

# How Starshipit's automation leap improved referrals by **239% better performance**



# Situation

## Manual tracking couldn't keep up with success

### A manual struggle: One person, hundreds of referrals, zero automation

During a period of explosive growth in 2020-2021, Starshipit's partnerships team faced an increasing workload. Their Head of Partnerships was trying to keep up. Every single referral required him to:

- Manually check which links were used in the old tracking system
- Cross-reference each lead in their CRM to verify they'd signed up
- Log in repeatedly to confirm that customers have stayed for three months
- Coordinate with finance to process individual PayPal payments

The workload became harder to sustain on the side of growth opportunities. Manual processes had created a clear need for a scalable solution.

### The success paradox: Growth accelerated the strain

Ironically, Starshipit's success exacerbated the problem. The more partnerships grew, the faster the system collapsed.



The math was straightforward: During the early 2020s boom, referrals increased significantly.

## Situation (*cont.*)

### Manual tracking couldn't keep up with success

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But the partnerships team didn't. One person handling 50 referrals per month could (barely) keep up. That same person handling exponentially more referrals?

**Impossible.**

Tedious processes created bottlenecks that prevented swift reward delivery. What's worse, the team couldn't simply "work harder" to their way out. Manual processes don't scale. Every new referral added to the backlog, creating a doom loop: more success → more roadblocks → slower referral.

### Market expansion slowed down

In new markets where [Starshipit](#) had zero brand recognition, word-of-mouth from trusted partners was essential. A retailer in Denver wasn't going to try an unknown Kiwi logistics platform based on ads alone.

**But a referral from their web developer or a peer retailer? That carried weight.**

The problem: If early partners in uncharted territories experienced delayed payments and tracking issues, they'd risk defecting to established competitors. The partnerships team was already underwater managing local referrals.

**Adding global partners — across different time zones, with higher expectations — would push them past the tipping point.**

**The choice was clear: Fix the referral program, or struggle with expansion.**

# About

## Starshipit

When retailers struggled with the manual chaos of printing shipping labels across multiple platforms, founder George Plummer built [Starshipit](#) to solve it. Today, the Australasia-based logistics platform automates shipping for retailers like HiSmile, MESHKI, Lorna Jane, Princess Polly, Culture Kings and more — from one-hour city deliveries to international logistics.

This automation saves retailers a substantial amount of time and cost. But during the early 2020s, while Starshipit's business boomed, its [referral program](#) struggled to keep up. Manual tracking led to a day per work week spent on sorting out referral payouts — hindering effective growth and expansion into new territories.



## Solution

### Two-month onboarding delivered enterprise-grade customization

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With the help of the impact.com onboarding team, Starshipit strategically implemented impact.com/advocate to better manage both customer and partner referrals.

Starshipit opted for additional platform design customization to match its brand, collaborating with [impact.com](https://www.impact.com)'s design team to customize program emails and the referral dashboard. Onboarding managers at impact.com provided clear technical guidance and fast turnaround, responding to queries within 24 hours or less.

### HubSpot integration automated all referral tracking and payments

Starshipit leveraged impact.com/advocate's native HubSpot integration. When a referral link was used, HubSpot automatically flagged the lead as referral-sourced. This allowed the team to track its progress through the sales funnel and automatically:

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*“When our sales team updates customer data in HubSpot, the integration automatically tells Advocate the lead's AOV and adjusts the commission. This ability to continuously sync and reward referrers appropriately establishes trust with our partners.”*

**Jennifer Caust**  
Digital Marketing Lead,  
Starshipit



## Solution (*cont.*)

### Two-month onboarding delivered enterprise-grade customization

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- Adjust the commission payout to ensure referrers were accurately rewarded based on each customer's true value.
- Trigger payments only after two months of verified activity.
- Cancel if a customer stopped paying, preventing churn-related losses or fraud.

This continuous data exchange between Advocate and HubSpot provided deeper insight into referral performance, improved payout accuracy, and reinforced partner trust.

