

Maximising business from high performing partner channels

Enabled. Motivated. Progressive.



Ensuring your sales people and your partner channels are fully enabled and operating within a structured, motivational and progressive partner program can significantly improve business results. This paper targets how partner marketing processes can generate significant results.

Growth accelerating marketing services

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Why partner marketing?

The success of your business will directly correlate to the performance of the sales personnel, ecommerce and partner channels that sell your products, services and solutions.

Ensuring your sales people and your partner channels are fully enabled and operating within a structured, motivational and progressive partner program can significantly improve business results:

- Enabled personnel better represent your brand and products and are likely to be more successful at each and every stage of the sales process generating and converting more business while also reducing miss-selling costs.
- Well considered and structured partner programs will reward and secure your top channel partners while motivating other channels to aspire to higher levels within the program; so as to obtain the corresponding program benefits and in doing so win more business for you. A partner program will lay the foundation for a mutually beneficial business partnership establishing clarity of what is expected from channels and the benefits that channels can enjoy by achieving the requirements of each partner program level.

Are your current sales personnel and channel partners truly enabled? If you reflect upon your last new product, service or solution launch are your sales people and the sales people within your partners:

1. Firstly **aware** of it?
2. Are they **motivated** to sell it?
3. Are they **skilled** on it and on its value?
4. Are they **convinced** that they will be successfully selling it versus maybe a competitor's offering?
5. Are they fully **equipped** for every stage of the sales process to maximise results?

If the answer to all of these questions is 'yes' then you are likely to be operating an effective sales and channel enablement strategy that is hopefully bringing you significant returns.

In a number of organisations 'yes' will be the answer to a number of the questions but not to all of them. To achieve enablement a 'yes' is required for all of them.

In research by IDC, as detailed by [B2B Marketing Directions](#), 26% of business buyers said their sales reps were unprepared for the initial sales meeting, and 31% of buyers described the sales reps as somewhat prepared.

Only 43% of buyers rated their sales reps as very or extremely prepared for the initial meeting. That's for the initial meeting what about the more in-depth meetings and discussions that are likely to follow?

Studies by [Savo](#) have shown that 90 percent of content created for sellers is ignored, while 74 percent of sellers re-write the material or create their own. All of that marketing time and cost is wasted. This results in no consistent or common value proposition, different messages and a different look-and-feel for every presentation all with varying success and results, whilst also potentially damaging your company's brand. To successful equipped sales and channel partners it is vital to ensure content is highly relevant for each stage of the sales process and that it is well-structured, easy-to-access and easy-to-find at the point and time when it is needed.

If you are struggling to achieve true enablement or the desired business results from new product launches Scorchsoft can assist with its [Build Performing Channels](#) and [Achieving Go-to-market Success](#) services.



Do you also have in place a highly motivational and progressive partner environment that encourages, recognises and rewards relative partner performance encouraging each and every partner to go the extra mile? Does this environment clearly articulate what you expect and if your expectations are met what you offer in return and in doing so establish a healthy business relationship leading to a win-win business partnership between the two companies?

Establish a tiered progressive channel partner program.

Have you created a common channel partner performance dash-board against which you are measuring the relative performance of each partner? Does your performance dash-board include metrics that aim to achieve your long term strategic, as well as immediate commercial, aims? Are you differentiating your support, program benefits and rewards for your top partners? How are you managing your worse performers? Do you have an attractive on-boarding strategy for new partners? Are your resources aligned to priority areas and channels? Do your individual channel partner annual targets total to exceed your planned annual business target? Do your partners provide you with closed-loop feedback to aid your forecasting and production schedules?

These are just some of the questions that you will confidently answer with a 'yes' if you are operating an effective channel partner program.

Achieving Enablement

If we reflect upon the questions raised above and firstly focus on the area of **Enablement**.



Are your sales people and channel partners aware, motivated, skilled, convinced and equipped and delivering your desired business results? Below are a number of the items that need to be considered by each of these areas respectively when creating your sales and channel enablement strategy:

Achieving channel partner awareness:

- Announce using a combination of communication channels:
 - New product release emails.
 - Within newsletters.
 - Using online webinars.
 - Leveraging social content (e.g. YouTube Videos).
 - On social media using collaboration groups and fun engaging social media applications.
 - Face-to-face partner events, exhibitions and briefings.

