



HOW TO  
monetize  
your  
WordPress  
blog





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*If you're ready to become a serious blogger and start making money online, all you need are the right techniques, some tools you trust, and a little creativity!  
Let's get started.*

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The internet belongs to millions who have shared their passion with others via blogging. The leading authorities on their craft, providing step-by-step guides for others just starting out. The ones that relate to the research-driven decision makers, comparing multiple options for products and services, inspiring confidence in buying decisions.

If that sounds like you or the current state of your site, you're maybe thinking, yeah, okay, but then what's next? How can I make a little coin on all the hard work and resources I've put into making this WordPress site amazing? How do I convert my readers into customers? Or at the very least, how I can I recover the investment I've already made in design, hosting, and my time?

Step one is to understand the type of blog you have (or would like to build!) and how it's tailored to earn you money.

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# 01 The types of blogs that drive revenue

This question is a little tricky, because the real and true answer is that any well-built and thoughtful WordPress blog can drive a lot of revenue; there really is no secret formula. In general, your goal is to attract a sizeable audience that provides high value to potential advertisers and to keep those readers loyal, driving up site visits.

In general, blogs that have a particular niche or interest group are more likely to develop a loyal readership at scale. While it might seem tempting to appeal to a really broad audience in order to boost your numbers, overgeneralizing can cause your blog to get lost in a sea of similar content and your readers may drop off quickly.

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## MEET HEATHER

She has a real eye for fashion and works a day job that requires her to travel frequently. Instead of launching a general fashion blog highlighting her outfit of the day, Heather could consider a blog detailing her top fashion finds in each city she visits. Featuring her favorite boutiques, her tips for finding bargains in a new city, and an outfit she feels really captures the vibe of the local woman is bound to attract a loyal readership that grows with each new city featured! (We'll hear more about Heather later.)

Now, let's talk about some specific types of blogs that are perfect for monetizing.

**Note: For the purposes of this book, we won't be addressing eCommerce sites, since their entire purpose is driving revenue. If selling products is your main focus, check out our free, [ultimate eCommerce guide!](#)**



## COMPARISON AND REVIEW SITES

Word of mouth is the oldest marketing medium in the book, and certainly among the most effective. Providing in-depth and insightful reviews of products, services, or businesses that you have personally used or patronized can build a valuable user base relatively quickly.

Comparing various services is a great way to help your readers decide among various options. Objectively comparing user experience, product quality, value for the money, and other attributes in a way that is easy to digest and informative is a highly in-demand skill, and the sites that are doing it right are making lots of money.

Keep in mind, monetizing a comparison or review site only works as long as you maintain true transparency. If goods or services were exchanged for your review, or your review contains referral links, it's imperative (and in some places, the law) that you disclose that information to your readers.

## TUTORIALS/COURSES

Developing a set of self-paced tutorials or instructional videos is a great way to get a loyal following, and monetizing can be a relatively quick next step. Just make sure your content is unique and provides real value to customers, or they'll skip over it in favor of free resources. Often times, introductory or "101" content is readily available, so consider the intermediate or advanced audiences as potential valuable targets.

Keep in mind that tutorials and courses do not have to live on a standalone site. If you maintain a WordPress site to advertise your photography business, you could consider adding video content about how to gain more photography clients or how to deal with unhappy clients. It's a great way to earn passive income in addition to your core business.

No matter what type of site you own or who your audience is, as long as you're providing valuable information that keeps people coming back, you have a great opportunity to monetize! Next, let's dive into some of the specifics of making money with your WordPress site.

*“The key to monetization is to provide valuable information that keeps people coming back.”*



# 02 Options for monetizing your site

## BANNER ADS

They're basically the oldest trick in the marketing book, and just about as old as the internet itself. Sometimes the classics stick around because they're effective, sometimes it's just because no one has thought of anything better. We'd put banner ads somewhere in between.

If you want to pursue banner ads, there are a few different ways to go about it.

### 1. Sell directly to advertisers

The first is to designate space on your site, create a rate card with sizes, specs, etc. and sell directly to advertisers. You can sell on a flat fee for a designated time period, or as a CPM (cost per thousand impressions model). The advantage to a CPM model is that you have total control over what ads get displayed on your site and can make sure they adhere to your brand standards. The disadvantage is the time and effort it takes to sell advertising and the extra step of invoicing your advertisers. It's a fairly high maintenance approach to banner ads and monetization in general.

