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The Publisher's Guide to Affiliate Marketing

In the fall 2012 edition of this magazine I wrote an article, *The CMO Guide to Affiliate Marketing*, that established the basic principles every marketer needs to launch an effective affiliate marketing program. Now, I'm turning my attention to the entrepreneurial side — the affiliate/publisher.

As an affiliate myself for the better part of a decade, I know that none of the progress of the performance marketing industry would be possible without these entrepreneurs.

Being a publisher isn't easy. In the digital age, many major media sources, as well as the state and federal governments, conspire to make it difficult for publishers to consistently and efficiently market their business. Even if a publisher makes it through all of those pain points and finds a great campaign to scale, it requires significant financial support and a watchdog mentality to ensure everything runs smoothly.

The road to being a successful affiliate or publisher isn't easy but it comes with many tangible benefits. Here are five such benefits worth considering:

- 1. 25 billion reasons and counting.** The Interactive Advertising Bureau estimates that annual spending in the United States on performance marketing services will reach at least \$25 billion in 2012. That is a 120-percent improvement over 2011 spend. Performance marketing accounts for 67 percent of all online marketing revenue transactions, according to the IAB. It's a growth sector and represents an opportunity for new and old affiliates alike.
- 2. Low barrier to entry.** It takes a small investment to test affiliate marketing campaigns. There are multiple media channels to experiment with, offering publishers several ways to measure the effectiveness of their campaigns. Often, it takes \$1,000 or less to accurately measure the effectiveness of a test campaign and to judge whether additional spend is warranted.
- 3. Affiliate network support.** Networks are available to take most of the stress off of the sales, technology and client service needs that eat up labor expenses. They make it easy to access brand advertisers that would be difficult to otherwise engage as an individual or small company.
- 4. Lucrative potential.** Few industries have produced the number of millionaires that the performance marketing industry has spawned. Performance marketing services are in high demand. If you test, optimize and innovate, there is the potential to make a lot of money.
- 5. Lifestyle.** Affiliate marketing provides the freedom to work remotely since few office-based services are needed. Until physical working capacity is reached, and you need to hire multiple employees, there is little need to leave the comforts of home.

There are many more reasons to become a publisher. Let's start with some of the more basic steps to get your first campaign launched.

Step 1: Choose Your Media Channel

It's critical to decide upfront which media channel you want to utilize. Once the appropriate media channels are determined, you need to learn as much as possible from a variety of sources, particularly the experts in the space.

Expand your personal network and use industry publications and conferences to meet people. No one will give up their winning techniques. You can gain valuable resource insight regarding the amount of time, effort and money involved in developing and maintaining a successful affiliate marketing campaign by networking with the right people within the industry.

Worth noting, I specifically did not pluralize the word "channel." It's critical to start with only one media channel before experimenting with others. For example, I started as a search engine marketer and then moved into display and email marketing, and eventually social media.

Don't try to learn every media channel at once. Instead, determine which channels are best for your brand. Spread your affiliate marketing efforts across multiple performance marketing channels. Once you have mastered a single performance marketing channel you can hire and teach employees across different media channels. This will allow you to invest in additional channels, or find business partners that can give the same undivided attention to another channel.

Step 2: Choose Your Network(s) Wisely

More than likely you will not be doing your own sales and tech work. It's critical, therefore, to find one or a select few affiliate networks that will work with you as a trusted partner.

There are hundreds of affiliate networks, so you need to do your homework before engaging one. Talk to other affiliates in your media channel, read industry publications and get referrals and introductions from good affiliates.

Monitor conversion rates after launch. Test the same offer across multiple networks to ensure that tracking is being appropriately handled. Otherwise, you could miss out on valuable revenue.

A reputable affiliate network will have affiliate managers with results expertise and a client-service mentality. It should focus on helping you make as much money as possible. You should never be treated like a statistic, and poor communication is a sign you are working with the wrong affiliate. Affiliate network contracts are rare, so if your relationship doesn't work out, there are plenty of other places to take your valuable business.

Step 3: Find the Right Campaigns

Once you have your network, it's time to get started as an affiliate/publisher. Here are the steps you take to ensure success:

Gather valuable insight from your affiliate manager as to which campaigns are doing well in your media channel. They should be able to tell you which campaigns are new and exclusive. They should also provide some basic metrics, such as click-through and conversion rates, CPM, EPC, etc.

Much like the stock market, it's not always best to jump on the bandwagon; the past doesn't necessarily predict the future. Find the vertical or niche where competition isn't as strong or campaigns aren't as saturated. At the very least, find a niche within a strong vertical, such as a degree-specific campaign within the education industry.

Monitor what your competitors are doing and mirror their best practices while avoiding their mistakes. This can be done on your own for free or with help from outside technologies.

You can set up email seed accounts, or pay for a service such as Email Data Source, an independent provider of email data, to track email campaigns. Services such as The Search Monitor and Keyword Spy will help you comb the page-one results of Google, Bing and other major search engines where your affiliate content will be displayed. Spend time on, and refresh, major portals to see banner ads linked to your content, or pay for a service such as Adbest to automatically monitor this for you.

Once you have decided on the campaign, make sure you know your loss tolerance. Not every campaign will make money. Decide on a spend amount and time period you are willing to invest before you move on to the next campaign, or before you invest more time and money in the current campaign.

Whether you find a competent and successful campaign to invest in further, or a loser you need to abandon, have the next campaign selected so you are ready to take advantage of the momentum from the first campaign.

Step 4: Target Your Audience

Once you have done all the difficult work of figuring out what you want to be, which affiliate network to partner with and which product or offer to market, you need to target your audience to eliminate wasteful spending. It may seem obvious that you should know your audience, but the majority of campaigns are launched with little thought other than speed and immediate revenue generation.

Transparency is the key to success in affiliate marketing. Your network partner or advertiser should provide basic demographics of the consumer that converts best on the front- and back-end. If you can't obtain basic details from your affiliate network about your target audience, it's best to reconsider the efficacy of the campaign or be prepared to invest more money experimenting until you find the right audience.

Making grand assumptions, or mass marketing when targeting options are available, is not recommended for beginning affiliates/publishers. Media channels like e-mail tend to have

difficulties with the ability to utilize deep segmentation. Other channels, such as display, social media, search and co-registration, have basic to advanced targeting capabilities that will help you hone in on your target audience.

The beauty of affiliate tracking technology is that you can utilize dynamic SubIDs in tracking links to segment lists, keywords, banner placements, etc. This will allow you to optimize conversions and media spend upfront, ensuring your spend only goes toward your target audience.

Properly understanding your consumer and where to find him or her will help make a marginal affiliate marketing campaign good, and a good campaign great.

Step 5: Optimization and Feedback

The final and ongoing step is to optimize your campaign via conversion metrics and advertiser feedback. Find the best converting media within your campaigns from your SubID tracking. Turn off those media channels that are losing money. Increase spending on channels generating strong results.

