

# RAMPED REVIEWS

BY  
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**get to writing!**

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# Introduction

You have heard it can be done. You have seen other blogs rake it in like crazy. What you don't know...is how to get all of this free product to your doorstep and make the UPS and Fedex guy see your house as part of his regular route. With all of the resources the web has to offer, why haven't you received a phone call or email begging you to review their product on your website?

Ramped Reviewing is going to bring your blog to a level that you never imagined. We are going to increase your blogs worth past the written articles that you slave over day in and day out. We are going to bring assets to your front door and build a profitable business all without costing you one penny out of your bank account.

Through all of my blogging, what I have found is that most bloggers have zero background in sales or dealing with companies and corporations on a sales and marketing level. Most bloggers are internet based professionals or in another field where daily corporate sales is not part of their resume.

This is where I step in.

My unique background in multiple levels of sales in multiple industries is going to give you the knowledge you need to ramp your blog into the free product reviewing realm.

# Mountain Biking by 198

If you are anything like me, you are probably pretty skeptical if this will actually work for you and by this point...you are ready for some proof. My biking blog, [Mountain Biking by 198](#), brought in over \$24,040 in free product before it's 1 year anniversary.

Additionally, Mountain Biking by 198 was also sent over \$44,950 in review product that was returned to the manufacturer. If that wasn't enough, we also helped out the industry by getting over \$3,000 worth of product donated to various causes for the purpose of fund raising that further grew my brand awareness.

I know that is a lot to swallow at once, but here is the number...that equals **\$71,990** in product when the blog was not even a year old. So...do I have your attention now?

**“I received  
over \$10,000.00  
worth of  
product in one  
month!”**

My success with review blogging also caught the attention of top blogger Yaro Starak of [Entrepreneurs-Journey.com](#). During a podcast (before Mountain Biking by 198 was a year old), [we discussed](#) how I received over \$10,000 worth of review product that I kept in one month alone!

As you are starting to see, product reviews on your blog can be a secondary revenue stream as well as incredible content for your blog as you grow your blogging from a hobby into a thriving business.

My unique experience in the corporate arena has allowed me to apply what I know about business to blogging (bio at the end of this ebook). It is also important to state that each and every business I have dealt with through blogging is still a great contact and is ready to do business again without the need for a glorified ad as a product review.

## Why does this seem like new information?

Companies sending free product to publications (including bloggers) is not a new revelation. Print magazines and newspapers have been enjoying the fruits (circulation numbers, free product and advertising revenue) of product reviews for a long time now.

It all started to get crazy for blogs when they started seeing huge traffic and subscriber numbers that not only provided necessary page views for exposure, but also a loyal following that created sales to a very targeted group of consumers.

These targeted followers are extremely attentive and ready to buy. They are not drivers down a highway or a casual bathroom reader of a magazine. They are a specific group that is engaging with the subject matter on a daily basis. This provides the perfect audience for companies that are trying to promote and sell their products and services.

However, in the Internet marketing world, most of the emphasis is placed on affiliate ad revenue, direct advertising and how to build/grow your blog. There is very little information on how to approach companies about review product and how to keep those relationships long lasting over the life of your blog...until now!

In fact, review product can be a secondary source of revenue that can be highly lucrative. This product will also serve as a foundation for direct advertising, traffic and affiliate revenue for your site. These review products and articles will grow your blog and your business exponentially and provide SEO and link bait gold that will send your search engine traffic through the roof.

## Why do companies send free product for review?

Before we get into how to approach prospective companies for review product, we need to understand exactly why they are going to send you their inventory in the first place. Advertising and lead generation for large and small corporations is very expensive.

With ad spots on the conventional media streams (magazine and television) costing in the thousands of dollars, a prospective company has to sell a large quantity of product to see even a marginal return. Add to that...they aren't even completely sure that they are reaching their target audience. Much of the advertising cost is getting wasted on leads that had no intention to buy their product.

This brings us to lead generation. A simple online search for lead generation will bring you to 100's...if not 1,000's of lead generation companies all promising targeted leads for a price. As you can see by these websites, these targeted leads come at a very high price for the company just trying to find that next sale. In some cases, companies are paying upwards of 100 to 200 dollars PER LEAD just for the off chance they will get their name out there and sell another product.

With these figures it is obvious, the cost of doing business is on the rise. So how does this affect the blogger and company relationship?

Here comes the blogger. A blogger has assets at his disposal that the product producing company is very interested in. A blogger has a targeted, attentive audience in their niche and a successful blogger has a lead list generated by their newsletter subscription that would have cost the company thousands to get a hold of.

So what does it cost the company to get their information out there to this potential consumer base...one product. This one product for review is their key that gives them access to this large consumer base that is targeted and interested in buying their products!

One blog, like Mountain Biking by 198, can bring in sales revenue that is off the charts. This becomes increasingly important for small start ups looking to make it big. A review on a highly subscribed blog can give them a low cost jump start to success. The best part...this is all done for their cost of manufacturing...not retail cost.

As you surf the web watching these blogs get thousands of dollars in review product like Mountain Biking by 198...think to yourself...what did it cost the manufacturer, programmer, advertiser to get their product promoted on these sites? Next to nothing... and that is why you can get these same results out of your targeted, niche blog.

That said...there is one non-monetary price that the company is fully aware of...they can not control what you do or say with their product. Unlike conventional forms of advertising, the blogger has complete editorial control over the review article. Have you ever come across magazines that seem like the great review product also had the largest advertising spot that month?

This is a common occurrence because magazines are solely dependent upon ad revenue to generate income. The blogger is more diversified through multiple revenue streams and the more upfront and honest he is about a product, the more credibility he receives with his audience and that equals an even larger audience and subscriber base (which equals more revenue through the multiple income streams).

For a company looking to submit product for review, this can be a concern, but the low price associated with the risk makes for a great investment. 9 times out of 10, you will find they see this small risk as the price of admission.

Recent case studies have also shown that...more times than not...negative reviews do not affect product sales. The increased awareness and product buzz is also a direct contributor to sales, so the negative review often brings more sales than a cookie cutter ad'ish review. That makes a honest review by a blogger even more powerful.

The internet is becoming (most likely already is...) the most used resource for product information prior and after the buying process is complete. Eager consumers are scouring the net to find any and all information they can to be a more educated buyer.

The more these companies can get their name on the front page of major search engines, the more likely these consumers are going to purchase their product. This can not be done alone and they need YOUR HELP to get their name out.



# So, how do I get started?

Before we dive in to realm of reviewing product on your blog, there are several key questions you need ask yourself.

1. Are you ready to take your blog seriously
2. Are you prepared to deal with outside companies and firms?
3. Can you grow a thick skin and hold true to your conclusions?

If you answered yes to these questions, then you are ready to start a serious blog that reviews free product from outside companies.

Now that you know the who, what and why...it is time to start into the how. How do I get free products for review for my blog? The steps that you have to take to get to the 71 thousand dollar mark are the same whether you already have a well-established blog or you are just starting out.

## **When can I start contacting companies for review product?**

The most common question I receive on a daily basis is the how do you get all of this free product to review on your blog? About 30 seconds after I explain how it is done, the next question is, “When can I start reviewing product and contacting companies on my blog?”

It’s never too early to start contacting manufacturers, companies and other firms in search of growing a long term relationship that will eventually lead to product reviews. Notice...I didn’t say that you are going to get something right off the bat just for asking.

Each company may or may not have an idea in their head about review product and how much traffic is needed before they will hand you something for free or to return after the review process. In most cases...they actually

don't, so your highly attentive 100 readers might be just the small group they were looking for!

Typically, you want to start small and work your way up. Do not go after the biggest fish in the sea with a half assed blog design and an idea.

With Mountain Biking by 198, I started with the smaller independent manufacturers that are more willing to start a dialogue. As I grew a reputation in the industry, larger manufacturers (ex. Trek Bikes) started contacting me directly with review interest and eventual product.

If you do not have at least some track record to pull off of...you are going to get laughed out of email and phone call oblivion and that respect will be hard to earn back. When you are small and just starting out...treat it that way! Reach out to companies in your niche and start to build a relationship with the employees.

They are going to...in most cases...really enjoy your enthusiasm and dedication to a product that they put their lives into as well. Smaller companies are also...in most cases...more willing to work with smaller blogs to get the word out about their products and services

A lot of the time, you are going to get no response at all or a quick no. That is ok too. Keep plugging away and start relationships built upon credibility that you will be able to use in your company and review resume for the future.

Remember, every company that you have a working relationship with is now part of your resume that you can further build on.

Also remember, just because you didn't receive an immediate answer does not mean that you are not on that prospective companies radar. I have run into situations in the past where my answer came months later.

One manufacturer, Niner Bikes, was subscribed to my email list and rss feed.

After months of watching the site's progress, the owner responded to my original email. Once the decision makers were comfortable with me and my track record, they moved forward with the review proposal and we now have a great working relationship.

## **What does my blog need to have to contact companies?**

Having said all of that, there are several things I would have in place before writing that first email or picking up the phone for that first cold call:

### **Professional looking blog design**

If you want people to take you seriously...you need to look serious. Have your own domain name and a professional looking blog design. Your name at blogspot.com reviewing the latest in electronics is not going to work. You have to treat this venture as a start up company and present it as such.

### **Reviews in the bank**

Have reviews that you can pull off of to show a track record. Do not blindly email companies with no history of actually performing and writing a review. Ideally, I would have at least 20 quality reviews in the archives before going after some of the bigger fish in your industry.

### **A plan**

You would be surprised how many bloggers get a "sure, that sounds like a great idea...how do we get started?" and they don't have an answer. Lay out your review process and stick to a plan. The companies you are dealing with are going to want to see that you are organized.

Other than that...you should be good to go! Trial and error are going to show you how your industry, niche responds to the whole idea and you will have to adjust during the process. Start small and think big...

## **You Must Have Reviews On Your Blog Already**

As I mentioned before, you need to have a bank of reviews on your blog

before you start getting out there and contacting potential companies. There is not a single company in this world that is going to send you product to review if you have never posted a review article. You have to have some kind of track record with product reviews to get this rolling.

So...what do you review? Anything and everything that you can get your hands on that is related to your niche. Hopefully, you are blogging on a subject that you are passionate about. If that is true, then you should have a long list of products that you are using or have used in the past that you can start writing review articles on. These are normally items that you have purchased for yourself and have extensive experience with their use, features and positive/negative aspects.

I had more mountain biking and general cycling equipment than most. I was...and still am...engulfed in the industry, so finding parts and bikes to review was as easy as stepping into my garage and borrowing a couple of friends rides. I had been riding for 14+ years and this led to my own personal inventory. Reviewing what you know best is the perfect way to get started and what else do you know better than your own equipment?

Start reviewing these products right away and do as many of them as you can. This will start your database of review articles that you are going to draw off of to get free products to review in the future. This series of product reviews are not only going to be an asset for blog promotion, but they are also incredibly useful to your readers and they generate incredible amounts of organic traffic through search engine results.

As you continue your career as a review writer, you are going to continue to review products and services that you use for your own needs. Every review article that you post does not have to be sent straight from the originator to warrant a review post. After-all...content is still content and you need to keep delivering the goods!

## What are companies seeing when they visit your site?

Before we get into how to contact companies in search of valuable review product, you need to step back and look at your site through the eyes of the executive that is going to ok this project. What does the company and exec see when they review your site and make a decision off of their first impression? Are they seeing a serious/professional blog that is going to bring them more revenue by investing in one product for review? Or are they seeing someone's hobby who just wants free stuff?

When a prospective company visits your blog for the first time, they need to see that you are taking this seriously. You need to have a professional looking blog design that features your review articles in some way.

