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Sample Affiliate Marketing

Buyer's Guide 2010

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Sample Affiliate Marketing



Published August 2010

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1. Introduction

Econsultancy's buyer's guides are the ideal starting place for anybody researching new suppliers in digital market sectors. They contain **in-depth vendor profiles**; to help you quickly evaluate suppliers and service providers, as well as **market analysis** to help you put things into perspective. Vendors are selected for the report based on a combination of factors, *not limited to but including*:

- **Analysis of capabilities** (services / products)
- **Clients**
- **Experience** (qualifications / trade bodies / case studies / client lists)
- **Expertise** (by sector / topic),
- **UK status** (a UK office is preferred, occasional exceptions are made)
- **Ability to take on and fulfil new projects**
- **Recommendations from trusted sources** (or anecdotal evidence to the contrary)
- **Google visibility**
- **Business model** (a high % of turnover should be related to these services)
- **Company website**

Econsultancy does not explicitly recommend any of the suppliers featured in these guides, principally because it is impossible for us to work with all of them to form a first-hand opinion. But we do believe - based on an intensive and careful selection process - that the chosen vendors represent quality.

Buyer's Guides are updated on an annual basis, so the information contained within is recent and thus valid. Send any questions or comments to Econsultancy's Director of Research; Linus.Gregoriadis@Econsultancy.com

Other Econsultancy buyer's guides published in 2010

PPC Bid Management Technology Buyer's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/ppc-bid-management-technology-buyers-guide>

Multichannel Campaign Management Buyer's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/multichannel-campaign-management-buyers-guide>

Online Reputation and Buzz Monitoring Buyer's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-reputation-and-buzz-monitoring-buyer-s-guide>

E-commerce Platforms Buyer's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/e-commerce-platforms-buyers-guide>

Web Analytics Buyer's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/web-analytics-buyers-guide>



1.1. About Econsultancy

Econsultancy is a [digital publishing and training group](#) used by more than 200,000 internet professionals every month.

The company publishes [practical and time-saving research](#) to help marketers make better decisions about the digital environment, build business cases, find the best suppliers, look smart in meetings and accelerate their careers.

Econsultancy has offices in New York and London, and hosts more than [100 events](#) every year in the US and UK. Many of the world's most famous brands use Econsultancy to [educate and train](#) their staff.

Some of Econsultancy's members include: Google, Yahoo, Dell, BBC, BT, Shell, Vodafone, Virgin Atlantic, Barclays, Deloitte, T-Mobile and Estée Lauder.

[Join Econsultancy](#) today to learn what's happening in digital marketing – and what works.

Call us to find out more on +44 (0)20 7269 1450 (London) or +1 212 699 3626 (New York).

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2. Executive Summary

The focus of this report is affiliate marketing, with an analysis of market trends and challenges, as well as detailed profiles of both the leading UK affiliate marketing networks and the main UK agencies offering affiliate marketing services.

The affiliate marketing sector continues to flourish and will drive more than £4.5 billion in e-commerce sales this year, according to Econsultancy's market valuation. This means that this channel is driving 8% of all online retail sales.

Trends covered in this guide include:

- Affiliate marketing prospers in difficult economic climate
- Transparency holds key to enhancing industry reputation
- Consumers turn to voucher-code and cash-back websites
- Case for multi-attribution model gains momentum
- Emerging channels drive affiliate marketing innovation

The report contains profiles submitted by the following companies:

Networks: Affilinet, Commission Junction, Digital Window, LinkShare, OMG, Paid on Results, TradeDoubler, Webgains.

Agencies: 7thingsmedia, Affiliate Program Advice, Altogether Digital, Azam Marketing, Bigmouthmedia, Existem Affiliate Management, Media Contacts, R.O.EYE, Stream: 20, ZenithOptimedia.

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3. The Market

3.1. Focus of Report and Market Definition

The focus of this report is affiliate marketing, with detailed profiles of the leading UK affiliate marketing networks and agencies offering related services. There is an extensive analysis of trends and challenges within the UK affiliate market.

The guide is intended to be of interest to online retailers and other types of merchants across a range of sectors who are considering affiliate marketing for the first time or reviewing their current approach. It should also be of interest to media agencies, affiliate networks and publishers, as well as analysts and journalists writing about this increasingly influential sector.

