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CMS Made Simple - Hosting Partners Policy

Introduction

It is in the best interest of the CMS Made Simple team to promote the product and to encourage its use. This means that we encourage hosting providers to support CMSMS and to encourage their customers to use CMSMS. This leads to a symbiotic relationship between the hosting partner and CMSMS. CMSMS gets increased visibility and use, and the hosting partner receives increased business of a targeted nature through extensive co-marketing campaigns.

This document attempts to describe why CMSMS wishes to involve partners, and what we hope to give, and to gain from a partnership relationship. It also attempts to answer some of the most common 'what if' questions that potential partners will have. This document is worded in friendly terms, and is not in any way a legal contract. So read on!

We Take Partnership Seriously

To the CMSMS Dev team Partnerships are not merely revenue generation streams. We undertake a partnership, and a two-way communication that allows both parties to better our products for the targeted user base, to co-market and increase the visibility of our brands, and to therefore increase our business.

Hosting partners will have opportunities to sponsor and participate in CMSMS events when they occur, and the CMSMS Dev team will endeavor to co-market our various partners via numerous communication mechanisms, and reviews. We will stand behind our partners both in direct recommendations to our user base, and by working with our partners to fix any technical difficulties and to adjust our products in areas that the partners notice may need improvement.

The CMSMS Dev team will market our partners as seriously as we market ourselves, and we want communication from our partners to better our business. As well, we will work with our partners to resolve technical difficulties, discover new marketing opportunities, and improve products on both sides of the relationship.

We Want The Few, The Proud, The Best!

Managing partnerships requires the expenditure of valuable limited resources by both parties (the CMSMS Dev team, and by the partner). Additionally, in order to maximize the value to be extracted from the partnership, that partnership should have a certain level of exclusivity associated with it (if anybody can become a partner, it's value is diminished). To recognize these facts, the CMSMS Dev team will limit the number of partnerships to a number that we feel we can handle given limited resources, and still maintains a relationship with a feeling of exclusivity and status. As well, each potential hosting partner will go through a vetting process so that we ensure that we are dealing with reputable, long standing, quality organizations. We expect that you will have done the same.

Small Amounts Available, Going Fast!

The CMSMS Dev team has decided that the hosting partner slots will be limited by geographic region. We feel that this type of arrangement best suits the needs of the partners we have talked to to date, and of our user base. The amount of slots in each region, and the regions themselves will be reviewed from time to time based on demand and our availability to manage them. The numbers below indicate the number of hosting partner slots per geographic area:

AREA	slots	AREA	slots
North America	5	Asia	3
South America	5	Africa	1
Europe*	15	Australia	3
Russia / CIS	5		

* Slots in Europe will be spread throughout the entire continent. This means we will accept 1 hosting company per country.

What's in it for You?

A) In-depth Review

Based on the information gathered during the application stuff, members of the CMSMS Dev team will write an in-depth review of our new partner. The review will be posted on our websites (you can post it on yours too), and we'll push it with a helluva marketing effort. Our users are looking for great hosts that will work with their websites, our in-depth review will pull a great deal of weight, and will probably result in noticeable traffic improvements.

If there is further opportunity to better market our partnership for specific purposes, or to solve specific issues related to our users or our software, we would love to write and market further articles in a similar fashion, we're always open to ideas about this stuff.

B) Social Media Campaign(s)

We want the world to know that you are working with us! We market our partners using our various social media channels and mailing lists on occasion, and we'll make sure we announce it big when you first come on board.

C) A Special Place in our Forum

Because communication with our partners is important, your organization will have a forum account with access to a forum board exclusively for our hosting partners. This provides a way for the valued hosting partners to communicate with each other, view what is going on, and to let us know what is happening. If there are problems, this is one way you can help us, and we can help you in return.

D) One person to talk to.

Nobody likes to be a number, and business relationships often work better when you can get a personal relationship working with somebody. If the forum isn't your 'cup of tea' you will have a personal contact on the CMSMS Dev team to which you can communicate your ideas and concerns. If that person isn't available, we'll let you know of an alternate, so that nobody ever gets ignored.

E) A nice listing on our Partners Page

As one of our valued partners, we're going to let the world know. We'll put an appropriate advertisement of your organization on our hosting partners page. We probably will design various filtering capabilities in this page for our community members to find the appropriate partner in their area, and we'll probably add some tracking stuff in there to gather some all important statistics.

F) Rotating Banner Ads

We have numerous websites, and numerous pages on those websites, and an active forum community, so we will use that to market our partners on there wherever reasonable. Without getting to loud about the issue we'll include your banner advertisement on our rotating banner mechanism. This banner mechanism is designed to give fair returns to all of our partners, so we will rotate other partners ads in the same space, and may optimize it by the where the visitor is coming from or preferred language or something like that.

G) Use Our Trademarks in Your Marketing

As a valued member of our hosting partner program you will have the ability to use the term "Approved CMSMS Hosting Partner" in your marketing campaigns, along with the ability to use our logos or specially designed graphics in your websites, and marketing campaigns.

You CAN do More!

H) Put Your Banner on our Newsletter

We have mailing lists with more than 15000 members. That's a valuable communications tool that we use to inform our community of various important events, neat things they can do with CMSMS, or sometimes just

'what's happening'. We may contact you, or you may want to contact us about opportunities for advertising in these newsletters. This extra opportunity is only available to our valued partners.

l) Sponsor a Live Event

Even this über-geek community has to meet in person from time to time. Online chat 'just doesn't do it' all the time. So we occasionally host what we call a 'geekmoot' where we have a meeting of real live people. You as a great partner may want to inquire about sponsoring our coffee breaks, a special discussion or course, some graft etc. And we'd love to hear how we can make these meetings bigger and better.