Ensuring channel partners are motivated:

- Create and clearly articulate your differentiated value proposition (see below).
- Ensure all channel messaging aligns to your documented value proposition.
- Run motivational and competitive partner incentive programs.
- Hold partner advisory boards and partner events.
- Establish kudos and high visibility amongst peers for successful partners.

Ensuring partners are skilled:

- Link to your core value proposition and use typical training aids including:
 - Videos
 - Webinars
 - Web based training
 - Face-to-face training
 - Certifications
 - Educational events

Ensuring channel partners are convinced:

- Publish customer references.
- Create and publish other sales reps successes.
- Communicate progress and the factors contributing to success.

Ensuring channel partners are equipped at all stages of the sales process:

- Appropriate full sales and marketing kits to support each announcement and launch.
- Kits that align to the strategic or level of importance of any new product launch.
- Easy access to well-structured high value content aligned with our sales process.
- Responsive partner portals allowing any device access to assets and resources.

Once the seller is aware, motivated, skilled, convinced and equipped, they are enabled and an improvement in business results is likely to follow.

Creating a motivational partner environment

Equally important to the sellers and channels being enabled is the partner operating environment. A well-structured partner program with the right ingredients, including formal partner accreditation and certification, will answer the questions raised above and create a highly progressive and motivational environment that helps grow your and your partners' business results and the depth of your relationship.

When creating your own partner program or reflecting on the next stage of your current program be clear on what you are trying to achieve, strategically and commercially. Consider who your target end-customers are, today and tomorrow, and understand which channels you will use to reach these customers today and tomorrow. If you need help to reflect upon and sharpen your aims see our [Strategy Formation Service](#).

Visualise a triangle, on one side detail your strategic and tactical aims and desires and then on the other side detail what you need from channel partners to achieve these aims. Also reflect upon the priorities and their relative importance. From this you will start to form your first-pass view of the critical components of your partner program (or the next stage in your current program) and the possible tiered partner levels and any specialisms you may need to include within your program. Considering the relative importance of each item will help you decide what accreditation points you may later assign to an item within your program and what total points a partner has to achieve to reach, or even be demoted from, a certain accreditation level.

Against each accreditation level you will want to clearly document what you expect and in return what you will give. Understand the growth you anticipate from each accreditation level, the number of channel partners that are likely to be in each level and what you are prepared to invest into each level to achieve that growth.

Understanding what each of your partner channels is likely to expect is important; remember they are likely to compare you to the way their other supplies operate with them and the other partner programs they are familiar with. If you are unsure you may wish to consider researching these requirements. If you are to create a partner program that is motivational you need to consider and address the things your channels will value from you.

Every item you decide to put in-place needs to be clear as to its incremental value in building the relationship and growing your business strategically and commercially.

It is important to segment your approach as you are unlikely to be able, and it would be inappropriate, to take the same approach with each and every individual channel partner. If your largest partner were to see you treating them in the same way as you do your worse performing partner they are quickly going to question the value you really place on your relationship with them.

Often companies choose three main segments and they are typically aligned to the values associated with Gold, Silver and Bronze. However, when reflecting on the points above make sure any structure you implement supports your business goals. Many companies will start with simplicity, with maybe two levels and no

specialisms and then evolve their programs as they start to become established and start delivering the desired stepped results.

For example, you may decide, after reflecting upon your business objectives, that your Gold segment is your top 20% of channel partners that gives you 80% of your current and future business and put in place initiatives to appropriately support them; partner plans, advisory boards, partner business development funds, Gold partner level discounts, etc. However, ensure you can resource your plans. If you put 30 partners into the Gold category can you really resource the creation of 30 formal channel partner plans and will this effort give you the desired business growth relative to cost and effort?

Once you have your program's structure and agreed you may consider putting in-place for each partner your performance dash-board for progress and results tracking and reporting. These will assist channel partner managers' with their partner meetings and performance reviews.