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3.1.1. Terminology and key stakeholders

Affiliate Marketing

In the context of digital marketing, affiliate marketing is the practice of a company financially rewarding a publisher (an affiliate) for a sale, customer or lead which has been shown to derive from the affiliate's website or email activity.

The term is also applied to this particular industry as a whole, encompassing affiliate networks, management companies, in-house managers, third-party vendors, and various types of publishers who promote the products and services of their partners.

Affiliates

Affiliates are the companies or individuals who attract traffic for their selected businesses (known as "merchants"). They do this in a number of ways, typically through paid search, search engine optimisation (natural search) or email marketing.

Affiliates can use a number of digital marketing channels or methods in order to get traffic to merchant websites. Some of these different affiliate "categories" (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive) include:

- **Paid search affiliates**

Pay per click (PPC) affiliates run campaigns within search engines such as Google and Yahoo, bidding on words and phrases to help drive traffic to a merchant's website. Merchants are able to choose whether they want to have affiliates bidding to promote their products or services. Additionally, if this route is followed, they need to decide whether the affiliate is allowed to bid on brand terms or generic terms.



- **'True content' / SEO affiliates**
- **Loyalty and reward websites**
- **Email**
- **Co-registration affiliates**
- **Voucher-code affiliates**
- **Group-buying affiliates**

Affiliate Merchants

These are the advertising clients who are actively using affiliates (often through networks) to promote and/or sell their products or services.

3.1.2. Affiliate marketing networks: benefit for merchants

The benefits of affiliate marketing include sales increases (or sign-ups and leads), the transparency of return on investment (through the ability to track the origin of sales) and the ability to pay commission to affiliates based purely on performance (therefore removing a large element of financial risk).

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3.2. Market Value and Growth

Econsultancy

Econsultancy estimates that affiliate marketing will drive £4.62 billion in online sales during 2010, a 12% increase on 2009 when the sector was responsible for £4.13 billion in e-commerce sales.

Although the affiliate marketing sector has been hit by the recession, this industry is still flourishing and will drive more than £4.5 billion in e-commerce sales this year, according to Econsultancy's market valuation.

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The chart above shows the growth of the affiliate marketing sector since 2004 when Econsultancy produced its first Affiliate Marketing Buyer's Guide.

As in previous years, we would like to emphasise that the valuation for the affiliate marketing sector arguably slightly underestimates the total value of affiliate marketing, because it does not include sales value outside the online shopping basket. Substantial commissions within the affiliate marketplace are based upon leads, which create value for merchants without a transaction necessarily taking place online.

Although the overall percentage of online retail sales driven by affiliate marketing is 8%, for many "blue chip" merchants, particularly in retail and travel, this figure is much higher. However, there are other companies who choose not to run an affiliate programmes at all, because they question the value of the channel.

SAMPLE QUOTE - What the networks say

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Liane Dietrich, Managing Director, LinkShare UK



3.3. Market Trends

3.3.1. Affiliate marketing prospers in difficult economic climate

There has been much discussion about the impact of the recession and slow economic recovery on digital marketing.

The disappearance of familiar brands from the high street in the last two years has adversely affected the affiliate marketing sector, as has the withdrawal and scaling down of programmes by many financial services merchants.

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3.3.2. Transparency holds key to enhancing industry reputation

A further consequence of the recession is an even greater need to get maximum value out of every campaign. This has meant that all channels in the marketing mix need to be far more accountable.

Voice of the network

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Robert Glasgow, Webgains

Examples of malpractice by affiliates include post-view cookie dropping, “cookie stuffing” into users’ machines, and bidding on brand name terms against merchants’ wishes.

Many of the tactics employed by less scrupulous affiliates may not be strictly illegal, but they do diminish trust and transparency in a way which is detrimental to the reputation of the industry as a whole.

The merchants involved need to have clear policies set out for their affiliates, and make it clear what is acceptable. There needs to be more communication between affiliates and the merchants. Asda, for example, states on its website:

“We also ask voucher-code sites to remove any links to the ASDA site that purport to be revealing voucher codes for Asda when actually they are just links through to the ASDA site that drop a cookie on to the user’s machine for no work by the voucher-code site. Any link through to The ASDA site must be either backed up by a real voucher-code that we provide, or by some editorial.”

“ASDA would like to inform its affiliates that it is restricting affiliates bidding on brand terms on all search engines. This includes any terms with the word ‘ASDA’ in it. However, we still actively encourage affiliates to bid on generic terms in order to drive sales and increase commission.”



3.3.3. Consumers turn to voucher-code and cash-back websites

As mentioned previously, another consequence of the recession is the increasing popularity of voucher-code and cash-back sites. Added to this mix are group-buying websites such as Groupon and Groupola.

Peter Rowe, Managing Director of affilinet said:

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3.3.4. Case for multi-attribution model gains momentum

As affiliate marketing has grown and matured, there has been much debate around how to attribute value based on models beyond the “last-click-wins”.

3.3.5. Emerging channels drive affiliate marketing innovation

Affiliate marketing is a highly innovative sector, as affiliates are always finding new ways to engage with users. The growth of social media technologies and mobile has provided new opportunities for affiliates, and the channels are well suited to the sector.

Mobile

Mobile allows for real-time, geo-location services, which enable marketers to be far more relevant and targeted.

Social Media

The rise of social media has inevitably affected all channels in the marketing mix, and affiliate marketing is no different. Social networking sites such as Twitter have been used effectively to drive traffic to sites. Beyond this, many consumers now talk about products online, and this represents a huge opportunity for affiliates.

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3.4. Return on Investment (ROI)

If utilised effectively, affiliate marketing can offer businesses a wide range of advantages, from highly tangible increases of revenue, through to softer benefits such as improved brand perceptions.

Affiliate marketing (networks) can help advertisers ...

- **Drive revenue**

When considering the other benefits of affiliate marketing – not just ROI – our [Affiliate Marketing Business Case](#) should also be referred to.

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3.5. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT)

This section contains a ‘SWOT’ analysis for the affiliate marketing sector, focusing primarily on networks and agencies.

3.5.1. Strengths

- The affiliate-marketing industry continues **to grow and mature**. Merchants are attracted to this sector, as it provides many advantages in terms of boosting their online sales at relatively little cost.

3.5.2. Weaknesses

- Due to the unethical actions of a few, affiliate marketing still suffers from a **perception problem** as one of the “dark arts”.

Voice of the network – weaknesses

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Alison Guise, Commission Junction

3.5.3. Opportunities

- Affiliate marketing is a **highly flexible business model** that can be adapted as online trends develop.

3.5.4. Threats

- **Voucher-code** and **cash-back sites** are becoming increasingly popular with consumers, but some affiliates see them as a threat since they divert business away from “true content” affiliates.



4. Costs and Pricing Models

4.1. Introduction: network charges

It is important to recognise that both the costs and charging methods can vary between the networks. Merchants must decide what model is most appropriate to their needs, and whether they are prepared to pay more or less for a particular network, depending on the standards of service.

As with any outsourced service provider, it is important to understand clearly what is included in the costs and what will result in additional fees.

The different types of charges for merchants can broadly be broken down into the following areas:

- Over-ride charges
- Set-up/technical integration costs
- Monthly management charges

4.2. Over-ride charges

The network's fee does not come out of the affiliates' commission and it is therefore imperative for merchants to factor this in to their budgets when deciding how much commission to pay their affiliates.

4.3. Set-up/technical integration costs

Those who wish to consider spreading themselves across several networks will need to consider whether they have the budget to do this if there are set-up costs involved.

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4.4. Introduction: Finding the right network

In order to identify the most suitable network - or networks - for affiliate marketing it is important to understand that different networks have different selling points, in terms of both their technology and their services.

This chapter, in addition to the detailed company profiles and market positioning charts contained in the next sections, will help you focus on what your company needs and help you to find the right match.

Here are some key questions and considerations which can act as a checklist to help you avoid any pitfalls.

It is also worth consulting our [Affiliate Marketing Request for Proposal \(RFP\) template](#).

What the networks say

“The things that are important are often those that aren’t easily quantifiable. Select a network or agency which understands your business objectives and seem passionate about working alongside you. Ask for case studies about success they’ve had with other merchants and look for innovative and imaginative approaches that are specific to individual clients.

