

Colleen's Interview With Ryan Stevenson – 13 Year Amazon Affiliate Veteran



Hi there, Ryan, and thank you for allowing me to ask you questions about Amazon affiliate marketing.

COLLEEN: Amazon affiliate marketing is very popular among internet marketers all over the world for many reasons. What do you think the appeal is with the Amazon Associates program?

RYAN: Personally, I find the Amazon Associates Program appealing because of their brand recognition and product availability. Their brand recognition makes them an ideal program for affiliates because you do not have to convince people that they are buying through a trusted retailer since they are the #1 online ecommerce company in the world. The massive number of products found on Amazon means that affiliates can pick any niche they want to promote without having to use multiple

affiliate networks.

COLLEEN: How long have you been promoting Amazon products for?

RYAN: I made my first dollar online as an affiliate in 1995 at the age of 13, and I got started promoting Amazon products in 2004.

COLLEEN: Wow, that's very entrepreneurial of you at the age of 13! As you have been promoting Amazon products for an incredible nine years now – way before most affiliate marketers - what is your preferred method for getting sales as an amazon affiliate?

RYAN: I prefer referring sales through advertising on my own websites. Each website is targeted to a very specific niche, making it much easier to attract targeted traffic to those websites on autopilot. I feel like this method allows me to increase my monthly commissions by continuing to build new websites without spending too much time or effort on my completed sites.

COLLEEN: That sounds like a smart business model, Ryan. With the increasing popularity of the Amazon Associates program, why do you think so many amazon associates are failing or are not achieving the income levels they'd like?

RYAN: I believe that most affiliates fail because they are looking for instant success without working for it. Automated software has become very common over the past few years. This software allows people to build entire Amazon affiliate sites with the click of a button. Building sites like that is easy, while driving traffic to those sites can be the exact opposite. A lot of people get frustrated at that point and simply give up before they can figure out how to build a successful site.

COLLEEN: I understand what you are saying, Ryan. You raise some good points. Are there particular niches that you feel do better, from an affiliate point of view, than others?

RYAN: Absolutely. I'm a big fan of running pet related affiliate sites. People love their pets and often will not hesitate to buy things that will help make their life easier. I also like home & garden or

personal care related niches. In particular, I feel products that are in demand but cannot easily be found in most retail stores are excellent choices to promote through Amazon.

COLLEEN: Having pets myself, I can vouch for how much pet owners are devoted to their pets and buying things for them :O). Are there any niches that you tend to steer clear of?

RYAN: Yes. I generally steer clear of any computer related niche and especially TVs. When most affiliates are getting started, I believe these can be common niche choices for many of them because they are popular products and most people already have some knowledge about them. As a result, I feel like these niches always have high competition and the products are always changing. I prefer to be able to build a site and not change the products I promote for a year or more, while electronics niche websites often have the need to be updated much more frequently than that to keep up with new products.

On top of the high product turnover and high competition, I also avoid computers because of the flat commission rate Amazon offers for that niche. When you sell more each month, you get higher commissions from Amazon, but this is not the case with computers - they always pay a flat 4% and are capped at a \$25 max commission per product. That means that any computer you sell over \$500 is not going to pay you any extra commissions.

COLLEEN: It does make sense, Ryan, to build websites where new products aren't always coming out because it means much less work on your part and you won't look inferior promoting older items. I personally have an embroidery site and I have found the same too, some people love particular brands and models and will generally stick with them or products close to them.

While we are talking about site building...when an affiliate decides to create a new site for amazon promotions, what do you think is a common mistake they make?

RYAN: I believe the most common mistakes creating new sites involve rushed niche/product selection and the urge to use automated software. Ultimately, the niche you choose for a new site can make or break your future success with that site. If your niche is too broad or has too much competition, you could be wasting your time. As a result, I thoroughly research my products and niches that I select for new sites before making a final decision.

I already mentioned automated software before, but this point is really important to remember. Ultimately, if you are building sites with automated content, you will constantly fight to get traffic to those sites. If you can build a new niche site with it in mere minutes, so can another affiliate. There is only room in search engine rankings for 10 sites in the top 10 results, and there is no way that Google is going to put two sites there that essentially have the same content. I prefer spending my time building my sites instead of fighting to get traffic to them.

COLLEEN: I am a bit old fashioned like you, Ryan. I'm in favour of the same thing which obviously means more work at the end of the day. But we all know what Google in particular is like, and when push comes to shove, quality sites will always win in my opinion at the end. Having said that, I know that people can become frustrated and will take shortcuts when they are available so I can understand that stance also. There is always a lot of talk about domain names. With domain names, what is your preferred method for coming up with the right name for your site?

