

Affiliate Marketing For a Merchant – The Cookbook

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This document attempts to give the basic idea to a newbie marketer who aims to increase his website sales through affiliates and partners.

What is an affiliate programme? How does it work?

It is the Internet equivalent of a vast team of salesmen in vans! - Except that you only pay them by results and they pay for their own vans! It is a 100% risk free online marketing technique.

It can increase your sales 10%, 50%, 100%, or even 500% depending on your product salability and the efforts you put on it.

Strictly speaking, an affiliate programme is a referral marketing system, where a commission is paid to the referrer (affiliate) after the referred site (merchant's site) visitor makes an action, such as signing up or making a purchase on the merchant's site.

So . . . I (affiliate) have a busy web site. You (merchant) have an e-com website where you are selling your products /services online. You setup a 3rd party affiliate software (Euraffiliates) , install, integrate with your website, personalize it with your own software and commission settings, setup some links and tell the prospective affiliates (like me) to join.

I sign up from your web site as your affiliate. I place your link on my site. The link contains my unique marker. When someone goes from my site to yours and buys your product, I get credited with the commission you have agreed to pay. I get credited even if the visitor who buys comes back to you months later and without going to your site directly from mine. You pay me once in a month or when it exceeds a threshold amount whichever is later.

A two tier affiliate programme additionally rewards the affiliate in the chain, if any, who had referred the immediate affiliate. And a three tier affiliate programme also reward the 3rd level affiliate.

In short,

1. You install the affiliate software and setup an affiliate programme at your website
2. You create different types ads/links promoting your products
3. An affiliate join your affiliate programme just filling a form
4. The affiliate publishes an ad on his website (or circulate an affiliate link through emails)
5. A website visitor (or an email recipient) get attracted with the ad, click it to reach your website
6. The visitor makes the purchase on his first or subsequent visits and make payment online

7. The affiliate gets credited a commission as agreed
8. At the end month, you pay an affiliate, if his total outstanding has exceeded a certain amount

An Affiliate System just automates the process. You just have to install, setup it and let it moving, just once. Euraffiliates is next generation affiliate software helps to setup an up to 3 tier affiliate program.

Who can setup and run an affiliate program?

Anyone who sells his products or services through an ecommerce website

What software to buy to get started?

You don't need to buy anything to get started. You can download and setup Euraffiliates Affiliate Software. You can choose the edition depending on your budget and requirement.

To make the best in-house affiliate program with a single domain you can download and setup "Euraffiliates Pro" free. It offers one month free trial and the trial period starts on the day of first registered sale, not the day you download or install the software. You can learn more about Euraffiliates Pro features at <http://www.euraffiliates.com/euraffiliates-pro.php>

"Euraffiliates In-house Network" has all the pro benefits but you can setup multiple websites and create your own in-house network. Learn more at <http://www.euraffiliates.com/euraffiliates-inhouse-network.php>

"Euraffiliates Basic" offers a fantastic **one year plus free trial** that means, it is free for the first year and it is so in the next years if the number of affiliates has not exceeded 25. More information is available at <http://www.euraffiliates.com/euraffiliates-basic.php>

So you get enough time to decide. You can make a lot of money before you buy the software. You never lose. Even if you fail at your first attempt you don't lose, you get the first experience of a new way of marketing your products that that can make you rich at your next attempt. This is not gimmicking but simply natural way of multiplying of your sales.

How to get started with an affiliate program?

There are several steps to get started with an affiliate program. But each setup task you have to do once only.

First two steps (Step 1 and 2), the basic installation and the integration with your site, in strict sense are part of the basic programme setup.

Step-3 and Step-4 are to attract your prospective affiliates.

Step-5 involves setting up various advertising units that your affiliates will publish/circulate to attract their visitors to become your customers.

Step -1: The basic installation

The basic installation process with Euraffiliates is absolutely painless with Euraffiliates. You can download it, unzip, upload it and run the wizard. It never asks to read 53 pages installation manual to get started but to the one-screen help.