“Remember that your network or agency will be responsible for selling your business to the affiliate base so you need to be confident that they hold existing relationships within your vertical and that you would trust them to be able to communicate your proposition effectively.”

Matt Bailey, 7thingsdigital

4.4.1. Can affiliate marketing help you to meet your sales and marketing objectives?

- What are your objectives from affiliate marketing?
 - Can affiliate marketing help you to reach and exceed your business targets?
- What advantages will affiliate marketing have over other types of online marketing, for example pay-per-click (PPC) or display advertising?

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4.5. Introduction: Finding the right agency

If you are a merchant looking to use an agency for your affiliate marketing activities, the following considerations need to be made.

4.5.1. Do you need an agency?

- What kind of online marketing activities do you run?
 - A large-scale operation or a small, niche business?

What the agencies say – tips for choosing an agency

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Mark Russell, Existem Affiliate Management



5. Network Market Positioning Charts

5.1. Explanation for charts

5.1.1. Chart 1: Business model

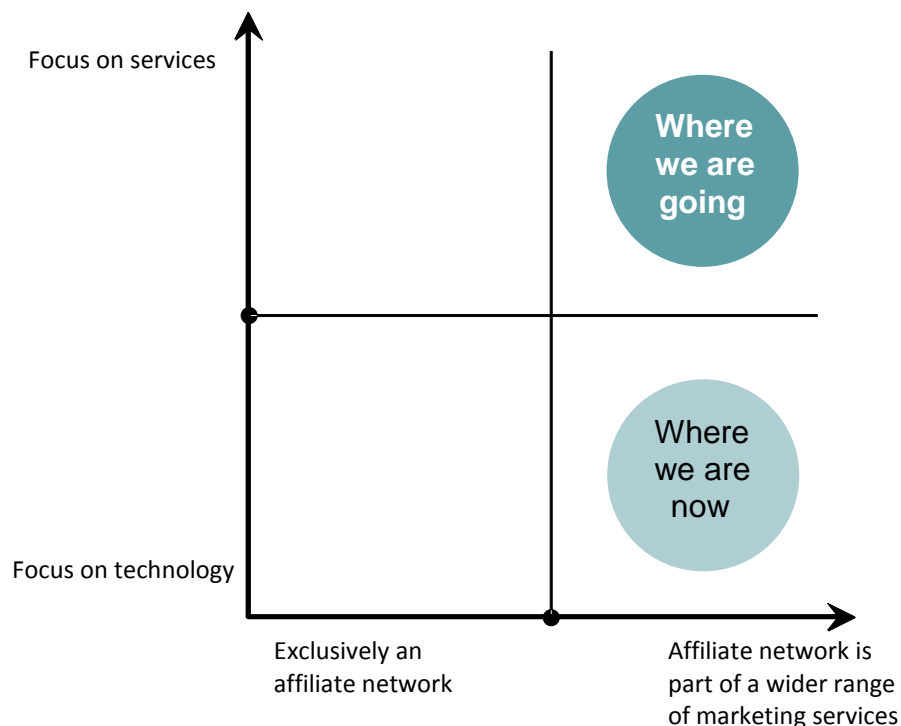
The **vertical** axis charts to what degree the network has a focus on services versus focus on technology).

The **horizontal** axis charts whether the profiled company is exclusively an affiliate marketing network or whether the affiliate network is part of a broader suite of marketing services available to the client.

The light blue circle denotes the company's current position while the dark blue circle reflects their medium and long-term aspirations. If the circles are in the same position, the company is happy with its current market positioning and has no plans to change.

A company positioned in the bottom right quadrant has an affiliate network as part of a wider offering and is currently focused on technology rather than services.

Chart 1 – Business Focus and Geography



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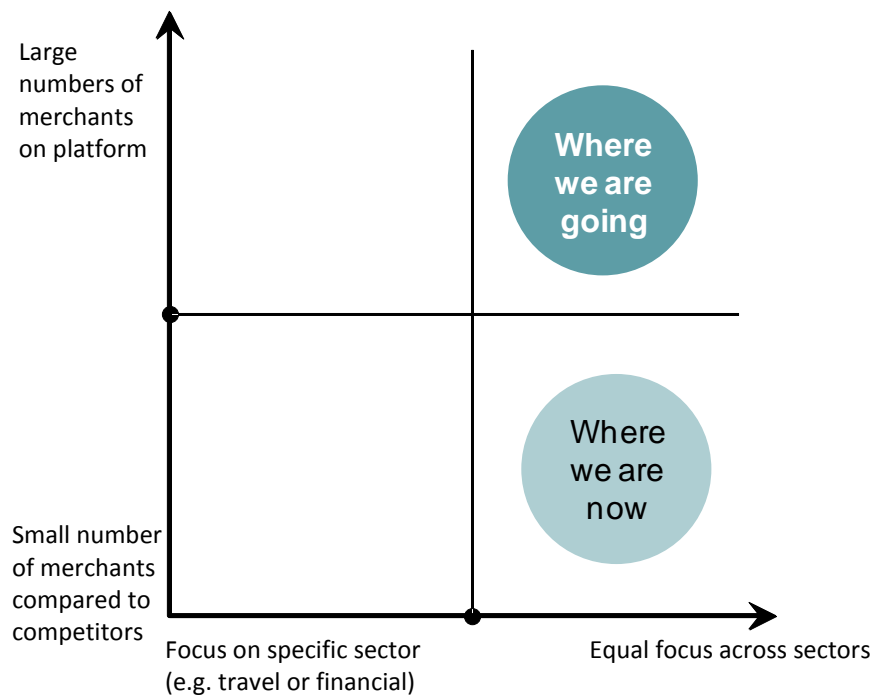
5.1.2. Size and focus

This chart shows the size and focus of the profiled network.

The **vertical** axis indicates the number of merchants that affiliates can accommodate on their platform.

The **horizontal** axis charts whether affiliates are focused on a specific sector or whether they have equal focus across a range of different sectors.

Chart 2 – Size and Focus



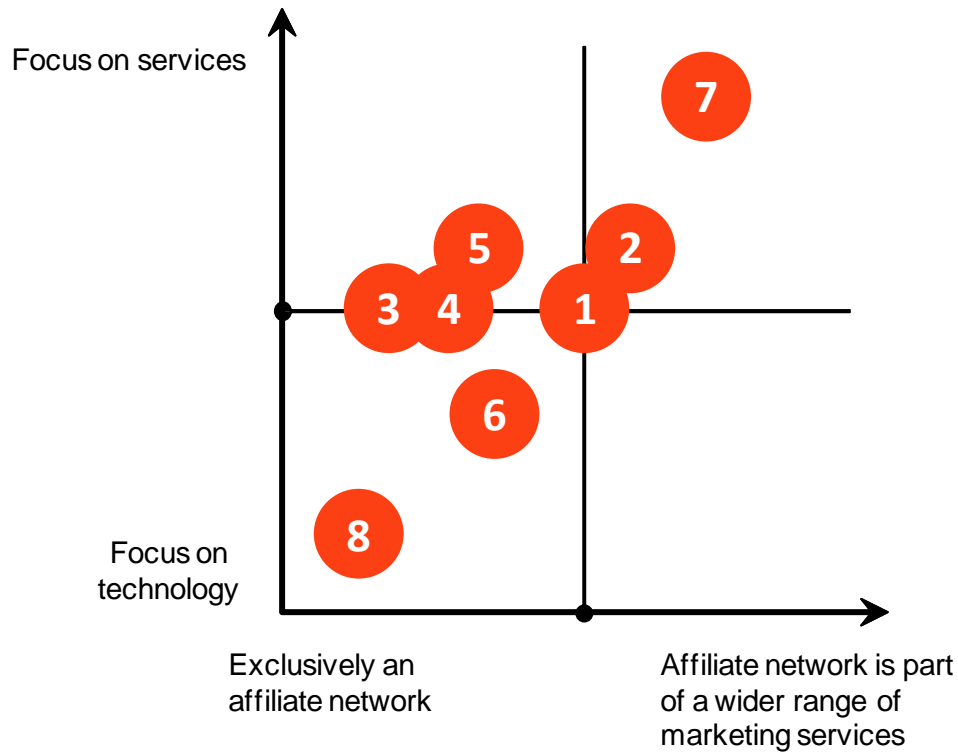
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5.2. Network Company Positioning: Summary Diagrams