If you take a look at Mountain Biking by 198's homepage, you will find current articles in large boxes, but in the middle of the page...there are "Featured Posts" that are the latest reviews and ongoing reviews of that month. This provides first time readers and companies a direct source for the most up-to-date product reviews.

I would also recommend featuring your product reviews in their own categories that are accessible above the fold on your homepage and preferably on article pages (in the header is the easiest way to accomplish this). Create different categories if you are covering a broader topic to make searching for different reviews on your site easy for everyone.

*A note on subscriber counts: Unless you have an extremely large and strong subscriber base, leave the Google Feedburner stat widget off your homepage. In many cases, the companies will be more interested in pageviews and unique visitors, but if they see a lower number (under 1,000 and in some cases under 5,000) it can really hurt your chances for receiving review product.*

Bottom line...these companies are looking to do business, not make friends. Keep that in mind as you move forward.

**Side note on incorporating:** *It is a great idea to incorporate your websites/blogs as a business entity of its own. Not only is this great for tax reasons, but it also establishes your credibility as a serious blogger. In some cases, these companies will require a tax ID to ship the review product to your front door.*

**Be serious...  
incorporate your  
business.**

*Having a corporate tax ID by forming a LLC (mine is oneniney8, LLC) or other form of incorporation keeps you from having to give out your SSN# (or other form of personal identification).*

# How to contact companies and offer up reviews of their products

So far you have completed the following steps on your way to contacting companies for review product.

- You have started a blog under your own domain name.
- You have a professional looking blog design.
- You have reviewed at least 20 products (more on how to write a solid review in this ebook).
- You have featured these reviews in their own categories and on the homepage.
- You are starting to see search engine results from all of your work! (what a great side effect!)

Congratulations are in order! You are a review writer with a successful blog that can now take the industry by storm reviewing some of the products that most readers would only dream of!

Before I directly contacted any company for review product, I was already seeing direct, organic search engine hits from my articles in the review bank. I used these results to provide social proof of the success of Mountain Biking by 198. This online credibility made opening the communication door much easier in the long run.

## Methods of Contact

Now, with this track record to pull from, it is time to start searching for and contacting companies in your niche to inquire about product reviews. There are four basic ways you can contact potential review product companies.

### 4 Different Methods of Company Contact

- 1. Email** - Email is the most popular form of direct communication today. There are several ways you can go about getting the correct email address, but the most popular way to start is by sending out an email to the address on the contact section of their webpage. In most cases, this email will not fall on the screen of the decision maker, but it will get forwarded to the correct party. To help this process along, preface your email with “please forward this message to the appropriate party” or “please forward this email to the VP of Marketing”.
- 2. Cold Call by Phone** - Cold calling prospective companies can be extremely successful if you are ready to talk to corporate execs and company owners. Voice to voice communication is still the best form and by calling directly, you are showing that you are not just sending out a thousand emails hoping one hits. Some companies will actually require a phone conversation prior to product being sent out to get a handle on who they are working with.
- 3. Snail Mail** - Yes...some business is still done through the postal service. Actually, I have a 100% success rate with using the licking stamp method because it is done correctly. All publicly held companies have to list their officers. Find the VP of Sales or VP of Marketing and send them a typed letter with your written signature explaining your intentions. Put your blog’s logo at the top and use a printer to address the envelope with your return address and logo. This professional looking letter shows that you really took the time and effort to contact their company and it proves the seriousness of your site before you



even talk to this company about review products. Do not forget to include your cell phone number and email address at the bottom of the letter below your signature.

- 4. Fax** - You will find that most corporate website's are not going to give you all of the contact information that you need. Furthermore, just like with the written letter above, there are still corporate execs that like to have a slip of paper on their desk to work with. Almost all companies list a preferred fax number that you can send a professional looking fax (formatted very similarly to the mailed letter) to the head of marketing or sales. I recommend using a fax over internet service like eFax. This makes faxing easy from anywhere when you might not have land lines available.

I normally use a combination of the methods above depending on the company. For smaller companies, I will email first and follow up with a phone call. For larger corporations, I normally skip the email all together. It is going to get trashed or fall into the never ending stack of the thousands of emails they receive on a daily basis. Many of these emails are exactly like yours and they have no time to differentiate between the serious company owners and "I want something free" hobbyist. The formal letter of intent followed by a phone call is much more personal and has a far greater success rate. Sending an email couldn't hurt though...and you never know...you could get lucky!

## **Example Letter with Explanation**

Ready for an example of a letter? Here is one that I have been using regularly that converts at a rate of 85%...100% if it gets in the right hands.

Carly,

My name is Robb Sutton, owner, author and biker for Mountain Biking by 198 and existing customer of Garmin. MTB by 198 is the fastest growing mountain biking website on the internet, according to MTBR, Web Statistics, and research on our market share versus other

publications.

We are beginning a new series of articles and product reviews related to road bikers and commuters. Our approach is aimed at giving attention towards individual riders who both bike for recreation, sport and daily commutes as well as serious road biking enthusiasts. We solicited the opinions of our newsletter subscribers and loyal visitors for products they wanted to see reviews. The largest discussion was GPS units as they relate to all aspects of cycling. Historically, we provide component and part reviews; riding tips and suggestions; and industry news and editorials related to the mountain biking industry. However, we are currently drafting a series of commuting and road-bike reviews sponsored by various bike manufacturers: Blue Competition Cycles and others.

During this series, we would like to plug product reviews that go hand in hand with road biking and commuting. GPS units are an important aspect of riding, both for ride data collection and route planning. The transition of recreational mountain bikers, moving into the commuter and road-bike sector of biking is huge. I could give you the history and statistics, but they are likely to be boring and dull. Fact is, gas prices and financial situations are leading individuals more and more towards natural energy: biking to and from work, home and leisure activities.

We are emailing you to inquire about the opportunity to review your GPS product(s) for our viewers and provide you with genuine product feedback on your merchandise. We currently have a variety of riders to put these products through real-world tests and stages to get an honest and valuable review out to our subscribers.

How can this benefit your organization? We have performed product reviews and feedback for many industry leading companies: Ellsworth, Blue, Fox Racing, SRAM, Hope Technologies, Niner, Rocky Mountain Bicycles and others. Our traffic has sent more visitors to their websites, converting into increased sales of their merchandise and

related products. We have many testimonials from companies and organizations we have worked closely with to assist them in improving their take of the internet pie. We realize your company is likely performing very well and we do not promise increased sales, however we do promise a great deal of exposure of your product through our web venture.

Many of the companies' products we have reviewed have noticed our weight in gold on the internet. We out perform their search results organically and showcase their brand and products throughout our articles. We work diligently to provide quality content and improve our search rankings for various search engines: Google, Yahoo and MSN.

I believe this could be an incredible medium to promote your merchandise, brand and likely add additional revenue to your bottom line.

If you believe this could be a possibility, please get back in touch with me and let's make some arrangements to put your brand on our site. We are currently having the site redesigned and it should be launching very soon, giving us more placement opportunities and options for showcasing the brands we work with.

I am a current user of your Garmin 305 and Nuvi 660, and I believe we can bring the necessary exposure to your new GPS lineup for cycling (605 and 705).

Talk to you soon,

--

Robb Sutton

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123.456.7890

There are several key aspects to this email that need to be pointed out specifically.

**Section 1 - Introduction** - The introduction is short and to the point. Just a simple who you are and what you do is sufficient here. There is no need to get into a lengthy, detailed bio at this point in time. You need to shoot straight into the meat and potatoes of your email because your target reader needs the information fast.

**Section 2 - What you are doing that would benefit their company** - Right here...you are not asking for anything. You are showing how your site will directly benefit their organization. You want these first two paragraphs to show how your site is worth something to the perspective company. This will get their gears running on ideas that will probably include what you are pitching. This is a great time to mention your readers and subscribers because their feedback is the basis of your request.

**Section 3 - The How** - This is where you show the research that you have done into their company and how their products fit into what you are trying to accomplish with your site. This is a great time to use direct examples of past partnerships that are relevant to their industry and your site. Do not list companies here unless you have worked with them exclusively. You never know...their best friend could be the head of marketing at one of the companies you listed. It is always better to be upfront and honest instead of creating fraudulent lists in an attempt to increase your worth. If this is the first time you are contacting a company for review product, be honest and say that. "We are starting to contact companies like yourself because of our increased growth and presence on the web. Due to your dominance as the highest quality widget on the market, we wanted to come to you first about the opportunity of partnering together for a product review on widgetexplosion.com." Being open and honest on where you stand in your blogging is always better than stretching the truth.

**Section 4 - Reinforcement** - Reinforce why this would be beneficial for both parties.

**Section 5 - Signature** - Leave every bit of contact information you have in your signature. This gives your contact a way of getting in touch with you that works best for their needs.

Short, sweet and to the point makes the perfect pitch letter. You are aiming to increase interest and create a need for a response. Every company contact reacts differently and has a different set of guidelines, rules and suggestions as it relates to review products. Your goal is to open the doors of communication so that a partnership can grow.

If you were wondering, Mountain Biking by 198 has a Garmin Edge 705 that is mounted for every posted ride as a result of the letter above.

One of the larger players in one of my niche industries wanted to get together for a phone meeting before we could discuss a large review product deal. During the course of this hour long phone conversation, we talked about everything but the product! He wanted to know what else I had going on and even went as far to read articles off of some of my other sites while we were on the phone. At the end of the conversation, he expressed that the purpose of the phone call was to get to know who I was and what I did. 4 days later...I had a very expensive product on my front doorstep ready for review from, arguably, the top player in the industry...Trek Bikes. Sometimes, the companies are just going to want to know who they are dealing with before they put their neck on the line by sending out their inventory...I would do the same thing...

## **I contact the companies... Now what?**

Just sit back, relax and watch all the product roll in right? Well...no. While some of the partnerships will happen that easily...most will not. It is vastly important to keep track of when you contacted these companies so a week down the road you can send out a follow up email. Contrary to popular belief,

these employees are not spending their entire day scouring the web to find blogs like yours to just give product to. They are most likely just as busy as you are during the day and a friendly reminder/follow up email can go a long way at speeding the process along.

A simple “How’s everything going? Just checking in to make sure you received my email and to make sure there isn’t any more information from my end. Look forward to hear from you.” email normally works perfectly. You need to show increased interest in building the relationship past a broadcast email. Many times, this increased interest is what seals the deal.

### **Once you have reached an agreement**

So...you have gotten the go ahead and it is time to start negotiating the product review deal. Before you even contact these companies for review product, you need to have a laid out plan on how your blog handles product reviews.

Here are some things that you need to have setup but are not carved in stone.

#### **Total time of review period**

How long will it take you to review the product or service? When will the first post hit? When will the last post hit? This can vary from product to product depending on how in-depth you need to go, but still know the review period for each product before contact.

#### **Preferred Form Of Communication**

During the review process, you need to know who to talk to and how to communicate with them if any questions arise. I normally recommend email, but some companies prefer phone calls.

#### **What happens after the review**

Are you keeping the product? Is it sent back to the manufacturer? All of these kinds of details need to be explicitly spelled out at the beginning of the process before the product ever hits your computer screen or front door.

Each product review negotiation is handled independently. You might run into situations where every single product review is handled differently depending on the product and company involved. Be sure to be flexible in your terms to accommodate these differences.

### **Under Promise and Over Deliver**

This is one point that I can not drive home hard enough. By under promising and over delivering, you ensure that the business to business relationship you started with this product review will continue to be positive no matter what the outcome of the review. As much as we would wish that everything is perfect, that just isn't true. You are going to review products that you will not like and might find completely useless. You are going to run into situations where the company that produces/distributes that particular product really does not like your review. All of this is ok if you under promise and over deliver.

How do you under promise and over deliver? Here are some tips how...

