 280 Large Rectangle
- 728 x 90 Leaderboard
- 160 x 600 Wide Skyscraper

Other - Horizontal

- 468 x 60 Banner
- 234 x 60 Half Banner

Other - Vertical

- 120 x 600 Skyscraper
- 120 x 240 Vertical Banner

Other - Square

- 250 x 250 Square
- 200 x 200 Small Square
- 180 x 150 Small Rectangle
- 125 x 125 Button

Border # FFFFFFFF

Title # 000080

Background # FFFFFFFF

Text # 000000

URL # cccccc

b. Don'ts

Google AdSense certainly has a Terms Of Service which you need to follow to remain accepted into their advertisement program. We suggest you read their terms carefully before starting publishing advertisement but we will provide you some of the most important parts. The most webmasters that got kicked out of Google AdSense violated one of these rules.

Click fraud is the most common reason that can result in a ban but also other obvious factors like having a website that breaches the AdSense policies also leads to a ban. Below are the most common issues that could result into a Google AdSense ban.

- **Click Fraud**

As we already stated click fraud is considered very seriously by Google AdSense. Encouraging your friends to click on your ads is regarded as misconduct and will be punished when noticed by Google. However Google allows a limited amount of accidental clicks – they might happen sometimes, so there's no reason to panic when you accidentally click on an ad of your own – lots of webmasters recommend reporting it. Also, when you notice an usually high CTR¹ it is never a bad idea to report this to Google. The message is actually very simple: just don't try to cheat on Google and you will be ok.

- **No disclosure**

This is becoming a common cause for an AdSense ban as most publishers are still unaware of this issue, Google requires you to disclose on your site (preferably in the privacy policy) that cookies are served that collect information to display the ad, failing to do so may eventually lead to a ban.

- **Disclosing earning details**

Another part of their program policies state that exact earning statistics like click through rate and impressions cannot be publicly disclosed. Getting your account closed this way is usually done by a tip from an anonymous person so it is pretty much hit or miss but refraining it all together is your best bet as you wouldn't want to jeopardize one of your top income sources.

¹ Click Through Rate, calculated by dividing the amount of clicks on a specific ad by the amount the ad has been displayed. A visitor who clicks on an ad repeatedly will increase its CTR.

Sometimes you might have to look for alternatives though, in case your account was barred for breaching policies or the content on your site is against their program policies. For example Google doesn't allow you to publish content that is related to adult, gambling, drugs, alcohol, violence, weapons topics. Also, if Google finds out you might be encouraging your friends to click on your advertisements or other malicious behaviour you'll soon find out. And as Google doesn't allow one individual to create a second Google AdSense account, you'll have to search for alternatives if this scenario comes up.

While I could safely say that no other program can compete with AdSense with their widespread popularity and the fact that it's a Google service of course, there are some services that has gained some buzz in recent times and over the years.

2. Chitika

Chitika has gained widespread popularity in recent times and serves similar contextual ads (in terms of appearance) however uses innovative, 'smart' methods by displaying ads to only search engine users based on the search term for example. This means the content of the advertisements will not be based on the content of the page a visitor has landed on, as it's the case with Google AdSense. Only visitors of the website that got there by typing in a search term on a search engine (e.g. Google, Yahoo, Altavista) will be seeing ads related to their specified search term. This type of advertising is very smart too as visitors will be seeing ads about something they're very interested in. The odds visitors will click through on an ad is substantially higher.

3. Kontera

Kontera offers in-text advertising, while these types of ads are not served the same way AdSense is, it could well be an alternative as it makes money for your site traffic and is also contextual advertising. Kontera offers low CPC but can be a healthy revenue stream if you receive a large amount of traffic to your website. Kontera is a non-intrusive way to enhance the user's browsing experience on your website or blog and deliver additional revenue along with control over the look and feel of your site. Advertisements will be embedded within your content so it will not be regarded as being an advertisement.



As you can see on the screenshot the advertisement is just the word “web page” with double underlining. This definitely doesn’t look like an advertisement and will thus not be perceived like one. Only when you hover the hyperlink you get a small popup with some more information.

