

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

Heather Vale: I'm Heather Vale, partner of Codrut Turcanu, for [ClickBank Affiliate Confessions](#)... Today I'm speaking with James Martell from British Columbia, Canada, author of the [Affiliate Marketer's Handbook](#). First of all James, for those who don't know already, could you give us a brief background of yourself and your websites?

James Martell: Yes, you bet Heather, basically I've been on the internet since 1999 in the world of affiliate programs. Self taught, I actually discovered it when a friend of mine walked through my door at my home office in Abbotsford, B.C which is in the central Fraser Valley just east of Vancouver. I live on the west coast. I live in a little seaside community with my wife and four kids, and have been making a full time income with affiliate programs ever since. I have somewhere, I think I'm just about at 100 websites that I've built over the last seven years, I've been through seven, what I call online shopping seasons. I'm really fond of the Christmas season because that's when obviously retail, and a lot of people are spending money online. So, I've had a chance to watch it for years now as it's grown and evolved.

Heather: Before we start, I'd like to just clear up a little curiosity. Most people, by the time they get to this interview will already have heard the one with Rosalind Gardiner and they might notice that you're both super affiliates who have written your own handbooks, and you're both from British Columbia, Canada.

James: Quite a coincidence, huh?

Heather: Any connection there?

James: Actually there's not. You know, I've never actually met her, met Rosalind. I know she lives in the interior BC, she's probably about four hours from here, and I know she made... her business is basically in the area of paid search, Pay per Click, and she's done extremely well. I've heard good things about her training and her book, and just another fellow Canadian, fellow British Columbian.

Heather: OK, so you mentioned your friend walking into your office, but how exactly did that spark you to want to get started with affiliate marketing in general, and then why [ClickBank](#)?

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

James: Well at the time, I was running a telecommunications company, small little phone company in the Valley, and we were doing quite well, but deregulation of the industry was kicking into gear, but at the time we were, we were already used to earning a very good income through a subscriber base where people would pay us to access our server. So we were used to getting monthly checks in the mail, you know we would get, we would get a couple thousand subscribers, every month we'd get a check. They weren't a lot of money but they were 15, 20 bucks times, you know a couple thousand people added up, and when deregulation was looming, we knew our business was basically going to end because soon as they opened up the area to a toll free long distance calling area, our service would become obsolete. So when a friend of mine walked into my office and he was showing me a little website that he had built, he really got my attention because I was looking at the site he had built, and at that point he was giving away free internet access. And I was curious as to why would you build a website for somebody else, to give away their service for free. I mean what's the deal here? And then he explained to me they were paying him, \$4 for every subscriber that he would send from his site to their site if they would, you know, fill out the form and hit submit, he would make four bucks. I was like, you got to teach me how to do this. And that was basically my introduction into it. I was into a business that was going away, I was definitely hungry for something else. I wanted something I could build where you know, you kind of do the work once and then the income would continue. So that was basically my forte, he was kind enough to do so, he taught me how to do it. Built my first site, things were going extremely well, ran right into the dotcom crash. So after about, I don't know I guess it was about six months, we were up to around \$5000 a month, earning money from affiliate programs. I hadn't discovered [ClickBank](#) at that point yet. But we were just running with some of the other programs, with credit cards and satellite TV and long distance services, different sites. We were just kind of figuring it out, how to go, we were still kind of in that area, is this for real? You know, when the dotcom crash, all the companies that were giving away free services such as free internet access, I don't know if you recall those days, Heather, when there was a lot of companies out there, they would give you, if you would subscribe to their service, you could get free internet access, and the catch was, you would log on and you would be displayed with a bunch of banner ads. And when the dotcom crash came, anybody

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

and everything that was giving away for free, pretty much went away along with the incomes. So at that point, I had to make a decision. Was kind of like, what we just did there, was that for real? Can we do this again? So I started looking around, and this is when I needed to come up with some new services, something else that I could offer. Because I had a feeling this industry was going to go, and keep thinking back this was 1999, so there really wasn't... [Google](#), you know I didn't even know of [Google](#) at the point, and it was, we were back to the search engines like [Excite](#) and [AltaVista](#) and [Webcrawler](#). Remember those?

Heather: Yeah, I do now that you mention them, I haven't heard them in years.

James: Yeah, most of them... I guess they're still there but you know, it's so dominated by other players now, that's how we kind of forget. But it was... I remember getting my first email account, so that's kind of the time, just to kind of put it in perspective. So there was a lot of, my wife's mother, my mother in law, was asking you know, is this legal? You know, was this for real? Can we really? Where are these checks coming from? So we started building more sites so we got into like as I said, satellite TV and credit cards and long distance services, and then from there we just kept going. It's been an amazing, amazing ride.

Heather: So how much do you make now, just as a [ClickBank](#) affiliate? Not as a vendor, not as affiliate for all the other programs that you do?

James: [ClickBank](#), I am around 3700 a month, not huge but nice.

Heather: What kind of proportion would that be of your overall affiliate commissions?

James: Oh, a small percentage. Smaller percentage. Yeah, we've got now, just because we've continued to build sites, year after year and you know, the nice thing about the net is you get this kind of layering effect, so once you learn how to build one site and you kind of set it loose, and let it do its thing and then you can build another one. So they all earn a little bit, but the collected whole, once you add it all up, you start to really see some decent income. I meant that's... the whole

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

affiliate business has completely changed my life. I mean we now, we live in a beautiful 4500 square foot home. We live in a very nice neighborhood. We travel every six to eight weeks, I've been, you know, I took my wife and kids to Disneyworld for ten days and then off to a ten day Caribbean cruise all in the same trip. We did Disneyland. We travel all over the place. And it's just been, it's been, it's been amazing. I mean I bought my, about 18 months ago, two years ago I guess now, I've always had this dream of buying, you know every guy pretty much, and a lot of girls have this car that they always want to have. So I've had the opportunity a couple of years ago to phone my accountant and say, you know what, I think, can I actually afford to buy this now? And I went out and I bought a 19... I actually had it hand built, I don't know if anybody watches this overhauling or one of these shows where you see these guys build cars from the ground up. I built a 1965 Shelby Cobra. And all thanks to you know, [ClickBank](#) and these types of programs where you can just earn income off the net. It's been unbelievable. In fact I even built a website for the car. For the car called [65cobra.com](#) for anybody that wants to have a peek, just click on the editor's button and you can go see a link to the car.

Heather: Cool.

James: It's the real deal.

Heather: So how much do you think it's possible to make as a [ClickBank](#) affiliate?

James: Oh, I don't think there's... I mean realistically for somebody to make a nice part time income, 500 to a thousand bucks very easy. You know to get into a full time income, I don't know 2500 to 5000 if they were to, you know, learn how to do it. That's one of the things that people need to do. This can be learned. So what I always tell people is to get in, set your goals, maybe your first goal. I mean my first goal was around 100 bucks a day. Because I figured oh, if I can make a hundred bucks a day, I could really go. And when I hit a \$100 a day, I changed it to \$200 a day. And then I moved it up to, and then I just started, up it went, I changed it from, you know, from there to 30,000 a month which at the point was just unbelievable. I could never believe it, and when I hit it, I changed that goal again. So it's really, depending on what people bring to the table, people have a lot of different skill sets, so if they're comfortable with computers and

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

they're used to surfing the net and they can follow instructions, they can quite easily earn a full time income. Now once you've learned how to do that once, because you get that kind of layering effect that I talked about, you can just build another site, and you can just continue to build upon it, so it's really, you know I've got... I know people that make, I mean astronomical amounts of money.

Heather: How long did it take you to reach each of those milestones, from 100 a day to 200 a day to 1000 a day?

James: You know what, I remember sitting in a New Year's Eve dinner in the end of 1998. And there was all this talk of the internet, it's like internet, internet, internet, dotcom, dotcom and I had nothing to do with it at the time and the conversation over New Year's, you know how everybody gets into this mindset, New Year's, they're going to set their resolution for the new year and their new goals, well that kind of came up. And one of the things that somebody at the table said was, you know, if we're not making a couple of hundred bucks a day on the internet by the end of this coming year, which would have been '99, we're sleeping. Like, we're not even paying attention. So, I started looking for things and I came across all kinds of gimmicky little scammy things, and I was just kind of looking and looking and when Shawn walked through my door, in... it would have been in the summer of '99, my first check which would have been end of September was around 5000 bucks, \$5500 U.S. But I really got at it and I got after it, what I... I actually teach people how to do this as well and what I usually teach people to do is, it's always the first few months is kind of this grey area, where you don't know if it's going to work and you're hoping and your, maybe your wife or your husband is looking at you, are you crazy, what are you doing spending all this time on the computer? You know, I don't know what you're doing, is it legal? And then, away it goes. In fact, I've seen so many stories. Usually though, I would say realistically, if somebody were to get after it within three to six months, they should be doing, they should be, you know, they should start to see some success.

Heather: So before we go into the details of the various tactics that you use, what are they in a nutshell?

