

Experience Advertising
Presents:

Affiliate Management Playbook



All the knowledge and tips
to grow a large
productive affiliate
program for your
company.

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Beacon

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

2. The Various Types of Affiliate Marketers

3. Proven Ways to Recruit Affiliates

4. Affiliate Management Best Practices

5. 9 Ways to Effectively Manage and Grow Your Affiliate Program

6. Affiliate Management

Introduction

The ebook will illuminate the strategies and techniques needed to grow a large and productive affiliate channel.

by Evan Weber

Thank you for taking a look at the NEW affiliate program management playbook!

I wanted to put together a collection of my most read articles from the recent past on the topics of affiliate program management and affiliate recruiting.

Let me know what you think and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Evan Weber

The Various Types of Affiliate Marketers

by Evan Weber

Growing a large, productive affiliate marketing channel is a great idea if you go it about it correctly. The bottom line is that not all affiliates are the same, in fact there are several different types of individuals and companies that can be brought on as affiliate marketers to promote your company. Recently, I gave a talk on how to recruit affiliate marketers and this was the first part I discussed, i.e. what are the various types of affiliate marketers that you can bring on board to promote your company on a performance basis (paying them when they drive in a sale or lead)? Here are the 15 types of affiliate marketers that you can look to prospect and sign-up as your company's affiliate:

1. Webmaster Affiliates - the original type of affiliate marketer. Webmaster are website owners that can promote your company through display ads, newsletter spots, social media posts, and other ways that they are able to market your company. Some of the best quality affiliates are those with relevant websites to the products and services that you sell as a web business. So finding relevant webmasters to promote your company as an affiliate is a great way to increase the "new eyeballs" that are exposed to your company.

2. Search Marketing Affiliates - search engine oriented affiliate marketers are also a very desirable type of affiliate marketer, if they go about it according to the rules you layout for your affiliates to follow. For instance, if you sell pet supplies, you may want your affiliates to build organic content and do PPC ads promoting pet food, pet supplies, pet coupons and other types of search-related content. However, you may not want them to bid in PPC on your company name, trademarks, or company name + coupon code since those users have likely already visited your website and are just "Googling" for a coupon code. If you do allow them to participate in this

type of advertising, I would recommend paying them a lesser commission than a relevant website affiliate, since you are basically giving them money for little effort. Affiliates that optimize content on their websites for valuable search phrases that can bring you sales are some of the most desirable types of affiliate marketers you can work with because they can be very productive and produce very targeted traffic.

3. Social Media Affiliates - affiliates that focus on the social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram are also very desirable in most instances. You can work with them to promote your company on their social networks and even sponsor some of their Facebook boosted posts and Twitter sponsored tweets to really leverage the ability to reach their audiences. Working with Instagram users with a lot of followers in your niche is also a great way to drive in new customers. You can assign them a dedicated coupon code, dedicated url, or even dedicated 800 number to effectively track the traffic and sales they are referring. You can also look to provide free products or samples that they can review, or "unbox" and review, then sharing a post with their audience. This can be a very effective way to increase new customers through your affiliate channel. They have to be found and prospected and this takes a lot of work, but very effective when you do land these types of affiliate relationships.

4. Blogger Affiliates - bloggers are some of the most desirable types of people to work with on the Internet as an affiliate marketer because of the reach and audience they can expose your product to. Bloggers as affiliates can leverage product reviews, sponsored posts, email blasts, and other web placements they can do for your company. One of the best things bloggers can do as an affiliate is to become a 2nd tier referrer in your affiliate program. This means that they refer their blogger friends to join as your affiliate through their affiliate referral link, which ensures that they get an "override" on the sales that the bloggers they have referred produce. Some bloggers, mom bloggers for instance, know a lot of other mom bloggers and have the ability to refer a ton of them to join as your affiliate. This can be an incredibly powerful strategy to grow your affiliate program and increase productivity in your affiliate program drastically.

5. Coupons Site Affiliates - coupon affiliates primarily operate in the ecommerce channel, and most times are capitalizing on a merchant's traffic by serving up a coupon code to users that have visited the merchant website, observed that the company accepts coupon code discounts, and

then go to Google looking for that company's coupon code, which is where the coupon affiliates are ranking organically and frequently in the sponsored search results ready to serve up a coupon code to the user. This can be an effective way to show affiliate channel sales, however isn't without it's issues. Because of the nature of how they operate, I recommend not paying them a very high commission amount, otherwise your affiliate commissions will go through the roof as soon as you launch your affiliate program and let them in the door. Rather, you should pay them a lesser commission rate to preserve the overall ROI in of your affiliate channel.

6. Review Site Affiliates - reviews sites as affiliates are great for service providers such as in the niches like: dating, diet, hosting, software, and other services. The reason for this is because a lot of times people look for reviews in Google for companies that operate service businesses. So as an a service-oriented company you want to have a good amount of review sites as affiliates to capitalize on this phenomenon. Review site affiliates can be very productive for your affiliate program especially if they do PPC advertising for search phrases related to your services or your company, such as: dating website reviews, or match.com reviews. These types of affiliates can be the main producers in some affiliate programs depending on how heavy the search volume is for these types of phrases.