Building an open line of feedback to optimize campaigns makes for long-term success and a great strategic partnership.

Gather feedback from the network or advertiser regarding what is, and isn't, working on the back-end. Let them know any needs you have, whether it's creative, site copy, landing-page designs, new audiences to target, payout and payment needs and other changes you think are necessary for success. Reputable affiliate networks and advertisers will be receptive to your entrepreneurial ideas. It's important to get approval before experimenting on your own due to brand sensitivity.

Make sure your intellectual capital will remain exclusive to you to protect your rights prior to sharing any sensitive business information with an affiliate network. Protection from theft or competition is the reward for your risk and hard work.

Now that you understand some of the high-level ingredients needed to become an affiliate, get out there and start networking. The conference season begins in earnest in January with Affiliate Summit West, followed by many other great networking opportunities, such as LeadsCon West in March and ad:tech San Francisco in April.

Always keep in mind what Theodore Roosevelt once said: "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty . . . I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well." The same holds true for success in affiliate marketing: it's a tough road for many but the rewards far outweigh the risks.

About Peter Klein

Peter Klein is senior vice president of media services at MediaWhiz, an integrated digital media agency. He oversees MonetizeIt, the MediaWhiz affiliate network, and can be reached at pklein@mediawhiz.com.



Five Ways Mobile Can Succeed in the Affiliate Channel

We all know that mobile commerce is poised to explode in the next few years. While its adoption has seemed slow when compared to the volume of commerce already taking place on desktop PCs, it's only a matter of time before mobile devices are the preferred vehicle for online shopping.

Carlisle & Gallagher Consulting Group forecast that within five years half of today's smartphone users will be using mobile wallets as their preferred payments method, while Forrester Research estimate that total US mobile commerce will reach \$45 billion by 2017, more than 4x higher than today.

Depending on how you look at it, mobile will either be a huge boon or a colossal bust for the affiliate channel. Success will be determined by the foundations that advertisers put in place now, which include working closely with publishers and ensuring their affiliate networks are properly tracking and crediting mobile conversions.

To help you make the most of upcoming mobile opportunities, here are five important components of a successful strategy when it comes to m-commerce and the affiliate channel.

1. **Affiliate tracking capabilities.** The nuances of the most popular mobile platforms, with their constantly changing features and functionality, require that the affiliate network conduct regular and rigorous testing. Without this mechanism in place, you run the risk of alienating your publishers through technical oversights that don't credit them for driving traffic and sales.
2. **A clear understanding of the path to purchase.** With so many ways for consumers to shop and on so many devices, it can be easy for the path to purchase to become confusing. From the shopper's perspective, this non-linear path represents freedom and flexibility. Yet from the advertiser's point of view it can be challenging, especially when it comes to understanding where the shopper is in the purchasing lifecycle. Advertisers that work closely with publishers to understand this new, non-linear path will be able to increase conversion rates by presenting the right offers at the right time on the right device.
3. **Rich Data Feeds.** While your site may appear to be optimized for mobile, it's wise to take a closer look at your data feeds as there may be inadvertent errors that are turning off your customers. Four of the most common oversights are:

- Characters or symbols that are inadvertently inserted in place of text.
- Images that are too small or low resolution.
- Lack of compelling and descriptive product descriptions.
- No UPC code which is required for many mobile commerce applications.

4. **Mobile site or optimized desktop site?** While a mobile site is an extension of your brand, be sure that it's not simply a tweaked version of your website that only provides a half-baked mobile experience. If you're looking to drive traffic and conversions through mobile, you need to fully m-enable your site.

For example, if your customers find your mobile site takes too long to download or is difficult to navigate, they may never return. In fact, 57 percent of consumers will not recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile site. Similarly, 40 percent of consumers will go to a competitor's site after a bad mobile experience.

5. **Create an smooth, uninterrupted consumer experience.** The three elements that must be firmly in place to ensure customers return through a mobile device are simple navigation, easy and secure sign in, and fast checkout. If there are any hiccups along the way, the consumer will make their purchase elsewhere. Be sure

to test the end-to-end experience from the publisher site to the advertiser site to check-out.

It's clear that mobile commerce is a top priority for advertisers yet many are still hesitant to invest heavily as this nascent market continues to undergo many changes. There are lessons to be learned and best practices that have yet to be established.

However, waiting too long to institute a mobile affiliate marketing strategy will put advertisers at a disadvantage. By working with publishers and affiliate networks now, advertisers will be able to make significant gains when mobile commerce reaches mass adoption and at the same time leverage the innovation and experience of their publisher partners.

About Scott Allan

Scott Allan is senior vice president of marketing at Rakuten LinkShare. He has more than 15 years experience in corporate and product marketing with an expertise in the performance marketing channel.

Total US mobile commerce will reach \$45 billion by 2017, more than 4x higher than today.



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Partnerships, Partnerships, Partnerships!

Digital agencies set to lead the gold rush on enterprise marketing software

In a recent report titled *Establish New Agency Partnerships*, Forrester analyst David M. Cooperstein asserts, “Building a 21st century brand requires marketers to form new types of relationships with agencies. As with the fast-changing technology landscape, it’s up to marketers to stay current with the fast-changing ecosystem of agencies that are continually reinventing themselves to serve clients’ most pressing needs.”

This reality creates a simple mandate for digital marketing and advertising agencies everywhere: establish new technology partner relationships that address your clients’ most pressing needs.

As CMOs at leading global brands re-evaluate both their existing and future agency relationships, leaders at digital marketing and advertising agencies need to look at their technology partnerships and understand which companies and solutions provide real value to the agency’s clients. These partners, once identified, will also help the agency win new global business.

Independent of the issue of agency relationships, many CMOs are already adapting to the fast-changing technology landscape by taking advantage of SaaS software platforms that provide scale, centralization and real-time insights. These kinds of solutions unlock the potential to reach consumers through growing digital-marketing channels like search, affiliate and display.

But identifying SaaS solutions to track and manage “big data” from performance-marketing campaigns is only one side of the overall equation. CMOs that oversee performance-marketing campaigns are also realizing the benefits of adopting an all-in-one global solution that includes things like payments and in-market tech support. For international brands, questions like, “can we pay in Yuan to a performance partner in Shanghai?” and “can our local team receive live tech support in Mandarin?” are fast becoming equally important considerations.

Whether a CMO is just exploring new marketing technology solutions, or already has a new infrastructure in place, the challenge lies in how to manage performance-marketing campaigns in a way that allows a brand to concentrate on its core competencies and to continue to scale globally. Agencies that can provide a response to this challenge for both existing and potential clients have uncovered a tremendous opportu-

nity. They are able to address what is now a pressing need for all global brands and therefore become an attractive option for CMOs looking to establish new agency partnerships. The software company provides the “plumbing” and the agency in effect becomes the “contractor”, pulling the levers to drive the best results for their client.

