
The Most Successful Route to the SMB Market

Plus: What SMB Partners are
Asking for and How IT Vendors
are Responding



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Overview

Today's economy has presented IT vendors with many challenges, including the need to increase sales performance in their SMB channel.

Many IT vendors have revised their SMB go-to-market strategies to more effectively penetrate and achieve market leadership through their SMB channel partners.

The Most Successful Route to the SMB Market report provides a view of the changes taking place within the SMB channel and provides a mix of strategic and tactical recommendations that address many categories including:

- New successful tactics and best practices to identify and recruit a great set of new quality SMB partners that will make the required commitments to drive sales.
 - A close look at what the successful SMB partners are asking for and how IT vendors are responding to their needs in a cost effective manner.
 - Proven strategies and tactics that place SMB partners on a fast track to accelerate sales.
 - How to achieve dramatic new levels of productivity and sales from your inactive base of SMB partners. This is major untapped revenue source.
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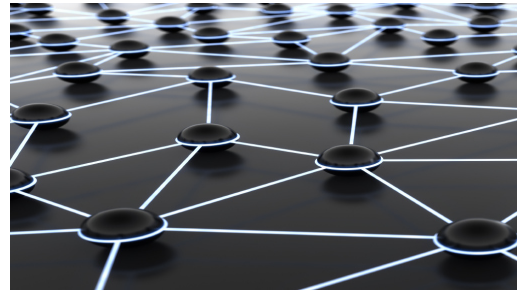
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The Most Successful Route to the SMB Market



Partners that primarily focus on selling to the SMB market are critically important for IT vendors to reach the SMB market in a cost efficient manner.

Note: SMB partners are defined as value-added resellers, solution providers, system integrators, independent software vendors and dealers.

Small and medium businesses represent an important and growing market for many IT product and services vendors. As revenue and margins slow or stagnate within the enterprise client market, the SMB market represents many vendors' best opportunity for new growth.

Although SMB customers' individual budgets are smaller than those of larger enterprises, these customers understand that IT is critical to their business in order to keep them competitive and operating efficiently.

Less than 30% of SMB businesses have dedicated IT staff, while the rest rely upon their relationship with their local SMB partner. A large percentage of SMB businesses have developed long term relationships with their local SMB partner.

Small businesses seek capabilities from their SMB partners that go beyond their product knowledge and support services. These small business owners look to build relationships with local partners that have empathy for the challenges of small businesses, understand their market and business model and of course, provide the ability to advise, service and support all of their IT needs.

The SMB partners typically are also small organizations that have been in business for several years. Competent SMB partners are capable of providing many valuable services including advising the small business owners on how to get the most out of their IT investments, educate them on how new technology solutions can help them achieve their immediate and long term goals and provide complete solutions that include training and other services.

With the partner's assistance, SMB owners can make knowledgeable decisions when purchasing new innovative solutions and technology. The SMB partners assist the company to quickly adjust by implementing the new solutions, training the company's staff and providing on-going support and services.

The most successful SMB partners work hard at continually acquiring new customers in their local geography and developing trusted advisor status that leads to establishing long term business relationships.

Best Practices: Identifying and Recruiting the Right SMB Partners

Avoid the Pitfalls... New Tactics that Deliver Qualified Partners

If partner recruitment is a near term requirement, the following new tactics should be considered for your next partner recruitment campaign.

Over the past 4-5 years, most IT vendors have launched recruitment campaigns to attract SMB partners. Every vendor offers compelling reasons to entice partners to enroll in their partner programs - but are they the right partners?



"We recruited over 5,000 new SMB partners but after 1 year only 15% are selling our products"

The success of a recruitment campaign has typically been measured on the number of new partners recruited. Many vendors outsource recruitment to their distributors or an external organization that has some level of partner recruitment experience.

The vendors provide descriptions of the partners required and the number of new partners needed by geography. The organization chosen to implement the program typically focuses on achieving the desired number of new recruits and has no way to know or measure if they have recruited the right partners. The right partners are partners that align to the vendors' requirements and will commit to engage and sell the vendors' products and services.