7. Loyalty Portals - there are a whole slew of "loyalty portal" affiliates that run sites like cashback virtual malls and membership portals. They can be very productive affiliates for a company depending on the amount of members or users they have to market your company to. Some of the larger sites in this space are eBates, Upromise, and big companies that run membership portals for their customers. They can be very productive however can have issues related, such as having rogue users that sign-up to their portals to place orders and get their cashback with fraudulent credit cards. You have to keep an eagle eye on any orders referred from loyalty portals based on this fact. With a good "order reconciliation process" at the end of the month you can effectively screen their orders and make sure nothing unwanted is happening. But don't blame the portal, just make sure they are doing everything in their power to remove these bad apples from their systems.

8. Incentivized Traffic Affiliates - these types of affiliates will motivate users to make a purchase by giving them something in return like points or

credits towards a prize. They can be good affiliates but you have to watch their orders closely to make sure they are referring only valid orders that aren't experiencing buyers remorse when they realize they aren't getting their prize. It can work for some types of companies but I don't recommend it for all companies or for lead generation.

9. Email Marketing Affiliates - email "publishers" are affiliates or companies that own email databases they can market offers or ads to. Email-oriented affiliates can be some of the most productive types of affiliates if they have a quality email list and operate in an extremely ethical manner. However, it's really a case by case basis because you never know how they generated their email list or if they adhere to ethical email marketing practices. You have to have a very rigid policy for your email affiliates to make sure no issues arise from their type of marketing such as requiring that use an suppression file management platform like Optimzo.

10. Large Web Properties - big websites are some of the most desirable types of affiliates because they have a lot of traffic that they can expose to your affiliate banner ads or links. They can have large, quality email lists as well. There are a lot of large web properties that utilize affiliate ads on their sites and you would never know they participate in affiliate programs. Most of the time you can access these types of affiliate marketers through the big affiliate networks, where they have joined to partner with big brands with affiliate programs. So if you want large web properties as your affiliate you may have to join a big affiliate network like CJ or Linkshare to access them.

11. Company Partnership Affiliates - one of the best types of affiliate relationships are when you can partner with another company with a similar audience, that's non-competitive. You bring up the idea of doing a "reciprocal rev share partnership" which means you promote their offers and they promote yours, and you pay each other on a revenue share (which is just a more corporate term for an affiliate partnership). These types of reciprocal partnerships are extremely desirable because they can be really strong, consistent producers. A lot of times they can place your ads throughout their website and include you in their customer newsletter, which can bring you a whole slew of new customers.

12. Traditional Media Affiliates - a lot of people don't know that you can run traditional media on an affiliate basis. TV, radio, and even print ad buys

can be done on an affiliate basis. Usually you have to access their "remnant inventory" which is unsold advertising space that would normally be going to waste. Often times, companies are willing to partner on a revenue sharing basis and run ads to their remnant inventory on this basis. Because there isn't necessarily a click through, you have use tools like dedicated coupon codes, dedicated 800 numbers, and dedicated urls to track the campaigns effectively. If you can show them a decent amount of revenue through working on this basis, it can be a great way to run traditional advertising on a performance/affiliate basis.

13. Pay-Per-Call - pay-per-call marketing is all the rage in the affiliate marketing industry. It typically works great for service companies and lead generation companies that are looking to drive phone calls into their call centers. Typically, you would assign a dedicated phone number to the affiliate source and then pay them for every call that they drive in through that phone number. Because quality can be an issue, you have use a reliable pay-per-call tracking platform to make sure you are getting quality calls from each affiliate source you are working with. This can be a powerful way to grow your inbound call volume on a performance/affiliate basis.

14. Mobile Affiliates - mobile affiliates are growing dramatically as the mobile industry grows. There are various types of mobile affiliates that can promote your company through app ads, per call ads, and rewarding actions in mobile games with offers. There are many ways mobile companies can utilize affiliate ads to monetize their apps and mobile experiences. This is a burgeoning vertical so it's really still taking shape, but in general mobile affiliates will at some point become one of the most formidable types of affiliate marketers in the channel.

15. Conversion and Technology Affiliates - these are typically technologies or widgets that plug into your ecommerce website to help convert traffic and sales on your website. Conversion affiliates like Yielify or VE Interactive, help companies better convert their overall traffic into more sales with widgets like: pop-up boxes, on-site offers, and shopping cart abandonment follow-up emails. Because they capitalize on your website's traffic you have to be careful how well you compensate them or the commissions can go through the roof, and there goes all the profit. Another type of affiliate technology are companies like Viglink and Skimlinks, which help bloggers and other web publishers to monetize the content in their posts or pages by automatically hyperlink certain phrases in the content through affiliate

links. This has emerged over the past few years as a great way to generate more affiliate traffic from the content already on the web.

