

"Your Own Affiliate Program"

Free (Feature Limited)
Site Replication Version

User and Installation Guide

Developed by Paul Galloway

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“Your Own Affiliate Program”

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INTRODUCTION

The full version of "Your Own Affiliate Program" (YOAP) is a software package which allows you to start and maintain your own "Affiliate Program".

This free version was designed to be a simple "Site Replication" package. It will allow people (your "affiliates") to "replicate" your site by simply submitting a signup form. The replicated site can include affiliate-specific information such as name, email, phone, etc.

An affiliate program allows other people to "sign up" as your "affiliates" -- these affiliates get a commission on any business they refer to you through a web site which is created for them when they sign up.

You can also award "points" when they recruit other affiliates, or to reward them for performance -- they can then redeem these points later for whatever products or services you specify.

"Your Own Affiliate Program" consists of several Perl programs (also called "scripts"), all of which work together to give you a complete affiliate program solution. The software provides the following functions:

- Sign-up new affiliates with automatic web site replication for each one
- Dynamic or Static web pages for affiliate sites
- Updating of all affiliate static web pages
- Affiliate record maintenance (modify and delete)
- Traffic statistics checking by affiliates

The following functions are available in the full version of YOAP, but have been disabled in this free "site replicator" version:

- Automatic (real-time) commission calculation and recording.
- Order checking for any time period
- Commission checking by affiliates
- Manual "adjustment" transactions to affiliate accounts
- Month-end commission statements
- "Referral Rewards" program allows you to give "points" to your affiliates which they can then redeem for various incentive items

This "User and Installation Guide" will explain how to install the software and how to use the various functions.

Even though you'll be installing the software before using it, the [installation section](#) comes after the user section, as you won't need to use the installation guide very often, and you shouldn't have to wade through it to get to the information you will likely be referring to more frequently.

ADMIN CONTROL PANEL AND

AFFILIATE FUNCTIONS

Once you have the software installed, the only administration script you'll need to remember is "conpanel.cgi". This is the "Control Panel" for your affiliate program administrative functions -- all other administrative scripts can be accessed from this screen, just by clicking on a "button"!

If YOAP was installed in the cgi-bin/yoap directory at "www.yoursite.com", you would access the control panel by entering this URL in your browser:

<http://www.yoursite.com/cgi-bin/yoap/conpanel.cgi>

Once you load that page, I recommend you bookmark it! :o)

Now let's go through the various screens available from the "Control Panel":

CHANGE YOUR PASSWORD

This is really the LAST option on the "Control Panel" page, but it's an important topic I want to discuss first.

The password is encrypted and stored in your "administration" directory. Anytime you decide you want to use a different password, just enter your old and new passwords and click on "Change Password".

If you ever forget your password, you can delete the "password.txt" file in your administration directory via FTP, then go to the control panel and set a new password.

VIEW AFFILIATE CONTACT AND COMMISSION INFORMATION

This is the "workhorse" of the whole package. From this screen you can access and change affiliate records, delete affiliates and their web sites, and generate commission reports.

Just select the function you want and click on the "Get Information" button at the bottom of the page. Let me explain each of the input fields and functions in the order they appear . . .

Affiliate You Want to Generate Reports For

This is where you enter the affiliate number you want to get information for. If you leave "ALL" in this box, then reports will be generated for ALL affiliates.

If a "keyword" is used (see below) with the "Mailing list", "Affiliate List", and "All logged info on affiliates" functions, then this "Affiliate Number" field is ignored. The program will return data for all affiliates whose records contain the keyword(s).

An affiliate number (not ALL) is REQUIRED for the "Modify or delete affiliate information and site" function and the "Disable" and "Enable" functions.

Modify or Delete Affiliate Information and Site

This allows you to edit affiliate information such as address, affiliate level, phone number, et cetera. The only field you can NOT change is the affiliate number.

You can also completely delete an affiliate's web site and affiliate account.

Disable/Enable Affiliate Account

Sometimes you want to disable an account without totally deleting it. These two options allow you to disable and re-enable an affiliate account. When someone visits the home page for a disabled affiliate account, the HTML code found in the "**disabled_account_message.txt**" file (in your admin directory) is displayed.

