



Partnerize

29 Tips to improve your partner and affiliate performance today.



Introduction.

Looking for some quick wins that will help drive growth for your affiliate or partnership program? In this eguide you'll find 29 simple concepts to do just that. These aren't pie in the sky ideas. Each of these simple ideas is something that you can make significant headway on, today. Some you can start and finish in a morning. Others will take more than one day to complete but you can make heady progress in one day.



01 **Replace third-party pixel tracking. Now!**

Most marketers know that pixel-based tracking faces increasing challenges as a measurement methodology. Here's why: Some browsers including Safari and Firefox have implemented third-party cookie management policies that impede or limit pixel-based tracking. Some ad blockers prevent third-party cookie placements. More and more consumers now regularly delete their cookies. Because of these and other developments, there's growing recognition across marketing that third-party, pixel-based measurement must be replaced.

Lots of brand leaders are rightly worried. But worrying about it won't fix it. Most major third-party measurement tools and networks have options for replacing third-party pixels. If yours doesn't, please get in touch with us. We have several. But whether with us or with one of our competitors, take a concrete step today toward getting it done!

02 **Get comprehensive mobile partner program measurement implemented.**

Many partner and affiliate programs don't have a complete mobile measurement solution in place for their small-screen campaigns. If you can't capture every sale for your business, including those that take place on mobile apps, you may be missing out on millions in credited sales. Talk to your measurement provider. And if they can't help, please feel free to talk to us. Further, mobile's share of total transactions continues to increase. With the Partnerize mobile SDK, you can capture all those consumer events and purchases. Without asking partners to change tracking links.

03 **Grow the size of your buying funnel by adding content affiliates.**

While the "buying funnel model" is considered by some to be a simplistic or outdated model, there is no denying that people who never consider your brand won't end up buying for you. On the other hand, if you put your brand into more consideration sets, your sales are likely to increase. Partnership can be great at growing both the top and the bottom of your funnel. One of the best ways of growing your consideration set is to work with more content partners, who play an important role in driving more people to learn about your brand. Content sites can help you grow your awareness, and their recommendations can help drive more people to consider buying from you. To take action on this tip, identify a few content sites with large traffic within your target audience(s) and reach out to start a conversation.

04 Reexamine your cashback strategy.

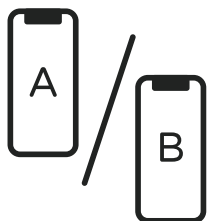
If you work with cashback sites, chances are that they represent the largest proportion of your total partner and affiliate program sales. Now, it makes sense to take a look at incrementality to ensure that your offers and programs are incenting the right kinds of conversions. It's really all about how you structure the offers. The other thing to remember about cashbacks is that their customers tend to be higher income and deliver higher average order values.

If you don't work with cashbacks out of the perception that the sales they drive aren't incremental, it may make sense to reconsider this decision. Cashback sites provide tremendous sales volume for many affiliate programs. And while years ago some prestige brands avoided them, these days even the most elite retail, travel and personal finance brands participate in these dynamic communities. Further, while some believe that cashback sites don't drive much incremental value, we have seen that is often not the case. Across all of our retail clients who consent to sharing industry trend and benchmarking data, we see that more than a third of total cashback-driven customers are "new to file" - meaning they have never purchased from the retailer before. That's pretty similar to any form of digital marketing activity. Again, the secret to getting the right results from cashback is the offers and programs you create.

05 Do a partner audit to ensure you are working with all of the right partners.

Are you working with the right partners? Are you working with ALL of the right partners? A partner audit can be a really valuable way to identify more of the partners that can help drive significant revenue and volume for your business.

Talk to your agency, network, or tech provider to discuss how you can learn about which partners are driving the strongest sales in your category, or have the most sway with your target audience. Such an audit can help you spot new partners as well as take a long, hard look at partners that aren't really delivering much volume to your programs.



06 Formulate an A/B creative test.

It's hard to believe, but thousands of partner marketers have never tested alternative creative approaches and offers to see if they can improve sales results. A/B tests, in which two creative messages are tested in 50/50 rotation, are relatively easy to formulate and execute.

07 **Benchmark your competitors' offers.**

If it's been a while since you compared your offers to those of your competitors, today is the day to change that. If competitors are sweetening their offers, you may need to respond in kind to maintain or grow sales. By contrast if they've diluted their offers, there may be an opportunity to increase your margins. Do a Google search for your competitor's offers. Or ask your agency to research the information for you. Then compare those offers to what you are taking to market.

