

Vikki Danielson: The question is really as basic as do you want more customers? Lead gen conserve is a way to expand your client base. What do you ultimately want from the lead? Is it their information, for them to purchase a product or service, a referral, or something else?

Lenox Powell: Hi, I'm Lenox Powell, a host and producer of the Outperform Podcast. In this episode of Outperform, out smart, savvy, and incredibly strategic publisher development team here at Acceleration Partners takes you into the world of lead generation. You'll hear about different types of lead gen partners, some benefits and challenges working with them, and how to leverage these partners within your affiliate marketing program to drive conversions and grow revenue.

Cassandra S.: Hey, everyone. Welcome to the Outperform Podcast. I'm Cassandra Scarbeck, and I'm here with my fabulous colleague, Vikki Danielson. We are the publisher development managers here at Acceleration Partners. So, Vikki, say hello to our listeners.

Vikki Danielson: Hello, listeners. I'm super excited to be here today.

Cassandra S.: Awesome. So, in today's episode, Vikki and I are going to talk about lead generation in the affiliate realm. So, let's start off with the basics by first defining what we mean by lead generation or paying a partner on a cost per lead. Vikki, how do you define a lead?

Vikki Danielson: Starting with the basics, Cass, you're a lead, your aunties and uncle is a lead, your doctor is a lead, and even Betty that lives down the street, she's also a lead. The reason we are all leads is because we can be stimulated and have interest in products and services. The term lead can take many forms. It can be an email submit, an app download, a form fill, signing up for a free trial. Essentially, it is some form of data input.

Cassandra S.: Okay, perfect. So, tell the listeners who may not be as familiar with lead gen what this type of marketing is.

Vikki Danielson: Essentially, it's the process of attracting and converting Betty, Ted, your doctor, aunties and uncles, even strangers, into someone who has indicated interest in your company. Historically, affiliate generally meant either a content site, a coupon site, or a cashback site. As we transition away from the term affiliate to the cooler, more relevant and accurate term of performance partnerships, this widens the umbrella and incorporates so much more. It does still consist of those sites.

However, it also incorporates linked card offers, mobile partners, networks, email, the list goes on. It is made up of traffic sources that help brands to acquire users on a cost per lead model, or make sales on a cost per acquisition model. As affiliates, our partners have the ability to promote many different advertisers and programs, and lead gen to them simply means programs that don't require a sale.

Cassandra S.: Okay, great. So, how do they differ from programs that pay out on a sale, either flat fee or revenue share?

Vikki Danielson: I would say the biggest differentiator is lead gen takes work. I'm not saying that sale-based programs don't, but with lead gen, advertisers have to do something after with the data.

Cassandra S.: Okay. So, talk a little bit about the differences in the payouts.

Vikki Danielson: So, for cost per lead programs, they often pay out at a top of funnel action, compared to a cost per sale or revenue share model, where the payout is at the bottom of the funnel and through a sale. So, CPA stands for cost per action, and is essentially a model where partners are paid when they help facilitate a sale, such as buying a product. Commissions to partners can be fix rate or rev share, meaning a percentage of that basket value for the sale. For lead generation, it's way more top of funnel. CPL stands for cost per lead, and it's a model where leads should be qualified into genuine prospects, and commissions are typically top of funnel. So, they're paid out on amount submit or a basic form fill. Affiliate programs can also have elements of both CPA and CPL due to the varying goals of brands. AP actually works across multiple programs, with both a lead and sale element.

Cassandra S.: Okay. Good. So, if an advertiser isn't working with lead gen publishers or if they don't currently have a lead component in their affiliate program, what would you say are the benefits or reasons they should consider changing their strategy to include lead gen?

Vikki Danielson: The question is really as basic as do you want more customers? Lead gen can serve as a way to expand your client base. Before brands launch a lead gen program, they need to understand their goals and their metrics. I mean, any affiliate program you do, but for lead generation it's one tactic to generate a certain number of leads, it's another to determine the end goal of a particular lead. Rather than generating leads willy nilly, it's more valuable to base performance on whether your lead is helping you to reach your goal. What do you ultimately want from the

lead? Is it their information, for them to purchase a product or service, a referral, or something else?

Cassandra S.: Okay. So, in regards to the information, what types of information can advertisers expect to receive from lead gen partners and how can this be added to their affiliate program strategy?

Vikki Danielson: So, the type of information is set at the advertiser level. The landing page process can be as basic or as complex as you like; the payout would just need to justify the required effort on the partner's side. So, it's up to the advertiser to determine what information they seek and is going to be valuable to them, going back to those goals and metrics. So, is it a simple email submit that they will enter into their CRM and become part of an email nurture campaign or that goes to their sales team for follow? Or is it a four-to-five-page granular detail landing page that requires information inclusive of name, address, email, telephone number? Some of the user flows even ask for social security number and credit card. That type of information obviously further qualifies a lead, but is more expensive to obtain as it's further down the funnel.