Changing the Recruitment Metrics

Practically any distributor or outsourcing company can deliver hundreds or thousands of new partners. However, a truly successful and productive partner recruitment campaign is measured based on the number of partners that "make commitments" up-front to the vendor prior to being accepted into the partner program.

The new partner recruitment strategies and tactics described in this document have resulted in the

recruitment of the "right" partners that made the required "commitments" to "engage" and become quickly "enabled" to sell the vendors' products and services. Recruitment candidates that do not make the required commitments are not accepted into the program.

How to Identify a Great Set of New Quality SMB Partners to Drive Sales

The tactics described below ensure that each new partner recruited does not become just another name on your list of unproductive partners that are not generating the revenue and business results you desire.

1. Recruitment Plan

Prior to launching a recruitment campaign, it is critical for vendors to define a specific set of parameters that identify and segment the type of SMB partners they require to successfully sell their products and services. Establishing clear parameters for identifying, qualifying and recruiting new partners will ensure that the partners that are targeted for recruitment possess the desired competencies and business models you are seeking.

Best Practices: Identifying and Recruiting the Right SMB Partners

Recruiting the right business partners is the key to developing or expanding a successful SMB channel program. The following is a sample of categories for consideration when developing the criteria and parameters for recruiting new SMB partners:

- Size of the company
- Number of sales, technical & marketing personnel
- Number of years in business
- Number of current customers
- Geographic coverage
- Primary industry focus
- Specific vertical market expertise
- Type of solutions and services provided
- Size of companies they sell to: very small, small, medium, large enterprise
- Specific technical certifications
- Primary and secondary sources of revenue
- Current partner agreements with other vendors
- Other key qualifications

2. Qualify the new partner candidates.

Once the new SMB partner candidates have been identified, vendors typically do not build into their recruitment plan the need to “qualify” each new partner recruitment candidate before moving forward with the new partners.

- **Do the partners fit the criteria?** Each new partner candidate should be asked a list of very specific questions, based on the recruitment parameters and criteria that were developed, to determine if they fit the “profile” of a successful partner to sell the vendor’s products and services. Partners that do not align to the vendors’ requirements should be told why and dropped from the program.

- **Will the partners make commitments?** The partners must be asked about their intentions to commit to specific vendor programs such as enrolling in the training courses required to become proficient to sell and support the vendor’s products and services. Partners’ responses need to be captured with training enrollment timeframes they committed to for future follow-up. Partners that do not commit to engaging and enrolling in training programs or other requirements should be dropped from the program.

Based on the information gathered in items 1 and 2, vendors are now able to evaluate and determine which partners truly qualify for their SMB partner program initiatives.

Through this qualification process, vendors are positioned to engage and develop a great set of new quality partners to sell their products and services to the SMB partners’ current and new customers.



What SMB Partners Are Asking For From Their Vendors

Vendors are addressing the needs of their SMB partners via outsourced, low-cost alternatives. This includes outsourcing services to help secure a strong relationship with their SMB partners, accelerate partner enablement on their products and services and drive new sales.

“Make it Easy-to-Do Business.”

This is one of the most important requirements SMB partners are asking for.

- In the 1990's, vendors began focusing on easy-to-do-business initiatives, but these initiatives were designed primarily for their Tier-1 partners. Today, Tier-2 SMB partners are making commitments to vendors that provide a similar level of support.
- Vendors that have implemented the programs that address this need have experienced substantial commitments and sales growth through their SMB partners.

“I Seldom Receive a Call From My Vendor...You Do Not Understand My Business or What We Do.”

- Partners often complain they rarely receive a direct call from their vendor unless they want their sales forecast. Otherwise they receive generic email communications.
- Partner centricity is all important. Vendors must spend time talking directly to the partners and listening to their stories, understanding their issues, needs and business goals.
- The first step in addressing this need is to understand the partners' business model, number of employees, market focus, solutions, geographic focus, key issues with current

vendors, how they go to market and add value. This information is also used to develop the partners' profile and formulate plans to accommodate the partners needs.

“I Do Not Want to Interface With Multiple People. I Want One Interface.”

Secure and nurture a strategic relationship with the partners.

- It is critical to demonstrate real value and establish the relationship. Assign a Partner Resource Manager to the partner as their single point of contact. (We will demonstrate how to accomplish this on a low-cost basis through an outsourced resource).
- Partners need vendors to clearly define the compelling product advantages and increased margin opportunities. Provide key competitive data, and take the perspective of the partners' business model and key issues in crafting effective messages regarding opportunities, profitability and business growth. It's not about budget limitations - it's about providing measurable value to their business and gaining the partners' mindshare.

What SMB Partners Are Asking For From Their Vendors

- Successful vendors make it easy for partners to become enabled and ensure they are easy-to-do-business with. Partners have proven they will provide loyalty to vendors that make it easier to do business. Educate and demonstrate to the partners the various easy-to-do-business initiatives in place to assist them to become sales and technically enabled. This ensures they will be more successful selling your products.

“I Can’t Find What I Need to Work With You.”

Offer a guided resource tour.

- SMB partners appreciate being guided through the vendor’s partner portal. Identify specific sales collateral, marketing programs, incentive programs, technical resources and training programs that apply to them.

“Given Today’s Economy, What is Available to Help Me Sell Your Products Based on Financial Benefits?”

Provide sales skills training to address today’s economic factors.

- Partners need to obtain training on ROI tools and improve their skills to enter “financial benefits” discussions with their clients. Most of the SMB partners have sold on the merits of “technical” benefits. In today’s economy, these partners realize they need help in articulating the business and financial value of the solution.

“How Can You Help Me Find New Business?”

Generate sales leads.

- Not surprisingly, these SMB partners are asking for sales leads. The majority of SMB partners will

not initially qualify to receive qualified vendor sales leads. Help identify vendor programs, resources and tools to assist the partners to develop and implement their own local lead generation programs.

“Can You Identify the Training Courses My Team Needs to Take?”

Help identify the right training.

- Partners need detailed training roadmaps and help in identifying appropriate sales and technical training courses based on their current needs. Assist them to enroll in the courses. Distance learning is their preference.

“Where Do I Go to Get Guidance and Resources to Port/Develop My Solution on Your Platform?”

Provide technical enablement support.

- Successful vendors understand that partners need help in identifying key resources, programs and tools that are available to assist them to quickly develop or port their solutions.

“What is Available to Help Get My Sales Reps Prepared to Sell Your Products With My Solutions?”

Offer sales enablement tools.

- Providing the right tools for partners to easily develop professional quality sales collateral (for example, PowerPoint slides and Word document templates including ROI tools) will increase their ability to confidently and professionally present your products with their solution and services.

What SMB Partners Are Asking For From Their Vendors

“Will You Assist Me to Develop a Sales Plan?”

Help accelerate sales plan development.

- Most small SMB partners need help in this category. Step through a series of sales questions to prime the partners’ thinking and actions to start developing strategies and plans for their sales campaigns. Provide templates and samples of well documented sales plans.

“Can You Help Me Develop a Simple Yet Effective Marketing Plan?”

Support marketing plan development.

- SMB partners realize the importance of having a marketing plan. However, these same partners often push back because most vendors want them to complete the vendors’ supplied marketing plan template which contains 10-12 pages.
- Provide an easy-to-use three page marketing plan template that allows the partners to define their top 3-4 marketing initiatives, goals, execution elements, schedules and owners. Follow-up with the partners to find out what worked/did not work. Then guide them on how to improve their marketing strategy.

“How Can I Get Visibility for My Solutions and Services?”

Provide help developing solution profiles.

- Provide templates and automated tools to assist the partners to develop professional profiles of their solutions and services. Partners want to gain visibility through the vendor’s solution database. They will also use these solution profiles in their sales and marketing programs.

“Can You Help Me Connect With Other Partners?”

Help your SMB partners collaborate with your partner ecosystem.

- SMB partners, especially those with deep vertical market expertise, want to connect with other vendor’s partners to grow their business. By collaborating with other partners they can extend their geographic and market reach and potentially grow revenue in new directions.
- You can help partners align with other participating partners based upon common market objectives with complementary skills and offerings. Provide a process to help them formalize new relationships, develop joint business plans and go-to-market schedules.