Whew! That's a lot of different types of affiliate marketers you can work with to promote your company and drive in sales. Of course you have to go out and bring them on board so they can participate. Then treat them really well and compensate them well so they make money promoting your company. In my next post I will review numerous ways to recruit the various types of affiliate marketers, so stay tuned for that. You should seriously consider bringing on an affiliate agency like [Experience Advertising](#) to help you grow your affiliate program quicker.

Let me know if you have any questions, and be sure to contact me if you would like to discuss growing your affiliate program or managing your other digital marketing and social media channels. I run one of the most effective agencies on the planet at growing traffic and sales through the various online marketing channels. I look forward to hearing from you!

Proven Ways to Recruit Affiliates

Evan Weber

Recruiting affiliates for your business can be one of the most difficult tasks to undertake. However, if you have a really great strategy to accomplish this goal you can build up your affiliate program with tons of great affiliate marketers and web publishers that can make all the difference in your website's traffic and revenue. Over the years, I have worked on growing more than 100 affiliate programs for companies, implementing many of the techniques listed below. I hope you benefit from these affiliate recruitment strategies and let me know if you have any questions about how to carry out these strategies.

1. **Proactive Site Contacting** - reaching out to websites, blogs, and other web publishers with a well-written "outreach email" or affiliate recruitment email is a great way to prospect and bring on new affiliates for your company. There are some great tools out there like [5IQ](#) and [GroupHigh](#) can identify affiliates and bloggers in specific niches, so you can reach out to them and ask them very nicely if they would like to become your company's affiliate. This is a task your affiliate manager should be doing on a monthly basis to grow your affiliate program. Or you can hire an agency like [Experience Advertising](#), to methodically conduct the email outreach process. If you want it to be done effectively with a great response rate you have to send them one by one and personalize them. Yes it takes a lot of effort and you do have to do it in volume to get what you want out of it. You can also run basic Google searches for keyword phrases in your niche, see what sites or blogs come up in the search results and then send them a nice invite email to join your program. It's a very tedious process, but a very effective process to grow your affiliate channel.
2. **PPC Search Ads** - every day there are people search for various types of affiliate programs in the search engines, such as: dating affiliate

programs, health affiliate programs, insurance affiliate programs, etc. If you run an affiliate program in a niche it only makes sense to run PPC ads in Google Adwords and Bing Ads targeting people searching these types of phrases. You can gauge the effectiveness by assigning a tracking link to the campaign, send the traffic to your affiliate sign-up page, see who signs up, and then see how productive those affiliate referrals then become. This is how you can see the ROI of your PPC advertising for affiliate program and affiliate network related keyword phrases. It's a tried and true strategy to recruit targeted webmasters, companies, and bloggers looking for companies to affiliate with in their niche.

3. **SEO Optimized Content** - piggy-backing on the same concept, when people are searching for specific niche affiliate programs, you need to have an SEO optimized page on your website that ranks well in Google, Bing and Yahoo, so those individuals will find that page ranking organically and sign-up for your program. You can also do online press releases promoting your affiliate program and LinkedIn posts about your affiliate program. All of which can gain organic rankings for search phrases related to your company and affiliate niche. This is a great way to get more affiliate sign-ups and build your affiliate base with targeted affiliates. Over time, if you do enough posting on various sites you can build up a great amount of organic saturation for you affiliate program niche keywords.
4. **Facebook Ads** - one of the best ways to bring on new affiliates and partners is to run Facebook ads targeting people into affiliate marketing, blogging, and trade shows like Affiliate Summit. You can also target the people that have shown interest in affiliate networks on Facebook. You can target blogger communities like the Blogger network, and drive them to your affiliate information page to learn more. Make sure your affiliate info page is a good one. I would recommend including a video on this page to explain the affiliate program so people that aren't as familiar with affiliate programs can better grasp the benefits of participating in your affiliate program, i.e. how much money they can make. This is a great way to inexpensive run advertising to increase the traffic to your affiliate information page. You can also do the same type of thing with Twitter advertising to gain new affiliates.
5. **Big Affiliate Networks** - one of the best ways to recruit a bunch of affiliates quickly is by launching on the big affiliate networks like CJ, Linkshare, and Shareasale. Using their recruiting tools to send pending

offers then email follow-ups is a great way to build the program up with affiliates in your niche and also some of the other types of affiliates, which I referenced in my last post. I do believe in screening the affiliates that apply to your program on any network, simply because there will be all types of individuals applying and you may want to pick and choose who is appropriate for your company. In my opinion, CJ's recruiting tools are the best at sending "offers" to prospective affiliates by country, category, and even a word contained in their url, for instance anyone with the work dating in their url is a likely good dating niche affiliate. If you are interested in growing your program as quickly as possible, there is nothing out there that rivals CJ's recruiting tools. Once the pending offer is made, you have to send them a follow-up email to accept the offer because they aren't notified by email automatically. It takes a lot of work, but this is exactly what your affiliate manager or OPM agency should be doing to leverage the network. If they aren't utilizing this process they are squandering the opportunity in my opinion.