08 **Schedule conversations with your top five partners.**

One of the best ways to drive growth in a partner or affiliate program is to work directly with your largest partners. You can collaborate on new tools and approaches they may offer, gain new market insights, or learn about and address any issues that are holding your sales back.

Large partners tend to lead technologically in this industry, so they may offer special ad units or targeting or data-driven marketing approaches that you aren't yet using. I know of a brand, for instance, that is now driving 12% of its sales from a hyperlocal geolocation product it only learned about by scheduling time with their top partner. In most cases, large partners are very pleased to work directly with important advertisers. After all, they win when you win.

09 Get a jump on your next holiday sales promotion.

Let's use Halloween as the example here. The month before Halloween tends to be a big month for candy promotions in grocery and drug stores. Yet some candy brands may not be as big as Mars or Hershey, and it may be difficult for them to fight for in-store display space. Perhaps trying to promote your candy in early September, when the competition for merchandising is less intense, can work.

You may see results or a huge boost in volume. This may be because you're alone out there in early September or, perhaps your merchandising is just great. Either way, you can essentially sell your candy twice to the same audience: once in September and once in October.

Bottomline: First movers for holiday promotions often get the best response. Consider starting your promotions a little earlier and see if your lift increases. There's ample evidence that it will. For example, for the December holiday season we are now seeing that many brands have pulled their holiday sales forward into early November. All by promoting more aggressively at the earliest days of the season.

10 Identify 10 influencers that could help you drive sales.



Influencers are a hot topic in marketing, and the marketing investment in influencer programs is growing even faster than many other arenas of partnership. Why not see if there are some influencers that can make a meaningful contribution to your sales?

It's incredible to see that some influencers are now attracting audience sizes that overshadow those of traditional media platforms. Further, so-called "micro-influencers," who attract smaller but very passionate audiences interested in specific topics, are playing a key role in helping millions of consumers make product choices.

Whether you work with influencer networks, or instead cultivate direct relationships with these special partners, you may find that influencer marketing can kickstart growth for even the most mature programs.

11 Do a fraud check.

While fraud is not as prevalent in partner marketing as in other digital categories that are measured by softer metrics like impressions or completed views, partner marketing fraud is on the rise. Speak with your network or solutions provider on how and where to look in your data for program fraud.

Protecting marketing dollars should be done proactively. With Partnerize's AI-powered fraud detection, the platform recognizes unusual patterns in performance and alerts users before it's too late. As a supplementary protection to our platform's leading brand safety solution, the platform also integrates directly with your existing fraud detection providers.

12 Test LTV-based commissioning.

Many partner programs are structured very simply -- to maximize total sales revenue. Everyone likes revenue, but sometimes your real goals are a bit more complex than that. If you are primarily tasked with finding users that will deliver a high lifetime value, consider structuring a commission program to maximize performance on this critical metric. More and more brands, for example, are creating programs that reward partners for every month that a subscriber remains a "payer." Creating a program that emphasizes and rewards user longevity encourages partners to attract the right users, not just any users.

13 Test AOV-based commissioning.

Some marketers are charged with increasing average order value (AOV) as a way of driving more incrementality from programs. It's easy to test the appeal of partner programs that offer additional incentives for higher ring purchases. One of the most effective strategies here can be to make an escalating offer at a purchase value that's just above your company or channel average. The additional incentive can help begin to change shopper behavior for the better. Be careful about replacing a simple program with one that only rewards an extremely high order value, however. High order values tend to be less appealing to first-time buyers. The key is to create a mix of programs that are well aligned to your true KPIs.

14 Test customer acquisition commissioning.

A different but related strategy can be to formulate and test an offer that rewards partners more for first-time customers. While this may require a two-way data integration, results across our clients show that this strategy can be very powerful for attracting new users to your business.

How it works: When a user makes a purchase through the channel, you simply get your backend platform to deliver a message to your solution tech that indicates whether the sale was made to an existing or a new user. Sophisticated partners can then adjust when and how they promote your offers to increase the likelihood of new customer acquisition.

Generally, we recommend offering something for every sale and extra for new customers versus rewarding only for new customers because partners can find it difficult to make money with such programs, especially in the first weeks and months when they lack sufficient data for optimization.

15 Test margin-based commissioning.

Often, brands create partner marketing programs that offer the same percentage bounty for all items. That certainly makes for simple campaign management, but it can lead to a mix of total purchases that isn't as profitable as you might like. If your product catalog offers items with very different margins, we suggest testing multiple commission rates for different product categories -- rates that reflect the different values of each purchase to your bottom line.

This is an increasingly common strategy. For example, travel OTAs offer far more commission on hotels and car rentals than on airfares because margins on air travel tend to be miniscule. In retail, Partnerize has many clients that offer variable commissions by category, brand or even item based on the margin and/or penny profit available from each purchase.

16 Test marketing to a new audience.

Many marketers begin their partner marketing efforts by mimicking the targeting for their brand's broadcast marketing programs. While that can be a great place to start, the wonderful thing about partner marketing is that you can test alternative target audiences at little or no cost to yourself. Don't have your partnerships strategy be limited by what makes sense for broadcast. Digital enables cost-effective targeting of audiences that might be too small for big ad buys but are easily reached with the right partners and offers.



17 Approve (or reject) all of your pending partners.

Approving new partners isn't the sexiest of work, but it can mean the difference between a great result and a poor one. Partners sign up to programs raring to go - excited by the prospect of working with you. If you take weeks or months to review and approve them, you may find that their enthusiasm has lessened or vanished altogether. Bottom line is that if you tell the world that you accept new partners, review and approve them in a timely manner. That's what a true partner does.

18 Compare the value of your affiliate driven customers versus those attracted via other channels.

One area in which partner marketing often excels is in the AOV it generates versus sales attributed to other channels. Usually it's very easy to pull AOV from a network or data solution, and your insights team should be able to provide the figures for other channels.

Many users of cashback, coupon and other site types fall into the classification of "supershoppers" -- for lack of a better term. These are people who like shopping, love a deal, and respond tremendously to appealing stories and offers. Armed with the knowledge that your customers are of greater value than those attracted through other channels, you can ensure that all your hard work is recognized for the outstanding value it delivers to the total business.

19 Identify the team “time sucks” for your partner program.

Managing and marketing programs -- including partner marketing -- takes time and resources. How much depends on whether you have the right processes and tools in place for the key tasks. Call a meeting of your team and identify where the management hours are going. What tasks need to be better automated? For example, are you still managing payments manually? Are international tax rules killing hours/days/weeks? Do you export data in CSVs and then have to reformat for your BI tools? Find out where the most time is spent managing your programs today.

20 Generate three ideas to reduce or eliminate one of the “time sucks”

Playing off of 19 above, work with your team to come up with potential solutions to your biggest time sucks. Then speak to your internal tech leads, finance teams, or a solutions provider to determine what you can do to implement your great ideas. The application of technology, for example, can dramatically reduce time demands and improve overall management accuracy. Finally, the greatest benefit here may not even be the time savings but rather the elimination of busy work that makes your team’s jobs harder and less rewarding.

21

Test dynamic creative messaging.

Dynamic ads feature content related to your recent searches. For example, if you looked at a blue sweater on a site but didn't buy, that site could deliver ads featuring that specific sweater to you across the web, trying to drive a conversion. Such ads are common in CPM advertising. Now they are transforming the partnerships space.

We see dramatically higher response rates for dynamic creative versus generic creative, particularly but not limited to the travel category. The typical range is 40-200% higher.

With the advent of new tools that automate the workflow for producing and fielding dynamic creative, virtually any brand can find a way to deliver dynamic ads that reflect the needs and search behaviors of individuals. Why not find a way to test the conversion power of dynamic creative for your business?

22 Test a new way to express your base promotional offer.

Have you tried to restate your offer in a new way lately? The way that you present an offer or discount can have a profound impact on both consumer appeal and response rates. I suppose this falls into “marketing 101,” but how you present an offer matters -- a lot. The same discount may become more appealing by restating it in a compelling way. After all, shopping is both a rational and irrational activity. For example, according to many industry studies, shoppers prefer buyone- get-one-free (BOGO) promotions versus equivalent discounts presented as a percentage off the retail price. Free stuff is darned exciting to lots of would-be customers.

While BOGOs and 50% discounts represent significant deals, the same principle could apply to smaller offers. For example, an offer for free shipping might be more appealing to consumers than a small percentage discount that would deliver an equivalent value.

23 Take a stand on attribution.

While many large companies are now undertaking multi channel attribution measurement, most do not include partnership data in those models. In partner marketing, some people think of attribution as a single channel analytics challenge -- that it is all about assigning credit to specific partners according to preset, rules-based methodologies. But that's not really attribution. Consumers don't just interact with one form of media on one type of device. Rather, they seamlessly migrate from touchpoint to touchpoint and expect to find their favourite brands ready to meet their needs everywhere.