“*Banner ads –one of the oldest tricks in the marketing book.*”

### 2. Sell via ad networks

Your second option is to sell space via ad networks, such as [Google AdSense](#). There are several WordPress plugins available for seamless implementation of programs like this. You can still designate where the ads are displayed on your site, but to attract the most advertisers, you'll want to stick with the industry standard ad sizes. We would recommend using a third party system if you are planning to sell banner ads, simply due to the added convenience and simplicity.



## The pros and cons of banner ads

There are a few key benefits to banner ads. The first is that if you have a lot of traffic, they can drive a significant amount of revenue. If you use an ad network, aside from some initial setup, it's relatively low maintenance. Another benefit is that they come with lots of good data. You will know via AdSense how many impressions and clicks your ads received, and which placements are the most profitable for you. You can optimize for various devices and provide data to your client if needed.

There are, of course, a few drawbacks to banner ads. First, advertisers seem to be growing wary of them. Marketers are asking a lot of questions about viewability or impression quality, or whether their desired customer even saw or retained anything about the ad. With the prevalence of ad blocking software, your potential audience might be shrinking by the second. Also,

they seem out of sync with the current sleek, simple trend in web design. Ads can stick out like a sore thumb on a page that is designed with several visual components or on a one-page layout. They also take away your control over your site's aesthetic. You have no idea whether a network ad will match your site or even who the advertiser will be. You could find advertisers showing up with which you have no personal experience, or even a negative experience.

Everything on your page should reflect your brand promise, and sometimes banner ads can seem like invaders.

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## PREMIUM AND GATED CONTENT

If you've developed a loyal following of readers who are learning from your WordPress blog, you may consider developing a strategy for offering premium content to paid subscribers. This means that your best secrets, tips, and tricks are available only when someone purchases a membership on your site or buys content a la carte.

We would caution you, however, against making 100% of your content gated. Free content will be what attracts new users to your site, and it's unlikely you'll have people lining up to pay you money unless they're convinced they'll find value. It's important to establish and maintain your position as an authority on your subject matter. Remember that free content is plentifully available across the internet, so yours must be unique, different, and at a different level than others out there.





Remember Heather, our friendly travelling fashionista? She's developed quite a following writing about her fashion adventures in new cities and is ready to monetize her blog. Some ideas for premium content might be to offer personalized consultation and styling services via Skype, mapping out a personalized shopping trip in a new city (complete with navigation, walking directions, etc.), or a step-by-step course on how her followers can launch their own fashion blogs.

One of the biggest benefits of premium content is that it can be quite lucrative for bloggers who offer a great service and have substantial audiences. Depending on the content, some of it can be relatively passive, such as a class or tutorial that you create once and can continue to reuse. More personalized services obviously take a larger investment of time, but can demand a much higher price than more general content.

While gated and premium content is great, there are a few challenges with this method of monetization. One is that you may need some additional development resources to securely collect payments and hide premium content behind a paywall. You'll want to make sure the content doesn't get shared among multiple people for free, since that would defeat the purpose. This method is also less scalable than others. Even if our fearless fashionista, Heather quit her full time job to pursue fashion blogging, she can only sell as many Skype consultations as she has time for in a day.





## INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing is a relatively new term for a practice that's as old as advertising itself. It's an option available for WordPress blogs with substantial readership, most likely in the hundreds of thousands and above. It can also apply to social media accounts with huge follower counts. Essentially if a brand believes you are a trusted authority to a group of people that includes a large number of potential customers, they'll pay you to promote their brand via your social media channels or on your blog.

Since we're talking about WordPress sites, we'll talk about what this looks like on a blog. More specifically, Heather's blog! She's gathered quite a large audience with her blog and styling services, and several brands have determined that her readers are a potential gold mine of new customers. One in particular is a chain of boutiques in Chicago, where she has told her readers she will be visiting at the end of the month.

Heather placed an "Advertise with Me" link in the footer of her site and provided contact information, which the marketing team from the boutique chain clicked on. They sent Heather an email offering to send a towncar to her hotel to provide transportation to the closest boutique location while she is in Chicago. They also offered a \$250 clothing stipend and an additional \$250 gift certificate to use as a prize for a sweepstakes promotion on Heather's blog. In exchange, Heather will write an honest review of their store and selection for her readers, complete with photos of the outfits she selected. Heather will be sure to disclose to her readers that she was compensated for her review, but that it in no way affected her assessment of the boutique's product or service.



