Pretenders vs Contenders:

The Truth About Through-Channel Marketing Automation (TCMA) Platforms

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INTRODUCTION

Through-Channel Marketing Automation (TCMA), in its purest form, should accomplish one straightforward goal: **simplify digital marketing execution for your channel partners**. If the TCMA platform doesn't follow through on this promise, it has little to no value. Unfortunately, many vendors are being convinced they are buying TCMA when they aren't.

Providers of related channel technology like Channel Learning & Readiness (CLR), Channel Incentive Management (CIM), Partner Relationship Management (PRM), Channel Data Management (CDM), Marketplaces, and Ecosystems claim to provide TCMA. These offerings often promise the world and then fall far short of customer expectations leaving both partners and vendors with a poor overall impression of TCMA. Worse yet, they bust customer budgets when every dollar needs to work harder and go further.

This eBook lifts the veil on TCMA to educate customers so they might avoid a decision that will tie up a budget and sub-optimize marketing for years. Let's look under the hood and explore what a comprehensive TCMA platform looks like to help channel marketers know the difference between the "haves" and "have nots."

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TCMA:
WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

TCMA was first coined as a term by former Forrester analyst and current chief analyst at Catalyst, Jay McBain, as a technology that helps vendors improve the effectiveness of their marketing by allowing them to better support partners with promotional materials and collateral that boost sales.

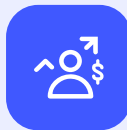A true TCMA platform should deliver on the **Five C's** of successful channel marketing:

CREATE effective, engaging and localized content

CONNECT partners with the right content at the right time

COMMUNICATE to customers through a variety of marketing channels and languages

CAPTURE leads and convert them to sales

**CALCULATE** results with real-time analytics

More specifically, TCMA platforms provide marketers with pre-defined campaigns and assets that are easily customizable, coupled with marketing automation that increases engagement and lead generation. Effective TCMA platforms streamline the setting and sharing of programs, assets, and pre-configured campaigns for channel sales partners.

With **65% of CEOs seeing channel partners as one of their most important initiatives to drive growth** in the current market, its more critical now than ever to understand TCMA and to recognize that you're not getting what you're paying for if your current platform doesn't include the following:

CREATE effective, engaging and localized content
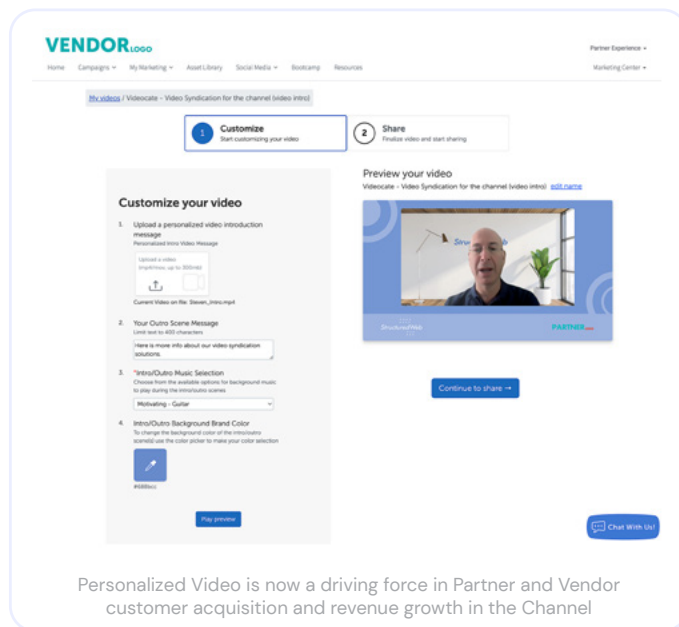
Create Content that Engages and Excites:

Content matters. Any successful TCMA program must start with the ability of creating content, which includes the campaigns and collateral vendors need to engage with the ecosystem of partners. **This content MUST be easily accessible and easily scalable, while also being highly customizable.**

