

TAMING CHANNEL

chaos

Reclaiming Channel Partners' Rightful Spot in ABM

While a minority of vendors and partners are ahead of the game, the majority still struggle to stay afloat. Battling MDF measurement and accountability issues on one side, they also struggle with partner performance issues and their sales and marketing misalignment on the other side.

Today, a mere one in three channel marketers are confident that they can optimize their MDF spend. Perhaps this is spurred by the fact that 59% say they have zero visibility into their marketing-generated pipeline or historical campaign analytics, and 78% complain of poor lead conversion.

To this point, channel marketing programs have largely mirrored B2B marketing best practice – to generate and process leads, with a focus on efficiency and quantity. It makes sense, we all want more leads, and it would be great if they were less expensive.

Partners are a critical component within your company's revenue machine. This indirect sales model can amplify the influence and reach of your business, but it can also complicate and disconnect vital communications. Key to this disconnect, while partners have become familiar with receiving MDF, the supporting systems and processes are too often splintered, leaving this critical advocate disengaged because they cannot see the incentives, or lack the right expectations and proficiency. Amplifying this problem, partner sales and marketing teams frequently lack effective communication and collaboration amongst themselves and this misalignment results in a fractured sales funnel.

Doing more of the same isn't working! Most vendors selling through the channel depend on partners to generate demand. Their leads may, or may not, be interesting. And, even if those leads are interesting, you're still reliant upon their teams to communicate effectively, to act with diligence, and to report back to you with precision. There are so many gaps in this system; the unfortunate reality is that the channel often transpires to nothing more than a fulfillment arm for vendors.

Over the last several years, your peer marketers who focus on direct sales strategies have seen similar challenges in their ability to optimize and measure impact using a lead-based marketing approach. A renaissance of sorts, many are now changing approach, shifting focusing to a new Account-Based Marketing (ABM) approach. An integrated ABM strategy can encompass major process flow issues, simplifying complex business objectives, and leveraging emerging technologies to save time, while also fostering a revenue-accountable environment. An ABM enabled channel marketing strategy can help partners achieve these more significant marketing outcomes, faster and with higher sensitivity to their budgetary requirements.

Account-Based Marketing: Leading The Changing Channel

Think of it this way, is the best sales rep at your best partner focused on closing your next lead, or are they committed to closing a massive deal at their best client. The answer is obvious. Your channel partners are already account-based. The question is, when will you be account-based?

Organizations that use a channel-based ABM strategy are advantaged as they tap into the broader reach already built into their channel partner network. This extended ABM strategy provides all parties with the visibility and the foundation for collaboration on the accounts, leads, and deals that help build pipeline, revenue, and partner traction.

"Nearly half of its practitioners said that ABM delivers the highest ROI of any marketing approach. By reducing the influence of intuition, gut-level feelings, and relationship-based biases, channel professionals and marketers will be on their way to similarly positive results. Partner Based Marketing success requires not only leveraging marketing insights from firmographic, demographic, and technographic data but also integrating historically siloed channel data on pricing, inventory, incentives, and co-selling and co-marketing programs".

Jay McBain, Principal Analyst Global Channels at Forrester Research

Applying ABM to your channel program – where and when

There are two key areas where channel marketing professionals should consider the application of Account-Based Marketing:

1. "TO" programs – ABM is a great fit in helping you build and motivate your channel partners. The primary

challenge here is to create an applicable database of target partners. While you likely already know those who are approved or certified to sell your solutions, what about competitive solutions, would you like to split their market share? Once you select the right list of partners, segment them by focus industry, geography, or other criteria that help you identify a proxy for your tiering strategy.

2. "THROUGH" programs – This "two-step" version of ABM, similar to the steps between vendor/distributor/partner relationships, marketers can apply MDF driven demand gen efforts to reach and engage specific target accounts that exist on the other side of partners. Perhaps you have a new product launch or promotion that applies to certain partner tier and target account type, or you want to trigger service renewals and product upgrades at particular target accounts – this version of ABM is the ticket. This connected relationship between your needs, specific audience needs and the relationship of those audience members to specific partners creates a highly accountable and measurable ecosystem.