James: Personally, I'm pretty much a natural search guy, and for those, that might be a little bit of a new word to, when you go to

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

[Google](#) and you do a search, you get the result down the front left hand side of the page, those are natural search results. And then on the right hand side of the page, you get paid search results. Rosalind builds her business learning how to do paid search, I built my business learning how to do natural search. Both work. I like natural search because if you know how to get the traffic for free, I figure you might as well get the traffic for free, so if you can get to the top of the list in [Google](#), pretty much doesn't matter what you're selling, you've got an audience just because the search engine is so powerful, and now with [Yahoo](#) and [MSN](#) coming on the scene. So essentially what I do is I find products from a company like [ClickBank](#), I say OK, I like this product. For example, I recently bought a hip replacement site, which doesn't normally sound like a typical affiliate program, but it actually is because in [ClickBank](#), there's a product, there's a company there called [VitalityHouse.com](#) and it's just a little e-book, it's just a 19.99, sorry 19.95 product that teaches people a little course on how to help, you know resolve, you know at least get some relief from maybe your back or hip problems. So I'll build a nice little website. I used a company on the internet to help me write where I find people where I can get low cost writers. Company called [Elance](#). And then I find a guy that'll write me articles about hip replacement, I publish them on the website. I refer to this book as a solution to maybe solve their, some of their pain problems, and then I get paid for every one of those that are sold. I get a percentage of the commission.

Heather: When you're picking [ClickBank](#) products, how do you decide first of all what niche you're going to focus on, and second of all, how do you pick a good product?

James: I usually do it a couple of ways. Either if I'm looking to build a new site, which I do quite often, I will, before I decide on the topic, I will go find the product. So and I like, I used to just build sites because it looked like I could make a bunch of money with it. And that's still a good strategy. But I find it's much more interesting now to find something that you're interested in. So what I do typically, the reason my hip replacement site came in to being is a friend of mine has got a serious hip problem and he was going in to have hip replacement surgery, and he couldn't find any information on the internet which was written in layman's terms, so everything was written by doctors and a lot of doctor language, and very complicated and very technical. And I figured, you know what, I bet you I can go

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

find you a few products around this, and I bet you I could find a writer who knows the industry so I went to [ClickBank](#), I found that product and a couple of others, and this is more of a health site, you know kind of boosts your immunity type of thing. And then we went to town to build the hip site. So what I did, I've got a very simple little formula I've devised, years ago now to, how to construct a very low cost inexpensive website, that I can now display these merchants on. So what happens is, in the early days, I used to do all the writing myself because I really couldn't afford to hire writers, but now there's a company out there called [Elance.com](#) where you can actually contract with low cost writers who are looking to, you know, make a little extra money writing content. So what I did, I posted a project on [Elance](#), hey, I want to write a website about hip replacement. Well, lo and behold I get a student, a doctor whose just finished up his residency, who was looking to earn some extra money who was dealing with hip patients as we spoke. So he ended up writing me 100 articles for \$5 a piece. Beautiful, well written articles, and next thing you know, I've got a website.

Heather: Cool.

James: And it doesn't make a whole bunch of money. It only makes you know, 15, 20, 25 bucks a day. So we're not talking that it's a home run, but you know what, if you get enough of those types of sites you're a pretty happy guy.

Heather: So when you're going into [ClickBank](#) and you're picking, for instance those health products, how do you know if it's a good product to promote?

James: You know what I use to search, to source the hip, sorry the [ClickBank](#) products, I use a little website, I don't know who owns it or anything about it but it's called [CBmall](#), you familiar with that?

Heather: Yeah.

James: [ClickBank Mall](#), I think it's short for. I go in there, I look through it, obviously I want to have a quality, a lot of it you know is information type products, so I'm looking for a quality product that's obviously, there's the difference types of e-books that's on the market, there's the guy who wrote the e-book on the weekend. And then

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

there's the guy who wrote the e-book that you could tell he spent, you know 2 or 3 or 4 weeks on it, or a month or two, and he's done a really nice job. That's the product that I want. I also have a look at the website that's selling it. I want to see that the website is clean, that they've got good creative, that means you know, when I send a visitor from my website to that website, what are the chances of that visitor converting from just a visitor into a paying customer who buys that product so I can get a commission? So I look at that type of thing, and I just get a general feel for the overall product. You know it's not, I don't do a lot in the area of, I know a lot of people are out there they measure all kinds of things. I'm actually more of just providing quality information with a click to a merchant, and then when they hit the merchant which is the [ClickBank](#) merchant, there's a good opportunity for a sale.

Heather: Do you ever buy the products yourself to read them and stuff?

James: All the time. All the time. If it's quality. And I like the old money back guarantee. That's one thing I always look for. I look for things like secure shopping cart, which is obviously what [ClickBank](#) does, provides a secure shopping cart for the merchant. I also look for... I try to put myself in the mindset of somebody who may have never ever purchased anything online. You know, they may be a little tentative. Does this site look credible? You know, is there a money back guarantee? Do they have any, you know you can see a lot of these little security, if you go to some sites now, they've just done a really good job of settling that visitor down and gaining their trust. So I'm always on the lookout for that type of thing.

Heather: So the typical niche website that you're building, is it going to have reviews of that product or just, here's my articles and here's a link if you want something else.

