

Downloadable software publishers (DSPs) have been a topic discussed widely in affiliate marketing. Those in the industry often find varying opinions on this promotion type, so the PMA encourages both merchants and publishers to educate themselves about DSPs, as well as their benefits and risks.

What is a DSP, exactly?

A Downloadable Software Publisher (DSP) refers to a publisher whose business model includes the installation of a piece of software on a user's device. This software can provide competitive offers as users shop and help them earn cash back.

DSPs include:

- Toolbars
- Bookmarklets
- Browser plug-ins or extensions

What are the concerns about DSPs?

While DSPs can be beneficial for driving brand awareness and customer conversions, a common concern is that these transactions are not incremental, meaning that the brand likely would have received the conversion anyway even if they did not partner with the DSP. Another concern is that DSP partners are poaching conversions from partners further up the clickstream.

How should merchants approach working with DSPs in their affiliate programs?

The PMA has compiled a checklist of best practices for navigating DSP partnerships. You can find more detailed info and recommendations within our guide [DSP: A Quick Reference Guide](#) as well as our comparison of affiliate network DSP policies by visiting the links below.

- Evaluate DSPs as part of your affiliate screening process
- Set and share policies with DSPs around both approved and prohibited behaviors
- Understand how your affiliate network vets DSPs and any tracking capabilities that exist for managing these partnerships
- Test the downloadable software to recreate and understand the user's experience
- Routinely audit and monitor compliance
- Analyze DSP performance and incrementality against your goals
- Maintain open communication with your DSP partners

[Download the DSP Quick Reference Guide](#)

[View the DSP Policies Comparison](#)

The PMA recommends merchants and DSPs work together to set guidelines and compliance standards around downloadable software usage and behaviors.

With open communication and compliance monitoring, both sides can find value in these partnerships!