

Best Practices in Affiliate Program Management

PartnerCentric adheres to the highest standards and best practices while promoting and managing your affiliate program.

1) Offer new affiliate activation bonuses

This kind of incentive is incredibly effective when you're trying to attract new affiliates to your program. It's not so much about the money. Don't get us wrong - money is important so incentives work. This is more about trust, however, which is essential when you're trying to develop a working relationship with affiliates. By offering an activation bonus, the merchant is showing the affiliate that this merchant is willing to reward affiliate partners. That's important.

2) Provide fresh creative on a regular basis

Effective advertising creative must be tweaked on a regular basis. A dynamic affiliate program should also have dynamic creative. When we say dynamic we don't mean your creative should include FLASH or video files. We simply mean that your creative needs to flow with the seasons, with special offers, with the latest product information or pricing. It's also important to use insights gained from your search engine marketing (specifically from keyword research and development) to constantly be revising your text to best capture clicks, leads or sales.

3) Distribute coupons as incentives

When PartnerCentric surveyed our affiliates in July 2007 about things they want to see more of that would have a positive effect on sales, one of the biggest requests was for more coupons. This is because coupons are a very effective way for affiliates to make the kind of offers that resonate with their customers. That makes good sense - and it's good business for any merchant. Keep the coupons flowing!

4) Enable affiliates to create product stores using the Instant Page Creator data feed tool

You don't need to be told that affiliates are busy people. That's clear to anyone who has ever launched an affiliate program and then wondered - where are the affiliates and when will sales start flowing in? Anything we can do to simplify or speed the process means more productivity and results for you. Therefore, we work with merchants to provide instantaneously-built product stores through our in-house data feed tool - the Instant Page Creator. This enables your affiliates to get your whole catalog on their sites by adding simple code. The feed is updated as your catalog changes, and your affiliates don't have to do anything in order to deliver the new information. It automatically updates on their sites. That's smart marketing!

5) Sponsor and promote contests to incentivize affiliates

Affiliates love contests and are motivated by incentives. That's why we work with our merchants to encourage affiliate contests, which serve to invigorate existing affiliates and recruit new ones. Because contests are measured by performance, they are cost-effective ways to increase affiliate activity and sales. The most recent example of an affiliate contest is being run by National Geographic Store (<http://shop.nationalgeographic.com/>). The affiliate who brings in the most validated sales totalling more than \$20,000 from June 1 to Aug. 31, 2007, wins a trip for two (airfare included) to the beautiful Galapagos Islands from Dec. 14-23, 2007.

"We're in the business of building relationships, and our greatest success comes when we set a high standard for all to follow."

- Linda Woods
President,
PartnerCentric, Inc.

6) Roll out seasonal or holiday offers

A vital affiliate program is one that best advertises - and sells - the program's products or services. Seasonal and holiday offers are important parts of the program because the offer and accompanying creative, if well-planned and executed, resonate with customers looking for products and offers that match the season, the holiday or the specific need of the moment.

7) Review commission structure to ensure it's competitive

Affiliates, like the customers they reach, are shoppers by nature. That means they're always looking for the best deal, the most money and the best ROI. Having a commission structure that is competitive within your niche is key to your program's ability to recruit the best affiliates. That's why PartnerCentric conducts competitive research - to ensure that your commission structure is going to attract the best affiliate partners for you.

8) Optimize landing pages for maximum effectiveness

If an affiliate program is the vehicle for increased revenue, landing pages are the doors. Affiliates and merchants spend too much time and money driving traffic to landing pages to have these critical pages be ineffective. PartnerCentric works with you to ensure that your landing pages are as effective as possible, and that the conversion rate is as high as possible.

9) Coordinate offline and online marketing efforts

FatHead.com turned management of its affiliate program over to PartnerCentric in Q4 2006. The PartnerCentric team reviewed all creative and promotions for the program and made changes that brought the branding and product descriptions more in line with the extensive television campaign that FatHead was running at the time.

As PartnerCentric Affiliate Program Director Matt Enders explains, "We put out brand new banner ads and creative focusing on lifestyle images and the popular sports such as NFL and NASCAR. We also started a buy one, get one free promotion that really got things rolling. We started approving affiliates several times a day to keep up with demand because this program quickly became a hot item."

The results were nothing short of miraculous. Under PartnerCentric's management, the program quickly generated increased traffic, conversions and sales through the end of Q4. By every possible measure, the Fathead affiliate program was off to a great start:

- Increased the conversion rate from 1.56% at its launch in November to 4.95% a month later.
- Raised the CJ EPC from \$109.86 to \$126.08.
- Inspired increased affiliate activity, turning more than 20% of the affiliate base into active affiliates
- Brought in 3,200 transactions through December
- Maintained a steady average order value of \$150
- Created strong text links that generated 79% of total orders

10) Promote program benefits and special offers

PartnerCentric spends a good deal of time and effort promoting all of our managed affiliate programs to affiliates through e-mail marketing. Our internal newsletter to affiliates, called PC Announce, is distributed monthly to 10,000 affiliate subscribers. Spreading the word about program benefits and special offers is an important tool for recruiting new affiliates and invigorating existing affiliates.

Get more information

PartnerCentric is your partner for integrated marketing services. For more information about our best practices, or our full range of Internet marketing services, contact us today at 1-800-930-0267.

"What do we mean when we say that we only employ the best practices? We mean that our experience has taught us the most effective, efficient way to get results for you."

- Samantha Morris
Director of
Client Services,
PartnerCentric, Inc.