Here are the steps

- (1) Download the source file, unzip it, upload the setup folder and zipped source run the setup wizard. You never need to edit any file; the setup will even unzip the source file, create the configuration file, and give required file permission. You only need to enter the FTP password and database info when asked. You will be prompted to enter the basic affiliate software and commission settings in the subsequent setup forms. This steps ends when you reach the account optimization map. The total process should take 10-25 minutes.

However you may get stuck in the following cases for some genuine reasons

- a. Your server PHP / MySQL version are too old and do not meet the system requirements. Please contact your hosting provider to upgrade it or move your hosting to another provider.
- b. The ioncube loaders are not installed in your server as describes in the system requirement. The setup will guide you and how to install ioncube. If you do not have the root access and your shared hosting account does not allow dynamic installation of the ioncube loaders you must get it done by your server administrator.
- c. You have entered wrong FTP/Database information. Please contact your hosting account administrator and collect correct info and then re-run the wizard.
- d. Still if you face an issue, you can always contact Euraffiliates Support. We will love provide free support to you!

Once the basic installation is done the optimization map will guide you to do now, what later and what never.

Step -2: The Tracking Integration

This is a compulsory task and without it the software will not track anything. You can do the sale and direct link integration following the on-the-page instruction. The account optimization map will guide you where to go and how to do it.

Site Integration is basically a copy-paste job with some minor changes in the sale integration. But it is important to find the right files to paste the integration code. I recommended you to ask the site developer because it needs some changes in the code.

Step - 3: Theme Customization

The system will continue to work without the theme customization but it is highly recommended to have better feelings among your affiliates. The account optimization map will guide you where to go and how to do it.

Changing the theme folders requires changing the logo, header, footer and the CSS file, so we recommend you to take help of a web developer. You can also seek Euraffiliates paid service.

Step - 4: Content Customization

Though technically not essential but you must do the content customization, write the affiliate public pages (information page, terms page), help kit and affiliate FAQs. The software will help you to get started with some default content but it is always recommended to rewrite it. The optimization map again will guide you.

Step - 5: Setup links and promos

You are also recommended to setup some text links, banners and other advanced link types depending on your requirement and knowledgebase. The optimization map will again guide you.

What are the different ways you can give your affiliates to advertise your products and services?

Behind every affiliate sale there is an affiliate link. An affiliate link can be just an URL or it is mingled with a text/image/mixed type of prom/ad-unit. And it is an affiliate who must have published that ad unit in his/her website, circulated through a sales letter or have shared it through the facebook or other community sites.

An affiliate never appreciates a big process to publish an ad in his website. So easier is to process – access, share and publish a link, higher is the chance that an affiliate will advertise your products through his websites or share with his friends and customers. So depending on the nature of your products you must plan to setup the right types of links and promos for different set of affiliate requirements.

The ad copy and the presentation of the ads plays an important role to arouse the interest among the visitors of an affiliate site otherwise all your efforts will go in waste.

Euraffiliates support various types of advertising methods that you can offer your affiliates to advertise your products and services. However, it is never necessary that you have to use all of them. You should choose only those you and your affiliates are comfortable with.

1. **Quick links** – These are direct links but have an additional query string to carry the affiliate marker. A typical quick links appears like <http://www.yourwebsite.com/anypage.php?aid=XX> XX=[AffiliateID] . A quick linking technique is really useful for an affiliate when he is sharing links through emails or community sites. Affiliates also use it when placing an article link or any custom link on his website. An affiliate will never publish a banner but a quick link (or a natural link) inside the content of a webpage.

You do not need to setup any specific promo because this is built in feature of Euraffiliates Pro and higher editions. All you need to do is the additional integration for deep and natural linking.

2. **Natural Links** – Any normal link works as an affiliate link when the affiliate domain is verified for natural linking. It hardly takes time for a merchant to make an affiliate domain verified. The same can be done by an affiliate too. A typical natural link looks <http://www.yourwebsite.com/anypage.php> . Natural links are highly accepted by the affiliates for two main reasons,
 - a. Affiliates can hide their identity marker in the URL
 - b. It is 100% SEO safe as it is just normal link

Just like quick linking, you do not need to create any specific promo because this is built in feature of Euraffiliates Pro and higher editions. What you need to do is the additional integration for deep and natural linking.