James: No, typically reviews. Typically reviews. Typically we'll take the topic and we'll thoroughly examine it. We'll develop a keyword list around it, we will look at the, for those that may not be aware of what a keyword list is, there's services and tools out there that we can use to figure out what people are searching for prior to building the website, and once we have this list of words that we already know people are looking for, then we can develop the site around that. So

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

when somebody goes to [Google](#) and does a search for a particular keyword phrase that relates to that merchant, that [ClickBank](#) merchant that we're representing, then we've got a good opportunity to come up to the top of the list, and then depending on what the keyword is in the keyword list, sometimes drives what that page is about. So I'll take a keyword list, so let's say I had a hundred keywords around the word "hip replacement". So then I'll take a look at the words, and if there's a word like "hip replacement surgery". OK now, if somebody was going to [Google](#), [Yahoo](#), or [MSN](#) and they were typing in the word "hip replacement surgery", what are they thinking? Well chances are they're probably scared. They're probably in pain. They're probably worried. They're probably tired of being in pain and so I'll take that word "hip replacement surgery" and we'll sit down and we'll really think about, OK what's this guy's, what's the deal here? And then we'll come up with a nice article, review or whatever would be best suited for that particular keyword. If somebody is looking for a keyword like "hip replacement after care", which is after the surgery, OK, that person's thinking a little bit differently. He's already been through the surgery, so then we would create a page around what that person is thinking about. While all the same time, obviously keeping the merchant in mind, because our article, review, whatever we decide to write on that page, will lead through to the merchant which would be the recommended product that would solve that visitor's problem.

Heather: What are the tools that you use to come up with that keyword list?

James: I use a few. I use probably the industry leader is [Wordtracker](#), [Wordtracker.com](#). I've used them since they came out on the scene, probably 2001. I use another tool called [NicheBot.com](#) which is kind of a version of [Wordtracker](#) but it's free. So if somebody wants to do a nice little keyword report, or just go try it, go to [NicheBot.com](#). And I also use a tool at Google, called the [Google Sandbox](#). If you go to [Google](#) and do a search for [Google Sandbox](#), you'll get a little tool that Google supplies, you can type a word in and it will give you all the words that relate to it, so those are pretty much my big three.

Heather: So once you have your pages, and you've made keyword dense articles, what's the next step to actually getting the traffic to your site through the search engines?

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

James: And that's the million dollar question. If we can answer that, and I can, and if we can get to the top of the list for those keywords, we're doing great because until traffic happens, we don't make anything. So essentially what we do is we focus on, there's really two components of getting to the top of the list in natural search. One is quality content, on your site. This would be like an onsite topic, so you need to develop very good quality content because search engines are very smart these days, they understand words and their relationships towards words, and the old days of just slapping a page together and getting to the top of the list is over. So you have to focus on quality, that's number one. Number two is inbound links, and an inbound link is another website owner linking from their site to your site. So what happens is a search engine like [Google](#) or [Yahoo](#) or [MSN](#), part of their algorithm is determined by, and the algorithm is the mathematical formula that they use to determine who should be where in the search results. Part of their algorithm, and the major part of it, is who is linking to you? So if you've got a nice little site about, you know, hip replacement, they will look at what other websites are linking to you, and every site that links to you is basically a vote for your site because why would a webmaster link to you if you didn't have something worth linking to, and they look at the quality of those sites that are linking to you. So if you've got a hip replacement type website that's selling, that's recommending a book about back pain, it would be nice if the other websites that link to you were doctor sites and medical sites and sites that make sense. So basically quality content and quality inbound links. It's really all it takes.

Heather: So how do you get those other quality sites to link to you?

James: A variety of techniques. In the old days, we used to do what was called link partnering, where I would contact a webmaster who was similar in topic and I would just recommend, I would just suggest why don't we swap links? And we ran with that technique for years. It worked very well. Last probably 12 to 18 months, that's not working so well anymore, and what I did, was I developed a brand new strategy called the PAD technique, which is short for Professional Article Distribution. And now what I do, very simply is, I'll have a nice little article written about hip replacement, and I'll offer it to another webmaster where it would make sense for that article to be on his website. And in that article is a couple of links back to my site. And it works, it's actually far superior to the old link partner games we used

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

to play. It provides quality content to the other webmaster, and on the net, quality content is king, and it provides me with the inbound links, so if I go and distribute ten articles to ten other websites, each with two links back to my site, now I've got 20 inbound links to my site. Problem solved.

Heather: Do you ever submit any of those articles as well to article directories so that any site can post it?