### Tiered rewards incentivized higher-value referrals

Starshipit launched a three-tier reward system. Referrers can earn \$100, \$200, or \$500 with the goal of incentivizing higher-value, mid-market/enterprise plans. VIP partners can receive a higher commission to nurture key relationships.



## Solution (cont.)

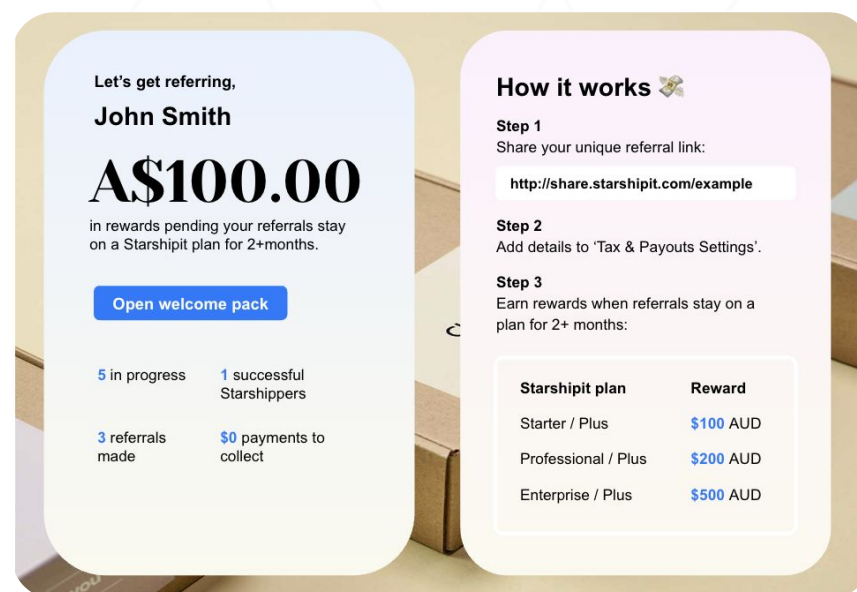
### Two-month onboarding delivered enterprise-grade customization

Each referred customer also receives two months of Starshipit free, creating a shared incentive for both parties. Using impact.com/advocate, the team personalized communications for different audiences, tailoring messaging to fit each segment's language and motivation.

### Two-step signup removed the 'time-poor' barrier

The company used impact.com/advocate to simplify and elevate the referral experience. The platform's two-step sign-up process aligned with Starshipit's standard for user-friendly software and removed a major blocker for busy customers. Personalized referral dashboards further boosted engagement by showing each user their live pipeline of rewards, all customized to align with Starshipit's own brand guidelines.

By surfacing potential earnings and real-time progress, Advocate helped Starshipit turn a once-complex process into a rewarding and interactive experience.



# Starshipit

*“Within our space, there's a wide range of people who could refer Starshipit — from retailers to web agencies to couriers. We can send personalized emails from Advocate to each audience. When people sign up, they tell us their role, and their journey gets personalized. It's about always talking their language.”*



**Jennifer Caust**

Digital Marketing Lead,  
Starshipit



# Outcome

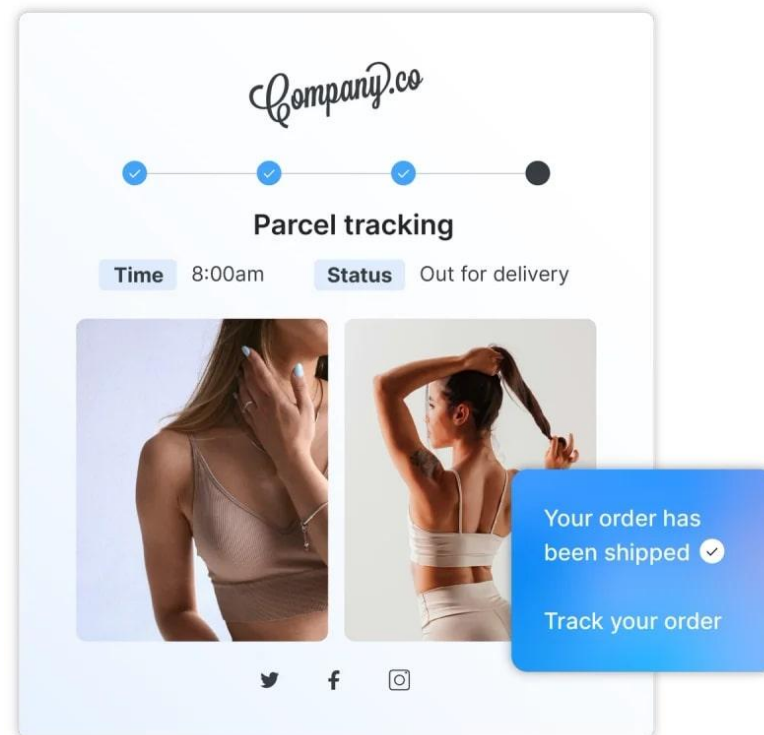
Starshipit's referral program delivered measurable results across efficiency, cost, and growth