6. **CPA Affiliate Networks** - there are many other affiliate networks that have great affiliates and publishers. It can be a hit or miss type of situation though because you never know if these networks have affiliates that can be productive for you. You have to give them a chance and see what they can do. Cost-per-acquisition affiliate networks usually prefer cost-per-lead or cost-per-sale offers with flat rate payouts, so ecommerce websites on a % of sales isn't usually appropriate. So if you have a CPA or CPL offer, look to launch your "offer" on a few CPA networks and then when it's working well, find some more launch on. I would recommend keeping an eye on the sales or leads coming through from these types of networks because you never know who their affiliates are and there are issues with fraud in the affiliate channel. So make sure you have a good "order reconciliation" process in place so you don't payout on any bad orders or leads.
7. **Hiring an Agency/OPM** - working with an affiliate agency or "OPM" can be a great idea if you use the right one since OPM's have existing relationships with affiliates and know how to work the networks well. Since my own agency has an OPM division I'm biased towards thinking that the way we recruit and manage is the best way. But do your due diligence before working with any agency. I will tell you that no other OPM recruits affiliates in volume like my agency or manages as well as my agency (again I'm biased. but I know how they all operate). Just take a look at our affiliate newsletters versus the other agencies. But like I

said, do you due diligence and hire whomever you feel is best going to handle the job. When you outsource your affiliate program management you need an agency that really delivers on recruiting aspect and the management aspect as well. Anything less than excellent is unacceptable in my opinion. As I often say, "you have to always be recruiting and managing at the same time."

8. **Trade shows** - trade shows and conferences like Affiliate Summit, CJU, Adtech, and PubCon are great places to meet affiliates and companies that can be partnered with as affiliates. Every time I attend a trade show with the intention of meeting some affiliates and partners it works out well. Exhibiting can be a great idea as well because then the affiliates will come to you instead of you having to hunt them down, so getting a booth or meet market table at Affiliate Summit can be a great idea.
9. **Affiliate Forums** - affiliate forums and niche forums in general can be great places to meet and network with affiliate marketers of various types. Forums like [ABestWeb](#) definitely have affiliates that hang out on them and have discussions. It can be a good place for affiliate managers to meet affiliates and interact with them in a fairly informal way. In fact, forums of all types, in various niches, can be great places to find webmasters and bloggers and ask them if they would like to become an affiliate of your company. For instance, if you have a gardening website and are looking for people with gardening blogs to be your affiliate, you would join some gardening forums and become active. Most forums allow you to have a link in your forum signature which gets posted at the bottom of every comment you make, so it's another place to have people see and click to view info about your affiliate program. The more you post the more exposure your signature links will get, so it's definitely something that builds up over time.
10. **LinkedIn** - LinkedIn is a great place to meet people and network in general. There are plenty of LinkedIn groups in the affiliate industry and even blogger groups. You can post discussions, participate in discussions, and connect with people that may be interested in becoming your affiliate. You have to do it in a fairly subtle way in my opinion to be effective at it though. It's also something that's an indirect benefit of networking on LinkedIn, although plenty of people will just use it for that purpose. In my opinion you have to interact with people and then they will see where you work and that you're an affiliate manager, and possibly become interested. So more of a soft approach is a best practice in my opinion, although sometimes you just have come out and

say, "would you be interested in joining our affiliate program and making a great commission?"

11. **Twitter** - on Twitter, you can find influencers and convert them into affiliates for your company. By searching on Twitter for various keywords you can see who is talking about phrases related to your niche and follow them. Then you can start commenting, re-tweeting, and interacting with their tweets. They may follow you back if you post valuable content of your own. They may then see you are an affiliate manager and get interested. After you know them decently well you can send them a direct message and ask them if they participate in affiliate programs.
12. **Customer Base** - a lot of people don't realize that their customer base can be converted into affiliate marketers for the company. You have to make it really simple for them to participate and share the links though or you will run into a lot of support issues. You may want to consider launching a "customer referral program" with tools like [FriendBuy](#) or [ReferralCandy](#), which basically function the same way as an affiliate program without the banner ads. So you can look to leverage your customers and turn them into referrers with either your affiliate program or a customer referral program. Some companies get as much as 25% of their revenue from these types of referral programs. It's all in how well you expose people to it, basically everywhere possible and keep reinforcing it over time.
13. **Link on the Website** - when you place a link in your footer to your affiliate program page you are allowing your customers and website visitors the opportunity to sign-up for your affiliate program. This is a great way to capitalize on your traffic and turn some of them into affiliate partners. Same goes for your customer referral program, you should have a button in the header to refer a friend, so people see it and act on it. Some companies will incentivize users to refer on their social networks for a discount on their own purchase or future purchases which I think is a great idea to boost social sharing and referring.
14. **Reciprocal Partnerships** - one of my favorite ways to get your affiliate referrals increased is to partner with other companies with a similar audience (non-competitive of course). You can promote their offer and they can promote yours, and you pay each other on a revenue share. It's basically an affiliate program for companies. A lot of times companies don't like to consider themselves as participating in affiliate programs, but if you refer to it as a "rev share partnership" they will be more

receptive to it. Some of the best affiliates are other companies that can promote your offer to their email list, website traffic, on their thank you page, and on their social networks. This can be a really powerful type of affiliate partnership. I have put together many of these types of partnerships over the years and they always drive in a ton of sales.

