



How to Get Better Return on Your **MDF Marketing** Investment



Most channel partner organizations lack dedicated marketing resources to truly drive MDF marketing programs and generate leads.

Organizations selling through the channel tend to spend quite a lot of money on MDF marketing activities with the intent of increasing partner-generated leads. However, most **MDF marketing** investments provide little if any tangible return. In this article we will explore why that is the case.

// A lack of marketing resources can be easily addressed by allocating concierge resources, which can help partners drive simple, scalable and high-impact programs consistently around the world. //



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Channel marketing organizations are always hoping that their partners will bring in new business and run successful marketing programs on their own. In order to drive partner engagement and marketing activity and thereby generate new demand, vendors often spend a boatload of money in MDF marketing funds, only to discover that most of these activities do not generate nearly the return that direct marketing activities do. This lack of investment return from MDF marketing activities is traceable to two primary functional failures, as well as a lack of systems investment. Let's explore these in a logical fashion.

Marketing Gaps

The challenge here comes down to a failure to align channel marketing with other functions within the organization when putting together MDF marketing-driven channel programs.

- **Channel-focused programs:**

While channel marketing has improved quite substantially over the past decade, it is still in its infancy compared to direct marketing. I have pointed out in other articles that direct marketing programs tend not to work in channel marketing and why. I won't repeat that discussion here except to remind readers that you cannot take successful direct marketing campaigns and simply roll them over on the channel marketing side and expect partners to run them successfully using MDF marketing dollars. The main problem with that approach is that channel programs need to be super simple to scale.

- **Duration of MDF marketing programs:**

Most MDF marketing programs are not run for an extended period of time. Channel programs based on MDF marketing, run as an extension of channel sales, tend to focus on most activities within a quarterly framework, and without a properly thought-out approach to the types of products that are being sold, how long it takes to generate leads and nurture them to close. In this context, quarterly measurements often come up empty. This is a very simple yet profoundly impactful problem that can be easily fixed with proper expectation setting and tracking.

- **Partner marketing concierge:**

Finally, most channel partner organizations lack dedicated marketing resources to truly drive MDF marketing programs and generate leads. This confounds challenges in partner adoption, tracking and results production. However, a lack of marketing resources can be easily addressed by allocating **concierge resources**, which can help partners drive simple, scalable and high-impact programs consistently around the world.

Sales Gaps

At the end of the day, marketing is not simply about “activities.” It is about driving programs that actually build sales pipeline. Creators of MDF marketing programs always need to keep this in mind. Here are the top three areas to focus on to make sure leads from MDF marketing activities actually close:

- **Alignment of marketing and sales:**

Alignment of channel marketing programs with **partner training** and sales **incentives** is critical for success. In many cases, channel marketing teams roll out MDF marketing programs that really do not close the loop end to end. We see this all the time: When marketing programs that generate leads also have sales incentives programs linked to them, they tend to perform quite a bit better.

- **Partner sales training:**

Generating leads is only half the battle. The other half involves making sure sales people are trained to close those leads. In most cases when a channel partner sells multi-brand products, their primary focus will be on getting their sales team trained on high-volume, core products. If your organization is not part of a partner’s core product portfolio, or if your solutions get attached to core products only occasionally, making sure that your partners can actually sell your product when opportunities arise is extremely important.

- **Celebrating success:**

We talk about this with all of our customers. It is very important to make sure that, once a sales organization has closed deals based on leads generated from MDF marketing activities, you and your partners celebrate success together. Making it visible brings more credibility to the overall program.

When marketing and sales **celebrate success** together, they share their positive experiences, but they also discuss what needs improvement, and this drives the success of future MDF marketing programs.

As you can tell from this article, helping MDF marketing programs generate ROI requires proper thinking, horizon planning and alignment between marketing and sales team. However, all of these bases can easily be covered if the marketing and sales teams sit down together and plan programs on an annual basis, and then run them six months at a time to evaluate results, drive improvement and scale what is working. All of this is quite doable—it just requires patience, planning and cross-functional execution.





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