Typically, a CPL model is often the payout at the top of the funnel action, compared to a cost per sale or revenue share model where the payout is at the bottom of the funnel or for a sale. Mostly gen partners actually seek out the top of funnel payout. So, the type of info varies greatly.

Cassandra S.: Wow. That actually sounds quite detailed and a lot of work, as you mentioned, for partners as well as advertisers to go through. So, that being said, what are some of the challenges for brands when working with lead gen?

Vikki Danielson: Infrastructure is probably way up there. So, having the tools to respond, measure, and document accordingly. So, finding a strategy, tactic, or offer that gets the attention of potential leads is one thing. The ability to follow up, nurture, and convert that lead is another.

Cassandra S.: When you say infrastructure, are you referring to the advertiser's or the performance partner's infrastructure?

Vikki Danielson: Both, really. The advertiser needs to ensure they have systems in place to cultivate their leads. So, when leads enter the funnel, that's when the lead-nurturing content will help turn potential customers into loyal ones. So, that can take the form of a ebook offer, a blog post, podcasts, social media covering topics of interest. They're all great ways to promote and capture new

leads. So, all advertiser's processes for nurturing and converting leads will determine the success of the lead gen efforts. From the partner's perspective, they will also need to be able to ensure that they can support data transfer, lead verification, and are on top of any fraud.

Cassandra S.: Got it. Okay. So, what are some of the other challenges you come across with lead gen?

Vikki Danielson: Probably missed opportunity. When looking at research, it shows that in the earlier stages, leads make up 40-70% of potential sales, and most of these leads are often lost, ignored, or discarded due to a company's processes, so it's really making sure that you're aligning marketing and sales. That would be the number one priority.

Cassandra S.: I suppose that also ties back into infrastructure in a way, doesn't it?

Vikki Danielson: It does, yes. Perceived reputation would be another. Some brands can be nervous of fraud or fake leads. In the past, I've listened to recordings of sale reps calling what they thought was a lead and actually saying, "Hello, Mickey Mouse. This is Steve from steve.co.uk."

Cassandra S.: You gotta be kidding me. That happens?

Vikki Danielson: It does. It's so funny but so dated. Fraud has become less of an issue. We have tools and verification techniques coming into play, and some programs are set up to pay, normally on a lead once verified by the brand, so there are multiple ways to avoid fraud these days.

Cassandra S.: Really interesting. Okay. So, let's talk about some of the lead gen partners that we are excited about here at Acceleration Partners.

Vikki Danielson: It's so difficult, Cass, to spotlight partners, as we have so many that are unique and that have carved out their own niches. We have partners that are focused on education, insurance, mortgage, job opportunities, [inaudible 00:09:32] wide range in [inaudible 00:09:34] verticals. Each partner varies in how they deliver data, too. It can be what we call a simple link out campaign, where a partner directs traffic to a brand's landing page. Pretty simple. We can have co-registration setup, where, from a single page, a user opts-in to be shown co-registration offers from multiple brands, and then we have host and post campaign when the partner actually hosts that landing page and then posts the data to the brands that can be via an API, direct to their CRM, or in the form of batch files.

So, there are so many conversion paths, promotions methods, and consumer flow. So, I would always encourage a conversation to be had where we align and define strategy so that the best possible partners make the magic happen.

Cassandra S.: I love that. Making magic happens. I feel like that should be our pumped up tagline.

Vikki Danielson: It's also important to remember that some partners have the ability to deliver leads and sales and a setup to be able to support both.

Cassandra S.: Can you give us some examples of different types of partners that can help advertisers drive leads and sales?

Vikki Danielson: CPA networks are an example. When you look across a lot of our top performing lead gen programs, you will find CPA network partners that are driving and delivering qualified, timely, and accurate data to brands. They have tons of different ways they can promote. They can run mobile, contextual, display, social, email, search—the list goes on. They also span across a variety of verticals due to the partnerships that they have at their disposal. They all have their uniques at play and can select partners to support lead or sales programs.

Cassandra S.: Okay. Interesting. So, what are some of the things you look for when vetting partnerships for our clients with CPA networks?

Vikki Danielson: The things we look for and which brands ask for the most is transparency. So, ensuring that their network has the ability to pass back sub-ID, shared ID, or referring URL data. This will ensure that the brand knows where the traffic is coming from.

Cassandra S.: Do you find that that's a challenge to get that transparency from partners?

Vikki Danielson: It can be. It has known to be. Now most partners are able to do it. The technology has always been the challenge in the past. More platforms enable that transparency to be put into play now.

Cassandra S.: Gotcha.