Affiliate Management Best Practices

Evan Weber

The main reason I started my affiliate agency 8 years ago was to address the vast need for quality, competent, proactive affiliate management for companies running affiliate programs. While I was at my previous company, we grew an affiliate program of more than 10,000 affiliates in our in-house affiliate program as well as on a few affiliate networks and CPA networks. From day 1 of launching our program I was the person that provided the support to our affiliates, which consisted of 1000's of phone calls explaining how to be an affiliate of our company. I always looked forward to the opportunity to get on a call with people all over the world that were interested in making money promoting our company's banner ads and links. It was a huge help that we had a decently converting website and a good payout to affiliates that produced sales for us. Because I already had a decent background with HTML and website building, I was able to walk our affiliates through the process of signing up, accessing the HTML code for our banner ads, showing them how to place the code on their website, and then uploading it to their server (or publish the page). I guess you could say I was "in the trenches" with our affiliates helping them get up and running as an affiliate of our company. Over the years, I developed many great friendships with people of varying backgrounds and experience levels, some of which I still maintain to this day. I truly believe that in order to be an effective "affiliate manager" you have to have a few skills such as: being a people person, having some web marketing skills, having passion for online marketing, and probably most importantly wanting people to succeed as your affiliate, i.e. they make money promoting your company through online marketing strategies. You don't just become a good affiliate manager, it's something you have to really have to work at, love, and have passion for, otherwise you won't be able to truly help people to become a successful affiliate of your company. And, if people aren't succeeding at

being your affiliate, your affiliate program won't "gain traction" and it won't really grow the way it can. After running my digital marketing agency for more than 8 years, I still look forward to getting on the phone with affiliates and companies every day that want to discuss how to be a successful affiliate partner of the affiliate programs we manage. I pride myself on my ability to make them a more effective affiliate marketer regardless of how much experience they have as an affiliate. Below, I have put together some of the main tenants of being an effective affiliate manager and how to work with affiliates to really facilitate the process. I hope you like my suggestions.

1. **Building the Relationship** - this is probably the single most important aspect of being a good affiliate manager. If you take the time to get to know your affiliates one by one, you are essentially building valuable relationships for your company that will last years. You should look at your affiliates as valuable partners and not a means to an end. You should give them suggestions on how to get more traffic to their website or blog, or capitalize on their traffic more effectively, and not just "how many sales can this person produce this month." In my opinion, this is best done through phone calls, but a lot of good relationship building can be done through email as well. The truth of the situation though is: most affiliate managers don't really want to get on the phone with their affiliates because they don't have much to say to them. Which is why you need experienced, friendly people running your affiliate program and interacting with your affiliates to have a really productive affiliate program with a lot of uptake.
2. **Spoon-feeding** - when a new affiliate (or publisher) signs-up as your affiliate you should do what you can to facilitate the process. This means logging into their affiliate account, grabbing the html code for their links and banners, and sending it to them. It can also mean writing some original content for their website about your company so they don't have to. It can also mean walking through the process of logging into the affiliate dashboard and finding the tracking codes, then helping them to place it on their website or blog and publishing the changes to their site. It can mean editing their email HTML to make sure their have the affiliate tracking code inserted properly in the code. It basically means doing more than what you would normally do. It means being there for them to really help them with whatever they need to get up and running as your affiliate. If you leave it up to them, they may never actually do anything as your affiliate, either because they don't know how to or they haven't gotten around to it yet. So when you spoon-feed

them you are ensure they start at least participating actively as your affiliate.

3. **Personalized Interactions** - this means not treating all of your affiliates like the same person. It means personally interacting and becoming their friend, their best friend even. I can't tell you how many long, protracted phone calls I've had with people that just wanted to vent to me because I was willing to listen, or needed my help to get into the game as it were as an affiliate promoting the company. One thing is for sure, all affiliates WANT to be productive, they just may need help to do so. And that's where the affiliate manager role comes into play. If your affiliate manager is treating all of your affiliates the same way, they don't get it and won't be anywhere near as effective as they could be.
4. **Education and Strategies** - the reality of it is, most affiliates don't know much about digital marketing or how to really drive a lot of traffic to their websites or blogs. That why affiliate managers should be constant feeding helpful content and valuable articles (and there are plenty of them out there) to their affiliates to educate them about various aspects of driving traffic to websites and how to better capitalize on web traffic. Essentially, you are curating content and articles for your affiliates so they can stay informed about all types of online marketing and social media marketing strategies. This is one of the main ways I have differentiated my agency from the rest. People tell me all the time that they really like the articles I have written and that they have learned a lot from me over the years, which is great to hear and really motivates me to do more of it.
5. **Facebook Private Group** - having a private Facebook group for your affiliates can be a great way to increase interaction and engagement with your affiliates. It's also an opportunity for you to bond with them further, share content with them, and answer questions they may have about being an affiliate of your company or another issue in general that they need clarification on. Groups are also nice because affiliates can help each other.
6. **Micro-managing payouts** - a lot of companies will have one commission percentage for all of their affiliates to make per sale or lead. They do this because it's just easier to handle it this way, but it can actually be detrimental to your affiliate program to do so. What ends up happening is that companies will lower their commission amount because they think certain types of affiliates are making too much, like coupon affiliates. When the company realizes how coupon affiliates make their sales, they

penalize the entire program by lowering the commission amount. The fact of the matter is that there are several different types of affiliates, and they should be compensated at different rates depending on the type of affiliate they are and how much value they are bringing your company. After you've run your affiliate program for a while you can start to trace which affiliates are responsible for which sales, and then look to see how valuable those customers are to your company. For instance, if an affiliate with a niche blog brings you a lot of customers that order again and again, that affiliate should probably be compensated better than an affiliate that brings in customers that order once and never again. This is just one example of how you can analyze your affiliate-referred sales and start to adjust payouts accordingly.

7. **Regulate Coupon Affiliates** - like any online marketing channel, you have to "optimize" it to get the best ROI from your affiliate channel. For ecommerce sites, what happens is that coupon affiliates will get credited for a lot of sales if the company's website gets a good amount of traffic and people are Googling for that company's coupon code prior to purchase. In this instance, you should reduce their commission amounts so your overall ROI in the affiliate channel will be better and more profitable. You can also look to boost the commissions of affiliates with relevant blogs or websites because they are often times bringing you all new customers to your website. You can do this with "toolbar" publishers as well, because like coupon affiliates they are capitalizing on the traffic your website is already getting. Once you have made these adjustments, your affiliate program will have better profitability.
8. **Regulate Toolbar Publishers** - similar to coupon affiliates, toolbar publishers make sales based on the amount of traffic your website is already getting. People with certain deal toolbars installed in their browser will see deals flashing when they visit ecommerce websites with these types of affiliates. So you can look to reduce those commission amounts to reduce the amount of commissions you are paying out which improves the ROI in your affiliate channel.
9. **Great Affiliate Messaging** - unfortunately, most affiliate managers send out "affiliate newsletters" that don't look very good or read very well. They do things like saying "Hello Affiliates. Please promote our offers." The best approach with regards to your affiliate messaging is to keep it very personalized and treat them like a friend and less like a means to an end. Why companies still handle it poorly is beyond me, but they do. Your affiliate messaging should not only be personalized but look amazing!

Rarely will affiliate newsletters look as good as the company's customer newsletters. This is primarily because the affiliate manager putting it together don't know how to work with HTML and don't use well-designed affiliate newsletter layouts. So if you want your weekly or monthly affiliate offers to be well-received, make sure your messaging looks great, reads well, and is extremely friendly. Make sure to include your phone number in the affiliate newsletter so they can call you with questions. The sad reality is that most affiliate managers don't want their affiliates to call them, which is simply a reflection of the fact that they don't really want to speak to them. They just don't have enough to say. But all you really have to do is be friendly, helpful, and willing to build the relationship. Affiliate messaging should also be fairly frequent, to stay in their consciousness, otherwise someone else will. If you handle your affiliate messaging well it will always be well-received and you don't have to worry about sending too frequently.

10. **Promotions/Deals** - Affiliates by in large LOVE promoting deals and promotions from the company they affiliate with. Make sure to send out deals frequently so they have something fresh to promote on their site, blog or socially. You can even set up special "vanity" coupon codes for affiliates that request this. They love it when you set them up a special deal, it makes them feel special and they will try harder to promote it for you.
11. **Run Affiliate Contests** - in order to focus attention on your affiliate program, you can look to run sales contests, giving away prizes and bonuses. I like to run sales contests that give anyone a chance to win, i.e. any affiliate that produces at least 1 sale in the month will be entered into a sweepstakes to win a special prize. This gives more affiliates the perception that they could win in the contest and that it's not just for the big producers. These types of contests have worked well for me over the years. A lot of times you don't see a huge lift during the contest month sales-wise, but you do see a big uptick in participation which usually translates into more sales in subsequent months.
12. **Motivating Affiliates** - Implementing a monthly strategy to motivate your affiliates to produce is a great idea. You can offer performance bonuses, run contests, or flat-out boost their commissions for a period of time to inspire them to get more active in your program. These types of strategies can be a little gimmicky but they work. With so many affiliate programs to choose from, you have to do things to stand out from the crowd, and doing things to bonus, reward, or incentivize affiliates to

produce more sales are great ways to increasing participation and production.

