



7 Key **Partner Relationship Management Best Practices**

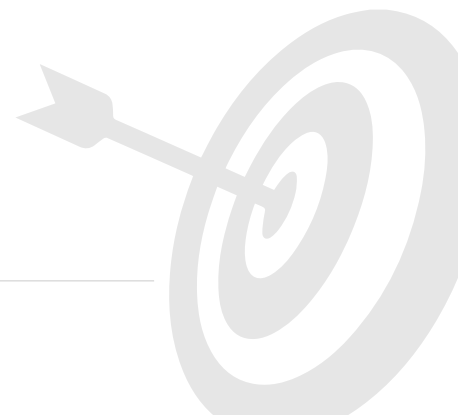


7 Key for Partner Relationship Management Best Practices

Keeps your focus on big picture and on the channel activities that matter the most.

Selling through the channel is a complex undertaking, and it's easy to get off track. Maybe your sales velocity has diminished because of increasing channel management costs. Perhaps there is too much churn in your partner base or your ROI from co-marketing activities has taken a turn downward. Or maybe your partner base just doesn't have the marketing and sales competencies necessary to keep revenues growing. You can try addressing each of these problems one-by-one, but what you really need is a comprehensive, fully integrated PRM framework that establishes a strong business proposition for your partners. To help you get there, I am going to provide you with a series of partner relationship management best practices.

// Keep in mind that state-of-the-art partner relationship management software can make a huge difference in your efforts to integrate these core functions. A good PRM system will also provide the business intelligence to track your progress and identify areas that need immediate attention. //



- 1. Partner portal:** The first of our partner relationship management best practices focuses on the partner portal, because this is the primary means that you have at your disposal for communicating with and engaging your partner base. More than anything else, your partner portal requires a dynamic content management system that is fully mobile, and that can be easily configured to get the right content to the right partners at the right time. It should also be able to connect seamlessly to other PRM functions like **partner training** and incentives management.
- 2. Partner recruitment:** A formal program for recruiting and onboarding partners is essential for any organization serious about partner relationship management best practices. Any partner who joins your program should immediately and automatically be enrolled in a 30-60-90-day **onboarding** process with clear steps and milestones that will ensure partners can navigate the portal, have a clear business plan, have signed necessary agreements and are familiar with the programs that can help them market and sell your solutions.
- 3. Partner training:** Does your organization offer an online learning management system (LMS) to your partner base? Combine this with some targeted face-to-face training events to get your partners engaged with your solutions and ready to sell.
- 4. Partner engagement:** Engagement is not just an abstract goal. It should be a structured program with specific tools. Partner relationship management best practices include the deployment of easy-to-use engagement tools like a dynamic partner portal, role-based **content delivery**, **social marketing** connectors, multi-touch **email marketing** tools and templates, **event marketing** tools, **microsite tools** and more. Engagement means providing partners with programs and tools that are timely and relevant.
- 5. Deal registration:** Most channel programs will offer deal protection and registration as their channel grows. You can rely on a CRM for this, but CRM systems are rarely ideal for the unique characteristics of the channel. A purpose-built PRM platform will save you the headaches of trying to make your CRM fulfill these functions and will reduce the complexity of trying to manage a **deal registration** program across multiple partner types and tiers on a global scale.
- 6. Incentives management:** Any thoughtful approach to partner relationship management best practices must address the fundamental challenge of driving demand. One of the best ways to do this is provide fair, transparent incentives programs that stimulate competition, and reward and recognize superior performance. Again, an integrated PRM system can be a big help by automating the management of market **development funds** (MDF), incentives programs, sales **rewards and rebates**.
- 7. Multi-partner demand generation:** A good PRM platform will provide partners with a complete set of strategic integrated tools for activities like **search marketing**, web and **social syndication**, event marketing, collateral marketing and so on. It will also include real-time **analytics** capabilities that can pinpoint the most important performance metrics and help you figure out what you need to do change in order to improve.

These seven areas of focus comprise a partner relationship management best practices approach that keeps your focus on big picture and on the channel activities that matter the most. Keep in mind that state-of-the-art partner relationship management software can make a huge difference in your efforts to integrate these core functions. A good PRM system will also provide the business intelligence to track your progress and identify areas that need immediate attention.



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