SCALEUP

PARTNERSHIPS HANDBOOK | 2020

INSIGHT
PARTNERS

A strong partner program can have unprecedented impact on the growth trajectory of a business in the ScaleUp phase. Partnerships drive an efficient and effective indirect revenue source that can accelerate new ARR and facilitate expansion in existing accounts. However, building a successful partner flywheel is not easy.
It requires the right business capabilities and market momentum in addition to a carefully designed strategy to succeed.

Insight is passionate about helping companies ScaleUp. We believe channel partners and partner programs are a critical lever for intelligent scaling in high growth software companies. This handbook provides a 6-step process to help you think through the various pieces that comprise a strong partner program. With Insight, you can access the best ScaleUp resources from the experts doing it now.

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STEP 1:
VALIDATE

YOU'VE ESTABLISHED SUFFICIENT REVENUE AND SCALE. YOUR PRODUCT IS PROVEN, YOU HAVE REFERENCEABLE CUSTOMERS AND PREDICTABLE ARR. PERHAPS YOU HAVE INFORMALLY PARTNERED WITH COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCT OR SERVICES COMPANIES IN A RECENT DEAL OR VIA A JOINT MARKETING CAMPAIGN.

So, you're ready to dive head first into building out a channel partner program, right? You're a growing software company. Isn't that what you're supposed to do? Maybe you're dreaming about how the partner flywheel will alleviate any new bookings hurdles and open a treasure chest of new ARR.

...LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE TO UNDERSTAND WHETHER YOU ARE INDEED READY...

...Not so fast. Before embarking down the path of building a channel partner program, it's important to pause, and look at the big picture to understand whether you are indeed ready to (or should) build out a channel partner strategy. Investing in the channel is exciting and can pay big dividends for your business, but it comes with its fair share of risk. The channel is not a magic bullet, flick of a switch solution. Be prepared to invest a great deal of time, money, and effort to get it up and running. Partnering is hard work and having the right frameworks in place to build out a sound strategy is key.

START PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE PARTNERS' SHOES NOW!

Successful channel execution is the focus of this ScaleUp handbook. The goal is to inspire you to ask the right questions and become attuned to the patterns that could either trip you up or bring you great success. Many of Insight's portfolio investments are at the point in their growth trajectories where they are considering building or strengthening their indirect revenue stream. Insight Onsite has channel expertise to help you grow and navigate the partner path.

Our 6-step journey to channel success provides a framework to validate and define a channel strategy, recruit and enable your partners, and ultimately grow and analyze your program. This ScaleUp handbook will explore the crucial steps necessary to set you down the path to achieving an efficient and powerful partner flywheel channel.

And, with this preamble, let's start at step 1. It's critical to take the time to carefully validate your reasoning for "why channel?" before launching into any solidified planning.

Validate – It starts with why

Why is a simple question, but it isn't an easy one. Take the time to dig into the motivations behind moving to the channel in order to identify whether you truly understand the reasoning and whether that reasoning makes sense.

WHY WILL A PARTNERSHIP MAKE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BETTER?

The very first question you should ask is: Why will a partnership make the customer experience better? If the answer isn't clear, then I would advise rethinking your motivations. Counterintuitively, this is not about what channel can do for your business, but what it can do for customers. The goal of any partnership should be to bring added value to the end user experience. That value could be in the form of seamless implementation, better support, stronger user experience, or verticalized domain expertise.

After you consider the customer, you must understand why a partner would want to work with your company in the first place: Why will working with you benefit the partner? For example, partners could sell more to their existing customers in order to maintain a stickier relationship, fill gaps in their customers' pain points, or drive incremental business for themselves. If you feel confident with your answers to these two questions...great! Onward. But, ensure you're maintaining a customer and partner-first mentality throughout your planning process.

Partnering is by no means a “build it, they will come” scenario. It’s paramount to take the time to validate why you’re looking to invest in channel partners. Maybe your answer is as simple as: “Direct sales have plateaued.” But, if you don’t know why your direct sales aren’t growing like they used to, you certainly should not assume that investing in channel partners will resolve the issue. Can your products offer partners added value they aren’t getting elsewhere? Is there anything that should be fixed or improved before building out your channel strategy?

Validate your business readiness

Some additional channel readiness questions are below to help you think through whether your business is equipped to hit the ground running with partners. If you answer “yes” to more than 5 of the questions below, your business is more than likely ready, or at least on the path to channel readiness.

Have you established a predictable ARR engine?

If you are primarily a direct sales business, it makes sense to reach predictability through your direct selling motion before building out an indirect revenue source.

Have you achieved product-market fit?

The channel is not going to push the ball uphill. Pull from the market is a necessary precursor to get partners onboard.

Do you have reference customers?

Having repeat customers that are willing and able to speak to the value your business brings is incredibly important. Without referenceable customers, your partners aren't going to have the confidence they need to invest in selling your product.

Are your products/services documented and understood by a third party, hence ready for a partner to implement/sell?

If your products/services are overly complicated and lack clear and simple documentation, chances are partners will have a difficult time getting up to speed on sales and technical implementation. We will get to this later in the "Enable" step, but keep in mind that direct sales enablement is going to be a different beast than partner sales enablement. These two groups care about different things. Materials can be leveraged from direct to partner, but ultimately, direct and partner enablement should be personalized to the things each party cares about.

CLEARLY DEFINED STAGES OF EVERY SALES CYCLE ARE KEY TO GETTING THE DEAL DONE IN THE MOST EFFICIENT MANNER

Is your messaging easy to understand?

A good test here is to take a close look at how well your direct sales reps understand and articulate your value proposition and product marketing messages in a selling situation. Are they able to answer tough questions from prospects? If the answer is "sometimes" or "eh, maybe not" – an external party (a partner) is probably not going to do any better. Make sure your value is clearly defined.

Is your sales cycle overly complex?

Clearly defined stages of every sales cycle are key to getting the deal done in the most efficient manner. It's important to have assigned roles and responsibilities, timelines, and stages for both direct and partner selling motions. For example, maybe there is an assigned SA for partner-sourced

deals that lives and breathes partner. That person is the partner's technical "go-to." Whatever it is, be sure you have your deal cycle execution mapped out.

Is your product relatively straightforward to implement?

Software is complicated! There may be several technical integration points (some or most of them customized) and phases of implementation in order to get a customer up and running, but if that is not clearly outlined, a partner will shy away from investing. Speed to market is important. The faster a customer is off to the races, the faster partner services can be put to work.

Do you have alignment across functional teams?

Channel is not a siloed function. It spans all departments in a business. If product isn't on board, you have a problem. If marketing is unsure, you're in trouble. No partner support on the customer support side of the house? Well, that's an issue. Ensure you are gaining alignment and clearly defining stakeholders (ideally with quarterly channel success targets attached to them) and systems across all functions.

Is there executive support and budget allocation?

Your leadership and your board must be fully behind your efforts in order to make channel successful. They are your biggest cheerleaders. It's important they understand that giving up margin in the short-term will pay dividends in the medium to long-term. Building a channel takes time (24 months should be allotted before seeing any real traction). Without understanding and enthusiasm behind the investment, you will be fighting a losing battle from the start.

Are you ready to dedicate ongoing enablement and marketing resources?

As discussed, the channel is not a "flip the switch" solution. In order to arm partners with the right enablement and marketing, you need to hire and invest in the right infrastructure (e.g., deal management software, partner portal, etc.). This is not a one-time thing. Ongoing commitment to enablement and marketing are critical to lasting success.

ENSURE YOU ARE **GAINING ALIGNMENT AND CLEARLY DEFINING STAKEHOLDERS** (IDEALLY WITH QUARTERLY CHANNEL SUCCESS TARGETS ATTACHED TO THEM) AND SYSTEMS ACROSS ALL FUNCTIONS.

The graphic below shows how you may outline your own channel readiness factors and areas for improvement that must be addressed before building out the channel. It's important to have a clear handle on this before diving into the "Define" phase.