Content MUST be easily accessible and easily scalable, while also being highly customizable
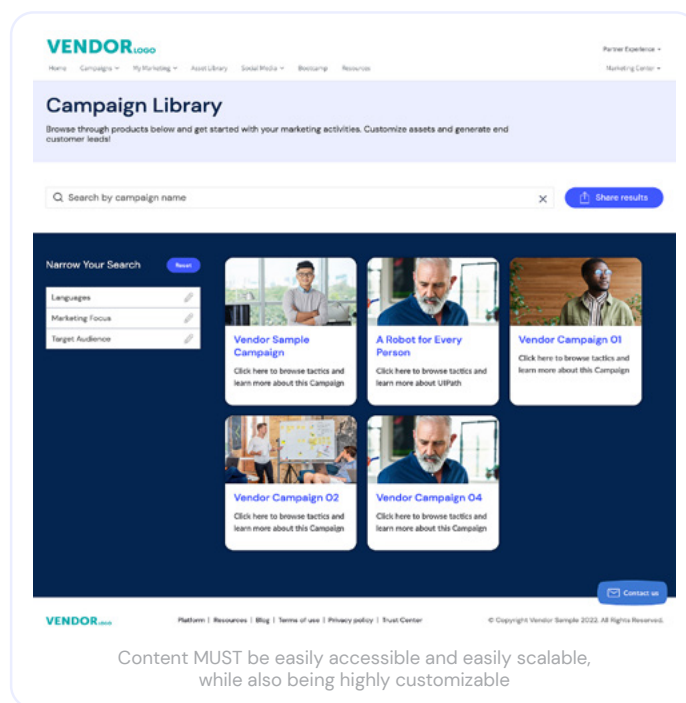
As an example, a favorite marketing tactic of B2B tech partners is virtual events, such as webinars and lunch and learns. Partners often need the vendor to supply the promotional campaign assets (email, landing page, etc.), presentation deck and sometimes even the speakers to support these events. Of course, partners need these events personalized to their specific business and want control over the leads they produce. This requires close collaboration with the vendor – something that the marketing automation solution must facilitate.

Another hot marketing tactic in the partner community is personalized video. **Brands are reporting a 16x better open rate and 8x better click-through by adding personalized video to their marketing campaigns.** In fact, **80% of marketers are incorporating video into non-paid advertising strategies to drive traffic and convert leads.** Without the help of a TCMA, Channel partners can't even get started personalizing video.

Personalized Video is now a driving force in Partner and Vendor customer acquisition and revenue growth in the Channel

While many so-called TCMA providers say they offer highly-customizable content, if you really look closely, they just don't. A bland email blast is not what today's partners need. Instead, true TCMA platforms offer multi-channel content that has superior vendor-led, partner-focused customization. From webinar syndication and personalized video to microsite and social content creation, a TCMA platform worth its chops has to offer the type and variety of content that today's partners gravitate towards in order to be successful.
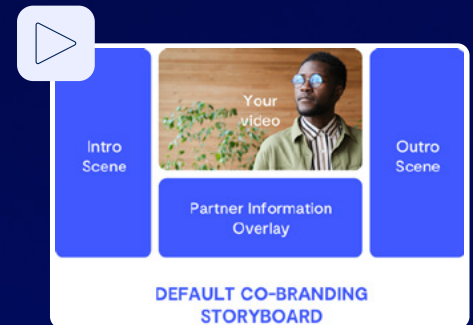
DEFAULT CO-BRANDING STORYBOARD

Personalized Video is now a driving force in Partner and Vendor customer acquisition and revenue growth in the Channel.

54% of buyers want to see more video content from brands while also expecting a level of personalization in their marketing communications.

Combining video with personalization can drive:

8X
higher conversion rates and

5x
higher engagement rates

CONNECT partners with the right content at the right time

Content falls flat without the right connections

You may have the content, but are you able to effectively connect that content with your partners and engage them in marketing and selling activities? If your partner engagement with your TCMA platform is low, you aren't connecting, and your content is not finding its way to market. This is yet another red flag that your TCMA is not what it may seem.

To connect with partners the TCMA platform should provide a central portal to strengthen partner connections and drive engagement. Partners are time and resource strapped, so a single, consolidated gateway that offers co-brandable assets, automated go-to-market campaigns, lead management, and real-time analytics offers partners the support they need to connect and market successfully.

Every partner's experience should be personalized to them. The TCMA should connect them with the most relevant content and marketing tactics to meet the partner's needs at any given moment. Connecting the partner with the TCMA and the vendor is at the forefront of a superior partner experience.