For agencies, the benefits of recommending and/or managing an appropriate enterprise-level performance marketing software solution for current and potential clients are clear. They are able to remain technology-agnostic and don’t need to engage in trying to build out multiple best-in-breed technologies in-house, which is unlikely to be a core strength. This much-needed value-add solidifies existing client relationships and makes the agency

an attractive choice to CMOs searching for a firm that understands and can support new digital marketing objectives, strategies and tactics. CMOs understand and perceive real benefits when they work with an agency that can both design and implement global performance marketing campaigns on the front end and manage the program’s important analysis, insights and support services on the back end.

We have entered an era that Mr. Cooperstein calls “adaptive marketing”. It is driven by social media and digital proliferation. He says, “This era will force yet another change in the expectations placed on marketing agencies to deliver.”

Just as CMOs are under pressure to make decisions based on big data, new marketing trends and global growth; so ad agencies are perfectly positioned to nurture this shift. Forming strategic partnerships now with the software winners of tomorrow makes a whole lot of sense for agencies, and those that adapt the quickest will undoubtedly secure a long-term competitive advantage.

About Malcom Cowley:

Malcolm is CEO and co-founder of Performance Horizon Group (PHG), a leading provider of real-time performance marketing technology to some of the world’s biggest brands. Prior to PHG, Malcolm co-founded the highly successful buy.at affiliate marketing network, which AOL acquired in 2008. As CEO of PHG, Malcolm oversees all aspects of the company’s global growth. For more information, visit www.performancehorizon.com or follow at @tweetphg

It’s up to marketers to stay current with the fast-changing ecosystem of agencies that are continually reinventing themselves to serve clients’ most pressing needs.

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The online Advertising BIBBLE BOOK

**The Authoritative Guide to
Ad Networks and Exchanges**

The Best Performance Marketing Networks In The World

Chris Trayhorn, mThink.com



Each year we conduct the largest research survey in the performance marketing industry in order to identify the best affiliate and CPA networks that brands, merchants and agencies should be working with. Within these pages you will find 40 of them, as chosen by the advertisers and publishers of the world-wide performance marketing community.

Our Winning CPS

Network: Rakuten LinkShare

Rakuten Linkshare received significantly improved support from both affiliates and merchants in this years survey, a result of investment in new technology and a great publisher experience. In combination with a fine portfolio of e-commerce clients like Macy's, Apple iTunes, Avon and Office Depot, this was enough to push Rakuten LinkShare above some very tough competition.

Our Winning CPA

Network: Clickbooth

Ranking high on everyone's list this year Clickbooth's full service management platform is making money for a lot of people. Celebrating a decade of success John Lemp's behemoth had a strong 2012 being recognized as one of the best places to work in Florida, by two separate agencies. With top campaigns in virtually every vertical it's easy to see why ClickBooth was chosen best CPA.

These are the networks that, in a highly competitive environment, have been able to maintain professionalism and achieve the guaranteed ROI that is the mark of a top network. These are also networks that have learned to survive and thrive in a difficult commercial environment, so they are without exception run by smart, effective leaders.







2013 is before us with bigger opportunities than ever. Social commerce, the worldwide adoption of mobile, digital TV and new payment systems mean that performance marketing is positioned perfectly. Brands should and must bring performance marketing into their mix if they are to succeed in the years ahead. The networks in these pages are the ones to help them, do just that.

This year's BLUE BOOK survey was bigger than ever, with more information on how different networks appeal primarily to publishers, or to advertisers, or both. Look for our ad:tech edition in April for more detail on these results, together with our new look Blue Ribbon Panel of performance marketing industry experts.

Methodology

The BLUE BOOK Top 20 is not a simple list of the biggest networks. Instead, it takes into account reputation, influence, clientele, popularity and scale. Publishers and advertisers are self-identified and are provided with different questionnaires depending on whether they primarily run CPS campaigns or CPA/CPL. In addition to the main survey, we also accept input from the Blue Ribbon Panel of industry experts as well as our own research and aggregation of traffic data, measures of industry influence and as many other pieces of information as we can gather.

TOP 20 Affiliate (CPS) Networks

Network	URL	Survey comments or notes
1 Rakuten LinkShare 	linkshare.com	A focus on big retail, smaller merchants and advertiser service has kept Rakuten LinkShare on top for another year.
2 Commission Junction 	cj.com	CJ is professional, consistent and trusted. A very close competition between CJ and LinkShare this year.
3 Amazon 	affiliate-program.amazon.com	Amazon offers a lowish percentage per sale but their ease of use and massively broad product offering makes them very popular.
4 ClickBank 	clickbank.com	Everybody's favorite way to get into selling their own digital product, ClickBank continues to attract a lot of small merchant support.
5 ShareASale 	shareasale.com	ShareASale generates a lot of loyalty and trust from publishers and advertisers alike. A network that is perceived as doing things the way they should be done.
6 AvantLink 	avantlink.com	A very professional network that gained ground in this year's survey. AvantLink is doing a lot right.
7 Google Affiliate Network 	google.com/ads/affiliatenetwork	The Google Affiliate Network inevitably benefits from the vast scale of Google's portfolio. A huge network.
8 RevenueWire 	revenuewire.com	A network specializing in digital products, built on elevated principles of sustainable and ethical commerce.
9 oneNetworkDirect 	onenetworkdirect.com	Digital River's oneNetworkDirect is the leader in software sales with the industry's best network technology and offices worldwide.
10 Pepperjam 	pepperjamnetwork.com	Renowned as a network helpful to newbies, Pepperjam also has a loyal following of super-affiliates and merchants.
11 LinkConnector	linkconnector.com	An established network offering many trusted merchant brands ranging from Internet Top 500 Retailers to smaller niches.
12 Affiliate Window	uk.affiliatewindow.com	The biggest affiliate network in Britain, received a lot of support from affiliates in Europe.
13 eBay Partner Network	ebaypartnernetwork.com	eBay's affiliate network with the Quality Click Pricing (QCP) payout system.
14 Avangate	avangate.com	Another award winning network out of Europe with an emphasis on software and SaaS
15 TradeDoubler	tradedoubler.com	Founded in Sweden, strong in Europe.
16 zanox	zanox.com	Europe's biggest affiliate network.
17 Millionaire Network	millionairenetwork.com	Millionaire Network is an invitation-only affiliate network completely dedicated to advertiser success.
18 PeerFly	peerfly.com	Came from nowhere two years ago and zoomed in popularity this year. Great staff and an excellent platform.
19 WebGains	webgains.com	Strong contender out of the UK, with some excellent core values that should keep them around for a long time.
20 AdCommunal	adcommunal.net	The best affiliate network in the AdCanadian internet marketing industry today.

