


# Network **VS** SaaS

## How to choose the best affiliate management player

### Choosing the right affiliate partnership management solution for your brand is a big decision. That's why a little coaching can help.

Let's get on the court, rally the ball a little, and find out which player, network or SaaS, will help you "serve" your partnerships the most.

#### Discovery and recruitment

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Easy access to partners</b></p> <p>Many networks allow you to work with both in-network partners and your own out-of-network partners. However, a few networks limit you to working with in-network partners only. It requires the network's approval to work with a new partner (which puts the partner on display for competitors to see).</p>		<p><b>Unlimited reach</b></p> <p>SaaS solutions allow you to work with partners in the platform's marketplace and directly with your own partners.</p>
<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>Networks give you easy access to the typical coupon and deal sites found in affiliate marketing. However, some networks may have limited tools to make tailored partner recommendations, which can make it harder to scale effectively.</i></p>		

#### Partnerships management

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Network managed</b></p> <p>The network facilitates the partnership and often acts as an intermediary between you and your partners. However, most networks still allow you to communicate directly with your partners.</p>		<p><b>Direct control</b></p> <p>One-to-one partner relationships allow you to freely communicate with partners and make the best decisions for your program.</p>
		<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>Network services teams are often paid a percentage of your overall spend. This can lead networks to optimize for volume at the cost of incrementality or efficiency.</i></p>

#### Technology flexibility

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Basic options</b></p> <p>Some networks have only basic options for your contract terms, making it harder to create customized payouts aligned with value. In addition, some networks mandate a change notice period — meaning you have to wait a certain number of days before making updates to your contract terms.</p>		<p><b>Flexibility and innovation</b></p> <p>SaaS platforms like <b>impact.com</b> have innovative features such as flexible dynamic commissioning capabilities, giving you greater control over your spend by helping you more closely align commission payouts with the value each partner provides.</p>
<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>To maximize efficiency, you need to have complete flexibility in how you pay your partners. This not only aligns payouts with the value a partner is providing, but can also help lower overall program costs.</i></p>		

#### Reporting

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Standard reporting</b></p> <p>Networks give you access to standard reporting with some custom reporting, but you may have to rely on a network account manager to pull it for you.</p>		<p><b>Fully customizable</b></p> <p>Granular, customizable reporting that you can access in real-time allows you to easily demonstrate the value of your channel internally and view full customer journey insights.</p>
		<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>When it's difficult to pull detailed reporting in real-time, it limits your efficiency. SaaS solutions provide in-depth reporting suites right out of the box, giving you full transparency into your data.</i></p>

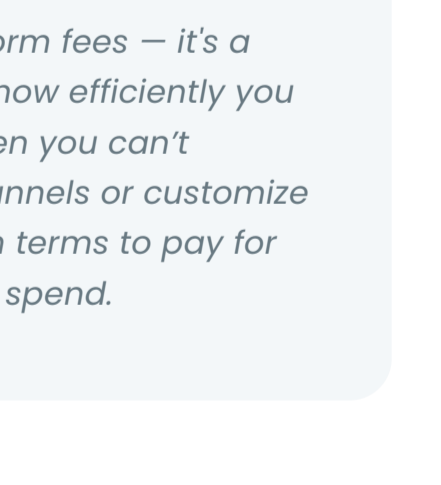
#### Platform fees

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Override fee</b></p> <p>Pay an override fee on either the commission paid to the affiliate or the revenue generated. Service fees for account management are sometimes baked into the override fee and sometimes separated out.</p>		<p><b>SaaS licensing fee</b></p> <p>Pay a software license fee that scales efficiently as your program grows.</p>
<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>Networks generally charge monthly minimum fees, meaning that brands have to pay a certain fee even if their program volume falls below the threshold. Small brands with volumes far too low to reach that minimum threshold can often find themselves overpaying on a network.</i></p>		

#### Program cost

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Channel silo</b></p> <p>Some networks don't offer the ability to dedupe against other channels or have strict rules about when you're allowed to dedupe, which leads to low-value conversions and double payment.</p>		<p><b>Efficiency of spend</b></p> <p>With a SaaS platform, you can dedupe against other paid marketing channels, such as paid search, ensuring that you don't pay twice for the same conversion.</p>
		<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>Cost isn't just about platform fees — it's a combination of fees plus how efficiently you can run the program. When you can't dedupe against other channels or customize your contract commission terms to pay for value, it prohibits efficient spend.</i></p>

#### Services

NETWORK	<b>VS</b>	SAAS SOLUTION
<p><b>Baked-in management</b></p> <p>With a network, you can use a third-party agency or an account management team from the network.</p>		<p><b>Bespoke options</b></p> <p>You have the flexibility to choose in-house management, a third-party agency, or platform managed services.</p>
<p><b>What's the score?</b></p> <p><i>Because networks use decades-old technology platforms, humans need to step in to do many of the activities that the product can't. The network services that brands pay for are often actually just the application of manual processes to make up for neglected product development.</i></p>		

### Who's got game — networks or SaaS platforms?

Game, set, match: SaaS solutions win for brands that want full control over their partnerships program.

#### SaaS platforms:

- Use innovative technology to give you flexibility and control
- Provide you with robust custom reporting to give you full visibility into your data
- Efficiently scale pricing as you grow

**Coach's advice:** Networks can be a good option for brands that have limited resources and want the network's help managing a program. However, a lack of technological innovation and high costs may limit your program's efficiency.

Go for Grand Slam partnerships — contact a growth technologist at [grow@impact.com](mailto:grow@impact.com).