13. **Convert Your Affiliate Traffic** - a lot of companies have the attitude that they don't need to do anything to make their affiliates money. They say, "We have a great payout, affiliate should be all over it." It couldn't be any further from the truth! As a company, you have to constantly be working on your website to improve your conversion rate so your affiliates make more sales. When they make more sales on the traffic they are sending, they get inspired to work harder or put more resources into promoting your company, which leads to more traffic and sales. As a company you should be implementing conversion optimization strategies to convert more of your traffic so your affiliates prosper. (I work with companies specifically to boost their website conversion rates, ask me about it)
14. **Rewarding Producers** - If you take care of your producers you will likely keep them around producing for years. If you don't you could lose them to another company that will take care of them or someone else that will pay them out more money. You should be doing special things for your affiliates like giving them gift cards, throwing parties for them at conferences, and taking them out to dinner whenever you can. Your affiliates are your salespeople on the Internet so you have to do the same types of things to reward and bonus them that you would do for your internal sales people.
15. **ALWAYS BE RECRUITING AND MANAGING!** This is a little saying I have because in affiliate marketing you have turn over. You always have to be recruiting new affiliates because you want to grow the program and you will have attrition. If you slack off on managing and working with your affiliates you could lose their interest or lose them to a competitor, which is really bad because once you have them you don't want to lose them. So you have to always have a strategy to proactively recruit new affiliates, as well and personally manage them and build the relationship so the program will grow larger and larger over time.

Those are some tips for you about how to effectively manage your affiliate program and get the most out of it. Don't be like those companies that treat their affiliate program like a blob or let an intern manage your affiliates and send crappy messaging. **Don't be cheap with your affiliate program!** Do yourself a favor and invest in the channel by hiring a competent person that really cares about their success, or bring in an affiliate marketing agency like [Experience Advertising](#) to recruit and

manage your affiliates, treating them like gold! Then, if you do that and keep it up over a year or 2 you will have a large, productive affiliate channel, something that will be a constant source of new customers and incremental revenue. If you don't handle your affiliate program in this way you will be doomed to having an affiliate program with 99% coupon affiliates as producers, and guess what you would have had those sales anyways. But there IS a better way! If you handle the channel well it can be a reliable source of truly incremental revenue you wouldn't have had without it. Don't let anyone tell you any different! :)

9 Ways to Effectively Manage and Grow Your Affiliate Program

Evan Weber

Launching an affiliate program can be a great idea for ecommerce websites to increase traffic and sales through a large diversity of traffic sources. Affiliate marketing has been around for more than 10 years and really just started as a way to compensate traffic referrers who were sending business through to various types of websites. It has steadily evolved with various affiliate networks and tracking platforms into a huge channel in the commerce industry. So what should you do as a merchant or advertiser looking to launch into affiliate marketing? First, you should launch on a major network so you can access a database of existing affiliate marketers and web publishers. If you are a merchant or a website owner and you are selling products or generating leads, you should first launch on one of the major networks like CJ, Linkshare, or Shareasale, depending on your budget and wherewithal. You may also consider launching an "inhouse" affiliate program as well to cultivate direct affiliate partnerships for your company. Here are some important concepts and strategies to maximize and run a successful affiliate program:

1. **Recruiting Affiliates** – this is one of the biggest question marks as to methodology and effectiveness. Recruiting affiliates is really easy if you know how. You have to do a lot of pro-active reaching out, contacting websites, and contacting known affiliates, doing it very tastefully and offering them some benefit of working with your company, otherwise you just become one of the thousands of companies vying for their time, which is why it's important to differentiate yourself by standing out from your competitors with perks for affiliate marketers. Another way to recruit affiliates is to advertise in Search. You can advertise in Google and Bing/Yahoo under "affiliate program" keywords. You can also

advertise on forums and in places where affiliates frequent in order to recruit affiliates to either your affiliate signup page or directly to one of your affiliate network signup pages. You can advertise on Facebook targeting people interested in affiliate marketing. Exposing your website's customers to your affiliate program can also be an effective strategy to grow referral partners, but I usually recommend a proper customer referral program for that purpose.

2. **Managing Affiliates** – This is one of my favorite phrases: “Management is everything.” If you launch an affiliate program or a performance marketing channel and you don't have intensive, competent affiliate management behind it, it's likely not going to gain traction unless you are a huge Fortune 500 retailer that's never done affiliate marketing before, then it might grow on its own with coupon affiliates. But otherwise, it needs a lot of doting upon and lots of TLC to grow properly. You need very proactive affiliate management in place to both grow it and manage the affiliates as well as possible. Whomever handles your affiliate management, or is working with your affiliate partners, needs to follow a very detailed strategy and take it extremely seriously. It really is a 24/7 type of process. You need to encourage your affiliates to contact you to discuss the program or they won't. Most affiliate programs aren't managed intensively enough in my opinion, mainly because the affiliate managers in place don't have the background or experience to effectively work with affiliates of all experience levels. Simply getting them their tracking link isn't enough! You need great affiliate management strategy and processes in place to really grow the program effectively.
3. **Affiliate Payout Levels** – affiliate payout levels have got to be looked at frequently, and you should look to payout as much as you can to the right types of affiliates to make lucrative for your affiliate/publishers. You should also look to throw in some kind of incentives and say, “if you make 50 sales this month or even 10 sales this month, we are going to give you a \$100 bonus,” or we are going to give you an iPad or an iPod or pay more now. Pay as much as you can initially and then you can reserve a couple of percentage points for people who can produce serious amounts of volume. There are many different types of affiliates, so make sure to pay them based on the value they are delivering for your company. For instance, many companies value affiliates that produce new customers over those that produce repeat customers. Some companies highly value affiliates that have relevant websites and blogs,

as opposed to coupon sites. But you can't ever lump all affiliates into a certain type, they all have to be evaluated and measured individually.