The Changing Dynamics of Vendors' SMB Partner Programs

A Fast Track to Accelerating Partner Sales

Vendors are realizing they cannot rely only on the general strength of their brand to cultivate the trusting relationships with the SMB partners that sell to the SMB market. They must address the needs of the SMB partners beyond providing inbound telesales support through distributors or in-house telesales teams.

SMB partners tend to enroll in partner programs with multiple vendors and normally do not commit their resources to one vendor unless they can achieve substantial benefits, business growth and a higher level of support.

SMB partners are pushing back when vendors attempt to gain a higher share of their business. The partners want assurance from the vendor that it makes sense for them to invest and commit their resources to the relationship.

Most IT vendors today do not have effective go-to-market programs and outbound nurturing and development support in place for their smaller SMB partners. They have not developed and implemented the programs necessary to cultivate the trusted relationships required to win mindshare and accelerate sales.

Utilizing distributors to grow partner sales has gone full circle

Over 15 years ago, IT vendors relied on their distributors to provide cost effective support to their smaller tiered partners. Significant results were not achieved, costs rose and the vendors pulled back key categories of the support. Today, some vendors are again relying

"Why should I invest my resources to sell your products and services versus vendor X?"

"What differentiates your partner program from the rest of the vendors?"

on their distributors to recruit and develop partners, especially in the SMB space. Again, vendors are realizing mixed results.

While vendors' channel-oriented telemarketing centers are necessary, most have been treated as tools of inbound "reactive" response centers rather than tools of "proactive" partner enablement and sales development.

Smaller SMB partners normally qualify for the lowest support category of the vendors' partner programs. However, today's new tactics have been extremely successful gaining the mindshare and commitments required to get the new partners on the fast track to "sales/technical enablement and sales activation."

Partner Type	Registered	Advanced	Premier
Support Available	Minimal	More	Most

New Tactics to Gain Partners' Mindshare and Their Business

A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

The following provides a summary of proven and successful tactics and programs that are winning significant business for IT vendors in the SMB market through their SMB partners.

"Through this program, we increased SMB partner sales sequentially 30% quarter over quarter in the first year."

Quote from a General Manager of a Major IT vendor that contracted CGS for partner development services

Post-Recruitment: Partner Engagement, Enablement, Sales Activation, Nurturing, and On-Going Development Support.

Recruiting new qualified SMB partners is the first step towards success. Quickly engaging, enabling, nurturing and assisting the partners to be ready to go-to-market and sell is the critical next step, otherwise the partners may not be able to generate the revenue and business results you need to achieve.

SMB partners that purchase through distributors are now beginning to expect their vendors to provide a higher level of support that will solidify the partnership, strengthen mutual business growth and develop trust and loyalty. In order for this to happen, there must be a catalyst in place to satisfy those needs.

Many IT vendors are turning to outside sources to cost effectively implement and manage the partner engagement, enablement, sales activation and support functions. It becomes the catalyst for a true robust partner engagement and development program that is winning partner mindshare.

These outsourced services provide partners with the required assistance to become quickly sales and technically enabled all within one comprehensive program.



A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

New Cost Effective Tactics to Gain Partners’ Mindshare and Their Business

The phases of a successful partner engagement, enablement, sales activation and support program are outlined here...



The following section describes a proven best practice model that contains new and unique tactics that will help gain partners’ mindshare, their business commitment and loyalty.

Welcome and Awareness

Quickly engage the new partners.

- Following any recruitment campaign, one of the highest priorities is to quickly engage the new SMB partners and establish a valued and positive relationship. Within 24 hours of being approved and authorized, a Partner Resource Manager is assigned to the partner and welcomes the new partners to the vendor’s partner program.

The questions asked and messages conveyed during the first call must be designed to convey high interest information.

- It is critically important that this first call communicates categories of “high interest” information that is important to the partners. Otherwise, the partners will have low interest in accepting or returning future calls.

A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

Understand the partners' business model first.