James: Yes and no. Article directories are good, if they're used correctly. Meaning if you had a list... I've got a list of 27 article directories that I use, and what a lot of guys are doing out there is they'll go out and they'll write an article and then they'll distribute that article to all 27. Then they also, they've got 27 inbound links, or 27 articles linking back to their site, and what happens is that will trigger a duplicate content penalty at the search engines. So what happens is all those 27 articles no longer have any effect at all. Except you might get some click-throughs from those websites. So the better way around that is to take those 27, article directories are reasonably easy to find, just do a [Google](#) search for article directory. And you hand pick maybe 20 really nice ones, you write one unique article for each directory, and then you distribute it to each of those. And you try and find directories that are not blasting your articles out all over the net. Because that... from a duplicate penalty point of view, it just doesn't serve you. So two ways, I use the PAD technique, I'll hand approach a webmaster directly and give him an article, if I'm going to use article directories which I do, I only send one article per directory. One unique article to each directory.

Heather: And I guess the next step after that is submitting your sites to the search engines. What's the right way to do that?

James: The best way is to actually, is to let the search engine find you, and what happens is if you've got other websites linking to you, especially quality ones, that the search engines already know about, the next time the search engine spider visits that website, and the spider is just a little software program that goes out and scurries around the internet, chasing down links, imagine this little program running around out there. The second it finds another website with a link to you, it will crawl down that link and it will find you, and there you are. And next thing you know, next thing comes around, they've

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

found you, there's no need to submit to them. You can speed up the process sometimes if it's a brand new site, I'll use a service called SelfPromotion.com and it's another free service and it's run by a gentleman named Robert Woodhead, I trust him, he's been around for years and years and years. I recommended him in my first book, I still do and he, what he does, is he stays on top of all the directories and he's kind of plugged into that end of the industry, so he's a good resource. Just kind of a way to kickstart, you know, the submission process, so...

Heather: Now, you've mentioned that the techniques have changed over the years, but how easy is it to get natural search engine ranking today compared to, say 1999?

James: It's different, and it's not necessarily different. And there's a lot of confusion out there right now because of the changes. And I guess the best way to say it is there's really three things going on, in fact I can even say this myself. I've got three types of websites. I've got the sites I built years ago, some of them do OK, some of them... when I say OK, I'm talking on Google now. Some of them, although they look OK, I can't find them on the top 400 search results. Those sites were not heavily, it was early in my career, they're not, there's not a lot of good content on them. And there's not a lot of good inbound links. You take a look at the other side to today, you take a look at some of my sites that are very well constructed, that have good quality content and good quality inbound links that rank top of the list, those ones are doing good and the old ones are doing bad, and I've looked at the two side by side, to see what's the difference. The difference is quality. And what's happening and one of the reasons some people are having challenges getting back to the top of the list, some of the older guys, is because they're kind of straddling the old and the new, they're kind of caught in this time warp where they think they're kind of maybe doing it the right way but they're still actually doing a lot of the old techniques. So they're stuck in the middle. Where it's easier now is to take a brand new person who doesn't have the old habits and have them go through the process of building a site, the new way, without any of the baggage of the past. For those guys it's much easier. But where the guys that are having problems are, is the ones that haven't been able to let go of the old habits.

Heather: What are those old habits that they haven't let go of?

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

James: Link partner gathering as the only method of gathering inbound links to a site. Not focusing on quality content, focusing on adding pages just for the sake of adding pages and not focusing on that visitor, not serving the needs of the person that's found their website. [Google](#) has, [Google](#) now uses very advanced language algorithms that they understand relationships between words. If you have an article written about, here's a good example. I live in White Rock B.C., we live on the west coast, and there's a little marine drive about five minutes away from my place, and there's a little row of restaurants. And there's a little place down there, and this is what, if you can picture this, this is the way we used to build articles and guys who've been around it, maybe listening to this, will probably be able to relate to this. We would develop a keyword list, we would create a keyword. OK, Charlie Don't Surf, that's a restaurant down the beach, so let's pretend we were going to write an article about Charlie Don't Surf in the old days. So in the old days we wouldn't go there. We would just kind of figure it out OK, Charlie Don't Surf and we would write this beautiful article that used the word Charlie Don't Surf in the headline and we'd place it in the proper paragraphs through the article, and we would talk very generally about maybe it's a nice place for dinner, and probably not a lot of meat to the article. That's the old way. The new way is, if you're going to write an article about Charlie Don't Surf, it probably would be best to go there, and if you went there and you had a pen and pad in hand, you would quickly see that it's directly across from the train station, so you would make a note of that. It's just west of the White Rock pier. It's ten minutes from the US border, it's 45 minutes from downtown Vancouver, so you'd be gathering up this information. It has a beautiful patio outside and a gorgeous awning. And it's surrounded by flower boxes. You walk inside, there's a beautiful fire place, there's memorabilia of all the old movies, like Laurel and Hardy and all kinds of the old movie stars of the days gone by. There's an amazing menu and they serve steak and lobster, the staff is great. If you were there, you might ask the customers for a little testimonial, you might you know put a bug in the ear of the owner, saying you're writing an article, get him to provide a little content for you, and then you'd say OK, well while I'm here, I've got my camera, I might as well take a picture. And you'd snap that photo, and off you'd go with that little bit of research that would have took you 5 minutes, 10 minutes and now you would write an article. The first one I described with no content was the old way. The second

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

way, is the way it has to be done, which is the way it probably should have been done in the beginning, but we just didn't know any better. And the guys that are still doing the old article with no research and no content are failing, the guys that have grasped that, "hey, we'd better actually focus on creating some quality information here," they're singing.