4. Adbrite

Adbrite is also a popular alternative to AdSense and usually used by webmasters who serve content that does not comply with Google's policies. So if your website is filled with content about topics as gambling, porn, weapons, drugs etc Adbrite might be a good pick. The admission policy at Adbrite is certainly not that strict as with Google AdSense, although a disadvantage might be that revenue might be slightly lower. The advertisement look very similar to those of Google AdSense and despite Google undoubtedly has the biggest pool of advertisers Adbrite has a fair share too. The difference with Google AdSense is Adbrite also offer the opportunity to display in-line text advertisements as in the Kontera ad network.

Although we offered the last three as alternatives to Google AdSense, it’s not required you only use one of these ad networks simultaneously on your webpages. The best earnings can be achieved by making the best combination of a few of these networks used together. We recommend to constantly experiment with some combinations and see what works best for you. Some networks might be more profitable than other depending on your site content and visitors. It’s up to the webmaster to find out the winning combination. There doesn’t exist something like what’s called a general best setup.

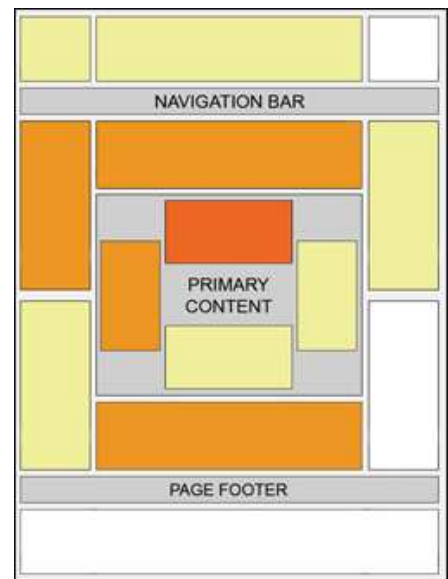
Developing a contextual advertising campaign is not a one-day job

As we already stated making money with online advertisements isn't just putting some random advertisements on the screen and seeing the money roll in while going out or sleeping. It comes to constantly tweak your website and the advertisements and see what suits best for your personal website. It's all about experimenting different setups and see what earns you the most profit.

Placing an ad with some random colors at a random location on your website could potentially make you lose a ton of revenue. If you seek to maximize your revenue you should continuously be doing some trial and error with different combinations in terms of positioning, colors and design. Although experimenting and testing are the keywords there are known combinations that in general tend to achieve better results.

- Positioning

When it comes down to the position of the advertisement, placing it above-the-fold² seems to work better than placing in hardly visible somewhere in a sidebar. Placing your ads on the right and/or above the actual content of a page will lead to an improvement of the CTR for that particular ad. It gives the visitor the impression it's the most important content of the page. Also, ads placed near rich content and navigation menus usually do well because users are focused on those areas of a page. To discover other successful locations on your website that match well with a good CTR, you can use the "AdSense Heatmap" Google provides.



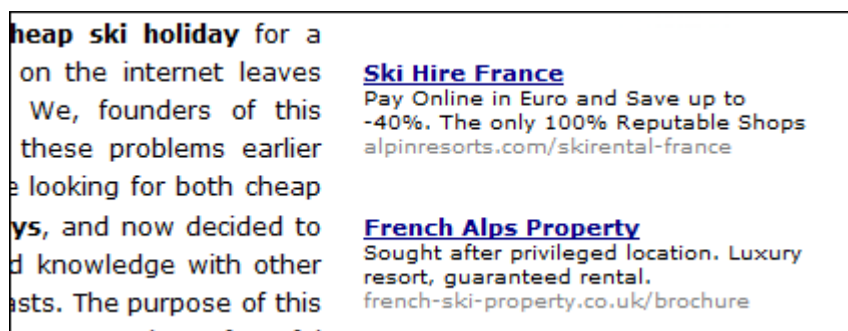
² Is sometimes referred to as above-the-scroll in internet marketing purposes. The term refers to that region of a webpage that is visible without having to scroll. It's the content that's visible when the page pops up.