- The partner profile data captured during the recruitment phase is used as a reference by the Partner Resource Manager to develop their call strategies and initiate discussions centered on the partners' market focus, current solutions and services provided, key issues with current vendor(s), how they go to market and add value and what is needed to begin the initial steps toward becoming enabled on the vendor's platform. It is also important to listen to the partners' stories. This information is also used to update the profile for each partner.
- During the second "scheduled" call, the Partner Resource Manager provides a guided tour of the vendor's partner website identifying key sales and marketing tools, provide direction to obtain passwords and IDs, review the recommended sales and technical training courses and address their needs and objectives to get engaged.
- At the conclusion of each call, the partners are emailed information that includes the "high value" information discussed, such as the latest incentive programs, sales tools, training program roadmaps, technical resources for initiating their application porting/development activities, etc., and information for contacting their assigned Partner Resource Manager.
 - Information captured from each call is documented to ensure follow-up calls are planned with the appropriate knowledge and status of each partner. A partner is never called until the previous call has been analyzed and a "call plan with objectives" is developed.
 - Partners tend to become more actively engaged with the vendor when they realize their assigned Partner Resource Manager understands their status, the outstanding action items and know that they are acting on the partners' needs.

This extra effort is another key reason why vendors win the mindshare of the partners with this program.

Partner Profiles

It is critical to establish well defined profiles on each partner.

- The Partner Resource Managers are responsible for the development and ongoing updates to the profiles as they step through each phase of the engagement, enablement, sales activation and support program.
- The profiles enable vendors to understand the capabilities, solutions, demographics, etc., for all of their new partners. This data is used later for launching multiple initiatives including targeted sales and marketing programs by market, solution, geography, etc.

Partner Training

It is vital that the new partners immediately commit to enroll in training courses.

- The assigned Partner Resource Manager works closely with the new partners to identify the courses that are applicable to the partners' specific training requirements.
- The Partner Resource Manager works with individuals or the partner's entire team to provide information on training categories such as certification, prep materials, online courses, course schedules and assist the partners to register for the courses.

A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

- The Partner Resource Manager maintains the status of partners that have or have not enrolled in training. If a partner has not enrolled, the Partner Resource Manager questions the partners' intentions to enroll and strives to obtain the partners' agreement to move forward with their prior training commitment.

Partner Solution Development

Enabling the partners to easily and quickly port or develop their solutions on the vendor's platform will accelerate the partner's go-to-market timeframe.

- The Partner Resource Managers are instrumental in enabling partners that sell solutions to support their solutions on the vendor's platform.
- The Partner Resource Manager provides guidance on using all of the vendor's available technical tools, downloads, drivers, labs, trouble shooting tricks, tips and traps and aligns the partner with the appropriate level of technical support when required.

Partner Go-To-Market Plans

- After the partners have been indoctrinated, trained, and their solutions are almost ready to go, the Partner Resource Manager interfaces with the partners to accelerate their sales activities by assisting the partners to develop their sales and marketing plans. This ensures the partners will be fully engaged and actively marketing and selling the vendor's products and services as soon as their solutions are ready.

- These small partners need assistance to develop their marketing plans and often will not complete the vendors' supplied marketing plan template which often contains 10-12 pages.
- To offset this issue, an easy-to-use downsized three-page marketing plan template is provided that allows the partners to define their top 3-4 marketing initiatives, goals, execution elements, schedules and owners.

The Partner Resource Manager maintains an understanding of the partners' sales-readiness status and provides assistance wherever necessary to accelerate active selling.

- Some of the actions may be to direct the partners to marketing collateral, competitive data, customer presentations, configuration guides, proposal templates or other material located on the vendor's partner website.
- Other sales assistance may be in the form of supporting partners with sales lead telemarketing campaigns or developing webinars targeted at prospects located in their geographic sales territory. All assistance is designed to help partners quickly begin generating revenue with the vendor's products and services.



A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

Sales Accelerator Tools for SMB Partners

Sales tools must be provided to augment and assist the partners to quickly develop professional quality sales collateral.

SMB partners are typically very small organizations with limited resources or talent to develop compelling collateral to present their solutions and services to new prospects, including the benefits of the vendors' products and services included in the partners' solution.

