Contents

What is Partner Relationship Management? 02
Growing a Partner Program with a Modern Toolset 04
Five Key Components of Next-Generation Partner Relationship Management 06
  #1 A Healthy Pipeline of Potential Partners 07
  #2 Partner Enablement and Onboarding 08
  #3 A Great Partner Training Program 09
  #4 Stand-Out Channel Marketing Content 10
  #5 Adequate Internal Support and Resources 11
Driving Channel Results with Allbound 12
What is Partner Relationship Management?

What do you think of when you hear the term Partner Relationship Management?

If you’re like a lot of people, chances are you’ve never heard of Partner Relationship Management or PRM until recently. After all, channel sales and marketing technology has long been an afterthought when it comes to building a modern sales and marketing tech stack.

Perhaps, your knowledge of PRM is based on what you find as a result of a search engine result search - a plethora of complex, expensive, hybrid Software-as-a-Service, or SaaS technologies. The search results may be so confusing that you might question whether incorporating a PRM program is a good idea. The purpose of this guide is to point out what PRM tools can do for you and your channel partners to increase the quality of your sales funnel, keep your pipeline full, and increase revenue.

In the Beginning

Originally designed as a ledger to help Channel Managers track, manage and control their partners, PRM was the chief channel management software in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As channel programs grew more complex and varied across enterprises, so did PRM. Enough so, that many organizations turned to their own internal teams to build highly customized partner portals. Suddenly, PRM systems evolved into the proverbial dumping ground for complicated processes, disconnected systems, and inefficient tools.

The New Generation of PRM

Today, however, a subscription-based model for marketing and selling technology has taken over and channel partner programs have a new lease on life. As a result, a new generation of API-based PRM tools have taken the industry by storm due to their ability to deliver real, measurable results. These tools focus on user experience, partner engagement, collaboration, integration, and real-time intelligent data.

This guide shows how this new generation of simple yet powerful PRM tools are building more successful partner programs by encouraging collaboration and communication. You will learn how to make the most of your channel marketing and sales efforts by optimizing onboarding, channel enablement and training, content marketing programs and pipeline management. We’ll illustrate how modern (SaaS) platforms are improving partner adoption, engagement, and effectiveness.
Today’s PRM Platform Drives Your Partner Revenue

Today’s complex business-to-business (B2B) sales cycles demand more from channel technology, because:

- The workforce is becoming increasingly younger and more mobile.
- Cloud-based subscription models are dominating the industry.
- Buyers are using more information sources than ever.

These factors make it critical for businesses to understand buyer personas, motives, and attitudes. They enhance the notion that integrating channel technology into your marketing and sales stack can no longer be reliant upon complex, expensive, hybrid-SaaS platforms. Maintaining disjointed siloed systems challenge the efficiency of your channel partner program. Technologies have evolved and advanced, making these types of outdated systems no longer powerful on their own.

**Today’s generation of simple, powerful partner relationship management tools are the future of channel sales and marketing - and critical to successful partnerships.**

Emerging from traditional PRM systems, these true SaaS platforms enable businesses to deviate from the chaos and expense of traditional or hybrid-SaaS software. They also substantially decrease the costs associated with extensive customization, service, and support.

These cloud-based, next-generation tools take the idea of the outdated partner portal and turn it on its head by accounting for the entire sales and marketing ecosystem. Modern partner management is about analyzing data across disparate departments to learn what is most successful. Now teams can build their channel programs around real, hard facts.

Are you ready to turn your gaze toward the future? Read more to see how next-generation PRM is the cornerstone for modern partner programs.
Approaching today’s channel demands without the right tools is like trying to perform complex, high-speed tasks on a dial-up modem. Sure, it’s possible. But it’s ultimately an exercise in futility because you’re limiting yourself—and your partners—while creating unnecessary headaches and expenses in the process.

**To support your partners, you need to think about the future. You need to think about next-generation, cloud-based tools.**

The right PRM platform can help move the needle by enabling teams to achieve key performance indicators (KPIs) and hit revenue goals. When your channel team is hitting its KPIs, you’re contributing to an overarching organizational goal of increasing sales and boosting company revenue.

Today’s tools facilitate communication and collaboration in your channel. They help indirect reps stay on the same page, regardless of the distance between them and their vendors. They use the wide array of data that the channel partner program collects to provide critical insights into market trends and sales activities that can lower costs and add value to customers.

Today’s digitally-focused marketing and sales teams use a healthy variety of tools and technologies. This combination of software and technology is called your technology stack. Ideally, the tools your team uses should enable your entire organization—including your partner channel—to be effective.
Streamline Your Content and Technology

What’s worse than not having the right technology? Having too many tools that don’t talk to each other. You’ve already invested in technology, you don’t need more stacked applications.