Heather: Are your little niche sites in your own name or are they completely anonymous?

James: No, they're in my own name. They used to be anonymous. There was a time where we used to do that, because we wanted to, one of the things we used to do was build a website and then build another website and link to it, so we would get an inbound link. Interestingly enough the search engines are far past that now, they understand... I went to a search engine conference last fall down in Las Vegas called [PubCon](#). And one of the search engine engineers there, his name is Matt Cutts, and he is the senior [Google](#) engineer, and he was, he did a very interesting presentation where he asked the audience, part of the presentation is, "let me show you, does anybody in the room here want me to evaluate their website?" So one guy puts up his hand, sure, sure, pick me. So he took the guy's website address, put it up on the big screen on the net in front of 400 people, and he said before you, before you tell me about your site, let me tell you about your site. He says, it's been online since this date. He says, it's owned by this company. But he says, hang on just a minute here, I can see you own all these other companies as well, and they're linking to this site, and I can see... and he basically took the whole guy's life in two seconds and he understood everything about this guy, all the companies he owned, all the little games that were being played, where he was doing things that were not, you know, in the good books of [Google](#), and next thing you know, the guy's like OK, OK, OK, and then Matt goes, "anybody else want me to evaluate their site?" Nobody. So the old days of hiding things is gone. You have to do it legitimately. The old way, that would be again, that would be another of these little things the way we used to do it, and the way we do it now.

Heather: How could he tell so quickly that all those links were from the same company, because they were on the same server?

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

James: No he's got a little tool in his laptop that probably the search engine does as well. and what they do is they do a "who is" look up and they've just got... "who is" would be where you registered your domain name, and they've just got access to the data, they're out there spidering the planet, and they just compile it and they just know. It was amazing. It was stunning. The place was silent and this was a room full of senior guys. Breathtaking. So it was an awakening for me, because it was just one of those little reminders that there is no, there is a right way to do this and there's a wrong way to do this. And to do it right is not any harder than to do it wrong. In fact the competition right now, a lot of them are gone because they didn't know how to react to these changes over the last 12 months, which has kind of cleared the playing field a little bit, I hate to say it. But it's provided an amazing opportunity for a lot of us that are still here because it's actually easier now, if you know what to do.

Heather: So if we've got a newbie who wants to build a site quickly and easily, what's the best way for them to do that?

James: Well, there's a few ways to do it. One of the little pieces of software that I used to use, and I recently changed but it's still a very nice little piece of software is [FrontPage](#), [Microsoft FrontPage](#). And we've used that for years to build all kinds of sites. And I've taught students how to use [FrontPage](#) since 2001. And it's a nice little tool, but fast forward to today, because there are some new types of site builders out there. There's one online called [EZ-webbuilder.com](#) and it's a cool little tool, it's something that I came across probably about three or four months ago, that a friend of mine actually owns the license to it, up in this area in Vancouver here. It's an amazing little service. 29.95 a month, they give you a ten day free trial, you go on and play with it and kind of get the feel of the whole thing, see how it works. There's other tools out there, use blogging software that's becoming more and more popular. That's another way. I'm not much of a blogger at this point because I've got kind of my little system that I follow. But I would say mostly, probably an online site builder, something like [EZ-webbuilder.com](#) is probably the best way, especially for a new person. Not that, saying a new person, that it's a substandard service because I'm using it now myself, it's a very advanced service, but it's very simple to use. I actually just based my entire, the third edition of my [Affiliate Marketer's Handbook](#) on that new site builder because it's so powerful.

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

Heather: So besides getting the natural traffic, what other tools do you use? Anything like opt-in lists?

James: I do some opt-in, not a lot, I do... I'm starting to dabble in the area of paid searches which is where Rosalind is. I actually have met a student of mine who's in the natural search area who's actually an expert in paid search. He lives in Perth, Australia. You got to love the net, I ran into them at one of the conferences, and he's an expert with [Google AdWords](#), and he's been kind of giving me the lay of the land. So I'm starting to get a lot of traffic through paid search, which is a new thing. I don't do a lot of list building at present with my affiliate sites, although I might, I might start to move into that area a little. I'm not really convinced. I think people are getting enough email. People are sick of email. I'm sick of it. Everybody I talk to is sick of it. I know there's money to be made with it. It's just not something I've needed to do, or really I'm not interested in at this point.

Heather: So once you get the traffic to your websites, what's your sales conversion ratio like?

