

# Promoting Your Affiliate Program Utilizing Your Own Website

Prepared by: LinkShare Corporation  
Last Updated: June 2002

### **Introduction: Why**

**The number one reason for success or failure of a program starts with the promotion of your program.**

Who visits your web site? Are all visitors shoppers? No. In fact many visitors come to your site just to see if you have an affiliate program. As such, your web site is one of the most valuable marketing vehicles for your affiliate program. Why? Not all prospective affiliates know you may be participating in the LinkShare Network, and will come to your site first to look for a program. If there is no sign of a program, these prospects will likely move on to the next merchant in the same category: your competitor!

The use of your site as a marketing vehicle also allows you to further distinguish your program for the other merchants within the Network. You can add more personal touches and have full creative control over the promotion of your program. You can also take the time to compare your program to competitors, providing as much detail as you wish. Not having this information shows a lack of support and attention to your program, so it is essential to do this. In the U.S. LinkShare merchant sites like Dell and American Express promote their programs heavily.

Don't forget another big reason: marketing your affiliate program is FREE on your own site.

Know this: the number of partners that you get is proportional to the amount of revenue that your program delivers. Embrace advocates of your company and program. Many sites already promote you, advocate you, and link to your site as a courtesy or convenience to their site visitors. Marketing your affiliate program is the best way to encourage them to work with you, and for you to gain influence over them.



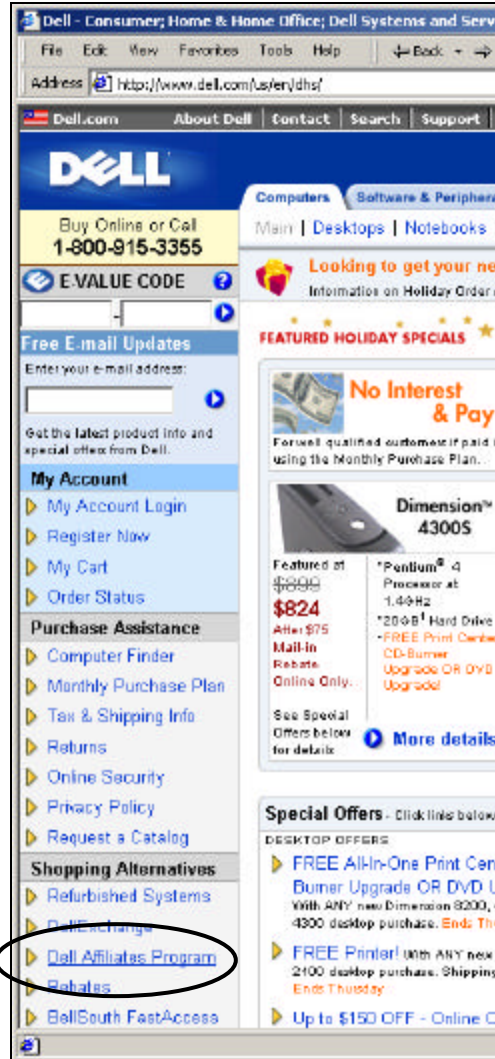
## Where & How

How you promote your program is a representation of your commitment to your affiliates. Affiliates will not want to work with you if it seems like you are not going to be helping them along the way.

Your affiliate program should be mentioned on your home page. Why? It'll create the greatest awareness. Also, just how many clicks do you think someone is willing to make until they give up looking for it? An affiliate program is more likely to be successful in recruiting affiliates when mentioned on the home page, rather than being several pages deep within your site.

For example, Dell Home Systems promotes its program with a link on the main page of its home systems site. (See right top) Any shoppers to the Home Systems section of their site can easily view this link and know immediately that Dell has an affiliate program.

NTT/Verio also promotes its partner programs directly on its home page, which is key, since many web site owners are visiting the site. (See next page) NTT/Verio includes their affiliate programs amongst the various levels of reseller programs available to businesses on the