5.2.1. Business model

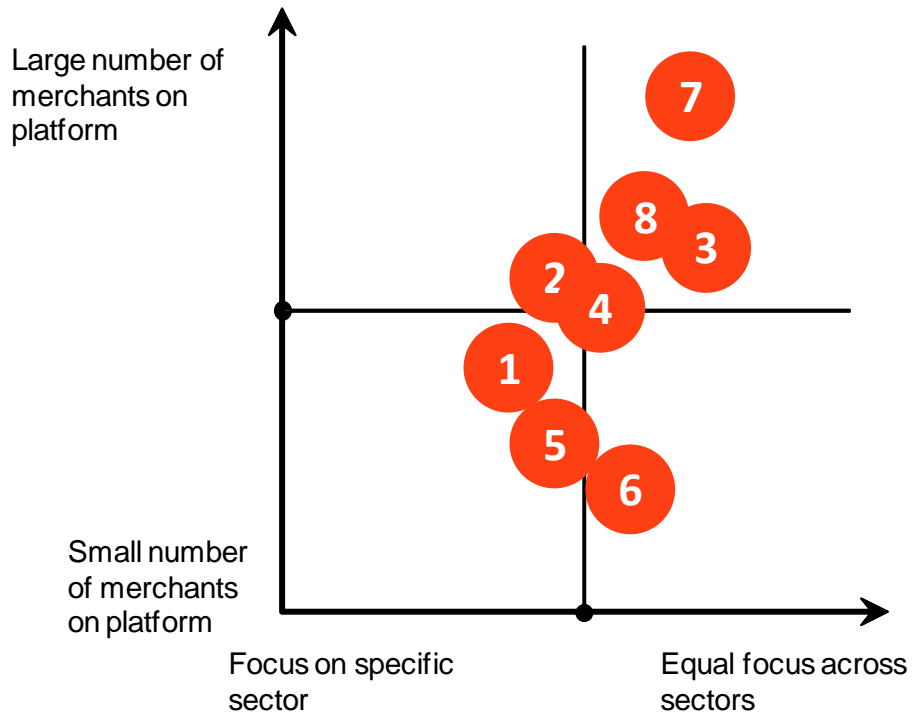


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5.2.2. Size and focus



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6. Network Supplier Matrix

Vendor Matrix: A fast guide to services	affilinet	Commission Junction	Digital Window	LinkShare	Online Media Group (OMG)	Paid On Results	TradeDoublor	Webgains
Services offered								
Affiliate Management	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Affiliate Recruitment								
Affiliate Support								
Account Management								
Consultancy								
Two-tiered programme								
Private affiliate programme								
Multiple programmes under the same account								
PPC assistance and control								
Competitor Analysis tools								
Merchants that offer drop shipping								
Role-based user levels								
Online Accounting								
Grouping of affiliates into categories								
Different commission based on affiliate performance or group								
Different commission based on products/services								
Visibility on Click Through Ratio (CTR)								
Multi Currency								
Multi Lingual								
CPA								
Pay Per Lead (PPL)								
Pay per Click								
Pay per Impression (CPM)								
Offline tracking								
IP-based tracking								
Database tracking (non cookie)								
Real-time tracking								
Affiliate performance incentives or bonuses								

7. Network Supplier Profiles

7.1. Sample Network

Company Details

Company Name **Sample network**

Company Logo

SAMPLE COMPANY

URL

UK Head Office Address

Other locations

Relevant Contact Names (e.g.
*For publishers and merchants/
advertisers*)

Contact Telephone

Contact email

Brief Company History
*(including number of years
operating in the UK)*

Number of UK full-time
Employees *(with breakdown
for key functions)*

Revenue for 2009 or last
accounting period (including
dates)

2009 year-on-year growth
(compared to 2008)

Projected revenue for 2010

Projected year-on-year growth
for 2010

Company proposition and USP

What is your 'reason for being'
as an affiliate network?

