



How Partner Profiling Can Increase Your Channel Sales





The Art of Making Partners More Productive

Most organizations who sell through the channel have both productive and unproductive partners. One of the easiest ways to grow revenue is to figure out how to transform some of the partners from unproductive into productive. Partner profiling is an excellent way to unlock this potential.

If you have a channel that has hundreds or even thousands of partners, it is reasonable to assume that majority of your sales come from a small, core group of partners. While there are exceptions to this rule in some specialty cases (like niche vertical solutions resellers or those working with early stage companies), the majority of the time a significant portion of the partner base only sells once or twice a year, rather than regularly or even every day, as the most productive partners do.

Over the years we have performed many channel partner profiling studies and the results show that there are three primary reasons why a partner is not productive:

1. Lack of Engagement

Vendors don't have the resources to engage with all partners equally to provide the same level of support: it's just not realistic. As a result, most vendors' sales and technical efforts tend to be focused on a core group of high-performing partners – some vendors call this group 'managed partners' or 'premier partners'. With this structure, a significant portion of the channel is left untouched and unengaged.

2. Lack of Business Focus

Most partners tend to have core areas of focus competence. If we use the burger, fries and coke analogy then the vendor needs to clearly understand into what category their products fall for different partners. Partners tend to sell products that are core (burgers) to their business in a very different way, than when they sell solutions to which the vendor's products are add-ons or options (fries or coke). The partner support process needs to vary according to the partner's business focus.

3. Partner Maturity

Sales people sell what sells. So for example, if a partner has been selling storage and virtualization solutions over the past five years, it's a significant investment for them to add new categories, e.g., wireless infrastructure or security. They may have customer access, but lack of competence in other areas gets in the way of building sales success and velocity outside their niche specialization.

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This goes to show that engagement with partner base in a monolithic way really doesn't work to unlock the true potential. The best way to do this is to undertake a partner profiling campaign, using both primary and secondary data and then truly segmenting that information to understand who the partners are and how they can be helped.

A proper Channel Marketing Automation tool is a powerful way to enable an organization to carry out partner profiling in a consistent fashion, and tier their partners on the basis of potential – not just sales out. Currently, most organizations structure their partner profiling into monolithic tiers like platinum, silver and gold, basing the rankings on sales velocity alone.

Partner Profiling Elements

Recently, some organizations have started to add other elements to their partner structures, e.g., technical certification or segment specialization, but this needs both a cohesive approach, and constant management. Just as an organization manages its human resources through a constant performance management process, a similar approach is needed via regular partner profiling and partner management. ZINFI's unified Channel Automation platform has two core application sets: the first for Partner Relationship Management (PRM) and the second for Partner Marketing Management (PMM). ZINFI's PRM application set has a profiling engine that allows companies to actively profile and manage their partner base by using multiple parameters and criteria. This can also be substantially augmented by ZINFI's Partner Marketing Concierge services that can significantly reduce organization internal workload by performing high value, time-intensive tasks such as phone surveys and call out campaigns to collect key information from partners that may be missing from secondary sources.



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