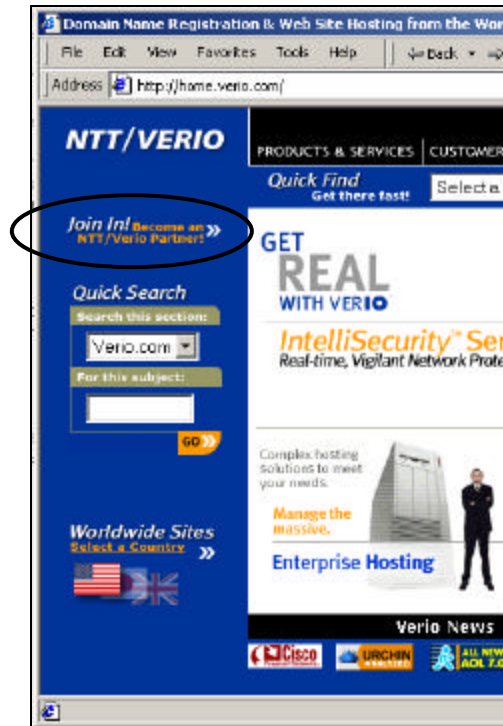
web. Just being on your home page is not always enough, though. Your affiliate program link should be placed and remain in the main navigation for your site. That means this link should appear to the user whether he is on your home page or on a specific product/item page.

For example, Lands' End maintains a persistent link to join the affiliate program in its main navigation. (See next page.)

Most web sites have a navigation menu at the bottom of each web page. This is another good fixed location for a link to information about the affiliate program.

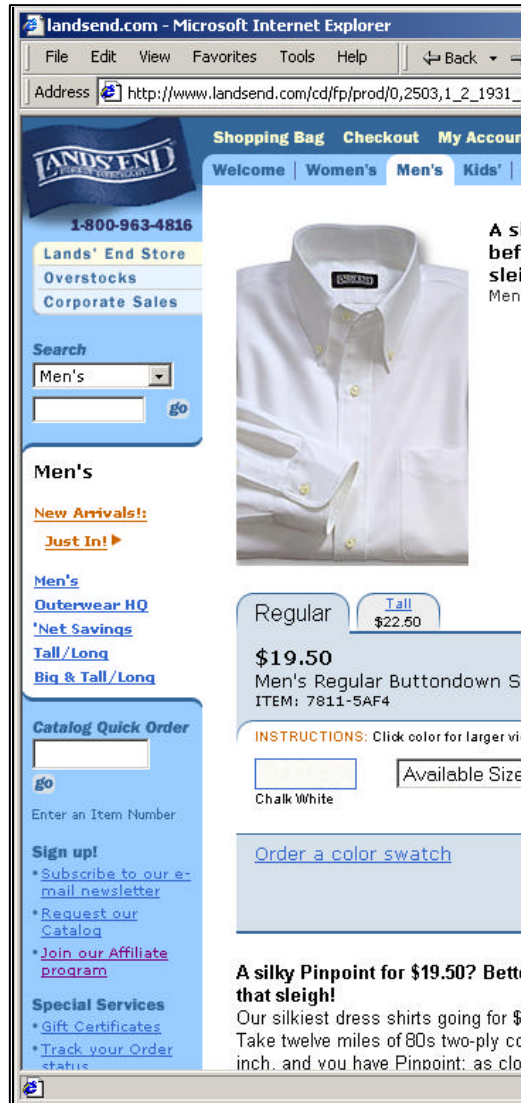
Wherever possible, your links should have a call to action for your affiliate program, such as "Join now!" or "It's free to join" or "Start earning commissions - Join now!"

These links serve as a billboard for marketing your program to the specific audience of prospective affiliates. This audience specifically visits e-commerce sites to find affiliate programs, and is accustomed to looking in the specific places mentioned above for information. Without mentioning your



affiliate program, these visitors to your site may assume you have no program, and go elsewhere. You probably don't realize how big this group already is until you put up a link!

Beyond your own website, consider promoting your program through third party websites featuring associate and affiliate program reviews, or "making money on the web" sites.



## The Right Content

Now that you have decided to promote your program, here is the information you should provide to prospects.

