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10 THINGS

VENDORS DO THAT DRIVE PARTNERS CRAZY

Vendors: Ever wonder what your channel partners are thinking?
About you? About your channel program?

Partners: Ever wonder if your peers feel the same way about some vendors?

If the answer is “yes,” then maybe you should open up some lines of communication.

The fact is, the 2112 Group sees a “*low birth rate*” in the channel, with CEO and chief analyst Larry Walsh **writing that** “increasing complexity of new technologies and delivery models is creating a higher barrier to entry, resulting in fewer companies starting up in the channel. The problem, as we’ve noted several times, is that fewer start-ups means fewer innovative partners to refresh the channel.”

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Meanwhile, a steady stream of M&A activity means constant shake-ups, while the long tail of small partners can spread vendor enablement resources thin, especially where there's little automation. On the vendor side, start-ups are coming fast and furious, with many of them embracing a channel sales model.

Some trend stats from Jay McBain, Principal Analyst, Channels, Partnerships & Alliances, at Forrester:

- ▶ Recent reports from CompTIA and IPED show a current North American technology partner base of 160,000 companies. That's down 36 percent since 2008 and continues to face 10 percent to 15 percent annual attrition for the foreseeable future.
- ▶ 40 percent of the entire channel will retire in the next 10 years.
- ▶ The average channel partner has eight employees; 97 percent of them have fewer than 50.

So yeah, you will need all the selling help you can get from a channel that wants to work with you. That means, at the very least, not doing these 10 things that drive them crazy.

1 ■ Acting like information travels by osmosis

“The biggest frustration in dealing with vendors is keeping communication lines open. Vendors need to share their success stories with partners; their success is our success.”

— *Pennsylvania VAR*

2 ■ Too many rules

“I would say the thing that drives me crazy is over-complicated or extensive certification and other vendor requirements. Some of the vendors have so many requirements it becomes a full-time job for many resources just to stay compliant. If you are going to have extensive requirements, then you need to provide the partners with an easy way to determine what they are, and to manage them through a portal.”

— *Massachusetts VAR/Solution Provider*

3 ■ Lack of team perspective

“Channel vendors need to be PARTNERS with MSPs — be more open and flexible in their partner agreements. Most do a pretty good job; some are failing miserably.”

— **Missouri Security MSP**

4 ■ Muscling in on relationships...

“When they develop programs/systems that require me to give them all of my clients’ names and contact info. It is seen as an attempt to bypass me and my relationship that I’ve built and developed with my client for their services or products. All it does is make me not want to work with that channel partner and try to find a new one.”

— **Virginia MSP**

5. ■ ...or even outright cheating

“When you interact with a customer the partner brought to you ... bring the partner in to the meeting/call with you!”

— *Florida VAR*

6. ■ Lack of appreciation for what a partner brings to the table

“It is frustrating when software vendors don’t recognize the value that small services partners bring them with a very focused expertise that can help win contract awards and provide long-term services to their customers.”

— *Virginia IT Consulting Partner*

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7 ■ Unresponsiveness

“Our main issue with vendors is the lack of timely access to high-level technical support, which forces us to work through their tedious trouble-ticketing process.”

— *Illinois MSP*

8 ■ A revolving door for reps

The lack of consistency or constant changing of our channel representative. There is one large software company we work with where it seems like we get a call from our new personal representative who’s going to ‘help take care of everything we need’ about every six months. At this point we don’t even bother following up with their calls or take them seriously. When we need something, we don’t even try to call them. We tend to call a general number and figure out who we need to get routed to for our needs. When we have attempted to call our representative in the past, they never seemed to know how to help us anyway.”

— *Virginia MSP*

9 ■ Lack of trust

“Not trusting that your channel partner is taking the steps to get themselves to the point where they are proficient at being able to move the technology. And then communications, not having a point of contact that understands the value of the partnership, needing that open dialog so that when a customer is being worked on, that information is being passed back and forth and the prospect and the opportunity are being moved forward by both parties.

I think that is critical. It has to be a true partnership, otherwise it's just talk. It's not the real deal.

– ***New Hampshire ISV Partner***

10 ■ Blowing smoke

“What drives channel partners crazy is when you tell them that your direct sales team will never interfere with your channel sales team.

Partners are smarter than that.”

– ***Texas Software Solutions Vendor***



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