## Word-of-mouth unlocked new markets with low brand awareness

The [referral program](#) became central to Starshipit's go-to-market entry strategy. In regions where the brand had no recognition, word-of-mouth from trusted partners instantly built credibility that paid advertising couldn't match.

By offering enhanced incentives to partners in key growth territories, Starshipit accelerated relationship-building in a market where competitors had an incumbent advantage.

The automated system allowed the small partnerships team to manage cross-border referrals without geographic scaling challenges.



## Outcome (*cont.*)

Starshipit's referral program delivered measurable results across efficiency, cost, and growth

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Within six months of launch, the program was on track to deliver positive ROI — validating referrals as a cost-effective expansion strategy.

### **Partners became advocates and internal competitors**

Clear attribution and transparent reward tracking transformed partner behavior. With personalized dashboards showing their "pipeline" of potential earnings (e.g., "\$800 in rewards pending"), partners actively followed up with referred customers to help close deals.

The frictionless two-step signup process — with financial paperwork deferred until after successful referrals — removed the "time-poor" barrier that had blocked participation. Referral links have transitioned from taking days or weeks to generate to being instantly available.

### **Automation freed strategic capacity**

The partnerships team reclaimed roughly one full day per week — a 20% workload reduction — by eliminating manual tracking, verification, and payment processing.

This freed capacity allowed the team to focus on high-value activities: deepening relationships with key partners, attending industry events, and planning market expansion — rather than administrative tasks like PayPal transfers and spreadsheet reconciliation.

The combination of time savings and program performance enabled Starshipit to scale referrals without increasing headcount, and ultimately helped regain partner trust.

## Outcome (cont.)

Starshipit's referral program delivered measurable results across efficiency, cost, and growth

### The results:

#### Financial performance

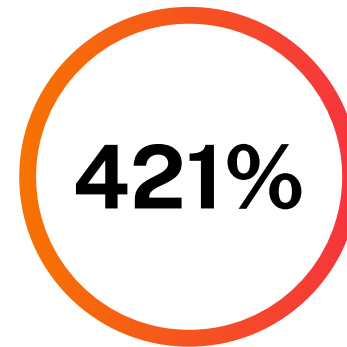
- 239% better CPA performance per dollar spent on rewards vs. average ad spend
- 421% ROI when comparing projected reward payments to ARR pipeline value

#### Program efficiency

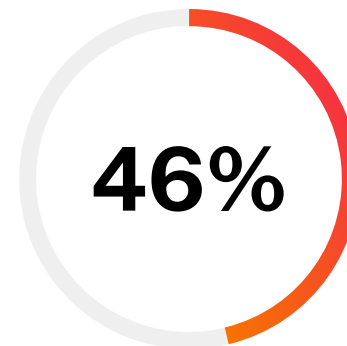
- 31.5% referral-to-conversion rate
- 46% of referrals from mid-market or enterprise retailers
- 20% workload reduction (8 hours per week) for partnerships team

#### Market expansion

- Positive ROI projected within 6 months of expansion



ROI when  
comparing  
projected reward  
payments to ARR  
pipeline value



of referrals from  
mid-market or  
enterprise  
retailers