



The **Totally Virtual**
Entrepreneur



The Totally Virtual Entrepreneur
Real-life strategies for making your
living in cyberspace

INTRODUCTION

This is a full chapter extract from ***The Totally Virtual Entrepreneur***, distributed here as an exclusive bonus with ***UK Affiliate Gold***.

The Totally Virtual Entrepreneur is an ebook that looks at some of the real ways in which real people, all over the world, are earning their living entirely by means of the internet.

Naturally, **affiliate marketing being one of the backbones of internet business**, this aspect plays a fundamental part in many of the business models of the entrepreneurs whose businesses feature in the ebook, whether they make their living from the sale of information products, a series of theme-based websites, a "hobby" website, or an ezine.

The extract included here focuses on the business of one person who has created his entire business based around affiliate marketing: Banbury-based entrepreneur Steve Nash, who runs a whole series of websites selling a huge range of affiliate products, from DVD players right through to contact lenses!

In this interview Steve shows us how he's set up his business, and gives us **a unique insight into affiliate marketing from the UK point of view**, commenting also on some of the more **recent changes taking place in the way "affiliate mini-sites" are constructed**, and the reasons behind these changes.

I hope you enjoy this extract from my ebook. What Steve tells us in his interview is invaluable – this is real, straight-from-the-horse's-mouth information from someone who's really making his living this way.

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You may have taken the opportunity to purchase the entire ebook when you ordered UK Affiliate Gold. However if you didn't, and at any time you wish to "unlock" the copy on your CD ROM, just follow the upgrade links within the package.

With my best wishes, and the best of luck to you with your internet affiliate business.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alannah Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

Alannah Moore

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FULL CHAPTER EXTRACT:

How Steve Nash cashes in on online shopping

Steve Nash's is an interesting case because he didn't intend to get involved selling on the Internet – he describes himself as a 'reluctant marketer' - but now he creates a very nice income for himself almost exclusively from sales.

He sells digital cameras, mobile phones, handheld computers, contact lenses and even Harry Potter goods - but as you have probably guessed, none of the products is his own.

"I make money via affiliate marketing," explains Steve, "predominantly via affiliate mini-sites promoting merchants like Amazon UK (electronics items like digital cameras and DVD players), Dialaphone (mobile phones), and a few others.

"I also make money putting Espotting search results on my site (I earn commission per each link clicked).

"Finally, I make a small income promoting Internet marketing products via my content sites, newsletter and email courses (icing on the cake, really).

"Being an Internet marketer is not something I set out to be, and is not the label I give myself (I normally just tell people that I'm a web designer).

"Internet marketing - affiliate marketing, really - is what I've ended up getting involved in, because I was fed up with my 9-5 job, because I wanted more, and this was the best method I found to make money! (I actually quit my day job a long time before I made any money online - just lived off my savings for a year. Yes, times were a little desperate.)

"I fell in love with the Internet a few years ago, and designed a few personal sites just to get involved. Eventually, I got interested in

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the 'making money' thing, but absolutely hated the idea of selling. Hated it. (Probably because I'm British, I don't know.)

"I gradually warmed to the idea of 'selling', saw its importance (in all aspects of life, not just the Internet).

"So I have grown to accept selling and marketing, but I still don't *like* to sell.

"That's probably why the first ebook I bought and thoroughly absorbed was *Make Your Words Sell* by Ken Evoy and Joe Robson (rather than Ken Evoy's *Make Your Site Sell* - still a good read, but not what I wanted to learn about in my early days!) And it's probably why I'm an affiliate marketer right now.

"Affiliate marketing means, to me: doing some research; building a nice mini-site, and making it useful; recommending a variety of products; and *someone else* sells the product (I just make a commission).

"I like that arrangement a lot.

"Even though I'm probably not making as much money as those that sell their own product - so be it.

"Working for myself has always been about doing what I want, when I want, and earning *enough*. It's never been about becoming a millionaire.

"Anyway, I think I've digressed a little here. I just wanted to say that I'm not that keen on selling - it's taken me a long time to warm to it, and I'm certainly not a born marketer."

When Steve first got involved with the Internet he initially thought he might become a professional web designer - "But now designing websites for others does not inspire me," he explains. "Clients can be so 'difficult!'"

I asked him how it struck him that there was a commercial opportunity from the sites themselves, rather than charging other people to do their design, as was his original idea.

"The first time I believed I could make money simply from

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designing my own sites was when I read Phil Wiley's ebook *Mini-Site Profits* in September 2001 (<http://www.minisiteprofits.net>).