### **Over Communicate**

Communication is key. Email your contact when you receive the product. Email them the day before your post to give a heads up that it is coming. Write a thank you email at the end of the product review process thanking them for the opportunity and express how you look forward to working with them on future projects. Send Happy Holiday's emails... there are all kinds of ways that you can show your professionalism and organization. Another great idea is to quote comments from your post, Facebook, Twitter, etc. on what people are actually saying about your review and the product. The company is not going to be following every single one of your media outlets, so a quote with a link goes a long way.

### **Send Stats and Metrics**

By sending stats and metrics to the company of the product you are reviewing, you are providing social proof that this review was worth their time. This becomes increasingly important if you post an unfavorable

review. I have had cases where my review of the product was negative at best, but I was able to track sales through the affiliate links that I was able to report back to the manufacturer showing that the review still increased their bottom line.

### **Take care of items better than you take care of your own**

In some cases, the company is going to request that you send the product back after the review process is complete. In these cases, clean everything up and return the product in the best possible condition you can. At the company level, nothing is more annoying than getting review product back that is a mess. In most cases, they are trying to get that product ready for another media review, so taking the extra step to clean everything up goes a long way in preserving the business to business relationship.

### **Link Throughout Your Blog**

Link back to reviews throughout your blog articles. Whenever you mention that product in the future, link back to the review. This creates increased exposure for the company, but it also increases your pageviews and reader engagement. If an article gains a lot of traction that includes one of those back links, bring it to the attention of the company in question.



# How To Write A Successful Product Review

Writing a successful product review is an art that can be mastered very easily as long as you follow some easy guidelines. Please notice... I said SUCCESSFUL product review. Anyone can just throw information on a page and call it a review, but how do you write a review so that your readers see the honesty and the companies see the benefit? This is a tight rope to walk, but... with practice...becomes easier with each review.

## The First Step - Nothing is Perfect!

The first step in writing a successful product review is the most important. There is no such thing as a perfect product! Every product on the market has its positive points and its flaws and you need to address both in your article. You will find that some products have more of one than the other. Your product review can not seem like a sales pitch that is used to butter up the manufacturer or you will lose all credibility with your blog readers. A great way to display the features of a product in a positive and negative light is to list them at the end an product review much like you see in car magazines. This gives the reader a quick glimpse into both the good and the bad as it relates to the product you are reviewing. Like it or not, many readers are scanners and they will not read your detailed review in full. If they are able to scan your article and see the quick high and low points, they will be converted into return visitors.

Many blogs and print media also use a rating system (stars, chili's, etc.) that is used as a quick glance "how did it fare" assessment. While this rating system can be great for readers, I have seen most of these systems only use 3 stars and above for all products. If you are going to use a rating system, use it honestly. You dilute the value of a rating system by giving every product you review an above average rating.

For those readers that completely read your article from front to back, you need to provide the most complete and objective review article you can. The more details, pictures and video you use...the better. You want to provide a review that leaves no rock unturned in the pursuit of the truth. This shows that you took the time to review the product completely and it builds upon your credibility as a high quality review writer. There are many blogs on the web that will publish sub-par reviews in the attempt to gain traction with a flood of content. This is not the kind of review writer you want to be for a long term business model that will be profitable. You want to gain credibility over time by writing reviews that provide your readers with answers.

- Will this product work for me?
- What will I gain or lose by purchasing this product?
- Who is the ideal customer for this product?
- Is it a value or overpriced?
- Does this product perform as advertised?
- How does this product perform for its intended use?

Your job is to answer these types of questions for your regular readers and fly by night Google/Search Engine visitors.

## **How do I construct my product reviews?**

The following guide is how I construct my product reviews. This method has worked extremely well in both search engines and in growing long lasting relationships with readers and review product companies. You may have to bend and twist this as you see fit to accommodate your niche, but the general principals should apply.

If you follow these steps...you too will have product reviews that appear on the top of the front page or Google begging for views by the general browsing public. It is not a hard process...you just need that leg up on your competition...and here is how.

## Step 1 - Multiple Post Product Reviews

In most cases, you will see blogs and product review sites release one product review article at the end of the reviewing period and move onto the next. Google and other search engines spider your content looking for sites that are an authority on the keywords that people are searching for. I have adopted a multi-post process that has brought my product reviews above the typical one post only reviews.

*Note: Typically, I use this multiple post process with larger review products that tend to have a long review process associated with them. For smaller, less involved reviews, I use a two post process that only includes the introduction post and final review post.*

### **1. Introduction Post**

Create a post introducing the product that you are reviewing. Tell a little background on the company and provide simple stats on the product, what you hope to accomplish through your review and give any initial insight of what you think about the product at first glance. This gives your readers a preview of what will be coming to your site in the future, and it gives you content on the specific product review. Create returning readers by inviting them to your rss feed at the end of the post so they do not miss out on future content!

### **2. Mid-Cycle Review Post (optional)**

Midway through the review period, write a short mid-cycle review post that summarizes what you have discovered about the product up until that point. Do not giveaway your entire results, but give insight on how the review is progressing. In this post, you should 1/2 review the product and again...invite them to your rss feed so they do not miss out on the rest of the review! This mid-cycle review post keeps your readers engaged and provides the necessary social proof for larger review periods. I have also found that mid-cycle reviews cut down on my “how

is that review going?” emails drastically. If you have a very attentive readership, they normally like to hear how things are going. Provide that by writing this mid-cycle review post.

### **3. The Final Review**

This final review post should be your longest of the three. It should recap the previous two posts and provide a complete product review. Link to the previous two posts and share all conclusions...good and bad. You should follow the “How to write a successful product review” guide from later in this ebook as a guide for this post.

Now...what happens when Google spiders your site versus the one product review post on your competitors? It sees your site as the authority due to the increased amount of valuable content on the related subject matter. Your 3 specific posts vs. the one post provides a much better overall user experience and as the Google algorithm continues to advance...this will become increasingly important. This also gives you the maximum allowed pages on Google’s (and other search engines) front page. In many cases, you will see two of your results on the front page of search engine results and this increases your chances of capturing that eager searcher.

