



# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know  
**before** you develop a channel  
partner training programme



# INTRODUCTION

**Welcome to our guide that will teach you everything you need to know before you get to work on a channel partner training programme.**

We have created this guide to give you the background information you need to create, develop and sustain a successful, long-lasting training programme.

Perhaps you are currently experiencing:

- **A growing partner channel**
- **Loss of brand identity**
- **High support costs associated with lack of knowledge**
- **Issues communicating product updates, features and benefits**
- **Concerns about persistent outsider mentalities**

Our knowledge and understanding from over 20 years in the business form the basis of this guide. It highlights what we have learned and implemented in businesses across the globe, to help them run their training programmes effectively.

**It offers advice and insight on:**

- **How and why training works in sales scenarios**
- **What you need to know before developing your training strategy**
- **The challenges you may come across and how to overcome them**
- **Key benefits of partner training and how you can achieve them**
- **Best practices for creating a training programme**

# DEFINITIONS

Before we move on any further, and to avoid any confusion, let's be clear about terminology.

## PARTNERS

The definition of a partner means an approved reseller of products, components or services to end customers. So, although partners are customers in that they buy, they are not the end-user of the product who would be referred to as the customer.

## CUSTOMERS

Customer means the end-user or third party to whom partners market and/or sell products for use in their solution, and not for resale.

## THE TYPES OF PARTNERS

Each partner type represents a different kind of relationship:

**Installers/resellers:** Local experts who understand the regional specifications that impact the solution. The training and certification programmes provide assurance that customers will receive consistent, reliable service.


**Integrators:** Organisations that integrate solutions with other technology to address the customers' complex issues.

**Consultants:** Consultants help ensure every aspect of the customer's network is designed for excellent quality and performance.

**Distributors/retailers:** Distributors focus on the complex logistics of stocking and distributing solutions around the globe.



# CUSTOMER SEGMENTS



*72% of partners aren't able to connect offerings to buyer needs and challenges (360Insights SiriusDecisions)*

In devising a plan, it's important to realise that **end-users have different dynamics** and the market is made up of different types of customers.

## Product Aware End-Users

These customers specify the product as they already see the specific benefit from an applications and technology perspective.

Focusing on this customer group enables a manufacturer to bring value to partners, showing control and strength in the market. In this customer segment, partners usually play a fulfilment role.

However, if positioned properly, partners can help maintain the product specifications with the end-users and increase the value of the products and solutions. Their training and certification play a key role here in customer confidence and positioning.

## Unaware End-Users

This group of customers are ones that partners have an influence over. They can be brought to the manufacturer by partners who have successfully delivered a value proposition in which the customer sees value.

The partner sales, product training and certification enables them to position themselves with customers and ensures they have the knowledge to find appropriate solutions for the customer's needs.

# SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR 'PULL' SALES STRATEGIES

Companies often adopt a **Pull – Push Sales Strategy**.

'**Pull**' is the strategy that will **deliver** a true **competitive advantage** to, through, and with partners. It is customer-focused. Driving **demand**, and creating **awareness, recognition**, and **specification**.

Customers who **tie specific benefits** to your products from an applications and technology perspective, usually **specify** which of **your products** they want.

In this case, your sales team may play the lead role and the channel partners may support the specification effort or play a 'fulfilment' role.



When dealing with specified solutions, the impact on **partners** is that they need a **highly trained and certified team**. In addition, they require strong brand support and vendor presence, innovative and differentiated solutions, and protection from competition.

**In response to this, you need to offer:**

- **An installed base of customers**
- **A sales team in all major markets**
- **Brand differentiation**
- **Strong certification programmes**

# SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR 'PUSH' PARTNER STRATEGIES

A '**Push**' strategy is when your partners are able to **influence a customer** by selling them your combined value propositions.

In this space, the business becomes **more price sensitive**. Despite the sensitivity of this segment, there are still **differentiators** that your **partners can offer**. These can be presented through product features, accreditation and training, services, and the packaging of multiple solutions.