"Everything fell into place for me, as Phil had examples of successful mini-sites, and these inspired me to create my own. (Inspired! I just copied one of his ideas and made it relevant to UK-shoppers!)

"The design-bit was easy, and I already had decent search engine optimisation and copy writing skills from reading Dr Ken Evoy's ebooks *Make Your Site Sell*, and *Make Your Words Sell*, respectively. So my first 1-page mini-site took very little time to create.

"It didn't take long to get a good ranking on Google, and my affiliate commissions soon started to add up.

"In actual fact, my first mini-site regularly made - until recently - over US\$500 per month. This is what that first mini-site looks like - not too different from how it looked, originally, either: - <http://www.mobile-phones-free.co.uk>.

Steve has been making profits since January 2002 although he started building sites back in 1999.

"This whole 'making money online' business took me a long time, initially because that's not what I set out to do when I first started designing websites. And then because I was a bit slow to 'get it' I guess! (What works is constantly changing, and this means you constantly have to re- 'get it', as it were!)"

Steve has now set up numerous sites and therefore has several streams of income coming in at the same time. I asked him if he sees this as integral to success with Internet business.

"The short answer - yes," he responds.

"I think it's vital that you rely on more than one stream of income, because you never know when one method of earning money will just stop working.

"For example, up to September 2002 my affiliate mini-sites were doing really well on Google. Many of my sites were on page #1 (sometimes in position #1). Then Google changed its ranking

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algorithm in a big way, and I lost 75% of my site traffic, just like that!"

I asked him which of his several streams does best.

"It changes every month, actually, depending on what affiliate offers are available. I'm presently focussing on earning money from Espotting - a European pay-per-click search engine - Amazon UK, and a free SMS provider called Red Alertz (available via UK affiliate network DGM2 - <http://www.dgm2.com>).

"Six month ago I was making a lot of money by promoting Dialaphone - a direct seller of mobile phones in the UK. But recent changes in the UK mobile phone market occurred, and now I'm making almost nothing from them!

"So you do have to stay alert to the constant changes in affiliate marketing, and this can be quite tiring and tiresome. Regular visits to this UK affiliates forum help - <http://www.affiliates4u.co.uk/forum.html> - but I am seriously thinking of a 'better way' of making money.

"I can only see affiliate marketing getting even more competitive. What I'm hoping to discover this year is a passion that I can literally build income through content (as explained in my site: <http://www.anyonecansellonline.com/build-income-through-content.shtml>)."

Steve doesn't seem to have had any problem attracting traffic to his sites. Since he mentions Google, I asked him if visitors mainly arrive via the search engines. I would have thought that excellent search engine positioning is essential especially if the affiliate market is getting more crowded.

"Yes, I mainly rely on free search engine traffic," he says. To supplement this main traffic stream he is also an advocate of pay-per-click search engines, viral marketing through word of mouth, and writing a newsletter - among some other tactics he outlines at HowIPromoteMyWebsite.com.

"I developed the free website promotion guide, above, a few years ago, based on website promotion methods that I found worked. Though I don't use pay-per-click search engines or even Google

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AdWords at the moment.

"Still, one of my sites gets over 5000 unique visitors per day, and my other sites get enough website traffic to generate a decent affiliate income."

I asked Steve how he manages to keep on top of so many sites. He told me it was as automated as possible.

"I use site templates and Server Side Includes as much as I can. That way I can add articles, or change navigation very quickly and easily. (I build sites using Macromedia Dreamweaver 4, by the way.)

"I also maintain a site-update schedule.

"So once sites like HowIPromoteMyWebsite.com and AnyoneCanSellOnline.com are built it only takes about a day a month to maintain them.

"One thing I'd say about how I make money online is that it's slowly changing and my answer this time next year *will* be different to now.

"For example, I set up TextMeFree.com in 2001 as an experiment in getting traffic. I did make some money last year from it, but didn't rely on it. I'm now relying on this site more and more, and make a good income from Espotting commission alone, for keywords like 'polyphonic ring tones', 'cheap mobile phones' etc. (I earn a commission on the cost of the particular keyword bid.) I also earn a considerable affiliate commission from a merchant who happens to offer free SMS text messaging for UK dwellers (an absolutely ideal fit for my site).

"TextMeFree.com gets about 5000 unique visitors per day, and I'm sure I could make more money from it, especially if I went pop-up crazy!