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TOP 20 CPA Networks

Network	URL	Survey comments or notes
1 Clickbooth/Integraclick 	clickbooth.com	John Lemp's behemoth just keep growing. A very strong showing this year.
2 Neverblue 	neverblue.com	Fresh from acquisition from GlobalWide Media, Neverblue is still going strong.
3 MaxBounty 	maxbounty.com	MaxBounty has built upon a good year to gain a lot of popularity this time around.
4 PeerFly 	peerfly.com	Chad French has built a network that publishers love. Superb affiliate management.
5 MediaWhiz Monetizelt 	mediawhiz.com	Not the biggest network but especially well-liked by advertisers and agencies.
6 CPAWay 	cpaway.com	Tom Dietzel's young network is extremely popular with affiliates, and has an excellent technology platform.
7 Adscend Media 	adscendmedia.com	Very strong in content monetization with good reach and a nice offer portfolio.
8 Convert2Media 	convert2media.com	C2M continues its run up the rankings. An especially strong turnout among publishers.
9 W4 	w4.com	W4 has a very experienced team who know how to make campaigns successful. Good technology too.
10 Adknowledge 	adknowledge.com	Strong in predictive/behavioral technology, good reputation.
11 CPA Lead	cpalead.com	A leader in content-locking and a favorite for many.
12 Matomy	matomy.com	With international locations and multiple platforms, Matomy is a welcomed addition this year.
13 Adperio	adperio.com	A fast-growing network with a variety of online solutions.
14 Intela	intela.com	Professional, with good campaign integration across channels.
15 RevenueStreet	revenuestreet.com	Part of TheMediaCrew, a solid network that knows its business.
16 AdWorkMedia	adworkmedia.com	Another great performing network out of Florida, with a global reach.
17 Fluent	fluentco.com	A strong new comer in boutique performance network arena, with a penchant for smartphone app developers.
18 xRevMedia	xrevmedia.com	Breaking in to the Top 20 this year utilizing Smart Technology to deliver data in real time.
19 Motive Interactive	motiveinteractive.com	Premium, invitation-only, and an excellent proprietary tracking platform.
20 ValuLeads	valuleads.com	Another new comer, ValuLead's customized campaigns have fostered a dramatic rise in popularity.

Millionaire Network's Not-So-Secret Sauce For Driving Advertiser Sales Online: Quality

Parker Powers of Millionaire Network tells us what it takes to grow a network into the BLUE BOOK Top 20 in less than three years.

Millionaire Network was a new entrant into the BLUE BOOK Top 20 for 2012 - an amazing performance for a network that was founded only two years earlier. During that time we at Revenue Performance have been able to see their increasing popularity via our annual survey. What has been intriguing is that while the sheer volume of publisher votes hasn't been especially high, the average level of influence of those publishers has been. Millionaire Network may not get the most votes, but it does seem to get votes from people who matter.

Parker Powers is the CEO and co-founder. We thought we should ask him what he thinks he is doing right and what it takes to build a start-up network into a BLUE BOOK Top 20 entrant.

"From the very beginning we took the approach that you can only really add value for an advertiser if you have great publishers in your network," he told us. "The publishers and affiliates are the key. And that's where we came from ourselves - we had spent years as affiliates learning the business from the ground up.

"When it came to starting Millionaire Network we asked ourselves the question: as publishers, what would the perfect network look like? What would we want it to be? Once we had worked out the answer, then we decided to build it."

One of the interesting aspects of Millionaire Network's model is that they are genuinely an invitation-only network. We wanted to know why they had chosen to go that route. Surely it limits the rate at which a network can grow when its just starting out?

"We began with one idea in mind. Our secret sauce if you want to call it that, except that it is not a secret. It is simply, "Quality First". That means only good publishers and only great traffic. We have never been interested in signing up thousands of newbies or in feeding our publishers with a bunch of syndicated offers. We decided that we would rather grow slowly but with good quality as the determining factor. Quality first - it is as simple as that."

The conversation continued as we talked about what's involved in trying to maintain a high-level of publisher-capability. How does one go about recruiting a whole network full of what are effectively super-affiliates?



Parker Powers discussing the unique value proposition Millionaire Network offers advertisers

"You just have to realize that affiliates have a lot networks to choose from, so you have to differentiate yourselves by being seen as actually better. Lots of networks pay lip service to the idea that publishers are important, but they don't follow through. We do. We work with many publishers that bring in tens of millions of dollars a year. They need a network that is totally professional, with completely reliable infrastructure and solid finances. Once you drill down into which networks can truly deliver on those requirements then you take an awful lot of networks out of contention."

"So we understand that publishers can afford to be picky about which networks they work with. But networks should be picky too. As a network, if we accepted every publisher who wanted to apply, we would spend half our time sorting through them all and dealing with poor quality traffic. We avoid all that by working on an invitation-only basis. We do get asked about what our criteria for acceptance into the network is, and the answer is that we judge things case-by-case. But in general, we take the approach that almost all the good business in affiliate marketing is done by the top two or three per cent of publishers, so that's the ballpark in which we operate. If a publisher can drive more than \$1 million worth of traffic a year, then that's a good start."

“The truth is, there are probably less than a few thousand publishers total in the US that fall within the criteria needed to qualify for an invitation from Millionaire. Not all of them are in our network working on our advertiser’s behalf, but the simple truth is we have a lot of them. It makes a big difference for our advertisers because affiliates at that level of success don’t walk the floor at trade shows looking for business. Each one of those affiliates probably generates more business than several thousand newbies, but without our help many advertisers would never be able to reach them.

That goes some way to explaining the profile of the publishers that we see in the BLUE BOOK survey voting for Millionaire Network, but it doesn’t address the success with advertisers. We asked Parker to talk about that aspect of their approach:



Millionaire Network’s Advertiser Sales Report Dashboard

“We focus on building strong relationships, whether with brands, or merchants or agencies. By emphasizing relationships, we have been able to attract a lot of exclusive offers, and that is in turn great for our publishers. But it also means that we have a genuine responsibility to our advertisers to make their campaigns successful.

So, a focus on high-quality offers for high-quality publishers, that in turn generate high-quality traffic - this is not a ground-breaking formula. Presumably then, the difference lies in execution? How about some details?

“Well, I’d like to be able to tell you more,” says Parker. “This is a good time for us and we have some real successes under our belt. We are lucky enough to be growing fast with a number of big brands as clients. The trouble is that in this business a lot of the time it’s better not to give too much detail about your successes. That’s why we use the slogan, ‘Once you are in, you’ll understand.’”

Millionaire network



*Parker Powers
Co-Founder @ CEO*



*Bryan “Wiz” Wiznuk
Co-Founder @ COO*



*Ronen Hamatian
Co-Founder @ CMO*

Millionaire Network was founded in 2010 by Parker Powers, CEO, Bryan “Wiz” Wiznuk, COO, and Ronen Hamatian, CMO. Ronen told us:

“At the core of everything we do is responsibility. From Day One we deliberately adopted a very conservative approach to selecting our publishers. We are careful about the process by which they gain access to offers from our advertisers. And from the beginning we have incorporated proprietary quality-control and compliance technologies, and strict legal and accounting standards.