- Design

Adsense offers a wide variety of different design combinations to choose from. Although image ads are a real eyepicker, text advertisements tend to perform better because these kind of banners get easily associated with advertisements. The biggest part of the internet user community is very experienced in browsing the web and have acquired a skill called “ad blindness”. It means banners on a website are getting ignored subconsciously. When it comes down to the size of the ad, the large rectangle performs very well when well embedded within the content on the website, and skyscrapers on the sidebar can capture clicks from the lurking surfer.

- Colors

It may sound somewhat trivial, but the text color of your advertisements is a very important variable for your total income. Don't try to put the attention by using some flashy colors, but what frequently works is to try blend it with the rest of your website. For example if all the hyperlinks on your webpages have a darkred color, choosing darkred as the linkcolor of your ads would be a good move. An alternative that has proven its worth too is implementing darkblue (#000080 htmlcode) for your advertisement link color. A plausible reason could be that web visitors correlate a blue color with hyperlinks who lead them to a page with more relevant information. That's why they won't be very reluctant to click on these ads.



I'll briefly explain why the two advertisements in the above screenshot are performing quite well. The ads are positioned after the content so eventually the eye of the visitors will land on the ads when reading the content on the webpage. The linkcolor of the advertisements is darkblue, so they will be eager to think it's an innocent hyperlink that leads them to what they're searching for (in this case a skiing holiday). The url of the advertisers website is made grey on purpose so all the attention will be drawn to the blue hyperlink.

Affiliate marketing

What is Affiliate marketing?

Affiliate Marketing is a method of promoting web businesses in which an affiliate is rewarded for every visitor, subscriber and/or customer provided through his efforts. To do this you will need a partnership with an online merchant. This can be done by signing up into an affiliate program. Websites like Amazon.com and Ebay.com have their own affiliate program, but there are also websites who offer affiliate programs of different merchants (e.g. Clickbank.com).

This last kind, offering plenty of different affiliate programs, are separated into two sections: advertisers(or vendors) and publishers. The advertisers are the real merchants who sell a product or service online, accept payments and fulfill orders. A publisher, also known as the affiliate, is an independent party who promotes products and services of an advertiser in exchange for a commission.

As an affiliate, you join merchant's programs and place their advertising on your website.

Affiliate marketing is a win-win-win situation. The advertiser is making money, the publisher is making money, and the customers are getting what they want or need. Everybody wins.

Different types of affiliate programs

There are essentially three types of affiliate programs:

1. **Pay-Per-Sale:** These programs pay either a fixed amount or a percentage of sales generated by your visitors on the advertiser's website.
2. **Pay-Per-Lead:** These programs pay a set amount whenever your visitor fills out a survey, requests information or signs up to the advertiser's website.
3. **Pay-Per-Click:** These programs pay you each time a visitor lands on the advertiser's website by clicking on a link of the affiliate.

Tracking the visitors

Affiliates are assigned a special link or URL, that is coded with a unique ID. The merchant's site tracks the visitors that arrive via that unique affiliate link and the publisher gets paid a commission for all the sales and leads generated by those visitors.

For example, Amazon's homepage URL is:

<http://www.amazon.com>

A unique ID as an Amazon affiliate is 004X2P7Y0AJY8TFWK56X. The Amazon affiliate program will generate a special link:

<http://www.amazon.com/?&tag=onlpokshomal-20&camp=15309&creative=331469&linkCode=st1&adid=004X2P7Y0AJY8TFWK56X>

To ensure a publisher gets paid if the referred visitor places an order at a later time than when he first visited the website via the promotion material the advertisers work with cookies. A cookie is a small text file containing data about the visitor that is stored in the visitor's browser by the website he has visited. A cookie can contain information such as dates, times, names of visited pages or purchased products.

Ways to promote the advertiser's products

Once signed up into an affiliate program you can begin to promote their products. There are several ways to do this depending on the promotion material you have from the advertiser.