Factor			Description
Channel readiness factors	✓	Sufficient revenue & scale	• Generally, software companies that sell only direct should establish predictable incoming ARR with low churn and repeat customers before investing in the channel
	✓	Stable, proven product	• Core product is proven in the market with large reference customers • Product will not require frequent retraining as product evolves
Areas for improve-ment	!	Product marketing & messaging refinement	• Product packaging is unclear (category mind-shift) • Messaging focused on technology vs. proactive education on the long-term business value • Clear messaging for easy understanding and selling
	!	Complex sales cycle	• Sales reps aren't properly enabled/don't understand the technical and business implications for your product across different industries
	!	Complex integration	• Integration is difficult for customers, who often have complicated internal IT systems • Takes engineers several months to get comfortable with integration process
	!	Limited resources dedicated to partners	• Limited to no resources dedicated to channel success (e.g., head of channel, partner sales reps) • No devoted technical resources for partner products or partner questions

If you can confirm that your business is ready to build a channel (or, at minimum know what to fix to make it ready), next up is validating the market opportunity. Bottom line: If you're failing at direct, you won't succeed with the channel. The channel is not a panacea. However, it can certainly help your business scale efficiently and effectively into the future. Once you have a compelling reason as to why you are building out the channel, you can move into figuring out how to do it.

Validate the business opportunity

Validating the channel opportunity requires understanding what your goals are and where the opportunity lies. Ask yourself whether any of the below five statements describes you.

1. Your product is not stand-alone, so maybe you need partners in order to sell and/or implement it.
2. You're looking to reach a new customer segment – moving into the Mid-Market or Enterprise.
3. You're looking to reach new geographies.
4. You're looking to reach new vertical markets.
5. You're looking to reach new buyer personas or lines of business.

Once you've examined your business reasons for wanting to build a channel, ask yourself the below questions to ensure that you are ready to start defining what your program will look like. These should be answered for each new vertical market, new geography, or buyer persona you plan to target.

- Will the customer be satisfied working with a partner? How does the customer want to engage in the selling cycle?
- What outcomes do you want to achieve? Which target should you prioritize first, and how large is the opportunity?
- How does the customer purchase today, and which partners do they currently work with?
- What is your expected timeline to see results?
- How much resource (people, money, time) are you prepared to devote?

YOU NEED TO BE SURE YOU HAVE A STRONG REASON TO TAKE ON PARTNERS AND ULTIMATELY BE THE BEST PARTNER YOU CAN BE

From Validate to Define

Initially, you need to validate your channel plans. Why are we doing this in the first place? Are we really ready? Is our product sophisticated enough? Is our brand strong enough? You need to be sure you have a strong reason to take on partners and ultimately be the best partner you can be.

2

STEP 2:
DEFINE

ONCE YOU'VE ESTABLISHED YOUR GOALS AND JUSTIFIED BOTH YOUR COMPANY'S READINESS AND THE MARKET'S READINESS, YOU'RE PREPARED TO BEGIN DEFINING YOUR CHANNEL STRATEGY.

Define – lay the right groundwork

It's time to start shaping your plans, identifying who your prospective partners are, and putting pen to paper on the type of channel operating model that will work best for your business.

Defining your channel strategy

Remember, what you do depends on what you want. As you begin planning, consider the following:

- What benefit would partners get from you that they wouldn't get elsewhere?
- Which type of partner should you pursue?
- What should the operating model look like?
- How do you both make money?

Defining which types of partners

CHOOSE WISELY AND ADOPT A WIDE VIEW WHEN SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT PARTNERS

Defining which types of partners to prioritize should generally be an organic thought process stemming directly from your overarching goals for wanting to build a channel in the first place. You cannot choose the partners to go after until you have validated and clearly defined your goals. Choose wisely and adopt a wide view when searching for the right partners. Don't just choose the largest. Make sure you are considering all factors, such as cultural fit, willingness to engage, industry, geography, and existing capability set.

Defining which products to sell through the channel

In order to build and design the right partner program, you must decide which of your products your partners will sell. It's important to identify the synergies here. Is it your entire product suite? Do your partners offer services that wrap around some or all of your products? Which of your products are ready for partners to sell and implement?

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MAKE SURE YOU’RE THINKING **PARTNER FIRST.**

Make sure you're thinking partner first. Consider the following 3 questions:

1. What can you offer a partner to strengthen/complement their services and ultimately bring them more business?

Consider what's happening in the market. Is there a product of yours that is selling especially well in the industry you are going after with a particular partner? Prioritize recruiting, educating, and enabling the partner on the benefits of that product.

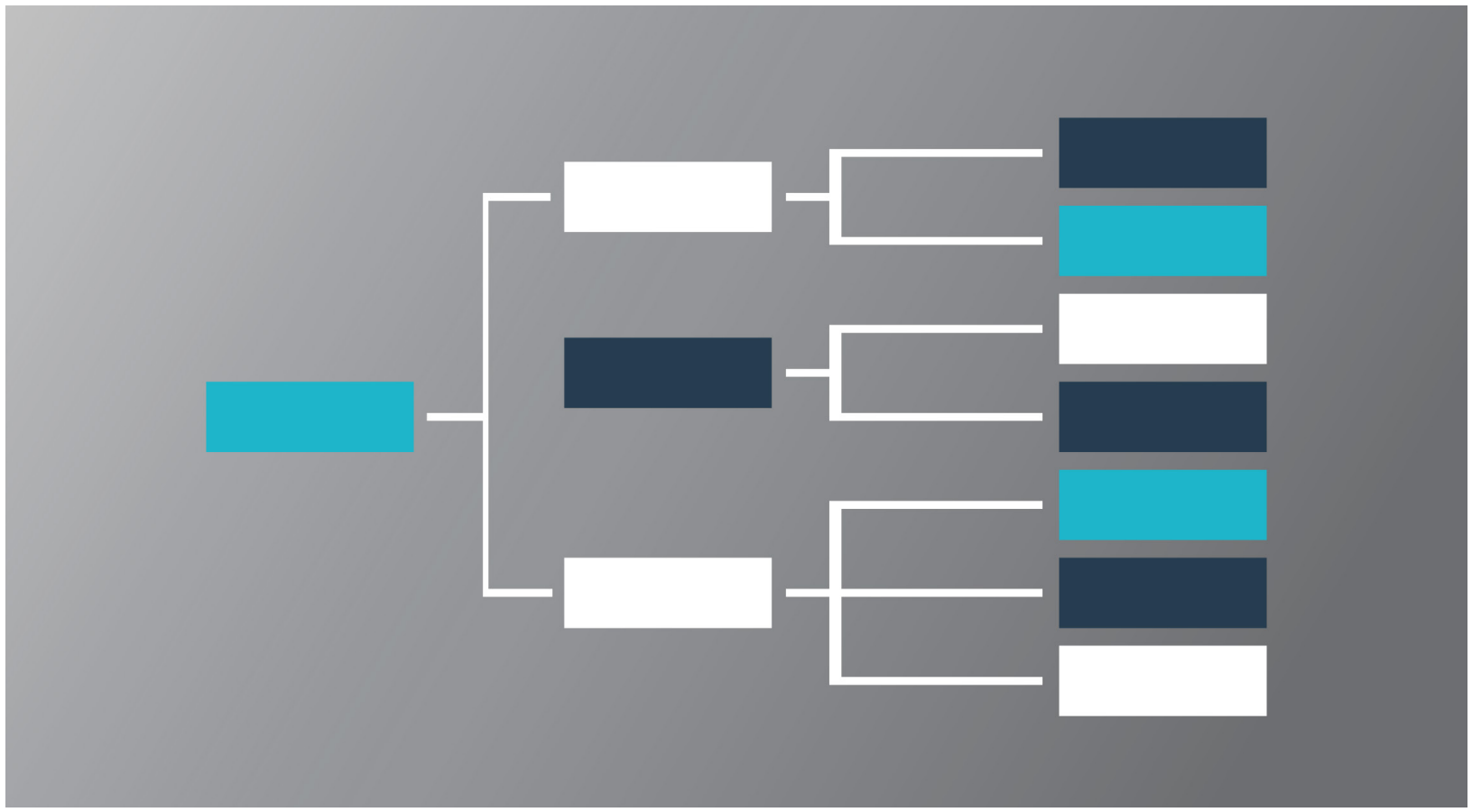
2. Which product would benefit your partners' existing customers most?

Think about both new bookings as well as upsell/cross-sell opportunities. Which products align with your prospective partner's go-to-market strategy and sales pitch? Which of your products will help their case and ultimately facilitate winning new business and maintain stickiness and continued expansion with existing accounts?

MAKE SURE THE PRODUCTS YOU SELL WITH/THROUGH PARTNERS ARE LEARNABLE

3. Last, but certainly not least, is considering the sales, marketing and technical expertise required to sell and implement your product. Are there certain capabilities needed for certain products?

Make sure the products you sell with/through partners are learnable, meaning there is training you can put in place in order to get partners up to speed relatively quickly. If they need to acquire capability sets or resources or invest too heavily in order to even be able to sell the product, that's probably not a great sign.



Defining your channel operating model

There are several operating models to pursue. Does it make sense to build a product or relationship-oriented partnership? Are you selling with your partners or through them? Maybe you're selling for them? Below is an illustrative snapshot of the 4 key software partnership models (along with examples) you could consider in your definition stage:

1. ISV (Independent Software Vendor)

The Salesforce AppExchange includes thousands of software companies that build integrated apps featured on the marketplace all with the end goal of strengthening existent Salesforce customer experiences. Partners partake in a revenue sharing model, but all apps are sold through the Salesforce AppExchange.

2. VAR (Value-Added Reseller)

HubSpot's Agency Partner Program enables agency partners to resell HubSpot licenses to their clients. Taking part in this program offers partners added benefits dependent on partner tier.

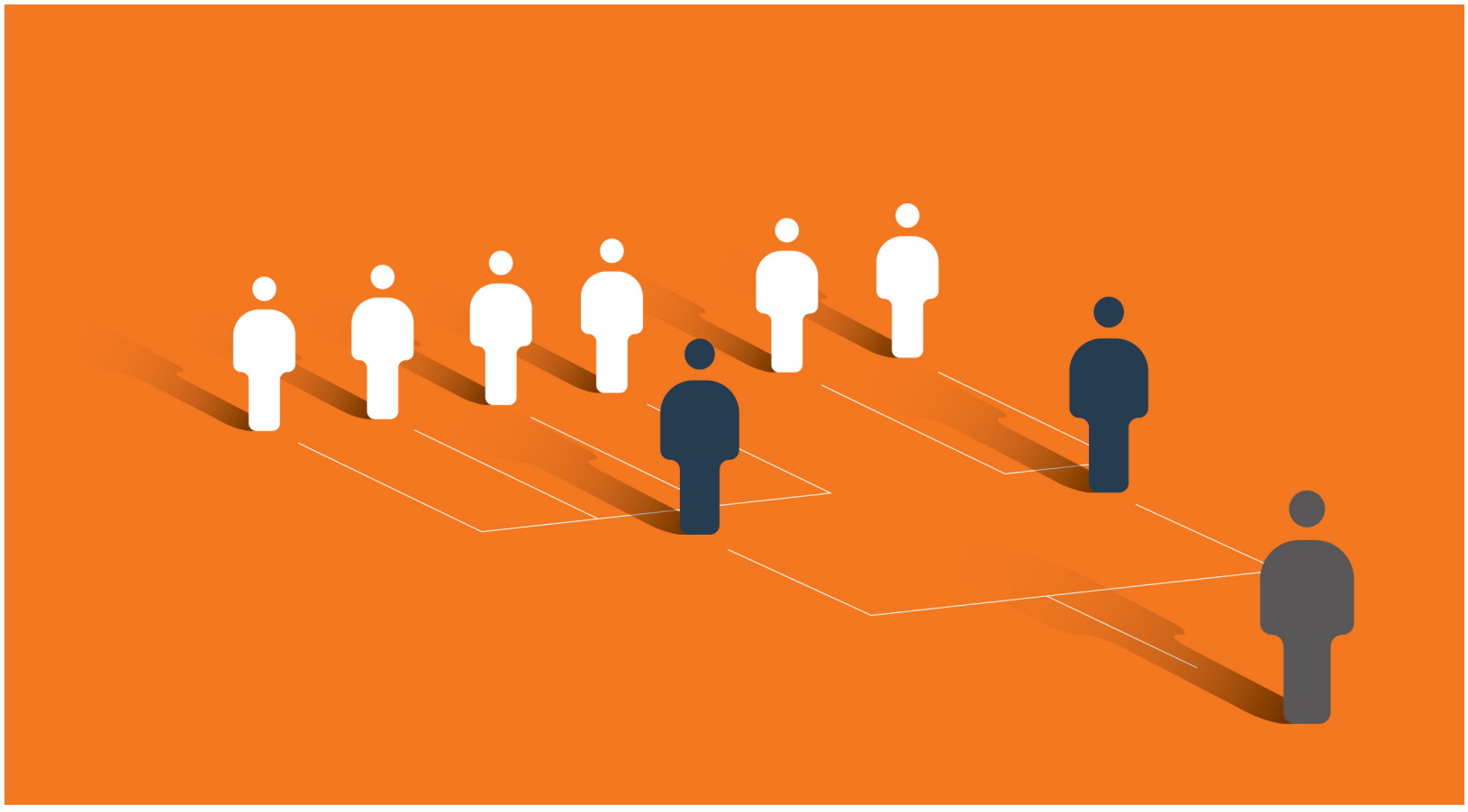
3. Strategic Alliance

A good example of a strategic alliance is Spotify and Uber partnering to personalize music in rides. The ability to play your own Spotify lists in Uber rides enhances the customer experience and also creates opportunities for Uber customers to sign up for Spotify and vice versa.

4. Systems Integrators (also known as GSIs/Global Systems Integrators)

Consultancies (like Accenture or Wipro, but don't overlook some of the smaller, regional SIs out there) provide deep technical expertise and consulting to their customers, both through recommending as well as implementing software across organizational systems. This type of partnership requires significant investment to get up and running but can ultimately hold the key to ASP growth and the enterprise "whale" accounts you've been targeting. Go see them in person, take them to dinner, and put in the effort to actively build these relationships. Show them you want to make this work. These will require significant effort but are worth the upfront investment.

Operating Model	Description	Est. Revenue Share
ISV	Company that builds and/or sells integrated software application(s) that run on an existing platform.	~25-40%
VAR	Company that resells another company's product, often under their own name and branding.	~40-60%
Strategic Alliance	Company that formalizes a relationship with another company in order to achieve more joint business, often through co-selling or referral-based selling.	~5-15%
Systems Integrator	Company that specializes in bringing together component sub-systems into a whole, ensuring that all software functions together.	~5-20%



Defining and designing your program

This section deserves an entire series to itself, but it will cover the basics and a framework to get your thoughts rolling on the ingredients needed to build a thoughtful channel program. Keep in mind that this skims the surface. We will go into more detail on several of the areas below in future posts. Here are some areas you should play particular attention to when getting started:

Channel Team Structure

YOUR CHANNEL SALES TEAM STRUCTURE LARGELY DEPENDS ON YOUR GOALS AND HOW YOUR BROADER SALES TEAM IS SET UP

Your channel sales team structure largely depends on your goals and how your broader sales team is set up. In general, you want to work towards a model that creates predictable and consistent coverage across all of your major sales territories as well as global scale and strategic new market entry. This strategy will evolve as your program matures. You may gradually work your way towards more of a managed partner model where each channel manager has a list of partners they "own" and formulate strategic plans with on an annual basis. There are several ways to structure your team. Regardless of how you define it, make sure you are aligning incentives to both avoid channel conflict (internal and external) and incentivize the right behavior to achieve your goals.

Commission/Compensation Structure

Partners

The way you compensate your partners largely depends on the operating model and the maturity of your channel organization. You can see general reference point ranges for partner commission in the chart on page 19. Generally speaking, you want to be competitive on what you're paying out to partners. Understand how your competition is incentivizing their channel and adapt/maintain accordingly.

Internal

You should do everything you can to avoid internal channel conflict between your direct and channel reps. We would generally recommend paying direct sales reps fully on channel-sourced revenue in their territory. This way, your direct team is incentivized to cooperate (not compete) and collaborate on target account strategies with your channel partners, which means all around greater likelihood the deal will close. Depending on the maturity of your channel program and what your priority goals are, you may also decide to compensate your channel managers on channel-influenced bookings or even qualified pipeline in order to encourage the right behavior. A lot of this comes down to channel team roles and responsibilities and the KPIs that help each of those roles meet their targets most effectively. For example, if you are set on recruiting partners, attribute at least part of your rep's target around recruitment quota attainment. Or, if you're looking to strengthen large, globally focused GSI partnerships (budget 6-18 months to begin seeing pipeline on these), set targets around partner influenced or qualified pipeline instead of solely sourced bookings. Ensuring you have the right skillsets aligned to the right overarching goals is key. Bottom line: having strict targets around sourced business is not going to inspire reps to work on building out longer-term strategic partnerships or recruit new partners. Know your priorities and know your teams' strengths.

BOTTOM LINE: HAVING STRICT TARGETS AROUND SOURCED BUSINESS IS NOT GOING TO INSPIRE REPS TO WORK ON BUILDING OUT LONGER-TERM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OR RECRUIT NEW PARTNERS. KNOW YOUR PRIORITIES AND KNOW YOUR TEAMS' STRENGTHS.

THE GOAL HERE IS TO INCENTIVIZE PARTNERS TO MOVE UP THE RANKS AND WANT TO COMMIT MORE TO BUILDING THEIR BUSINESSES WITH YOU

Program Tiering

Many partner programs have tiers based on annual sourced business among other commitments (e.g., commitment to enablement, number of developer certifications, participation in a partner advisory boards, etc.). This can be viewed as a measure of loyalty and determination to build a successful, lasting partnership. The goal here is to incentivize partners to move up the ranks and want to commit more to building their businesses with you. The flipside is that they will also receive more program benefits (e.g., access to product roadmap previews, customized enablement, additional marketing support, invitations to your partner advisory board, etc.).

Channel Marketing

Channel marketing is the function that supports all of the marketing and program management for a channel sales organization. It is an important function that liaises between channel sales and direct marketing, creating synergy across your company's go-to-market. Generally, channel marketing reports into marketing, but will have a very serious dotted line to channel sales. You can boil it down to the following:

Marketing to Partners

Recruiting new partners via generating awareness in the partner eco-system around the benefits of your program as well as nurturing and reactivating existing partners through marketing programs.

Marketing With/Through Partners

Teaming up with your existing partners to develop a joint GTM message in order to generate customer demand. An example of this could be writing an eBook and putting on a webinar around your joint solution for a specific target industry or use case where the partnership thrives. Both of your marketing teams will promote these assets to their prospect databases and share the generated leads. We will cover more on channel marketing in "Step 5: Grow."

Channel Enablement

Enablement is hugely important when it comes to making the channel successful. Without a partner targeted enablement program (both sales and technical/product enablement), you won't get very far. Ensure you have the appropriate resources dedicated to this early on.

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STEP 3:
RECRUIT

ONCE YOU'VE VALIDATED THE OPPORTUNITY AND DEFINED WHAT YOUR PROGRAM WILL LOOK LIKE, IT'S TIME TO BEGIN MAPPING OUT YOUR RECRUITMENT STRATEGY.

Recruit – The "OPP" (Optimal Partner Profile)

We spoke briefly about defining the right types of partners to recruit in Step 2. The bottom line is that putting the upfront work into evaluating your recruits and ensuring that you are going after the right partners is key. Your team should be investing in a uniform "OPP" assessment process before diving into the actual recruiting.

Consider evaluating potential partners on:

1. OPP "Fit"

Characteristics include: industry expertise, geographic coverage, go to market model, competing/complementary technologies and partners, existing/target customers, corporate culture, existing capability sets, etc. Your team should be aligning with direct sales on the relative importance of these traits to your organization's success. Each trait should be mapped and scored for each recruit your team is considering.

2. Willingness to Engage

Willingness to engage is another important factor that is often not appropriately considered. Consider mapping and scoring your recruits list by priority (based on fit) as well as willingness to engage. This exercise will enable you to not only know what to look for when compiling your recruit list but also help diversify your efforts across low, medium, and high input.

It's recommended to score your existing partner ecosystem in the same way. Of course, you can integrate additional factors, such as sourced business and certified developers, into the existing scorecard. This process should be built into either a quarterly or bi-annual review of partner tiers and commitments.

Recruit – Hold the right people accountable

With competition in the software space continuing to heat up and buyer needs constantly evolving, it's important to actively recruit new partners on an ongoing basis. Having a pipeline of new recruits will keep your partner ecosystem fresh and diversified. To do that effectively, you must have channel managers incentivized (read: paid) on recruiting new partners. If there is not clear focus and accountability devoted to recruitment, your team will naturally gravitate towards working existing partnerships.

Additionally, the two activities (growing existing partnerships and recruiting new partners) require very different skill sets and timelines.

This leads me to my next point: consider defining separate roles for partner management/development and partner recruitment (SiriusDecisions does a great job at breaking down the differences between the Channel Account Manager and Channel Development Manager roles). Ultimately, the person who's perfect for building and strengthening a relationship over time is not necessarily the same person who succeeds at finding and successfully engaging a new recruit. If you don't have the budget for separate roles, there should be clear distinction between recruitment vs. development targets and how those align with compensation for each member of your team.

Recruit – Ensure you have the right marketing support

If you have a Channel Marketing resource in place, you are golden. This person/team should be ready and willing to support both: **1) "Market To"** and **2) "Market With"** activities to make partner recruitment as efficient as possible and get new partnerships up and running effectively. If you don't have someone devoted to Channel Marketing, it's important to get top-down support on allocating a piece of your Direct Marketing team's time to partner. Ensure that this commitment is officiated through OKRs.

I would recommend the following:

1) Market To Partners

Messaging

Your messaging to partners needs to be segmented by partner type (e.g., SIs have different needs than creative agencies). Not all partners are created equal. Just as you would with a prospective customer, go through the exercise of creating persona templates by type and invest in understanding and articulating the differentiated value your product offers each persona.

Keep the following questions top of mind when crafting your partner messaging. Ensure you are clarifying how and why your product (over your competitors') helps them diversify their capability set, differentiate their pitch, and ultimately win more business.

- Why should they partner with you?
- How are your products going to help them win more business and expand existing business?
- What marketing/enablement/support benefits do you offer that competitors don't?
- How are your products going to help their pitch?

Webinars/Events

Education-based webinars and events are a good way to enable partners at scale. Try to include a partner-customer success story to illustrate how your product has made a customer super successful while also helping the partner win business.

Make it clear that adding your product to their suite of partner products will offer them more (and "stickier") access to customers.

Newsletter

Keep your products top of mind and highlight relevant feature updates and/or recent customer wins through a monthly partner newsletter. This will build community and ensure that your brand doesn't get lost in the mix.

Keep it simple

Don't overengineer it. Simply show partners why they should partner with you. That's the end (and only) goal. Demonstrate that you are a partner-first organization and that there are tangible business benefits to investing in a partnership with you. Consider mapping out a typical partner services revenue model. Show (monetarily and operationally) how a partners' services wrap around your technology in Year 1 (what can they expect in terms of revenue for that initial subscription sale?) and then Years 2-5 (what is the expansion services opportunity?).

2) Market With Partners

Self-service marketing for lower tier partner recruits

Add top-performing white-labeled marketing collateral to your portal for easy partner access (e.g., a killer eBook that a partner can easily co-brand for selling purposes). You could also test demand generation "campaigns in a box," but ensure that you are providing segmented messaging across buyer and industry. Otherwise, your joint campaigns will come across generic and irrelevant (not ideal, especially when you aren't in control of the final send).

* DON'T OVERENGINEER IT. SIMPLY SHOW PARTNERS WHY THEY SHOULD PARTNER WITH YOU. THAT'S THE END (AND ONLY) GOAL.

“Partner GTM Packs” for Middle Tier Partner Recruits

Create core marketing assets to build foundation with new recruits:

- Joint PR announcing momentum around the partnership
- Joint customer case study
- Joint pitch deck articulating the value add of the partnership
- Web messaging

Joint GTM solutions for top tier partner recruits

Pitch a joint GTM motion with your most strategic recruits. This could entail developing IP or simply investing in sales and marketing collateral/enablement around a niche value-add. Potentially you and your partner want to go after a specific vertical (e.g., regional banks) or horizontal use case (e.g., personalization and channel insights). In order to do this well, you must research what will be attractive to the partner. Look at their current customers and partners. Where’s the white space? Go after that. Leverage your own product’s secret sauce and offer it as a high value-add benefit that complements and strengthens the partner’s pitch.

LEVERAGE YOUR OWN PRODUCT’S SECRET SAUCE
AND OFFER IT AS A HIGH VALUE-ADD BENEFIT THAT COMPLEMENTS AND STRENGTHENS THE PARTNER’S PITCH.

