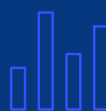
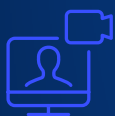


THE ULTIMATE TCMA PARTNER SUCCESS GUIDE

This TCMA Partner Success Guide aims to help companies implementing the technology onboard and activate channel partners and get the most out of their time and investment.



StructuredWeb



INTRODUCTION

We've seen a disturbing pattern emerge in the channel tech landscape that goes something like this:

Companies want to enlist their channel partners in increasing market awareness and demand. They see TCMA as an opportunity to do this. Who wouldn't want to enlist thousands of companies to spread the word about what they do?



"Our TCMA platform will..."



These companies round up the leaders in the TCMA space to hear about the capabilities of the platforms. The TCMA suppliers attempt to focus the interest on what differentiates their offerings to separate themselves from competitors.

The evaluating companies gravitate to the sexiest differentiation, which becomes their assessment's focus. This approach usually means eliminating all but one or two providers. They assume partners will be as excited about the shiny new toy as they are and then negotiate a contract with the vendor. Evaluations and negotiations usually happen very late in the year.



Once the contract is in place, there is a rush to get the technology ready for the partner kickoff meetings early in the year. At this same time, all staff is preparing partner programs for the following year. The vendor needs more access to partners or the company's senior channel staff when preparing the platform for launch.

The partners barely notice when the platform's availability is announced at the partner kickoff meeting. The announcement is buried in a tidal wave of other information being handed out at the kickoff.



we need more resources...

it doesn't support our marketing...

it's hard to use...



The company wonders why engagement is low. Don't the partners appreciate the extra support? They reach out to top-tier partners for feedback. These partners tell them they need more resources to utilize the platform, the platform doesn't support their marketing, and it's challenging to use.

The company complains to the TCMA vendor. The vendor can't solve the partner's resource problem; instead, they focus on making the feature the customer found important work for the partners. The partners remain frustrated.



Within six months, the company and its partners lost focus on the platform and stagnated with low engagement. When the contract comes up, the company doesn't renew and seeks a new solution, and the process repeats itself.

Why does this happen over and over again? The simple answer is that the focus of the TCMA evaluation was on the technology and not the partner. A partner-centric approach is required for TCMA success.





The Eight Laws of Channel Partners

A successful TCMA implementation requires working with channel partners. To properly set expectations, it is important to understand the mindset of the partners. These eight laws are important to keep in mind during evaluation, implementation, and support of a TCMA platform.



1. PARTNERS WELCOME MARKETING SUPPORT

From the introduction, it is easy to assume the partners don't want the vendor's marketing support. The opposite is true; partners welcome vendor efforts to drive awareness and create LEADS.



2. PARTNERS HAVE VERY LIMITED MARKETING CAPABILITIES

Many channel partners have no one designated with the job of marketing or have a very junior person in the role.



3. UNATTENDED PARTNERS WON'T ENGAGE

If no marketing staff exists or the person in the marketing role is very junior, only expect to achieve engagement with a hands-on approach.



4. ENGAGEMENT IS YOUR CHOICE

Getting engagement and the channel partners that do engage reflect the effort and focus put into them.



5. NOT ALL PARTNERS ARE EQUAL

A TCMA will help channel partners do marketing better, but it will only solve for channel partners not committed or equipped to do marketing.



6. RELATIONSHIPS BUILT ON LOYALTY DO NOT EXIST

Channel partners are in the relationship to make money. Only expect the activity you want to happen if they can draw a line between the action and their goal.



7. BUILDING YOUR BRAND IS NOT YOUR PARTNER'S JOB

Your channel partner makes money selling your product, and they don't see building your brand as part of their job.



8. THERE'S A NATURAL RATE OF ENGAGEMENT, AND IT ISN'T 100%

If you expect all of your channel partners to use your TCMA, you're setting yourself up for failure.

Now that we've established the
immutable laws of partners,
we can begin discussing the best
practices to ensure platform success.



CHANNEL MARKETING PARTNER SUCCESS BEST PRACTICES

To achieve success in Channel Marketing, a combination of the right people, processes, and technology is essential. The TCMA platform is the technology that supports the service you provide to your partners. To ensure your partners effectively utilize the service, clear processes and guidelines should be established.