Common used promotion material are text-links, (flash) banners, HTML-advertorials or product feeds.

Text-links

Text-links are the easiest promotion tools. When promoting an advertiser's website or a product on your website you just have to put a link to the advertiser's website that is coded with a unique ID.

The advertiser will offer you a lot of promotion links or you can generate one on your own.

A special kind of text-link is a deeplink, this is a link to a webpage that is one or more levels under the homepage, such as a link that points directly to a specific page (a product, for instance) of the advertiser's site. The visitor is taken directly to the correct page and can

place an order immediately, instead of crawling to the right page within the advertiser's website.

Banners

Banners are the most used kind of promotion tools. The advertiser has created a few banners of his website and/or products and your unique ID is included in the URL to the specific page on the advertiser's website.

Flash banners are almost the same as normal banners, but in general they will look more attractive. They need Adobe Flash Player to display.

HTML-advertorials

HTML-advertorials are promotion tools with an interaction. It's not just a static image or flash file, but the advertisement provides the customer an activity to do. This can be a search engine, a registration form, or a calculation form. (e.g. Searching for airline tickets)

After completing the activity in the advertisement the customer will be redirected to the advertiser's website.

Product feeds

Product feeds, *also known as data feeds*, are files that include all or a subset of products available in a specific webshop. Product feeds can be used by affiliates within dynamic websites by showing product and price information of a selection of products. Simultaneously visitors can click through on this information which leads them to the product-specific page on the advertiser's webpage. A product feed automatically shows the current specials or advertisements of an advertiser on the website of the affiliate. The file is formatted in an XML-based text or a CSV file. An affiliate can then determine how the product feeds are graphically presented on the webpage.

There are various ways to use the advertiser's product feed. The easiest way is to create an account at a product feed processing website which processes the product feed automatically for you. The more complex way is to create an own script to process your product feed. Of course this offers you a lot more flexibility.

Integration of product feeds by using a processing tool

When using a processing tool you are limited to the functionality the website offers. You can only use the templates and functions the website offers.

Some examples of product feed processing websites:

FeedProcessor.com

“FeedProcessor.com’s popular Site Builder tool can quickly generate a search engine optimized, page per product content-rich affiliate website in minutes. It works using a template system, or you can design your own templates.”

PriceTapestry.com

“Price Tapestry is a PHP and MySQL price comparison engine based on Magic Parser³, a PHP library designed for working with affiliate product feeds, automatically recognizing and parsing any product feed file format.”

Integration of product feeds by creating your own script

This is a more complex way to integrate the product feeds on your website. The biggest advantage of this method is that you can develop your own script which does exactly what you want and need for your website. Some technologies you might consider using to accomplish this are PHP and MySQL.

PHP is a widely-used general-purpose scripting language that is especially suited for web development and can be embedded into HTML.

MySQL is a relational database management system. It has become the world's most popular open source database because of its consistent fast performance, high reliability and ease of use. It can be used with almost all programming languages.

³ Magic Parser: A data feed parsing algorithm created by Price Tapestry.

Hands on: Creating your own script

An example of a basic product feed with one product:

```
<products>
  <product>
    <productID>EZ35182</productID>
    <name>Citytrip Barcelona</name>
    <price currency="EUR">479.00</price>
    <productURL>http://www.kras.nl/tradetracker/?tt=839_0_43583_&r=
http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kras.nl%2Fvakantie%2Ftrip.htm%3Ftripid%3D35182
%26osc%3Dttracker%26utm_source%3Dttracker%26utm_medium%3Dcps
    </productURL>
    <imageUrl>http://www.kras.nl/wsmedia/000/162/044.jpg
    </imageUrl>
    <description>Barcelona, one of the most beautiful cities of
Europe!</description>
  </product>
</products>
```

Take a look at the product feed and decide which information you want to use at your website. Because this is a very simple product feed we will use all the information.

