



**DRIVING GROWTH
THROUGH
THE CHANNEL**

YOUR GTM EGUIDE

The secrets to successful through-channel marketing

ONEGTM

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INTRODUCTION

Through-channel marketing (TCM) has become a hot topic in the technology sector in recent years and for good reason. In 2019, Forrester uncovered that TCM delivered 7x higher conversion rates than conventional direct marketing.¹ As a result, vendors and service providers are increasingly focused on how they can engage their channel in their marketing programmes and unlock the channel's potential as a demand generation engine.

However, despite the increased focus, many companies are still finding their way in this area – experimenting with different approaches to find what works and what doesn't.

At OneGTM we specialise in helping vendors and service providers build successful TCM programmes. We've produced this guide based on our experiences and what we regard as best practice.

| *What you'll find inside*

- 1** Why through-channel marketing (TCM) has increased in importance
- 2** The common issues that prevent TCM initiatives achieving their goals
- 3** Our tips for delivering successful TCM programmes
- 4** TCM in action

1

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF THROUGH-CHANNEL MARKETING

Every aspect of B2B technology channel marketing has undergone profound change in recent years:

- B2B technology has changed dramatically with the shift to the cloud, and the growing importance of areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and analytics.
- The channel has changed radically with the transition to hybrid business models, greater vertical specialisation and more collaboration across ecosystems.
- The discipline of marketing itself has changed significantly, with greater focus on automation and data-driven, digital tactics as firms seek new ways to engage hard-to-reach decision-makers.

It's therefore not surprising that technology vendors and service providers have been re-thinking their go-to-market approach. The days when vendors stimulated demand and resellers fulfilled it are long gone.

Through-channel marketing has become increasingly vital as a way to drive business growth.

There are a number of factors driving this change:

RELIANCE ON THE CHANNEL FOR GROWTH

B2B companies are increasingly looking towards indirect channels as their primary growth engine. Research shows 91% of B2B leaders expect to increase revenue directly attributed to their partner ecosystems this year, with 30% expecting channel attributable revenue to increase by more than 20%.²

Vendors are also relying on their channel ecosystems not just to resell their products, but also to influence customer thinking and help retain customers post-sale. This greater dependence on partners throughout the customer lifecycle increases the importance for vendors of aligning partner marketing activities with their own.

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DIMINISHING POWER OF VENDOR BRANDS

As enterprise IT complexity has increased, customers no longer want the hassle of working out how to select, deploy, integrate and manage multiple discrete technology products. They want to buy integrated solutions that address specific business needs, and increasingly they want those solutions delivered as a fully managed service. In 2020, more than half of 1,800 MSPs worldwide reported that over 50% of their revenue came from recurring (managed) services.³ As a result, the influence of individual technology product brands is declining, and solutions- and services-focused channel partners have greater influence over technology purchasing decisions.

THE VALUE OF SECTOR AND CLIENT INTIMACY

Customers are increasingly resistant to generic messaging. To engage them, you need to talk about the business problems they face that technology solutions can address, which relies on knowledge of sector- or client- specific issues.

Up to 66% of B2B buyers say it's important that a solution provider's website speaks directly to the needs of their industry.⁵ Channel partners bring the customer and market intimacy that turns generic vendor campaigns into something more relevant and compelling for individual customers.

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In 2019

75%

of marketers said they were already using at least one marketing automation tool, and 77% reported an increase in conversions.⁷



A CLOUD PROVIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

"Through-channel has become even more important in the cloud world. It gives our partners more opportunity to leverage our brand and our resources, while enabling us to keep a level of consistency over key elements. Bringing that together with our partners' customer knowledge and relationships is really powerful... The other big advantage for cloud providers/vendors and channel partners alike is that it gives us a lot of analytics about what's working and what's not, so we can react far more quickly to what's happening in the market."

