

A ClickBank merchant account allows you to define and sell up to 50 separate products. If you have more than one product in your range, it makes sense to sell them from a shared ClickBank account. Here are three good reasons why:

- Every active ClickBank account incurs a setup fee of \$49.95. Why pay this more than once?
- Managing multiple ClickBank accounts adds unnecessarily to your administrative effort
- The combined sales of multiple products through one account will significantly boost your Marketplace ranking

Unfortunately, the architecture of the ClickBank system has, historically, not been well suited to selling multiple products from a single account, especially for merchants who use affiliates to promote their products. The problem is that, although you can define 50 products within ClickBank's account control panel, you can only specify a single landing page URL – the destination page that your affiliates will refer their prospects to.

The result is that all referrals must arrive at your site via a common page. This forces you either to present all your products on a shared sales page or to create an intermediate page, from which your visitors must click through to see the product of their choice. Neither option is ideal as they both create obstacles that will distract your prospects and seriously reduce your conversion rate.

For optimum sales effectiveness, affiliate referrals should go directly to the sales page for the product of interest. This is known as deep linking and is widely acknowledged as the best way to convert affiliate referrals into buyers. But ClickBank's lack of support for this technique is a major barrier that inhibits effective use of its growing affiliate network.

To tackle this problem, a number of pioneering merchants have developed their own techniques to work around ClickBank's shortcomings. Some of these innovations have even evolved into successful commercial software products. Most implementations rely on intercepting the inbound referral and automatically redirecting it to the relevant product page, as indicated in URL parameters passed by the referring affiliate. There are several variations on this theme, but they share a common gambit – using scripts, installed on the merchant's web server, to intercept and redirect requests.

However, the need for smoke and mirrors to fix ClickBank's limitations may soon be a relic of the past. In October 2003, ClickBank announced plans for major improvements to its hoplink system – improvements that will all but eliminate the need for workarounds or enhancement products.

The new architecture – known as the enhanced hoplink system

– employs a more flexible referral URL format, in which affiliates are able to specify the numeric code of the product they are referring their prospects to. Using this code, ClickBank's server will look up the corresponding sales page URL and send referrals directly to it, handling cookie-tracking and other admin chores in the normal manner.

The main attraction of the enhanced hoplink system is its simplicity of implementation and maintenance. Whereas add-on products require at least a moderate understanding of script installation and configuration, the hoplink system is maintained entirely via the ClickBank account control panel. This means that a merchant selling multiple products (even across multiple web domains) can expose them for affiliate deep linking, simply by configuring the relevant sales page URLs in his account.

At the time of writing, ClickBank has published the format of the enhanced hoplink URL, but has not completed the database and control panel changes that will allow the configuration of multiple landing pages. So, although we can visualize the new architecture and dream of the benefits it will deliver, we remain in eager anticipation of its release.

---

Tim Coulter is a consultant and software developer who helps netpreneurs to harness marketing technologies.

He is also the author of "ClickBank – The Definitive Guide" The Ultimate ClickBank Tutorial & Reference Manual.

<http://www.clickbankrevealed.com/>

---