Mailing List (addresses only)

If you want a mailing address (snail mail) for an affiliate (or ALL affiliates) just click on this radio button and then the "Get Information" button.

Affiliate List

This gives you a "summary" of the affiliate information, including the affiliate's name, affiliate number, email address and web site URL. The email address is set up so you can click on it to send an email. The URL is set up so you can click on it to go to that site.

All logged info on affiliate(s)

This will give you ALL the information you have for the specified affiliate.

Enter keyword for above reports

Suppose someone emailed you and said, "My name is John Brown, from Tampa, Florida. I signed up for your affiliate program, but I can't find my password! Will you send it to me?"

That's when you'd use this field. You could just enter "Tampa" or "John Brown" in the "keyword" box, click on the "All logged info on affiliate's" radio button, and then click on "Get Information".

The "keyword" field is only used with the "Mailing list", "Affiliate List", and "All logged info on affiliates" functions. Keep in mind that the "Affiliate Number" at the top of the page will be ignored for these three functions if you have anything in the "keyword" field.

UPDATE ONE OR ALL STATIC AFFILIATE PAGES

(Only displayed if you have enabled static affiliate files)

Whenever someone signs up to be an affiliate, all of the ".htm" and ".html" files in the template directory are copied to the newly created affiliate site. Remember, these are "static" pages. Dynamic pages end with a ".txt" extension, and they don't get copied. (For details, read the section on "Template Files")

Let's say you want to change what the affiliate sites look like. Once you change the template files, the modified files will be copied into a new affiliate directory whenever someone signs up to be an affiliate. But what about all the previously created directories? That's what this "Update" page is for.

The "update" script will read the new files from the template directory and copy them to EVERY affiliate directory -- you can change 100's of web sites with the press of a button! If you want, you can change just ONE affiliate directory at a time -- this makes it easy to "test" the functionality of your new design.

VIEW AFFILIATE ACQUISITION HISTORY

This program allows you to see an overview of your affiliate acquisition results. You can specify the resolution of the output (daily, weekly, or monthly).

AFFILIATE STATS CHECKING UTILITY

If YOAP was installed in the cgi-bin/yoap directory of your site, "www.yoursite.com" your affiliates would access the control panel by entering this URL in their browser:

<http://www.yoursite.com/cgi-bin/yoap/checkord.cgi>

As the administrator, YOU can get to this page by clicking the link on your "Control Panel".

From this screen, your affiliates can:

- Check traffic stats for their affiliate site (if you've enabled this feature)
- Change their contact information and password (if you've enabled this feature)
- Have their password emailed to the email address they used when they signed up

EXTENDED ADVERTISING TRACKING

If your affiliates want to track several ads to see which are producing their sales, they can add a “tracking” code to the end of their affiliate number. (This does NOT work with static affiliate pages . . .)

For instance, if my affiliate number was “abc1005” and I had two ads to track, here are two URL’s I might use (this assumes the SSI or Javascript affiliate tracking method is being used):

<http://www.yoursite.com/?abc1005!ad1>

<http://www.yoursite.com/?abc1005!ad2>

Note that an exclamation point is used to separate the affiliate number from the tracking code. This is an exception to the “no special characters” rule (see the section titled "Things to Avoid" at the end of this manual).

MISCELLANEOUS SYSTEM INFORMATION

CRITICAL FILES IN THE ADMIN DIRECTORY

There are some files in your "admin" directory that it would be prudent for you to backup on a regular basis. And there are a couple of files you may want to change from time to time as your affiliate program and products change. Here are the file names and descriptions:

adm-dealers.txt	Contact information for all your affiliates is kept here. Anytime you modify or delete an affiliate, that action is recorded here. But you never actually delete every trace of an affiliate from this file, even though you can delete their web site and their affiliate privileges. You should DEFINITELY backup this file on a regular basis.
password.txt	This is where your encrypted password is kept. If you forget your password, delete this file and then enter your new password in the "Change Password" section of the "Control Panel" (leave the "old password" box blank).
access_logs	This is actually a directory in the admin directory. The access logs directory contains the traffic logs for all affiliates. You may need to delete some of the older files in this directory on occasion, as an active affiliate program can produce many megabytes of traffic data in a short period of time.
aff_info	This directory contains an "info" (.nfo) file for each affiliate and should be backed up regularly.