DP Venkatesh, GM - Digital, SMB and Strategic Partners at Cisco

NEED FOR SMARTER MARKETING

Today's senior decision-makers are generally impossible to reach through cold-calling and ignore or filter out unsolicited emails. So generating demand and leads requires a more sophisticated approach utilising integrated inbound and outbound tactics, insightful content, personalised content and effective use of marketing automation technology. In 2019, 75% of marketers said they were already using at least one marketing automation tool, and 77% reported an increase in conversions.⁸

However, many channel partners lack the resources, the platforms and the marketing expertise to create and execute effective integrated campaigns, utilising modern marketing techniques. This creates an opportunity for vendors, who typically have the resources, and the economies of scale that enable investment in the marketing assets and tools needed.

BATTLE FOR CHANNEL MINDSHARE

Many vendors operate in highly competitive markets, where they struggle to achieve genuine product differentiation. Getting channel engagement and mindshare can make the difference between success or failure. In such an environment, the level of marketing support offered by vendors and the ease with which partners can incorporate vendor-supplied resources into their own activities, can be critical factors in partners' decisions on where to focus their energies.

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YESTERDAY'S APPROACHES MEAN TODAY'S FAILURES

In times past, putting together a campaign for the channel probably consisted of not much more than some email copy, a call out script and some product collateral, and shipping it out to partners with a covering note reminding them how great your product is.

That approach just won't work today (if it ever did), but the evidence suggests that many vendors are still not doing TCM in a structured, programmatic way. We see a number of common pitfalls that are preventing vendors realising their growth potential.

TOO PRODUCT-FOCUSED

Today's B2B decision-makers don't want to talk to suppliers about technologies and products until they're some way down their buying journey. Therefore, materials which focus on why your product is faster/ bigger/ cheaper than the competition are next to useless for stimulating demand. Campaigns which lead with product also turn off channel

partners, because they allow less space for them to build in their own value.

RELIANCE ON OUTDATED TACTICS

Many through-channel resources still rely too heavily on outbound tactics (e.g. email blasts or call-out days), despite the fact that pretty much every marketer knows that these tactics are ineffective when used in isolation. Traditional tactics still have a role to play, however in today's B2B technology market they are seldom effective unless they're part of a broader campaign, and used at the appropriate points in the customers' buying journey.

75%

of B2B marketers say they have successfully used content marketing to achieve demand/ lead generation goals in the previous 12 months.⁹



DULL, POOR-QUALITY CONTENT

Distinctive, insightful and engaging content, which speaks to the issues that customers care about, is at the heart of most successful campaigns. Content which is either – a) very dry and technical; b) a thinly-disguised product plug, c) an un-original re-hash of what every analyst and vendor is already saying or d) poorly-designed and poorly-written – adds very little value to partners and can do more harm than good.

66%

of B2B buyers use supplier content to educate themselves about the options they have in the marketplace prior to speaking with a specific vendor.¹⁰



INADEQUATE PLATFORMS AND SUPPORT

Even a great campaign idea and interesting content will fail to generate results if channel partners don't have the right tools and resources to execute effectively. If your partners all have sophisticated, in-house marketing operations then maybe all they require is content, which they can repurpose. However, if your channel partners are predominantly smaller organisations then a failure to provide them with the right tools and support will undermine the success of your campaign.

52%

of partners cite a lack of marketing staff as a challenge in executing campaigns with brand-provided marketing platforms.¹¹



A VENDOR'S PERSPECTIVE

"TCM initiatives require great planning, appropriate resources and a robust delivery platform. TCM campaigns can sometimes be too product focussed without considering the customer benefits. Whilst lack of execution guidance can result in sloppy campaigns which do not follow brand guidelines or messaging closely enough and can even damage the brand."

Andrew Cowling, Senior Channel Marketing Specialist at PFU (EMEA) Limited – A Fujitsu Company



Surveys have suggested
as much as

60%

of MDF goes unclaimed.¹²



ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH

Channel businesses are a diverse group, with different business models, resources, market focus, propositions and capabilities. Some partners will have well-maintained prospect databases or a significant social media audience, others won't. Some will want to adapt messaging to reflect their own value-add, others won't. A one-size-fits-all approach is likely to miss the mark for a lot of partners.

