

AFFILIATE ACTIVATION & OPTIMIZATION



The art and science of turning affiliate potential into productive partner performance

WHY AFFILIATE ACTIVATION & OPTIMIZATION MATTERS

We understand that getting new affiliates is a great way to grow an affiliate program. Signing them up is only half the battle. What really drives revenue is getting them to actually do something.

Those first few days after they join are when they are most motivated and paying attention. If you give them clear direction, ready-to-use assets, and an easy first win, they are much more likely to take action. If you don't, even great affiliates can stall out, lose interest, or move on to programs that feel easier to work with.

Optimization is where things really start to scale. Most programs already have affiliates doing something, but not nearly as much as they could be. With a little focus, you can take partners who are doing okay and turn them into strong performers.

That means figuring out what is working, improving your messaging, offering the right incentives, and giving affiliates the support they need. It is not just about driving more volume. It is about getting better results from what you already have.

When you combine strong activation with ongoing optimization, that is when things really click. New affiliates get up and running rather than sit idle, and existing partners continue to improve over time. The result is a healthier, more engaged program where affiliates feel supported, stay motivated, and continue to grow with you.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS e-BOOK



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Affiliate managers looking to improve activation rates and partner performance
- Brands running in-house affiliate programs that want more control and efficiency
- Startups launching an affiliate program
- Marketing teams tasked with driving revenue through partnerships
- E-commerce businesses looking to scale without increasing paid media spend
- Influencer and partnership managers expanding into affiliate marketing
- Founders and small business owners wearing the affiliate manager hat
- Performance marketers looking to diversify acquisition channels
- Existing affiliate programs with inactive or underperforming partners

- How to turn new affiliates into active partners fast
- The simple drivers behind higher activation rates
- How to onboard affiliates in a way that actually gets them to take action
- What to say and send to spark that critical first campaign
- How to unlock hidden revenue from affiliates already in your program
- Easy ways to improve performance without increasing spend
- How to use incentives to drive the behaviors you want
- How to boost conversions through smarter positioning and messaging
- How to build stronger partner relationships that last

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PART 1: ACTIVATION: NEW AFFILIATES

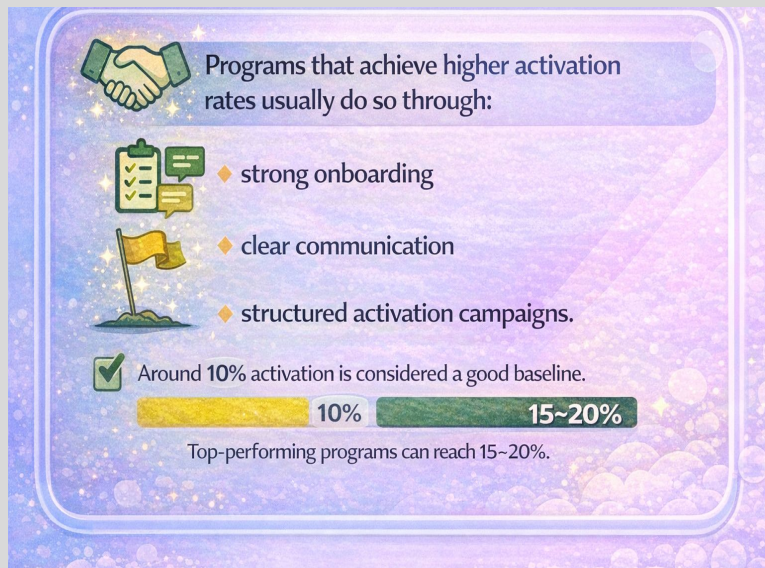
So you got a list of a few hundred affiliates who say they want to work with you. They all suggest they're going to promote your products and make sales for you. They are eager to earn commissions hand over fist starting immediately, right?

Wrong.

We need to reset expectations and align them with reality. Over the years we have learned that activating affiliates is one of the most important aspect of recruiting.

You would think that identifying potential affiliates and reaching out to them means you've done all the hard work. But the reality is you can get a thousand people who agree to promote your products and only 10 of them will actually become active.. It takes more effort!

However, you spend the time and work smarter, you can turn perspective performers into actual performers. That will set you on the path to a successful affiliate program



ACTIVATION DEFINED

So, what' does activation really mean? It's all about getting affiliates to their first win as quickly as possible.

It's the journey from **"you're approved"** to **"you've made your first sale."**

The faster they see results, even small ones, the more likely they are to stay engaged, keep promoting, and make your program a priority.

Without clear direction, even motivated partners can hesitate or put it off altogether. And in many cases, they end up focusing on other programs that make it easier to get started.



ROLL OUT THE WELCOME MAT



Immediate communication is one of the biggest drivers of successful affiliate activation. When a new partner joins your program, their interest and motivation are at their highest.

This is your window to guide them, build momentum, and turn intent into action. If you reach out right away with a clear welcome, useful resources, and a simple next step, you give them confidence to get started.

Without that early communication, momentum fades quickly. A delayed or generic response can make your program feel like a low priority, especially when other programs are actively engaging them and making it easy to take action.

Fast, thoughtful communication also sets the tone for the entire relationship. It shows that your program is organized, responsive, and partner-focused.

This early experience builds trust and makes affiliates more likely to reach out, ask questions, and stay engaged. It is about establishing a working relationship from day one.

FOLLOW UP IS KEY



It's easy to assume that silence means a lack of interest, but in affiliate marketing, that's often not the case. Many affiliates sign up with genuine intent, then get pulled in other directions.

Even motivated partners can go quiet. That silence is usually a sign of friction, not disinterest.

In many cases, affiliates need a nudge. A well-timed follow-up can bring your program back to the top of their list and remind them why they joined in the first place.

Consistency matters here. One follow-up is helpful, but a thoughtful sequence over time is what creates results. A message a few days after signup, another a week later, and a longer-term check-in can catch affiliates at the right moment when they are ready to engage. Timing can be the difference between inactivity and a new revenue stream.

Persistence can build familiarity and trust. It shows your program is active, supportive, and invested in a partners.

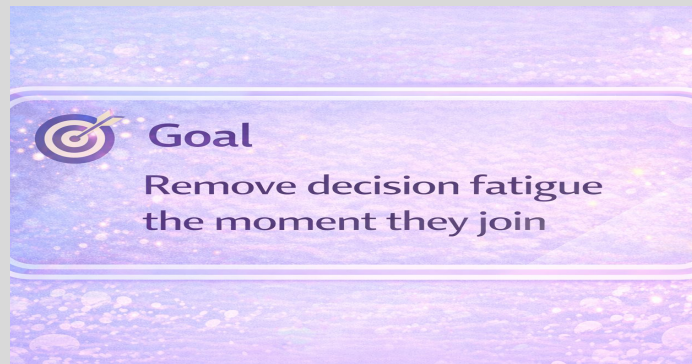
MAKE IT REALLY SIMPLE



One of the easiest ways to lose a new affiliate is to overwhelm them right out of the gate. If they log in and see a ton of links, endless creatives, a huge product catalog, and no clear direction, they're likely to do nothing at all. Instead of feeling excited, they feel stuck wondering where to even start.

The objective is to make things simple and obvious so affiliates can take action right away. Think less "here's everything" and more "start here."

The best way to do this is to narrow the focus. When the first step is easy to understand, affiliates are much more likely to jump in and get moving quickly.



PROVIDE ASSETS & RESOURCES TO GET STARTED



Pre-Build Starter Assets



Identify a small set of “hero” products proven to convert

- ◆ Focus on top-performing creatives, high earners, or timely offers. Provide clear positioning so affiliates know what to promote and why



Create ready-to-use tracking links for each key offer

- ◆ Label links clearly (Top Seller, Beginner Pick, Limited Time Offer)



Develop swipe copy affiliates can use immediately

- ◆ *Include email templates, social captions, blog intros, and subject lines



Bundle product details, links, images, and key selling points

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- ◆ Bundle product details, links, images, and key selling points



You need to help and encourage affiliates to move quickly once they sign up for your program. Otherwise, they will put promotion on the back burner.

They are far more likely to take action if everything they need is already packaged and ready to use. The goal is to eliminate setup time and guesswork so partners can move straight to promotion.

You can take this a step further by bundling everything into simple “campaign kits.” Each kit could include a featured product, tracking links, images, key selling points, and copy tailored to different channels. When affiliates can grab a complete package and go live in minutes, activation rates increase significantly.

Ultimately, pre-building starter assets is about reducing friction and accelerating time to first promotion. The less work affiliates have to do upfront, the more likely they are to take that critical first step and start generating results.

HAND HOLDING CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT



The easiest way to help is to recommend a specific campaign idea based on who they are and how they promote. Make it feel tailored and doable.

- A content creator: blog post or product roundup idea.
- An email marketer: a ready-to-send campaign.
- A social creator: a simple “post this today” concept.

Give them plug and play content so they aren’t starting from a blank page.

- Email copy
- Captions
- Product picks
- Simple outline

Make it crystal clear how they will earn. Spell it out, so they understand the “why,” they are more motivated to act on the “what.”