As a result, we now take pride in having the trust of several large, reputable brands who have chosen to give exclusive rights to us to promote their products and services via various channels. These advertisers include Fortune 500 companies with annual revenues of over \$6 billion. These relationships really demonstrate Millionaire Network’s second-to-none standards of quality and the kinds of volume we can drive online.

The commitment to responsibility and quality runs through everything we do, with the goal of making a small, yet influential group of top affiliates and advertisers very satisfied. That is what success looks like to us, and it is what will ensure we are here to stay.

The Next Generation of DirectTrack®

The Long-Lived Tracking Platform Has An All-New Version Launching In January.

Is DTX The Best Performance Marketing Platform of 2013?

The marketplace for performance marketing tracking platforms has become crowded over the last few years with low-cost network-in-a-box software competing with established, enterprise-level applications that can run massive, globally distributed affiliate networks. DirectTrack is the 800-pound gorilla in this space, but performance marketing is no respecter of companies or products that don't move with the times. Does DirectTrack X, the 10th major release of the DirectTrack platform, keep it ahead of the chasing pack?

Tracking platforms are the glue that holds the performance marketing industry together. Every publisher or advertiser engaged in performance marketing uses a tracking platform interface to set up campaigns, to track conversions and to report on what is or isn't working. Every network runs on a tracking platform - either one bought off the shelf or one developed in-house. They make the performance marketing industry run, linking millions of publishers across the world to thousands of advertisers and merchants, all while tracking billions of transactions each year.



Figure 1. The new DTX interface is clean, widget-based and includes custom Twitter feeds.

The biggest and best known tracking platform is DirectTrack, and the latest version has just been launched. Since it is version 10, the developers, Direct Response Technologies, have taken the Apple approach of adopting a Roman numeral, hence DTX.

For those readers that are familiar with previous versions of DirectTrack - and that probably means a clear majority of people in the performance marketing industry given the number of networks that have utilized the platform at one time or another - DirectTrack X will come as a refreshing surprise. Gone are the long-winded processes by which new campaigns were set up, and the static, dated interface that seemed to make everything take a little too long.

Instead we get a modern, state-of-the-art interface (see Figure 1) acting as the front-end of an entirely re-architected application. Real-time reporting on a global scale, an interface that can be customized by

user, campaign setup wizards, multi-currency capabilities within individual campaigns, five-level deep Sub-ID tracking, cookie expiration that can be set down to

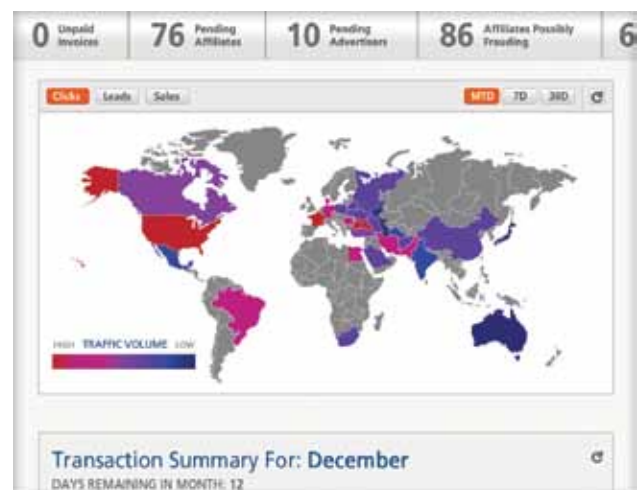
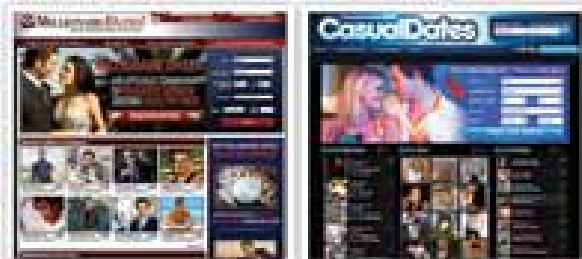


Figure 2. A geo-based heatmap of transactions is included in reporting.



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Revenue Performance – Product Review

the second, mobile and post-app install tracking: the wish-list of features that have been delivered in DTX just goes on and on.

The question is, does it all work together to make this the best performance marketing solution of 2013? We took a test-drive of DTX to find out.

Test-Driving DTX

The first thing that you notice with DTX is that it's pretty. Good design was never really a priority in performance marketing interfaces but over the last year or two we have seen the influence of Apple's design-oriented approach making itself felt. DTX takes the clean, simple approach to an advanced level.

Then there is the speed of response of the new architecture. Drilling-down into information is snappy, reporting is fast enough to make it easy to move from campaign to campaign quickly, and setting up new affiliates or campaigns just means stepping rapidly through simple wizards. It is a treat to use.

And, perhaps most obvious after a few minutes of use, the depth of capabilities of the system is remarkable. This is where the fact that DirectTrack has been through 10 major versions makes itself apparent; newer entries into the marketplace have been able to emulate most of the major feature set, but it is in the nuances and the sheer depth of capability that you notice what a difference product maturity makes.

Everywhere you go you find thoughtful touches that help you do what you want to do faster than expected. A quick and easy campaign setup wizard takes you through the essentials in order to get a campaign up and running right now, and then go back and fill in the details later. Site-wide search works effectively to allow you to jump quickly when you need to find something fast. A user-configurable favorites bar allows you to set up your favorite pages to ensure relevant reports and important daily tasks are always one click away at any time. Time after time you find that the software understands what you want to do and is ready to facilitate it.

While the capabilities within DirectTrack X are extensive, here's a breakdown of nine major highlights.

New architecture

Compared to earlier versions of DirectTrack, using DTX seems significantly faster and more responsive. The developers claim that the entire middle-layer has been re-written — losing more than two-million lines

of code in the process — with a focus on user experience, and it shows. Everything is real-time with effectively zero lag. Additionally, the revised architecture allows the full software package to be remarkably comprehensive and full-featured for enterprise-level customers, but the feature-set can be pared back for smaller customers with lower budgets. DTX has been designed so that it can be customized for a one-man agency in India, as much as for a multi-national retailer based in Kansas.

Dashboard

The dashboard is the first thing that most users will notice when they try DTX for the first time. It takes the art of the interface forward by quite some distance. Almost everything on the screen is widget-based, which means that elements can be moved around and rearranged at will. Each individual user can customize their own interface by dragging-and-dropping from a long list of widgets supplied with DTX, plus custom ones where applicable. Add in a custom Twitter feed, a user-specific Favorites Bar and site-wide search capabilities, and it all adds up to one of the most attractive and efficient affiliate, advertiser or admin interfaces that we have yet seen.

Wizards

In order to bring simplicity to what can be complex processes, DTX includes wizards for setting up campaigns and new affiliates. They're designed to bring together all the required information while making it easy to get campaigns or affiliates started. In an associated innovation, Info Cards pop up when needed to provide quick overviews of campaigns or affiliates — these let you jump straight to a detailed affiliate record or to editing a campaign with just one click.