LACK OF EXECUTION GUIDANCE

Many channel partners lack in-house marketing expertise. Therefore, just sending them a handful of assets without any guidance on how to turn them into a campaign won't produce the best results. If partners don't understand the target audience, the campaign strategy, the buyer journeys and how the different tools should be used as part of an integrated campaign, then they're unlikely to execute successfully.

MISALIGNED CHANNEL INCENTIVES

Despite the majority of partners who say they would be more likely to consider a brand-provided platform in exchange for incentives, many vendors still haven't aligned their incentive programmes with their TCM programmes. Given the high proportion of MDF that surveys suggest goes unclaimed each quarter, this is a missed opportunity to build stronger partner engagement.

MAKING IT TOO DARN DIFFICULT

Most channel businesses operate with lean teams who are overloaded with demands on their time. They also have to choose between multiple vendors all vying for their attention. If you don't make it easy for them to work with you, they probably won't. Just by loading up all your campaign assets on to your cluttered portal and expecting partners to navigate their way through the out-of-date datasheets and training decks to find them, isn't the best way to ensure engagement.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL THROUGH-CHANNEL MARKETING

Executing TCM effectively can be hard, but it's not rocket science. Applying best practice, and a bit of common sense, can make a big difference to the success of your initiatives. Below we've set out the ten principles of successful through-channel marketing.

#1 CLEAR 'TO PARTNER' MESSAGE

Let's start with the basics. Before you can hope to interest a partner in your through-channel campaigns they need to be convinced about your value as a vendor. So alongside any 'through partner' activity, you need to make sure your 'to partner' message is clearly articulated and effectively communicated. That message needs to cover a number of bases, including the market opportunity for the partner, how you'll help them unlock it, and how working with you will help them achieve their broader business goals.

#2 INSIGHTFUL, IMPACTFUL CONTENT

To open up new conversations with prospective customers, your partners will need good content. To sustain engagement through a buying journey they'll also need a range of assets in different formats and with different content depth: easily digestible content to attract interest, such as video and infographics, as well as more in-depth content to build deeper engagement and trust, such as eGuides and webinars.

Given that many channel partners lack the resources to create high-quality content, this is an area where vendors can really add value. Creating content built on unique insights, a distinctive point of view, and actionable advice will enable your partners to build credibility and empathy with their target customers and unlock new opportunities.

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#3 FLEXIBLE TOOLS AND PLATFORMS

Smart marketing in today's world is technology-enabled, whether it's micro-targeting ads, remarketing to website visitors, or scoring leads for telemarketing follow-up. Many channel partners can't afford leading-edge marketing platforms, so vendors are increasingly investing in Through-Channel Marketing Automation (TCMA) platforms. TCMA platforms enable vendors to give partners access to the tools they need to customise content and deliver campaigns, while still retaining control over elements such as branding and core messages.

#4 EFFECTIVE SALES AND MARKETING ENABLEMENT

It's no good having great campaigns if your partners' marketing teams don't understand the strategy or their sales teams don't understand the key messages, or how to develop the conversation to convert interest into a sale. Effective

enablement is a vital part of any campaign roll-out, and it needs to address multiple audiences – the senior execs who'll decide whether to adopt the campaign, the marketing people who'll be responsible for the execution and the salespeople who'll be expected to follow up on opportunities.

35%

of B2B vendors say they currently provide through-channel marketing automation and 32% plan to implement or upgrade in the next 12 months.¹³



A PLATFORM VENDOR'S PERSPECTIVE

"COVID-19 had a major impact on how Channel Partners are generating new business and replaced their reliance on direct marketing activities and face-to-face events with smarter 'digital' campaigns. Through the advancement of Through Partner Marketing Automation (TPMA) platforms, partners can now easily socially syndicate their suppliers 'stories', create and run joint email campaigns, automate web content posting and even run GoogleAds campaigns with their suppliers. Partners now have many ways of driving demand, based on their own internal needs, marketing know-how, and resource constraints, whilst being able to leverage the great content and campaigns provided by their suppliers"

Olivier Choron, Managing Director, EMEA at Impartner

#5 INTEGRATED CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORKS

Most successful campaigns use multiple marketing tactics to capture the interest of prospective buyers, build engagement through their buying journey and convert interest into pipeline. However, when presented with a list of assets it might not be obvious to partners, particularly those with less marketing experience, about how to use them as part of an integrated approach. So, when building through-channel campaigns, vendors need to provide not just the assets, but also an execution framework – including things like illustrative customer journeys – to help partners understand how the various tools and tactics can be used in combination to generate results.