4. **Don't be Cheap with your Affiliates and Partners** – this is one of the biggest mistakes companies make. They just don't compensate affiliates well enough and they kind of look at it as just another marketing channel and say, "I really don't need to payout much because it's just my affiliate program...I don't know what it's going to do." Wrong attitude! You really should look at it as a real sales force for your company, your online "feet on the street" so to speak and you need to make it's really lucrative for people to work with you and send you traffic.
5. **Affiliate and Partner Management** – personalization works best when managing affiliate marketers. Typically, personalized affiliate management always works better than a mass approach, but you have to have experienced people in order leverage personalized affiliate management properly. Most companies and agencies use a mass approach and aren't helpful or friendly enough to their affiliates, which doesn't build the relationship properly. Make sure to have proactive, friendly affiliate managers in place to work with your affiliates, or it won't come close to reaching your expectations. Affiliate newsletters are also really important, as they are the primary method of communicating with your affiliates, however most companies fail miserably at this task. A really good agency (like mine) sends gorgeous looking affiliate newsletters that are highly engaging and friendly, with a great subject line (another aspect that affiliate managers do poorly in general).
6. **Affiliate Network Choice** – one network versus many networks can be the questions. This is a common issue in performance marketing because the more you spread out your offer or your advertiser account onto several networks, the more management has to be put forth. You also have to make sure the same order isn't being credited to more than one network source. So it can actually have problems when you branch it out a little bit wider with additional networks. I usually recommend maximizing one network and then possibly trying a couple others when you want to add more volume if there are additional partners you can pick up there. Or launching an inhouse program and recruiting directly to your inhouse program via website contacting and advertising in search and on Facebook to build affiliates there.
7. **Want your Affiliates to Succeed** – Make it worth your affiliate's time and effort. If you just look at as just another marketing campaign, then don't even bother because you really have to nurture your affiliate program to

get the most out of the channel. Facilitating your affiliates and partners with good management, tools, helpful resources, content, info about your company, keywords, and guidance will ensure you have a well-supported affiliate program. I always say you have to spoon feed your affiliates to have the greatest amount of participation. Affiliate management is a 24/7 endeavor. If you aren't willing to put that much effort into it, don't expect much as far as a diversity of producers. Anyone can have a bunch of coupon sites collecting sales, but the beauty in affiliate marketing is having a plethora of sale producers from all different directions.

8. **Strategize on Growing your Affiliate Channel** – Don't just sit there and kind of let it happen. Every month you should be putting a new strategy together, asking certain questions like: "what are we going to do this month to maximize this channel", "what are we doing for Q1 to maximize our affiliate channel?" "Are we going to pay out a little more or are we going to do a recruiting campaign?" "Are we going to run new promotions?" So you really have to strategize pretty heavily and leverage experts like myself to tell you what works in the channel, and then commit to doing them.
9. **Spend Money on Your Affiliate Channel** - most companies are really cheap when it comes to investing in their affiliate channel. Primarily because they don't know how to effectively spend money to grow the channel or have tried it in the past and failed miserably. But there are several ways you can spend money to grow your affiliate channel, including: hiring a competent agency, paid recruitment emails through the affiliate networks, advertising in Google and Bing/Yahoo, advertising on Facebook, advertising on affiliate forums, and conducting website prospecting. These are all ways to spend money to grow your affiliate channel and can absolutely be measured for effectively, you just have to know how to do so. Another very effective way to meet affiliate marketers is to attend Affiliate Summit, which is the leading affiliate marketing conference in the world. They do shows in NYC and Las Vegas every year, make sure to check it out, it's a great networking and learning experience. I'm lucky enough to be a frequent featured speaker at Affiliate Summit at last once a year.

These are some basic concepts in affiliate marketing and growing your performance marketing channel. Only through a tremendous amount of hard work, competent affiliate management, and dedication to growing the channel, will your affiliate program even come close to reaching its full

potential. Affiliate programs should grow larger on an annual basis and you have to keep your expectations in check. The better your website “converts the traffic” or performs, the quicker your affiliate program will grow and prosper. So make sure you have done a great job on your website and work to improve your conversion rate over time if you want to have a truly productive affiliate program. Let me know if you would like to speak to me about what my agency can do to grow your affiliate marketing channel. We are the best in the business and have the best processes, managers, and strategies for growing affiliate programs in any niche. Let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss!

Affiliate Management

Now that you know how it's done, you can do it yourself or enlist help to grow your affiliate program. To learn more about how to grow your affiliate program with the best affiliate agency in the business, click the button below!

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