4

STEP 4:
ENABLE

PARTNER ENABLEMENT IS ONE OF THOSE FUNCTIONS THAT OFTEN DOESN'T GET THE LOVE IT DEMANDS AND DESERVES. ENABLING YOUR PARTNERS ON HOW TO SELL AND IMPLEMENT YOUR PRODUCTS IS OF UPMOST IMPORTANCE. THINK ABOUT IT. IF YOU ARE SKIMPING ON ENABLEMENT, YOUR PARTNERS MAY NEVER FEEL CONFIDENT RECOMMENDING YOUR PRODUCT, LET ALONE RECOGNIZING THE RIGHT USE CASES FOR SELLING IT.

It all starts with looking at where your partner segments are in their enablement journeys and creating a cohesive strategy that helps them understand why they should be recommending your product (make this is a no-brainer for them), what they should be recommending when, and how to ultimately sell and implement it effectively.

TO DO PARTNER ENABLEMENT CORRECTLY, YOU NEED TO START FROM SCRATCH

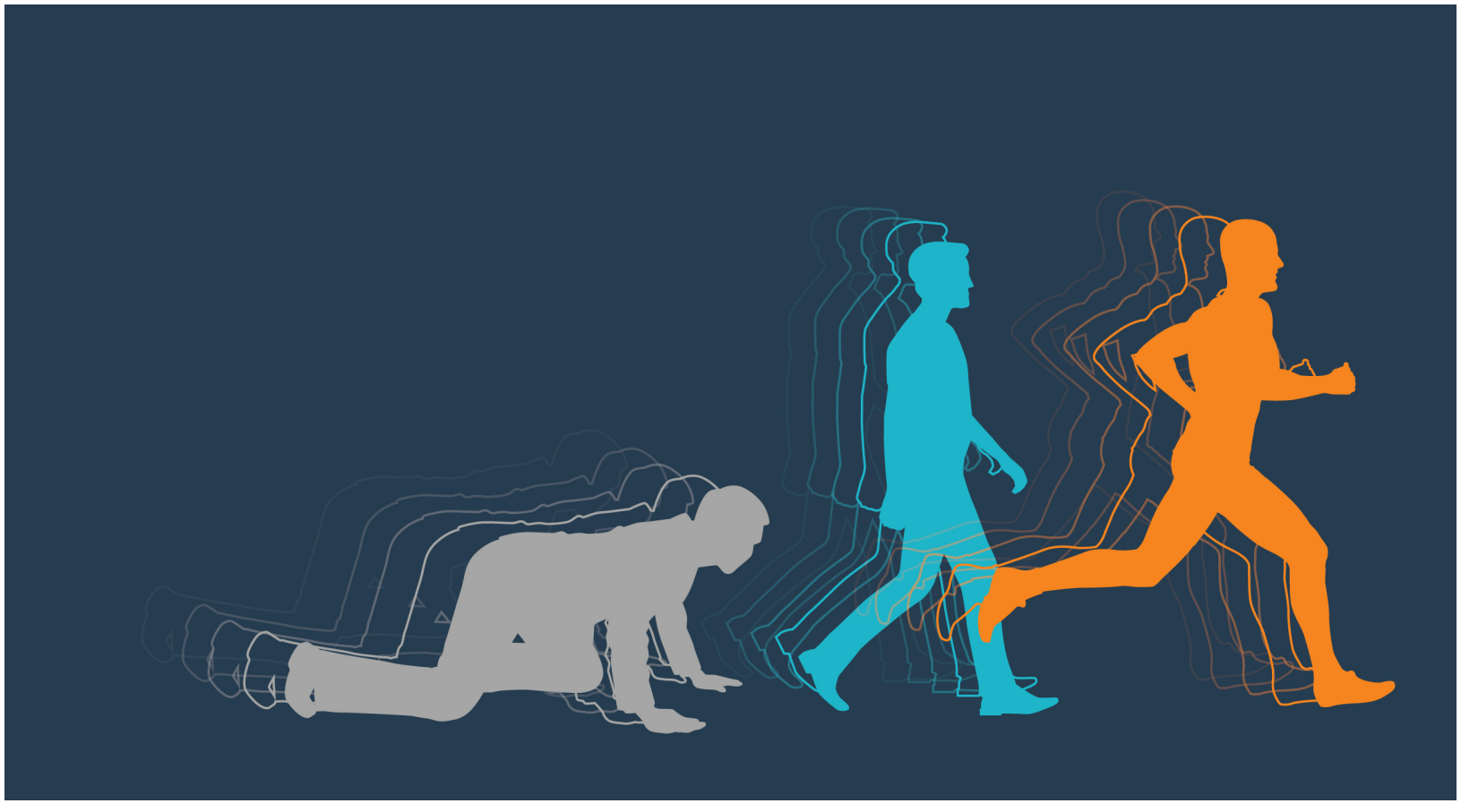
I often hear about partner enablement programs and how robust they are. In reality, when you dig deeper, these programs are often taking what the direct sales enablement teams have built for training and doing a quick "find and replace all" with "partner." This is not the right way to build a successful program. Because a partner enablement manager is generally not the first hire when testing and building out an indirect revenue stream, the thought is that carving out a snippet of the sales enablement team's time will suffice. This is just not true. To do partner enablement correctly, you need to start from scratch (sure, you can leverage product content

and layer in the partner lens). But, when it boils down to it, partners go to market differently, care about different things, and are starting from a very different place in the learning curve when it comes to getting smart on your product. The absence of a holistic and proactive methodology to enabling your partners (keep in mind, this is an ongoing effort) hinders your ability to scale and achieve indirect sales targets. Read on for the key areas every successful partner enablement program should consider.

Onboarding

Let's start at the beginning. Having the appropriate sales and technical enablement in place when onboarding a partner is key. In addition to ensuring you have joint target business plans defined, a regular check-in cadence, and the appropriate introductions underway, you must put both sales and technical enablement goals in place. These goals could be in the form of certifications or course completions, depending on the structure of your program. You should also ensure that you have the appropriate marketing and demand generation enablement in place. For example, if your partners are reselling, referring, or co-selling your product, you must provide them with the foundational collateral and marketing support to generate top of the funnel interest.

* HAVING THE APPROPRIATE SALES AND TECHNICAL ENABLEMENT IN PLACE WHEN ONBOARDING A PARTNER IS KEY.



Systems and Infrastructure

When getting started, I would not recommend investing in loads of expensive technology. You should adopt a crawl, walk, run mentality for building out the systems and infrastructure for your partner enablement program. It's okay to begin with manual tracking and even spreadsheets/shared folders to test and iterate on what is most effective. Keep in mind, in order to build the most effective program possible across your various partner types and personas, you must have the appropriate feedback loop in place. Some key areas systems/infrastructure areas to consider as you build out your program below.

Partner Portal

A portal is a great way to centralize your enablement resources and information for easy access, tracking, and version control. Ideally, you can build to world where your portal is personalized for each user depending on partner tier or type.

LMS

A Learning Management System (LMS) is a great way to build out structured enablement tracks. Chances are you can leverage the same LMS you are using for your internal enablement for partners (at least to start). Ensure you have a system in place for pulling the data so that you can track status by partner organization.

Train the Trainer Program

For higher tiered partners, implementing a 1:1, high touch train the trainer program is a great to enable large teams efficiently. Assign a technical and sales resource to go onsite and train assigned stakeholders at the partner organization so that they operate as the "go-to" in-house expert for all questions when it comes to your product. These onsite trainers can hold their own in-office trainings for new employees or refreshers when new products are released. These people are your go-to and they should be held accountable for verifying that their organizations are properly enabled on your product.

On-demand Communication/Collaboration Channels (e.g., Slack)

Having easy communication channels in place with your partners is another potentially "low hanging fruit" way to streamline processes when it comes to enablement. Implementing real-time communication channels for partner rep and partner organization so that key stakeholders can easily communicate is a great way to maintain a constant stream of support and knowledge transfer. Building peer-to-peer community forums/discussion rooms through common platforms, like Slack, is another way to generate community. This can also be done via a portal or intranet later in your partner program's maturity cycle.

Sales Enablement

Partner sales enablement should originate by asking yourself the question "why would a partner want to invest in building a business with me?" Job number one is to understand the why. Making it very clear upfront that it is worth investing time in understanding how to pitch and why they should be integrating your technology into their process is key. Map it out. Show them how getting enabled on selling will make them money (consider an infographic or a case study illustrating the why and the how). Again, this is not just direct sales enablement tweaked for partners. Enable partners on selling with the following in mind:

Scenario based selling

It's not just about understanding the product and how to pitch key buyer personas, think about the use cases and selling cycles your partners go through and how plugging your product in makes their process easier and stronger. Where relevant, consider how this differs by industry as well.