Push is all about **building**, **maintaining**, and **delivering** real channel loyalty and commitment.



It includes **targeted sales and marketing programmes**, extensive solutions, tools and training, joint marketing and incentive programmes and channel-ready sales and marketing tools.

When responding to bids, **partners need a generally accepted brand**, a strong supply chain with broadly available products, competitive prices and reliable quality and performance.

## In this instance, you need to offer:

- **Recognised quality**
- **General availability**
- **Competitive pricing and services**
- **Readily available sales and product training**

# THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Now would be a good time to talk about developing the channel training programme.

The **programme** should be designed as a **mutual investment** for both you and the partner. It should **encourage commitment**, by offering status through certification. You should also provide **training** in **selling** and **promoting** your solutions. In return, the programme **rewards commitment from partners** with brand recognition and market differentiation.

The **overall goal** is to **increase market share** and coverage, by increasing the partner's revenues through **targeted** encouragement, **education** and understanding of your solutions.

Developing and optimising a **partner training strategy** is fundamental to maximising partnerships. Using a structured systematic methodology for approaching the training programme ensures that a comprehensive solution can be created, developed, designed, and deployed.

Focusing on factors that will deliver **maximum impact** is key to the successful execution of the partner training strategy and **support** of the partners who will **achieve partner goals**.

## COMMITMENT TO YOUR PARTNERS

To recognise the importance of partners, you should make fundamental training commitments to encourage and help them to succeed in their market sectors. These include:

- Training programmes to **empower** partners, give them a **competitive edge** and enable them to bring value to their employees and their customers.
- **Expertise** and knowledge to realise a market's **full potential** combined with great solutions.
- **Fast**, flexible **response** to partners through a partner **support** organisation that is tuned to partners' needs.
- **Dedication** to a successful future for partners. Fully backed by offering time, money, and personnel, to build easily accessible, valued, and effective training resources.

**Partners should feel comfortable investing in your partner training programme.**



# WHY DO TRAINING PROGRAMMES WORK?

Before we talk more about developing a partner training programme, it is important to understand the reasons why they succeed:



Detailed partner training lays the foundation for recruiting and leveraging the most effective partners and ensures customer satisfaction and maximum revenue.

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By building training programmes specifically aimed at energising, recognising, and mobilising carefully selected and recruited partners, you ensure the partner will enjoy the business benefits of aligning with a company that cares about their successes.

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Treating partners in the same fashion as you would your own internal sales team, further strengthens their focus and loyalty.

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Including key training performance indicators that will function as metrics for programme compliance early in the process, ensures timely and accurate information will be available for gauging the partner's success on your behalf.

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Finally, automating the training programmes infrastructure, so that it is easy for partners to engage with you, contributes to a compelling partner proposition that aids in continually growing, cultivating, and grooming partners for greater productivity over time.



# TRAINING PROGRAMME ELEMENTS

The training programme, through its processes and features, enables you to deliver a consistent, efficient, responsive, and proactive programme with the partners.

A channel training programme aims to enhance the relationship between you and your partners, and by doing so, delivers your solutions to a growing audience of end-users.

Incentive programmes for training are sometimes made available to partners and can form an important part of the programme.

Some of the key areas training programmes should cover are:

- 1 Sales training**
- 2 Product training**
- 3 Technical training**
- 4 Incentive programmes**
- 5 Marketing support**
- 6 Dedicated web training portals**
- 7 Feedback on training status through the review process**
- 8 Dedicated partner communications and events**
- 9 End user and market promotion of training programme**

# ADDITIONAL MARKETING SUPPORT

Extensive marketing resources are often made available to partners to promote their training and certifications. Such material can be distributed via the chosen learning platform with additional guidance provided for proper use.

