

What could a travel enthusiast, director and published author teach you about blogging and making money online that you can't find elsewhere?

Little known secrets? The “push a button” magical formula that makes people rich overnight?

Find out next in my interview with [Andy Hayes](#) ...



**Please introduce yourself to our readers...**

I'm Andy Hayes, the Managing Director of Travel Online Partners (TOP), the go-to resource for small businesses in travel and tourism for help with online marketing. When not working on TOP I'm also working on my online travel magazine and writing articles – I'm a published author. I'm based in Edinburgh but travel quite a lot, enjoying the entrepreneurial lifestyle!

**When, how and why did you get started with blogging @ [TravelOnlinePartners.com](#) ?**

Travel Online Partners began well over a year and a half ago, but we relaunched under the TOP branding back in October. The services began to grow and just needed their own distinct brand apart from the rest of my businesses and activities. The purpose was simple: to give small tourism businesses a single place to find the resources they need to be more successful. We do that with our one-on-one support services, but more importantly our popular series of eLearning digital products and the blog.

**How long did it take you to get you to where you are now, and what would you say to our readers who are already tired and frustrated of not seeing any results from their blogging?**

Patience is a virtue. Really, it is.

Our current blog is only six months old now but we've benefitted from taking along with us those customers from the previous list, so we had a big head start. It's a long journey ahead still.

If you aren't seeing the results you want, keep in mind what Seth Godin says in his book The Dip: If you're in the dip, you can't quit. Unless you can put together some clear facts to decide your future is bleak, then you can't quit. "I've been at it a month and it isn't working" is a not good enough reason. You only win when you outlast the competition.

**What are the TOP areas I should concentrate on in affiliate blogging?**

Well, you should have a plan and a strategy for where you are headed. You need to develop a set of affiliate products that are a great fit for your ideal reader. Perhaps some higher priced and lower priced products, or other combination that fits the primary customer needs you plan to fill.

Work on having something of clear value to your reader first, then focus on getting more readers.

**Do you have a formula for attracting traffic to [TravelOnlinePartners.com](#) and your other blog [SharingTravelExperiences.com](#) ?**

Our take is to have a multi-pronged approach:

- Organic SEO
- Social Bookmarking (Stumbleupon & Digg)
- Social Media (Twitter & Facebook)

You need to have multiple approaches to ensure both short term and long term results. Remember: if it's too easy, then it's probably too good to be true.

**What would you say is the one most important thing you've learned about blogging?**

You need to have a VERY clear picture of your reader. Give him/her a name. And write as if they're sitting next to you. That picture of the person should drive everything you do, from the types of products you choose to the way you explain things.

**What's the biggest mistake you made getting started in affiliate blogging?**

Not practicing patience.

Remember, in traditional terms, a customer would have to see your advertisement up to 20 times before realizing you sell something. What makes you think that slapping up a blog post means people will spend hundreds of dollars?

**So how do you make money online with your blogs and what are the best ways to monetize a blog short and long-term?**

Our consumer-facing blog is a combination of services (i.e. travel concierge) and digital products (i.e. how to earn airline miles). Our B2B blog is only digital products, but we ensure varying layers – both beginner and advanced products, as well as audio and video.

Short term earnings are a matter of luck – you can't expect to hang up your shingle one day and be rich the next. Focus on good products and a welcoming environment that will keep your visitors coming back.

**What's your experience with readers comment approval so far and how important is to listen to your audience?**

I don't find the amount of comments as a valuable measurement in many cases. Gauge your audience – for example, if you're in the weight loss area, people might feel embarrassed to comment. On our business blog, our ideal customer is quite busy, so comments aren't a priority. Though I am often surprised what is popular and what isn't.

It is very important to reply to anyone who comments – I see a lot of people who don't. It is disrespectful to the reader and encourages others to *not* leave comments.

**What's your list building experience so far – what did you learn from getting readers onto your newsletter @ [Inspiration](#) and interacting with them? Do you have any list building plans for the near future?**

The list building has gone a lot better than I had experienced; email is a far better direct marketing channel, and we have very high open rates and conversions because we treat readers with respect and have high quality, highly targeted products, so we don't have to hard sell them.

Building the lists is mostly related to building traffic; we have some good enticements to join the list, so we think that will be effective in the future. We also make sure that our offer is clear and relevant to keep unsubscribes low.

Thank you for sharing your affiliate blogging advice with us!

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Bye for now.



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