### General Overview

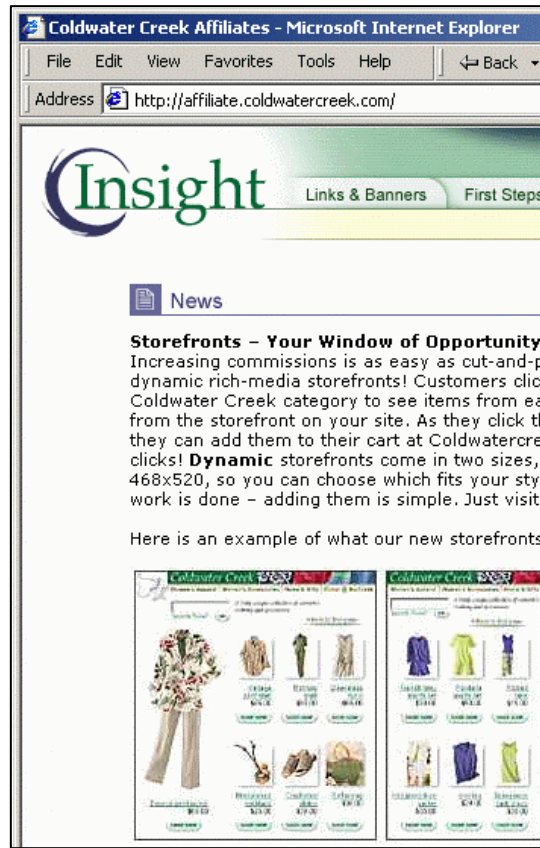
Begin with the right positioning on your site. Create a sub-domain like "http://affiliate.merchant.com", such as Coldwater Creek has done, which serves as the home for your affiliate program information. (See below).

You'll need to explain what Affiliate Marketing is, and what your affiliates get from the program. Not everyone knows right away what Affiliate Marketing is, or they might have heard a different name for the same concept, such as "associate programs". A simple statement such as "Our affiliate program allows you to earn a commission for sales you refer to our site," should be clear enough. You can dive into the details later.

You might also wish to try different words or terms for "affiliate marketing", as not everyone knows what an affiliate program is. You may need to try phrases like "Join our partner program", "virtual sales force", "referral plan", or "commission program". These phrases are bound to attract the right people.

Whatever the term, make sure you convey that they can earn money, it's free, and no commitment is required. Explain how it works in simple language. Show examples by providing "commission math", i.e. "You earn 10% of sales you refer. Refer \$500 and you get  $500 \times 10\% = \$50$ ."

Quickly state the product categories or services you offer. Also provide a clear reason to join your program, such as a good brand name, leader in the field, higher commissions, etc. Discuss the value-add for an affiliate that comes along with partnering with a great brand or building a store to promote specials. Give affiliates a reason to believe that promoting your company will result in successful transactions by end users.



You might also want to consider naming your affiliate program, but try not to get carried away. Make sure it has a recognizable meaning to it, and you may wish to include your brand or something referring to your brand within the name to make it consistent. Some examples are 1-800-Flowers.com's Commission+ Affiliate Program and Buy.com's Affiliate Connection.

### **Detailed Program Information**

Expand upon ideas stated within your "General Overview" section. Inform the prospect about your company, dedication and resources to your program. Explain how impressions, clicks, and transactions are tracked and reported. State that you are a LinkShare Network merchant, so existing LinkShare Network affiliates can join through an existing account.

Also, you'll want to explain LinkShare's role as the technology and software provider that enables the program, as well as the fact that LinkShare provides technical support for free to all affiliates.

### **Getting Started**

Recognize that promoting your products on the web is a new experience for most affiliates. Make it easy by providing a clear set of steps for getting started. Some affiliates may need some convincing, but some affiliates may be ready to go and want to join without reading through other information. Make it easy for them by providing this section with quick answers about how and where. Provide links to your Terms & Conditions and to your customized registration page hosted by LinkShare.

### **Commission Details**

Now that you've perked interest by explaining the basic concept, follow up with an explanation of the commission the affiliate can earn. Answer questions that you would have about your commission, such as:

- Is the commission a flat rate, or can I earn more based on how much I sell? Or is there a different commission for different groups of products?
- Is the commission on every sale, or just certain sales?
- Is there more than one way to earn a commission, such as on sales and on clicks or other lead?
- What amount is commission paid on? Just the products/services, or is tax and shipping included?
- Will affiliates earn commissions on their own purchases?
- How do returns affect my commissions?
- Is there a minimum in commissions that must be generated before I am paid?



- If so, what is a typical corresponding amount of sales to reach this amount in dollars (\$) and number of orders? Providing a little chart can be very effective, like
- How often can I expect to be paid? Do you pay me every month/quarter/other?
- Do you offer return day commissions? If so, how many? And is this on every purchase within that return day window, or just the first purchase?

### **Terms & Conditions**

Post your program terms and conditions. This is the legal document governing the relationship between you and approved affiliates in your program. Clearly state that these must be read and agreed to by affiliates. You do not have to build a mechanism for acceptance, as this is already included within the LinkShare Network and your customized registration page hosted by LinkShare.