These best practices should help you identify what will be required, so you can plan to have the resources available.



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Establish Success Measurements

When rolling out any new technology it is vitally important to establish clear success measurements from the outset. This will help to ensure that the project stays on track and meets its goals.

Goals are an important place to start this planning. Ask yourself, what do you hope to achieve by making this technology available to your channel partners? How will you measure if those goals are achieved? Getting this framework in place early is critical to managing a successful implementation.



KPIs, or key performance indicators, are metrics that help you understand how well the platform is achieving its goals. When rolling out a new technology platform, it is important to establish KPIs so that you can measure your progress and ensure that the platform is meeting expectations. The TCMA vendor is a good resource for this information. They can not only tell you which KPIs make the most sense, but also provide benchmarks from their other customers.

TCMA platforms are a valuable tool for any company looking to streamline their channel marketing efforts. By automating tasks like email marketing, social media campaigns, and lead generation, businesses can save time and resources. However, with so many different features and options available, it can be difficult to know which KPIs (key performance indicators) to track.

Some of the most important KPIs for TCMA platforms include **partner engagement rate, tactic conversion rates, and qualified leads.**

By tracking these metrics, businesses can get a better understanding of their partner's marketing performance and adjust as necessary.

By taking the time to track the right KPIs, businesses can ensure that their marketing automation platform is working effectively and achieving desired results.

There are a number of KPIs that you might want to track, depending on your goals for the platform. For example, if you are looking to improve partner satisfaction, you might track KPIs such as partner satisfaction scores, net promoter scores, or first contact resolution rates. If you are looking to reduce costs, you might track KPIs such as average handle time or cost per contact. By establishing KPIs at the outset of your project, you can ensure that you are on track to achieve your goals.

Collaborate with the Platform Provider

Before committing to a TCMA vendor, you should ask them how they will support the successful launch and adoption of the platform. If you've chosen a proven TCMA platform, you've got a vendor with deep experience, and you should leverage it.



Leveraging their experience starts with a discussion regarding how success is measured. The vendor should help you understand the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that determine success. What other companies have achieved, and what you should expect. You should sit down with the vendor and establish KPIs and target goals for each KPI.

For each KPI, ask the platform vendor to help you define the critical actions needed to achieve the goal. Also, ask what role they will play in helping you achieve the goal. Work with the vendor to build a project plan with all the actions required for success.

This activity forms a foundation for monthly and quarterly business reviews (QBRs). The project plan and KPIs should be the focal point of your business reviews, and you should adapt your approach and strategy over time to achieve the goals.

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Gain Partner Buy-in Early

When it comes to channel marketing technology, it's essential to engage partners early in the planning process. Involving partners from the outset ensures that everyone is bought into the platform's success and is starting on the same page regarding objectives, tactics, and timelines. It can also help to identify potential red flags and pitfalls.

Co-branding is often one of the first sought features for both partners and vendors. Engaging partners on how they would like their brand integrated into your collaterals, which languages need to be supported, and determining the prioritization of collaterals, is critical to ensuring everyone is on the same page and aligned.

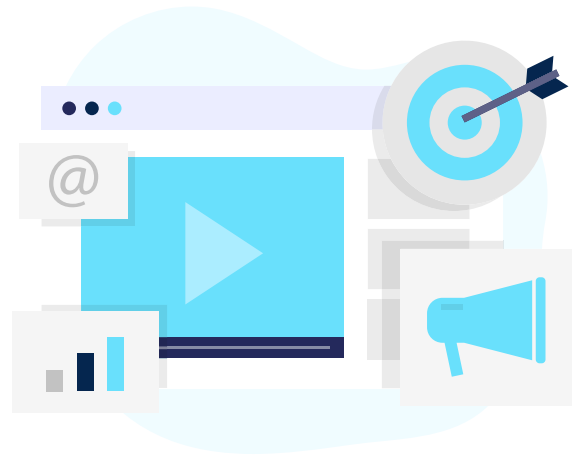


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Most importantly, engaging partners early in the process can help to create a shared TCMA roadmap. A roadmap prioritizes marketing tactics and plans for rollouts and associated enablement and support. The roadmap is also essential for ensuring everyone remains aligned with the platform's goals. Engaging partners early can avoid potential problems and ensure your TCMA launch is successful.