RYAN: I use two different methods for domain selection. Everyone likely knows about using exact match domains already. Google has decreased the power of these domains over the past few years. However, I am convinced that Google will NEVER completely do away with the exact match domain ranking bonus for one good reason - brand names. If Google penalized exact match domains, they would essentially be stopping people from finding websites based on a brand name.

For example, Dell Computers uses dell.com, so Google always has to at least consider that an exact match domain could be a brand domain. I also have many Amazon sites running on exact match domains already. Despite all of the talk about these domains losing their power, my sites have maintained their rankings or even improved them during that same time. My other method for picking domains involves a combination of branding and exact match domains. For example, if I wanted to create a site about computers, I could call the site RyansComputers.com. You still get some search benefit from having a relational keyword/phrase in your domain while still giving you the opportunity to be creative with the name.

COLLEEN: Yes, I have heard a lot of talk about domain name choices too. Having started so many years ago I obviously have many domains that are exact match or keyword rich. Some have been affected, while others haven't. Having said that, I have created a brand new site this much that is brand related that is on page one google and sticking because I've put a fair amount of work into it. I had one company take a domain of mine that I had years ago when there was the FTC clamp down, not because there was anything wrong with my site – but they shut down their affiliate program straight away and I was required to hand over my domain it's much more personable and friendly in my opinion.

That was not a pleasant experience, as I was making a fair amount of money from it every month and I was getting a lot of traffic – which the site owner was now going to get full advantage of. Food for thought there.

I actually think the new twist on domain names can be good. In your example, Ryanscomputers.com

Now as we are talking about keywords, as you know, the Google Keyword Tool has been updated to the Google Keyword Planner. What are your thoughts on the Google Keyword Planner for Amazon affiliates?

RYAN: Even though the new Keyword Planner appears to contain less data than the Keyword Tool, I actually prefer the new system because it offers the information up front that I had to dig to find in the Keyword Tool.

Instead of dealing with Global/Local search counts, you just get one number now based on your targeting options, so you can still retrieve those same counts by changing your search options. In particular, I love the new search trends graph that they have in the Keyword Planner. Previously, I had to download the keyword data to a spreadsheet file to get access to the search counts from specific months, but I can now find this information easily by just hovering over an icon next to each keyword. The search trends graph makes it much easier to find trending keywords or to identify seasonal keywords.

COLLEEN: Yes, I am getting used to it and quite enjoy it. I am a bit frustrated with some keyword software that I own that previously scraped keywords from the free tool and don't seem to be able

to now. That is one drawback. I actually really like the ad groups. I know a lot of people look straight at the keyword tab but I like the ad group information because you can get ideas obviously for advertising, for lsi keywords, for tags, categories etc. I think it's really good.

Generally speaking, Ryan, with your Amazon promotions do you focus on high end products, low priced products, or a mix of both?

RYAN: I prefer a mix of both. I know a lot of people solely focus on more expensive products (\$100+) so they can earn decent commissions from each sale. I feel the more expensive products are better earners. Despite that, I also don't ignore low priced products for one major reason - the Amazon commission structure. As you refer more monthly sales, your commission percentage goes up. If you only promote high priced products, it can be hard to even move up a couple of commission brackets. However, a single site referring cheap product sales can often get even a new affiliate up to at least the third tier fairly easily. By promoting a mix of both, I get a better commission rate from promoting cheap products, and then I receive that higher percentage for commissions on my expensive products making them even more worthwhile to promote.

COLLEEN: That's a good philosophy, Ryan, and does make a lot of sense. I would assume people promoting cheap Kindle books for example (hint, hint LOL), would reach those higher tiers very quickly as an example.

You touched earlier on review site creation. What do you commonly see affiliates do wrong when it comes to actually writing Amazon product reviews?

RYAN: I believe the most common mistake with review writing is that most people are basically trying to do the same thing. I commonly see people building pages on their own sites that use the exact same title from an Amazon product listing, and many of them will simply repeat the information found there. I feel like this makes websites that are not really useful for anyone but the affiliate (assuming they can even get traffic to it).

COLLEEN: Yes, the review writing side of things can be a stumbling block for a lot of people. It's a good idea to write as you would if you were talking about the product with someone that you know face to face. Dragon Naturally Speaking is good to use if you want to just talk about a product completely off the cuff and then play around with the text later.

Speaking of reviews, do you outsource your reviews or write them yourself?

