Don’t Make These Costly Affiliate Marketing Mistakes

I just found one of my affiliate links wasn’t working anymore.

Worse? It had probably been broken for a while.

And I have that link everywhere. It’s no wonder I stopped seeing growth. I was wondering. The partner did not set up redirects, like you expect them to (sadly). That is why it’s up to us as affiliate marketers to do our homework and maintenance of our business – because… nobody else will.

If you do affiliate marketing — even casually — this should make your stomach turn. That’s lost traffic, lost clicks, and lost commissions. And unfortunately, I’ve learned this lesson more than once.

So before you lose money (or your affiliate account), let’s talk about the most common affiliate mistakes people make — and how to avoid them.

Mistake #1: Not Checking Your Links Regularly

This one hurts because it’s so preventable. Affiliate programs change their URLs, restructure their tracking systems, or switch networks entirely. If you’re not checking, you’ll never know your links are broken — and you’ll keep sending traffic into a black hole.

My rule of thumb: check your affiliate links at least once a quarter. Seriously — put it on your calendar. Set a reminder. Whatever it takes.

Even big networks don’t always put up redirects like they should. And when that happens? It falls on you. As online marketers, *we* have to own that responsibility if we want to keep earning.

Mistake #2: Not Using a Redirection Plugin

If you’re still pasting affiliate links directly into blog posts or emails, stop. Right now.

Use a redirection plugin like **Pretty Links** or **ThirstyAffiliates**. These tools let you create clean, trackable URLs like:

Copy

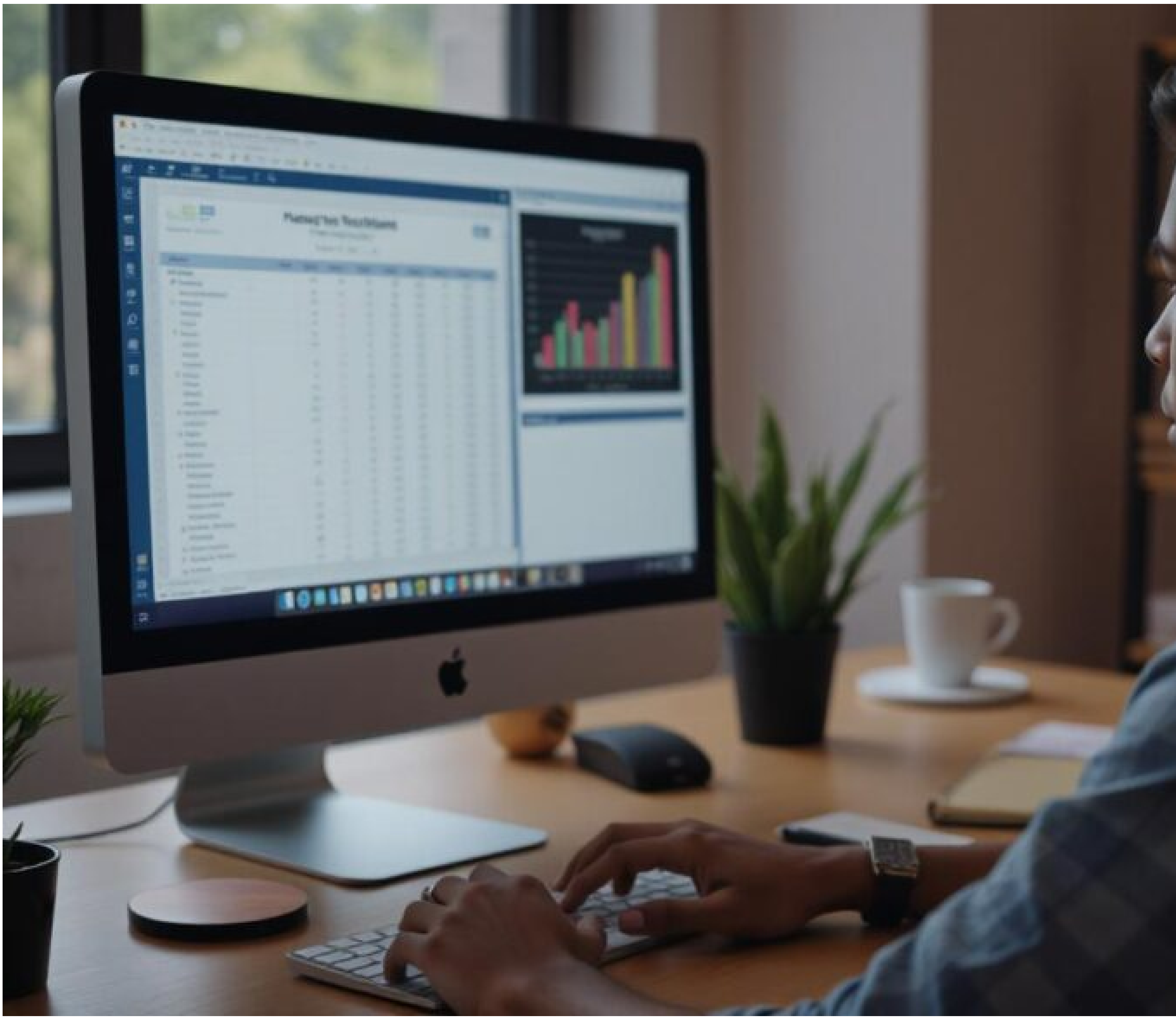
```
https://www.yoursite.com/go/product-name
```

