



5 Things to Look for in Selecting a Great **Channel Marketing Agency**



If you are going to invest in building out a channel marketing agency as an extension of your team, you need to find one that is innovative, agile and multi-cultural.

If you are selling through the channel in today's world of borderless enterprises, it is critical to have a partnership with the right **channel marketing agency**. Whether your core focus is hardware, software or services, chances are there are capabilities you need to augment by tapping into an external channel marketing agency. But there are so many of them out there. When you put out an RFP and begin the process of selecting an agency, how can you be sure you have the right partner for your channel marketing needs? It is certainly not easy, but you can make the right choice if you prioritize the following five core areas.

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- **Focus on results** – Your channel marketing agency should be obsessed with helping you succeed. (If not, get rid of them in a hurry.) Beyond that, they should be obsessed about return on your investment (ROI)—to the extent that they’re not afraid to argue with you when you want to spend money with them! Their focus needs to be on how they deliver results for you, but not how you deliver revenue to them. The best way to evaluate this is to speak to their existing clients. How long have they done business with their current client base? What is their retention rate? And how do they bill? By the minute or by the hour, or by the results they deliver? Once you have this perspective, you can quickly separate the good from the bad and the ugly.
- **Moves at a digital speed** – The channel moves fast, and channel programs move even faster. By the time a quarter begins, you are rushing to put plans in place. Then, before you know it, the quarter is over. You need a channel marketing agency that can move as fast as you need them to. You need people who have great program planning and execution capabilities, so that they can keep up as you plan forward. Execution absolutely needs to meet planned targets. Ideally, the agency you select will have a digital channel marketing infrastructure in place that they own and can quickly improve upon. This is a huge differentiator today, especially if you want to move fast.
- **Digital competency** – Gone are the days when you can hire a bunch of people by the hour and train them to perform your channel marketing tasks. Today’s channel marketing environment requires sophisticated skillsets related to **partner relationship management, partner marketing management** and **partner sales management**. However, no matter what your current project entails, you will almost certainly need an agency that has a very high level of digital competency. This digital competency should not only be in marketing programs, but also in internal operations such as **lead management** and distribution, **incentives management**, and other sales and marketing functions.

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- **Global presence, local support** – Most multinationals today run global channel programs. While certain elements of those programs are localized, you need an agency that can provide support at both ends of the spectrum. That means working closely with your corporate team, but also working with local, in-country channel marketing team members to drive results. In some cases programs are highly customized by region. Regional buying

cycles by verticals can be quite different from place to place. That's why it's so important that your agency not only has a global presence, but also knows how to act and deliver locally. As a global partner, your channel marketing agency should be able to quickly add relevant competencies in different markets. That way, when you know what you want to do, you can outsource the work and get it done sooner rather than later.

- **Better than you** – Yes, you read that right. This is a key criterion. After all, what is the value of hiring a channel marketing agency if they cannot bring great ideas and real practices to improve your performance? One of the values of hiring an external agency is being able to tap into the expertise that they have developed by delivering results over the years for a broad range of clients in the marketplace. In fact, a truly global agency can not only apply ideas and practices from one vertical to another, but also from one market to another. For example, EMEA and APJ are quite similar in terms of channel complexity due to the diversity of languages and cultures, but these markets are also quite distinct in other ways. You want an agency that understands these nuances and can advise you on how to scale globally by acting locally.

// While there are many other functional competencies to look for when you are evaluating a global channel marketing agency, the reality is that you are a channel expert and should be able to quickly figure out if they can do the job or not. A key differentiator among agencies is whether they can go above and beyond the scope and the job that you have in mind right now. Needs change rapidly, and the channel evolves at the speed of digital, so if you are going to invest in building out a channel marketing agency as an extension of your team, you need to find one that is innovative, agile and multi-cultural.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't end this with a sales pitch at the end: If you are struggling to find all of these attributes in an agency, please give me a call. We can help you.



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