RYAN: I write everything myself. I actually don't outsource any of my work, even as a product developer. Outsourced work is often done as quickly as possible with as little thought as possible. I am often trying to achieve the opposite with my writing, so I don't feel like others can provide me with that type of writing unless I am willing to pay an arm and a leg for it. Since I do my own research work for new sites, I also end up knowing quite a lot about a new niche before I start to build the site so I often find the content fairly easy to write.

COLLEEN: I am very, very impressed, Ryan. You must enjoy writing a lot. I know a lot of people in your shoes do differently (myself included, quite often LOL). I think once you get in the groove you can get the knack for it pretty quickly. And if you look at customer reviews in detail and take notes

you can easily see what people like, don't like, what they want to know about a product etc and present it for them.

In your opinion, what do you believe is the most important part of an Amazon review site?

RYAN: The niche being targeted and the content on the site are the most important parts, in my opinion. Unless you really spend your time on these two parts, you can easily end up wasting your time because you don't realize there is a problem until the work is done. I want to create useful websites with unique content that target a very specific niche that has fairly low competition.

COLLEEN: Yes that makes a lot of sense. I have had questions from people who are wanting to save on hosting and domains and create a website where they put all their reviews on. In those kind of cases, it can be virtually impossible to get good rankings due to the diversity of the niches. Targeted niches, with quality content are the key.

We've known each other for quite a while now and you've created a lot of plugins specifically for amazon affiliates which have been bestsellers. Which are your top three?

RYAN: Product Style, UpsellAzon and ExtendAzon are my top Amazon affiliate plugins. Product Style is a full-featured plugin that allows you to quickly build unique ads and comparison charts. UpsellAzon will then automatically promote accessory products on pages where you promote other Amazon products. For example, you build an ad for a TV with Product Style, and then UpsellAzon might automatically promote various cables, movies and/or a Blu-Ray player on the same page. ExtendAzon then takes the Amazon affiliate links from those plugins (and other WP plugins too) and converts them into shopping cart links. These special links can be used with an on-site shopping cart so visitors can add multiple Amazon products to the cart before proceeding to buy them on Amazon. The shopping cart links also enable a 90-day cookie on Amazon compared with the standard 24-hour cookie given with normal Amazon affiliate links. ExtendAzon was actually the first Amazon plugin on the market that let affiliates tap into their shopping cart system and the 90-day cookie.

COLLEEN: You definitely have your finger on the pulse when it comes to not only plugin development for amazon marketers but also being a successful amazon associate yourself. Have you ever done any marketing with Facebook with your Amazon sites and, if so, how did that go for you?

RYAN: I have done some Facebook marketing for my Amazon sites, although it is really something that I just started earlier this year. I've had great results so far, although I also feel like better results can be achieved with more work. My success with Facebook and Amazon involves running fan pages and/or Facebook groups relating to my website niche. It is an excellent way to help build a name for yourself in a specific niche, although it can also be time consuming because it can require a lot of attention to get something successful started on Facebook. As a result, I have really adopted Facebook as an additional marketing tool for my sites to simply help increase the free, targeted traffic they receive.

COLLEEN: Yes, Facebook definitely seems the rage now, there's no doubt that. Talking about traffic, what has been your best method for getting traffic and sales to your Amazon sites?

RYAN: Unique content and a unique perspective. Most people approach all niches the same way by just targeting the popular products in that niche and reviewing them. Instead of following this

standard behavior, I try to put myself in the shoes of the consumer. I'll ask myself, if I was interested in this product, what would I want to know about it? I then try to build my site around those ideas so the end result is actually a site that people want to visit.

COLLEEN: Yes, I agree with you there. I think I touched on that up above when I referred to looking at customer reviews. The more you know your buyers, the better you can presell them on Amazon products. I have personally seen Amazon sites sell for some niche chunks of change on sites like Flippa. Have you ever sold any Amazon sites and, if so, were you surprised at what they sold for?

RYAN: Yes, I've sold a number of my Amazon sites in the past. The actual dollar amount some sites have sold for has been surprising. However, it is often relational to the monthly income of a site. For example, I sold one site for \$3,000 that was exactly six weeks old. Considering it only took me four days to actually build that site, the income for my time invested was quite surprising. However, I have no doubt in my mind that particular website has made more than that amount since I sold it in 2010 because it is still sitting at the top of Google rankings today.