You will also want to include within any program your partner acquisition and on-boarding strategy and the supporting components to ensure you have the right quality and number of partners to reach and maximise business from your priority target markets and customers. Developing a clear program of supporting activity to successful 'on-board' new partners (i.e. training, access to affordable demo equipment, initial marketing and sales support, access to assets, etc.) so that they professionally represent your business and values from day one and that they rapidly progress to successfully selling, and maybe servicing too, your products and solutions.

Typically you may consider the following items and plot them against the Gold, Silver and Bronze partner levels carefully considering the feedback you obtained from channel partners too:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Partner plans | • POS marketing and merchandising |
| • Level of partner communication | • Access to sales promotions |
| • Partner portal entitlement | • Joint campaigns / programs |
| • Partner advisory boards | • Joint partner channel marketing plans |
| • Partner events | • Co-operative funds and allocation |
| • Partner incentive programs | • Lead generation campaigns |
| • Channel and Sales training | • Lead allocation and transfer processes |
| • Competency certification | • Sales and partner lead handling |
| • Partner program and joint branding | • Partner relationship management |
| • Partner asset and collateral creation | • Social media partner communities |
| • Closed loop partner processes | • Partner sales and marketing kits |
| • Partner recognition programs | • Partner research |

While many partners will run their own demand generation programs for the products and services they sell on your behalf others will look to you for help in generating sales leads especially during their ramp-up phase if they are a new channel partner. Scorchsoft can support you in creating sales leads for your own or your channel partners' business with our [Demand Generation](#) and [Sales and Marketing Automation](#) services.

Against each of the partner levels you will then detail what you expect. Typically this will include such items as:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| • Revenue levels | • Training completed |
| • Planned growth | • Competency certificates obtained |
| • Investment levels | • Number of leads progressed |
| • Equipping demo rooms | • Feedback received on sales pipeline and leads received – closed loop |
| • Marketing activity | • Demonstrable progression |
| • Point of sale presence | |

To reflect the importance of each item you are likely to assign a weighting and score and carefully consider the total points score to reach each category. This is important if the whole program is to be aspirational and motivational. For example, it is important that a Bronze partner knows exactly what the benefits are and what is required to become a Silver partner so that they can aspire to Silver level accreditation. If you don't establish this transparency you are likely to end-up with many dissatisfied partners and instead of achieving motivation, desire and progression you could end-up with the opposite.

Once you have completed the steps above and you have clarity on the likely ingredients you may wish to also reflect upon and capture your company's value proposition for each level of the partner program. This will help

you determine whether your differentiated value is compelling and clear. Establishing and documenting clear and common propositions and messaging will guide the production of all assets and the messages of all outreaches. As a specific example, with regard to websites and web development projects, Scorchsoft sees its value proposition and key messaging to channel partners as being summarised here:

SCORCHSOFT Making complex web projects simple				
Value Proposition for Scorchsoft – Channel Partners				
Channel Needs	They complement our organisation and help us differentiate our web projects to win more new customers	They are always flexible and highly responsive to our specific needs	They are a leading web developer with highly competitive rates	We have total trust and confidence in them. They are a joy to work with .
Key Message	Making complex web projects simple <i>Providing technical excellence, resource and solution support to help you win more customers</i>			
Values & USPs	Our deep technical web competence complements your core capabilities We handle the technical stuff so you don't have to We remove technical distractions to help with your core business focus We make daunting complex web-projects simple We tailor our services and solutions to meet with your specific needs We help you create differentiated web solutions to win new customers	We help bridge your technical resource gaps and peaks in workload We provide quick quotation turnaround We are always available on the phone and on Skype to support you We adapt to align with your processes We support your sales and service process with our technical web development competences	Comprehensive portfolio of live websites and solutions We offer a comprehensive range of tailored web solutions and services Highly competitive rates Free pre-project advise Easy-to-understanding transparent pricing	Highly competent and experienced, UK based, degree qualified developers Constantly up to date with technology advancements A track record of supporting partners in producing high performing bespoke web solutions Honest, open and friendly team with a go-the-extra-mile attitude.
Proof Points	Our 'made-a-difference' websites: E.g. Chance-to-dance made £2k on first evening of the site going live	See our channel customer references on www.scorchsoft.com	See website for portfolio Compare our rates	Richard Golding testimonial See our team on our website
Call: 0121 4690009 or email: enquiries@scorchsoft.com			SCORCHSOFT	

If you need any assistance in capturing and articulating your value propositions and messaging Scorchsoft can help with its [Value Creation](#) marketing service.

