



# Multi-partner business planning with **PRM software**



## The Primary challenge for vendors is to establish a robust process that can address both partner and business objectives

If your organization is selling through a distributed channel and you are thinking about creating a business plan with some or all of your partners, the next logical question to ask is how. This is where partner relationship management (**PRM**) software comes in. However, before we delve into the details of doing business planning with **PRM software**, let's first discuss briefly where business planning makes sense.

*// There are several channel consulting organizations that can help vendors set up a sound business planning process, and ZINFI's partner relationship management (PRM) software can meet the end-to-end automation needs of this process. //*



Organizations selling through a broad channel with small to large partners—resellers, system integrators, agents, wholesalers, dealers, etc.—typically conduct business planning with partners that have a significant impact on their revenue stream. When these organizations are considering investing in sales and marketing initiatives, it is essential they understand which partners they should invest in and how to do that. In this scenario, business planning makes a lot of sense, and PRM software can definitely help.

So, what are the core elements of business planning with a partner? This actually varies considerably, depending on the nature of the partner as well as the industry segment. In the case of large franchise partners, the planning will focus primarily on how to market a single-brand solution in the marketplace – whether it's local, regional or global. The PRM software needs to be flexible enough to address these market planning needs and variables, and it should be able to develop market plans, sales plans, technology and infrastructure plans, and “people plans” tied to these functional initiatives. The PRM software should have the flexibility to accommodate these requirements and variables and create a number of different types of plans.

Now let's consider another segment, such as technology, where a channel partner may be selling multiple solutions and is large and active enough to have an impact on the vendor's revenue plan. In that case, the vendor may choose a specific product or a set of products as the primary focus for the business plan. Again, PRM software can help, but it needs to be flexible enough to address this somewhat different scenario.

As you can already see, the nature of the business plan and what it needs to include will vary quite a bit among industry segments and partner types, so the PRM software has to give vendors the ability to set up dynamic fields, forms and flows to address highly specific processes.

With this as a backdrop, let's talk briefly about how the business planning process itself unfolds. First, the vendor needs to target a set of partners, and engage them either via phone or in face-to-face meetings to complete a preliminary planning session. Most partners who are serious about this already have drafts of plans in place in various document formats, such as PowerPoint, Excel, Word or PDF. Partners should be able to upload these documents directly into the business planning part of the PRM software. Vendors should be able to set up the PRM software to establish specific sections for planning areas like marketing, sales, technology, finance and people, and in each of these areas a partner may be asked to provide an executive summary and some answers to a specific set of questions or fields, and then attach documents for a vendor to review.

Once a plan has been set up in the PRM software system, both the partner and the vendor must be able to collaborate via the PRM software and establish milestones, target dates for completion of certain activities as well as other other criteria, and the PRM software should be configurable to set up alerts and reminders based on these criteria to keep partners on track.

Finally, the PRM software needs to be able to keep track of any changes to the plan and summarize planning activities, status and results across multiple partners so the vendor organization can monitor and manage the entire process.

The business planning capabilities offered by SaaS solution providers like ZINFI far exceed the requirements of most companies. That's one important piece of the puzzle. The other primary challenge for vendors is to establish a robust process that can address both partner and business objectives. There are several channel consulting organizations that can help vendors set up a sound business planning process, and ZINFI's partner relationship management (PRM) software can meet the end-to-end automation needs of this process.



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