- Comprehensive sales tools help provide the compelling content and messages partners need in order to have higher quality interactions with their customers and prospects. They are an important way to help empower your partners to increase revenue and shorten sales cycles. Some examples are described below.

Sales Enablement Tools: Preparing for the Sales Call

Sales Guide	A summary sales reference guide to support the partners' sales team. It contains information on the market, the competitive environment, the business challenges, the solution, the benefits, the sales strategy, and much more.
Understanding the Client	A document that helps the partners' sales team initiate contact with the prospect, engage the prospect, determine their needs and pain points, overcome initial objections, and frame a solution.

Sales Enablement Tools: Working With the Client

Executive Presentation	A high level customer presentation that introduces the solution, describes the business problems that it solves, lists the benefits of implementing the solution and the benefits of the vendor's underlying technology.
Client Presentation	A more in-depth look at the solution targeted at customer decision-makers, influencers, and technical audiences.
Sales Summary All-In-One	A single-page sales aid that presents the key points of the solution. May be used as a leave-behind after meeting the prospect or emailed following the meeting.
ROI Calculator	A return on investment (ROI) calculator used by partners to quickly demonstrate savings of the proposed products or services.

A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

Communicate, Communicate and Communicate Some More



Partners are asking for direct communications and higher quality information from their vendors. They rebel against “boiler plate” emails.

Communications should be frequent through direct discussions. Emailed data must contain meaningful information pertinent to this base of partners.

Webinars are used extensively and can be an outstanding tool for creating additional excitement and interest with the partners.

Monitor and Manage: Sales Status, Win/Loss Analysis, Program Status and Progress

It is critical to maintain frequent telephone communications to understand the success partners are having, or not having, once they have launched their sales campaigns.

- The Partner Resource Managers, through the vendors’ sales-out reports, are able to identify each partner’s sales activities. Information is also gathered to understand primary reasons for winning. In addition, information is obtained to determine why partners lost. This information is analyzed and provided to the vendors with recommendations. The data is also used to develop and publish “success” stories.

The Partner Resource Managers also track each partner’s progress and assists the partners to achieve their commitments on schedule.

- Assistance is offered in many categories such as providing appropriate training roadmaps, assisting to enroll in training courses, guiding them through the vendor’s partner portal to quickly locate sales and marketing tools to develop their sales and marketing collateral on the vendor’s platform, offering technical tools to begin porting/developing their solution, developing their marketing plans, etc.

Partner Support

- Vendors typically utilize their own resources to support the sales and technical needs of their partners that have a direct relationship with the vendor. Today, vendors realize the importance of providing sales and technical support to their SMB partners that purchase through distributors.

- This is especially important to those vendors that have focused on the SMB market. The route to the SMB market is through the smaller partners that purchase through distributors.

In order to provide cost effective support to the SMB base of partners, vendors have a choice of high, medium or low-touch and low cost support programs.

- These programs provide seamless live on-demand chat support, email support and one-on-one live support with subject matter experts.

A Best Practice Model: Partner Engagement, Enablement and Sales Activation Program

Partner Satisfaction Surveys

Surveys must be designed and sent to each partner participating in this program on a quarterly basis to determine the level of partner satisfaction with the vendor.

Vendors recognize the importance of being able to accurately measure the on-going success of any partner enablement program. Rolling survey results allow the vendor to monitor and make changes to the tactics and strategies in real time.

- The following two quotes are from SMB partners participating in a CGS partner development program exactly as described in this document. Both were taken from a recent partner survey, and are representative of the survey's total results.

"We have never experienced this level of assistance and support from any other vendor".

"I had been primarily selling X vendor's products. Because of the valuable support I am receiving I am now fully committed to selling your products."

Partner Program Administration, Reporting and Metrics

Today, every IT vendor strives to obtain as much information as possible about what is working well or not working in their partner programs.

The recommended reporting categories listed below provide vendors with all of the information they require to understand the status of their new SMB partner programs.



When vendors launch new partner initiatives and programs, they need to receive weekly reports that provide real insight to the key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure the critical metrics of the program.

The reports described below are designed to meet the vendor's information needs to easily evaluate the performance of their partner programs on a weekly basis, and if necessary, make quick decisions to improve and deliver more effective go-to-market channel strategies and programs.

