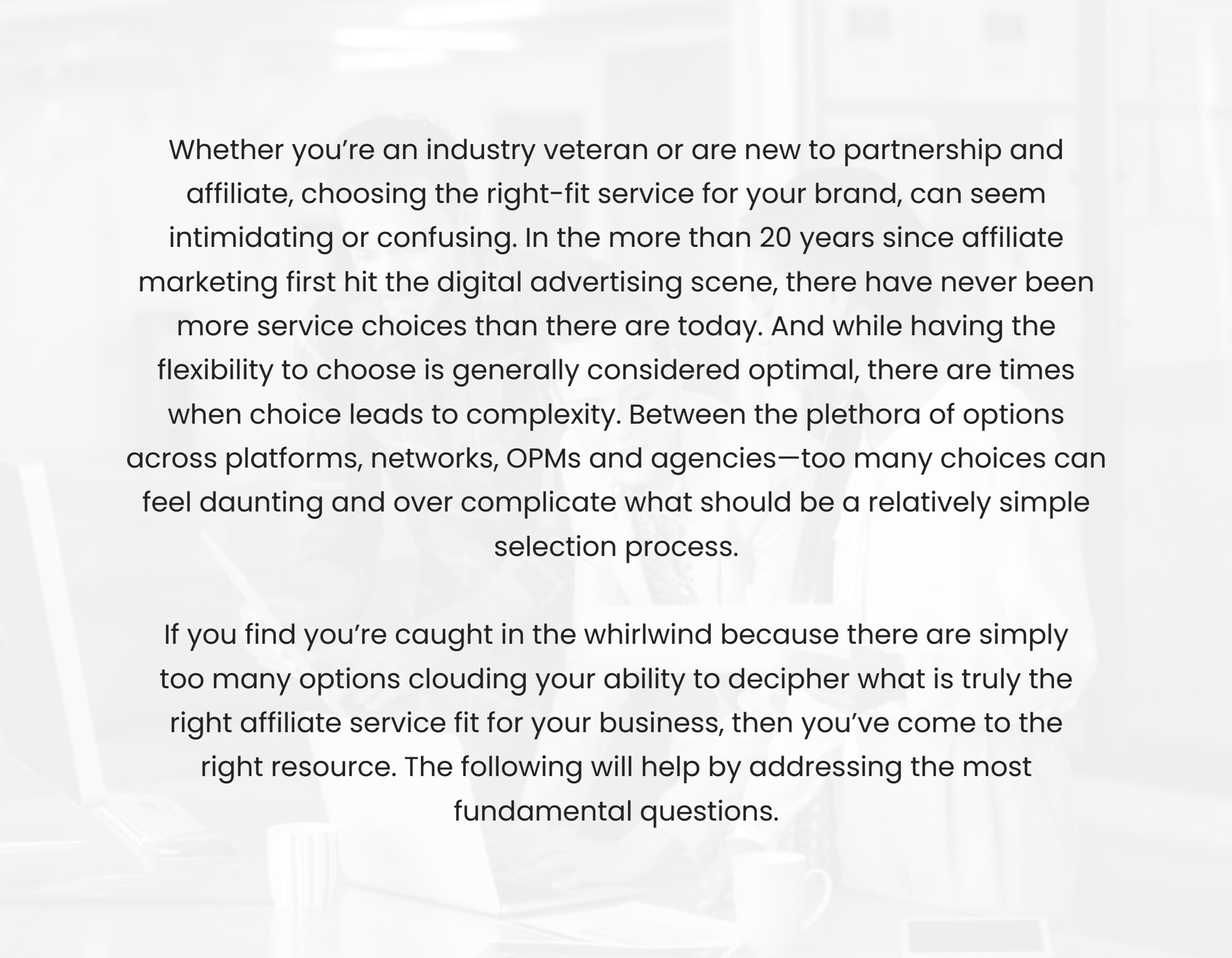


Selecting the right affiliate marketing and partnership service: bringing clarity to the complex



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Whether you're an industry veteran or are new to partnership and affiliate, choosing the right-fit service for your brand, can seem intimidating or confusing. In the more than 20 years since affiliate marketing first hit the digital advertising scene, there have never been more service choices than there are today. And while having the flexibility to choose is generally considered optimal, there are times when choice leads to complexity. Between the plethora of options across platforms, networks, OPMs and agencies—too many choices can feel daunting and over complicate what should be a relatively simple selection process.

If you find you're caught in the whirlwind because there are simply too many options clouding your ability to decipher what is truly the right affiliate service fit for your business, then you've come to the right resource. The following will help by addressing the most fundamental questions.

What is your partnership or affiliate strategy? (Or perhaps even more so, why having one is imperative to your success!)

Perhaps you have a strategy, a means to use the channel against your business objectives. If so, congratulations! The simple fact that you have a plan puts you one step ahead of the game! From here, it's all about executing against that plan. So, assuming you have a strategy, you now need to think about who will be handling the execution.

On the other hand, if you don't have a strategy or you have a half-baked version but still need help filling in the gaps, then you will need to decide on one before you can determine how you are going to service that strategy. The good news is if you don't know how to craft a strategy, you can work with your partnership or affiliate provider to develop one that directly aligns to your business objectives. Without this goal to channel alignment, it is pointless to even set a strategy. Strategy defines what you need to do to meet your partnership and affiliate program goals – whether it's about driving revenue or acquiring a certain % of new customers.

