



An Open Letter to the UK Affiliate Industry

28th January 2026

Unlocking Growth Through Better Payment Practices

Over the past six months, a group of publishers, networks, agencies and platforms have worked together through the APMA Payments Project to tackle one of the most persistent and least glamorous challenges in our industry: affiliate payments.

Today, we're proud to share the Advertiser Payments Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct is designed specifically for advertisers.

It sets out clear, practical best practices for how affiliate payments should work, covering validation timelines, communication, transaction queries, bonuses, and budgets. It is a voluntary opt-in code for advertisers, deliberately achievable for the vast majority of advertisers using today's technology. At its heart, this is about helping advertisers run genuinely best-in-class affiliate programmes.

Why does this matter? Because the industry we're operating in today is holding the channel back.

Affiliate payments are often slow, opaque and inconsistent. Validation rules vary wildly, communication breaks down, and publishers spend time and resources chasing what they are already owed.

Most critically, restricted and unpredictable cash flow directly limits publisher growth. Our research shows that when payments are delayed, publishers invest less, not because they want to, but because they have to.

More than half of publishers report delaying investment and restricting campaign growth due to payment issues (APMA Publisher Survey, 2025). And when publishers can't grow, the entire industry loses out.

This isn't just a question of fairness. It's a problem that holds back revenue growth for advertisers.

Our survey data also shows that if payment issues were resolved, more than half of publishers would reinvest improved cash flow straight back into growth. That means

more traffic, more customers, and more revenue for advertisers, without changing strategy. A substantial amount of unrealised growth sits within the channel today, locked behind outdated or unclear payment practices.

Now imagine we work together to fix this.

Validation timelines become clear and visible. Payment processes become predictable and transparent. Best practice isn't negotiated one advertiser at a time, but is clearly defined and widely understood. Affiliate managers have the tools they need to champion better finance processes internally. And publishers can invest confidently, knowing when and how they'll be paid.

Our affiliate industry already delivers £19 billion in revenue for UK brands (APMA State of the Nation 2025), and around half of UK publishers driving that revenue say they could grow further with better cash flow.

That's the version of our industry this Code of Conduct is designed to help create.

So what happens next?

We're asking the industry to come together and support our initiative.

For advertisers, this is an opportunity to voluntarily adopt the Code of Conduct and to signal clearly that your affiliate programme is one publishers can trust and invest in. Even partial adoption is valuable; every step towards best practice strengthens your programme and your partnerships.

For networks, platforms and agencies, we're asking you to help promote this Code, educate advertisers on what good looks like, and explain why it matters. This Code gives you a shared framework to support those conversations and raise standards across your programmes.

For publishers, this Code is a business tool. It provides a clear, industry-backed reference point for commercial discussions, whether that's deciding where to invest, how to prioritise partners, or how to approach payment conversations.

This Code of Conduct isn't an instant fix or panacea for change. But it is a meaningful step towards a healthier, more scalable affiliate ecosystem; one where growth is unlocked, not constrained.

We believe this is an inflection point for the channel. And we invite you to be part of it.

Signed,

Julia Stent, *Strategy Advisor & APMA Board Advisor, on behalf of the APMA Payments Project*

The letter is also co-signed by the organisations listed below. They are committed to raising standards across the affiliate industry. By adding their names, they are signalling leadership, collaboration, and a shared belief in unlocking sustainable growth for the channel.

Adtraction / Affiliate Future

Awin

Broadband Genie

CJ

Easyfundraising

Everflow

financeAds

Finder

Genie Goals

Genie Shopping

impact.com

intent.ly Global, Ltd.

Kwanko

NucleusLinks

Optimise

Perkbox

Rakuten Advertising

Revlifter

Revvig

Reward Gateway - Edenred

Shopnomix

SitePlug

The Sole Supplier

TopCashback

Tradedoubler

Uswitch / RVU

VEVE

Webgains

Zilch

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