Tracking

Accuracy of tracking has always been a Direct-Track strong point, and DTX continues this tradition. Options include almost anything you can imagine, including compliance with Do Not Track, device fingerprinting and lead/sale cookie expiration that can be set to the second. Mobile devices are automatically recognized, with optional mobile-specific linking URLs allowing campaigns and offers to be differentiated for mobile users.

Affiliate Commissions

Affiliate commissions in DTX are customizable by leveraging its trigger-based commission structure, allowing for a wide variety of web user-actions to be

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commissionable. Facebook “likes”, user gender, specific locations, installs: you name it, you can pay commission on it. Breaking the constraints of traditional rigid campaign payout options, DTX has been positioned to allow clients to reward any type of activity that may lead to higher lifetime value of customers, and each trigger can be customized for individual affiliates or groups of affiliates. Also important from an affiliate’s perspective is that DTX, in line with previous editions of DirectTrack, does not include any type of auto-scrub functionality. Scrubbing and shaving are too commonly used by networks seeking to maintain their margins these days, and it’s good to see a platform that still does things right.

Reporting

Reporting brings huge changes from previous versions of the software. The new reporting interface is dramatically simplified and, once again, offers user-level customization. Columns can be added, subtracted and dragged into position at will, and it’s easy to

drill down into campaigns or to bring up new panes of information (what the developers call “modals”). Opening a new report, dragging in the columns you want, and then opening up a new modal to compare and contrast is the work of a few seconds — it’s very slick. They’re even introducing geo-based heatmaps so you can see in an instant where across the globe your business is coming from at any moment (see Figure 2).

Fraud prevention

DirectTrack has been the leading tracking platform for many years and as a result has perhaps the largest database of fraudulent affiliates in the industry. It allows new affiliate applications to be checked against the historical records of any application to any of hundreds of DirectTrack networks. In a welcome advance, the system also matches IP addresses to the initial login IP address, meaning that if an account is opened by a shill in the USA and then transferred to somewhere in Russia or China, for example, it will be flagged.



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Globalization

DTX has been re-engineered with globalization and localization in mind. The developers seemed to have put a lot of thought into what is needed when expanding a network or campaign into a new country. Particular affiliates or groups of affiliates can use different currencies all within one campaign. Currency exchange rates can be updated manually or automatically by a feed from Cloanto.com. Individual advertiser or affiliate interfaces can be customized by language. We couldn't find anything that we needed to do for which there wasn't functionality already built-in.

Exchange/distribution

One of the aspects of DirectTrack that has been very popular with new networks over the last couple of editions is the ability to cross-publish offers to other networks on the DirectTrack platform. The new DTX version builds on this with an excellent recommendation engine which combines well with the developer's in-house team that proactively matches available offers to networks. This works really well for agencies and brands who may have a good offer but may not know too many people in the performance marketing community.

Conclusion

So, after covering the multitude of features and functions in the new version, the question to be asked is: is it right for you?

Traditionally, the answer would depend on what you want to achieve and whether you're a CPA specialist, an agency or brand just getting started, a super-affiliate, or a publisher looking for a more robust in-house tracking engine. For each use-case it was easy to differentiate between the various tracking platforms and arrive at a conclusion.

In our view, for many people the best choice just became clear. In DirectTrack X, Direct Response Technologies has produced a do-it-all champion. DTX is a powerful, distributed, global platform offering scalable, real-time reporting, and exceptional user experience. DTX can also be configured for individual needs for cost-effectiveness without sacrificing any of the new bells and whistles.

The fact that performance marketing tracking platforms are incorporating state-of-the-art technologies can only be good for the industry. DTX has carried the ball forward — the question now is whether the other platforms will be able to invest in trying to keep up. **RP**

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Does Increased Commission Actually Generate More Sales?

Increasing sales volumes is a critical task for affiliate managers, but is a simple increase in commission the best way of achieving that goal? Traditionally, the commission structure offered by an advertiser has been the main lever to engaging publishers and rewarding them for their levels of activity. Typically a program will offer a standard commission rate together with higher rates for selected partners that may be necessary to ensure the program is competitive for those key people. Putting a custom commission structure in place is almost mandatory for advertisers in these cases and it may buy them placement on a large publisher site, but the incremental value of these sales is more difficult to ascertain.

In cases where an advertiser offers an increase in commission as a temporary tactical measure, they will often receive additional exposure, perhaps to a particular audience upon which the publisher has influence. While commission increases across the largest partners may secure additional exposure, promotions can also be targeted at longtail publishers to provide them with an incentive to increase their activity. For example, 'each publisher that generates x sales this month will receive a higher commission next month' may motivate the longtail to put more effort into the promotion of a campaign. These kind of promotional bonuses encourage affiliates to continue promoting the campaign and driving additional sales throughout the month they receive the bonus. Success breeds success.

Whether working with large publishers to increase volumes, or trying to motivate the longtail, it is important that advertisers are able to make educated decisions. They need to be confident that the increase in spend on these kinds of promotions actually drive additional sales, rather than simply paying more for the same sales volume.

Advertisers can also use tactical commission increases to stimulate publisher activity and competition. For example, running commission increases across cashback sites is often thought of as being very effective. It seems logical to assume that higher cashback rates will result in increased sales. However, if increased commissions are offered too regularly, shoppers become savvy and learn to avoid purchasing until there is a strong rate of

cashback on offer during a promotional period. This effect can be compounded by competitors increasing their own cashback offers, turning the situation into a 'race to the top' from which it is hard to return. Customers who are loyal to the concept of cashback rather than to the brands themselves will purchase from whoever offers the best deal and the value and incrementality of these customers comes into question.

Advertisers can avoid this by arranging tactical commission increases to fit in with their KPIs. For example, brands that are running mature and well managed campaigns will not simply base their commission promotions on sales uplift. They will use data to understand which publisher partners are best able to drive profitable customers for them based on their target actions, and will reward them with increased commissions accordingly. For instance, if the primary objective for an advertiser is to create new customers, higher commissions can be targeted at publishers best able to generate new customers rather than just increased sales from an existing customer base.

It is important during this process for advertisers to treat their publisher base as individuals and assess the quality of their traffic on a case-by-case basis so they can be rewarded accordingly. Trying to create "categories" of publishers and setting commission rates based on those categories is a mistake. No two publishers are exactly alike, and the quality of traffic and type of customer generated through one coupon site will not be the same as another. Despite looking superficially similar on the surface, two different couponing sites will have completely different audiences.

Advertisers should avoid assuming that increased commission is a surefire tactic to increase sales. It is important to understand publisher partners individually. That will then provide the insights into which levers to pull to not only drive higher sales, but also to ensure that other goals and KPIs are met too.

About Matt Swan

Matt Swan is a Client Strategist at leading global affiliate network, Affiliate Window. He works with advertisers to offer strategic advice to optimise campaigns. He also contributes to new business pitches and is an active member of the IAB AMC.

