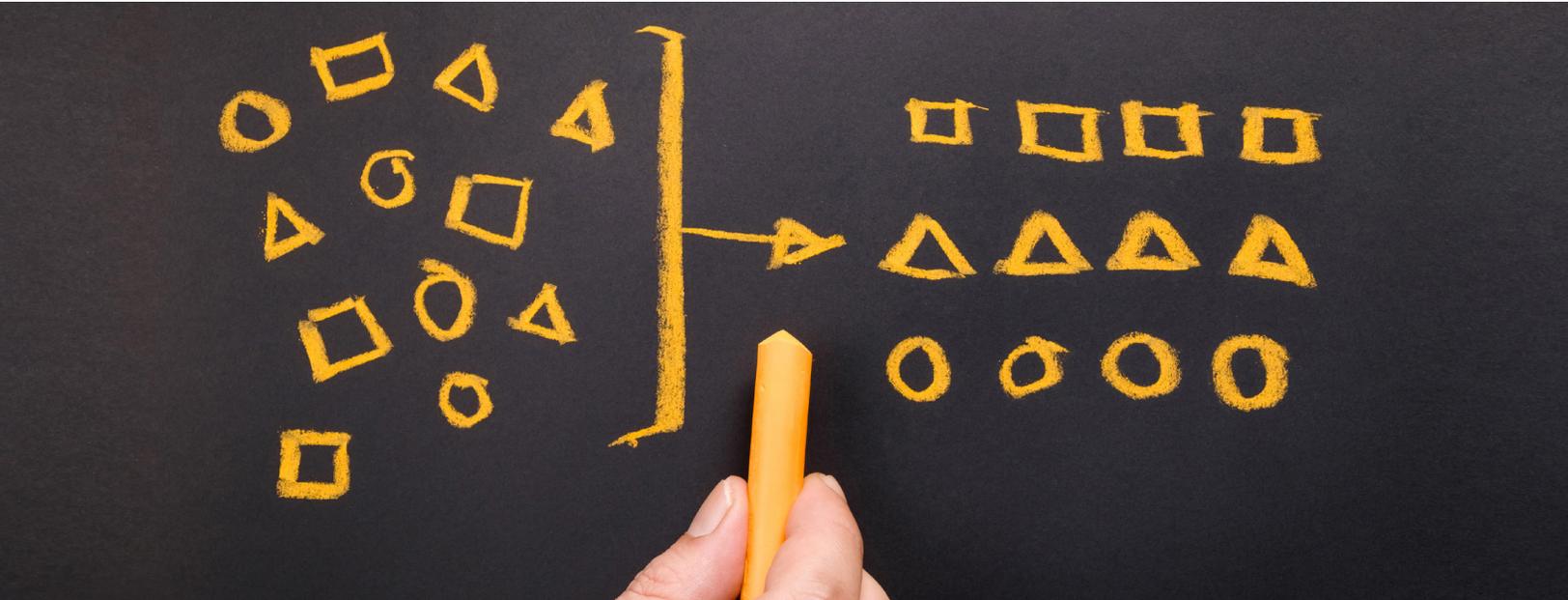




Making **Channel Marketing** **Software** Work



Channel marketing software can drive significant ROI for an organization when channel programs, processes and people are fully aligned.

We have discussed in earlier articles the rise of channel marketing software. Many organizations across multiple verticals today have deployed **channel marketing software**, but often these organizations wonder why they are not generating the return on investment (ROI) they expected. In this article, we will explore a few key elements the organization needs to align to truly realize ROI from their channel marketing software investment.

To start, let's look at two existing applications and functions that most organizations are successful with: sales and finance. Almost every organization today in their finance department uses financial management software quite successfully. Why? Because each finance function has clearly defined basic processes, trained professionals and clear deliverables. The same is true of sales.

Driving significant ROI requires planning and organizing proactively, ensuring structural alignment of roles, responsibilities and workflow. When done right, it can not only save a lot of time and money, but also increase partner productivity, profitability and satisfaction substantially.



// *Provide training to the cross-functional team on using the channel marketing software. Few people like learning new software. However, to manage an automated workflow and ultimately improve your channel processes, it is essential that your team members know where to log in, how to find things, what to do, and so on within your channel marketing software platform. //*

For sales functions almost all organizations today at the mid-market and enterprise level use some type of customer relationship management (CRM) application software for sales activity management. CRM works for sales and financial management software for finance because the processes and the people carrying them out are fully aligned within the department. The same alignment is needed for channel marketing software to succeed.

So let's briefly look at the first core success factor for channel marketing software: programs. Channel marketing software doesn't run by itself. It is an enabler of various channel programs, which are run by people (which happen to be the second core success factor). Before an organization even considers rolling out channel marketing software, it first needs to decide

which core programs the software will automate. These programs can range from **partner recruitment** and **partner training** to multi-partner demand generation and **incentive management**. There are countless possibilities, depending on the unique requirements of the organization. However, without a mature and clearly defined program, channel marketing software deployment is bound to fail.

Now, let's return to the notion of aligning processes. Having a program is one thing, but rolling out management and review processes is quite another. Unlike the sales and finance examples I cited earlier, where the focus is on internal functional processes only, channel organizations are all cross-functional. That means when you are thinking about putting together a channel program you must involve finance, marketing, sales, operations and other departments in order for the program to have a chance of succeeding. You must involve these functions, and you must also discuss—with all key stakeholders, ahead of time and in detail—the process changes and development you will have to carry out to make your channel marketing software work.

One other thing that is very important, which very few organizations do effectively: provide training to the cross-functional team on using the channel marketing software. Few people like learning new software. However, to manage an automated workflow and ultimately improve your channel processes, it is essential that your team members know where to log in, how to find things, what to do, and so on within your channel marketing software platform.

In summary, channel marketing software can drive significant ROI for an organization when channel programs, processes and people are fully aligned. It can easily be done—and we have seen many clients do it quite successfully—but it requires planning and organizing proactively, ensuring structural alignment of roles, responsibilities and workflow. When done right, it can not only save a lot of time and money, but also increase partner productivity, profitability and satisfaction substantially. Isn't that what channel management all about?



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