

Unique discount voucher code tool pay off for online garden centre

Webgains helps affiliates deliver 15% of sales for GardenCentre.co.uk

Need

Being in the online garden centre business is a competitive life. Having sold up one of the best-rated garden centres in the business – Sanders Garden World in Somerset, brother and sister team Kerry and Michelle Michael turned their attentions to online retailing. Early in 2008, **GardenCentre.co.uk** was born.

Peter Howarth, who was brought in by the Michaels as general manager to run the new venture, soon realised the difficulty of the challenge. Searches on just a few of the thousands of terms that might yield sales through the search engines revealed that it was affiliates who dominated the listings. Determined to harness this newly-discovered virtual sales force, Peter set about learning the world of affiliate marketing.

“Webgains and, in particular, the voucher affiliates, have become an invaluable part of our marketing mix.”

PETER HOWARTH, GENERAL MANAGER
GARDENCENTRE.CO.UK

This eventually led to investigating the potential for offering online vouchers for **GardenCentre.co.uk**, Peter was pointed by one affiliate to Webgains.

He takes up the story: “I was aware of affiliate schemes and one site, VoucherCodes.com, recommended Webgains to me as being the best for customer and client support and for their online administration tools.”

Having then run trials with Webgains and a few other major affiliate providers, Peter decided on working with Webgains to help him build the **GardenCentre.co.uk** business.



“Webgains was also the best in terms of results. The brief was very simple: drive sales, increase our online exposure and grow the customer database.”

Action

Webgains worked fast to identify affiliates that would be best suited to helping drive sales to **GardenCentre.co.uk**. Webgains also recommended the use of online vouchers to help attract customers in this competitive sector.

However, the key to the success of the program – and any program that exploits the power of discount voucher codes – was the use of exclusive codes for selected affiliates and the effective tracking of those offers.

A large problem with exclusive offers made available to particular affiliates is the ability of other discount voucher code sites to ‘scrape’ these vouchers from rivals’ sites. They can then offer the codes to buyers themselves and claim the commission from the merchant when customers use those codes to buy.

But, Webgains technology tracks the specific codes so that, wherever any exclusive offer is used by a customer, it is always the correct affiliate that is rewarded.

The system also allows merchants to set specific commission levels for discount voucher code



purchases, allowing them to control the margin erosion that can result from giving customers money off, as well as paying affiliate commission.

Webgains merchants can use the administration tools to set different commission levels for different offers in a very straightforward way. The system gives them enormous flexibility with how they reward affiliates and allows them to stay on top of their margins and marketing budgets.

David Vince, **GardenCentre.co.uk** account manager at Webgains, explains: "Affiliates understand that retailers need to protect margins and so, particularly on exclusive discount voucher codes, are happy to accept lower commission levels. They love exclusive voucher offers and entirely understand the need for merchants to retain their profitability." In effect, they make up for the lost commission with the volume sales that result from the efficient use of discount vouchers."

A second and crucial step in the program was to help **GardenCentre.co.uk** provide comprehensive product data feeds to affiliates. With his background in data systems in the aeronautics industry, Peter was able to understand and facilitate XML product feeds that update on a daily basis with available inventory, prices, product images and offers.

Vince adds that providing accurate and timely product data feeds is crucial to enabling affiliates to work at their best for the retailer.

Benefit

The **GardenCentre.co.uk** program has become a good example of the effectiveness of using discount voucher codes in any affiliate strategy.

Peter's Webgains program now includes more than 400 affiliates, about 20 of whom are discount voucher code sites.

The **Gardencentre.co.uk** business has seen remarkable growth in just nine months and Peter says that the Webgains affiliates program accounts for 15% of the company's overall sales.

He comments: "I've been very impressed with the response from the discount voucher codes that we have used and the level of support that Webgains has given."

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