

Channel Partner Marketing: How to Support Partners and Increase Your Revenues

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Co-Marketing Programs Provide Leverage

When you and your partners work together, you can cover more territory, expand more quickly and increase the size of your customer base. In many ways, a strong co-marketing program is like putting your in-house marketing program on steroids. For the best results:

- **Identify Channel Partners' Expertise**

Identify your channel partners' areas of expertise. How do they complement your own strengths? What domain expertise do your partners bring to the table

to help you reach new vertical markets? Are they strategically located in a geographic region you aren't able to cover?

- **Collaborate and Agree on Joint Campaigns**

Once you identify your individual strengths, you need to agree on a series of joint marketing campaigns. Perhaps you'll decide to work a tradeshow together. Maybe you opt to use your in-house web team to create landing pages for your channel partners. You might decide to co-author whitepapers, blogs and articles. Or you can promote your channel partners through social media marketing.

- **Qualify and Nurture Leads**

Instead of simply passing leads along to your channel partners, manage your co-marketing lead generation with the same care and attention you give to your in-house lead programs. Nurture and qualify leads so you can pass along solid prospects with the greatest propensity to buy.

The Three Essential Roles for Telemarketing

Telemarketing is one of the most effective tools for supporting your existing partners with qualified leads, nurturing your partner relationships and even helping you to attract the best new partners.

1. Lead Nurturing and Qualification

While you can use autoresponders to follow up with leads via email, the communication is typically one-direction. It's harder to qualify leads via email and virtually impossible to initiate a two-way dialogue.

Using professional telemarketers, however, you can design a follow-up program to collect more information about leads, gauge prospects' interest and discuss their specific needs. Make sure agents are well versed in your products and services and have the skills necessary to:

- Get past gatekeepers.
- Generate interest among decision-makers.
- Ask penetrating questions that will engage decision makers in discussion.

- Collect additional information that can help channel partners close the deal.
- Set appointments, thus taking some of the administrative burden off your partners and freeing them up to focus on sales.

Your ability to support your channel partners with a strong lead generation program adds to the bottom line of your business as well as that of the partner companies. Also, it enhances your reputation as a company with which others want to partner.

2. **Nurture Your Partner Relationships**

Although your channel partners have their own businesses, you should think of them as extended members of your corporate family. As such, you need to build and grow these relationships. You can nurture your channel partners through telemarketing to:

- Keep partners informed of new product announcements, upcoming events and corporate activities.
- Maintain open lines of communication that make your partners feel as though they are part of the business and that their efforts matter.
- Identify potential problems or conflicts within the channel.
- Invite partners to contribute ideas and share successes.

In addition to telemarketing, you can support your partners with online training, webinars and certification programs. Your goal should be to make *all* your partners as successful as possible.

3. **Expand Your Channel Partner Program**

As your channel partner program grows, analyze the results. Who are your best partners? Where are your weaknesses? Use this insight to identify potential partners that can expand on your success and to strengthen your weak spots.

Use telemarketing to recruit new partners like any new prospect. Reach out to potential partners to:

- Gauge their interest.

- Learn more about their strengths and the value they can bring to your company.
- Invite them to attend a new partner event.
- Set appointments between your executives and their decision makers.

The value-add you can bring to your channel partners in the form of collaborative co-marketing, lead generation and nurturing, training and communication enables your partners to do their jobs better, increases your company's revenue and even grows the size and strength of your partner program. Everyone wins.

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