3. **Text Links** - A text link has a text phrase (the ad copy) and destination URL mingled with it. You can setup as many as you like. These will be available to your affiliates to publish in their websites simply by copy pasting method.
4. **Text Ads** - It has both title and short descriptions and a link. Like an individual ad unit of Google adwords.
5. **HTML ads** – You can write simple html with as many as links and text. Your affiliates can copy these HTML, edit if required and circulate to their customers through newsletter or sales letter .
6. **Static Banners** – You upload a static banner (simply JPG/GIF/PNG image) advertising your products and services and affiliate publish it.

7. Animated Banner – You upload an animated GIF banner advertising your products and services to let the affiliates publish it.
8. Flash banner - You upload a Flash banner advertising your products and services to let the affiliates publish it.
9. Page Peel s- You upload two images (small and big) advertising your products and services to let the affiliates publish it.
10. Light Boxes - You upload two images (small and big) advertising your products and services to let the affiliates publish it.
11. Datafeeds – There are some active affiliates who look for datafeeds to display products in their websites writing custom PHP script. Euraffiliates helps to create the datafeeds with your products.
12. Tell-a-Friend – Euraffiliates allows you to write email templates with quick links promoting your products. Your affiliates can send emails to their friends using this tool. They can also import email accounts from yahoo and Google accounts. A powerful method to reach your affiliate's friends.
13. Content-Widget – You can setup content-widgets with text, images and links. It is different from the HTML ad because you can change the ad information (say price) any time and your affiliate will never need to republish it.
14. Rotating Ads – Affiliate chooses only dimension and the matching banners / widgets get displayed on a rotating basis. You do not need to setup anything separately. The system will take the ads from the uploaded banners and widgets.

How to find the affiliates and get them started?

An affiliate with a busy site can fetch a lot of hot leads and if 3% of them are converted to sales, it will cause for 5% or even 10% rise in total sales. So if you can line up 10 such affiliates you may see 50-100% hike in sales volume. It is quite possible.

How to line up these affiliates? It may be more difficult than finding a customer. But an active affiliate may bring you 100 or 1000 sales, so it make sense to make some time to find them.

You must find them in the same way you find your customers. Here are some general guide lines

1. Find the target audience – who could be your affiliates. Do a small research on it.

2. Find out what will interest them to promote your products as an affiliate.
3. Prepare the general commission structure that will motivate a prospective affiliate to join your programme and promote your products.
4. Review your affiliate information page, affiliate terms page and join page contents. Get it written by professionals if required.
5. Increase your brand awareness through brand advertising to the extent you can afford. Affiliates always like to promote a strong brand.
6. Advertise your affiliate programme in different affiliate networks, forums to create a general awareness. You may get some affiliates in this method but there are a very little chances to get a giant affiliate who may account for a sizable amount of sales
7. Create a database of your prospective affiliates and contact them personally by email, phone and chat, know their needs and try to make a relationship with them and make a win-win deal with them.
8. Quickly respond to their queries they raise and solve it if possible. Please remember, a giant affiliate can continue to give you a good number of sales every month, so you must have time for him.
9. Make sure the newly joined affiliates have started promoting your business – help him to get started removing any obstacles if any.
10. Keep in touch with your contacts and prospective affiliates - e.g. send a monthly newsletter with ideas and offers

Following Euraffiliates Tools can play big roles to find, motivate and retain an affiliate

1. [The Differential commission tools](#) can help you to set a special commission for an special affiliate or an affiliate group
2. [The Affiliate Mass Mailer](#) can help you run an email campaign
3. [The Broadcasting tool](#) can help you to circulate a common message among affiliates quickly
4. [The affiliate help desk](#) can help you to listen to your affiliates problem and continue the communication until it get solved

Affiliate Management – The Regular Tasks

Euraffiliates has made the regular affiliate management easy and automated. Here are some tasks that may need regular monitoring. You can avoid monitoring the first two by setting the auto-approval to ON.

1. [Approve or disapprove an affiliate](#) - When an affiliate joins you receive an email alert and you need to approve or disapprove his account. You can turn ON the auto approval to avoid this

regular task. Before approving an affiliate you must see his details.

