

# The Secrets Of Free Classified Advertising - Tracking

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### Introduction

One of the best ways to build your home business is by advertising on free classified sites

The great thing of course is that the advertising is free, and so any results you get are "value" because you have not had to pay for it

### Tracking Is Essential

However free classified advertising can be a mine-field to the unwary

Remember: there is no shortage of website on the internet that are quite happy for you to "buy" their advertising product, even though they know themselves that their advertising product is pretty close to worthless!

Therefore make this your golden rule:

Always Track Your Advertising

### What Is Tracking

If you are unsure what tracking really means, this introduction will help

When you are advertising on the internet, you really need to find out who is clicking your ads, where they saw your ad, did it convert into a sale, and what was their referring URL

To "track" your advertising its usual to have a redirect URL of some some kind, which records the data that we are interested in e.g. was there a click and if so on which site did the click come from, what was the operating system of the user that clicked and what was the referring URL etc. You can often set up the same redirect URL for the same target URL you are advertising, but use a different code at the end of the re-direct URL to signify the site you are advertising on e.g. my redirect could be `www.somedomain.com/cgi-bin/track.php?r=1000` - here the "r=1000" is the code for the particular classified site I am using

Lets go through the elements of tracking in a bit more detail

#### 1) Who is clicking on your ad?

We dont want to know exactly who! but we do want to know if anyone clicked on our ad. Its just too easy for someone to let us advertise on their website, with the assumption that our ad will be clicked, when all the time they know that its very unlikely that any of the ads will be clicked by anyone. If you are going to make any assumption about your advertising, then always assume that no one clicked on your ad unless you have evidence to prove otherwise

#### 2) Where was the ad that was clicked?

Its all very well knowing that my ad was clicked - but I need to know which ad and on which site. If I post 3 different classified ad to 10 different sites, then its no good knowing just that "one" of them was clicked. I need to know which one and on which site

Proper tracking will give me this information. Usually I just log into the admin or members area of the tracking service I am using, and there will be a listing of all the redirect URL's I have used and the clicks that are recorded for each one

Now of course you have to get organized so that you know which tracking code you are going to use for each site and for each ad. there is nothing worse than not keeping a record and then not knowing which site gave you the click when you find out that the "r=4571" has recorded a click!

So it is essential to keep good records of what you are doing for the ads you are posting. After a while of course you will find out which sites are giving you clicks, and therefore you can rely on these sites since you have tested them and they are obviously working

#### 3) What Was The Referring URL

The referring URL is simply the webpage the person visited, immediately before the page where they saw your ad. With a classified Ad site this will probably be a directory or category index page

This aspect of tracking has become very important more recently as the search engines regularly spider good free classified sites. This is because when lots of new ads are posted every day, from the search engines point of view, this equals new fresh content. Search Engines will always give a site a higher ranking that is adding new fresh original content regularly.

However this produces a major downside for anyone posting ads to classified sites - because not only will the search engine spiders visit the sites - they will also click the links!

This will mean our tracking software will record "apparent" clicks - but they are not clicks at all, since it was a script from the search engines that clicked on our ads and not a real person reading our ads

Once again this underlines why advertising online can be a minefield for the unwary. To spot these "phantom clicks" you need to look carefully on the referring URL

Search Engine spiders generally use some kind of "bot" which will be included in the information about the operating system of the user. If you see "bot" anywhere in the information from your tracking system, then this means the person that clicked was a search engine and not a real person. Therefore such clicks should not be regarded as real clicks by anyone. I know of quite a number of classified ads sites which get clicks from search engine bots but not from real people!!

#### 4) Did The Click Convert To A Sale Or Lead

This is much more difficult to track, and certainly most tracking software will not provide this information

Extra code is required to be placed into your website in order to provide this information - PHP is the easiest vehicle for this information, though it can also be done via CGI. However a discussion of these modifications to your website is several article all by itself. However suffice it to say for now, that this kind of tracking information can be provided relatively easily. Some pay per click organisations also provide code which can tell you when ads resulted in a sale e.g. Google Adwords

#### Conclusion

Free Classified Advertising really can work, but you do need to track your "clicks" to make sure you only concentrate on those sites which actually give you real people clicking on your adverts

#### About the Author

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