### **Sample Links**

You should also provide a listing of the different types of links you have available for affiliates to use, as well as to provide sample links of current promotions. If you have more advanced links such as search boxes, you should be sure to display these.

Outline or provide examples of various categories you feature in your links, such as by brand, product line, and/or for sales or promotions. Assure affiliates you'll be providing them with the tools they will need to successfully market your site and products or services.

### **"Register Now!" Link**

Give your affiliates a clear call to action for joining. Make this link prominent (bold or different font color), and have a static link on all of your pages of your affiliate section in the same place. Also, every page in your affiliate section should contain text that invites the affiliate to join now with a link to your customized registration page hosted by LinkShare.

### **"FAQ" (Frequently Asked Questions)**

The FAQ page will contain information you've already provided, but simply in a different format where you provide typical questions and answers to those direct questions. Typically, affiliates look for answers to questions like these (sample answers provided):

- What does it cost to join?  
A: It's free! It costs nothing to join or participate.
- How do I join?



A: Complete the registration form at this link. We will review your application in a few days.

- How do I qualify to be your affiliate? Are there restrictions, or can anyone be an affiliate?

A: We look for websites that are consistent with our brand and marketing objectives. We will not accept sites that contain objective or profane content.

- How quickly can I begin participating and putting links on my site?

A: Once we approve you into our program, you can begin placing links on your site immediately. We typically approve affiliates within 3-5 business days.

- What commissions do I earn?

A: You can earn 5% commissions on all sales of all products you refer.

- Who keeps track of my sales and commissions? How do you do this?

A: We utilize an independent, third party affiliate technology provider, LinkShare Corporation. LinkShare tracks and provides reports on sales and commissions.

- When do I get paid?

A: We will pay you every month when your commissions exceed \$25.

- How will I be paid?

A: We send all commissions to LinkShare for distribution to affiliates at the end of each month.

- What about international sites and sales? Are these allowable and commissionable?

A: Our Company ships to all domestic states and territories only.

- What are the terms and conditions?

A: Please see the terms and conditions at this link.

- Who is LinkShare?

A: LinkShare is an independent third party affiliate technology solution provider and network of merchants and affiliates. LinkShare provides the tracking and reporting technology for managing affiliate programs, as well as a Network for merchants and affiliates to forge relationships.

- What kind of marketing material do you provide me with?

A: We will provide you with banners, text links, product links, search boxes, and storefront links. See samples at this link.



- Can I use any images or text from your site to promote you?

A: Please use only those provided to you through the LinkShare Network affiliate interface.

- Can I or should I display prices?

A: Prices may and do change. We recommend you do not display prices unless you frequently (daily) update price information on your site.

- Can you suggest ways to market your products and display your links?

A: Please see our Marketing Tips section at this link.

- Can I register more than one URL in your program? How?

A: Yes, you may manage more than one URL through one account; you need not apply more than once. Simply establish your account and then contact LinkShare's free affiliate support for step-by-step instructions.

- What about personal information and privacy? What is your privacy policy?

A: Please see our Privacy Policy statement at this link.

- Whom do I contact with questions?

A: Please contact us at [affiliates@merchant.com](mailto:affiliates@merchant.com) with any questions regarding our program.

### **Affiliate Testimonial**

After you've had a program established for some time, you might want to consider adding an affiliate testimonial regarding their success and happiness with your program. This serves the same purpose as a customer testimonial for your products and services.

### **Newsletters & Marketing Tips**

Think of your affiliates as a virtual sales force. Now think of how you train any sales force. You must provide them with the information they need to make them successful, as well as to make you successful.

Providing newsletters and tips to affiliates on a regular basis will help your affiliates become educated about marketing your products or services. Use your affiliate section to archive these newsletters and tips, so affiliates who join now or in the future can gain that stored knowledge.

### **Metrics**

If you can, provide simple metrics such as conversion ratios on traffic to your site. Affiliates like to know that traffic they send to you will result in a purchase. Detail how various link types (text vs. banner, etc.)



compare with one another in conversion ratios vs. impressions. This helps affiliates pick the best links for driving sales.

Other metrics you might want to provide are top affiliate commissions, total commissions paid, and best sellers. Think from an affiliate's perspective and provide the data you would need to know to efficiently market your products and services.