And if the affiliate URL ever changes? You just update the link in one place — and boom, it’s fixed everywhere.

This also makes testing different offers easier, lets you track clicks, and protects your links from looking spammy. No more mile-long tracking strings or weird referral IDs.

Mistake #3: Not Tracking Where You’ve Placed Your Links

This one cost me my Amazon affiliate status. I wish I was kidding.



They reached out and asked for a list of all the pages where I had Amazon links — and I didn’t have one. No spreadsheet. No tracking system. Just scattered links across blog posts, emails, and social content. I couldn’t provide what they asked for, and they pulled the plug.

Lesson learned: Keep a spreadsheet or use a tool that tracks where your affiliate links live.

At minimum, list:

- The product or offer
- The affiliate network
- The link you created
- Where it appears (page, blog post, email, etc.)

It’s a bit of extra work up front — but it can save your entire revenue stream later.

Mistake #4: Not Testing the User Experience

Click your own links once in a while. Seriously — try them on mobile, on desktop, in incognito mode.

Ask yourself:

- Where does it go?
- Does it load properly?
- Is the product still available?
- Is the offer still what you promised?
- Is your code working?

Broken links = lost money. But even a *working* link to a discontinued product or bad landing page can kill your credibility. And your conversions.

Bonus Tip: Do a Periodic Link Audit

Every quarter, go through your top-performing content and check your affiliate links. Replace outdated products, improve descriptions, or test new alternatives.

You’d be surprised how many of your top posts are still sending people to offers from two years ago that aren’t relevant anymore.

Affiliate Marketing Is a Business — Treat It Like One

Affiliate marketing might feel casual at first — you drop a few links, earn a few commissions, and everything feels pretty low-stakes. But if you’re making money (or want to), it’s time to treat it like a real business.

That means tracking your income and expenses. Keep records of:

- Affiliate payouts by network
- Plugin and tool subscriptions (like Pretty Links)
- Hosting, domain names, or software used for your site
- Any outsourced help (writing, SEO, etc.)

Why does this matter? Two big reasons:

1. **Taxes** – You may be responsible for reporting your affiliate income. Having organized records will make your life easier (and keep the IRS happy).
2. **Growth** – Knowing what's working and where your income comes from helps you scale up smartly. Guesswork doesn't build a sustainable business.

So open up that spreadsheet. Add a new tab. Start tracking. It doesn't have to be fancy — it just has to be done.

Final Thoughts

Affiliate marketing is great — but if you treat it like "set it and forget it," you're going to miss out. Or worse, you'll lose out completely.

Broken links. Missing redirects. Lost tracking. Closed accounts.

Trust me — I've been there. Learn from my mistakes. Check your links. Use a redirection plugin. Keep a spreadsheet. And treat your affiliate income like a real part of your business… because it is.

This goes right along with my "7 Reasons to Always Use Redirects for Affiliate Links" article.

Original article: https://www.tonyherman.com/costly-affiliate-marketing-mistakes/