Selling tools

In addition to the training programs that show partner how and when to pitch, make sure you are providing them with the right tools: demo environments, white labeled pitch decks, case studies, talk tracks, etc.

Sales certifications

Building a certification program with requirements by tier (the higher you go in terms of tier, generally the larger the partner will be, so consider having set requirements according to things like number of offices or number of employees – make sure you have at least one resource per office/per region enabled on your products) around your sales enablement is a great way to ensure partners go through the right motions.

Specialty certifications

Giving partners the option to get certified on recognizing and pitching specific use cases or specialty products in your suite is a great way to carve out differentiation with key strategic partners. Give them the option or build these into the requirements for higher tiered partners. Specialty certifications could include expertise in one specific product area or industry solution. Have your partner marketing team create a snazzy badge that your partner can showcase on their website and LinkedIn. You want to make sure they are proud of this and have the ability to showcase the hard work it took to be recognized for being an expert – and more credible than the general pool – in a specific capacity of your solution set.

* GIVING PARTNERS THE OPTION TO GET CERTIFIED ON RECOGNIZING AND PITCHING SPECIFIC USE CASES OR SPECIALTY PRODUCTS IN YOUR SUITE IS A GREAT WAY TO CARVE OUT DIFFERENTIATION WITH KEY STRATEGIC PARTNERS.

Technical Enablement

Selling may be where it starts, but it's just as if not more important to teach your partners how to successfully implement. If you can't trust your partner to implement high quality work for customers, you're in trouble. It is always recommended to institute a model where you are overseeing the partner's work and hand-holding a bit until you feel confident they have the technical chops to deliver on their own.

Developer certifications

In order to scale, it is recommended to have a developer certification training program in place. Your program should require a set number of developer certifications dependent on partner tier or size.

Reference implementations

Building reference implementations into the requirements of your program may be a smart way to differentiate top tiers from the rest and incentivize technical enablement. Requiring at least two reference customer implementations in the first year (depending on the complexity of your product and the model you have installed) and defining a process around what a reference customer implementation looks like will not only ensure your partner can implement without your oversight, but it will also build a "lighthouse" partner-customer success story into your joint value proposition. Use these reference implementations as an opportunity to

make your partners famous. Consider building an awards program around them, specifically recognizing the technical chops it took to make each reference customer a success.

Beta programs

Inviting partners to participate in beta programs (either through your Partner Advisory Board or on an invitation basis) is a great way to get buy-in early on from key partners on technical enablement for new product releases. Partner beta programs also provide valuable feedback so that you can tweak the roadmap as well as your technical enablement programs as you go.

When it comes to all things partner, but especially enablement, lyrics from Journey's hit "Don't stop believin" come to mind because, well, … "it goes on and on and on and on." If you are a growing software company, your product suite will continually evolve with new add-ons, feature sets, and product launches. With that, you must be equipped to enable both new and existing partners at the same pace. As you grow and evolve as a product company, so too must your partners' capability sets. This should be positioned as a win-win; partners have differentiated positioning because they know your product and you have capable partners that understand and can deliver on the value you bring customers. One last point is to ensure you have the right tracking in place to measure and celebrate the impact enablement has on partner success.

* ENSURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TRACKING IN PLACE TO MEASURE AND CELEBRATE THE IMPACT ENABLEMENT HAS ON PARTNER SUCCESS.

5

STEP 5:
GROW

ONCE YOU'VE ESTABLISHED YOUR FOUNDATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT STRUCTURE IN PLACE TO ENABLE YOUR JOINT BUSINESS TO GROW AND PROSPER. THE WORST SCENARIO IS THAT YOU'VE INVESTED ALL THIS TIME AND ENERGY INTRO RECRUITING AND GETTING A FEW WINS UNDER YOUR BELT ONLY TO LET THE PARTNERSHIP GO STALE. GIVE YOUR PARTNERS THE TOOLS, INCENTIVES, AND FRAMEWORKS THEY NEED TO CONTINUALLY EXPAND THE PIE.

The potential is boundless if you give Step 5: Grow the attention it deserves. Read on for some tips on how to continually grow the partnerships you've worked so hard to stand up – you've built the partnership house, now it's time to furnish it.

Sales Tactics

Getting more joint sales in the door is the number one goal, right? See some tactics below to do so.

Partner Performance Scorecards

This sounds simple, but ensuring that you are not only evaluating the attractiveness of a partner during the recruitment stage, but also the continued productivity after the partner is onboarded is critical.

Consider scorecards for existing partners across the below criteria:

- Sourced bookings
- Influenced/Touched business
- Registered deal flow
- Pipeline health and predictability
- Sales expertise/Ability to sell confidently
- Technical expertise and delivery
- Joint marketing contribution
- Geographical coverage
- Industry/Vertical coverage
- Quality of delivery
- Overall customer satisfaction
- Communication & Responsiveness cadence

YOUR JOINT VALUE MESSAGING SHOULD ALSO ALIGN TO THE TARGET MARKET YOU ARE GOING AFTER TOGETHER.

Target Account Planning

This one is paramount. In a co-sell situation, if you aren't taking the time to sit down with your partner stakeholders and your direct sales team to map out the target accounts you're going after, then you are never going to strategically grow your businesses together. Ideally, you should be mapping out the accounts that you can bring your partner into, the accounts your partner can bring you into, and the net new accounts you are going after together. Your joint value messaging should also align to the target market you are going after together. Even in a reseller or ISV situation, you should still be working with your partner stakeholders to map out your unique 'white space' from a target account standpoint. Which vertical or horizontal niche markets are your joint 'sweet spot'?

Joint Dashboards

Your key partnerships should all be operating on a shared dashboard that lists your key accounts, status of those accounts, and of course pipeline/bookings KPIs and target milestones (e.g., number of certified developers). Creating the right reporting structure with strategic partners is critical to generating accountability and building healthy and predictable pipe. You can do this through PRM software, or start out with manual joint spreadsheets. Ultimately, the goal should always be to give your partners real-time visibility into shared business. The right data and guidance with the right partners at the right time is a powerful mix for growth.

To get started, follow the below 4 steps:

1. Advance plan quarterly and annual planning sessions (conduct in person if possible)
2. Establish clear targets, timelines, and owners
3. Set regular check-in cadence with key partner stakeholders
4. Define a set agenda for each check-in meeting to ensure productivity.

   Consider tracking the below metrics:

   - Registered deals from partner
   - Qualified deals to partner
   - Target account pipeline status
   - Target account closed won
   - Commission paid/owed
   - Certified developer count status to target
   - Enablement sessions completed to target
   - Co-marketing completed to target

Spiffs

Spiffs are a strong tactic to accelerate partner sales. Everyone likes a little gamification, right? There are several ways to set up a spiff and ultimately your goals and historical data must inform the optimal structure of your spiff. For instance, you could decide you want to do a time oriented spiff, a money oriented spiff, or a new market/segment entry oriented spiff. Maybe you're looking to close deals to hit your numbers or maybe you're looking to get strategic accounts in pipe. Regardless of what your goals are, align the rules of the spiff to what makes sense for the partner. This should be a win-win. If targeting smaller partners that rely heavily on a referral commission to keep their lights on – make the spiff centered around number of deals closed in a certain timeframe or before the end of the quarter; partner who closes the most deals over a certain dollar threshold receives an extra 5% accelerator on all commissions (just one example). This generates healthy competition within your partner ecosystem as well.

* REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOUR GOALS ARE, ALIGN THE RULES OF THE SPIFF TO WHAT MAKES SENSE FOR THE PARTNER.

Direct/Indirect Collaboration

If your organization has scaled through traditional direct sales, it can sometimes be a challenge to get your direct selling team to work strategically with partners. This collaboration, however, is key to growing partner sales. Setting up a territory based mapping of reps to partners and requiring each rep to cultivate an in-person relationship (via at least one actual live meeting) with his or her assigned partners, though simple, can be incredibly impactful for local indirect/direct collaboration.