THINGS YOU SHOULD AVOID FOR BEST RESULTS

Special Characters in Affiliate Numbers

When determining your affiliate number scheme (prefix, suffix), be sure to avoid using any “special” characters. Only use the letters A-Z (upper- or lower-case) and numbers 0-9. Using a “-” (minus sign) or “!” (exclamation point) will cause you problems for sure, and other “special” characters are commonly stripped out of the input strings sent to the software for security purposes.

There are probably some you could get away with using, but I’m not telling you which ones -- my recommendation is to stay away from them altogether. The one exception to this is when you use the “!” for ad tracking (as explained earlier).

Using Too Many Static Pages

The more affiliates you plan on having, the more you should use dynamic pages. Consider this: If you have 40 static pages per affiliate site, and you have 2000 affiliates, when you attempt an “Update” operation, you’re asking the server to copy $40 \times 2000 = 80,000$ files. Many servers will time out before this is accomplished. Also, your hosting company may limit the number of files you can have.

Placing Files in the Affiliate Root Directory

The software doesn’t expect any files in this directory other than what it creates there. So other files you place there are assumed to be affiliate directories, and will result in error messages when you run some affiliate-related reports. Not a problem really, but a bit annoying sometimes.

INSTALLATION GUIDE

While the installation of "Your Own Affiliate Program" is not difficult or complicated, there are a number of steps that must be taken for proper installation. If you have questions while reviewing the installation, please review the rest of this document -- your answer will most likely be found in the other sections.

If you can't find your answer here, go ahead and send me an email at yoapf@paulgalloway.com and I'll see what I can do. Please be specific as to the problem you're having, and understand that **I can't possibly extend the same level of support for free software as I do for my commercial products** . . . but I'll do what I can to help you out.

You can expect the installation process to take about 30 minutes if you're somewhat familiar with terms such as "sendmail path", "absolute file path", "Perl path", "file permissions", etc.

If those terms sound very unfamiliar to you, you'll probably save valuable time by having someone else install the script for you. It's not hard, but you need to have some fundamental understanding of how CGI scripts work . . .

To save you the trouble of manually editing the configuration file, I have included a program called "install.cgi" -- it will help you create a correct configuration file -- all you have to do is answer the questions and fill in the boxes.

Just follow the steps below -- in the order given! -- and you should be fine!

Step 1: Collect Information

Before you start, you must have some basic knowledge of how your web site is set up. Be sure you can answer the following two questions.

The answers to these questions can usually be obtained from your ISP's "Frequently Asked Questions" or "Customer Support" page. If all else fails, your ISP should be able to supply the information when you ask. Here are the questions:

What is the full Perl path name? (should be something like /usr/bin/perl)

What is the absolute path to your web host's sendmail program? (something like /usr/sbin/sendmail)

Step 2: Check Perl Path and Edit if Necessary

All program files (which end in ".cgi") have "#!/usr/bin/perl" as the first line. 95% of the time, this is the correct Perl path. If your web hosting company has Perl located in a different location, you'll need to edit the first line of each of these files to reflect the correct location.

Be sure to use a plain text editor (like NOTEPAD in WINDOWS or EDIT in DOS) to make this change. Do NOT use "Word", "WordPad", or any other word processing application. You must use a "plain text" editor.

Step 3: Upload Files

The ZIP distribution file includes all the required files, organized by their upload destination.

All the **files and subdirectories** in the "cgi-bin" folder should be uploaded to an installation subdirectory of the cgi-bin folder on your web server. For example, you could create a "y" or "yoap" subdirectory in your cgi-bin folder, and then upload all the program files (the files and folders in the distribution's cgi-bin folder) there. I will refer to this folder as the "install directory" or "install folder".

IMPORTANT – be sure to upload these files in "ASCII" mode!

If your FTP program doesn't allow you to just upload whole directory structures, you will need to create the following subfolders in your install folder:

admin
templates
errors

Within the "admin" directory, you need to create the following directories (you must use the names specified here):

ip
cookie_IP
access_logs
temp
lock
aff_points
aff_info
aff_orders

Change the permissions on all sub-folders on your web server to **777 (rwxrwxrwx)**. Be sure you change the permissions on ALL sub-folders (including the subfolders within the admin folder).

Change the permissions on all the other files in your install directory to **755 (rwxr-xr-x)**.

Now you need to upload the "**yimages**" folder and its contents **IN BINARY MODE** to your main web folder. Do NOT upload it to your cgi-bin directory – it must be in your root (main) web folder, such as "www" or "htdocs" – wherever your home page is located.

Change the permissions on this folder and its contents to **755 (rwxr-xr-x)**.

IF you want to have “static” files for all of your affiliates (generally not recommended, so be sure you really want to do it), you will also need to create a “root affiliate” directory in your main web area – for instance, you could create a “home” or “main” folder in your www (or htdocs, whatever) web directory. Be sure to change the directory permissions to **777 (rwxrwxrwx)**.

All affiliate directories will be created in this “root affiliate” directory.

Step 4: VERIFY "install.cgi" Runs

The "install.cgi" program has one purpose -- to help you to quickly and easily build a configuration file (named "options.pm" for your affiliate program. Once we confirm that it is running properly, we'll also know that the Perl path is correct . . .

From your web browser, load the "install.cgi" script by entering the URL in your "Location" window.

For instance, if you uploaded the software to the “yoap” sub-directory of your cgi-bin folder, you would enter something like "http://www.yourdomain.com/cgi-bin/yoap/install.cgi" in your web browser "location" window and click "GO" or hit your "Enter" key.

If the script works, you'll get a configuration screen with the words "Software Installation -- Start" at the top of the page.

If you get an error at this point (most likely an "Internal Server Error"), it's probably for one of these reasons:

1. The first line of the install.cgi script does not contain the correct PERL path.
2. The read/execute permissions were not set correctly on the install.cgi file.
3. Your ISP has not correctly set up the "execute" permissions of the directory you placed the script in.
4. You uploaded the script in "binary" format rather than ASCII -- you must use ASCII format for FTP uploads of these scripts.

Assuming you and your ISP got everything right, let's continue!

Step 5: Build Your Configuration File

The "form" page you see may appear to be long to you, but you should be able to fill it in rather quickly -- not all fields will be applicable to your setup. Instructions, explanations, and considerations for each field are listed in the adjacent table cell.

Just answer all the relevant questions and hit the "Confirm" button at the bottom of the page.

The script will look at the information you gave it, and will check to make sure the required directories exist and can be written to. It will also make sure you supplied all required information.

If you get an error message, you need to hit the "BACK" button on your browser, correct the fields in question, and hit the "Confirm" button again.

If no errors are found, click on the "Create options.pm file!" button. When you do this, the "options.pm" file will be created and stored in your admin directory.

Step 6: Copy the options.pm File to the cgi-bin Directory

To prevent someone from inadvertently overwriting their working options.pm file, the install.cgi program writes this file to the admin directory. You need to copy the newly-generated file to the install directory (wherever you are keeping your YOAP program files).

Be sure you use ASCII mode when you download/upload this file via FTP.

IMPORTANT: After you have created the options.pm file, you MUST delete the install.cgi script from your install directory. Otherwise someone else could change your admin password by simply re-running the script!

Step 7: Edit and Upload the Response Page/Message Files

The following 3 files should be edited to your liking, then uploaded to the **admin** directory (again, in ASCII mode). Refer to "[Substitution Codes](#)" to see which substitution codes can be used for each file (they don't all use the same substitution codes).

```
signup_thankyou.html  
signup_email.txt  
disabled_account_message.txt
```

Step 8: Create and Upload Your Sign-Up Page

Using the "signup.html" file (in the distribution's "examples" folder) as a template, create your affiliate sign-up page and upload it to your web site. For more options related to the signup page, see "[Your Affiliate Signup Form](#)".

You can upload this as a static (.html) template or as a dynamic (.txt) template – if you upload it as a dynamic template, you can use the same substitution codes in this page as in the other template files -- see "[Substitution Codes](#)" for details.

NOTE: If you aren't running a two-tier affiliate program, you don't need the signup page to be a dynamic page -- you can just hardcode the "ul" form variable with your "in-house" (first) affiliate number and upload the file to your server like any other HTML file.

