

# Affiliate marketing 2.0

## A guide to creating more innovative affiliate marketing campaigns

**A**ffiliate marketing is one of the fastest growing and most financially rewarding internet marketing tools available today. Its popularity was highlighted in the Internet Advertising Bureau's (IAB) online ad spending report for 2009, which revealed affiliate marketing was up 38.2 percent to £72.6 million.

As well as strategically placing adverts across relevant and respected websites to drive online traffic, marketers are becoming more innovative with affiliate marketing campaigns that go one step further to include a range of promotions, vouchers, and more creative communications designed in line with a brand's identity and ethos.

### The next steps

To ensure a successful campaign, first it is crucial to master the basics. This includes regular communication between the advertiser (merchant) and its affiliate network. In addition, creative material should be kept up to date, giving the affiliates a wider choice of collateral that represents any seasonal changes, for example in the run up to Christmas, or ahead of the summer sale. Once the basic affiliate marketing campaign is established, there are a variety of web 2.0 tools available to advance the campaign and help publishers (the owners of the affiliated sites) engage an additional consumer audience.

### 1. Mobile links

Consumers are increasingly transferring their shopping habits to mobile, a trend that has been helped by the recent upgrades to network capacity and flat-fee mobile broadband plans. M-commerce is estimated to have exceeded £34 billion globally in 2008, with ABI Research updating its forecasts for the US for goods bought via a mobile phone from \$544 million, to \$800 million for 2009. Mark Beccue, senior analyst at ABI also commented in *Business Week* that this figure would double again during 2010. As a result, those advertisers who get ahead of the game and establish themselves in this space stand to benefit enormously.

We expect that brands will begin to further explore mobile throughout 2010, as they look to expand their digital marketing campaigns.

### 2. Dynamic rich media

The average consumer is used to experiencing the internet in its full, feature-rich glory. As such, publishers are keen to be seen amongst the noise and are constantly looking at new ways to highlight their offering to the passing shopper. By working with technology partners, publishers can create interactive links containing video, Flash and Javascript to encourage a higher level of interaction that will encourage consumers to follow through to

the advertiser's website.

So how does it work? Brands can take existing video content from an existing marketing campaign, which is then compressed and converted to make it web friendly. This is then fully branded and tracking codes are added for the all-important measurement role. The video code is then made available to affiliates who use the footage to promote the brand as they would with any normal advert. Menswear retailer Charles Tyrwhitt, for example, used video links to demonstrate the half-Windsor tie technique and used this as a platform for consumers to browse further items available in store. The video was very popular with consumers which helped to drive traffic back to the Charles Tyrwhitt website.

Interactive links can also be used to create product information widgets. Widgets are essentially a clip of the internet, designed to include information about the website or product. We have worked with a few of our travel clients to produce a search box which allows consumers to see up-to-the-minute fares and availability for flights and holidays without navigating away from the page.

### 3. RSS feeds

Much like the RSS feeds that consumers use to find out about their favourite news topics and stories, these feeds push relevant information directly to the user on demand, rather than them having to search websites at length for information. For affiliate marketing, RSS feeds are used by publishers to share information about advertisers' products and services with their customers, as an easy, quick and convenient way of keeping them up to date. An increasing amount of advertisers are making content available in this way to help drive higher conversion rates. Conversion rates are further improved as publishers are able to copy and paste the feeds straight into their own site.

In a world where the next change is just around the corner, it is vital that businesses move with the customer by shifting budgets accordingly. Online channels allow businesses to respond quickly to what consumers want and engage with larger audiences.

For businesses looking to maintain their competitive edge and continue to be profitable, affiliate programmes should be high on the agenda. By investing the time to develop and maintain a truly collaborative relationship, both advertisers and publishers will find it easier to achieve success in today's competitive environment.

Liane Dietrich is UK managing director of affiliate marketing agency LinkShare.



By Liane Dietrich



Charles Tyrwhitt distributed this video via its affiliates to help drive traffic back to its website