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10 Things You Never Knew About LinkConnector

LinkConnector is a network that has been getting increasingly good results in the Blue Book survey and so we took the chance recently to catch up with their CEO, Choots Humphries. The network has been around since 2004, making it one of the longest-established performance marketing platforms today. While they have always provided a fairly standard set of mainstream solutions, LinkConnector has become known for creating new, out-of-the-box approaches for its customers. Their SEO-friendly Naked Link Technology, which allows affiliates to link directly to merchant sites, is a great example of this.

Rather than doing a standard interview, this time around we asked Choots for a New Year list: **10 Things You Never Knew About LinkConnector.**

#1. Varied Merchant Management Options

LinkConnector offers three merchant account types starting with a self-managed account and extending to a fully managed solution. With à la carte program services also available, the management combinations available are nearly endless.

#2. Dedicated Affiliate Relations Department

LinkConnector created a dedicated Affiliate Relations department to give affiliates top support and representation. We feel our devotion to and representation for affiliates sets us apart.

#3. Product Feed Search API

LinkConnector provides a search API that affiliates can use to search against LC merchant product feeds. LinkConnector also has an API that affiliates (or merchants) can use for reporting and to call LinkConnector's Coupon/Promo Feed.

#4. EPC by Affiliate Type and Demographics

Wouldn't it be helpful to know how a Coupon Affiliate performs with specific offers versus an SEM or Display affiliate? Want to know which promotional methods are most effective? Beyond generic EPC, LinkConnector gives customers much more actionable snapshots of the total picture.

#5. Naked Coupons

LinkConnector can attribute merchant sales based on a private coupon code—eliminating the need for a click and empowering a much broader promotion (e.g., Twitter). We



Two Beauties and the Beast, Choots Humphries.

also offer merchants our coupon compliance technology which will only credit approved affiliate coupons—eliminating the need to worry about coupons not intended for the affiliate channel leaking in.

#6. Shareable Offers

One of LinkConnector's newest technologies gives consumers the ability to dynamically share offers and ads from affiliate sites. Merchant promotions then have the opportunity to go viral across the many social networks with the affiliate receiving credit.

#7. Product Links and Promo Links

LinkConnector dynamically determines a merchant's top performing product links and promotion links and presents these as affiliate text links. Affiliate performance with these specific, targeted links is often double or triple that of standard affiliate links.

#8. Robust Reporting Capabilities

Reporting is an essential element to our industry and it is something that is not often prioritized. LinkConnector uses feedback from our customers to constantly improve our reporting system. Need to know how mobile is doing? LinkConnector has it.

#9. Zero Tolerance of Fraud

LinkConnector goes well beyond providing merchants tools to find fraud. Our FraudFREE technologies actively seek out and eliminate existing fraud.

#10. Partner and In-House Tracking Solutions Available

LinkConnector can essentially white label our robust tracking capabilities and provide reliable in-house tracking for our customers. We currently power the tracking behind the partner or in-house programs of several of our larger customers.

Based on the Blue Book survey and on our conversations in the industry, LinkConnector's reputation is continuing to grow. Their clientele already includes esteemed brands such as Intuit's TurboTax, Getty Images, iStockphoto and Gander Mountain. For both advertisers

and affiliates looking for a well-established, top-tier network with a technical advantage, LinkConnector represents an excellent choice.

About the Author

Choots Humphries has been involved in online marketing for over 13 years, having founded two separate companies—LinkConnector Corporation and DotCom Corporation—with his business partner Ernie St. Gelais. LinkConnector is now one of the fastest growing Performance Marketing Networks today and powers the programs of many Top 500 brands and retailers. Previously, Choots received a commission in the U.S. Navy where he served as the navigator on two naval warships and managed worldwide staffing requirements for approximately 75,000 enlisted personnel. Choots holds a B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an MBA with an emphasis in Information Systems from George Mason University.



For more information on LinkConnector's leading-edge marketing solutions please contact:

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Retargeting Will Transform Mobile Marketing in 2013

The hurdles were high but now – for the first time – mobile retargeting on a global scale has become a reality. Retargeting describes the ability to re-advertise to the 98% of shoppers who look but don't buy, or to the 60% who leave their shopping basket agonisingly full but fail to checkout.

It has finally come of age for mobile. Advertisers have been able to retarget consumers on desktop for some years, with much success. Now, new technology means that this success can be translated for the benefit of the growing brigade of mobile shoppers. 2013 is going to see mobile retargeting seriously taking off.

The speed of mobile's crusade against the PC has been so rapid that many marketers have been left reeling. But while the web took fifteen years to disrupt everything, it has only taken the smartphone five. During these five short years 45% of all American adults have acquired a smartphone and 18% have a tablet of some kind. These figures are only set to rise: analysts are predicting that within two years 90% of mobile users will own a smartphone.

New technology, enhanced opportunity

M-commerce – the purchasing of products on smartphones and tablets - is booming, as sales figures over the holiday season 2012 have shown. We have seen that click-through rates on mobile ads rose 23% over the Thanksgiving weekend. This compares to a rise of only 5% in click-through rates on desktop-displayed ads over the same period. Importantly, we have found that retargeted mobile ad campaigns generate, on average, an impressive 40% conversion rate from previously abandoned leads.

Until recently, mobile retargeting has been impossible due to strict mobile privacy regulations. However, new mobile retargeting technology is now available that has been specifically developed to comply with the relevant privacy regulations. The technology securely maps anonymously held keys to a given user. Supporting this technology are five servers handling 85 million user records and processing thousands of queries per second, per server, at an average query time of five milliseconds.

Advantages of retargeting and mobile provide real ROI for advertisers

So, while adhering to the highest privacy standards, mobile retargeting can now enable advertisers to re-engage consumers who have previously shown an interest but never actually committed to purchase. It is estimated that

just 2% of online shoppers make a purchase on their first visit to an e-commerce site. With mobile retargeting, marketers can take advantage of location tracking and RTB, to retarget relevant ads at the right time and place, to the right audience, on the right device.

Mobile is scaling rapidly which means that brands can now target and retarget mobile users in 220 countries, which means that there are a potential 60 billion monthly impressions available for monetization. Performance marketing, charging on a results-only basis, is perfectly positioned to help advertisers take advantage of this massive opportunity.

About Simon Wajcenberg

Simon Wajcenberg is the Global CEO of Clash Group, a leading New York and London-based full-service digital media company.

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It Is Time For Performance Marketers To Grow Up

Performance marketers, it is time to grow up.

This is a call to action for all networks, affiliates, and advertisers. Performance marketing is one of the fastest growing industries in history and its not going away. According to Forrester Research, in 2014 US affiliate marketing spending is projected to hit over \$4 billion and this monumental rate of growth shows no sign of slowing.