To easily use the product feed data you could insert the data of your product feed in a MySQL database. Of course there are other possible workouts to do this (like reading the xml with xpath), but in this paper we will put focus on using PHP and MySQL. If you have a website hosted at a hosting company you mostly also have one or more MySQL databases.

Once you are in the admin panel of MySQL it's easy to create a database and tables. You need to create a table with the records of the product feed you want to use in your website (e.g. name, productURL, etc.).

Next step is to parse the data of your xml product feed into the database. This is done by using a php script:

```
<?php

class Citytrip {
    var $productID;
    var $name;
    var $price;
    var $productURL;
    var $imageUrl;
    var $description;
}

//database connection
$host = "localhost"; //database location
$user = "admin"; //database username
$pass = "adminpass"; //database password
$db_name = "db_citytrips"; //database name
```

```

$conn = mysql_connect($host, $user, $pass);
mysql_select_db($db_name);

//clear the table in the database to have consistent data
$emptydb = mysql_query("delete FROM tblCitytrip");
$resetincrement = mysql_query("alter table tblCitytrip
AUTO_INCREMENT = 1");

/* Insert product feed to the MySQL database */

$items = simplexml_load_file('productfeed.xml');

foreach ($items->product as $item)
{
    $product = new Citytrip();
    $product->productID = $item->productID;
    $product->name = $item->name;
    $product->price = $item->price;
    $product->productURL = $item->productURL;
    $product->imageURL = $item->imageURL;
    $product->description = $item->description

    $insertrow = mysql_query("insert INTO tblCitytrip(productID,
name,price,productURL,imageURL,description)
VALUES('$product->productID', '$product->name',
'$product->price', '$product->productURL',
'$product->imageURL', '$product->description')");
}

?>

```

Guide through the code:

First we have defined a class to make it easier to work with the following code. This class has the necessary attributes to contain the data of the product feed.

To use the database you have to create a connection to it. This is done by the 6 lines under 'database connection'

The 'resetincrement' is used to reset the unique ID increment of the table. This is not required but it's good to do this to keep the table well-ordered and manageable.

Now we can begin to parse the product feed into the database. With the `simplexml_load_file` method you load the xml file into a variable. With the `foreach` you will loop through the xml records and put the records one by one in an instance of the class `Citytrip`, and subsequently insert these products in the table `tblCitytrip` in the database.

After executing this script all the products of the xml product feed have been added to the MySQL database.

The only thing you have to do now is to show the products on your website. To show all the products in the database on one page you will have to make a PHP/HTML page. The following code shows the most important part of this page:

```
<?php

$products = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM tblCitytrip");

$html = '<table width="100%">';
while($row = mysql_fetch_assoc($products))
{
    $html .= '<tr><td>';
    $html .= '<div></div>';
    $html .= '<div>' . $row['name'] .
    '<br/>' . $row['description'] . '</div>';
    $html .= '<div>&euro; ' . $row['price'] . ' <a href="' .
    $row['productURL'] . '">Order now!</a></div>';
    $html .= '</td></tr>';
}
$html .= '</table>';
echo $html;

?>
```

Guide through the code:

With the `mysql_query` method you will select, by using SQL-query language, every row of the table `tblCitytrip` and put them in the variable `$products`. The `$html` variable will be the output after every product is fetched.

With `while($row = mysql_fetch_assoc($products))` you will loop over the products in the `$products` variable. After looping and putting the products into the `$html` variable you will show it on the screen by using `echo`.

Now we have created the scripts to use product feeds on your own! The scripts are very basic and can become more complex by using more than one product feed and using stylesheets to have a better looking output.

Conclusion

In this paper we have been talking about several opportunities to generate some extra income for your website. We split up these opportunities in two categories: contextual advertising and internet marketing. We gave a few examples of popular contextual advertising advertisement networks and concentrated ourselves a little bit more on Google AdSense. We gave some do's and don'ts to maximize your revenue.

In the next part of the paper, affiliate marketing, we defined this term and gave some examples. Ways to promote the advertiser's products were explained and we gave a practical example to integrate product feeds on you website.