As part of designing campaigns, you also need to think about roles and responsibilities. For example, if you've got multiple partners in the same territory, it doesn't make sense for them to all be fighting over the same keywords for PPC. Maybe that activity should be vendor managed with leads then distributed to partners.

#6 MARKETING- AS-A-SERVICE SUPPORT

Given that many channel partners have limited in-house resource, offering your partners Marketing-as-a-Service support can greatly increase both the take-up of your campaigns, and their effectiveness. With a Marketing-as-a-Service model, partners can draw on external support – whether that's a concierge service or an approved third-party agency like OneGTM – to help execute the campaign, filling in the gaps in their own capability. According to Forrester research "channel partners that use third-party services have a higher inclination to utilise TCMA".¹⁴

#7 CLEAR POLICIES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Establishing a governance framework upfront will save a lot of wasted time and energy down the line. Policies you need to think about include:

- **Partner eligibility** – how do you maximise reach without oversaturating the market with duplicate content?
- **Branding** – what's permissible in terms of rebranding or co-branding?
- **Messaging** – what messages are partners allowed to adapt and what should be locked?
- **Reporting** – what reporting will you need from partners on campaign metrics and how will you manage this process so it doesn't become a huge burden?
- **Commitment** – what commitment do you want from partners to ensure that you maximise the return on your investment?

#8 TARGETED INCENTIVES AND FUNDING

Aligning your incentive programmes with your through-marketing goals will help to maximise your ROI across the board. If you're offering MDF to partners, and you're also investing in creating campaigns for them to use, then it makes sense to allocate the MDF to support the execution of the campaigns. You should also consider whether it's appropriate to offer specific incentives tied to partner participation, particularly in the early stages when you're encouraging partners to invest time in something that may be unfamiliar to them.

#9 ROBUST CUSTOMER DATA POLICIES

Complying with data privacy legislation has become more challenging in recent years. For partners who are not experts in regulations such as GDPR or CCPA, concerns over data management may inhibit their use of vendor platforms for things like email marketing. To mitigate this and build partner confidence, vendors should establish and communicate clear policies for how partner-owned data will be stored, accessed and protected. TCMA platforms should be set up in line with those policies and many TCMA vendors will be able to offer best practice guidance in this area.

#10 ALIGNMENT WITH VENDOR-LED MARKETING

The impact of any through-channel activity will be maximised if it is well aligned with the vendors' own broader marketing programmes. That doesn't necessarily mean every asset needs to be the same, but it does mean having consistency in terms of themes, core messages and points of view. It means that partners will be leveraging any awareness that the vendor has created in the market, rather than having to start from scratch with each prospective customer, and for the vendor it means their messages are amplified by their channel.



72%

of partners say that improved incentive systems would encourage them to execute brand-provided marketing campaigns.¹⁵



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THROUGH-CHANNEL MARKETING IN ACTION

EQUINIX: DRIVING RAPID CHANNEL GROWTH

Equinix is the world's digital infrastructure company, with nearly 10,000 enterprises and service providers interconnected via Equinix's global platforms.

Equinix has a publicly stated goal for its channel to reach 50% of total revenues, up from <10% just a few years ago. To support that goal Equinix recognised that it needed to proactively support its channel partners in generating demand for propositions built on Equinix's solutions.

OneGTM have worked with Equinix over a number of years to help partners build joint propositions and GTM programmes. This has included creating a series of through-channel campaign toolkits, containing all of the assets and guidance partners need to develop and execute their own campaigns. These campaigns have been localised across a number of regions.