- The commission
- The offer
- What what action leads to a payout

CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION BUILDS TRUST

Staying in touch with new affiliates after they join is just as important as getting them started. Consistent, thoughtful communication puts your program top of mind. It shows there's a real person behind it invested in their success.

A simple monthly check-in can go a long way. A quick message asking how things are going, sharing a top-performing product, or suggesting a timely campaign idea can spark action.

You can also use these touchpoints to highlight what's working across your program, like "this offer is converting well right now" or "affiliates are seeing success with this angle." That kind of insight is incredibly valuable.

Beyond scheduled check-ins, look for small, meaningful ways to stay connected. Celebrate their wins, even the small ones. If they make their first sale, send a quick note. If they publish content, acknowledge it. You can also share seasonal opportunities, trending products, or quick ideas they can jump on. Short, helpful nudges often work best.



AN AFFILIATE NEWSLETTER ADDS VALUE



A monthly newsletter is one of the easiest ways to stay connected with new affiliates without overwhelming them.

Instead of relying only on one-off emails or reactive outreach, a newsletter creates a predictable touchpoint that affiliates can come to expect. It keeps your program visible, reinforces your presence, and makes it easy to deliver value at scale.

A good affiliate newsletter is not just updates, it is guidance. You can highlight top-performing products, share timely promotions, suggest campaign ideas, and call out what is converting well right now. This helps affiliates skip the guesswork and focus on what is most likely to drive results. For newer affiliates especially, this kind of direction can be the difference between staying inactive and taking action.

Newsletters also give you a natural way to educate and inspire. You can share quick tips, or break down simple strategies that others are using effectively. Newsletters create a consistent sense of momentum.

GET CREATIVE

Stand out in a sea of generic affiliate programs. Be human, memorable, and a little unexpected.

- **Handwritten welcome card:** A real, physical note acknowledging they joined. No one does snail mail anymore, which is why it works.
- **“Fuel Your First Campaign” coffee gift:** A \$5–\$10 Starbucks (or local coffee) gift card with a message like: *“Your first campaign is on us—let’s make it count.”*
- **Desk drop kit:** Small mailed package: branded sticky notes, a checklist, and a “Top 3 ways to earn this month” card.
- **Surprise milestone gifts:** First click, first sale, first \$100—trigger a small unexpected reward.
- **Company Swag:**
- Hats, mugs, stickers – basically anything your PR or promotions teams use to promote your brand

Unexpected High-Impact Ideas

- **“We built this for you” moment:** Create a landing page, bundle, or asset specifically for a partner.
- **Affiliate care package tied to their niche:** Food blogger? Send a spice kit. Fitness influencer? Resistance bands.
- **Voice note check-ins:** A quick audio message feels far more personal than email.



PART 2: OPTIMIZING CURRENT AFFILIATES

80–90%

OF AFFILIATE REVENUE OFTEN
COMES FROM JUST

5–10% OF PARTNERS



50–70%

OF AFFILIATES IN MOST PROGRAMS
REMAIN INACTIVE



MINE YOUR EXISTING AFFILIATES

Tapping into dormant, underperforming or inactive affiliates is one of the most overlooked growth opportunities in an affiliate program.

These partners have already raised their hand. They've applied, been approved, and at some point saw value in your brand. That means the hardest part, initial interest and access, is already behind you. Re-engaging an be more efficient than constantly sourcing brand-new partners in terms of time and cost.

There's also a significant upside in terms of incremental revenue. When even a small percentage of dormant partners begin to produce, it **can create meaningful lift across the program**. Instead of relying heavily on your top performers, you start to diversify revenue streams and reduce concentration risk.

Another key benefit is improved program efficiency and ROI. You've already invested resources into recruiting, onboarding, and approving these affiliates. Leaving them idle means that investment goes underutilized. Activating them helps you extract more value from work you've already done.



DORMANT AFFILIATES VS. INACTIVE AFFILIATES



START UNLOCKING AFFILIATE POTENTIAL

There are many ways to identify and target these types of affiliates within your dashboard. Of course, all of this is specific to your company's current program status and future objectives.

You'll need to determine what date range works best for you. Did you experience a sharp drop-off a year ago? Are you seeing some decline and want to nip that in the bud? Are you simply looking for a new way to improve your program while lowering affiliate acquisition costs? Maybe a new boss is requiring more from all marketing channels? Whatever fits your current scenario will determine the date range,

Start adding filters to further distinguish dormant from inactive.