Areas of marketing expertise available include:

- ➔ **Communication of partner status information on public websites**
- ➔ **Web partner locator**
- ➔ **Certification on approval**
- ➔ **Promotion of partner programme to end-users**
- ➔ **Full range of channel ready support, sales, and marketing collateral**



# MAXIMISING SUCCESS



Your success hinges on eliminating partner sabotage and embracing your partners by embedding a partner-focused, partner-centric, partner-friendly view into your training programme. Here we outline the benefits of developing a training programme in collaboration with your partner.



## BUILDING LOYALTY

To build loyalty, you must differentiate your product training and establish trust with the partner.

Also, you must realise that the partner may not be anxious to get trained on your products, because there are a host of other more pressing concerns such as maintaining and recruiting employees, making payroll, and fending off the attacks of its competitors.

A sure way for you to capture the attention of a partner is to build awareness and demand for your training and certifications so that partners can fulfil that demand. This requires creating brand awareness with both the customer and the partner.

If you do not capture partner awareness, partners readily switch to products they know and trust. A brand means nothing to them if they have not heard of it before.



# CREATING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

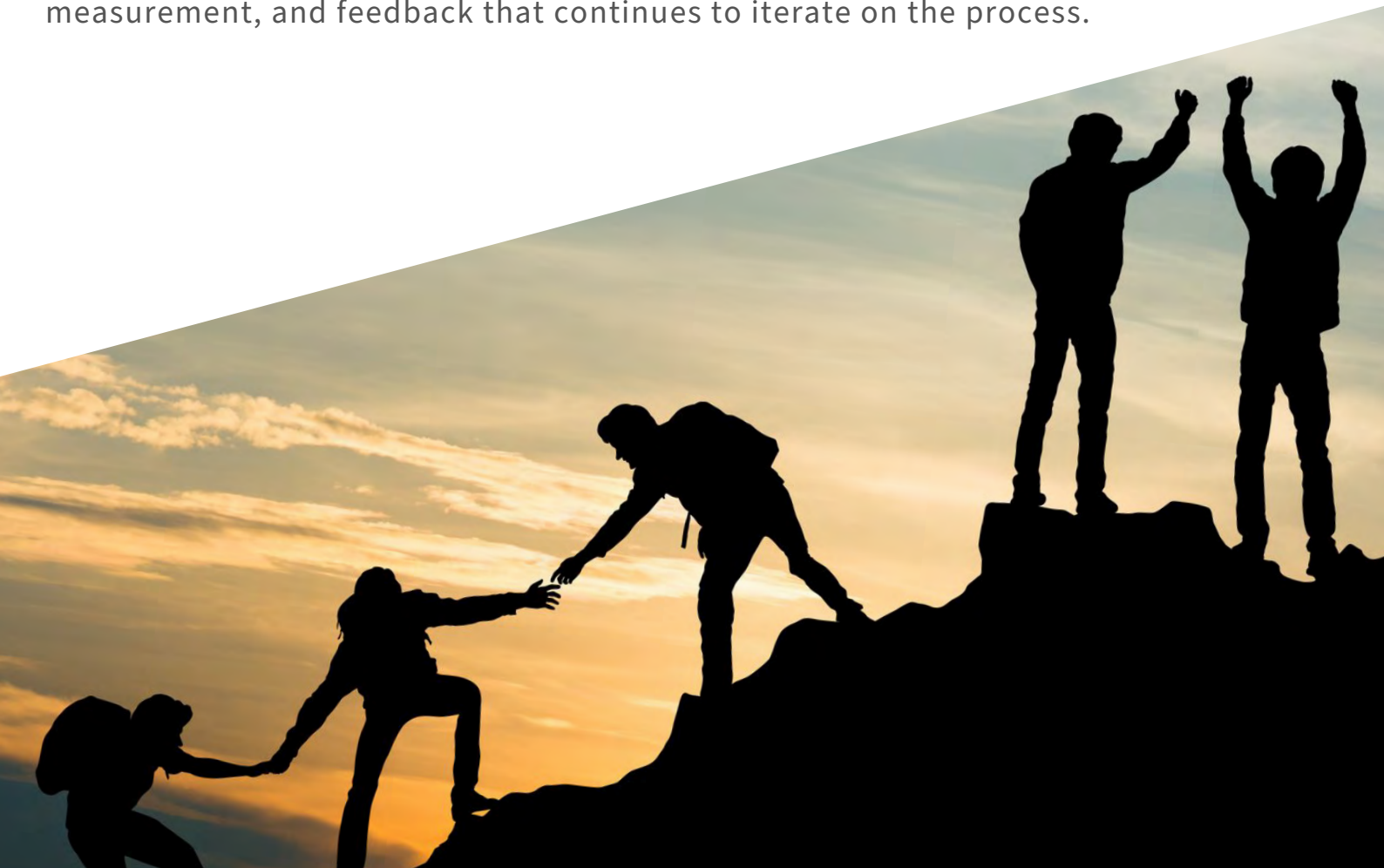


Effective elements to any partner training programme must:

- **Augment the partner's value**
- **Improve the core solutions the partner offers to its customers**
- **Facilitate differentiation against the partner's competitors**
- **Impact the partner's sales process**
- **Enhance their profitability**

Straightforward and simple ideas for creating successful training are so often overlooked because they are derived from common sense and are often too obvious. Nothing can be more powerful or simple than showing the partner how to sell successfully.

The underpinnings of any successful training effort involve planning, execution, measurement, and feedback that continues to iterate on the process.





# MOTIVATING YOUR PARTNERS

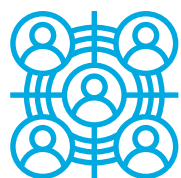


A partner's lack of motivation to train internal staff is less frequently due to lack of desire and more often due to a lack of clear expectation management.

It is difficult for a partner to remain engaged and motivated if they do not know what the training goals are, what needs to be done by both parties, and when.

Traditional means of motivating partners to train such as marketing funds, marketing support, reward and incentive programs are increasingly thought of as luxuries.

