

## Specialty Designer Protects Its Brand While Expanding Loyal Customer Base

### Overview

Specialty designer of bags, accessories and a wide variety of products catering to passionate and loyal customers

### Solutions/Services

Synchronized Affiliate and Search Marketing programs

### Success

Synchronized Affiliate Marketing and Search Marketing programs become an integral part of the overall marketing mix, leading to increased conversion rates and diversified Web traffic

### Future

Expanded brand awareness and increased sales through new partnerships and continuous optimization of Search Marketing investments to find new customers and increase sales



“LinkShare worked with us closely to find the right Publishers and build relationships quickly while aligning our investments across Affiliate Marketing and Search Marketing channels.”

A premium luggage and handbag designer maintains brand integrity while increasing sales through synchronized services for Affiliate Marketing and Search Marketing.

Over the last 25 years, Vera Bradley has earned a reputation as a unique leader in bags, accessories and a wide variety of products that have a passionate and loyal customer base. Vera Bradley’s commitment to quality, exclusive designs and excellent customer service has endeared them to a set of customers that flock to the latest collections designed to be as fun as they are functional. Vera Bradley’s unique quilted cotton handbags and accessories combined smart product designs with distinctive and colorful fabrics becoming the “must have” accessory for millions of customers.

Prior to joining the LinkShare Network, Vera Bradley did not have an Affiliate Marketing program and performed their Search Marketing initiatives in-house. They originally viewed Affiliate Marketing as an inappropriate channel for their brand and feared showing up on “crazy sites” or discount marketplaces. Search Marketing efforts were limited to defending their brand name and trademarks.

### More Than Joining a Network – A True Partnership

What made LinkShare stand out from other networks was an attention to detail and an ability to address their needs and concerns. The LinkShare services team went the extra mile to truly understand Vera Bradley’s customers and developed a true partnership with the larger Vera Bradley marketing team. Vera Bradley also invited the LinkShare account team to experience the brand by travelling to Fort Wayne to visit their offices as well as their retail stores. By understanding Vera Bradley’s overall marketing strategy, the LinkShare services team was able to ensure that Vera Bradley’s Affiliate Marketing program was aligned with corporate marketing objectives and became a true extension of the larger marketing department.

Vera Bradley also made strategic decisions about how they wanted to leverage their Affiliate Marketing channel to move excess inventory via coupon and discount sites that were a fit with their brand image. The great working relationship between the Vera Bradley marketing team and the

LinkShare services team brought together the tools needed to launch the program with Publishers who are brand compliant, and would help move retiring product.

“We appreciated the attention to protecting our brand,” said Andy Carpenter, Vera Bradley’s Director of Web Strategy & Operations. “LinkShare was really able to change our Perception of Publishers and the control we would have over quality and compliance, while achieving our objective to move excess inventory.”

Another important factor in Vera Bradley’s decision to use LinkShare was the breadth and diversity of the LinkShare Network, especially the high volume of successful Publishers in the fashion and apparel category. “LinkShare really worked with us closely to find the right Publishers and build relationships quickly.”

LinkShare and Vera Bradley worked together to establish concrete sales goals for their Affiliate Marketing channel and paid close attention to Vera Bradley’s brand and their business model. LinkShare’s dedication to customer service gave Vera Bradley the confidence they needed to embrace Affiliate Marketing as an important sales channel. The results thus far have been impressive. “We’re seeing our Web traffic diversify significantly plus our conversion rates and average order value are all up beyond our expectations.”

### **Synchronized Affiliate and Search for Maximum Reach**

Vera Bradley also chose LinkShare to manage their Search Marketing investment. The Affiliate and Search channels are in lock-step in order to maximize reach and return on investment which is critical in reaching the goals of each program.

“It just made perfect sense,” said Carpenter. “We really wanted to make sure our Affiliate Marketing and Search Engine Marketing investments were synchronized to maximize our return on investment. We thought we could do SEM ourselves, yet we were surprised when overnight we saw a massive improvement after LinkShare started managing our SEM dollars. Many companies underestimate the time and skill required to manage SEM. You really have to be on top of it and continually monitor and make refinements. We’re thrilled with the results and we exceeded our revenue and ROI goals.”

The strategy paid off quickly as the Vera Bradley program grew faster in the number of partnerships and faster in revenue when compared to other recently launched Advertisers in the LinkShare Network. Using LinkShare Affiliate Marketing and Search Marketing services also enabled Vera Bradley to synchronize their sales promotions through both channels. LinkShare reporting provides timely insights to identify actionable trends and advanced technologies such as LinkShare Merchandiser and LinkShare Flex Links, which have exceeded conversion rate expectations.

#### **Forward Thinking**

Since launching with LinkShare in August 2008, the Vera Bradley Affiliate and Search Marketing programs have increased sales, diversified Web traffic and maintained the integrity of their brand while expanding their passionate and loyal following. Vera Bradley is a prime example of a forward thinking retailer that is leveraging the strength of the LinkShare Network to reach and exceed their goals.

**Discover what LinkShare can do for your business at [www.linkshare.com](http://www.linkshare.com) or call us at 646.943.8200 or toll-free in the US at 800.875.5465, outside the U.S call +1 646-943-8300**