The balance of this paper will focus on the second option, Through programs, as this presents the highest value and most innovative approach to help you manage, control, and optimize your channel partner sales pipeline and the use of your MDF funds.

Building The Channel ABM Workflow

Configuration	Identification & Exploration	Proposition	Orchestration	Attribution
Vendor/ Partner Terms of Reference	Training & Education	Vendor Revised Content	Managed By 3rd Party (ABM Vendor, MAP etc.)	Vendor Lead Scoring Modelling
Channel Mapping	Account Black Lists (Partner & Vendor)	Partner Detailed Content	Partner Platform Utilization Where Available	Partner Funnel Scoring Methodologies
Vendor Lead Scoring	Audit of Partner Content	Content Adaptation	Sales Stakeholder Contribution	Engagement & Revenue Metrics
Vendor Marketing & Sales Funnel Mechanisms	Identification & Buy-in from Key Partner Marketing & Sales Stakeholders	Partner Validation (key ROI and performance activity)	Sales & Marketing alignment	Deal Registration
	Account Exploration	Partner & Vendor Collective Value Proposition		
	Intent reporting and scoring			
	Vendor Validation			
	Partner Data Enrichment			

Requirements for your Channel ABM Program

As you start down this path, you will likely come to the question of “who can help me?” As you ponder this question, examine your options from the perspective of these considerations:

Full Service vs Tech Only

It's critical that your technology vendor also be a channel marketing expert. The last thing you need is another tool to sit stagnant in your tech stack. Whether concerns over internal adoption or challenges regarding integration of technology or process, you should prioritize platform options that can accommodate your needs. Even as those needs change over time.

Channel Capable Targeting and Reporting

This is the crucial difference between channel ABM technologies and those available for direct sales and marketing teams, and the key driver to identify and optimize conversion and pipeline issues. In the channel, the technical requirements are more advanced, the selected platform must be able to accommodate program construction and reporting based upon multiple tiers, multiple partners per tier, and multiple target accounts per partner. This connected relationship will control program personalization, lead routing, MDF accrual and program spend. It will also serve as the framework necessary to report a connection between marketing spend and the generation of actual pipeline that's attributable to partners in a consistent manner.

Single Point of “Truth”

An unrestricted stream of intelligence is the only means to make ABM work in the channel environment. This means a

single shared data source with open lines of communication between sales and marketing, both at a partner **AND** vendor levels. Channel marketers need access to a complete view within the ecosystem and know which accounts are the most significant sales opportunity at a point in time, know which ones are working with multiple sales partners, and be able to see this across partner offices and different geographies. Channel marketers also need to see partner close rates, follow up patterns, and revenue pipeline. Alternatively, partners need to see lead flow and be able to report status.

Program Funding Options – MDF or OpEx?

Can your channel ABM technology work within the options you have at hand. While OpEx is easier, MDF is more prevalent... yet harder for platform vendors to properly manage.

Channel Partner Diagnostics

Before starting the process of mapping channel relationships into an ABM platform, channel marketers must first assess the completeness of their partner ecosystem. Of the 100,000 + potential partners, are you already working with the “right” ones?

Optimized Partner Lead Routing

Beyond knowing which partner to send a lead to, you need to know how to reroute and optimize the allocation of leads to partners. Key to this is the ability to establish baseline follow up and lead disposition rules. Using this capability, channel marketers can elect reward top-performing partners with increasing lead flow, based upon conversion success, timely reporting, and pipeline revenue generation.

Partner Education

We all hope that partner sales and marketing teams are advanced advocates for our solutions, but the reality is that most need help. The more comfortable you make it for partner team members to become confident advocating your solutions, the more frequently they will do it, and the more

valuable they will grow to their target accounts. Whether a computer-based training on your marketing programs or a new certification course, your technology vendor should be able to track participation and be able to use certifications as a means to properly route high-value leads.