The Ugly Stuff: What we want from you.

a) One click installs

Our users are professional web developers, but that doesn't mean that they should have to jump through more hoops when installing CMSMS than when installing "the cool package of the month". So we're asking that you have the latest stable version of CMSMS available via the the same install process as the other guys. If you're using an up-to-date version of Softactulous, CMSMS may already be there.

b) Keep up with us!

Our users want the latest and greatest versions of CMSMS that makes their lives easier, solves their problems, and makes their morning coffee. If you're a hosting partner, your customers are going to want that too. We need you to keep on top of this and make the latest stable version of CMSMS available via the "One Click Install" mechanism as soon as possible after a new release is out.

We make new feature releases of CMSMS available on a semi-frequent basis (a few times per year). But if there are bug fixes or security releases there may be a few more updates. We'll do our best to keep our partners informed of what is happening.

c) Test Drive

We don't buy a car just by looking at the color and kicking the tires, it's an involved process, and so is accepting a hosting partner. We want to make sure our users will have a good experience with our partners. So we need you to give us access to a test account. We use this test account to do our initial evaluation, some upgrade tests, etc. We may also use it for troubleshooting, or maybe capturing a few screencasts for marketing purposes. But rest assured, we will not host a CMSMS website or any other commercial type website there, it's only for test drives.

d) Someone to Talk to

Like you, we hate waiting on hold to get the 'right department', and because personal relationships are the way 'business is done' you give us a real persons name, and contact information so that we can make a phone call or drop an email to a 'real person', and we can get things done if there are issues, questions, or we have a new business opportunity to shoot by you.

e) The Technical Stuff

We will need some approved copies of text and graphics for your ads, given some minor constraints (such as size)... and the right URLs to link to for the various links. You probably have this stuff already, so don't sweat too much about it.

f) That Money Thing

Yep, the ugly part. To become a hosting partner with CMSMS there is some money involved. This is because we undertake a lot of effort with our hosting partner, and there is a lot of value in partnering with CMSMS. We're fairly flexible about it. Here is our current price structure:

- \$350USD Each month (12 month commitment)
- \$1000USD Each quarter ...Save \$200 for the year.
- \$3800USD Each Year ... Save \$450 for the year
- Affiliate Program Membership (Minimum \$135 per sale)*

*If you already have an affiliate program setup, it may be possible to use that in lieu of a flat fee. We're open to discussion, so talk to us.

Additionally, the CMSMS Dev team will do research to review the public standing of the proposed hosting partner, to indicate whether they have a positive public standing amongst their customers, and peers. This will include reviews of customer support, performance, business longevity, and business practices.

The Application Procedure

Step 1 – Drop us a Line

Send an e-mail to partners@cmsmadesimple.org introducing yourself, and your organization. In that e-mail please tell us as much information as you can think of, including which partner 'slot' you wish to be listed in. We'll then get back to you to setup what comes next.

Step 2 – We'll take a look

Our team will do some research on your company... surf your website, do some googling, see how long you've been around, how your peers and customers feel about you, reviews and other such things. This is because we feel that if we wouldn't recommend somebody to a close friend, then we shouldn't recommend them to our users either. We call this the 'Sniff Test'.

Step 3 – Test Drive

Here you supply us with information for a test account. We'll take the system on a test drive, do some test installs, or upgrades... copy a few 'known challenging' websites there and see if we can get them to work, etc. This information, and how your organization reacts to our questions will be used to write the review article if everything works out.

Step 3 – The Ball Gets Rolling

Here where things get busy. We arrange payment details and start working with you on graphics and link addresses for the banner ads. We also start writing the initial review article etc. We'll give your designated representative access to the restricted forum, and things get rolling. We'll make sure that everybody is in the loop during these early days to make sure everything goes smoothly.

How long does it last?

An approved membership in the hosting partner program is valid for one year from the date of the initial blog article posting. This allows other partners to apply for a slot in that geographical area, and ensures a level of competition. The CMSMS Dev team may choose to automatically renew the partnership agreement if slots for the applicable geographic area are vacant.

What if I want out?

So you're no longer doing hosting now, you're producing beer cozies, or you think you've found greener pastures, or whatever the reason you've decided you need to cease partnership with CMSMS. We'll be sorry to see you go, but that's okay, stuff happens from time to time. Here's what we'll do:

- Refund your money
If you've paid annually, subject to a 30% service fee and pro-rated for the months that you have enjoyed partnership, we'll refund the balance.
- Remove your ads
- Edit your membership in the 'Partners' Forum.
- Keep your blog post up, unless you really want us to take it down.
- We would also ask that you remove any CMSMS logos and images from your websites, and that you conform with the standard Trademark Policy that is posted the CMSMS Website.

What If There is a Problem?

If we have a few concerns from members of our community, or we discover some reason that causes us to have concern about our continued partnership, or there's some kind of financial problem then something has to be done.

But because we value our partnerships, and put significant effort into them, we don't just drop partners like hot potatoes. We'll work with you and give all reasonable effort to get these problems resolved. That's why we have a personal contact, and so do you. These problems can usually be worked out just by spending a bit of time on the issue. And our users like to hear about that too.

If, in the end, things just aren't going to work the CMSMS Dev team may chose to drop your partnership. In which case, we may need to take the same steps that are listed above, and possibly write some articles and messages to our community professionally explaining why the partnership was dropped. We hope never to do this.

That's All Folks

That's it... it's pretty simple. I hope we've explained what is involved in becoming a hosting partner, and why you should do it. Above all, if you have any questions about this stuff, don't hesitate to drop us a line at partners@cmsmadesimple.org.