## **Step 2 - Pictures...Pictures and More Pictures**

Pictures can be a bloggers best friend when it comes to product review. Not only do they portray the product much better than words ever could, but they provide excellent SEO characteristics. The key is how you format your pictures. Pictures in your review can take the form of screen shots, the product in use and static and up close, detailed shots that show the product like your readers have never seen. Images in your review, when formatted correctly, are also a secondary source of search engine traffic through search functions like Google Image search.

### **1. Properly Name The Picture File**

Get rid of the DSC001 file name. Name your file appropriately. If it is a

picture of a chair...name the file franks-brown-chair-top-view.jpg.

## **2. Captions and Meta Data**

Wordpress makes it extremely easy to properly name your files so that search engines can identify what they are. Simple fill in the Title and Caption fields with as many keyword dense descriptions as you can while still making it useful and readable. The key is not going overboard... just very specific. Double check the alt tag space to make sure that your description carried over. Your alt and title tags for your images are keywords that Google and other search engines use to find relevant images and content.

The result from using more pictures in your reviews (this an include screenshots for software reviews) is more keyword dense reviews that search engines find more useful to their audience. Another side effect is the additional traffic from image search results.

On Mountain Biking by 198, my pictures normally get labeled with something like this: Trek Session 88 FR Front View, Trek Session 88 FR Rear Triangle, etc. This leaves zero doubt for spiders and your readers on what they are looking at in the image. Detailed shots (including computer screen shots are also incredibly helpful for visual learners like myself.

## **Step 3 - Keyword Dense Articles - But Be Careful...**

Step 3 is a very fine line between using keyword dense articles and sounding like your entire article is nothing but keywords. First and foremost...your article should be written for the reader...not search engines. If your article is written solely for search engines and sounds like nothing but a bunch of keywords strung together...you are not going create long lasting, returning readers that will subscribe to your rss feed and your newsletter. Your goal should be to create these kinds of readers.

A little tip that has really hit home with me is this...write the review to the reader first. Then...after you have completed this task, go back through the article and in places where you used words like “it”, replace it with the product name. Here is an example...

### ***Original***

While I was wearing the sunglasses, I noticed they stayed securely on my head...even during running and biking. In low light conditions, they provided adequate light emission and I never felt like they were too dark.

### ***Revised***

While I was wearing the Oakley Straight Jacket sunglasses, I noticed that the the Straight Jackets stayed securely on my head...even during running and biking. In low light conditions, they provided adequate light emission and I never felt like the Straight Jackets were too dark.

As you can see by this example, you created a keyword dense article without taking away from the message or overall user experience. When search engines spider articles looking for the authority on specific keywords, your article will stand out from your competitors without putting off your readers.

## **Step 4 - Proper Use Of Tags**

This one is pretty straight forward. Use your H1, H2 and H3 tags properly and use the review product in every single one of them. A lot of product review writers (me included) like to summarize the good and bad at the end of the article. This is a great way to get article scanners your message. Instead of just saying Positive/Negative or Good/Bad on your summary tags (h2 or h3 normally depending on how you format your articles as they interact with your blog design)...say Good Product Name/Bad Product Name. This provides you with more targeted, keyword dense material, and it doesn't take away from the overall user experience. It also shows the product name in key areas of your blog that search engines spider for relevant keywords (bold, italics, h tags, title tags, etc.)

## Step 5 - Correct Article Titles for SEO Gold

Your article titles should be very specific.

Product Year (if applicable)/Product Brand/Product Model/Description with the word Review

*Example using 3 post method:*

2009 Fox Talas 140 RLC 15mm QR TA - In For Review

2009 Fox Talas 140 RLC 15mm QR TA - On The Trail Review

2009 Fox Talas 140 RLC 15mm QR TA - Final Review

Try not to deviate from this formula as much as possible. Your article titles need to be very specific. It really surprises me how many product reviewers try to get really creative with their titles, and their reviews fall off the front page. Remember you are competing with the actual manufacturer and retailers for that front page spot. They are going to be very specific and you need to be to.

Many of my reviews on Mountain Biking by 198 actually claim the top spot in Google or rank above the actual manufacturer.

If you want to spice up your titles to pop out on the front page, do something like the following:

**2009 Niner Jet 9 Final Review - The 29'er Rocket**

With the above title, you still have the necessary elements to a correct review title, but with the added benefit of a tag line that separates you from the crowd.

If you follow those 5 easy steps, you too will have extremely SEO friendly reviews that will bring you more search engine results than you can possibly

imagine. Just remember to write to your readers first. Your goal is to build long lasting relationships, but if you follow these 5 easy steps...you can turn search engine traffic into return readers. Another key element that is not one of the 5 easy steps that should be incorporated into your site as much as possible...linking back to previous articles. Any time you mention that product in a future blog article...link back to your final review post. This increases page-views and the overall reader experience.

## **BONUS - One More Tip That Will Bring Your Results Off The Charts!**

Video! Use as much video as you possibly can. At the beginning, end and throughout the video...put your logo and website url. Submit that video to all of the video share sites (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.) and watch your results soar even higher. Video is the future of the web, so get used to using it now!

Product reviews are great for traffic and content production, but their biggest selling point is the ability to turn product reviews into cash! All along, I have said that review product can be a great source of secondary income for your blog, and now I am going to show you how.



# Generate some cash

## Affiliate Revenue Through Product Reviews

When readers are scouring Google searching for specific products, they are researching buying decisions. Luckily, you are not new to the game and they click on your first page search engine result in a quest for complete information and answers to their purchasing questions. They read your review and by the end of your brilliant display of real information that is objective and to the point, they see a link to where they can find the absolute best price on the product in question! They click the link, buy the product and you get a kick back from the affiliate sale. It really is that easy! Better yet... once you post the review...it is up there for good and these kinds of sales do not go away!