The programme has helped Equinix rapidly grow, with channel bookings reaching a record high of

35%

by the end of 2020.



II. SAMSUNG: A SERIES OF READY-TO-USE VERTICAL CAMPAIGNS

With a go-to-market strategy directed 100% through channel partners, Samsung Business Mobile were keen to find ways to increase channel engagement and revenues. With some compelling use cases for Samsung solutions in key vertical sectors, and a number of channel partners with strong sector focus, adopting a vertically-focused approach had a lot of advantages.

OneGTM worked with Samsung to design and execute a new vertical Through-channel marketing programme. This included a series of through-channel campaigns across a number of verticals, including the Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transport and Retail sectors. Content and communications assets were complemented with sales enablement resources and campaign blueprints.

The campaign helped open up new markets for partners without needing them to do the heavy lifting. It generated significant numbers of leads and strengthened partner engagement, as well as winning multiple industry awards, including the B2B Marketing Award for 'Best Channel Marketing Initiative' and the Killer Content Award for 'Best Channel Partner Marketing'.

SAMSUNG



***B2B Marketing Award
for 'Best Channel
Marketing Initiative'
and the Killer Content
Award for 'Best Channel
Partner Marketing.'***



III. BROADSOFT (NOW CISCO): DELIVERING SUCCESSFUL THROUGH- PARTNER MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Always looking to capitalise on a growing market, BroadSoft identified an opportunity to step up the level of support it provided to its Service Provider partners.

OneGTM worked closely with BroadSoft to help develop a new way of working with partners. Initially this involved creating a new framework for through-partner marketing and then delivering a series of packaged campaigns-in-a-box that could be executed through selected partners. This included developing the campaign strategy and messaging and then building a full set of tools that would support an integrated marketing campaign.

The campaign was rolled-out in the US and UK, and well received by BroadSoft's partners with very positive feedback around the quality of asset and guidance provided. One partner in particular reported £1m+ opportunities generated within the first 2 months of the launch, whilst another generated 37 leads within the first weeks of roll-out.



“One partner in particular reported 1m+ opportunities generated within the first 2 months of the launch, whilst another generated 37 leads within the first weeks of roll-out.”

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SUMMARY

TCM has become an important area for any vendor that is reliant on its channel to drive growth. It is a fast-moving and still relatively immature area. Many vendors are struggling to find the right approach to deliver the results they need, however the rewards for those that are getting it right are significant.

By applying best practice principles and ensuring that through-channel programmes are well thought through, vendors can enhance their efforts and generate greater return on their marketing investments. In so doing, they will strengthen engagement with channel partners, differentiate themselves in the market, and accelerate growth.

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 - 2 Channel/Partner Marketing Benchmark Survey, Channel Marketer Report, Demand Gen Report, 2021
 - 3 Revenue Trends by the Numbers for MSPs, Channel Futures, 2020
 - 4 Empower Your Channel Partners With A Service-Led Approach to Through-Channel Marketing, OneAffiniti/Forrester, 2019
 - 5 Content Preferences Survey Report, Demand Gen, 2017
 - 6 State of Marketing Automation Survey Report, SMT, 2019
 - 7 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets & Trends, CMI/ MarketingProfs, 2021
 - 8 Top Tech Content Marketing Trends, Isoline, 2019
 - 9 State of Marketing Automation Survey Report, SMT, 2019
 - 10&11&12 Empower Your Channel Partners With A Service-Led Approach to Through-Channel Marketing, OneAffiniti/Forrester, 2019
 - 13 Channel Partner Marketing Benchmark Survey 2021, Channel Marketer/ Demand Gen, 2021
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ABOUT ONEGTM

OneGTM specialises in designing and executing effective go-to-market programmes for technology vendors and service providers. We've worked with many market leaders to help build successful TCM programmes. Our services include creating TCM frameworks, developing integrated, insight-led campaigns, building channel enablement assets, and providing execution support to partners.

**For more information on our work,
please visit our website at:**

WWW.ONEGTM.COM

**If you'd like to discuss how we could help
you build a successful through-channel
programme then contact us at:**

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