2. Approve or Disapprove a Commission Transaction - Same as affiliate registration, here you approve or disapprove a commission transaction. And you can make the auto-approval ON to avoid this regular task. Euraffiliates has a special option; you can white list an affiliate. It means all transactions of that affiliate will be automatically approved but a transaction of new affiliate will not. Before approving a commission you must see the click, sale logs in details.
3. Respond to an Affiliate Support Ticket – You receive an email alert when an affiliate has posted a support ticket. You must respond to his problem and solve it as quickly as possible. This is a proven tool to help your affiliates and run a delayed threaded conversation until a problem is solved. In future you can find the old tickets easily.
4. Create Bills and Pay the qualified affiliates – Once in a month you must create bills of the qualified affiliates (just a click is required with Euraffiliates) and pay them by their preferred method (paying affiliates physically are not part of affiliate management task) and mark the bill as paid.
5. Check logs, login history and find if any security threats - if so simply create proper firewall rules and make your system ultra secure using the application firewall.

Make It Better – Some Proactive Actions

1. Run more campaigns and find more affiliates – specially look for giant affiliates
2. Keep in touch with your existing affiliates on different occasions and send newsletters, greetings etc that to say them that they are important to you
3. Find ways to motivate the existing affiliates to take actions – send them offers, ideas and request them to share with their customers and friends through emails and social networking sites
4. Once in a month - Make a performance audit
 - a. Analyze what worked and what not, who did well and who not
 - b. Greet the performers and reward them, say higher commission (using differential commission tools) or a bonus commission (using manual commission)
 - c. Do something to encourage the less performing affiliates. If possible analyze individual sites, logs and send them improvement ideas. Not all will respond but if a few do you will gain.
5. Once in three months (or more frequently) - Review your affiliate program and reset it that meets your requirement. Review and change if required the commission groups, commission structures, links and promos, affiliate page contents, FAQ etc.

6. Review the logs, make a security audit and make the right custom firewalling rules to be ultra safe

Following Euraffiliates Tools can play a big role to make the performance audit and take remedial actions

1. [The Differential commission tools](#) can help you to set a special commission for an special affiliate or an affiliate group. It can also help you to specify a lifetime commission (you can define the life too, say 3 years) too.
2. [The Affiliate Mass Mailer](#) can help you run an email campaign
3. [The Broadcasting tool](#) can help you to circulate a common message among affiliates quickly
4. [The affiliate help desk](#) can help you to listen to your affiliates problem and continue the communication until it get solved
5. [CSV Exports](#) can help you to export affiliate data for external software use
6. [The performance reports](#) will help you to analyze the performance accurately and make an performance audit
7. [Logs and Application Firewall](#) will help you to make the security audit and take require measures
8. [Pay-Pal Mass Pay](#) tool may help you to create mass pay file to be used at paypal
9. [The Software settings tools](#) will help you to change the basic software and merchant settings as required
10. [Switch user as an affiliate](#) can help you to enter as an affiliate, review and change anything for the affiliate
11. [Switch user as the system admin](#) will help you to change some advanced settings, CMS etc

Advanced Affiliate Marketing

Amazon like Product Gallery Widgets

Your affiliate can display your products on his website; just it is in your website. The display is likely to include the thumbnail, title, price, short description and even the buy button linking directly to your cart/product pages. It is not only impressive it is time saving too. You need just one time setup for all your products. The affiliate's just need to choose his preferences and copy paste a one lines of code just only once.

If you have thousands of products, grouped in multiple categories, it becomes practically impossible for you to create links/banners for each product and product groups. Even if you do, your affiliates will find it to difficult to get the right creative that displays their desired products on it. In such a situation, you need an Amazon product gallery widget.

The gallery widget allows your affiliates to choose the category and/or keyword, desired price range, display options (number of rows, columns etc), the number of products to be displayed in one screen, the color and fonts and so on. You avoid the cost of creating and managing thousands of links and your affiliates avoids the pain to find the desired creative's checking one by one.

Most of all, in a gallery widget, data will come from your store database so neither you nor your affiliates need to bother to republish the ads.