## The pros and cons of influencer marketing

Sounds amazing right? It definitely can be. The barriers to entry on this method are a bit higher than others, as most brands will want a substantial readership and a fairly targeted audience in order to utilize a blogger as part of their influencer marketing strategy. While it may work for you to reach out to a brand and volunteer your services, it typically works the other way, with brands approaching bloggers they have identified as valuable.

In other words, don't call them – they'll call you.

While awesome, that can be a bit of a disadvantage as the revenue stream is entirely unpredictable. This is another method that struggles at scale. If every post on your entire blog is a sponsored post, your readers will start to wonder if they can trust you or if you're just a corporate sell out. It's important to find a balance and to choose brands that you genuinely believe in and can speak about with enthusiasm. It is imperative that you maintain objectivity and trustworthiness, or not only will your revenue stream be limited, but your readership will dwindle.

*“It's important to find a balance and choose brands that you genuinely believe in and speak about with enthusiasm.”*

## REFERRAL MARKETING

Referral marketing is a favorite of WordPress blog owners as it combines some of the best elements of all of the other methods we've discussed. Essentially, bloggers, instructors, and comparison sites can join referral marketing programs that incentivize them to promote products in exchange for commissions or credit when products are sold. Referral marketing

*“Referral marketing is a favorite method of monetization for many WordPress blog owners.”*

is great because you're get compensation for raving about products and services you already love. It seems authentic, your followers appreciate the advice, and you feel good about helping the companies you adore.





So, back to Heather. She has joined the referral program for Nordstrom, one of her all time favorite clothing retailers. She is given a custom referral link and also banners to advertise a free shipping promotion Nordstrom is currently running. Heather places the banner ad on her site, but also selects a pencil skirt from Nordstrom as one of her Fall must-haves for wearing to work. She uses a link on her blog when talking about the skirt and it leads to the page for that SKU on the Nordstrom site. When her reader clicks through and purchases that skirt, or any other eligible items at Nordstrom, Heather earns a commission, typically somewhere between 3-10% of the total sale, but potentially even higher. A similar action happens when users click on the free shipping banner she placed in her sidebar. Not only is she providing value to her users with excellent recommendations and access to a free shipping offer, but she's driving revenue effectively as well.



Like with influencer marketing, it's definitely a best practice to participate exclusively in referral programs whose products and services you truly believe in. You want to make sure your credibility isn't compromised by blasting referral-linked products all over your site. Make sure they fit seamlessly into your content, and as always, be sure to disclose that your post contains referral links.

Think outside the obvious when it comes to referral marketing. You don't have to limit your referral partnerships only to retailers in your vertical. You can join programs that aren't standard retailers. For instance, we know you love hosting your site with Flywheel, so [joining our program](#) and putting a badge in your footer exclaiming your site is "Proudly Hosted by Flywheel" can drive traffic and referral commissions without being intrusive or disrupting the normal flow of your site.

In fact, that's one of our favorite things about referral marketing. You don't have to completely disrupt your site or change your content plans in order to feature referral links. Just find and join the right programs and promote the best of the best. Referral commissions can add up quickly, so there is a great deal of revenue potential with this method. It's relatively easy to implement, too. It just takes some work initially to apply for programs, but once you're set, it's relatively quick and easy to add referral links to your site. Referral marketing is truly a win-win scenario. You provide valuable traffic to advertisers, they reward your advocacy, and you're recommending the greatest tools for your readers!

The one challenge of referral marketing is that it takes a bit of effort to keep up with promotions, stock, and features offered by your referral partners. Sometimes they offer unique deals exclusively to partners, sometimes there are week long sales or daily "Flash Sales," and keeping up with the newest info can be somewhat time consuming. The investment of time can have a huge payoff, but it's imperative that any offers you advertise are current or you may get a reputation as an unreliable source of info. You also need to make sure that products you're highlighting are still available on the site, as retailers can change their inventory frequently.

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## 03 How to get started

Hopefully by now you've developed a feel for the methods of monetization that might work best for your site. Many WordPress blog owners utilize a combination of these techniques, depending on the type of content they are promoting, seasonality, and a variety of other factors.



In general, you will find more success in a shorter period of time if you already have a great readership established. If you're not quite there yet, maybe focus on building your audience before you monetize. Work on building value and loyalty first, then the money will start flowing. In order to determine exactly how many visitors you are getting and where they are coming from, we suggest connecting your site with [Google Analytics](#) prior to even launching. It will inform lots of choices you might make for your blog and allow you to compare different pieces of content quickly and easily.