James: You know, it's all over the map. It depends completely on how good a job I've done with, you know, getting targeted traffic to my site, but it also is completely, in direct relationship to how well that merchant produces, you know converts my visitor I sent him into a sale, so I've got some sites that convert at nothing. And sites that convert up to 15, 20%. But typically you're probably looking at, you know it's probably not much different than anything else, probably around 2%, 3% when we're talking natural search here.

Heather: OK, now if you've already evaluated that vendor's sales page and you think it's pretty good and it converts at nothing, what do you do? Dump the product?

James: Yeah, if you know... I'm actually dealing with that right now, one of my sites, where I'm sending amazingly targeted very good traffic, and I've actually been on the phone, first thing I'll do is pick up the phone and call the merchant and see if we can figure out what's going on, whether it's something I'm doing or is it, are they dropping the ball. And one of the things that I'm doing now, that I actually never used to do, is I'm starting to really build relationships with the

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

merchants that are converting because you can usually increase your conversion rate. The ones... there are some dogs out there, no matter what you do, I don't know what it is, they just, they won't convert, those ones, it takes me two seconds to delete them from the site, another 10, 15 minutes to go in and find another one to replace them. So I'm a lot quicker to do that now than try and convince a merchant who's maybe not that interested in increasing his conversion rate, to finding one that actually is.

Heather: So you mentioned that the hip replacement one brings in, you know, 20 bucks a day or so, do you have any other [ClickBank](#) products that make more for you?

James: I have a few, I'm pretty... I've got a couple of sites that are based around earning income from the net. So they're keywords like "make money online", "earn extra income", "work from home", and any variation of those words. So there's a few products in [ClickBank](#) that I do like, I used to share my sites with people, I don't do that anymore, just because of competitive reasons, but let me just pull up one of my sites here. Again, I look for sites that are, for products that are, books that have not been quickly thrown together.

Heather: Do you look for the most popular ones or...

James: Sometimes. Sometimes. Like top of the list in [ClickBank](#) you mean, to see who's selling the most?

Heather: Yeah.

James: Yeah, I know there's a couple up there, a couple of the top ones right now are the ones like the [Rich Jerk](#). I don't actually market for him but it's a great marketing technique, I think the guy's hilarious. I mean talk about gutsy. "I'm a jerk, buy my book". And then I think Rosalind's pretty close to the top there. She's been doing well. I like to market a lot of the little tools, because I deal with a lot of webmasters who are looking for, you know, tips and techniques, little pieces of software that maybe they want to add a forum to their site and they want to add a little tool that will help them, you know, boost their rankings a little bit. Those type of things. Here's a classic one, I'm sorry, I'm not on my site, I just clicked through to one of these others, but here's, here's probably a good one, I'm on

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

BecomingAProfessionalOrganizer.com, ClickBank merchant.

"Comprehensive Start Up Business Kit to Becoming a Professional Organizer". Another thing I look for is a nice cover, a lot of guys will take the time and actually organize a nice cover for their book so people can have a look at the cover. It makes a representation that it is a book. One of the kind of complaints I have, one of the merchants, the VitalityHouse.com that I mentioned earlier, he's got a great site, it's a great product, he actually converts reasonably well, but he doesn't have a picture of the cover of the book, which would right off the bat increase the conversion rate, because now people, just by glancing at it they can say, oh, hey, this is the book.

Heather: What kind of commission level are you looking for?

James: That's an interesting question, especially with the ClickBank merchants because I don't necessarily look for the really high ticket ones. I know some guys are offering 70%, 50%. 50% seems to be about the norm, it's actually... it's very generous. I mean it's amazingly generous. For a guy like me to be able to go in and find a decent product in ClickBank. If a guy is going to pay me 50% of his total retail sale, think about that, that's amazing. You've got my attention, and if he's got a product that looks good and actually delivers to the consumer, so I don't get... I mean, even if it doesn't, it's going to feed back on me anyway. So we don't want that. But there's a lot of quality products in ClickBank. So if you dig through it and you find a guy who's paying you 30%, it's like, it's really a windfall. But even 25% is great, I mean think about it in a brick and mortar business, to have somebody, even in the sales business, offer you 25% commission of the full retail sale? That's unheard of, that's what's so amazing about the whole phenomenon of these digitally downloadable e-books on ClickBank. It's just... I've actually watched ClickBank grow from right back probably in 2001, because I was marketing a book on there a long time ago. So I was on the merchant side, and I didn't offer that. I think we only paid 20, 21%, we still attracted a lot of quality people that were looking to market that type of book. And it's really a gold mine. People go in to ClickBank and have a look around. It would probably be... if they haven't done so already, they'll be stunned and amazed at the opportunity in there for, you know, sales. It's unreal, for commissions.

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

Heather: Well, the cool thing too about the digital downloadable products is there's no overhead for the vendor, so they can afford to give the big commissions.