Create Channel Marketing Content

Marketing content can come in many forms, including blog posts, web pages, infographics, case studies, ebooks, videos, social posts, etc. Creating content will follow a similar process to traditional marketing content creation, but you must also consider localization, co-branding, and even channelizing the platform's supported formats.



It would be best if you didn't begin the development of any content without first considering the supported formats of the TCMA platform. Supported formats vary significantly between platforms, so you'll need to work in concert with your vendor's standards. Supported design formats should have been a critical consideration in selecting a platform.

Co-branding content aims to create a sense of unity between the partner and vendor's brands. Designing for co-branding is vital to create a cohesive look and feel for the final marketing. Co-branding can be challenging, as you'll likely have thousands of partners to consider when doing the design. The important part is to remember to account for this in the design and leave the space necessary to support it.

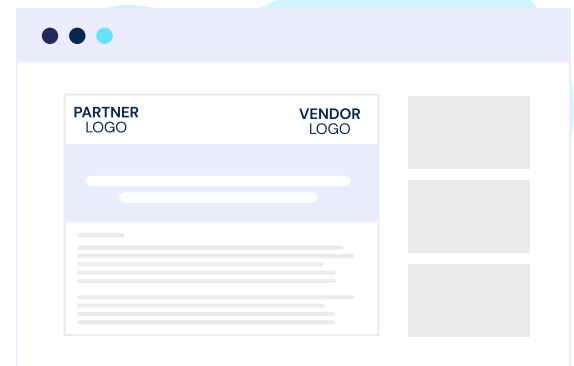
Some companies take partner branding a step further and "channelize" the content so it appears as an extension of the partner's business. This requires additional personalization and configuration. Channelizing content allows the partner to be seen as a thought leader.

In many cases, the content will also need to be localized to ensure it will be relevant to specific regions or countries the platform supports. Localization is crucial to ensure that the platform can effectively support the partners and reach its target market in every area the platform supports. Localization starts with identifying the regions with language considerations, developing the localization process, and securing the necessary resources to complete the work.

Operationalizing TCMA Content

Loading content into a Through-Channel Marketing Automation (TCMA) platform can present many challenges for those managing and using the platform. First, many TCMA vendors do not allow customers to load their content. Even if they do, it can be very time-consuming, and customers often do not plan for the resources necessary to support it. Part of the reason loading content is complicated and time-consuming is configuring co-branding, localization, and access control for each asset.

If the content is not designed for co-branding, it can present an operational challenge. We'd love to think content designers take this into consideration upfront. Still, content often needs to be manipulated when operationalizing it to accommodate all of the co-branding considerations of the TCMA. Correcting content not designed to be operationalized requires a resource that works in both the authoring tool and the TCMA.



Localization can also be an issue when operationalizing content if the localized versions are not provided upfront and in the correct languages. Localizations must be uploaded into the TCMA and configured to reach the right audience.

Each asset needs to be configured to control access. In most partner environments, not all partners sell all products. It is essential to configure assets, so the partner only sees marketing specific to their relationship with the vendor.

As a result, it is essential to carefully consider these challenges and develop strong processes and procedures around loading content into a TCMA platform. By planning and executing a content strategy, marketers can ensure that their content is properly loaded and accessible to those who need it.

Onboard & Activating Partners

The onboarding process is critical to setting channel partners up for success and should be at the top of your priority list. Your first impression is onboarding and activation, and the partner's experience begins with enablement to take on the role you've designed for them. Onboarding and activation are the keys to making an excellent first impression and fostering long-term relationships and loyalty.

Onboarding and activating partners must be process driven. Identifying all the information, training, and support partners need is essential. Develop robust processes to support the delivery of all information and training.

Remember Law 5 of Partners. It is best to develop onboarding programs tailored to meet specific partner types. Personalizing programs starts with segmenting your partners by who they are, what they are, and where they are. Then look at the expectations and needs of each segment and personalize the onboarding to create a better experience.

All enablement should start with a set of clear expectations. Use certifications as a method to elevate the importance of completing onboarding training and tasks and institutionalizing them within your channel. Prioritize the use of automation to create hands-on platform tours and learning experiences.

Partner enablement is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Regularly checking in with partners and gathering feedback ensures that they remain engaged and aligned with your company's goals. When done correctly, onboarding can help to build solid and long-lasting relationships with channel partners.



Evangelizing the Platform

When introducing a new TCMA platform to your channel, you should take a high-touch approach for at least the first 90 days. High touch means maintaining consistent communication, meeting with partners in person, helping them use the platform, and completing onboarding.

It is essential to monitor platform usage to understand which partners are engaging and what they are doing. Using Incentives to encourage initial and ongoing engagement is a best practice. You should take the time to celebrate milestone achievements and certifications with partners.

Taking a proactive, high-touch approach to evangelizing a TCMA platform with channel partners can ensure the platform is successfully adopted and set you up for long-term success.



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Supporting the Platform

If you want your channel partners to be successful, you need to make it your number one goal, which means being proactive in supporting them. By making channel partner success your top priority, you'll create a win-win situation for your company and partners.

The most effective way to support channel partners is to help them in the way they want to be enabled. This means understanding their business model and tailoring support accordingly. Solicit partner input, and develop a feedback loop. Take the time to understand your partners' short and long-term needs, and personalize and proactively implement solutions to meet them.

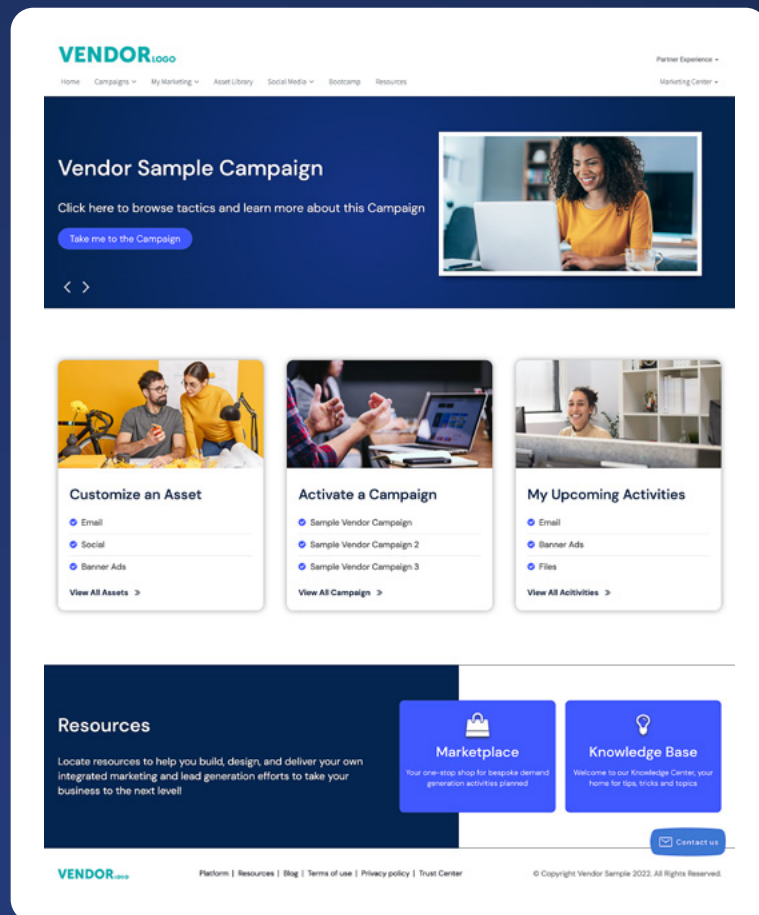


Hire enough channel field support to ensure high-touch communications. Channel partner support teams should proactively address potential problems and always be available to answer any questions. They should also have a deep knowledge of the products and services offered by your company. By providing channel partners with the help they need, companies can ensure that their products and services are delivered to customers promptly and efficiently.

Monitor all aspects of the partner relationship, implement success metrics and share the data with channel partners. Data and metrics help make informed decisions. Regularly put each stage of the partner's journey under a microscope and look for ways to improve it. Use data and metrics to build your relationships on trust and a desire for mutual success.

By making channel partner success your top priority, you can build a stronger relationship with your partners and create a more successful business.

The most complete channel marketing automation platform



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.