Reports should be provided with dashboards and include KPI categories that satisfy the vendor's stakeholders' needs.

The following provides a few sample categories describing the level of information that must be provided.

Partner Recruitment Phase - Sample Dashboard

During the recruitment phase, the dashboard must include data that provides a snapshot of the progress being achieved in the following categories:

- Number of daily, weekly, monthly recruitment calls to the prospective partners
- Number of partners engaged in discussion
- Number of partners indicating interest
 - Call back schedules by partner
- Number of partners too busy now to discuss
 - Call back schedules by partner
- Number of partners not interested
 - Reasons not interested are defined
- Description of partners recruited - provide basic profile data
 - Partner size
 - Number of full time sales, technical, marketing personnel
 - Partner's industry
 - Partner's solution description
 - Partner's services provided
 - Vendor's products and services that will be sold
 - Size of companies targeted: very small, small, medium, large enterprise
 - Sales/technical certifications
 - Geography supported

Partner Engagement Phase - Sample Dashboard

The partner engagement phase is critical in order to quickly establish a positive relationship with the new partners, listen to their stories and gain commitments. Weekly updates are provided for the following categories on each step of the engagement phase.

- Number of partners contacted and engaged in the welcome phase discussion
 - Dates contacted with partner names.
- Number of partners contacted but unavailable to participate in “welcome” phase discussion.
 - Dates contacted, partner names and call-back schedules.
- Welcome phase discussion categories defined and reported for each partner:
 - **Vendor’s benefits summary:** Provided partner with a review of key benefits of vendor’s partner program, products and services.
 - **Guided tour:** Walked the partner through the vendor’s partner portal, identified key sales and marketing tools, technical resources and assisted partner to obtain passwords and IDs to access partner portal.
 - **Partner’s business model:** Reviewed and documented partner’s business model. How they go to market and add value, solution description and services provided.
 - **Vendor’s products:** Gained an understanding and documented which vendor product(s) the partner has interest in selling.
 - **Issues, concerns, priorities:** Documented important issues/concerns/priorities relayed by partner.
 - **Partner’s needs:** Established and documented what the partner needs to become “enabled” on the vendor’s platform.
 - **Partner’s Commitment:** Obtained a commitment from the partner to train their sales and technical staff on the vendor’s platform.

Partner Enablement Phase - Sample Dashboard

Partner enablement is a vital phase of the program. This phase focuses on assisting the partners to become enabled to sell their solutions and services with the vendor's products and services. Data reported in the dashboard for this phase provides keen insight on a weekly basis regarding the status of the new partners' progress.

- Training Enrollment
 - Partners that committed to enroll in training courses with dates.
 - Partners that have not yet committed to enroll in training courses. Includes call-back schedules.
 - Partners that have completed required training courses. Includes description of courses and applicable certifications achieved.
- Solution status
 - Partners actively porting/developing solutions.
 - Partners scheduled to port/develop solutions. Includes dates.
 - Partners that have not provided a schedule to port & develop solutions. Includes call-back schedules.
 - Partners that require additional support. Action items defined.
 - Partners that have completed porting/developing their solution.

Partner Marketing Readiness Phase - Sample Dashboard

Assistance is provided to help the partners develop their sales and marketing go-to-market plans. This occurs after the partners have been indoctrinated on all of the vendor's sales and marketing tools, completed their training and their solutions are almost ready to go.

Marketing plan: Partners are provided with an easy-to-use marketing plan template to define their top 3-4 marketing initiatives, goals, execution elements, schedules and owners. The status of the plans are provided weekly.

- Partners that developed a marketing plan.
- Partners that are scheduled to develop a marketing plan. Includes schedule.
- Partners that have not committed to develop a marketing plan. Includes call-back schedules.

Sales readiness: Partners are directed to the vendor's sales and marketing collateral, customer presentations and solution profiling tools to develop their sales collateral with compelling sales messages that includes the vendor's products and services. The partners' sales readiness status is provided weekly.