"So my mini-site strategy is slowly changing to content-site strategy!"

This sounded fascinating so I asked Steve to tell me more.

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"I first started making decent money online from a 1-page affiliate mini-site, which I managed to get onto the first page of Google for my chosen keywords," he explains. "However, it is now much harder to do this - well, for my keywords anyway.

"Also, 1-page sites simply re-direct your visitors to the merchant site, and you never see them again.

"So the idea behind a 5- to 10-page mini-site (small content site, I suppose) is two-fold:

"1) To generate content that search engines (Google) will like.

"2) To try and retain contact with your site visitors.

"So the idea is to create enough content - (ever-green if possible; i.e. content that isn't going to need to change, but is still useful) - so that a visitor might bookmark your site.

"And also try and capture that visitor's email address too, so you can stay in touch just in case they never return to your site. You have more chance of capturing their email address from a 5-page site than a 1-page site, too.

"Here are a couple of example sites to illustrate my point:
OLD: <http://www.mobile-phones-free.co.uk> (mobile phones)
NEW: <http://www.pocket-pda-handhelds.co.uk> (handheld computers)."

With these great tips about 'enhanced' mini-site building under my belt, I asked Steve which direction he would advise people wanting to earn a living from the Internet to go in.

"Without doubt, I would suggest that they create a website about their passion (hopefully a niche subject). Then they should either develop appropriate products to sell on their site, or sell other people's products (again products should be relevant to their site).

"This is the 'build income through content' approach advocated by Dr. Ken Evoy of [Sitesell.com](http://www.sitesell.com) fame. He's so sure of this concept that he even developed a unique all-in-one Net tool that lets you do just that, called Site Build It! (<http://www.site-buildit.com>)

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"You have the passion, and Site Build It! pretty much does everything else. HowIPromoteMyWebsite.com is created by Site Build It!, as are the sites listed here:
<http://www.mikino.com/?shopping101.html>

"Incidentally, this is what I intend to do in the future - once I discover my passion! - because whilst I obviously like making money online, I am not inspired by promoting mobile phones or digital cameras or 'free SMS text messaging'. If your website is your passion, updating it and engaging with your site visitors will NEVER feel like a job. That's my *true* motivation - a job that doesn't feel like a job."

What mistakes does Steve see people starting out making over and over?

"The main mistake I see people making is simply doing the same thing that everyone else is doing.

"An example of this would be trying to sell Internet marketing products to fellow Internet marketers - there are simply too many people, too many GOOD people, doing this already.

"Find your niche, find your own angle, and then develop it.

"I am making this mistake right now, actually, but am slowly trying to steer myself away from what everyone else is doing (there are an awful lot of affiliates in UK promoting mobile phones, digital cameras etc.)

"So I seriously hope that, by the end of 2003, I've come up with a great idea - about a passion of mine - that I can develop using Site Build It!

Steve has outlined to us the changes he has seen taking place within the mini-site concept. I asked him if there was any particular direction he sees Internet business going in the near future.

"Tricky question," he responds. "And I don't really have an answer, other than I think there's just going to be more and more competition. So finding a niche is going to be even more important."

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Steve has given us a lot of food for thought as we've looked at how he has created a very successful suite of affiliate mini-sites in his already fairly crowded niche areas.

Firstly he stresses the importance of finding niche markets – something we have already understood as absolutely essential, and as he points out is growing more and more so daily, as popular areas, in his case digital cameras and mobile phones, become more and more crowded.

He also gives us something worth thinking about with regard to mini-sites. As the search-engine climate changes slightly, it becomes less easy to get your mini-site the good ranking it needs on Google, to get enough visitors to really do well.

You might want to consider developing your mini-site so it becomes a mini-content-site. This way you will rank better with Google, and you stand a better chance of seeing your visitors come back again.

Thank you Steve, for this very worthwhile tip!

The final important thing we've seen while talking to Steve Nash, that I want to really underline, is one of what I see as one of the really important tenets to earning your income via the web. That is:

Having multiple income streams is a really good idea.

Steve's explained how, due to a change in the UK mobile phone market, one of his major earners suddenly dried up. By creating several websites all bringing in separate income streams you reduce your vulnerability should your major income stream be threatened, for whatever reason.

Also, once you have multiple income streams all doing fairly well, it is amazing how they add up!

It's now time to look at someone else's strategy, someone else who also has several income streams, but in a different area...

Steve Nash

<http://www.shoptour.co.uk>

<http://www.wise-buys.info/shopping.shtml>