James: Absolutely.

Heather: When you're marketing, specifically in the marketing niche, the products we've been talking about most recently, how do you prevent your [ClickBank](#) ID from being stolen?

James: I actually use, now there's always ways around it. And generally speaking, most people are pretty honest and the guys that are going to come through and buy the product, that already understand that there's a commission to be earned and they would prefer to earn it than me, there's ways around it. Generally speaking people are pretty honest and it's not, depending what market you're going after, there's not a lot of worry. But if I do want to protect it, I just use a little service called, and it's available and it's another one of these free services. Called [AddMe.com](#). They go to [AddMe.com](#) and I think it's on the left hand column, I use it all the time... [AddMe.com](#) and then you just scroll down their main menu on the left under promotional tools and then there's one, the second to last link is called [All Tools](#), and you click on that and then there's two of them, there's [CompactURL](#) which, what that does, is it takes the affiliate link and you drop it in there and it takes it from a big long link and it changes it into a small link. That's called [CompactURL](#), it's a free service, and then you take that new link and you go back to the other tool below it called [Link Cloaker](#), and you drop it in there, and then it cloaks the link. And then you take that code and you put that on your website. It works like a charm.

Heather: What do you think is the next big trend in [ClickBank](#) affiliate marketing?

James: You know what I hope they would do? I don't know if they're thinking this way, but, and I've never quite been able to figure out why they haven't, but it seems to be the logical next step for me. And one of those is to go to a two tier program, which means affiliates can refer other affiliates and earn an override on a single level. That would be one. You know, I don't know if I have an answer to that. I don't really know, I would say, I mean obviously the whole focus towards

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

quality content, as the masses start to come online, they're going to want quality content, quality products, quality e-books so, I would say probably quality... it sounds like it's not really a marketing thing but in actuality it is, because you know repeat visitors, repeat sales to the same customer, you have a customer base where you can sell them multiple products because you've built trust with them. I don't know if that's really [ClickBank](#)'s role. That's more the merchant's role, that's more our role. So, I don't know if I have a really smart answer for that.

Heather: OK, so after somebody's done listening to or reading this interview, what do you think is the first thing that person should do in their goal towards becoming a top [ClickBank](#) affiliate?

James: I would say, first thing they would do is go to [ClickBank](#) and have a good look around. But don't do anything. Get a notepad and a piece of paper and start digging. One of the mistakes people make is they get into [ClickBank](#) and all of a sudden they see all these products and they figure, wow, I'm going to market this one and I'm going to market this one and I'm going to market this one, I think this one's good. Next thing you know, they've got, you know, 47 different products and they go and figure out a website and they try to put all those products on one website. And wonder why they don't make any money. Where if they were to, once they've got their list, they start to prune it down to what they really want to work on. And they start to say OK, and they get down to one or two products that they're really happy with, and then focus in on those one or two products. One is probably better than two. And then, because if you can figure out a way to make money with one product, this is what dawned on me years ago now, if I could make money with one product, I know I can make money with another product. So let's start slowly here, and figure this out, and go baby step at a time and once I'm successful with the one, then I'll add two. And the second one's always much quicker than the first one. So once you get good at one, you can do the second one faster and the third one's even quicker and you get economy of scale going.

Heather: Do you have any final words of wisdom for them to keep in mind as they're going along this journey?

ClickBank Affiliate Confessions

Interview with James Martell

James: This is doable. For those that are listening to build, you know, a business on the internet. It's the real deal. It's hard work. Anybody that I've known that's made it, and I know piles... If they're honest with you, they'll tell you, they worked hard. They worked really hard. There was times when they didn't even know if they were doing the right thing, but they just kept going. I could tell you stories of guys that worked for six months and almost made no money and was about, you know, had one emergency meeting left with his wife before he was going to pack it in. And then next month because of the work he'd been done and the search engines finally caught it, you know, he basically took off from there, and he's now, he's bought himself a custom home and he's paid off a lot of debt, and he's got a new truck and he travels all over the planet, and he's left his job three years ago, and he's free. So it's just, depending on what they bring to the table, what you bring to the table, if you've got some experience... everybody's learning curve is going to be a little bit different because we all have different skills, when I got into this, I didn't... I was a carpenter by trade. So I didn't have a lot of computer experience, I had a little bit from the telecom stuff that we were doing, but generally speaking, I could barely use Microsoft Word, so my learning curve was like very steep. Other guys that come in, already know how to do a lot of the stuff that I'm talking about and maybe just need to do a little tuning up. Brand new people, find somebody that you can learn from. And find one person, not two, and once what you've mastered what that one person has taught you to do, and you're making money, then start looking around for maybe other people, maybe not.

Heather: OK. Well thank you so much, James, for sharing your extensive knowledge with us.

James: Oh, you're welcome.