Understanding the interplay across media and devices is what attribution is all about. To gain this understanding, you need to include a comprehensive set of data on consumer events for the partner marketing channel. Through advanced analysis, that data -- when combined with performance insights across the marketing mix -- helps to identify the relative importance of different touch points toward driving a conversion. Across channels. Across devices.

In order for partnership to rise to its rightful role in company marketing investment, its data **MUST** be a part of this process in your company. Talk to you insights team about how partnership data can be incorporated in attribution. You can't win the game if you are not in the game.

24

Bonus an important contributing partner.

In partnership, we often segment partners into three “buckets”:

- Initiators are the first partner touchpoints for a consumer journey
- Converting partners are the last touchpoint
- Contributing partners are those partner touchpoints in between

In partnership, most brands compensate whichever property drives the last touchpoint. But touches farther up the funnel can help increase the number of people who consider your product or service. Yet they don't get compensated for that work. Today, platforms like Partnerize make it easy to bonus or split commission payouts so that multiple partners benefit from a sale, not just the last click.

Some of the largest partners strongly endorse and prefer last click, and may not want to participate in programs that split commissions. But no one opposes bonusing, and it can be a great way to ensure that these upfunnel partners get rewards for their efforts on your behalf.

25

Activate three of your inactive but high potential partners.

Some of the partners that have been accepted into your program may not yet have started participating in your campaigns. This can happen for a variety of reasons. Often they simply overlook a new acceptance. The larger the partner, the more likely it may be that they overlook you.

You can address this inaction by getting in touch with such dormant partners and asking them, why the holdup? Lay out the advantages you bring to the table, and some of the details on your offers and compensation programs. Chances are, some personal outreach will get them rolling -- and delivering conversions -- quickly.

26

Bonus an important contributing partner.

Networks and solutions providers wait for you to approve conversions and authorize payment before they compensate your partners. Some clients do this weekly. Some monthly. And some are notoriously late getting around to it. There is no better way to please a partner than to pay them what you owe, on time. And no better way to make a good partner unhappy than to constantly make late payments.

You may think a delay of a few days isn't important, but it is. What's more, partners have excellent memories. They don't soon forget chronic late payers, and there is every possibility that you will be denied prime real estate on their sites if they must constantly harass you in order to get paid. Take a moment to authorize the money.

27

Identify your competitors' top partners.

You might consider this an important subtask of a good partner audit, and I wouldn't disagree. But this tactic is important enough to call out on its own. If your competitors have found partners that deliver great results for them, and you aren't yet working with them, it's time to get off the stick and sign 'em up.

There are a variety of tools out there that can identify your competitors' partners by searching for cookies and other tags on websites. Most are fairly inexpensive -- as low as a few hundred dollars a month. Why not give one a try and see if you can find some great new partners that are already delivering great results in your category.

28 Recognize a team member.

Partnerships drive massive revenue and profit. But sometimes the most important people in that success get very little recognition for their amazing contributions to the company's business. Partly that's because people outside of partnerships and affiliate often don't really understand these channels and how they work. In other cases, minimal recognition may be because partner marketers make this success look easy. Why not take a few minutes to ensure that these individuals get the recognition they deserve. The additional motivation you inspire is sure to help get your programs and plan elements to the next level more quickly.

29 Make a play for more budget.

Partnerships deliver outstanding ROAS. A recent IAB study put the average return on ad spend for affiliate at a colossal 16:1. That's higher than any other major marketing channel. Further marketing costs in certain business driving sectors -- like paid search -- are skyrocketing.

While partner marketers tend to be consummate team players, it often pays to be assertive when another channel might not be delivering what is expected of it.

Shifting some of that investment to partnerships may be a fantastic way to increase your own authority as you improve the overall performance of the company.

About

Partnerize

Partnerize is the leader in partnership automation. The Partnerize platform is the only of its kind to deliver a fully integrated, comprehensive suite of discovery, recruitment, optimization, payment, brand safety and fraud prevention capabilities for marketers seeking a high transparency, scalable subsidy to alleviate pressure on their unit economics as a result of over dependence on primary sales and marketing channels.

Supported by unrivaled service including the category's only in-housing support program, with Partnerize, you're in control of the entire partnership marketing lifecycle—all on a single platform.

Headquartered in NYC, Partnerize retains offices in Australia, United Kingdom, Japan, Philadelphia and Wilkes-Barre. For more information on how Partnerize helps turn your partnerships into a profit center, please visit <https://partnerize.com>