

5

Keys to Building Strong Relationships In Channel Marketing



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It's easy to get caught up in the mindset of finding new 'channel partners' and 'organizations' to work with. But to find true success it's important to remember that Partners are People, and building and maintaining strong relationships with your channel partners follow the same principals you use when interacting with friends, or even finding love.

Keys to Building Strong Relationships Discussed in This eBook:

1. Find the right balance of communication
2. Be flexible
3. People don't like people who play games
4. Don't lose contact because your partner has moved on
5. Don't try to outsource your personal relationship

1 Find the Right Balance of Communication

Ever go on a date, or meet someone new that doesn't know how to read the clues? They over-text, over-email and generally over communicate. They come off as needy, even desperate and the last thing you want to do is engage for fear of encouraging them.

On the flip side is the person that sounds great at the beginning, but then doesn't deliver. They say they'll call and you never hear from them again. They never show up when they say they will, and aren't accountable for what they say they are going to do. It's too much work to try to keep the relationship up, so you give up and don't bother spending any more effort.

Now think of your exchanges with your partners. Either sound like something you've done?

You've got great programs and want to get the message out. Over, and over, and over again. There is a fine line between delivering information and stalking/spamming someone. Or you're super busy and find it hard to always respond in a timely manner to partners that do want your help, or you go dark once you sign the partner agreement, leaving that partner to fend for themselves.

You of course don't do either of these things on purpose, but it's sometimes hard to know where the right line is. What is the best way to find that balance?

- Talk with your partner and actively listen to what they say their needs are.
- Build a [business plan](#) together so you start your relationship off with mutually agreed upon expectations.
- Have a rich partner portal available with as much content as possible to enable him or her to sell.
- Automate [deal registration](#) and [MDF](#) so they don't have to get bogged down communicating with you. You want to encourage communication back to you by making it easy.
- Be responsive when they need that extra hand. It's also important to know who your high performers are and spend the extra time supporting their successes.



How do you balance the right level of communication to your partners?

2 Be Flexible

You have programs in place for your partner to register deals and request MDF. You don't want to, and can't, make exceptions to the rule the norm, but nothing is black and white. Sometimes your partner needs something special to close a deal, or needs a campaign contribution to be tweaked. Be flexible. Remember that these are people, like you, that are just trying to succeed selling your product.

If you're an emerging vendor, you have to prove yourself and your product. Have patience and go the extra mile.

People will remember your flexibility, and it will go along way in creating a strong relationship.

Developing meaningful activities and programs tailored to your partners' needs reap many more benefits for you and your partners in the long run.



3 People Don't Like People Who Play Games

Do you want to be the one night stand that becomes awkward in the morning, or build a meaningful relationship with the right partners?

Real relationships are built on fundamentals, not gimmicks. Gaming your partners, using leaderboards and competitions, may generate lots of activity and increased leads in the short term, but you end up wasting you and your partner's time.

Developing meaningful activities and programs tailored to your partners' needs move your business forward and reap many more benefits in the long run.

4 Don't Lose Contact Because Your Partner Has Moved On

Your relationships with partners are largely built on the specific people you've worked with at that organization. You put a lot of time and energy in building a personal relationship that will bear fruit.

Be proactive and create a long lasting connection. Use social networks such as LinkedIn to your advantage. Try to link to as many of your partner contacts as you can so you can get a better sense of who they are, and when the time comes, where they are going.

You may not always get the benefit of advanced notice before they make a career move to another organization, so do you just drop it and move on?

Yes and no.

For the organization they just left, it's important to focus on quickly finding your next ally and begin strengthening that bond so that partner relationship doesn't fizzle out.

For your contact that just left, use your connection on LinkedIn to reach out, congratulate them on their move and let them know that if it's a fit, you're there with the same level of service in their new organization. New business is often built on these lasting relationships.

WHAT TO PICK?

LinkedIn vs. Facebook

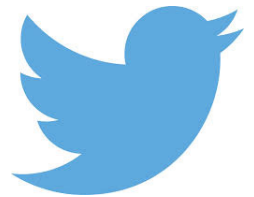
In Rhett Power's piece [LinkedIn vs. Facebook](#)

[for Professionals:](#)

[A Social-Media](#)

[Smackdown](#), he says

“Facebook may win when it comes to the latest gossip, true life confessions, and game requests, but LinkedIn rises victorious as the champion of business professionals.”



LinkedIn™

5 Don't Try To Outsource Your Personal Relationship

As a channel manager, you're by nature juggling multiple tasks on any given day, and you may be considering a move to a channel management solution to help streamline your process, and reduce those phone calls and emails. But channel management/PRM tools should be used to see trends and to know where to have personal interactions – not to remove them.

Partner Relationship Management software solutions enable the right interactions to help you be smarter with how you use your time, and to have more effective interactions – not fewer of them. They can help you see at what point in the sales cycle a conversation would help your partners, on the phone or in person.

That may mean less interaction but that's because you're getting better at anticipating and communicating when its needed and appreciated.

Personal contact with partners should be more meaningful. Aim for quality over quantity. By remembering that your partners are people too, and by interacting with them with that in mind, expect to see loyalty increase, sales success climb and your day – while still hectic – will be more effective.



Growing your Channel Program? Explore Channeltivity.

Channeltivity is a partner relationship management software platform that helps companies build strong relationships, optimize partner productivity and support new sales.

Channeltivity is easy to use, is fast to set up, and connects to Salesforce.com.

To find out why 20,000+ channel sales professionals around the globe depend on us, and to experience the solution through our hands-on demo:

CALL: 877-226-2564

VISIT: <https://www.channeltivity.com>

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An experienced marketing professional, Dana has over 15 years of success driving marketing strategy and lead generation in emerging and high growth technology companies.

As with all of us, Dana continually works to grow her business relationships in meaningful and productive ways.



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