Our industry includes some of the most creative, innovative people in the world, yet we lack the one thing that is needed in order to drive performance marketing to the next level: unity. We, as the leaders of the affiliate and performance marketing industry, need to stand united around a single common goal of agreeing industry-wide compliance standards.

As leaders, we are paving the way for a whole new marketing medium and in so doing we are shaping the future of both marketing and commerce. Performance marketing is the great equalizer. For the first time in history, anyone can compete with the largest brands in the world; the ability to market and hence create a new product or brand of the future is truly open to anyone.

The problem is that in pushing innovation in marketing forward, a multitude of different compliance approaches have been developed, and that typically has resulted in much finger pointing from network to network. No network can ever admit to being perfect, yet each has learned lessons they could share with others. We need to turn these lessons into industry standards that all of the major players can agree on and enforce. Only then can the industry we all love finally take that great leap forward.

This should not be taken necessarily as a criticism. Most industries go through a similar process of maturation. After the explosive growth of the convenience and fast food sector, companies such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Burger King, and General Mills were publicly shamed for the "obesity epidemic" sweeping the nation. The result was that the top players in the food companies collaborated to create disclosure standards for calories and ingredients. These self-imposed initiatives have greatly improved perceived consumer value of the food indus-

try as a whole and of the individual companies themselves.

We need to learn from such examples. We understand our industry in a way that outsiders cannot. We are the ones on the front lines, watching the overall trends and the day-to-day currents of performance marketing. Because of this, we must be the ones who come together and commit to industry wide standards that all must follow.

This is the only way to put us back in control of our own destiny and improve both consumer perception and market sustainability of the performance marketing industry as a whole. I have personally spoken with many of the largest players in this industry that agree with this approach and I invite the leaders of this industry to join me in giving full support to organizations such as the Online Trust Alliance, IAB, NAI, PMA and ECPM.

We, as the leaders of the affiliate and performance marketing industry, need to stand united around a single common goal of agreeing industry-wide compliance standards

These organizations can provide the platform for a unified affiliate marketing industry by connecting, informing and advocating for our industry, and speaking with one unified voice.

With one voice we can ensure that our market continues to thrive. It is time for action, organization and unity among us all. Our first step should be to create a comprehensive set of self-regulation policies that cover each of the various areas of performance marketing, such as advertiser landing pages, publishers, SMS, email marketing, etc., and the responsibilities for

each party involved. The next step should be to enforce these guidelines with the people we do business with. Only then will the \$4 billion dollar industry we have all collaborated to create be able to protect consumers effectively. In the end, if we can come together to protect consumers and advertisers, we will protect ourselves and our industry.

About John Lemp

John Lemp is the owner and CEO of Clickbooth, The Exclusive CPA @ CPC Network. With 10+ years of experience in Internet Marketing, he is both an industry leader and innovator.



Fluent



Fluent is a digital performance marketing company bridging the gap between advertisers and publishers to provide integrated solutions for online customer acquisition and monetization. Our proprietary web and mobile ad-serving technology helps advertisers better engage, qualify and communicate with their target audience. We promote interaction between brands and consumers with the end goal of providing tangible results through a pay-for-performance model.

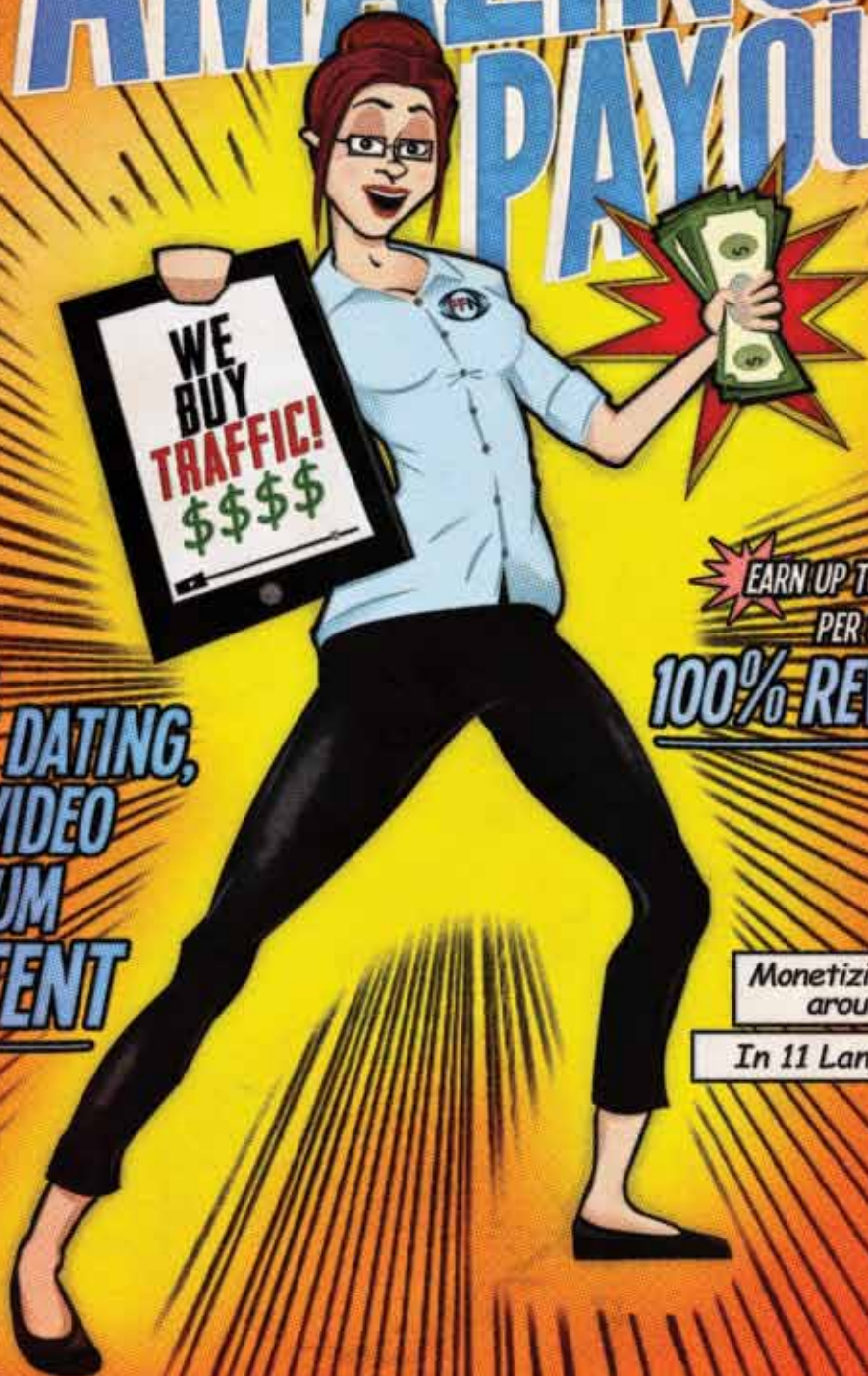
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