Adding an accessible, single-layer API-first channel platform to your current sales and marketing stack centralizes and connects your partners with your content and technology. Unlike hierarchical channel technology stacks, a streamlined technology layer works to grow your channel. Synchronized tools eliminate wasted investments and resolve inefficient processes. They provide your teams with access to reports and statistics that accelerate performance.

Augmenting your existing marketing investments with a plug-and-play platform designed around the needs of channel partners result in technology that helps your channel.

Having a killer channel sales and marketing stack can help drive channel sales — but it’s no magic bullet.

Ultimately, the best partner tools should account for the following functions:

- Lead and pipeline management
- Real-time communication and collaboration
- Channel sales enablement
- Analytics and reporting
- Content marketing and management

Let’s review the five best channel partner management practices that the next generation of partner relationship management tools provide.
Five Key Components of Next-Generation Partner Relationship Management
A HEALTHY PIPELINE OF POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Balance Lead Management and Sales Prospecting
Balancing lead management with effective sales prospecting can be a challenge for any size channel program. As you already know, keeping your pipeline filled with qualified prospects is difficult. Adding a partner layer to the equation creates even more complexity, as you’re tasked with keeping your partners’ pipelines full. Plus, lead management has become increasingly complex—especially in channel sales.

Empower Partners to Share their Pipeline
Failing to empower your partners to extend their pipelines can result in inaccurate commissions and revenues. Who has time for that? It’s up to you to provide your partners with the tools they need to successfully market your products. That’s why it’s essential to enhance your partner practices and pipeline with your partner relationship management tools.

Nurture Leads at all Stages of the Sales Cycle
While your customer relationship management (CRM) software may provide some visibility into the lead management process, your PRM tools should integrate with your CRM to provide a holistic view of the entire pipeline. Partner relationship management tools create and deploy lead qualification and scoring systems. They implement lead nurturing efforts at all stages of the sales cycle and provide appropriate information to all managers and teams that need to track progress.

Increase Your Ability to Forecast and Support Partners
It’s important that your tools increase your ability to forecast and provide targeted support to your partners at specific stages of the sales cycle. This enables management to identify any gaps and challenges in the sales process and address them swiftly and effectively.
PARTNER ENABLEMENT AND ONBOARDING

Strategic, Repeatable Onboarding and Enablement

Partner onboarding and enablement are two of the most important steps in building partner relationships. That’s why it’s critical for PRM tools to enable strategic, repeatable onboarding and enablement processes. Effective PRM programs establish communication guidelines and provide partners with the right information at the right time, thereby setting partners up for success.

Encourages Partner Engagement and Loyalty

A PRM platform is also a partner recruitment tool. It:

• Shows partners you have a place and content dedicated to them
• Shows partners you care about their process/leads/customers they bring
• Allows you to enable partners to their fullest capacity and make them the most successful

Partner onboarding and enablement should occur before partners begin selling, and should thoroughly support them throughout each phase of the sales cycle. They facilitate engagement and loyalty, which are especially important when considering the fact that resellers are selling for multiple vendors.

Below is what successful partner onboarding and enablement should look like:

• **Outline benefits and automate the application process.** First impressions go a long way. To attract partners in the first place, be clear about the benefits of working with your company.

• **Provide a warm welcome.** Once partners are ready to start, schedule executive kickoff call to convey enthusiasm and answer any initial questions. Consider providing a welcome kit with information and even some swag!

• **Provide partners with necessary credentials.** Ensure that they log into your portal, and politely nudge them if they don’t. Sometimes, they may need further instruction, and helping them can help establish a working relationship.

• **Establish goals and expectations.** Your partners should know the exact benefits of working together. Establish processes and create a document outlining what partners should tackle in the first 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days.

• **Simplify the process with consolidated tools and technology.** Your partners should be set up for success—not inundated with technology. Your PRM tools must streamline the process by incorporating guided selling, deal registration, and gamification into a centralized, accessible tool.

• **Empower partners with co-branded marketing content.** In addition to partner relationship management tools, co-branded content and marketing collateral should be provided to immerse partners in your products and services.
A GREAT PARTNER TRAINING PROGRAM

Consistent and Optimized Training
Ensuring your partners are ready to sell is only one step in building and maintaining engaged, productive channel partners. Once your partners are ready to sell, it’s time to start training. Your efforts must be ongoing and your partner portal must optimize your training techniques.

Content Available Anytime, Anywhere
Your PRM platform should present content and information in a way that resonates with your partners and ensures they can access it anytime, anywhere. In addition to providing your partners with an accessible knowledge base and partner playbooks, your training should mirror job conditions.

Immersive training models enable partners to solve real-life sales situations. New partners should use the same tools and systems that will be used on the job. It’s also important to foster an environment that encourages inquiry. Motivating partners with a culture of continued learning is the only way to foster long-term success.