If you have a readership and you've decided which monetization methods you think might work for you, the next step is to get organized. You are taking your site from a hobby to a business, and like any other enterprise, you need goals and a roadmap. Make lists of your priorities for your site.

- **Where does monetization fall in the list of your goals?**
- **What would you consider successful when it comes to revenue driven by your site?**
- **How much time can you reasonably devote to your site, and what is the return on your investment?**
- **Is your site tuned up from a programming standpoint, or does it make sense to make changes to boost performance?**
- **Does it look the way you want it to look right now?**

It's possible you may need to invest time or money to make the site as impressive as possible before monetization is possible. As they say, sometimes you have to spend money to make money. Identify blogs you love that seem to have effectively monetized their sites and see what they are doing well, what you like, and what you'd like to do differently.

The next step is to research like crazy. If you've decided that banner ads are right for you, start comparing ad networks and their various capabilities. Decide what is most important to you, be it reporting, easy integration, flexibility, etc. and look for networks that match your priorities. If you want to pursue referral marketing, make a list of some of your favorite brands, ones you can wholeheartedly recommend, and look into whether they have referral programs available.

After you have a clear vision, just start signing up. Most programs will have some kind of a screening process, so make sure to read the forms carefully and provide all the information requested. Once you are accepted into the programs, most will walk you through how to implement them. Make sure to test and retest any links on your site to make sure things are working properly. And don't set it and forget it! Review your monetization methods frequently to make sure you're still set up properly, links are working, and you're getting all the referral credit you should. Last, make sure to read all communication that is sent by your service providers so you're aware of all updates and any new features.



# 04 How Flywheel can help you make money

Flywheel not only offers world-class hosting services, but we're passionate about empowering WordPress bloggers, designers, and creatives to run a successful site, whatever that looks like for you. That's why we've developed a bunch of great workflow tools and will even migrate your site to our platform (for free!) so you can start monetizing your site quick and easy.

If you like what we have to offer, we also have our own referral program with generous commissions equal to 3x the first month's payment on any plan. Like previously mentioned, some of our referral partners have been really successful in simply placing a badge in the footer of their site, driving traffic to Flywheel and watching their commission stack up. We also offer two types of commissions:

## 1. REFERRALS

The gold standard in referral marketing. Use your custom referral link to promote Flywheel on your blog, your social media channels, your dating site profile, wherever you want! When customers come to Flywheel and purchase a plan with us, your pile o' cash starts growing!

## 2. TRANSFERS

When you spin up a new demo site on Flywheel and transfer it to your client, your commission automatically registers as soon as they activate a new plan with us. It's super slick and super easy – a win-win for both your client and your bank account!

## Flywheel Referral Program

*Team up with Flywheel and join our all-star referral program!*

Thousands of designers and developers are super fans of Flywheel. They love our blazing fast site speeds, friendly and efficient service, industry-leading management tools, and inspiring design. We are so pumped to be #1 in their hearts and are honored every time they refer us to their friends and customers. Our friends tell us that the lucrative commissions (up to \$500 per referral!) are awesome, but most of all they love knowing their friends and clients are getting a WordPress hosting platform that leads the industry with innovation, service, and handy tools that help them spend more time doing what they love.

[APPLY NOW](#)

The world wide web has given a voice to the deep thinkers, the dreamers and doers, and we love it. The entrepreneurial spirit is core to what we do here at Flywheel, so we're always excited to see the new and innovative ways people use WordPress to tell their story, create communities, and build successful businesses.

We'd love to talk more about how we can come up with a custom solution for monetizing your WordPress site. Just shoot us an email anytime at [referrals@getflywheel.com](mailto:referrals@getflywheel.com) with some info about your site and we'll offer some pro tips! And if you enjoyed this ebook, [share it on Twitter](#) to help your friends start monetizing their sites, too.

*Ready to start monetizing your site?  
[Join the Flywheel Referral Program today!](#)*



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# What is Flywheel?

Flywheel is a delightful platform that empowers designers, developers, and digital agencies to focus on what they do best — building beautiful, functional sites for their clients. We make it a breeze to create and develop WordPress sites, handle hosting, manage projects, and ultimately scale your business.

Stop wasting time on server management, security plugins, caching, and all those other boring repetitive tasks that take your focus away from growing your business and jeopardize your relationship with clients. Get Flywheel and get back to doing what you love.

## CONTACT SALES

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Or, sign up at [getflywheel.com](https://getflywheel.com)



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