Strategy is what will help you achieve those goals. A key consideration in your strategy is also its level of complexity and effort. Strategies involving little variation may not require the level of effort that complex plans do. Considering the intricacy of the plan will help you better evaluate and balance your service needs.



How much time is allocated to your partnership and affiliate marketing efforts?

As with everything else, time is a critical factor in determining the right fit partnership and affiliate service model for your brand. Are you planning to own and manage the execution of the channel? If the answer is yes, great! But I urge you to consider realities: How much time do you really have to devote to execution? If you answered 100% of the time, even 80% of the time, then you need to find a provider that enables you for success by providing a technology platform to operate with ease. That means working in a platform that is intuitive, helps you quickly identify optimization areas, track progress against goals, and generally perform tasks with little effort.

If you aren't so certain about time you're able to devote to executing on the channel or are managing several other channels (read: 3 or more), then perhaps it's time for you to reconsider a more viable plan. While in-house subject matter expertise is desired, expertise flies out the window in the absence of dedicated time to devote that expertise to the channel. In this case, you should consider a provider that can lend enough support to supplement your owned execution. This also means working with an intuitive platform so you can make optimizations on the fly—at your discretion—but also having a dedicated contact to help you craft your strategy and provide support based on what is happening across partnership and affiliate (i.e. measuring your program against a baseline or benchmark). If you find yourself with very little to no time to dedicate to the channel, that's fine too, you will just need to ensure channel success by having an expert or team of experts handle execution on your behalf.

But first, let's explore this idea of not being certain about time to dedicate to the channel a bit more. A simple question to ask yourself is about the total number of hours you or your team can dedicate to channel execution. Is it the equivalent of a full-time employee, a part-time resource or is it simply whenever time is available? If it's the latter, you should seriously consider seeking partnership and affiliate service solutions. If it's the equivalent of a part-time employee, consider services that aid in strategic consult and opportunity identification based on industry benchmarks to ensure that the recommendations being presented are rooted in data rather than intuition. Finally, if you know you have the time to handle it all on your own, then perhaps a platform with on-demand support is the most viable option for you.



The partnership and affiliate strategy?

On its face, this question may seem simple enough: What resources are you allocating in-house to partnership and affiliate program strategy creation and execution? But the answer can be the difference between success and defeat in the channel. For example, just because you can hire any resource to run your partnership or affiliate program, doesn't mean they are the right fit to do so. While an entry-level employee might be a good fit for smaller programs with more limited budgets, it's certainly not a one-size-fits-all approach. There is considerable skill level, and subject matter expertise required to execute flawlessly and consistently. Complex, mature programs require seasoned partnership and affiliate marketers to thoughtfully set strategy, optimize partners and evaluate profitability. This all takes time, testing and a healthy dose of finesse to get it just right.

Determining the right-fit level of expertise challenges you to think about the level of exposure for the partnership and affiliate channel. Does it capture the attention of the C-suite? What is the size of the budget? Think of it this way: Managing five thousand dollars is much different than managing five million dollars, don't you agree? If these were your personal funds, you wouldn't put them in the hands of an inexperienced financial consultant.

Remember: Experience level required will dictate experience level needed. And having that healthy dose of finesse mentioned above—that's only found when engaging a partnership or affiliate provider that has years of experience testing strategies proven to drive revenue.



What is your budget?

Budget is another important consideration in selecting your partnership and affiliate service model because you need to ensure that budget is available to even contemplate the service model. But perhaps even more important, you need to think about how your partnership or affiliate channel budget is acquired in the first place. If your budget is set, then perhaps a service provider with a fixed pricing structure is appropriate to ensure you never exceed your spend target.

However, if your channel budget is funded based on performance, then you need a service provider that enables your efforts to thrive and acquire additional investment. In this instance, performance-based pricing structures make more sense to incent growth and optimization. In either case, there is no right or wrong way. Simply ensure you have pricing flexibility that accommodates your specific service needs.

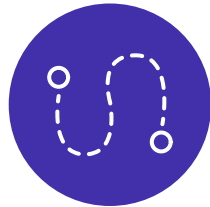




Once we've established a baseline...

Based on the responses to the four fundamentals above, properly staffing your affiliate campaign should be simple and help you well on your way to securing a partnership and affiliate service model that's just right—for you.

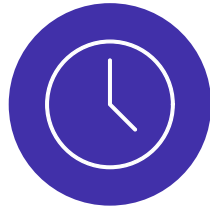
Key takeaways



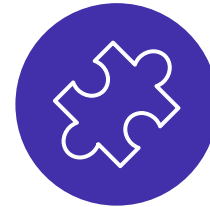
Set a partnership and affiliate strategy,
or work with an expert to develop one




Think about your budget and the type of
pricing model you need to thrive



Determine a reasonable amount of time
you can invest in the channel
(Pro tip: be honest with yourself about how much
time you can truly devote to the channel)



Ensure the resources executing are the right fit
based on experience/expertise needed



Partnerize is the only partnership management solution powering growth for marketers seeking high quality, scalable subsidies to primary channels through end-to-end technology & comprehensive service.

To learn more about navigating the partnership and affiliate channel or finding the right service model for your brand, reach out to us at contact@partnerize.com

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