Marketing Tactics

Marketing Development Fund (MDF)

MDF programs are a great way to incentivize partners to reinvest in growing the partnership with financial support for GTM initiatives that drive growth for the partnership. MDFs co-invest in approved, partner-requested activities. You might consider making MDF a benefit available only for top tier partners (if your program has a tiering model) who have completed all necessary requirements to be in that partner tier. Generally, you will see investments accruals range from 3-5% of sales (though this can vary quite a bit depending on partnership operating model). You will want to be sure you have very clearly documented, easy to follow program eligibility and process guidelines (requesting, approving, and claiming funds). You should also ensure you have a documented menu of approved activities and two-way data transparency so that the partner can easily view their accrued funds, status of activities, and guidelines for executing. Ideally, this all lives in a central place, such as a partner portal. Create a plan and define guidelines with goals in mind that ultimately benefit both your bottom line as well as your partner. Keep in mind that MDF can go beyond just marketing/lead generation and sales. You can also create menu items that help power your joint GTM, such as enablement (e.g., allow partners to put fund accruals towards training or certification testing).

Co-Marketing/Market With

I spoke about co-marketing in Step 3. Co-marketing activities can come in many forms and can be powered through MDF. On the self-service/scalable end of the spectrum, PRM software (such as Salesforce's Sales Cloud PRM) have capacity to provide scalable co-marketing campaigns that are built for co-branding. You can also provide "campaigns in a box" via a partner portal, but leveraging PRM software enables more control over the message and allows you to easily collect data. Co-marketing campaigns can also be homegrown and specific to target verticals. Show your most strategic partners that are you invested in building co-marketing programs together. Clearly define roles and responsibilities (keep in mind, your organizations' capabilities will be very different than your partners). Perhaps your partner can bring a unique customer speaker, create social buzz, and design compelling collateral while your team can easily handle the operations behind a joint campaign; build a nurture track, host the webinar, and manage the reporting.

Partner Awards

Building tradition and anticipation around a partner awards program can help grow partnership business not only through generating trust and loyalty with your partners (especially those that are recognized), but also through making your partners famous and generating demand and credibility for your joint value at scale. Consider creating an awards program that recognizes customer collaborations and/or technical innovation.

Enablement

It's no surprise that both sales and technical enablement is critical for growing partnerships, as we discussed in Step 4. However, enabling partners to put in extra work to achieve product, industry, or niche expertise around your products is a tactic for growing partnerships. Think about instituting a Partner Specialized Certification Program to do so. Partners can then post specialized badges on their digital properties and in their selling materials to show that they are uniquely equipped.

Program Support and Operations

Automation

Building automation into your deal registration, lead management, reporting, and referral compensation programs is key to growing partnerships at scale. The more streamlined your partner program house is, the more easily your partners will be able to confidently grow their businesses with you. Time is money and accuracy builds trust. Ensure you have the infrastructure in place to act quickly/in real-time on partner needs and requests and provide correct data on pipeline health and deal data in real-time.

Partner Advisory Board (PAB)

PABs are an excellent tactic not only for programmatically building a feedback loop from your partners to your executive team and back, but also for growing your most important partnerships. Generally, PAB invitations for reserved for your most strategic partnerships. PABs generally require a set cadence of in person and virtual meetings per year and require certain sales, marketing, and enablement thresholds. They are an excellent way to build trust and create a direct line into your partner's executive leadership, which ultimately will drive more strategy and more growth for your joint business.

Growing partnerships is fundamental to the success of your program. In order to do so efficiently, it's important to have the right infrastructure in place to provide the tools and programs needed for your partners to ScaleUp, drive growth, and create further opportunity.

...ENABLING PARTNERS TO PUT IN EXTRA WORK TO ACHIEVE PRODUCT, INDUSTRY, OR NICHE EXPERTISE AROUND YOUR PRODUCTS IS A TACTIC FOR GROWING PARTNERSHIPS.

6

STEP 6:
ANALYZE

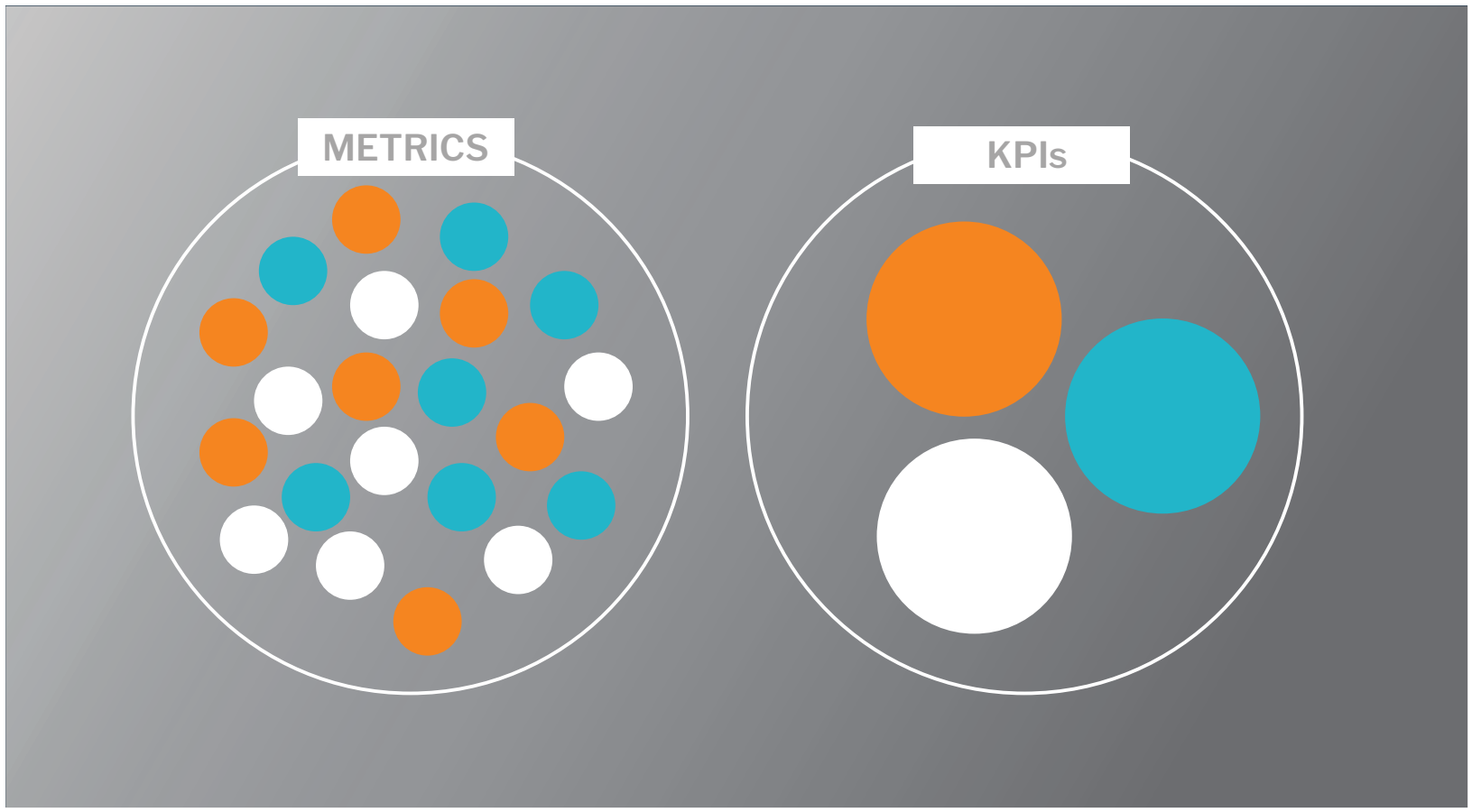
BY NOW, YOU'VE VALIDATED, DEFINED, ENABLED, AND GROWN YOUR PARTNER PROGRAM. TREMENDOUS EFFORT GOES INTO EACH OF THESE STEPS, AS WE'VE OUTLINED, BUT CHANNEL SALES ARE HARDLY A SET-IT-AND-FORGET DEAL.

To ensure the success of your partner program, you must continuously scrutinize performance data and trends. Insight and oversight are both crucial to success, whether measuring progress toward established sales goals or examining partner compliance in product messaging.

Welcome to Step 6: Analyze, the final step in the journey to establishing a partner program for your software business.

IT'S CRUCIAL TO ANALYZE PERFORMANCE BOTH AT MACRO AND MICRO LEVELS

While we've previously walked through the stages of getting a partner program up and running, this final step is about cementing your program through establishing a testing mentality and integrating regular analysis of channel investments, program efficiency, and partner effectiveness. Every initiative needs to be tracked and assessed after implementation, and your program is no different. It's crucial to analyze performance at both the macro and micro levels —the program itself and your individual partner relationships. Every insight gleaned from the data or a conversation will be valuable in directing investments, recruiting new partners, refining goals, scaling your program, and generating return.



