



Why **PRM** Is Just a Starting Point



Partner lifecycle management lifecycle begins with a company's effort to recruit, onboard and engage partners in selling a set of products and solutions.

PRM — partner relationship management—focuses primarily on helping organizations selling through the channel to be more productive in managing their relationship with the partner base. However, **PRM** is just the starting point. There are many other dimensions of channel management that keep channel marketing professionals up at night. That's what I will cover in this article.

Let's begin by thinking about how we typically work with channel partners and what partner lifecycle management looks like. The lifecycle begins with a company's effort to recruit, onboard and engage partners in selling a set of products and solutions. Those three simple words—recruit, onboard and engage—represent tasks that are not at all easy. They are actually quite complex.

|| If your organization is serious about building a state-of-the-art channel management infrastructure, then it needs to extend its focus beyond PRM and consider partner marketing management, partner sales management and partner care management as well. ||



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However, PRM solutions, including software and services, can make a big difference for vendors and help ensure they perform these three steps the right way. Good PRM software will automate partner recruitment, onboarding and engagement through a logical, step-by-step process. Effective automation not only reduces the cost of running recruitment programs, but also increases partner satisfaction regarding how they do business with a vendor.

We have discussed how PRM can facilitate effective channel management in many other articles, so we will skip that for now. (Please check our [blog](#) for best practices articles and more details.) However, I do want to take a moment to focus on aspects of partner relationship management that go beyond traditional PRM software—which, after all, tends to focus on only a few core objectives. For example, most PRM software today tends to rely on providing a dynamic partner portal, along with a set of assets and content that partners can use, followed by **lead management** and deal registration. A few platforms also offer **learning management**, and possibly some partner **incentives management**. But these capabilities are not enough. To bring their channel management into 21st century, it is essential for vendor organizations to focus on three additional core capabilities: enabling partners to market and sell, and providing partners with responsive support.

So, while most PRM software tends to focus narrowly on partner recruitment, **onboarding** and engagement, and

the relevant automation capabilities tied to those steps, it is essential that organizations selling through the channel also pay attention to partner marketing management, partner sales management and **partner support**.

The primary purpose of **partner marketing management** is to enable partners to market on their own by giving them a set of preloaded, out-of-the-box campaigns leveraging an integrated SaaS marketing platform. While a PRM platform focuses on engaging partners through **business planning, contracts**, training and so on, a partner marketing management tool enables partners to drive demand generation on their own by leveraging the vendor's **branded content** and campaigns.

The focus for **partner sales management** is to enable partners to close on more deals, and close more quickly. Partner sales management typically provides a set of content management and sharing capabilities that enable partners to send relevant digital content to prospective buyers, see how prospects are engaging with that content and quickly determine which content is working or not.

In this brief overview, I have suggested that **partner relationship management** software (PRM) software tends to focus rather narrowly on partner recruitment, onboarding and engagement, and that there are other dimensions to channel marketing—namely, partner lead generation and sales closing—that are just as important. That leaves us with one last step: partner care management.

The focus of partner care management is to provide support to partners in various stages of their engagement with a vendor. This is incredibly important, because it ensures that a vendor organization can streamline interactions with its partners.

I hope this summary helps you understand why PRM is just the starting point for effective channel management. If your organization is serious about building a state-of-the-art channel management infrastructure, then it needs to extend its focus beyond PRM and consider partner marketing management, partner sales management and partner care management as well.



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