- If lifetime conversions = 0 and the joined date is over 30 days old: Never activated
- If lifetime conversions are greater than 0 but no clicks in 60 days: Dormant
- If clicks still happen but no sales in X days: Traffic not converting
- If conversions dropped sharply from the previous quarter: Declining

Look for:

- Joined 30, 45, or 60+ days ago
- No clicks
- No sales
- No meaningful engagement



SEPARATE INTO BUCKETS

Approved but never activated. These affiliates joined but never placed a link, never clicked, and never produced a sale.

Look for:

- Joined 30 or 60+ days ago
- No clicks
- No sales
- No meaningful engagement

Clicks but never converted. These affiliates are technically active, but they are not producing revenue.

Look for:

- Some clicks
- Zero conversions
- No recent optimization
- Possibly weak placement or poor traffic match

Previously productive, now silent. These are your classic dormant affiliates.

Look for:

- Historical conversions or revenue
- No clicks or no sales in 30–90 days
- No recent communication or campaign participation

Seasonal or sporadic affiliates. Some partners are not truly dormant. They only promote at certain times.

Look for:

- Strong activity around holidays, back-to-school, tentpole sales, or specific content cycles
- Gaps that match their publishing schedule



DIAGNOSE THE “WHY” (BEFORE OUTREACH)

Finding dormant/inactive affiliates is just the diagnostic. What you do next determines whether you *reactivate revenue* or just maintain a clean list.

Program-side issues:

- Poor conversion rates?
- Broken links or tracking gaps?
- Weak creative or outdated offers?
- Uncompetitive commission?

Affiliate-side issues:

- Shift in their content strategy?
- Seasonal focus change?
- Promoting competitors instead?
- Just forgot you exist?



PRIORITIZE



Do NOT treat all affiliates equally.

Rank based on:

- Past revenue generated
- Traffic potential / audience size
- Brand alignment
- Effort required to reactivate

Focus order:

1. Dormant producers (fastest ROI)
2. Declining partners (prevent further loss)
3. High-potential never activated
4. Everyone else (automate)

PERSONALIZE OUTREACH

For Dormant Producers make it about *what they've already proven*

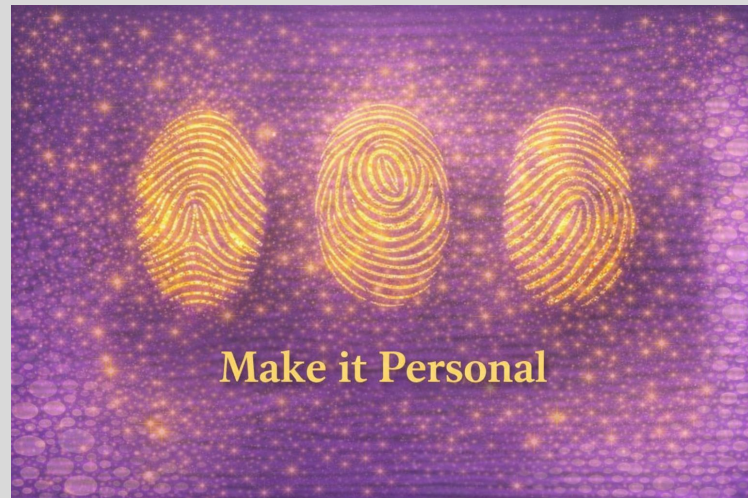
- “You drove X in revenue—let’s build on that”
- Share new opportunities (products, promos, exclusives)
- Offer custom boosts (higher commission, exclusive code)

For Declining Partners make it about *optimization*

- “We noticed a dip—here’s what’s changed”
- Provide fresh creatives + angles
- Suggest specific placements or updates

For Never Activated make it about *simplicity + activation*

- “Here’s exactly how to get your first conversion”
- Provide:
 - Starter links
 - Top products
 - Plug-and-play content



MOTIVATE INACTIVE/DORMANT AFFILIATES

Communication is a critical part of motivating and re-engaging affiliates who have joined your program but have not yet promoted it or those who have become inactive.

Affiliates go dormant not because they lack interest, but because your program has simply fallen off their radar. Affiliates work with multiple brands simultaneously, and without regular communication, it is easy for your program to be overlooked in favor of more engaging partnerships.

Consistent communication helps keep your program top of mind and reminds affiliates of opportunities worth promoting. Sharing updates about new products, seasonal campaigns, promotions, and performance incentives gives affiliates fresh reasons to re-engage. Even simple check-ins can reopen the conversation and encourage partners.

Communication helps affiliates feel supported and connected. Helpful information, campaign ideas, and timely responses to questions, help strengthen partnerships.