Normally development cost for custom widget even with established affiliate solution provider will cost you \$1000 to \$4000. While with Euraffiliates it will cost nothing extra. Euraffiliates comes with ready setup with Zencart and OsCommerce. For other carts it requires writing few connecting SQL statements to link data your product data with the affiliate system. Help and APIs are available. Your developer should be able to do it easily. If not Euraffiliates professionals will be happy to help you at a reasonable cost.

Managing your paid advertisements

You can setup all your paid advertisement campaigns (PPC, banners ads and other paid ads) as internal affiliates in minutes, track their performance and measure the ROI accurately. You can do the same using Google analytics however there are valid reasons why you should do it using the affiliate software.

1. Google analytics works on 30 days cookie. If a sale occurs after 30 days it will not track. But you can set your own cookie period in the affiliate software.
2. If a sale happens from double reference, initially by an affiliate but finally by a paid campaign, you may not be happy if the system generates commission for the affiliate. You can avoid it if you track your paid campaigns at your affiliate platform.
3. You don't need to do any extra integration to manage the paid ads at your existing affiliate platform while you may find Google Analytic for ROI tracking setup easy.

The system will never generate bills for your internal affiliates (since these are not real affiliates) but you can't every sale, click, lead and visitors just like a real affiliate.

Managing 3rd party affiliate networks sales – The master cookie platform

Some experts might say "NO" to sell your products through multiple affiliate platforms. But I say "YES". Here is why?

They say NO because they have a valid reason. Each affiliate network has its own cookie platform and generates commission if the system finds their affiliate cookie. So, if a customer visits your site via affiliate link route of multiple affiliate networks within a specified period,

each network will generate commission against their own affiliate for that sale. But you are paying multiple commissions for a single sale. If you have agreed to pay 30% commissions and the number of networks are 4 then you have to pay 120% as commission. It can never be desirable to you.

I say YES because with Euraffiliates, you can get rid of this problem, join multiple affiliate networks (as many as you like) and forget the nightmare of multiple commission generation.

If you setup Euraffiliates as your in-house affiliate platform, you can integrate multiple cookie platforms into a single making a master cookie platform. In such case the system will generate commission for the last affiliate platform (or first if you have chosen to reward the first affiliate in your merchant setting).

How to setup a master cookie platform? You have to create internal network affiliate for each 3rd party affiliate network and make some extra integration at the payment confirmation page. Euraffiliates executives can help at a nominal cost.

Managing your SEO sales

To see your affiliate's sales you do not need to do any prior setup. Just go to performance reports ->non-affiliate sales and see the reports. You will see the contributions of all search engines and all non-affiliate websites.

So you get a total picture that makes all your sales. You will see no referrer when the sales are made by direct customers or by affiliate customers whose cookie has expired.

Managing a multiple-website affiliate platform (In-house Network)

If you have 5 web-stores and you wish to setup affiliate programs at all stores, then installing and maintaining five different systems are not only expensive but impractical too. Even if do it, your affiliates will never be ready to do so.

"Euraffiliates In-house Network" affiliate software has a solution to it. You can setup unique affiliate program with own cookie settings /commission rates / ads for each store. Affiliates can also switch between programs and promote multiple store-products with a single affiliate account. It works just like an affiliate network but only difference it is you who will have access to setup all the programs. But it is unlike a 3rd party affiliate network because here all links will go directly to the merchant websites, not via the main site. Links are more SEO friendly. You can also setup affiliate pages (login, registration, info, terms etc) at all websites. You enjoy the advantages of both an in-house and network affiliate platform.

What you need is to upgrade your licence to an “in-house network” keep you adding new domains using your system-admin access. You will be able to switch between domains to setup the ads, cookie settings and commission structures.

Managing your newsletter sales

The free built-in mass mailer helps you to send out monthly newsletters. You don't need to buy mailing software. You can send newsletters to people other than affiliates - your customers, contacts etc. All you need to do is to import those lists in the mailer.

You can measure your newsletter sales through Euraffiliates tracking system. All you need to do is to create an internal affiliate through your merchant control panel and add a trailing query string “?aid=newsletter_aff_id” in all the site-links in the newsletter.

You have a Question

Should you have any question or doubt please contact me at <http://www.euraffiliates.com/contact-us.php> or skype-chat at “Euraffiliates” .