Affiliate revenue from honest product reviews is an incredible source of long lasting revenue for you blog. Where do you find affiliate programs for products?

Amazon Affiliate Program - One of the largest shopping portals online is an incredible source for affiliate income. Their affiliate program is easy to sign up for, create links and manage. Amazon is also highly regarded and trusted in the retail market, so your readers will trust buying from them directly.

[Sign up for Amazon's Affiliate Program by clicking here](#)

## Secondary Affiliate Companies

Many online retailers and direct sale manufacturers sign up with secondary affiliate sales companies to promote and manage their affiliate sales. In product heavy markets, this is the easiest way to manage large inventories and databases. Here are a couple of companies that I use and have had great experience with. You can search their databases for affiliate programs that fit the needs of your blog.

To sign up...click on the names below.

[Share-a-Sale](#)

[Avantlink](#)

[Clickbank](#)

[Commission Junction](#)

Often times, some manufacturers or online retailers have a preferred affiliate program that they want you to sign up with. When I started discussions with JensonUSA.com (an online bike component retailer), they pointed me in the direction of [ShareASale.com](#) for their affiliate program. Always ask if there is a preferred vendor or affiliate program that they prefer. You never know... they could have their own that pays better than the competition!

While 5% to 10% might not sound like a large percentage, what happens when one reader buys a 700 dollar suspension fork for their bike based off what you said on your review? You get 35 dollars dropped in your account for one action by one reader. See how it starts to add up?

## Direct Affiliate Deals

Many companies can or will offer direct affiliate deals. Make sure to negotiate this before the review is started.

**Quick note:** *Keeping track of affiliate links throughout your blog is not an easy task. If the affiliate company changes links, a company goes out of business or you get a better affiliate deal that requires a link change, going back through your blog and changing these links can be almost impossible given enough content. There is one plug-in that will save your life when it comes to affiliate promotions:*

**[MaxBlogPress Ninja Affiliate Plugin](#)**

*This plugin will completely manage all of your affiliate links quickly and*

*efficiently. I highly recommend it for anyone who is going to be serious about product reviews and affiliate marketing. It will save you days and generate loads of affiliate revenue for your blog and I use it on all of my sites.*

*[Click here to purchase the MaxBlogPress Ninja Affiliate Plugin](#)*

## **Paid Reviews**

Did you know that you can actually get paid to review product? There are even companies like ReviewMe.com that specialize in connecting bloggers and product and service companies for paid reviews! As you build up a reputation and provide results, you will be able to receive money just for conducting a product review. The more pull you have in your niche with a strong showing online, the more you can charge for reviews!

## **Selling Your Review Products**

Another way to turn your review products into cash for your blog is by selling them! Once you review the products that you get to keep...they are yours to do with what you wish. You can sell them on your site to your readers or throw them on ebay and craigslist...either way...that is more cash for your blog.

# Use Review Product to Grow Your Blog and Company

## Turning Review Product Into Traffic and Subscribers

While selling your review products, as mentioned above, can be a secondary revenue stream for your blog, I actually would not recommend going that route and I am about to explain why. You can use the review product that you can keep to further promote the review product company (creating more added value...under promising and over delivering) by giving it away on your site through a give-a-way or contest.

I actually gave away a complete bike on Mountain Biking by 198 and increased my subscriber count by 50% by doing it. That increase is going to pay for itself over and over again.

Is your goal to increase your number of newsletter subscribers? How many do you think would sign up in a two week period if you are giving away one of the hottest products on the market to one lucky newsletter subscriber? It costs them nothing to sign up and they get a chance to win! What if they could get an extra chance to win by following you on Twitter and retweeting a message that you set up?

Contests and giveaways can drastically increase your followers, subscribers and traffic in a very short period of time. By giving away this product that you didn't even pay for to begin with, you are growing your blog and giving it more potential, long term income for the future. You are also providing another reason why a fly by night visitor should be a return visitor. Even better, you are giving away products that you know your readership is interested in owning.

## Using Review Product To Get Quality Writers

As your blog continues to grow, the amount of product you are going to get offered to review is going to grow exponentially. With increased exposure, comes increased responsibility to deliver the goods on a frequent basis. There are many users of product in your niche that are willing to write quality review articles for a price, and what is that price for most of these quality writers? The product...that's right! They will write unbelievable quality review content just for being able to keep the product they are reviewing.

Review product allows you to grow your blog into a multiple author site that delivers loads of quality content on a regular basis. Many start-up blogs do not have the funds to directly hire writers, so a perfect way to test a writers ability is to provide the products for review. Before you know it, you will have a team of quality review writers all creating content for your blog. This will take the daily load off of your shoulders so that you can enjoy the fruits of your labor even more. We did not start the quest for the dot com lifestyle to be a slave to our keyboards and computer screens everyday...

The writers/partners that I have on Mountain Biking by 198 get to keep the product they are reviewing. It is my want of paying them for their time and effort and some of these products are very valuable.

By completing everything in this ebook, you have successfully created a blog that operates like a business and provides quality content and review content to its readers. You also perform extremely well in your niche search engines rankings as you have consistently performed at a level that is above your competition.

Before we finish here...I want to give you some of my final thoughts as you move forward with the process and grow your blog to a level you only once dreamed of. There are certain things that I have learned over the course of building Mountain Biking by 198 that I want to pass along.

## **It's time to grow a thick skin**

I mentioned this at the very beginning of this ebook and it is 100% true. You are going to be putting your thoughts and opinions out there on products and services that many people will have an extreme bias. Welcome the constructive opinions and do not pay any attention to those that are just going to try to bring you down. There are going to be others that are jealous of your success and your ability to bring in free product through your blog. They are going try to proclaim to the world how terrible your reviews are, how bad you are, how mean your mother is, etc. You have to ignore these people and realize that they look just as stupid for saying these things to other people as they do to you. They are also not dedicated readers to your blog, but they do drive traffic to your blog and count as one unique visitor every time they slam your content (they do have to read it somehow!). Most of the time, bad press is still good press so try to ignore them as best you can.