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To truly engage and connect, all the content needs to be delivered to partners in a unique portal experience, based on who is logging in, where they are located and their partner type or tier. A smart TCMA should provide a personalized experience that gives partners the right content, at the right time, in the right way. This increases platform adoption, partner satisfaction and long-term engagement.

COMMUNICATE to customers through a variety of marketing channels and languages

Multi-modal, Multi-touch, Multi-purpose Communication is a Must Have

It's a vendor's responsibility to make partner marketing efforts better and easier to deploy. In order to fulfill this promise, TCMA platforms must be able to provide vendors the technology to help their partners deploy integrated, multi-channel marketing strategies that meet and communicate with customers where they are — at every step of their buyer's journey.

The reality is most B2B buyer's journeys require multi-touch, and marketing can't support sales without it.
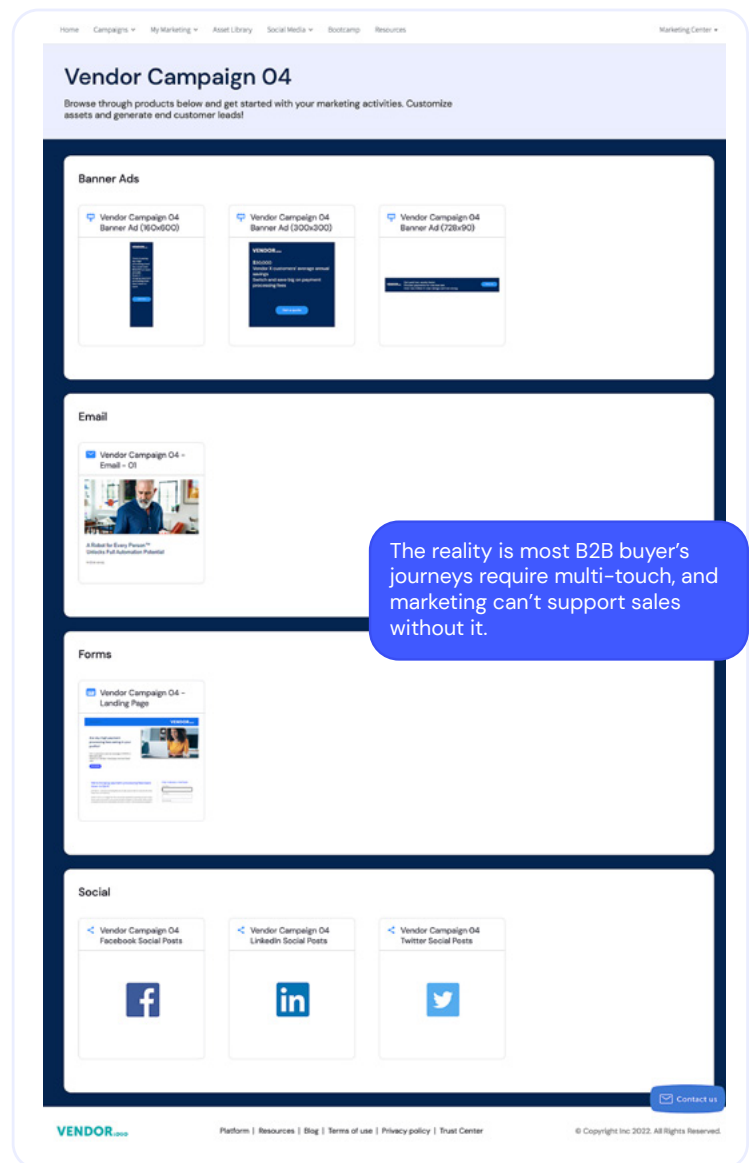
Email blasts are a thing of the past, and don't require any sophisticated automation. The reality is most B2B buyer's journeys require well-orchestrated multi-touch and multi-modal campaigns.

Not only does the TCMA need to support multi-channels (i.e., web, social, email, etc.) and multi-touch, but it must also automate the delivery from vendor to partner. This is where syndication comes into play. Vendors need to be able to create content and campaigns and personalize and distribute them at scale. If your TCMA doesn't support multi-modal syndication it has a fatal flaw.

All in all, TCMA platforms have to offer the right automated technology infrastructure for vendors to communicate and inform the brand's value proposition - keeping channel partners engaged and excited. On top of that, it's absolutely essential that they empower their partners to amplify that communication to end customers. If that connection stalls or is lost altogether, it's hard to rebuild.

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SOCIAL

EMAIL

LANDING PAGES
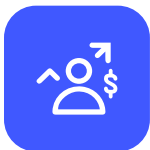
PERSONALIZED VIDEOS

Without Conversion, it's All for Not

Conversion is all about seamlessly executing on the first three "C's" to create awareness, nurture interest, and get the prospect willing to engage with a salesperson. At the speed of today's frenetic sales environment, salespeople need all the help they can get – that's where smart TCMA technology plays a starring role.

A successful TCMA platform combines advanced marketing tactics with state-of-the-art technology to automate, monitor and adapt to optimize conversions and create quality leads. This only happens when you're able to keep the right messages in front of the right prospects, at the right time. The leaders in TCMA excel at this.

CREATE, CONNECT and COMMUNICATE to create awareness, nurture interest, and get the prospect willing to engage with a salesperson.

Partners know their prospect base but need vendor support to realize its value. Vendors who arm partners with the right messages and campaigns, benefit from partners who can identify the right targets and tune the delivery. This requires true collaboration and is the key to conversion, which only a top-level TCMA platform can provide.

How do you know which message, timing, and tactic are right? You monitor and measure channel efforts to determine what works best. This is another way TCMA improves conversion rates across the channel. Smart marketers learn and adapt as the channel engages with the TCMA platform.

Measure, Monitor, Report: Rinse and Repeat

Successful TCMA platforms provide performance data surrounding your partners' interaction with the enablement tools, while also providing actionable insights into how successful partners are at putting those tools to work generating new revenue.

The TCMA's analytics should be designed for channel program managers to track, analyze, and adapt programs to changing conditions. They should be able to see the performance of assets, tactics, and campaigns in a visual way that leads to program refinement.

The analytics should also be designed to help field management understand engagement and retention. For example, how often does a partner login to the platform, what do they use it for, who is using it, and this should be easily segmented to fit the fields needs.

Field and program management should be able to see this data at a macro and micro level to help them make the best use of their time. Visualizations are important to see macro trends, but it is also important to be able to drill down to the account, people, campaigns, and assets.
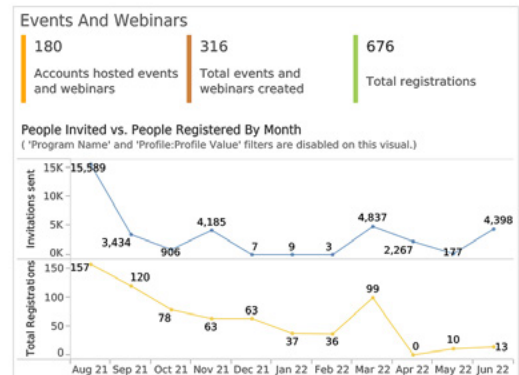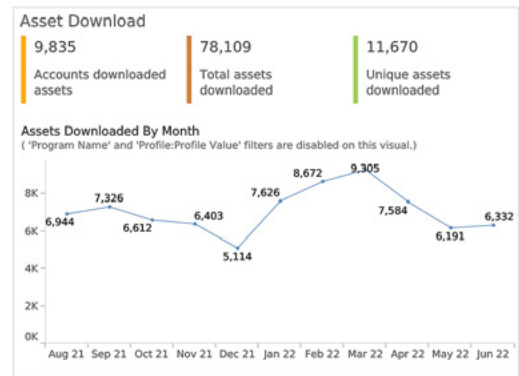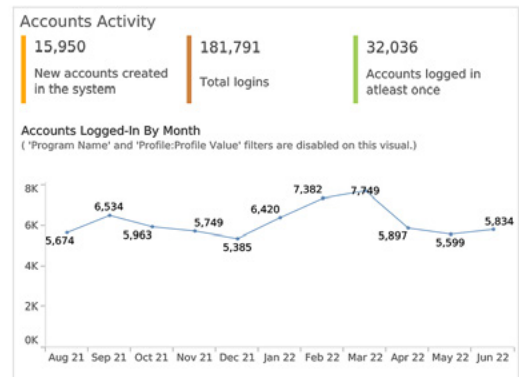
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A best-in-class TCMA will produce data analytics that are visual, organized, and intuitive to utilize. The TCMA also needs to be able to connect the data with other systems to ensure it can be consolidated with other sales and marketing data as needed.

Corporate content managers can get reports about the library, what was loaded to the library, how old the content is, what is being utilized and how well is it performing? Every tactic can be tagged by target market, vendor, language, tactic type, content by business size and by product,

The analytics are designed for the program manager to track, analyze, and adapt programs over time. You can't convert if you can't monitor, and you monitor if you can't measure. And you certainly can't measure without the right automated tools in place.

TCMA platforms that claim they're offering advanced measurement and reporting and NOT providing the following metrics are falling short:

PARTNER PORTAL SUCCESS
how many partners engaged with the platform

CAMPAIGN SUCCESS
which campaigns are they using and how effective are they

PERSONALIZATION SUCCESS
which assets are being customized and how were they used

CONTENT SUCCESS
which assets are used most, and which generate the most leads

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT
how often are partners interacting with your platform

PARTNER SCORING SUCCESS
how many leads and how qualified are those leads

LEVELS OF SUCCESS
which channel tiers are most successful

Integration and Automation at the Core

Regardless of what a TCMA provider says it offers, it will never live up to its promise without seamless integration and powerful automation at its core. For vendors working across multiple channels, maintaining single source of brand truth – allows for greater scalability, while using fewer precious resources. Managing channel program budgets across projects and platforms can be exceedingly tricky. Effective TCMA technology reduces workloads, improves operational efficiencies, enhances user experience, and accelerates time to insights.

Not all TCMA platforms are created equal.
Do your homework, look under the hood and assess whether or not your provider is a pretender or the real deal.

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The most complete channel marketing automation platform
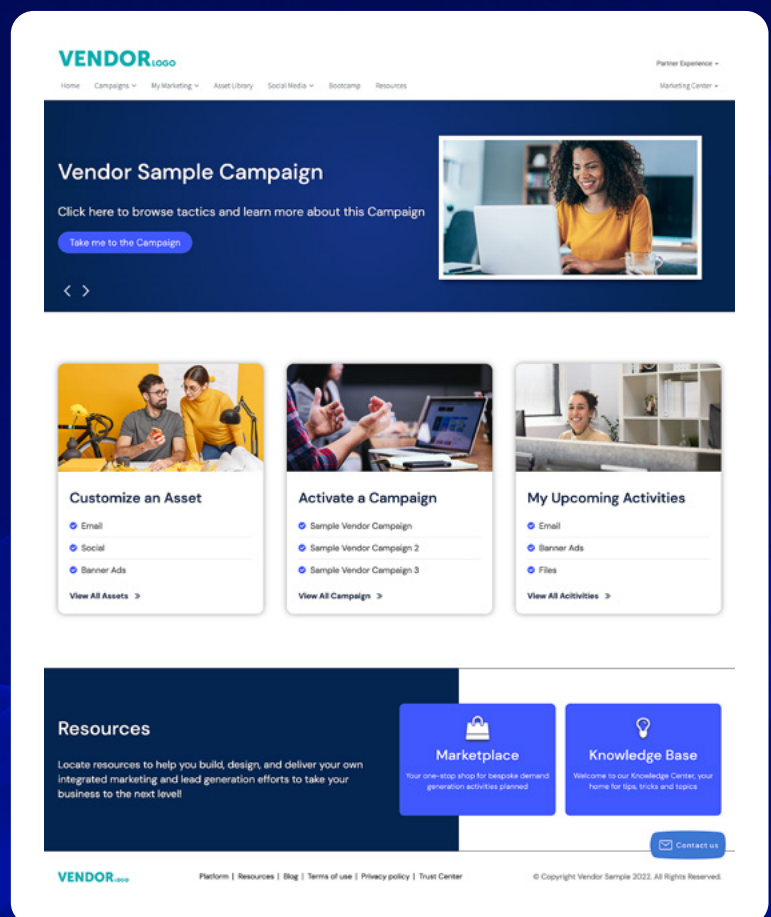
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Learn more:

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StructuredWeb is the leading enterprise channel marketing automation platform. For more than two decades, StructuredWeb has combined innovative technology with proven go-to-market strategies and world-class services to deliver a faster way to accelerate partner demand generation, strengthen partner engagement and grow channel revenue.

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