FREE 15-MINUTE GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

How People Actually Make Money Online

The Plain-English Guide to Your First Commission

No hype. No jargon. Just how it works, why most beginners fail, and the shortest path to your first commission.

By Seth Johnson
TheFirstCommission.com

INTRODUCTION

Why Nobody Has Explained This to You Properly

Let me guess how you got here.

At some point you typed something like *"how to make money online"* into Google. Since then, your inbox has been a firehose. Systems, loopholes, secret apps, AI shortcuts, screenshots of dashboards showing more money than you made last year. Some of it sounds amazing. Most of it sounds fake. And none of it ever answers the one question you actually have:

How does anyone actually make money online?

Not "click here." Not "spots are limited." Just… how does the money happen? Who pays it? Why? What do these people actually *do* all day?

Here's the uncomfortable truth about this industry: confusion is profitable. If you understood exactly how the game worked, you'd stop buying course after course trying to find the missing piece. So a lot of marketers keep the picture blurry on purpose.

I'm going to do the opposite. In the next fifteen minutes, I'm going to explain the entire model in plain English — the way I'd explain it to a neighbor over coffee. When you're done, you'll understand how money is made online better than most of the people who've been buying "systems" for years.

Quick introduction so you know who's talking: my name is **Seth Johnson**. I've been marketing online since 2007. These days it produces a full-time income on part-time hours, which mostly means I get to live near the water, fish when the weather's right, and play golf badly but often. I'm not going to show you a rented Lamborghini, because I don't have one and neither does anyone else showing you theirs.

What I will show you is how this actually works. Let's go.

CHAPTER 1

The Vending Machine on the Internet

Strip away every buzzword, and here is the entire “make money online” world in one sentence:

Companies pay ordinary people to recommend their products.

That’s it. That’s the engine under the hood of almost everything you’ve seen pitched to you.

Think about the offline version first. If your buddy sells his truck because you told a coworker he had one for sale, and he slips you $100 for the referral — you just earned a commission. Real estate agents live on this. Insurance brokers live on this. It’s one of the oldest arrangements in business: *bring me a customer, and I’ll pay you a piece of the sale.*

The internet didn’t invent that. The internet just did something remarkable to it:

It removed the limit on how many people you can recommend something to.

Offline, a recommendation is one conversation at a time. Online, a single recommendation — a link on a page, a message in an inbox — can be seen by a hundred people, or a thousand, or ten thousand. While you’re asleep. While you’re fishing. The recommendation keeps working because it’s made of words on a screen, not your time.

That’s the whole magic trick. There is no other trick.

Three Words You'll See Everywhere

✓ **Affiliate.** A person who recommends a company's product in exchange for a commission. That's the official name for the referral arrangement above. You sign up (usually free), the company gives you a special link, and any sale that comes through your link is credited to you.

✓ **Commission.** Your cut of the sale. Online commissions are shockingly generous compared to the offline world — digital products routinely pay 50% or more, because there's no factory, no warehouse, no shipping. If a $20 product pays 50%, you earn $10 every time someone buys through your link.

✓ **Funnel.** A fancy word for a simple thing: a small series of web pages that walks a person from "mildly curious" to "customer," one step at a time. Picture a tiny store with a single aisle and one product at the end of it. That's a funnel.

Let's Make the Money Concrete

And let's deliberately keep the numbers small — you've seen enough fantasy math in your inbox.

Say there's a $19 product that pays a 50% commission. One sale earns you about $9.50.

- **1 sale = $9.50.** Coffee money. Nothing to retire on.
- **10 sales = $95.** Now it's interesting — because the ten sales didn't take ten times the work. The same link did all ten.
- **100 sales = $950.** Same link. Same recommendation. Written once.

And here's the part the fantasy screenshots always skip: your **first** sale is the hard one — and the important one. Not because of the $9.50, but because of what it proves. It proves the machine is real and that it works *for you*. Everything after that is turning a dial, not searching for a miracle.

> ***Your first commission isn't about the money.***
> ***It's the proof that changes everything after it.***

So that's the model. Companies pay for customers. The internet lets one recommendation reach thousands. The money is real.

Which raises the obvious question: if it's that simple, why isn't everyone doing it successfully?

Good question. That's Chapter 3. But first, you need to see what the successful ones all have in common — because it's the same three things, every single time.

CHAPTER 2

The 3 Things Every Online Income Has

I've been in this world since 2007. I've watched trends come and go — blogging, YouTube, social media, and now AI. And I can tell you that behind every person genuinely making money online, in any niche, in any era, you will find the same three components. No exceptions.

If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember this list.

1. Something to Promote

An offer that pays you when someone buys. For most people starting out, this is an affiliate product — someone else's product, someone else's customer service, someone else's delivery. You just bring the customer.

Where beginners go wrong: they either promote nothing (endless learning, no link ever shared) or they promote junk — whatever screams the loudest — and torch their credibility with the few people paying attention. The offer you attach your name to matters more than almost any other decision, because online, your recommendation *is* your reputation.

The takeaway: you need one good offer. Not ten. One.

2. A Page That Turns Strangers into an Audience

Here’s a hard truth about the internet: traffic is like water through your hands. Someone visits a page, gets distracted by a text message, and is gone forever. If all you do is show strangers a product, you lose 97% of them permanently — including plenty who would have bought next week.

So every successful online marketer uses a simple page that asks visitors one question: *“Want me to send you this useful thing? Pop in your email and it’s yours.”* The visitor gets something valuable (like the guide you’re reading right now), and the marketer gets permission to stay in touch.

That page turns a passing stranger into an audience member. It’s the difference between shouting on a street corner and having a list of people who asked to hear from you.

Where beginners go wrong: they skip this entirely and send strangers straight to a product page. It feels more direct. It’s actually throwing money away — you pay (in time or dollars) for every visitor, and you keep almost none of them.

The takeaway: the audience is the asset. The page is how you build it.

3. A Way to Follow Up

Here’s a number worth writing down: almost nobody buys anything the first time they see it. Not you, not me, not anyone. We see something interesting, we think “maybe later,” and later never comes — unless something brings us back.

That something is follow-up: simple emails that show up over the days and weeks after someone joins your audience. A good follow-up email isn’t a scream of “BUY NOW.” It’s a note from a person — a story, a lesson, an honest recommendation — that keeps the relationship warm until the timing is right. Most of the actual buying in this business happens on the fourth, fifth, eighth contact.

Follow-up isn’t a detail of the model. Follow-up is the model.

Where beginners go wrong: they judge everything by day one. No sale in 24 hours, so they conclude “it doesn’t work” and quit — usually days before the follow-up would have done its job.

Now, here's something worth noticing — and I'll be completely transparent with you, because I'd rather demonstrate this business than just describe it.

You are inside these three components right now.

I have offers I recommend (component 1). You found a page that traded this guide for your email (component 2). And over the next few days, I'll be sending you follow-up emails with the most useful things I know (component 3).

Nothing sneaky about it — this is simply what the machine looks like from the inside, and now you can see all the moving parts. Every "guru" in your inbox is running this exact machine. The difference is that most of them hope you never notice. I'm handing you the blueprint, because once you understand the machine, you're five minutes away from the most important realization in this entire guide.

Which is this: if the model is this simple — three components, that's all — **why do most beginners fail at it?**

CHAPTER 3

Why Beginners Fail (It's Not What You Think)

Let me tell you what it isn't.

It isn't intelligence. I've watched brilliant people — engineers, nurses, small business owners who can run circles around me in their own field — bounce off this business three or four times. It isn't laziness either. Most of the beginners I've met work *hard* at this. Nights, weekends, notebooks full of notes from courses.

So what is it?

Here's what actually happens, step by step. See if any of this sounds familiar.

A beginner decides to make money online. They learn — correctly — that they need the three components from Chapter 2. And then they're told, or they assume, that their job is to **build all three from scratch.**

So the to-do list explodes:

Learn to build web pages. Learn copywriting, because a page with the wrong words converts nobody. Learn email marketing software. Learn to *write* emails — a dozen of them, in a voice they haven't developed yet. Learn to pick offers. Learn tracking. Learn traffic. Each of those is a genuine skill that takes real practice, and the beginner is told to stack up all of them **before earning their first dollar.**

That's like telling someone who needs a job across town: "Simple — first, build a car."