Vikki Danielson: It goes hand-in-hand with visibility. So, a lot of the brands don't like the fact that they could be promoted or have their brand displayed in places where they have no visibility of that. So, what network partners are doing now to build that confidence is they're starting to show detailed placement coverage before that placement would even go live, so brands do really have control about where they will be displayed. Another cool thing

that the networks can do is alter commission at the traffic-source level. So, you can pay your content partners or review sites different commission amounts based on their traffic source. Lastly, when we're vetting partnerships, where appropriate, we look to see if they have global reach, so partnerships in place than can span the globe.

Cassandra S.: Great. Thank you for that. So, next for those that aren't currently working with CPA networks, why would you encourage an advertiser to test including them in their strategy for offer distribution?

Vikki Danielson: What makes the networks we work with so powerful is their proven track record, their great supportive teams, and their scale and reach. You can spend significant time and resources in trying to recruit partners direct, or you can utilize professionals in the space that already have that existing network, they have the historical results, and they know how to get you to your goals. So, it's important to note that networks aren't going to take your campaign and run it in their own way. They wanna actually follow instructions down to the decimal. We have the pleasure and experience of working across many CPA networks, like Max Bounty, Global Wide Media, Cactus Media, Bright Horizons, and there's so many more.

Cassandra S.: Oh, yeah. So, managing performance partnerships takes a lot of effort and leveraging some of these larger network partners to do the heavy lifting certainly makes a lot of sense, particularly when they know they have proven partners in place to help them drive more traffic at scale. What would you say another partner is that you work with a lot to drive lead gen?

Vikki Danielson: Probably Review Sites. You would also find them at the top of a lot of our lead gen programs. They are partners that are in the comparison space that are helping to deliver high-intent leads to brands via their unique ability to help consumers make better, more informed decisions when choosing a product or service. So, we have partners that own multiple comparison sites that can get very granular and specific based on verticals they work with. So, they are helping drive great quality leads, whether they're in business—so, sites that are dedicated to website hosting, building software; whether they're in finance—sites that are focused on credit cards, mortgages, debt; or whether they're a consumer—so data and [inaudible 00:14:51] readings, medical. We have partners that can work with you and help guide leads your way. Partners in this space include Natural Intelligence, Traffic Point, and Relish Marketing.

- Cassandra S.: Yeah. I know recently when I was looking to buy mattresses for my boys, I Googled best foam mattresses for insights and I'm also getting ready to buy some new kitchen appliances and I plan to check out more review sites for those as well. So, yeah, it's really interesting to see how these types of sites can help drive those leads for our advertisers. Who else is proving to be effective in lead gen these days?
- Vikki Danielson: Like on a lot of sale-based programs, we see a lot of content websites that specialize in educating, providing resources, and supporting consumers on any given topic. They can be huge lead providers. So, AP works across many dedicated sites to act as powerful customer acquisition platforms across many sectors. The Penny Hoarder would be an example. This is a site that is an American personal finance website. Everyday Family is another. They have a community of millions of parents and there are thousands of content sites that are driving lead performance across our brands.
- Cassandra S.: Yes. We hear repeatedly from our advertisers that they want more content partners to drive brand awareness, and also educate their consumers on any number of things, whether it's on a new product or sales on the web share side, or even to help introduce consumers to opportunities with ways that they can save or make money. I know that's something that The Penny Hoarder really works to do. So, there's something truly special that happens when someone outside of the brand steps in to share their own authentic voice and experience in order to really help persuade others to give a product or service or an opportunity a shot. So, that makes total sense that content would be in this realm.
- Vikki Danielson: Exactly. Unfortunately, we have limited time today to mention all the ways we are partnering to help drive leads to our brand, but just know there's a variety of cool ways partners are attracting, collecting, and delivering leads, and we're excited to continue to help support these lead-based programs and to watch them grow.
- Cassandra S.: Any parting words for our listeners that are considering jumping into the lead gen world?
- Vikki Danielson: Oh, parting words. I would say the key to success is always quality, not volume. So, you want to avoid running into the issue of letting just anyone into your lead gen program and then discover their efforts aren't brand-aligned or they're delivering the types of leads you want, i.e. Mickey Mouse. Focusing on volume over quality negatively impacts conversion rates. So, having a few partners in your lead generation-focused affiliate

program, those that are driving high-value traffic at a steady volume is much better than dealing with mass quantities that have varying levels of interest.

Oh, but my last parting words are do not try to approach this method of marketing without the ability to follow through and close the lead.

Cassandra S.: Wise words, Vikki. Thanks so much and thanks for walking our listeners through lead gen today and explaining a little bit more about why they should consider giving lead gen partners a shot in their strategy. These types of partners, as we have found, can be incredibly valuable to a brand's performance marketing program, and we're excited to continue working with these partners here at Acceleration Partners.

Well, that's all for today's Outperform Podcast. Thanks so much everyone for listening. We will continue to spotlight interesting performance partners each quarter, so please stay tuned. In the meantime, if you have any questions about publishers and how you can partner with them, please do reach out to us through the Acceleration Partners website. Until next time remember: keep outperforming.