

A NEW-TO-THE-WORLD MARKETING TOOL for DESIGNER / LUXURY BRANDS and BOUTIQUE

Online shopping is the fastest growing retail apparel sales channel. Seven percent of all consumer purchases are now made online. However, far from being a threat to the future of retail stores, online and in-store channels complement each other producing more revenue for both. A new study from Forrester Research shows that consumers who shop both online and in-store for the brand they prefer spend 2 to 3 times more than those who only use one channel.

Many apparel brands have moved aggressively into online selling. Some own the whole channel; many more choose to compete with their retail channel partners. Other mass apparel brands that have placed high value on retail relationships have linked their sites by the best available means to enable high-volume retailers to fill orders. The designer/luxury market – characterized by strong brands, loyal customers, and independent boutiques who take individualized care of each client – have been least able to leverage retailer relationships to sell online...until now.

Arkdom Commerce Affiliate (ACA) is a patent-pending, new-to-the-world marketing tool that maximizes brand power and retail relationships to satisfy online customers. Design/luxury brand owners can immerse consumers in their brand on their website all the way to purchase at a boutique's website, assuring fulfillment of the authentic product selected and excellent client care. Through the power of ACA, designer / luxury brand owners and boutiques team up to levels not possible before to strengthen brand image, increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and maximize sales. Figure 1 shows how ACA works at a high level. More details are available on www.arkdom.com/arkdom/services1.html.



Figure 1 – How ACA Works

WHAT IS THE ACA BOUTIQUE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM?

Web Commerce Group (www.wc-group.com), a premier leader in delivering Internet-based applications as a managed service, designed the ACA Boutique Partnership Program specifically for boutiques that specialize in selling designer and luxury brands to discriminating clients. The program's main objective is to increase sales and client satisfaction by enabling boutiques to partner with brand owners at a new level in which a consumer visiting a designer / luxury brand owner's website can not only browse a full product line but also purchase products online directly from their boutique of choice.

HOW ACA ENABLES THE PROGRAM TO WORK

ACA works with designer/luxury brand owners and affiliated boutiques to seamlessly integrate their websites with ACA. Consumers can then browse all the brand's products. Upon making a product selection, clients state their preference of region/state/city, and are then presented with the boutiques in the area stocking the selected item.

Whether a boutique is already selling on the Internet or has no Internet presence, ACA can work with the boutique to make the branded products it stocks available through designer/luxury brand owners' websites. Specifically, ACA can provide the following services to boutiques:

- *Shopping cart service.* Any product selected by a consumer from a designer / luxury brand owner's website can be purchased on a boutique's website as long as it stocks the product. Even if the boutique does not have the capability to sell online, ACA can accept the customer's selection of quantity and product attribute such as color and size and add the product to a shopping cart on behalf of the boutique.
- *Order management service.* When a consumer completes an order, ACA can send it via email to the boutique. In turn, the boutique fulfills it and updates the status of order appropriately.
- *Inventory reporting service.* ACA provides a communication channel to each boutique to update its inventory information in ACA. ACA requires this information to assure shoppers of product availability and current pricing.
- *Fulfillment service.* If a boutique would like to outsource fulfillment service, ACA can package and ship orders on the boutique's behalf as an optional paid service.

WHY BOUTIQUES SHOULD PARTICIPATE

ACA allows designer / luxury brand owners and boutiques to partner by leveraging the Internet for a win-win proposition. Brand owners are able to showcase their full product line to shoppers preferring their brand, the customer is satisfied with the assurance of availability in a single web session ... and the boutique gets the sale and a client. ACA carries the traditional synergistic relationship between brand, boutique, and client into the online world by enabling the boutique to continue to provide the personal services required for long-term success. There are numerous benefits boutiques can enjoy by joining the ACA Boutique Partnership Program, namely:

- *Increased sales through a new channel.* Boutiques gain a new, invaluable sales channel by partnering with designer / luxury brand owners through ACA. New customers will find them, and existing clients will receive the value-added service of having online purchase capability that can result in a significant increase in sales.
- *Expanded client portfolio.* Because of the Internet, boutiques can gain clients who may have been difficult to capture because they are located in other states or other parts of the world. Boutiques will be able to expand their client portfolio of loyal clients beyond their local area.
- *Increased marketing visibility.* By associating with brand owners on their websites, boutiques can benefit from increased visibility with minimal investment.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

The ACA Boutique Partnership Program has the following participation requirements for boutiques:

- If the boutique is already selling online, they must provide hyperlinks through ACA's automated process to the individual products for the brand being served on a daily basis. These links take a consumer shopping on a brand owner's website directly to the boutique's product purchase page. If the boutique is not selling online, they must provide frequently updated availability and pricing information via available methods.
- Fulfill orders when received from ACA and update order status.
- Pay a 10% commission on pre-tax sales of any purchases made through ACA to Web Commerce Group as a fee for service.

HOW TO GET STARTED

To get started with the program or get answers to your questions, contact Mark Andrews at Web Commerce Group. He can be reached at 919-841-5992 ext 307 or mandrews@wc-group.com.

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