Step 9: Create Template File (ONLY if you are using STATIC affiliate pages)

If you are going to be using "static" affiliate pages, you need to create an "index.html" template file and upload it to the "templates" folder. See "[Understanding Template Files](#)" for details.

Step 10: (OPTIONAL) Add Traffic Logging Image to Home Page

If you want to give your affiliates traffic stats for their page(s), you'll need to add a traffic logging image to the affiliate "home" page template (index.html or index.txt, depending on whether you're using static or dynamic pages). See "[Enabling Traffic Logging](#)" for details.

Step 11 Test Everything

The installation is now complete -- test everything out! I recommend that you try "signing up" as a new affiliate (the first time you do this, you'll be creating your "in-house" affiliate account.), placing an order via that new affiliate link, checking orders from the control panel, etcetera.

ENABLING TRAFFIC LOGGING

If you want to enable hit logging (traffic stats) for your affiliates, you need to include the following HTML code in the template files of interest.

Obviously, you'll need to use the correct URL for your software installation . . .

This will result in a 1-pixel (invisible) image on the page. You should always insert the "traffic logging HTML code" as close to the top of the page as possible to assure the page visit is logged. There are a couple of caveats to this method of logging "hits" and "referrer" information . . .

First, if someone has their graphics turned "off" on their browser, this hit counter will never be activated -- because the browser will never act on the image code you added to the HTML file.

Second, if someone has viewed the page recently, and they come back to view it again, most likely that "hit" won't register, because the image file will still be in that person's browser "cache".

Third, if one of your affiliates has a link (to their affiliate page) on some other web site and someone clicks on it, this method of hit logging won't be able to tell where the clickthrough came from. That's because the page containing the image is considered to be the "referring" page.

YOUR AFFILIATE "SIGN UP" FORM

This should be the easiest part of the installation! Just take the example signup page, "signup.html", and modify the HTML code to your needs. Be sure to change the FORM action to point to the "start.cgi" script in the YOAP program files directory on your server.

VARIABLES RECORDED/USED BY THE SIGN-UP SCRIPT

The signup script (named "start.cgi") is designed to work with specifically defined FORM variables. You must use these specific variable names for the script to work correctly.

For instance, for the "Name" field, the variable must be "name" -- it can't be "fullname", because the script is looking for a variable called "name".

Here are the variable names used (and recorded to disk, sent by email) by the new affiliate signup script:

(IMPORTANT! All variables names MUST BE LOWERCASE!)

Variable Name	How Used
-----	-----
level	This is the "affiliate level" you will be assigning to those who submit this signup form. Usually a "hidden" field (See explanation below . . .)
name	Affiliate's name
address	First address line
suite	Second address line
city	City
state	State/province
zip	Zip Code
phone	Phone number
email	Email address
country	Country
checkboxx1	checkboxx1 and checkbox2 are fields you can use if you want someone to "okay" a statement you make on your signup form. See the "signup.html" file for an example of this.
checkboxx2	
custom1	These 5 custom fields can be used for whatever additional information you require from your affiliates. Web site address, ID#, Tax ID#, favorite color, referral info, whatever you feel is important . . .
custom2	
custom3	
custom4	
custom5	
forcednum	Affiliate-seleted affiliate number
forcedpass1	Affiliate-selected password
forcedpass2	Affiliate-selected password (same as forcedpass1)
required	"Required field" definition

SIGNUP FORM "LEVEL" FIELD

The "level" variable is normally a hidden field on your form, as in this example for a "level 1" affiliate sign-up form:

```
<input type=hidden name="level" value="1">
```

When someone signs up as an affiliate, the value of this field will be written in their file and will determine what "level" of commissions they are eligible for.

If you want to offer your affiliates multiple "signup" options (i.e. if you want them to be able to sign up as a "level 1" or "level 2" or "level 22" affiliate) you can either have a separate form for each level, or you can allow them to select different levels using normal HTML input elements such as checkboxes, radio buttons, or a "select" box.

However you set up the level selection, be sure you use **"level"** for the name of your input element. If the "level" field is omitted from your form, it will default to "1".

You can always change levels manually by using the "Modify/Delete" option from the "Affiliate Contact and Commission Information" administration page.

UPLINE SPONSOR FIELD

If you are using the "Two-Tier commission mode", this field is required. When the "signup form" template is copied to a new associate's site, this field will contain their associate number. So when others sign up "under" that new associate, the signup script will know who the sponsor is.