Merchant list *(or selection)*

Details of sector specialisation

Is there any type of publisher
type where your network is
particularly strongly
represented? (e.g. content or
voucher codes)

Case Study

UK Case Study
(with testimonial if available)

Services offered

Affiliate Management

Affiliate Recruitment



Company Details

Company Name **Sample network**

Affiliate Support

Account Management

Consultancy

Two-tiered program

Private affiliate program

Multiple programs under the same account

PPC assistance and control

Competitor Analysis tools
(please give details if applicable)

Merchants that offer drop shipping

Other *(Please specify)*

Features & Functionality

Role-based user levels *(i.e. different access levels for different people in merchant organisation)*

Online Accounting

Grouping of affiliates into categories

Different commission based on affiliate performance or group

Different commission based on products/services

Visibility on Click Through Ratio (CTR)

Multi Currency

Multi Lingual

Other *(Please specify)*

Payment model supported/Tracking & Reporting capabilities

CPA

Pay Per Lead (PPL)

Pay per Click

Pay per Impression (CPM)

Offline tracking

IP-based tracking

Database tracking (non cookie)

Real-time tracking

Affiliate performance incentives or bonuses

Costs and pricing for merchants

Initial set-up/technical integration costs

What services are included with this?

Do you charge a monthly management fee? If so, how much is this?



Company Details

Company Name	Sample network
--------------	----------------

Do you charge for ongoing technical support?

How much override / commission do you take?

When do merchants get invoiced?

Please provide any other relevant cost and pricing details

Service and support

What level of service should merchants expect from you? (e.g. number of service calls; hours available for support, etc)

If there are different levels of service, please outline what these are

Policy information

What is your network doing to identify and nurture the successful affiliates of the future?

What is your policy with regard to communication between merchants and affiliates? (how do you facilitate communication?)

What is your policy with regard to trading offers and voucher codes, and how do you manage this so that it is fair to all publishers and sustainable for the industry?

What anti-fraud protection measures do you have in place?

How do you vet affiliates before they can join the network?

What control do merchants have over their affiliates? (e.g. ability to view affiliates before accepting them and ability to suspend affiliates)

What visibility do you give merchants on performance of affiliates? (i.e. by affiliate, by group of affiliates and collectively)

What information does a merchant have to pass back to your software with regards to tracking a sale or lead?

Other information

Please provide any other relevant information (e.g.



Company Details

Company Name	Sample network
--------------	----------------

recent innovations, awards or extra information about code of conduct)

