



Affiliate Program Deployment Checklist

Manager task list for getting your program up and running.

Pre-Planning

- Work through the "Are You Affiliate Friendly?" Checklist. Choose the 10 most important attributes you want to start with.
- Sign up for competitor affiliate programs and study their compensation plan, cookies, creatives, reports, and support system.
- Develop a proposed affiliate compensation plan (commission, bounty, hybrid etc.) based on your margins and/or current advertising and customer acquisition costs.
- Develop a budget for your program. As a start, use the spreadsheet provided in the Template Pack that came with this course.
- Develop short term (6-12 month) objectives for your program. (Examples: Increase sales by 30% within 12 months; lower customer acquisition costs by 50%.)
- Decide how many hours per week you can devote to managing/supporting affiliates.
- Initiate improvements to make your products "affiliate-ready."
- Test your sales/order pages, navigation, and shopping cart for usability.
- Investigate affiliate management software options.
- Check with your current payment processor to be sure any potential software and/or shopping cart solutions are compatible.
- Will you have overseas affiliates? Make sure potential software solutions can handle foreign affiliates, multiple currencies, and different commission structures.

Finalize Management Plan

- Investigate tracking and management platform providers.
- If outsourcing, management firms.
- If undecided, consider hiring an affiliate management consultant to guide you.
- Perform due diligence: check forums for complaints about the firm and/or software, ask for references, look at client lists, etc.
- How will you, your management firm, or your network provider handle overseas payments in foreign currencies?
- If needed, revise compensation plan and/or your program budget to reflect management fees.
- If managing in-house, develop budget for software installation and maintenance.
- If managing in-house, investigate Help Desk and outsourced support options.
- Finalize contracts with network provider, management firm, or software provider.
- Develop/discuss an exit strategy in case testing or deployment is unsatisfactory.

Deployment

- Draft your affiliate agreement/contract and have it checked by an attorney.
- Integrate the agreement and digital signature into the online sign-up process.
- Test software installations and/or affiliate sign-up process. Fix bugs/errors.
- Upload sample creatives to your server and test all functions in affiliate management area, including correct link code generation. Fix bugs/errors.

- Sign up as an affiliate of your program, and check to be sure approval process and confirmation emails function correctly. Fix bugs/errors.
- Make a test purchase through you're an link. Check for correct tracking and cookies. Fix bugs/errors.
- If managing in-house, test your Help Desk and support system.

Program Promotion

- Write copy for your program promotion and sign-up Web pages. Add links to your program in your site navigation and your site map.
- Set up a blog with RSS for your affiliates. Pre-populate the blog with at least five entries. Make sure affiliates can sign up for blog updates via email.
- Write your program FAQ, Sales Guide, and Quick Start Guides. Upload to server.
- Sign up for an auto-responder system, pre-load initial newsletter confirmation messages, and add newsletter opt-in code to affiliate sign-up page. Test.
- Offer free or trial training to your affiliates upon sign-up through Affiliate Classroom via your sign up page or email confirmation.
- Submit your program details by hand to all the major affiliate program directories.
- Prepare press releases and submit to distribution sites.
- If advertising your program in ezines and/or via PPC, write ads and schedule advertising rollouts.

Creatives

- Develop an initial set of creatives and test via PPC and/or content marketing (articles, press releases, opt-in marketing, etc.).
- If you sell more than one product, create a data feed and make it free for all affiliates. (As an alternative, look into GoldenCan.com's data feed service.)
- Write and test the deployment of text ads with modifiable anchor text.
- Write a selection of articles, tips, and reviews to combat "thin affiliate" sites.
- Develop brandable viral reports, especially for limited time promotions.
- Develop landing page templates and test via PPC.
- Develop turnkey web sites and offer to all affiliates.
- For any creative that does not achieve a minimum 2% conversion rate, develop modifications and test to improve performance.

Communication Plan

- Provide your complete contact information to all affiliates, including phone and IM.
- Visit and participate in relevant forums. Be helpful, don't just promote yourself.
- Plan a telephone contact schedule for all super affiliates and selected others.
- Publish your affiliate newsletter at least monthly, preferably bi-weekly.
- Post to your affiliate program blog twice a week.
- Set up a system for polling or surveying your affiliates regularly.
- Plan at least four webinars or teleseminars in the next twelve months.
- Develop an affiliate recognition plan that includes awards for first sales, steady sellers, and top performers.
- Solicit feedback from affiliates about your products and suggestions for new creatives.
- Plan to hold an affiliate competition once your program matures (usually 12 months after official launch).