In the **template file** for the "signup" form used on your associate sites, you need to have this line:

```
<input type="hidden" name="ul" value="AFF_NUM">
```

Note that "AFF_NUM" will be replaced with a real (newly generated) affiliate number when a new affiliate site is replicated. Remember, this is for your TEMPLATE file.

If you're going to have a signup form on your "main site", then instead of using "AFF_NUM" for the "ul" value, you'll want to use an affiliate number YOU control.

AFFILIATE-SELECTED NUMBER AND PASSWORD

If you include a "forcednum" input field, the signup script will use that value for the affiliate number. All characters other than letters and numbers are stripped out of this affiliate number.

If this field is left blank (or left off the form altogether), an affiliate number will be automatically generated using the affiliate number "prefix" and "suffix" values set in the configuration file.

If the "forcedpass1" and "forcedpass2" fields are filled in (and are the same), that value will be used for the new affiliate's password. If they are left blank (or left off the form), a set of random characters will be used to generate one automatically.

DEFINING "REQUIRED" AFFILIATE SIGNUP FORM FIELDS

There will be certain information which you will want to REQUIRE the affiliate to supply -- such as name, address, credit card information, etc. Through the use of a "hidden" field, you can specify which information is required.

If the affiliate fails to supply information in the specified fields, they will get an error message and will be asked to hit their browser "BACK" button and fill in the missing information. An example is given below:

```
<INPUT TYPE="hidden" NAME="required" VALUE="firstname-First Name,lastname-Last Name,email-Email Address,address1-Your Address,city-City,state-State,zipcode-Zip Code">
```

Note the format being used -- first you type the field name used on your form, then you add a hyphen ("-"), then you add the text to be displayed if someone leaves that field blank. For instance, in the above example, if someone left the address line blank, they'd get a message telling them that "Your Address" (not "address1") was a required field.

Be sure to include commas but NO SPACES between fieldname-text values, as shown. Spaces in the defined "text to display" are fine (as shown in the above example).

If you leave the "required" line out altogether, the following default value will apply: "firstname,lastname,email,address1,city,state,zipcode".

SUBSTITUTION CODES

Substitution codes allow you to insert "dynamic" values in your affiliate site pages, response pages and emails. Here are some examples of what you might want to do:

1. You could insert the affiliate's name and email address somewhere on the "home" page of their affiliate site (either a static page or a dynamic page).
2. After someone signs up as an affiliate, you could include all of their affiliate information in the confirmation email, thus allowing them to check it for accuracy.

Here are the substitution codes you can use in your **template** files (including the "disabled_account_message.txt" file, which is really just a special-use template file):

AFF_NUM	AFF_SUITE	AFF_CUSTOM1
AFF_NAME	AFF_CITY	AFF_CUSTOM2
AFF_EMAIL	AFF_STATE	AFF_CUSTOM3
AFF_PHONE	AFF_ZIP	AFF_CUSTOM4
AFF_ADDRESS	AFF_COUNTRY	AFF_CUSTOM5

The above substitution codes may also be used in any template file in the templates directory.

These can also be used in the **signup_thankyou.html** file and the **signup_email.txt** file. These files define what someone sees on their browser and in their email, respectively, when they sign up as an affiliate. There is one additional substitution code which can only be used in these two files: **AFF_PASSWORD**, which is replaced with the affiliate's password.

UNDERSTANDING TEMPLATE FILES

If you want the ability to embed affiliate information (affiliate number, name, email, etc.) on a web page, you'll need to upload a "template" of that page to your "templates" folder.

Templates can be created for two kinds of pages:

1. "Static" pages, which are copied to an affiliate directory (with their unique information embedded where specified) anytime a new affiliate signs up.
2. "Dynamic" pages, which exist only in the templates folder, but can be displayed "on demand" with all the required "dynamic" information (unique affiliate information).

The only real differences between these files and your typical HTML files are how you name the files and how you "link" to other pages:

1. Templates which you intend to use for "static" pages need to have a ".html" or ".htm" extension (e.g. index.htm, contact.html, etc.)
2. Templates for "dynamic" pages must be uploaded with a ".txt" extension (e.g. index.txt, contact.txt, etc.)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: STATIC/DYNAMIC PAGES

Static Pages

If you choose to use only "static" pages for your affiliate sites, then every affiliate will have every template file copied to their own affiliate directory.

