

Building a Successful Partner Compliance Program

Brands have become increasingly reliant on partners to expand their reach into digital channels, but partners that inadvertently misuse your brand assets can create channel conflict, increase marketing costs and drain profits. Keeping partners brand compliant is a critical activity, but it requires a different approach than with intentional infringers. MarkMonitor® recommends taking these key steps to building a successful partner compliance program.



1. Start with a Clear Partnership Agreement

Creating a partnership agreement that clearly articulates your brand guidelines will help you head off compliance problems down the road. Make sure that it is comprehensive, outlining exact specifications for using trademarks, logos, copyrighted images, domain names, branded keywords and promotional content. Show examples of how it's done right (and wrong) and update your guidelines regularly to keep pace with new marketing tactics partners are rolling out.



2. Automate the Monitoring Process

Your partners represent your brands all across the Internet, so it's not easy for most companies to monitor every channel. Look for ways to leverage technology and gain visibility into what your partners are doing across websites, online ads, social media, paid searches, marketplaces and mobile apps. Focus your efforts both locally and globally, and prioritize infringements to deliver the highest ROI to your program.



3. Lead with Education

Remember, these are your business partners, and they're as eager to maintain a fruitful relationship as you are. Many partners who do infringe on your brand do so without malicious intent, so be sure to take a collaborative approach to keeping them compliant. Educate with regular communications to provide guidelines and even examples of successful promotional efforts that illustrate good compliance. Be receptive to feedback and keep an open channel for dialog.



4. Escalate Only When Necessary

If partners are still not in compliance after taking an educational approach to enforcement, escalate as necessary with direct phone calls first, then product or commission withholdings. Once a partner realizes how serious their non-compliance activity is, they tend to fall into line quickly. Failure to take assertive action may lead to more frequent cases of infringement and brand erosion, as other partners see that little is being done to enforce the brand.



5. Be Proactive to Prevent Future Compliance Issues

The more work you put in to your compliance program up front, the fewer incidents of brand infringement you'll see. Beyond regular communications, you can keep partners in the loop with blog posts and training sessions to illustrate how compliance helps both parties. Leverage the right technology to keep tabs on how your brand is being used in partner channels, and call on brand protection experts to validate your approach.

For more information on developing a comprehensive online brand protection strategy, please call us at **1-800-745-9229** or visit **markmonitor.com**.