Affiliates FAQ’s
- A Guide to Ensuring Success.

ACS has been successfully operating for over 30 years. John Mason has watched his own business flourish, in both Australia and the UK over this time. In addition, John has watched carefully for the ‘factors of success’ that have contributed to ACS Affiliate businesses flourishing. This is a brief synopsis to cover those ‘factors’, and prevent new Affiliates ‘reinventing the wheel’ – giving them the best possible chance at success.

Q: What makes a huge difference to affiliate success?
A:
Often, not what you would expect! For example:
1. Ensuring that content of a web site looks professional; writing in a clean, concise way, cleaning up grammar, spelling etc. had less impact than:
   • Adding lots of photos to web sites
   • Putting more interactive options on the front page e.g. “Order a Handbook!”
     “Request Free Course Counselling!” that lead a viewer to take action
   • Getting the right key words on a page that will enable the site to rank higher in search engine results.

Worthwhile Exercises:
• Changing the school’s name to something that begins with “a” and contains top key words for internet searches
• Changing a course name to be more industry specific (e.g. “Bookkeeping” might not sell as well to the Agriculture sector as “Bookkeeping for Farmers” would)
• Narrowing focus and putting effort into ‘tightening your target markets’ (e.g. marketing Medical Terminology to the medical insurance industry)
• Building a network of organisations or people who will sell or promote courses for you (e.g. Health Clubs sell a course for double its normal cost, but with a health club membership included for free).

Q: How can we be more successful?
A: DO NOT FOCUS ON THINGS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE, UNTIL THINGS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE ARE IN PLACE.

In our experience, the single thing that impairs affiliate success more than anything is lack of clear focus on what is important, or ‘spreading themselves too thin’ across many business ventures. Remember:
• Our core business is to facilitate learning
• The most important jobs are to generate enquiries, then convert those enquiries into enrolments and money, and to provide a quality service to those who have enrolled.
Without these things, everything falls apart.
Everything else (such as accreditations, improving course content, expanding services, etc.) is secondary. **Do not do anything that is incidental when you could spend those resources on something that would clearly have more impact upon either sales or the learning of the optimum number of students**

Q: *Don’t some ACS courses have too much of an Australian bias in them?*

A. Though this may be a valid concern, experience (and evidence of high enrolment numbers) has shown it is a very minor thing.
   - ACS is systematically introducing more UK and international content; but only where the benefit to the student is judged significant; and only when the quantity of sales in that course is sufficient to justify the work.
   - We rarely get this criticism from graduates.
   - Feedback from graduates indicates overwhelmingly that our courses are more internationally relevant and industry relevant than the vast majority of other colleges.

Q: *The courses have imperfections*

A: Every course at every institution in the world is imperfect. We certainly attempt to do the best job we can within the budget available, but in order to be economically sound (and morally responsible), we must prioritise what can be done and be pragmatic in making choices of what is done.
   - There is a procedure for affiliates to report on issues
   - There are well established criteria that are applied to making changes to courses

Q: *Don’t we need accreditation in order to sell courses?*

A: No. This is simply not true. Accreditation needs to be seen in terms of pros and cons. We’ve seen many colleges go bust because they have seen accreditation as inevitable rather than weighing up its advantages and disadvantages. Experience has taught us that:
   - Seeking external accreditations is a serious business risk. You are allowing something outside your control to have a critical influence over your business.
   - Being unaccredited can be a positive selling point when talking to a prospective student, in perhaps 75% of cases.
   - The best-run accredited courses are generally less profitable than the best run non accredited courses (over time)

Q: *What are some key factors that make an affiliate successful?*

A: All of the following:
1. **Product knowledge** – Staff who all know, understand and believe in the courses, and the philosophy (and proven track record) behind the business concept
2. High visibility
3. Not being under-resourced for what you are attempting to do
4. Minimizing as much of the work and time involved in the establishment phase by only
doing those things that cannot be taken ‘as is’ from ACS.

Q: What causes affiliates to flounder?

A: Any of the following:
1. Trying to change the courses into something that they are not designed to be
2. Not generating sufficient enquiry numbers
3. Poor conversion rate for enquiry (15% or higher should be achieved, and 30% is quite feasible)
4. Attempting to do a lot of different things from the outset
5. Assuming good education is highly price sensitive – it isn’t!
6. Not appreciating the “experiential learning” and “PBL concepts” built into the courses
7. An improper understanding of electronic media – web sites, social networking etc as it
   relates to marketing ACS courses
8. Assuming things rather than taking our advice, and not saving time and money by
   learning from our own and affiliates’ successes and failures
9. Not working closely enough with ACS – hence making mistakes we have already
   made and found solutions to
10. Allowing egos and personalities to get in the way of progress.

Q: What things are a common waste of time and money?

A:
• Seeking too much accreditation and recognition. Allow no more than 1% of
  resources if you feel you have to go down this track.
• Elaborately formatting or somehow altering ACS courses – this will mean an
  outdated version that will then need to be re-formatted to include changes we are
  constantly making to courses.
• Becoming too ‘pedantic’ about course content.