You are no doubt familiar with the link structure for a static page. It would be something like this:

<http://www.yourdomain.com/products/d2343ac/index.html>

In this example, "products" is your "root affiliate directory" and "d2343ac" is the directory created for your affiliate number d2343ac.

If you are only going to have a few affiliates, this may not ever be a problem. But if you plan on having several thousand affiliates, and if you have a fairly sophisticated web site, the required disk space could be significant.

Say you had 1000 affiliates, and your web site was 10 pages of 20000 bytes each. This would mean you'd require $1000 \times 10 \times 20000 = 200,000,000$ bytes of data for your affiliates sites.

Dynamic Pages

Dynamic pages only exist in one place -- your template directory. The link for a dynamic page really point to a CGI script that "copies" the template file to the viewer's browser. As it reads the template file, it looks for the substitution codes specified earlier. When it finds one of these words, it doesn't send that word to the browser, it instead sends the value corresponding to that substitution code.

The link structure for a dynamic page would be something like this:

<http://www.yourdomain.com/cgi-bin/d.cgi?index-d2343ac>

In this example, "d.cgi" is the CGI script that reads the index file from your template directory, makes specific substitutions of the affiliate number, and delivers the modified page to the viewer's browser.

The space you save is the only advantage you'll gain by using this method, but the savings can be significant. Using the same example as I used for "static" pages, your 1000 affiliates would require only 200,000 bytes of storage! That is literally 1000 times LESS storage space than if you used static pages!

The possible disadvantages are:

1. Your affiliates may not have as much "play" with the search engines and directories if they are submitting dynamic pages. This WAS a factor at one time, but I believe it's less so now.
2. Heavy traffic to your affiliate sites may put a greater load on your web server when compared to static pages – this is because a script interpreter must be run every time a dynamic page is requested.

Generally I recommend dynamic pages as a cleaner solution – I have yet to see any case where the use of dynamic pages have slowed down a server to any noticeable degree.

TEMPLATE FILE SPECIFICS

NOTE: If you're going to have your affiliates promote your site via "static" templated pages, the "home" (first) page of every affiliate site must be named "index.html" or "index.htm".

General Requirements

You must give all your "static" pages an extension of ".html" or ".htm" that's how the sign-up script knows to copy them to the new affiliate's directory.

The "dynamic" pages must have an extension of ".txt" -- the "d.cgi" script requires that extension.

When someone signs up to be an affiliate, a directory will be created for them (under the root affiliate directory), and all the static pages will be copied from the "templates" directory to that new affiliate directory.

Links to Static Pages

When you link to a static templated page from another static templated page, you can do it one of two ways:

A "relative" address:

Get the details

An "absolute" address:

Get the details

REMEMBER, you're creating a TEMPLATE file here. "AFF_NUM" will not end up in the copied file. When someone signs up to be a new affiliate, the script will take the template file, and when copying that file, it will first substitute the new affiliate number (i.e. "d2343ac") in for every instance of "AFF_NUM" in the template file.

Links to Images

Because graphics files aren't copied to affiliate directories, any graphic files you have for your affiliate web pages must be referenced as an absolute URL, such as this one:

Links to Dynamic Pages

One of the scripts in this software package is named "d.cgi". This script expects to be given two pieces of information: the name of the template file being requested and the affiliate number. This information is all included in the request, as shown here:

```
<A HREF="http://www.yoursite.com/cgi-bin/d.cgi?contact-AFF_NUM">Contact  
Information</A>
```

[Again, remember that this link is in a TEMPLATE file. After all the substitutions are made to this template file, (and assuming the new affiliate's number was d2343ac), the above link will look like this: **http://www.yourdomain.com/cgi-bin/d.cgi?contact-d2343ac**]

In the above example, the page being requested is "contact" -- the d.cgi script knows to add a ".txt" to the end of that name and then to look for "contact.txt" in the templates directory.

The affiliate number is "d2343ac". The script will look up this affiliate's information use that information in place of any substitution codes you have in the contact.txt file. See "[Substitution Codes](#)" for details.

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