## **Hold true to your opinions**

There are times where some companies will want you to change your review. As long as you are not completely bashing the product for no reason (back up all negatives with fact), hold true to your opinions. Your review is just that...an opinion by someone involved in the industry...if they don't like it...tough! Maybe they should have put together a better product. Every single one of your reviews can not be 100% positive and no product is perfect. There is a comment section of your article if the manufacturer wants to add their thoughts. I have actually added their thoughts to the comment section out of an email once. It created a great dialogue and increased traffic for that review.

# SO...WHAT'S NEXT?

## **This is your company**

Your blog is your company and you need to take it seriously and treat it that way. Do not let the opinions and attitudes of those around you to sway your from your goals. It is no loss to them if you fail as you are the only one that has anything to lose. Success is yours if you want it, you just have to hold true to you beliefs, learn from your mistakes (and you are going to make a ton of these!) and build off your successes. Make sure that learning from your mistakes to turn those mistakes into successes is one of your primary goals. Do not let your failures keep you from succeeding.

## **Have fun!**

You are about to receive product you used to pay for! I don't know about you...but when I look into my garage and see 10 high end mountain and road bikes (\$4,000+ a piece) that most people only dream of riding...that puts a huge smile on my face. Get used to doing what you love for a living and getting real with the idea that you are not going to have to do what you hate to make a living. The dot com lifestyle is real and obtainable if you do not let others or your own head get in the way of your success.

# Use Twitter as a resource!

Did you know that you can actually use Twitter as a source for industry contacts that will send you free product to review for your blog? It's true and I am doing it on a daily basis. Large and small companies alike are learning the power of social media at an alarming rate. Everyday, I have more companies following my Twitter accounts to stay on top of the latest web news and to keep an eye on Internet trends.

Twitter is growing at a rate of 50% per day according to the last calculations as this post is being drafted. That is a gigantic resource for you to pull from to create long lasting blog readers and personal contacts with companies at that are searching for relevant websites that can create more media around their products and services. So how do you tap into this vast resource to get products to review on your blog?

## Twitter Tips When Dealing With Companies

Be relevant and resourceful - You must have a quality Twitter account that relates to you specific niche. If all these perspective companies are seeing is what gas station you are visiting or what you are eating for breakfast, they are most likely not going to take you seriously. Share links, blogs, news and other related information from your niche that creates value to your followers on your Twitter account.

### Set Up A Twitter Feed To Display Latest Posts

If you have companies following you on Twitter, it is very likely that they are not following your blog. They are using your Twitter account as their source to keep on top of your latest news, and because of this...you need to have your latest posts displayed as Tweets. These companies do not have time to follow your blog, newsletter, Twitter account, Facebook account and anything else you have out there on the web all at once. They are going to pick their most efficient way and stick with it. Go to



twitterfeed.com and set up an account. Twitterfeed will automatically generate tweets off your RSS feed and provide your followers with your latest blog post.

### **Interact**

You will be incredibly surprised how much you can actually say in 140 characters or less. Direct message, reply and interact with companies in your niche that follow your Twitter account. Do not start off asking for review product right away, but instead form a relationship with the marketing guru that is running the companies account. This will be a very valuable contact for future business.

### **Search and Follow**

You will be really surprised to see who is an isn't on Twitter. Use the search function to seek out and follow perspective companies that you would like to work with in the future. As you follow and interact with these companies, you will now be on their radar when you might not have through other conventional outlets.

### **Keep Them Updated**

Once you have established the relationship, keep these people updated and provide your other Twitter followers updated on the behind the scenes information. Tweet when you get the product in, tweet when you are using it, tweet your initial thoughts, etc. All of this interaction brings more exposure to the company and provides you with relevant and useful Twitter content that may not be newsworthy enough for full out blog posts. Be sure to always use the @companyname when talking about their product or service within tweets.

Before I had mentioned that I am doing this on a daily basis, but what I did not mention is that I actually got my largest industry contact through Twitter. This publicly held company that does billions in revenue a year, sent me a \$6,100 product to review because of a relationship started on Twitter

# Who Is Robb Sutton?

So...who am I, and more importantly...why should you listen to me?

My professional career is colored with many different aspects of business. I started early in high school doing post production video editing in Atlanta, GA. Working with clients like Coke-a-Cola, Hooters and other large corporations gave me a unique experience with top-level managers at a very young age. I found a unique ability within myself to deliver on promises and meeting deadlines that would be a huge benefit in the future.

From there, I attended the University of Georgia where I received my degree in Economics and played around with the retail end of the market. It was there that I received invaluable insight into the average consumers shopping habits and how features affected sales. Day in and day out retail sales can be a huge learning experience...if you treat it like one. During that time, I was in the top 3 in sales for all categories until I finally left with dreams of making it big in the business world with a degree in hand.

After school, I went to work for a large manufacturer as a regional sales manager for OEM sales in the southeast United States. After increasing business in my territory by 1.3 million dollars in 1 year, I was trusted with the management of over 11 million dollars worth of accounts that spread all over the southeast United States. In this position, I dealt directly with manufacturers and companies at the corporate management level directing product releases, development, sales and business to business relationships.

Now...why is this information important? My diverse business background provided me with the insight on how manufacturers, retailers and top-level executives interact with each other. Once my blogging career started, I had already experienced, first hand, the other side of the spectrum and I was ready to take the blogging world by storm. I have been on the other side of the fence with top print magazines asking our company for product for

review and editorial/how-to articles. I know, with first hand experience, what companies are looking for when giving out free product for review and promotional purposes. I have used that experience to grow my blogs through product reviews.

**Connect with  
Robb Sutton**





# **the CREDITS**

**A huge kudos and thank-you to  
everyone who supported this  
effort, especially the Shatt,  
Justin Shattuck.  
[justinshattuck.com](http://justinshattuck.com)**