THE THEORY RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is simple: When someone does something for us, we naturally want to return the favor. This shifts interactions from transactional to human.

It's a built-in social instinct. Humans are wired to keep things "balanced," so when we receive something like help, a gift, attention, an incentive, we feel a subtle obligation to give something back.

- Someone buys you coffee - you want to get the next round
- A neighbor helps you - you're more likely to help them later
- A brand gives you something useful - you're more open to engaging with them

Reciprocity builds:

- Trust
- Goodwill
- Stronger relationships



INCENTIVES WORK



Incentives can be one of the most effective ways to re-engage affiliates who have not yet promoted your program.

Targeted incentives such as commission boosts, performance bonuses, and limited-time campaigns can increase affiliate-driven sales.

Because many affiliates work with multiple brands, incentives create urgency and give partners a clear reason to prioritize your program. When combined with clear communication and promotional resources, incentives can quickly transform dormant affiliates into active contributors.

NON-MONETARY INCENTIVES

Exclusive Promotions or Coupons

Affiliates love exclusive offers such as unique discount codes or limited-time deals. Exclusive promotions are a compelling reason to create new content.

Product Samples or Free Trials

Providing affiliates with product samples, early access, or trial subscriptions allows them to experience the product firsthand. This can make it easier for them to create authentic content such as reviews, tutorials, or social media posts that drive engagement and conversions.

Content Collaboration Opportunities

Some affiliates become inactive simply because they lack new content ideas. Offering collaboration opportunities, such as co-created articles, interviews, or featured content on your site or social channels, can inspire them to re-engage.



Temporary Incentives Drive Affiliate Activity

Programs that use temporary incentives often see a noticeable spike in both:



- ◆ Affiliate engagement
- ◆ Conversions
- ◆ Campaign participation.



Limited-time incentives create urgency and motivate affiliates to promote immediately.

NON-MONETARY INCENTIVES

Performance Challenges

Short-term competitions can re-energize affiliates. For example, you might offer rewards to the top 5 affiliates who generate the most sales during a promotional period. Friendly competition can motivate affiliates to increase their promotional efforts.

Early Access to New Products or Launches

Affiliates enjoy being among the first to promote new products. Providing early access to product launches or exclusive announcements allows them to create timely content and position themselves as a trusted source for new recommendations.

Improved Creative and Marketing Assets

Supplying fresh creative assets, updated product images, promotional copy, and campaign ideas can make it easier for them to restart promotion.



COMMISSIONS

Limited-Time Commission Boosts

Offering a temporary increase in commission rates can motivate affiliates to promote your brand again. For example, you might offer a 2–5% commission increase for the next 30 days or a short-term promotion tied to a specific campaign. Limited windows create urgency and encourage affiliates to act quickly.

Activation Bonuses

Providing a small bonus for generating the first sale after a period of inactivity can help affiliates get over the initial hurdle. For example, affiliates who generate their first sale within a certain time frame might receive a cash bonus, higher commission tier, or additional reward.



MYAP.COM SUPPORTS YOUR AFFILIATE OBJECTIVES

Affiliate marketing isn't a set-it-and-forget-it channel. It's a living, evolving ecosystem that requires intentional activation, continuous optimization, and a willingness to look beneath the surface.

Finding inactive and dormant affiliates is only the beginning. The real opportunity lies in what happens next. It's how you re-engage, personalize your outreach, remove friction, and create an environment where partners are motivated to perform.

The most successful programs don't just recruit affiliates. They activate them. They support them. They optimize every touchpoint (from onboarding to tracking to incentives) to ensure that effort translates into measurable results.

And perhaps most importantly, they pay attention to patterns. When performance shifts across multiple partners, they don't assume. They investigate, adjust, and improve.

That's where the right technology becomes a force multiplier.

MyAp.com, powered by ReferTrack, is designed to support exactly this kind of high-performance affiliate strategy. From precise tracking and real-time insights to tools that help you identify inactive partners, monitor performance trends, and eliminate friction in the conversion path, MyAp gives you the visibility and control needed to turn potential into profit.

Whether you're activating new affiliates, re-engaging dormant ones, or optimizing an established program, having the right infrastructure in place ensures that nothing slips through the cracks, and that every partnership has the opportunity to deliver.

Because in affiliate marketing, growth doesn't come from doing more. It comes from doing it smarter.

MYAP



Learn more about how **MyAp**
can support your **affiliate activation**
and **optimization strategy**
and explore additional tools and services.



Build Trust



Increase Engagement



Drive Conversions