Here's a course on engines, one on transmissions, one on welding. Should be driving in six to twelve months.

Nobody would accept that deal for a car. But beginners accept it online every day, because nobody tells them there's another way.

And so the failure follows a predictable script: three weeks fighting page-builder software. A sales page written from scratch that reads like a ransom note (no offense — everyone's first sales page reads like a ransom note; mine did in 2007). Seventeen tabs open. Zero dollars earned. And then the conclusion that does the real damage:

"I guess I'm just not the kind of person this works for."

Wrong conclusion. The right conclusion is:

You were handed a car-building project when what you needed was a set of keys.

Read that again, because if you've tried and failed before, this is the sentence that matters: you didn't fail at making money online. You failed at simultaneously mastering five professional skills with no support — which, for the record, almost everyone fails at.

The model was never the problem. The *build-everything-yourself entry path* was the problem.

And once you frame it that way, the fix becomes obvious.

CHAPTER 4

The Shortcut Nobody Explains: Start with Everything Already Built

Go back to the people I mentioned who actually get their first commission quickly. Over the years I've noticed they almost never have more talent than the people who struggle. What they have is a different starting point.

> ***They don't build the machine.***
> ***They plug into one that's already built.***

Remember the three components. There are systems out there — real ones — where all three come pre-assembled:

- ✓ The offers are already chosen and vetted *(component 1)*
- ✓ The pages are already built by professionals whose pages have been tested on thousands of real visitors *(component 2)*
- ✓ The follow-up emails are already written *(component 3)*

The beginner's job shrinks from "master five skills" down to one: **learn to send people to the system, and let the system do what it was built to do.** That's a job a genuinely new person can learn in days, not months — and every skill they pick up afterward makes the same machine work better.

It's the keys instead of the welding course. You still have to drive — but you're driving on day one.

Two Honest Warnings

This is where the industry usually starts lying, and I'm not going to.

First: pre-built does not mean push-button. You will still have to show up, follow the steps, and send people to the system consistently. A plugged-in system with no action is a parked car. Anyone who tells you money appears while you do literally nothing is selling you a fantasy — usually for $497. If you're not willing to put in consistent part-time effort, save your money and close this guide with my blessing; you'll have lost nothing but fifteen minutes.

Second: most "done-for-you systems" are junk. For every genuine one, there are ten that are a zip file of expired templates, or worse — a doorway to endless upsells with nothing usable at any level. The words "done for you" on a sales page mean nothing by themselves.

What separates the real ones from the junk is specific and checkable: who built it, whether it's still maintained, whether real beginners get real results with it, what it actually includes, and — my favorite tell — what its refund rate looks like, because customers vote with the refund button when a product doesn't deliver.

So the obvious question — maybe the only question left — is this:

Where do you find a system like that, and how do you tell a real one from the junk?

That's exactly where I can save you some time.

YOUR NEXT STEP

The System That Passed My Checklist

Over the years, checking out "done-for-you" systems has become something of a professional habit for me. I buy them, I go through the members' area, I check what beginners are actually saying, and I look at the numbers most people don't know how to find. The overwhelming majority don't survive the checklist from Chapter 4.

Once in a while, one does.

On the next page of this journey, I'll show you the one I currently recommend to complete beginners — a system where all three components are already built, created by a marketer who actually uses it himself, with one of the lowest refund rates I've seen in this industry and a full money-back guarantee. It costs about as much as a large pizza.

SEE THE SYSTEM I RECOMMEND →

That's an affiliate link — if you buy, I earn a commission at no extra cost to you. Chapter 1 in action.

One more thing. Over the next few days, watch your inbox for emails from me. I'll be sending you the exact checklist I use to judge these systems, the mistakes that quietly kill most beginners' first attempts, and a few things I've learned since 2007 that I wish somebody had told me at the start. Short reads, no fluff — the follow-up component, doing its job.

Talk soon.

Seth

Seth Johnson — TheFirstCommission.com

Somewhere near the water, probably thinking about fishing.