- Partners that developed their sales collateral and solution profiles.
- Partners that are scheduled to develop their sales collateral and solution profiles. Includes call-back schedule.
- Partners that have not established a schedule to develop their sales collateral and solution profiles. Includes reasons and call-back schedule.

Partner Go-To-Market Phase - Sample Dashboard

This phase includes many categories that are reported weekly. A few samples of the dashboard categories are provided.

- Partners that launched their marketing plan. Dates provided.
- Level of success with the marketing program. Report weekly the number of qualified prospects identified.
- Partners that launched their sales campaigns. Dates provided.
- Level of sales success. Includes number of qualified prospects they met with, -- number of prospects identified as >85% qualified.
- Number of sales won. Key reasons for winning.
- Number of sales lost. Key reasons for losing. Includes name of competitive vendor's products.
- Partners' pipeline/forecast for 1, 3, 5 months. Forecast is limited to prospects with minimum 85% probability to close.

In addition to the dashboard, other reports provide an analysis and deeper insight into various categories of the program.

- Sample data categories include:
 - Reasons why the new partner program initiatives are performing well or underperforming.
 - Recommendations as appropriate for improving the new program.
 - Detailed feedback obtained from the partners.
 - Competitive analysis data obtained from channel research reports.

A Major Source of Untapped Revenue: Vendors' Inactive Partners

Any IT vendor's current base of inactive SMB partners is a prime target for the best-practice program and tactics described in this document.

Every major IT vendor has thousands of partners that have not sold or sold only a minimal amount in the past one or two years. This base of partners is a major resource that will generate millions in sales.

Vendors typically do not have the "outbound" resources internally to apply to non-productive partners. The vendors' distributors have not been successful tapping this valuable source of revenue for them.

A vendor's inactive partners are normally selling other vendors' products. In order to win their business vendors must win their mindshare as described earlier in this document. Distributors are normally not comfortable swaying productive partners from one vendor to another.

"Over 65% of our 7,000 inactive partners were activated and we increased sales an average of 40% quarterly over a 12 month period using this program".

Quote from a Sales Director, North America SMB Channel, of a Major



By applying the strategies, tactics and best practice initiatives outlined in this document, vendors have been able to achieve dramatic new levels of productivity, commitment and incremental sales from their inactive partners.

A Proven Cost Effective Program That Drives Incremental Sales and Provides a True “Differentiator” for IT Vendors

Finally, there is a cost effective and proven program to “Engage, Enable, Nurture, Sales Activate and Support” your Tier-2 SMB partners and drive substantial incremental sales.

What Differentiates CGS From Other Channel Development Organizations?

- Our portfolio of innovative channel development services are “proven” with some of the world’s largest IT vendors.
- CGS’s channel development services offer IT vendors the opportunity to truly “differentiate” their partner programs from the competition with features that address the needs and desires of today’s SMB partners.
- Our executive staff has over 25 years of indirect channel sales and channel business development experience on a worldwide basis. You will be working with seasoned experienced channel executives that have encountered the same challenges you face, especially in today’s economy.
- CGS will assist you to gain a superior position in your market as the vendor of choice with the best partner program, delivering a complete end-to-end channel development program cost effectively.
- Founded in 1984, we have over 2,500 employees and facilities located in 20 countries serving North America, Europe and Asia.

CGS offers additional key services to increase the productivity of your channel partners.

Training Solutions

CGS is recognized for its comprehensive capabilities to develop training solutions for IT vendors’ partner programs delivered around the globe. In 2009, CGS was named to the prestigious list of “Top 20 Training Outsourcing Companies.”

Virtual Events

CGS’s VirtualEvents365 offers the impact and effectiveness of face-to-face events at a fraction of the cost.

VirtualEvents365 incorporates live events and conference features virtually to your organization’s customers, prospects, business partners, and employees.

Our goal is to strengthen your SMB partner program, reduce your costs and grow incremental revenue with the best set of SMB partners.

We will assist you to become the leading trusted IT vendor to your SMB partners and ultimately create the highest possible sales activity through your SMB partners.



CGS's Partner Enablement and Sales Activation Program is a major practice within the company.

To learn more about CGS's Channel Development Services, please contact:

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