“Marketers should think about creating programs that not only give partners funding, but also qualify the investment with requirements for continuing marketing education.”
Terry Moffatt, Editor at Channel Marketer Report

Partner Marketing Materials

In an ideal relationship, channel partners are actively sharing numerous forms of content, shared by both their sales and marketing teams. Often cobranded, it should be easy for partners to access this information and use it to advocate for your solution.

Customer Successes Story

Enterprise Technology Vendor

A \$49B multinational technology firm sought to empower their partners with insights surrounding some of their hardest to reach channel target accounts – whitespace and dormant accounts. The need for “going digital” in the channel highlighted the client’s requirement for a scalable, integrated channel execution program delivered to partners, with high volume goals quarter over quarter.

MRP Channel ABM Program Deliverables:

- Monitor intent signals across 4,000 whitespace accounts, using more than 2000 Intent topics
- Integrate client sales and marketing systems with MRP real-time streaming intent and predictive analytics
- Trigger media selection based upon Intent and Predictive Analytics scoring, delivering robust, cross-channel orchestrations using display advertising, direct mail, and email.
- Lead management technology and resources necessary to ensure prompt and accurate lead disposition

Results:

- 200% Growth Year Over Year
- \$711 million sales qualified pipeline

MRP Channel Offering

MRP has been delivering results in the channel, for the largest, and most complex companies in the world, since our inception nearly 20 years ago. Partners who participate in MRP programs, grow their business faster, stay loyal to your brand, and drive more trackable revenue in their target market.

In a fragmented and disconnected operating environment, MRP clients can optimize MDF investments, track conversion by partner and tactic, and have consistent and measureable pipeline revenue reporting. To achieve this, we view our offering in four groups:

- **“To” Partner Channel Programs:** MRP operates as an account/partner-based marketing engine for clients, enabling them to identify new partners, and then engage, recruit, onboard, and educate them. Using our proprietary database with more than 117,000 reseller organizations around the globe, we help channel marketing teams benchmark the completeness of their current partner selection and manage this ecosystem with the highest level of intelligence; whether targeting competitors or fit by industry and geography.
- **“Through” Partner Channel Programs:** MRP is the only provider of true multi-partner ABM programs available today, and we’ve cracked to code on how you can tap MDF to help fuel these high-impact programs. Our proven global capability delivers full-service execution of multichannel marketing programs designed to target based upon account level intent and predictive scoring, as well as renewal or competitive data. Built into our platform, we execute across five channels and track performance directly into your CRM. We put you in control of your MDF, conversion, and pipeline objectives.
- **“With” Partner Channel Programs:** text
- **Channel Operations Management:**
 - **Lead Management:** Using technology and experts, we tune and track your conversion and pipeline contribution. Ensuring consistent measurement and providing complete visibility into successes and failures but partner and tactic, clients who use this capability grow channel revenue twice as fast as those who do not.
 - **Lead Routing and Optimization:** MRP can automate the tracking of each lead and optimize the delivery of leads in real-time based upon the history of partner follow up, conversion, and revenue impact.

MRP Prelytix, the Only Enterprise Class Predictive ABM Platform.

For enterprise organizations that serve multiple geographies, lines of business or industries, Prelytix is the only ABM platform designed to give you control of your data, visibility into your target market and scale in the delivery of the highest impact engagement strategy.

Leading B2B sales and marketing organizations choose MRP for our ability to deliver and measure revenue impact across a half-dozen online and offline channels, our global workforce with expertise across 100 countries and 20 languages and our ability to simplify connections between insight and action using the industry's first application of real-time AI and Machine Learning. Powered by Kx, Prelytix sits on top of the fastest streaming analytics database in the world.

Schedule a demo today to learn more about how MRP Prelytix can help your team revolutionize your marketing goals.

For more information visit: www.mrpf.com