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# Why Most **Channel Marketing Automation** Tools Fail to Deliver

# Channel marketing automation may disappoint because of a failure to celebrate and reward success

In today's world, if you are selling through the channel you probably rely on some level of automation no matter how simple or comprehensive it is. However, when organizations step back and look at all the investments they are making in various **channel marketing automation** tools and capabilities, the first question they should ask is, "Are we getting our money's worth?" Sadly, in most cases the answer is a resounding NO. Why? That's what we explore in this article.

> *Once we see someone else is successful, we want to emulate their success. This applies to the channel as well. Not only should we celebrate and reward partners who are successful, but we should also identify the reasons for success by analyzing data generated by the channel marketing automation system*

Most organizations selling through the channel have gotten to this point by leveraging a few core tools—say, a partner portal, **partner training**, **partner incentives** and **lead management**. Most of these pieces in the channel marketing automation puzzle have been around for a while, but the disparate nature of their existence has also created unnecessary complexity and a decidedly poor partner experience. The result is often a mish-mash of software patched together to create a channel marketing automation system.

When channel marketing automation fails to deliver reasonable ROI, this piecemeal approach is almost always at the root of the problem. This is where an integrated approach—what we at ZINFI call **Unified Channel Management**—comes in. The entire concept of Unified

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Channel Management is to provide a set of software components or modules that work together via the same platform to provide a unified experience and flow, both for partners and for users from the organization selling through the channel. This unified approach significantly improves ease of use and lowers the cost of implementation, because an organization no longer has to worry about fitting disparate pieces together.

The next big hurdle when it comes to making a channel marketing automation tool succeed is the failure to localize both software and program content to match the language and culture of specific audiences. This is especially true for organizations selling to international markets, but it can also be true even in local markets like the US, where there are increasing needs to address multilingual users.

Now, localization doesn't stop at software and content, but also applies to the partner support system. If you are rolling out a channel marketing automation platform outside English speaking countries, it is essential to provide localized support for those countries in local languages and local hours. When you provide English language support to non-English speaking countries, you are creating a huge hurdle for adoption of any channel marketing automation tool and platform.

Once an organization has made sure it has the right unified approach to channel marketing automation and has created a truly localized experience (English and non-English), then the next step is to figure out how to drive awareness and adoption. This is where a state-of-the-art channel marketing automation platform can help significantly.

Today, any best-in-class channel marketing automation platform comes with a variety of tools for both partners and for vendors selling through the channel. This includes both digital and analog tools—tools for **search**, **social media**, **email**, **events**, **microsites** and so on. The availability of such tools is critical for driving awareness and engagement among the partner base in a structured way. In order to fulfill the potential of a channel marketing automation platform, partners need to know about the platform's many capabilities and use them regularly.

Finally, channel marketing automation may disappoint because of a failure to celebrate and reward success. We can all relate to this. Once we see someone else is successful, we want to emulate their success. This applies to the channel as well. Not only should we celebrate and reward partners who are successful, but we should also identify the reasons for success by analyzing data generated by the channel marketing automation system. When you expose other partners to key drivers of success, and reward the ones who are doing the right things the right way, you are making a logical, facts-based case for why other partners should use channel marketing automation. We at ZINFI have seen that this is one of the most important ways to stimulate partner adoption of the channel marketing automation platform, increase partner satisfaction and deliver results at a lower cost.
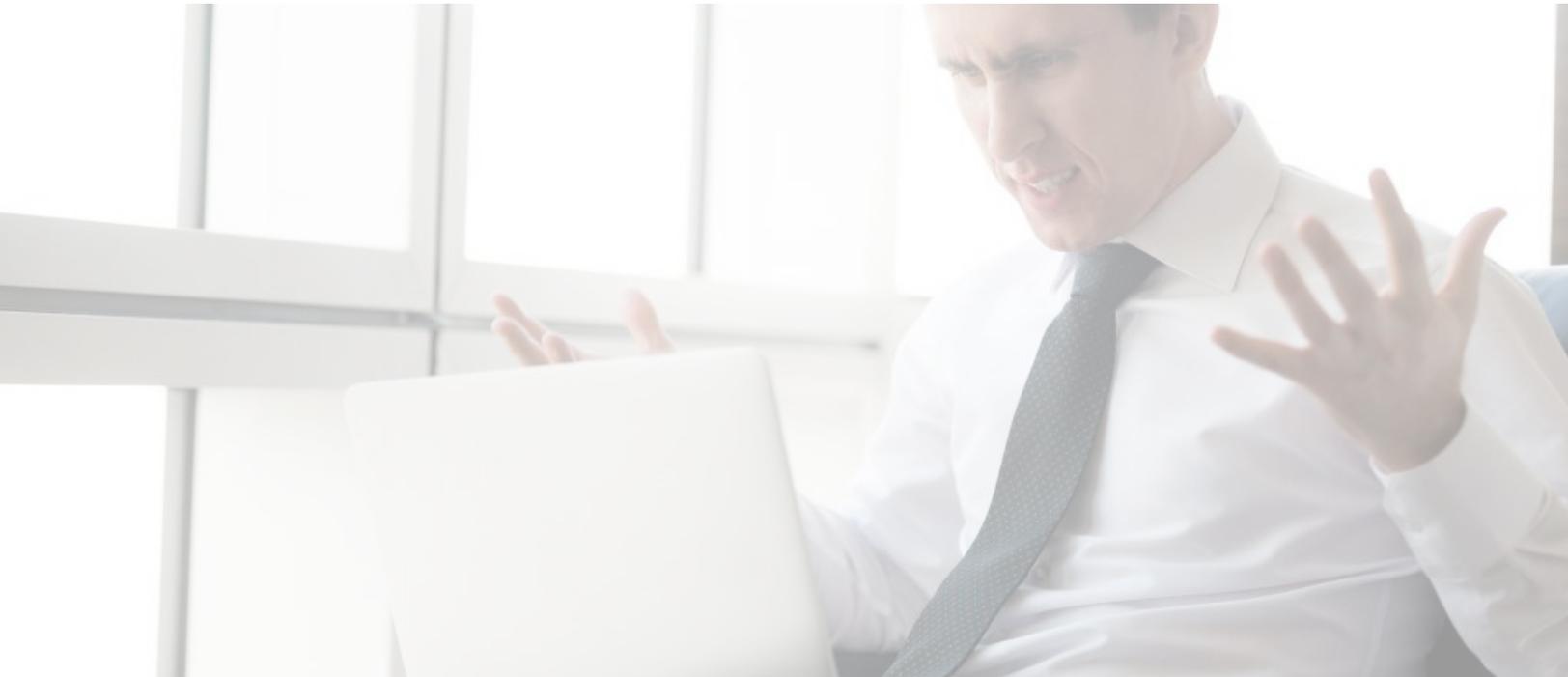
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