There's more to motivation than money. Often the depth of the customer base, industry recognition and brand awareness can motivate more effectively than financial reward.



## PARTNER SEGMENTATION

Partner segmentation through training enables you to profile your current or future partners to better understand how to help them increase business. This will also be necessary to add rigour to the process for partner targeting and recruitment, ensuring that you only recruit the best and most appropriate partners.

Through training and certification, it is also possible to assess partner expertise, commitment and expose gaps in a partner strategy. It helps the planning process to develop Partner training profiles charting the appropriate partner training criteria.



# PARTNER TRAINING CHALLENGES

Managing partners involves much more than product training and quarterly updates. It requires an effective certification and promotion strategy, training, mentoring, and support on how to sell products effectively in a complex sales environment.

Nobody consciously sets out to sabotage their partners. However, without thorough consideration of how a partner might view your training strategy, solution and plans you could find yourself plagued by problems.

The following are some mistakes that would negatively impact your partner efforts:

- **Undefined partner training strategy**
- **Unmet partner expectations**
- **Missing or poorly defined training**
- **Insufficient or inadequate training support**
- **Failure to proactively manage the partner training**
- **Not setting clear expectations**
- **Poor partner communication**





# SUMMARY

**Training plays a crucial part in your partner programme and will help support many aspects of it.**

We empower organisations to **deliver high-quality engaging training** and we do this through the use of our innovative Learning Management System and **unique management and support services.**

From our years of experience, we have created a suite of solutions to allow you to run a successful training programme with no internal resource needed.

We become your partner in training. With our help, you can build your programme effectively and cost-efficiently without the need for you to have an internal programme support team to implement, train and manage.



The entire process and programme is managed by us, leaving you to focus on your core business while we take care of your training..

**Interested in learning more about how we can work in partnership with you to deliver a high-quality, well-supported and engaging training programme? Book a chat with us now.**

**BOOK NOW**