Many metrics, few KPIs

While partner sourced sales growth should be the primary motivator for establishing a partner program, it is not the only KPI that must be considered. There are several KPIs you should be measuring yourself against (and many more metrics), depending on where you are in your journey.

LIMIT KPI COUNT TO NO MORE THAN THREE

For example, closely measuring leads sent to and received by partners is an important metric that feeds the success of partner-sourced business. A full 360-degree view into program performance will help identify what is going well, what areas need improvement, and what opportunities exist. When considering timeline to ROI, it's incredibly important to ensure there is top down agreement on the KPIs you will be measured on and when. It generally takes 9-24 months to get a partner program up and running. The first 2-4 quarter KPIs (depending on your sales cycle) should include a combination of sourced pipeline and sales plus milestones, such as number of new signed partners, or sales certifications and certified developers (per partner). KPIs should be limited to no more than three and measured on a quarterly basis (with regular status to target checks), while metrics should be looked at very regularly and exist across several components of your program.

Resources & Tech

Another important consideration is that partner operations is not something you can do in a spreadsheet on the side (at least not sustainably). If you aren't in a place to hire a full-time partner operations FTE, you must ensure sales and marketing ops are carving out pieces of their time (and quarterly targets) towards supporting partner needs.

AS YOU SCALE YOUR TEAM, ENSURE YOU'RE BUILDING OUT THE RIGHT SUPPORT FUNCTIONS: A PARTNER MARKETING LEAD AND A PARTNER OPERATIONS LEAD.

Partner Relationship Management (PRM) tools are critical to scaling and managing your partner business. I see a lot of partners complain about not understanding why they haven't received leads or not having a firm handle of where the leads they have sent stand from a funnel perspective. PRM vendors can offer lead management tools to ensure you are passing leads to the right partners at the right time and also automate much of the conversation between you, your sales team, and your partners on where pipeline stands. We like Channeltivity when you're just getting started because it's modular in its offerings (right-sizes to your needs and your stage of growth) and offers the full gamete of end-to-end solutions. Allbound is another option to consider when your partner ecosystem is on the smaller side or in the first couple years of building out your program. If your business is running on Salesforce and you have built a larger, more sophisticated program with robust marketing and enablement, I would recommend considering Salesforce Community Cloud.

Program vs. partner level

The deeper your analysis is, the more robust the insights will be. To that end, it's important to conduct analysis that focuses on the program as a whole, as well as your partner types individually. Your partner program is essentially an ecosystem of diverse business relationships, each with their own intricacies, and your analysis must reflect that fact. Drilling down into the specifics at the partner tier/type/tenure/geo as well as at the account level (for your top tiers and those partners that merit a deep dive into pipeline, enablement, and marketing metrics) will help build the transparency you need to manage, improve, and ultimately work to make your program predictable.

Analyzing overall program performance

Let's examine some of the KPIs and metrics you should consider, as well as tactics for pursuing high-quality insight and program transparency. In general, there a few categories of measurement you should be familiar with and have a data-backed point of view on:

Effectiveness

- Partner sourced bookings*
- Partner influenced bookings
- Partner sourced pipeline
- Partner influenced pipeline

Efficiency

- Cost per opportunity dollar/ARR dollar
- Sales cycle length
- New business average deal size

Trends

- Deal volume/ASP over time by partner tier/geo
- Deal volume/ASP over time by # of sales/tech certifications

** Partner sourced should always be your primary KPI, however it is important to look at influenced as well (ensure there are clear definitions for what qualifies influenced that are understood across the organization).*

Sales

PARTNERS NEED TO BE AWARE OF THE NUMBERS BY WHICH METRICS WILL BE MEASURED

Let's start with sales metrics and what your program analysis should be built on. To be fair, each business will have its own set of KPIs that matter most: Just be sure that these are codified and that partners are aware of the numbers by which they will be measured as part of your program.

At the partner level, some KPIs to consider include:

- Partner registered deals (#/$)
- New bookings (#/$)
- Expansion bookings (#/$)
- Average monthly/annual revenue per partner
- Churn per partner
- New bookings QoQ and YoY growth

Other measurements to look at include:

- Revenue by product/geo by partner
- Indirect ROI/Profitability:
  The net revenue impact of partner channels
- Indirect Win/Loss Analysis:
  Examining behaviors and patterns in wins and losses
- Predictive Analytics:
  Forecasting growth, markets and trends

Defining partner cohorts according to results or certain KPIs can help you visualize who your top-performing partners are, as well as those who could improve. This analysis should then flow into an annual tiering review with promotion and demotion according to the requirements you've set.

* COMPARING INDIRECT SALES GENERATED VIA THE PARTNER CHANNEL TO DIRECT SALES CAN HELP CONTEXTUALIZE PERFORMANCE AND INVESTMENT JUSTIFICATION.

When analyzing sales performance, you will also want to look outside the partner program. Comparing indirect sales generated via the partner channel to direct sales can help contextualize performance and investment justification. Make sure you look at efficiency here. Generally, partner deals are more qualified when they come in the door (if you're operating a referral model), so they tend to have faster sales cycles. Examine ASP as well. Often because the partner is already in business with the customer, the deals are larger (especially with services partners). It may also help reveal, for instance, partner effectiveness in selling a particular product and whether it exceeds, or lags, internal teams, and is therefore an area for improvement.

In the early days, it's crucial to establish a collaborative indirect/direct selling culture. Ensure you are publicly celebrating wins when direct reps work with partners and enabling the rest of your sales force on the tactics that made the collaboration so fruitful. It's important to highlight the value of working with partners. There are ways to incentivize friendly partner behavior from reps even when they aren't getting paid on the full deal value (net partner commissions). I would recommend exploring spiffs and enabling reps on the network effects of establishing partner relationships in their territories over double paying, though this decision depends heavily on the situation.

Marketing

Marketing effectiveness and sales effectiveness go hand in hand. It's critical to have alignment between the two. Analyzing marketing performance among partners can help provide further insight into what works, what doesn't, and how to better position partners to achieve revenue goals.

Marketing metrics to focus on may include:

- MQLs, pipeline and business through co-marketing programs
- Marketing development fund (MDF) program utilization and effectiveness (e.g., sourced business and pipeline per dollar allocated in MDF programs)
- Partner SEO performance (e.g. click-throughs, impressions, organic traffic to joint partner pages or partner contributed content)

When engaging in co-marketing with partners, ensure you have clear roles and responsibilities laid out in advance of the program kick-off. Clearly define lead attribution as well as routing and follow up protocol before you start marketing.

Another channel performance measurement your business should look at is net promoter score (NPS). NPS is a customer loyalty metric that gauges how willing a customer would be to recommend your product. Often measured on a 10-point scale with 1 being the least likely to recommend and 10 the most, NPS can deliver insight into how well partners are retaining accounts, creating satisfied customers, or marketing the value proposition of your product. Compare NPS for accounts with ongoing partner activity and those without.

Enablement

ENABLEMENT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT IT JUSTIFIES ITS OWN STEP IN THE JOURNEY

Enablement is so important to the success of your channel sales that it justifies its own step in the journey to a successful partner program. As such, there are assorted enablement-related metrics to watch, as they can expose gaps that stunt marketing and sales effectiveness.

Certification attainment is a necessary metric to monitor. Depending on your program model, the sales certification and/or courses you offer or require directly influences the success of a partner relationships. Be sure to track which partners have earned which certifications. You may want to track, for instance, the spread of specialty certifications across partner tiers, and whether more could be done to enable smaller partners on training and certifying their teams on a specific product or industry solution you offer. Also track technical/developer certifications and continuing education that's required as part of certification if your partners are delivering services. Make sure you look at how sales and technical certification impacts performance.

Reviewing the steps to success

Analysis may be the final step on the journey to establishing a successful partner program and achieving that partner flywheel we all want, but it's not the last step. You must continually analyze metrics to fuel a virtuous cycle of enablement and growth in your program. In concert with the other steps of validation and definition, these stages of constructing a partner program represent a blueprint. We hope these fundamental tactics, strategies, and best practices are helpful as you embark on the journey.

DOWNLOAD THE 6-STEP PARTNER OPERATING MODEL INFOGRAPHIC TO GET A DEEPER VIEW INTO TACTICS ACROSS SALES MARKETING, ENABLEMENT, AND PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PARTNER PROGRAM.

COMPLETE THE FORM