PRM software should take your training and education methods to the next level. To ensure you’re getting the most from your partner systems, ask the following:

- Does your partner portal simplify onboarding and set your partners up for success?
- Does your partner portal enable you to keep channel reps up-to-speed with courses you create?
- Are you able to align training content and programs back to your sales process?
- Can you offer certifications within training to help your partners succeed?
- Can you create quizzes to keep your reps up-to-date?
- Does your portal incorporate gamification to keep partners engaged?
We’ve already discussed how technology has empowered consumers by placing them at the center of the sales process. Because consumers can access content at any time, they are now in the position to lead their own purchasing journey. Content is everywhere these days. To sell in the channel, it’s important to leverage marketing content that engages with your customers.

**Align your marketing content with the buyer’s journey and your sales funnel.**

Your content must empower indirect reps to meet the needs of your end users. Arrange content into playbooks based on verticals, personas, life-cycle stage, and business outcomes to take some of the heavy lifting from your partners. Customized, co-branded content keeps partners up-to-date on products and services and helps them reach customers effectively and efficiently.

**Provide access to the right people at the right time.**

PRM tools improve end-user engagement with marketing content by making content discoverable, rankable, shareable, and usable.

**Build Brand Potency**

Indirect reps need to know that content isn’t just something they attach to an email as a follow-up. It’s something that must be leveraged across every stage in the sales cycle to cultivate relationships with prospects. Strong content that’s properly utilized in an indirect sales channel will help you build brand potency. The right tools empower resellers to access content on the fly, and enables channel them to track the content that converts browsing to sales.

**Turn Your Partners into Thought Leaders**

Ultimately, providing your partners with the appropriate content can transform them into teachers. They become sources of education information, rather than people who simply repeat a tagline. They become problem solvers who understand and champion prospects through challenges they face. Importantly, PRM tools empower partners to become coaches equipped to understand their prospects’ strengths and weaknesses. By providing the right content, your indirect reps become thought leaders.
ADEQUATE INTERNAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Aligns with Support Systems and Resources

Today’s increasingly complex sales landscape demands that organizations work to eliminate the sales and marketing barrier. From collaborating on marketing collateral to talking with clients and signing deals, both marketing and sales are engaged in promoting conversions. However, this collaboration and awareness must extend across your entire organization. Your PRM program must align with the support systems and resources required to be successful.

Align Enterprise with Tools and Technology

Aligning your organization’s disparate departments around your tools and technology prevents confusion and ensures that everyone is consistently receiving relevant information. PRM tools provide your team with the ability to create a steady flow of creative campaigns driven by results. Leveraging single SaaS systems ensures that content is delivered to the right people—both reps and marketers—at the right time. It guarantees that training materials, sales decks, and marketing messaging are centralized and distributed. Ultimately, it preps reps to close all gaps in the sales process.

Support Your Partners

Supporting your partners is step one in creating a successful channel sales program. However, finding the time in the daily scheme of business operations to provide consistent support can be a challenge. It’s critical to have an accurate overview of your organization’s current capabilities and resources.

From overseeing partner relationships to managing the development of individual partners, it’s essential to ensure you can scale up and down as needed. To determine if your PRM can scale as your partners scale, ask yourself these questions:

- What personnel are dedicated to the channel team?
- From which departments are you borrowing resources (marketing, sales customer success, operations, etc.)?
- Do your partners have access to customer health data?
- Do your partners have resources for better supporting customers’ needs?
- Can you deliver resources to partners so they can self-serve—from onboarding through sales engagement?
Driving Channel Results with Allbound

Next generation (PRM) tools are the solution to complex and expensive legacy PRM and partner portals.

Prior to reading this guide, did you think your opinion on PRM would change? If not, we really don’t blame you. These tools have had a bad reputation in the past decade—and, as we’ve illustrated, for good reason.

As this guide has shown, these tools provide your organization with access to reports, content, and statistics that ultimately accelerate your partners’ performance. Leveraging the best tools replaces power struggles with powerful partnerships. It also helps create a shared mission of working toward a common goal across your entire organization and your partners’ organization.

Cloud-based software transcends traditional PRM solutions by improving partner adoption, engagement, and effectiveness.

These single SaaS toolsets are shaking up the channel sales and marketing world by closing the loop on channel engagement.

ALLBOUND IS THE PLATFORM DESIGNED FOR ACCELERATING PARTNER REVENUE.

Allbound provides a modern, integrated framework for building and growing engaged, successful partners.

From robust features to effective partner onboarding and training processes, Allbound is designed to cater to the demands of the modern channel. Say hello to the future of channel management.

REQUEST A DEMO OR TRY ALLBOUND FOR FREE!

Schedule your first look by visiting:
Allbound.com/request-a-demo
Try Allbound FREE or request a live demo

Learn how Allbound can streamline your channel sales.

Discover how our platform solves your everyday channel challenges. With features tailored to all users—especially your channel marketing and sales teams’ needs—you get an all-in-one partner relationship management solution.

Schedule your first look by visiting:
Allbound.com/request-a-demo