Scorchsoft has a range of [marketing services](#) where we specialise in supporting companies who sell products, services and solutions through channels to market be that direct, indirect partner or ecommerce channels. **We combine leading practices and partner technologies to maximise channel partner performance.**

Partner Technologies

Online technologies are critical to supporting successful enablement and partner programs. Whether this is simply providing a partner portal for access to partner assets or providing integration solutions for such items as lead tracking or order placement. Scorchsoft's partner technology solutions include such items as:

- Providing well-structured and easy access to quality content through a device agnostic responsive, content managed, web partner portal.
- Linking portal content and services through to channel partners' own websites and through to their end-customers (commonly content and services can be modified to include the partners own branding).
Examples of common portal hosted services that can be made available for all channel partners include:
 - Email campaign generators for lead generation and nurturing.
 - Engaging social media partner applications (See our [Facebook App development](#)).
 - Sales and service tools (e.g. Return on investment calculators – see below).
 - Sales lead management - allocation and feedback.

Partners can simply choose or deselect the services that they wish to utilise. Alternatively, if you wish to mandate services this is an option too.

- Partner portal integration with sales, services and transactional systems. For example, partners' providing feedback on sales leads and forecasts, placing sales orders and tracking order status.

Scorchsoft's return on investment calculator case study - Lorentz:

With nearly a thousand partners across the Globe, LORENTZ needed an easy to use tool that allowed each and every partner to sell the benefits of solar powered pumps over the diesel equivalents. It may seem simple but with different pump and solar panel numbers needed depending upon factors such as the amount of water pumped and varying solar irradiation they needed a tool that was simple and intuitive for the end user even though underneath there was significant complexity to deal with.

The tool created is illustrated below. Please click on the image to view:

The screenshot shows the 'Solar v Diesel Calculator' interface for LORENTZ. The background is a green field with a person using a hoe. The interface is divided into two main sections: 'Your Situation' and 'Instructions'.

Your Situation

- Your location:
- Depth of water source: m
- Water needs per day: m³
- Current fuel cost per day: USD

Instructions

Please fill out your situation in order to calculate your savings.

- Your location
- Water source depth
- Daily water needs
- Daily fuel cost

At the bottom, there are three tabs: 'Your Situation' (highlighted in yellow), 'Assumptions' (blue), and 'Your Savings' (blue).

Footer text: Tel: +49 (0) 4193 7548-0 www.lorentz.de

Disclaimer: This tool is designed to illustrate the potential cost differences of solar versus diesel powered water pumping. Please use this tool to help you make your own choices. If necessary you should consult financial and water pumping specialists for advice. Systems size calculations are estimates and do not replace calculations made using specialist professional tools.

Logo: Sun. Water. Life.

The tool integrates directly with the LORENTZ partner management portal, partnerNET. As a result each LORENTZ partner is able to apply their branding to their own instance of the tool and embed it into their own website with ease. This is an example of how valuable assets can be provided centrally for the personalised use of each and every individual channel partner.

The next step for LORENTZ is to now extend the solar versus diesel tool to generate sales leads for partners that will then be fed into their internal [CRM systems](#) so that they are easy to follow up.

This tool is an excellent example of how web applications when employed correctly can:

- Support the businesses sales process.
- Generate new business leads.
- Communicate the benefits of seemingly complex product configurations.
- Empower a sales driven organisation.

Scorchsoft Can Help

There are many things to consider when creating a progressive and successful partner environment and Scorchsoft would welcome the opportunity to help you.

We are always happy to have an open discussion, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#)

For more details also see Scorchsoft's [Build Performing Channels marketing service](#)

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