

Affiliates: HIDE That Link!

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If you earn money from affiliate programs, you could be losing up to 30% of your income. That is a commonly quoted statistic for the rate of affiliate link hijacking.

Why does this happen?

Well, what would you do when faced with a link like this:

<http://www.leaddogbiz.com/cgi-bin/t.cgi/your-number>

You might be tempted just to cut off the part after .com and go buy the product directly from the seller. But, since you are honest and ethical, you don't. You realize that you are only cheating someone like yourself. Someone who is just trying to make a living by selling great internet marketing products. And it's not like you save any money. The price is the same. The problem is that other 30% who don't mind cutting off the affiliate ID.

So what to do?

The answer depends on several things:

- Do you use your link on websites?
- Do you promote your link in email or e-zines?
- How much web tech do you know?

Links on websites are relatively easy to hide from the majority of visitors. Just hot-link some relevant text. Don't write out the whole link like this:

<http://www.leaddogbiz.com/cgi-bin/t.cgi/your-number>

Write it like this:

Reviewer reveals what you get BEFORE you buy!

Here's the HTML code:

```
<a href="http://www.leaddogbiz.com/cgi-bin/t.cgi/your-number" Reviewer reveals what you get BEFORE you buy!</a>
```

Now the link looks like part of your sales pitch, but it is highlighted and underlined like all other active links. The affiliate link still shows up in the browser address line when the cursor is over the link, but most people don't look at that. They will just follow your link.

If you promote in e-zines and email, you can't hide the link like we just did. You MUST write out the entire link. But what you want is something that looks like this:

<http://www.your-web-site.com/review.htm>

If you are web tech savvy, and you prefer to save money, you can code either of these solutions yourself.

If you have more money than time or HTML knowledge, then you will want to buy a solution. Look around for ads promoting masked links. Or search for "link cloaking" on any major search engine. Most of the items sold are programs that generate a cloaking file.

Coding the solution is simple when you know how.

The technique is called frame forwarding. This is done with a small html file that defines a frame, which actually is invisible. But it loads the page your affiliate link points to. Here's the cloaking file:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE></TITLE>
```

```
</HEAD>
<FRAMESET ROWS="100%, *" frameborder="no" framespacing=0 border=0>
<FRAME SRC="YOUR-LINK-HERE" NAME="awindow" frameborder="no" framespacing="0" marginheight="0"
marginwidth="0"></FRAME>
</FRAMESET>
<NOFRAMES><CENTER>Your browser does not support frames. We recommend upgrading your browser.<br>
<br><a href="YOUR-LINK-HERE">HEADLINE</a></CENTER>
</NOFRAMES>
</HTML>
```

To use this, replace "YOUR-LINK-HERE" with your own affiliate link. Be sure to include the http:// as well.

Replace "HEADLINE" with a catchy headline for your product. This will only be seen if the browser does not support frames. This is very unlikely these days.

If you want to add a title to the page, put it between the `<title>` blocks. This may be seen by search engines.

Then save the file as .htm, .shtm, .html or .shtml, whichever your server supports. Upload it to your server and you are ready to link to it.

Now, in your email ads you can use a simple URL for your affiliate link. Let's say you named your file wow.htm.

<http://www.yourwebsite.com/wow.htm>

And you're done. Your link is cloaked. Readers see a much friendlier link. Your ads are shorter without that long affiliate link. No one is likely to ever find and hijack your affiliate link.

Ray Franklin founded The Success Equation to give internet marketers the information, tools, and tips they need to be successful. <http://www.success-equation.com> Email ray@success-equation.com