Sample company – Market Positioning Charts

Chart 1: Business model

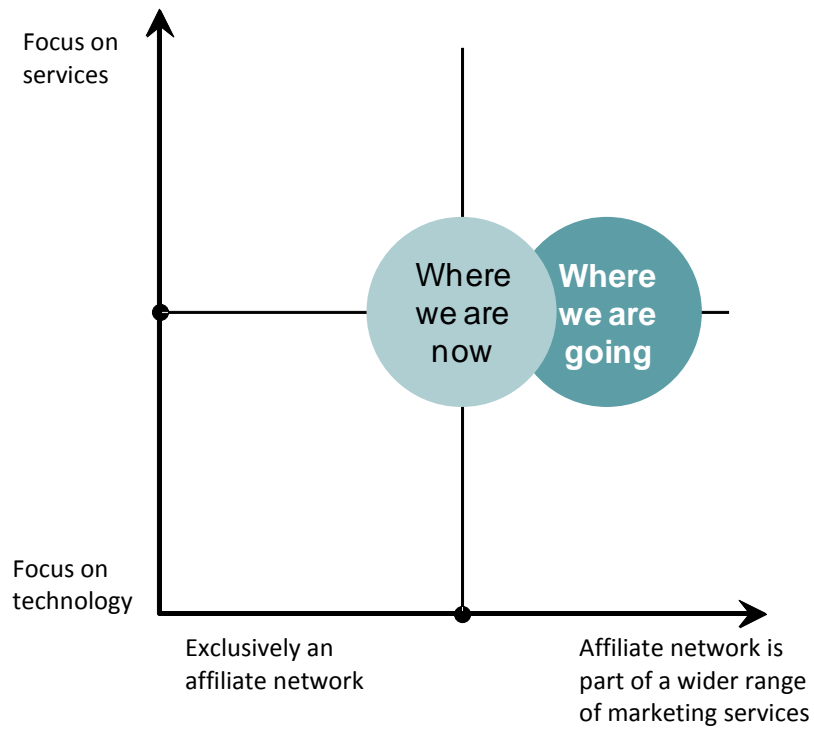
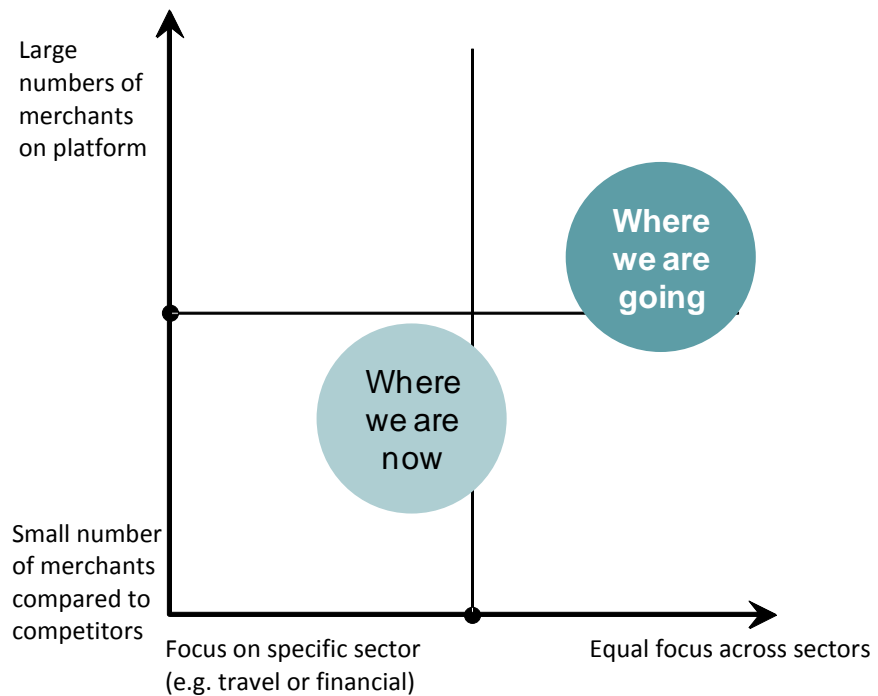


Chart 2: Size and focus



8. Agency Supplier Profiles

8.1. Sample Agency

Agency Details

Company Name Sample agency

Company Logo

SAMPLE AGENCY

URL

UK Head Office Address

Other locations

Relevant contact names

Contact Telephone

Contact email

Company Proposition

Brief Company History
(including number of years
operating in the UK)

Number of UK full-time
Employees (with breakdown
for key functions)

Revenue for 2009 or last
accounting period (including
dates)

2009 year-on-year growth
(compared to 2008)

Projected revenue for 2010

Projected year-on-year growth
for 2010

Company proposition and USP

What is your 'reason for being'
as an affiliate marketing
agency?

Client list (or selection)

Details of sector specialisation

Which networks do you
typically work with?

Case Study

UK Case Study
(with testimonial if available)

In a challenging economic climate in which many brands were struggling, the USC affiliate programme achieved extraordinary growth. By the end of the year the number of affiliates on the programme had increased five-fold, and Q4 (October to December) sales increased 851% with a 10:1 return on investment. These phenomenal results could not have been achieved without the strong partnership between 7thingsmedia and USC, whose respective knowledge and



Agency Details

Company Name **Sample agency**

Costs and pricing for clients

Please outline how you typically charge your clients, including initial set-up costs and on-going agency management fees

Please provide any other relevant cost and pricing details

Service and support

What level of service should clients expect from you? (e.g. number of service calls; hours available for support, etc)

Policy information

What is your agency doing to identify and nurture the successful affiliates of the future?

How do you typically work with merchants when they have their own affiliate manager?

What is your policy or opinion with regard to trading offers and voucher codes, and how do you manage this so that it is fair to all publishers and sustainable for the industry?

Other information

Please provide any other relevant information (e.g. recent innovations, awards or extra information about code of conduct)

SAMPLE ONLY - Please download the full report from:



<http://econsultancy.com/reports/affiliate-marketing-buyers-guide>

