



Case Study



Icreon

An Online Affiliate Marketing Gateway

Our client wanted to create an online gateway that would help them to streamline their affiliate marketing services and also provide a platform for affiliates and merchants to directly interact with each other. They required administrative capabilities to manage the affiliate gateway. Based on these requirements Icreon developed the web solution. Affiliates and merchants can register with the website and track their programs, sales generated through the programs as well as the commissions. The website has been developed using Drupal.

Customer Profile

Our client is a UK based company specializing in digital and direct marketing solutions that help companies in promoting their brand. They also provide search engine marketing, affiliate marketing, e-mail marketing, web development and other related services.

Business Requirements

To offer their customers affiliate marketing services, our client had registered with various third-party affiliate networks and was incurring huge costs in terms of monthly fees to these networks. With the aim of doing away with the recurring costs and to streamline their affiliate marketing services into a single centralized unit, our client wanted to create a web based affiliate gateway. The solution was required to provide them with a single point of reference for tracking all merchants and affiliates registered with them. Affiliates were to be provided with the means to register and manage their various affiliate programs, offered by the merchants, through the gateway. The solution was to enable merchants to provide details and upload creatives (for use by the affiliates) to their programs. A strong tracking and reporting mechanism was required to be built into the solution providing both the affiliates and merchants with the means to track sales and commissions. Facilities enabling our client to manage the gateway, including tasks such as processing registration requests, raising invoices, generating performance and statistics reports etc, were required to be built into the solution. The administrators were also to be provided with the means to communicate with the affiliates and merchants and also update content appearing on the website.

A solution to build and operate a web based affiliate marketing network

Based on the requirements, Icreon developed the affiliate network website. Drupal has been used for the presentation layer. All communication between Drupal and the database layer are handled by Web Services. In order to ensure reliability, all tracking data is stored on a separate server.

The website provides a platform for affiliates and merchants to interact and conduct business with each other. The administrator can manage and track all interactions.

The website can be accessed by three types of users:

- Affiliates
- Merchants
- Administrators

Affiliates

Affiliates can register with the gateway to offer their services in promoting the merchant products. They can register by providing details including personal, billing and banking information. Upon approval of the registrations, by the administrator, a unique tracking id is generated and assigned to each affiliate. A default payment threshold (the minimum amount for the commission to be payable) is assigned to each affiliate.

Affiliates can browse through and sign-up for any of the available merchant programs. Upon registration they can select a creative and can make use of the affiliate code, however any commission earned will be payable only upon approval from the concerned merchant. Every sale generated through the affiliate program needs to be validated by the merchant or the gateway administrator, for the commission to become payable.

Affiliates can track the programs that they have signed up for and can generate comprehensive program statistics reports detailing commission earned, performance of the creative in terms of clicks, impressions, sales etc.

Merchants

Merchants wishing to promote their products/services via affiliate marketing can register with the gateway. Merchants can only submit registration enquires with the gateway. All merchant registrations are handled by the administrators. In order to be registered merchants are required to create a payment balance account with the gateway. This account is used to make payments to the affiliates and a minimum balance is required to be maintained at all times.

Upon registration, the merchant can login to the website and browse through the available affiliates. They can invite an affiliate to join their program and can also process joining requests submitted by the affiliates. A merchant is required to validate all sales for a commission to be payable. The merchant can choose to set an auto validation of all sales or can choose to manually validate each sale.

Merchants can generate reports to monitor the performance of their programs as a whole and also monitor the performances of individual affiliates registered with their programs.

Administrators

The administrator can manage the affiliates and merchants registered with the network.

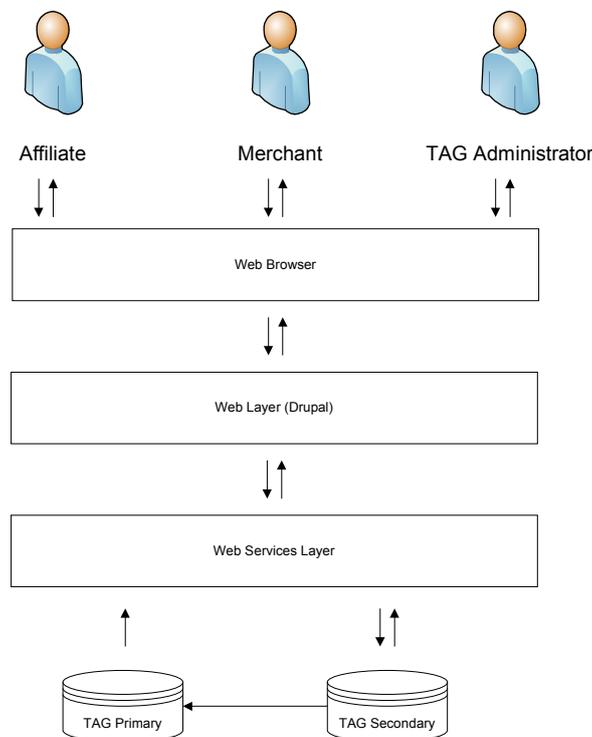
Administrators can be of three types, each performing specific roles within the gateway:

- Super Admin (having access over the entire affiliate gateway)
- Financial Managers (handling and processing all payments)
- Account Managers (managing the affiliate and merchant accounts)

All merchant enquires are received by the financial managers. After verifying the details and on receipt of the funds to be deposited in the merchant's payment balance account, the administrator can create the merchant account including details of the programs (product descriptions, commission rates, creatives etc) offered. The financial manager can raise an invoice for the payment received.

The account managers can view and manage the details of all merchant and affiliate accounts. They can monitor the affiliate programs and are notified about all commissions due to the affiliates. The account managers are also responsible for processing the payments due to the affiliates. The system automatically raises an invoice for such payments. They are provided with options to generate detailed reports to track the performance of the merchants and affiliates.

The administrators can post messages to the affiliates and merchants via a bulletin board and can also update content appearing on the website.



System Architecture

Technologies used in developing this application are:

