



**VIEWS FROM THE TOP:
2025 DEBRIEF, 2026 GAME PLAN (AFFILIATE EDITION)**



Featuring conversations with key voices from the major affiliate platforms and an in-depth reflection on 2025's most impactful performance drivers, uncovering the strategies and market movements that will influence the affiliate landscape in 2026.



AFFILIATE MARKETING REFLECTIONS 2025 - AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR 2026

Reflections on 2025's most impactful performance drivers, uncovering the strategies and market movements that will influence the affiliate landscape in 2026.

As the affiliate and performance marketing world races toward the 2025 peak season finale, networks are navigating rapid shifts in technology, data, and partnership models. From the rise of AI-driven optimisation to evolving publisher and advertiser behaviour, this year has tested agility and rewarded innovation.

We sat down with some of the top voices from the major affiliate networks and tracking platforms to reflect on the key moments of 2025 - and for a look ahead at what's coming in 2026. Here's what they had to say.



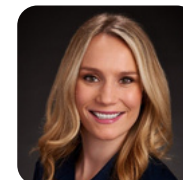
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LOOKING BACK ON 2025, WHAT DEFINED THE YEAR FOR AFFILIATE MARKETING?



Adam Ross: For me, 2025 was a year where the fundamentals of affiliate marketing largely held firm.

Despite constant headlines about disruption, the industry didn't radically change - and in some ways, that stability was the story. We made progress on tracking, but broadly speaking the channel remained resilient and continued to deliver strong value.

AI dominated the conversation, of course. There was everything from doom to wild optimism about what LLM-powered search might mean for referral models. But the reality is more balanced. Yes, traffic patterns have shifted, but early academic research (from the University of Hamburg and Frankfurt School of Finance) shows affiliate still massively outperforms LLM-generated referral traffic across AOV, conversion rate and revenue per session. Clearly, not all traffic is created equal.

Ultimately, I'm optimistic. AI will reshape the user experience in ways we expect and in ways we can't yet imagine - **but affiliate marketing has always been a**

durable, adaptive monetisation infrastructure. Our role now is to shape how we fit into this future and ensure we remain the connective tissue between advertisers and partners, so they can keep delivering for users.



Linda O'Connell: For years, we have discussed and championed the idea of channel convergence and the

role that affiliate marketing plays in the ever-evolving customer journey. 2025 was when much of the market finally accepted this important insight. While there is still work to do, we saw most advertisers move beyond focusing only on traditional affiliate relationships and toward more nuanced and wide-ranging partnership structures. Influencer-affiliate crossover became standard rather than experimental, and brands got much better at understanding which partners drive actual customer lifetime value versus just conversions.

What was particularly significant was the continued growth of content publishers and technology partners. Quality content creators started to become primary sales drivers for many advertisers across the UK and EMEA. **According to the latest APMA State of the Nation**

report, total UK affiliate spending grew 9% YoY in 2024, and a big part of that was the growing importance of content creators, blogs, and editorials, whose affiliate revenue grew +24%.

Similarly, tech partners, such as intent.ly, are helping advertisers make the most of every prospect and shopper interaction, to boost results across channels. **Our industry isn't just about driving traffic. It's about scalable performance-based outcomes**, and technology partners enable that in a big way.

It's also important to highlight how the research and reports produced by the UK Affiliate & Marketing Partner Association (APMA) offer an exceptionally detailed and nuanced perspective of our industry. As a founding member of APMA, CJ takes great pride in having contributed our data to this comprehensive report. We strongly encourage all professionals within our field to consider membership with APMA. From conducting in-depth research to advocating with UK government bodies on behalf of our industry, the APMA's efforts merit the support of everyone involved in our sector.



Marthe Berlin: The defining moment of 2025 was the industry's shift towards a fully customer-

driven channel that relies and thrives on true partnerships. The channel is no longer defined by a simple payment model, but by the partners that can tell a story that customers can trust. We have not only diversified away from relying on the last click as a performance indicator, but we are fully embracing the ecosystem of creators, advocates, and publishers.

The brands who are winning today are those who recognise that people trust communities, not ad campaigns. Modern, agile brands want to work with partners that tap into what their communities see, share, and believe, and build long-term relationships with an engaged customer base.

What stood out most: The shift to Authenticity and Advocacy. We saw performance accelerate for brands that were willing to be flexible, moving towards hybrid commission structures to secure high-impact partnerships with all kinds of partners in the partnership ecosystem.

The big surprise: The speed with which AI is creating a disconnect in traditional marketing. With some reports showing AI already reducing web traffic by 25%, it's become a mandatory stop on the path to purchase where consumers skip past the ads and go straight to personalised, AI-powered search engines.



Maura Smith: The year may be best defined by the zero-click conversion crisis and the resulting attribution gap.

Generative AI (LLMs and Overviews) solidified its position as the "gatekeeper of commerce", leaving a massive blind spot where traditional, last-click models could no longer measure influence. The surprising behaviour was that while traffic increased (+3% clicks YoY, global retail), conversions declined (-6% conversions YoY). This means consumers are more discerning, but their purchases are highly valuable (+11% AOV YoY).



Matthias Stadelmeyer: 2025 was a year of acceleration in affiliate marketing. The industry evolved rapidly

because partner types and technologies continued to blur traditional boundaries.

Convergence of influencer and affiliate marketing: The once-separate worlds of influencer and affiliate marketing have merged into a unified Partner Marketing model. Creators are embracing performance-based approaches, while traditional affiliates are integrating more content-driven strategies.

A shifting publisher landscape: **Publishers continued to diversify, with influencers, content creators, AI-first and tech partners taking centre stage.** Established players evolved their offerings, while AI-driven models have begun transforming discovery, engagement, and monetisation - paving the way for a smarter, more innovative affiliate ecosystem.

EVERY YEAR BRINGS BOTH WINS AND LESSONS LEARNED. WHAT STOOD OUT IN 2025?



Adam Ross: For Awin I think the biggest success has been the positive impact of our Conversion Protection

Initiative. Having launched it in April we've now seen hundreds of brands implement both Server-to-Server and app tracking and they are now getting a much more accurate view of the sales their affiliate partners are generating.

The latest refreshed figures indicate those upgrades have effectively tracked 2.5m additional sales which previously wouldn't have registered in the channel. **That amounts to more than \$250m in revenue attributed and \$16.5m being allocated to the right partners.** That's a massive gain for our industry.

There have inevitably been challenges with the rollout of the initiative. Notably it was disappointing to see some competitors in the early phase of CPI try and use it as an advantage to sell against us in pitches. We even had one advertiser leave Awin for a rival platform to avoid paying for app sales – and this was where most of their sales came from!

However, we've also seen several competitor platforms publicly back CPI and emulate its goal to raise tracking standards which was wonderful validation. And it was of course fantastic to see the initiative gain recognition from the wider industry by winning the Excellence in Transparency & Compliance award recently at the Global Performance Marketing Awards.



Linda O'Connell: 2025 was a breakthrough year for CJ's technology leadership. We're using a combination of

homegrown and partner technology to be an integrated platform for connected commerce across the partnerships space. Our biggest innovations include:

- CJ Wallet: Empowering brands to reach consumers across full journey marketing by letting consumers save offers for later use to their mobile wallets of choice.
- TikTok Shop Integration: CJ was extremely proud to be the first affiliate network offering seamless tracking and compensation for TikTok Shop transactions enabling publishers to also promote a Brand's TikTok Shop from outside of the TikTok app.

- CJ Marketplaces - Amazon: First-to-market solution for monetising Amazon transactions, opening up entirely new revenue streams for both publishers and brands.
- AI-Powered Discovery, Orchestration, and Optimisation: Our proprietary models are driving +14% incremental revenue and 8% higher ROAS for our advertisers, and new avenues of growth for thousands of publishers.
- Industry's Most Advanced Anti-Fraud: We've combined the largest human fraud team with next-generation AI/ML. In 2025 alone, we saved advertisers an additional 9% in fraud-related losses, reduced publisher non-compliance by 22%, and reversed over 100,000 fraudulent transactions.



Marthe Berlin: Our greatest strategic success in 2025 was the consolidation of our platform vision, bringing to

market a truly unified solution by introducing base versions of our Creator and Advocate products alongside the core Performance solution.



This allows brands to manage every single partnership type, from traditional affiliates to paid media to brand advocates, in one place.

Furthermore, we recognised the untapped potential of a fast-growing frontier: the launch of our dedicated Retail Media Solution was a critical innovation, enabling vendor brands to monetise the immense power of partners on retailer sites.

Where the channel still has room to grow: **The biggest industry challenge is not the adoption of AI, but the quality of its application.** The long-term advantage will belong to those companies who are able to feed their AI with the richest, most connected dataset across transactions, media, and identity.



Maura Smith: Our biggest success was pioneering the category of Generative AI Conversion Attribution with

the launch of VantagePoint™. This restored visibility and fairness in a market where content value was being lost. The primary lesson is that the old last-click model is no longer a viable foundation for investment.

The channel's room to grow lies in moving the entire industry toward influence-based compensation, which requires immediate, bold action from all players.



Matthias Stadelmeyer: Our expansion into the US market and the opening of our new headquarters in Miami marked

a defining moment for us in 2025. The market dynamic is vastly different from Europe: larger in scale, faster-paced, and highly competitive. The overwhelmingly positive response to our partner, influencer, and app marketing solutions confirmed that our approach resonates globally.

For the wider affiliate and e-commerce industry, **AI was the standout innovation of 2025 - and its impact is only beginning.** Artificial Intelligence is fundamentally transforming every layer of our ecosystem, reshaping how we operate, measure performance, and connect partners. The key lies in active participation: as an industry, we must deepen our understanding of AI's potential and take a proactive role in shaping its integration.

We're embracing the shift toward AI-driven commerce with a clear vision: to be the most automated and

intelligent platform built to work seamlessly with AI agents. By realising our vision, we're unlocking new levels of efficiency, profitability, and innovation across the entire value chain.



QUICK-FIRE ROUND

MARTHE BERLIN

One word to describe affiliate marketing in 2025? Evolving.

Biggest misconception about the industry? That it is defined by a payment model.

The next big disruptor in affiliate will be... The platform that fuels AI with the richest, most connected data.

A marketing buzzword(s) you could do without? The AIDA funnel.

One thing you're optimistic about for 2026? Partnerships are the engine of growth - and more and more brands are understanding and utilising this knowledge to their advantage.

BEYOND AI, WHICH TREND OR TECHNOLOGY HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT THIS YEAR?



Adam Ross: It's by no means a new trend but it's been exciting to watch the continued merging of

affiliate and influencer result in massive meaningful growth.

Awin's invested a lot in this space in the last couple of years to make our industry a more welcoming, accessible environment for creators and influencers. From our dedicated creator app and in-house expertise, to strategic partnerships with numerous leading creator platforms and of course our drive to raise app tracking standards.

So far this year, that's resulted in influencers and creators generating nearly 1bn clicks to advertiser websites via Awin, over \$900m in revenue and over \$100m in commission for them. It really goes to show that if you create the right conditions for performance, no matter the publisher model, then it can thrive.



Linda O'Connell: I'd argue that the biggest story in 2025 was the industry's accelerating shift toward

channel integration to empower full-journey performance marketing. We're using technology to create a unified customer journey, allowing customers to move from product discovery through to purchase across various platforms, such as traditional affiliates, content publishers, creators, lead gen partners, programmatic, social commerce, and digital retail media.

Our industry knows that the key to its future is to move performance channels to the centre of marketing strategies. To make every channel and touchpoint commerce-first, creating unprecedented alignment across the entire marketing ecosystem. It's about transforming scattered marketing efforts into a unified force where awareness creates buyers, buyers become advocates, and every investment compounds into lasting business value.



Marthe Berlin: Outside of AI, and maybe driven by its increasing prevalence, **we've seen a shift in**

customer mindsets around seeking authenticity. Within performance marketing, this has accelerated the shift towards the Advocacy Model and the huge role of creators within the space.

This trend resonates because it flips the script. The AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) marketing funnel is becoming more and more obsolete. **Advocacy has become the next logical step, transforming the linear purchase funnel into a self-sustaining marketing flywheel where conversion leads directly to retention and, crucially, to advocacy.** Since 89% of people trust personal recommendations, this trend has proven to be the most reliable, sustainable path to customer acquisition, tapping into customers' desire for real recommendations made by creators and partners that speak their language and who they can trust.



Maura Smith: Beyond AI, the biggest impact came from the accelerated migration to the mobile

shopping journey and the associated shift in partner dynamics. **Globally, revenue from mobile grew +6% YoY.** This surge created tailwinds for Influencers, who saw the biggest gain in global revenue share (+1.9% YoY). The trend resonated because it confirms that performance success is now about securing upper-funnel influence where consumers browse and discover, rather than waiting for the final click.



Matthias Stadelmeyer: One of the most exciting developments in 2025 was the rise of Retail Media

Networks. **Retailers and publishers started turning their own data and online store space into valuable advertising opportunities,** giving brands new ways to reach shoppers right where they're making purchase decisions. This approach helps brands connect with highly engaged, ready-to-buy audiences and drive stronger conversion rates. The integration of affiliate strategies into retail media ecosystems has opened up exciting new ways to leverage shopper intent data.



QUICK-FIRE ROUND

LINDA O'CONNELL

One word to describe affiliate marketing in 2025? Evolving.

Biggest misconception about the industry?

That it's a channel. It's a central marketing strategy.

The next big disruptor in affiliate will be...

Full funnel, cross-channel attribution measurement for every brand.

A marketing buzzword(s) you could do without? Affiliate channel. We're not a channel.

One thing you're optimistic about for 2026?

Innovation, driven by AI as both an efficiency tool across teams and businesses as well as an influencer of consumer purchasing journeys, will encourage all parties involved in affiliate and performance marketing to collaborate and devise new strategies for achieving measurable outcomes.

HOW IS YOUR NETWORK USING AI, AND HOW WILL IT AFFECT INDUSTRY COLLABORATION?



Adam Ross: Right now there are three key areas where I see it having an impact for us and our customers.

First, internal productivity. We're on a mission to enable all staff to enhance their working practices through smart use of relevant AI tools. Whether you're in HR or Engineering, AI can help you do your job better.

Second, the Awin platform. We previewed some major upgrades to the Awin platform earlier this year and those are coming for all customers in Q1 2026 with AI playing a pivotal role. Fundamentally, we see AI as a unique opportunity to simplify, speed up and scale the end-to-end experience of partnership value creation.

If our platform can achieve that, then it radically changes the nature of what being an 'affiliate manager' means. Are you spending your days manually searching partner directories, reviewing publisher applications, validating sales, uploading creative, etc? Or are you refining your overarching strategy based on the intelligent guidance that platform provides you with?

Third, is partner innovation. It feels like every wave of

innovation spurs on a new breed of affiliates to enter the channel. **The AI wave appears bigger than most and I think we're going to see a slew of exciting new partners emerge off the back of it.** I want Awin to be the go-to platform for these start-ups as they seek monetisation options.

We've set a precedent for this by pioneering the success of the tech partner space. It's been great to see companies like intent.ly thrive within the channel and push it further forward. I want to see us replicate that again and make it easy for these new companies to partner with brands and bring their innovations to commercial life.



Linda O'Connell: AI isn't just changing our technology - **it's fundamentally transforming how we collaborate across**

the entire affiliate ecosystem. We call this CJ 360-AI. Our approach centres on three pillars that work together to create value: AI that empowers consumers by eliminating purchase friction, that improves performance and optimisation, and that empowers our team to deliver more value.

From next-generation partner discovery, to the industry's best fraud detection and mitigation, to delivering predictive revenue modeling, we're incorporating AI everywhere to create unprecedented alignment across customers, brands, partners, and creators - **ensuring everyone gets better outcomes, better performance, and compensation for all the value they drive.**



Marthe Berlin: AI is already natively embedded across every stage of the partnership lifecycle and

built on an unmatched, scaled dataset. Our core focus is intelligence.

Our key deliverable is "ask impact": an AI-powered conversational interface designed to predict what's next, prescribe what to do, and tie every insight directly to measurable outcomes like incremental revenue and LTV. We are also working on a number of related AI-based projects, enabling partnerships with publishers that leverage their own AI-based solutions to tackle brand challenges,



and building out tools for our partners to measure and mitigate the impact of LLMs and AI in the customer journey.

Will it fundamentally change how affiliates, advertisers, and networks collaborate? Absolutely. **AI is set to redefine roles.** By handling the heavy lifting (the data analysis, the anomaly detection, and the recommendation engine) we are freeing up our human teams to focus on strategy, creativity, and relationship building. The partnership manager of the future will be a strategist, leveraging AI to maximise value rather than managing tasks.



Maura Smith: Partnerize is using AI right now to solve the fundamental measurement problem. We launched

VantagePoint™ powered by Konnecto's patent-pending journey-reconstruction intelligence to measure Clickless Affiliation™. This AI gives marketers behavioural clarity. AI will fundamentally change collaboration by shifting compensation from click-based negotiation to value-based attribution. This ensures partners are fairly compensated for their

influence, building a more transparent and trust-based ecosystem.



Matthias Stadelmeyer: We fully recognise the magnitude of change that AI brings and have made a conscious

decision not to simply add short-term AI features, but to rebuild our platform from the ground up for an AI-driven future. This transformation starts with data: we've restructured how we store, manage, and activate information by creating a central data lake that forms the backbone of our AI-ready infrastructure. On top of this, we're automating operational processes, evolving our platform into an AI-enabled ecosystem, and supporting the growth of AI-first publisher models.

AI will undoubtedly transform affiliate marketing - marking the start of a new era. It will enhance how advertisers, publishers, and networks collaborate by increasing efficiency and delivering faster, data-driven results. **What won't change, however, is the human element: trust, creativity, and relationships will remain the foundation of successful partnerships.**



QUICK-FIRE ROUND

ADAM ROSS

One word to describe affiliate marketing in 2025? Liminal.

Biggest misconception about the industry? That it's a channel ripe for complete destruction and irrelevance with the advent of AI.

The next big disruptor in affiliate will be... Complacency.

A marketing buzzword(s) you could do without? I defer to the [Wankernomics](#) guys on this topic. Maybe 'learnings' - it's lessons!

One thing you're optimistic about for 2026? Our new platform upgrade :)

HOW DO YOU SEE THE CHANNEL EVOLVING IN 2026 - WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE BRANDS & PARTNERS OVERLOOKING?



Adam Ross: I think the Card-Linked Offers (CLO) space is particularly interesting right now. CLO partners aren't

new, and they've already proven themselves as a high-impact way to connect with large, engaged audiences. But there are developments afoot that could materially expand their viability across Europe from 2026 onwards.

One of the reasons CLO has scaled so quickly in the UK is the presence of strong Open Banking standards. By contrast, Europe's lack of a single technical standard under PSD2 has arguably slowed wider adoption, making it harder for CLO partners to scale consistently across markets.

That's why the expected adoption of the new Payment Services Regulation (PSR) in 2026 is so meaningful. PSR introduces harmonised, enforceable rules around API quality, data access and real-time transaction visibility - exactly the conditions CLO providers need to operate smoothly across multiple EU markets. If the regulation lands as intended, it could unlock a significant new phase of growth in one of the world's largest consumer regions.



Linda O'Connell: The biggest opportunity is to **recognise that we're not a channel**. We need to leave siloed thinking

behind entirely.

We're the architects of a strategy to make every touchpoint we orchestrate deliver measurable business value, from search to CTV to social, display, email, the list goes on. What we represent is what should be - and what will be - a central marketing strategy of the future: performance-based marketing across every touchpoint and every journey stage.

The final moments before a conversion are only one aspect of what we bring to brands. The world is beginning to recognise this in a bigger way every day. Affiliate and partner marketing alone grew to £1.7b spend in 2024, with a 9% growth rate that was more than 11x the UK's overall economic growth rate. Brands are realising that affiliate partners aren't just conversion drivers.

This understanding is extending the impact of partnership programmes into retention, loyalty, higher AOV, and advocacy. The opportunity advertisers are overlooking is in viewing ourselves as a strategic

foundation, not as a tactic isolated in a single performance silo.

At CJ, we're enabling this by evolving to being the connective tissue that ties together all performance marketing touchpoints with accountability, transparency, and measurable business outcomes.

Another critical change in our ecosystem is the growing relevance of AI search listings and the evolving value of publisher citations to help drive awareness of a brand. We have been closely collaborating with a number of our advertisers and publishers to analyse their AI search listings and testing optimisation measures of success. 2026 will prove interesting with how this further evolves.



Marthe Berlin: The channel will **solidify its role as the undisputed engine of growth**.

Partnerships are no longer optional, they are the new standard for how modern brands reach consumers. The key evolution for 2026 is seeing



brands stop debating if they should invest in partnerships and start aggressively focusing on diversifying their partner mix for greater resilience and superior customer lifetime value, including all key actors within the ecosystem, from creators to customer advocates.

Many vendor brands are still overlooking the vast potential of partner-driven sales on major retailer sites or are simply unable to tap into this ecosystem in a scalable fashion. Our new solution is specifically designed to give vendor brands access to the high-impact creator and affiliate traffic that drives conversion on those crucial retail platforms.

We also expect strategic AI for creators to play a larger role going forward: While many creators are experimenting with AI for content creation, the real overlooked opportunity is applying AI to the business of partnerships itself and using intelligence to optimise affiliate link tracking, discover high-potential brand matches, and maximise performance outcomes.



Maura Smith: The channel will evolve to own influence-based attribution, **moving the conversation from**

“What did you click?” to “What influenced the buy?”

The industry is poised for a structural market expansion as the true, under-reported value of the channel becomes evident. The opportunity most advertisers and partners are overlooking is the immediate need to master Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO). **They must optimise their content to be cited by LLMs, securing their position in the new “front door to commerce”.**



Matthias Stadelmeyer: The affiliate channel is evolving at record speed, driven by constant innovation across

the publisher landscape. Publishers will continue to experiment with new models, formats, and technologies to find smarter and more authentic ways to connect with their audiences.

AI will remain the key innovation driver in 2026. Yet amid the AI momentum, what's often overlooked is the importance of focusing on meaningful partnerships

and technologies that truly add value. With new AI-powered tools emerging almost daily, success will depend on being deliberate - prioritising quality over quantity, and investing in fewer but more impactful partnerships.



QUICK-FIRE ROUND

MATTHIAS STADELMEYER

One word to describe affiliate marketing in 2025? Thriving.

Biggest misconception about the industry? That it's a niche channel rather than a core growth driver.

The next big disruptor in affiliate will be... AI-powered personalisation and predictive partnerships.

A marketing buzzword(s) you could do without? “Set and forget”.

One thing you're optimistic about for 2026? Our partners and the innovation they're driving.

WHAT ONE PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO BRANDS OR AFFILIATES PLANNING THEIR 2026 STRATEGIES?



Adam Ross: My one piece of advice would be, “**try something novel**”. **Affiliate marketing’s superpower**

is its entrepreneurial spirit. There are so many new, innovative technologies and business models that emerge via our channel. To only focus your attention on the established mainstays neglects what makes the industry so great. So, if you’re planning for 2026 now, do something different than what you did in 2025. Whether it’s a new partner type, new commercial model, new audience niche or campaign... make space to test it out and I can guarantee you’ll learn something about your business you didn’t know before.



Linda O’Connell: My advice comes down to three words: **Know your power. Believe in the power of what we**

can do at every stage in the buyer journey. Work relentlessly to help your senior leaders understand the transformative potential of partnership and performance-based strategies for every channel and touchpoint.

You’ll change some minds. Maybe not every mind in one year, but that’s okay. The story and value of our discipline should be a central element of every advertiser and publisher’s go-to-market program. Remember to utilise your network or agency to support you internally as you need. At CJ, we will often support our client contacts to help educate their leadership teams.

What excites me most is the continuous evolution of our industry ecosystem. For too long, we’ve been seen as the discount, last-click specialists, the conversion optimisers in the corner. But the convergence of AI, Connected Commerce, first-party data strategies, and cross-channel attribution is proving what we’ve always known: performance-based partnerships aren’t a tactic. Rather, they’re a strategy that should underpin all of modern Marketing.

We’re moving mindsets from seeing affiliate as a channel to a core strategy. That’s what excites me most: knowing that we’re not just participating in the future of marketing, we’re building it.



Marthe Berlin: My one piece of advice is to challenge the status quo, whether you’re a brand, an

agency, or a partner. **Stop building strategies on legacy models and fundamentally redefine how you allocate your spend on performance marketing.** Invest heavily in building scalable, diversified partnerships that deliver measurable LTV, not just last-click conversions. As a partner, challenge brands on the last-click payment model and highlight the value your community and audience can give them.

I am most excited by our collective commitment to helping our clients lead in this new era of partnership-driven growth. Our vision is bold: to be the global standard platform the entire Partnership Economy operates on. The opportunity to drive that future is incredibly motivating.



Maura Smith: A solid piece of advice is to stop planning based on the antiquated last-click model.

As one of our key clients stated, **moving beyond last-click is an "essential survival strategy"**. What excites us most is the structural market expansion that VantagePoint™ will enable. We are building the measurement infrastructure that will define the next era of digital commerce.



Matthias Stadelmeyer: What excites us most about the road ahead is the fusion of technology and

human creativity. **AI is freeing us to focus on what truly drives our channel: human relationships.** The technology will make partnerships smarter and faster, but trust, creativity and collaboration will always be the real differentiators.

SUMMARY



As 2025 closes out, one thing is clear: affiliate marketing's adaptability continues to be its greatest strength. Whether through smarter data use, deeper collaboration, or emerging AI capabilities, networks are redefining how performance is measured - and where growth will come from next. Here are the key takeaways from the interviews:

- **Pure 'last-click only' models are to become less commonplace:** The industry is actively moving away from the antiquated last-click model, which is no longer a viable foundation for investment, especially due to the zero-click conversion crisis caused by Generative AI.
- **Partnerships must drive customer Lifetime Value (LTV):** Brands should stop building strategies on legacy models and focus aggressively on diversifying their partner mix to deliver measurable LTV, not just one-and-done conversions.
- **AI demands a proactive, data-rich strategy:** AI is accelerating change across the ecosystem, and long-term advantage will belong to those companies who can feed their AI with the richest, most connected dataset across transactions, media, and identity.
- **Performance is shifting to full-journey influence:** Success is increasingly about securing upper-funnel influence where consumers browse and discover, rather than waiting for the final click, confirming that performance-based partnerships should underpin all of modern marketing.
- **The power of the channel is being recognised:** Affiliate marketing is transforming from a siloed channel to a core strategic foundation for making every marketing touchpoint deliver measurable business value.

We wish you a successful end to Q4, a wonderful festive break and a prosperous 2026!



ABOUT

intent.ly

intent.ly is an award-winning shopper journey optimisation platform empowering online retailers to engage and convert shoppers. Our performance-based tech targets all stages of the shopper journey - helping you turn more browsers into shoppers.

Personalised engagement tools – website overlays, in-page campaigns, email remarketing, brand partnerships, generative AI-powered product recommendations, and voucher code analytics – enable brands to achieve a range of ecommerce KPIs.

Whether your goal is to increase sales, boost AOVs, acquire new customers, manage inventory, or all of the above, we can help you achieve them. Our fully managed service means your campaigns are designed and constantly optimised depending on your goals. Our CRO experts handle everything, from set-up to optimisation, so you can focus on growth.

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