COLLEEN: That is quite astonishing, Ryan. I have seen sites go for thousands of dollars but not a six week old site that took just four days to build. It sounds like you have a compelling strategy when it comes to creating quality Amazon sites. Now I came to know you initially through your Amazon plugin development but in more recent times you have also started providing Amazon affiliate training. I imagine you would have a lot to teach, given that you have been an Amazon affiliate for what was it – nine years. Very few affiliates could say that. In October of 2013 you completed your Azon Home Study Course. What led you to create this training course?

RYAN: I have been helping others build Amazon affiliate sites since 2010. However, during that time, I never actually showed anyone exactly how I build my own sites. After years of receiving emails asking if I would ever show my personal strategies, I ended up deciding to create this course.

COLLEEN: There have been many courses released in the past few years related to Amazon. What do you think Azon Home Study Course brings to the fore, compared to Amazon products that have come before it?

RYAN: Most other Amazon courses I have seen simply teach people a single strategy that they can use with Amazon sites. Often those strategies will focus on a particular method of driving traffic to those sites. With my course, I teach everything about the entire site building process starting with research, then building the site, and finally marketing. Ultimately, I could've broken this class into 12 or more separate products, but I wanted trainees to get all of the information they need and not just part of it. Someone that knows nothing about marketing, Amazon or even building websites could take my course and learn everything they need to know to build profitable sites.

COLLEEN: I have seen the videos myself, Ryan, and I am very impressed with the amount of detail that you have put into each video. I'm used to seeing these quick, short videos that go for just a few minutes but not you :O). Is Azon Home Study Course especially for beginners or those with more experience -- or perhaps both?

RYAN: It is really intended for both. All of the essential information for beginners is there, but it also includes in-depth training in many different areas that more experienced marketers can really benefit from. Beginners will be able to take the course and learn to build their first website with it,

but then they can return to the course later to implement some of the more advanced strategies. With that said, I feel like the course is something that can be continually used by almost any marketer for years to come.

COLLEEN: Yes, I have seen the content inside Azon Home Study Course and it covers everything from niche research, product research, site creation, facebook ads, site flipping and lots more. Azon Home Study Course was initially a live webinar series which I understand was very well received. What feedback did you receive from your students? What did they enjoy most about it?

RYAN: Yes, this training series was done via live webinars. The feedback I have received from the course has been amazing and very humbling. Most trainees from that class made a point to specifically tell me that I am a wonderful teacher and that my course was laid out and organized very well.

COLLEEN: Have you received any feedback regarding results some of your students have enjoyed after following what you teach in Azon Home Study Course?

RYAN: A number of complete beginners from the class have told me that they have been able to successfully build their first site, even without any prior knowledge of using WordPress. Even though many of these sites were just completed within the past couple of weeks, a lot of them already have great search engine rankings and are receiving daily traffic. I have also had a number of more experienced affiliates tell me that they were able to implement specific strategies of mine into the Amazon sites they already run to help increase their earnings and traffic. As more time passes and more of my students complete their first site, I expect to hear many more success stories.

COLLEEN: That's good feedback to receive, Ryan. What is actually included in your Azon Home Study Course?

RYAN: There are 12 classes in this training series. I provided students with an ebook guide that was between 20 and 40 pages long for each of those classes. This guide teaches my entire strategy and even includes screenshots. Although those guides could be used on their own to learn my strategy, they were really intended to be used along with each of the live classes. Each live class was 2-3 hours long. The live classes followed the material from the ebooks, although I often went into much more detail in the live instruction. All students in the class were provided with the 12 ebooks for the 12 live classes, and then they also received video recordings of all of those classes. On top of that, I also included five of my Amazon WordPress plugins that I use in the class to build my Amazon sites. This ensured that my students wouldn't need to buy anything else beyond a domain name and website hosting to be able to build successful Amazon sites.

COLLEEN: I understand your Azon Home Study Course practically sold out at \$497.

RYAN: Yes, that's correct. I actually ran the live class twice because there were so many people interested. In total, more than 120 people enrolled and completed my Azon Home Study Course. Despite the high price tag for that class, everyone thought it was worth many times that amount. I actually had a few students take the class twice because they enjoyed it so much the first time.

COLLEEN: That's an incredible result, given the initial price tag. I understand the live event is obviously closed now but is it possible to get access to Azon Home Study Course at a special price for my subscribers?

RYAN: Yes, the live event for my Azon Home Study Course is over. However, the same training material, software and recordings from my live class is now available as my Azon Home Study Course. Until the end of Cyber Monday (Dec 2nd), I'd be happy to offer your subscribers the Azon Home Study Course at a massive discount. I am even including three bonus training courses with the Azon Home Study Course. These bonus courses cover essential information like web hosting training, basic web design, WordPress theme training, and motivational training that I simply don't want any of my students to be without. The three additional courses are also recent training that I hosted for my students live. Those three courses cost \$197 to attend, but all Azon Home Study Course customers that buy before the end of Cyber Monday will receive them as free bonuses.

COLLEEN: That's an incredibly generous offer, Ryan, for you to share with me and I'm so grateful to be able to offer your series that was originally \$497 for a fraction of the course. And your additional bonuses that were \$197 make this a real no brainer, in my opinion. Can you provide a link to your special offer till the end of Cyber Monday (2 December)?

RYAN: Sure, Colleen. Here is your link to promote my [Azon Home Study Course](#). It will go live 10am EST on 29 November 2013.

COLLEEN (TO MY READERS): *Well, everyone, there you have it. Some real gems in just these few pieces of paper....I personally have not met someone, as far as I'm aware, who has been doing amazon marketing for as long as Ryan. Nine years is a very long time and Ryan's Azon Home Study Course is the most in depth course on Amazon that I have EVER seen as far as tutorials go.*

*Now, as Ryan indicated, he has decided to hold a [Black Friday sale](#) which means you can save an incredible 95% on his Azon Home Study Course. Plus if you become a member before the 2nd of December you will also receive three additional training courses absolutely free (this also was \$197 for others to access)that's **a saving of \$647.00** for you today.*

Now one of Ryan's favourite niches is the home niche and niches related to it so I have a very valuable bonus for you today. Not only will you save \$647 on Ryan's courses but you will also save on research because I've already done it for you :O).

My Exclusive Bonus Just For You :O)

MY RESEARCH DONE FOR YOU #1 – AMAZON.COM

TOP 100 RESEARCH IN THE HOME AND KITCHEN MAIN CATEGORY

- ✓ Top 100 Bestsellers
- ✓ Top 100 Top Rated
- ✓ Top 100 Hot New Releases
- ✓ Top 100 Movers And Shakers
- ✓ Top 100 Most Wished For
- ✓ Top 100 Most Gifted

HOME AND KITCHEN SUB CATEGORIES:

Top 100 research for the following categories:

- ✓ Top 100 Bestsellers
- ✓ Top 100 Top Rated
- ✓ Top 100 Hot New Releases
- ✓ Top 100 Movers And Shakers
- ✓ Top 100 Most Wished For
- ✓ Top 100 Most Gifted

Bath

Bedding

Cleaning Supplies

Furniture

Heating, Cooling, Air Quality

Home Decor

Irons & Steamers

Kids Home Store

Kitchen & Dining

Seasonal Decor

Storage And Organization

Vacuums And Floor Care

Wall Decor

MY RESEARCH DONE FOR YOU #2 – AMAZON.COM

Research into the top Bedding brands in the US:

- Bed-in-a-bag
- Blanco Bedding
- Blowout Bedding
- Egyptian Bedding
- pearlbedding
- sheetsnthings
- sweet jojo designs

MY RESEARCH DONE FOR YOU #3 – AMAZON.CO.UK

TOP 100 RESEARC IN THE HOME MAIN CATEGORY

- ✓ Top 100 Bestsellers
- ✓ Top 100 Hot New Releases
- ✓ Top 100 Movers & Shakers
- ✓ Top 100 Most Gifted
- ✓ Top 100 Most Wished For

TOP 100 RESEARCH IN THE FOLLOWING HOME SUB CATEGORIES:

Accessories And Spare Parts

Arts And Crafts

Homeware And Furniture

Kitchen And Dining

Kitchen And Home Appliances

Large Appliances

MY RESEARCH DONE FOR YOU #4 – AMAZON.CO.UK

Research into the following top bedding brands in the UK:

- Catherine Lansfield
- Bedding Online
- Linens Limited
- Homemaker Bedding
- Viceroybedding
- Dreamscene
- Belledorm

This is truly an incredible amount of research and a value packed bonus if you choose to do Ryan's Amazon Home Study Course. It's in one of his favourite niches. It is also one of the niches that Ryan delves right into in his course. So you really will have a valuable advantage over any other members and will help you fast track your success with it.

Here's all you need to do to get it:

[Click on this link](#) to **save 95% on Ryan's Amazon Home Study Course.**

Log into your JVzoo account; click on my purchases; click on Amazon Home Study Course and you will see my bonus right on that page for you to download :O).

Lots of love, Colleen xxx