



How **Partner Relationship Management Software** Can Reduce Your Operating Costs

COSTS



Improve partner productivity to drive more sales through Partner Relationship Management

Digital business process transformation is no longer just a buzzword. It's real. Companies around the world are streamlining their operations and removing costs from their processes through proper definition of workflow and automation of that workflow using enterprise software. This is where **partner relationship management software** fits in as the next wave of cost reduction. In this article, we will explore how an enterprise marketing through the channel can deploy partner relationship management software not only to reduce operating costs but also to improve the partner experience and increase productivity substantially.

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Managing the channel is a complex challenge and involves many moving pieces. It becomes even more challenging when try to scale a go-to-market model and repeat success from one region to another, and as you address the regional differences and cultural nuances that inevitably as you expand to global markets. This is where partner relationship management software can make a big difference. Properly defined and deployed partner relationship management software can substantially streamline internal activities related to partner recruitment, engagement, enablement and management. In addition, it can streamline how an

organization interacts with its partner base, thereby reducing the friction that likely exists because of faulty or poorly defined manual processes.

Let's take a few minutes to explore how partner relationship management software can help with both organizational productivity and growth.

- **Partner recruitment:**

In most organizations today, partner recruitment is an ad hoc activity primarily because of two reasons: First, most organizations that have been selling through the channel seem to think they already have the partners they need. Second, those who are not happy with their current partner base don't understand how to recruit and find the right sorts of partners. Partner relationship management software can help significantly with this challenge. Through proper partner **profiling** activities, an organization selling through the channel can quickly identify the DNA of successful partners and, leveraging that profile, recruit new partners with similar characteristics using various inbound (**search, social**) and outbound (**email, events, telemarketing**, etc.) tactics. A properly configured and deployed partner relationship management software system makes it easy to set up partner profiling as well as inbound and outbound tactics to make partner recruitment a daily activity rather than an occasional or random event.

- **Partner engagement:**

Recruiting partners is an important first step, but once you've recruited partners you have to **sign agreements** with them, train them and make sure they have proper **business plans**. This only succeeds when you have streamlined processes. Unfortunately, most organizations today manage the entire partner engagement process manually using tools like Excel, Outlook, PDFs and Word documents. This makes the entire process opaque and prone to error. Properly deployed partner relationship management software not only automates many repeatable steps, but also reduces operating costs substantially by eliminating

redundancy, mistakes and any re-work that those mistakes make necessary.

- **Partner enablement:**

Once partners have completed the onboarding process by signing contracts, putting business plans together in place and so on, the next big focus is **training partners** on various aspects of the vendor's offerings. This happens across all functions, including marketing, sales, technical and support. Without a fully streamlined process and a comprehensive set of enablement tools, it is almost impossible to rapidly replicate success from one region to another. A purpose-built partner relationship management software platform can significantly enhance partners' experience while they are getting trained across various functions, and it can also allow the vendor's channel management team to have complete visibility into the training process so they can easily determine where each partner stands at any given point in time.

- **Partner management:**

The final, and most important, step in channel management is... management. Just as organizations manage their employees through annual plans, quarterly plans, performance reviews and other tools, channel management team members need to manage their partner base through similar

mechanisms. Whether a vendor operates a high-volume run rate business supported by hundreds of partners per channel manager or a has just a few large, dedicated partners per channel to manage, at the end of the day a channel manager will need appropriate tools and infrastructure to be able to perform essential tasks like creating score cards, establishing business plans, and tracking sales volumes, deal closure and pipeline volume. All of these activities require a significant level of automation to be effective, and partner relationship management software can play a pivotal role. In fact, without properly deployed partner relationship management software, it is almost impossible for an organization to review, manage and adapt to the ever-changing channel environment.

As the discussion above demonstrates, channel management is an integrated set of activities or workflows involving a set of four distinct phases in partner life cycle management: partner recruitment, partner engagement, partner enablement and partner management. If an organization wants to move at the speed of digital business, it has no choice other than to deploy partner relationship management software within a properly defined partner lifecycle management framework. Once this is done, however, an organization can not only remove costs by eliminating errors, streamlining process steps and reducing redundant manual work, it can also significantly improve partner satisfaction and productivity to drive more sales at a lower cost.



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