



# The Three Things Your Partners Want From You

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Secrets revealed:  
crucial must-haves for  
partner enablement

Spring 2022

Allbound PRM Solutions





# Introduction

Today, solution providers need to be agile and evolve their business models quickly in this new and hybrid work environment. However, there may be discrepancies between sales and revenue, leaving partners scratching their heads regarding profit margins.

Disappointing results that cannot be blamed on disappointing revenue **most likely stem from inefficient business and technical processes that can drag down an organization and thwart profitability**, says Carolyn April, senior director of industry analysis at CompTIA. It's a problem that dogs many companies today, one that will only grow more pronounced as firms move into new business models. And considering that the number of firms undergoing a high degree of business transformation has nearly doubled in recent years, it's time to take a hard look at operational efficiency to maximize profits and take full advantage of the emerging digital economy.

**Increasing efficiency is something every company should strive for, especially now, as it can be vital in improving your company's bottom line.**

Quite simply, this means you're able to **take less time to do things or able to do more within the same amount of time**. Greater operational efficiency can help partners maintain margins and keep their customers happy.

**Utilizing automation is critical here. The more automated processes you have, the quicker you can move.**

Suppose automation is done correctly and all your systems are talking to each other. In that case, you effectively take all the low-level tasks "away" from your employees so that they can focus on tasks that provide more value to the business.

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- CAROLYN APRIL,  
Senior Director of Industry Analysis,  
CompTIA



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Automation has long been around in one form or another. Due to the accelerated demands of today's work environment, **many companies have to have these processes now to remain competitive.** Automation is more than just a nice-to-have; **it is now compulsory.** So many employees are no longer in one centralized office and are working from different endpoints, there must be systems that automate certain communication functions.

### **Automation also allows companies to scale, doing more with the same amount of resources.**

So, if you can expand the purview of your employee's job description, you're still just employing one person, but their capabilities and bandwidth have broadened.

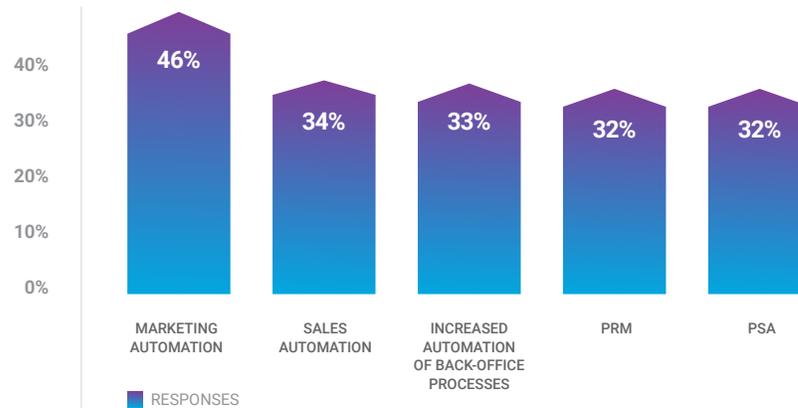
In many organizations, processes are still not automated. Employees' swivel chair' between applications or computers, manually extracting information from one application and then validating and applying it to another. One thing that partners want from vendors is increased API integrations to automate those functions, eliminating the need for the swivel.



Automation is more than just a nice-to-have; it is now compulsory.



Partners reported that their organizations implemented several processes and tools to control costs and increase operational efficiencies over the last 20 months:



**What did partners want to see more of from vendors regarding technology during the last 20 months?**

- 37% of survey respondents mentioned improved PRM functionality, including deal registration processes
- 25% said enhanced RMM functionality to manage work-from-anywhere end users

Participants also cited that marketing tools and data analytics are vital due to **changing behaviors and addressed that they had to get leaner in terms of automation and remote work tools during the pandemic.**



When it comes to scaling, it's easy to get caught up in the mindset that something drastic has to change. This is a pitfall that business owners encounter. To grow and scale, it's often best to stay put rather than jump into another delivery model. Instead, compile core projects and add automation.



# What Channel Professionals Want from Vendor Training

Many vendors and solution providers still haven't cracked the nut on partner training. Either there isn't enough training material to adequately prepare the partner or the hoops partners have to jump through almost make it not worth their while.

Umstead says that the easiest way to do this is **to tie the pricing model to the partner's education level instead of solely based on revenue.**

All vendors want to sell the most of their products, so they seek out partners who can push as many seats as quickly as possible. However, if those partners do not ensure that the end customer is provisioned and configured correctly, those same end users will have a negative impression of the product. This may, in the end, hurt the vendor more than the partner because the partner may simply blame the product instead of their skills in making sure the product was a good fit for the client.

**"I think vendors would be better suited making sure the partners they are working with are trained both in sales and the technical aspects and limitations of the product,"** continues Umstead. "Perhaps the best way to do that would be for the vendor to offer pricing incentives or tiered pricing on the level of training of the partner instead solely on the number of seats they can sell the first month. If there is ongoing training or annual updates, offer incentives around those."

"I think this problem stems from two major factors. The first one is that partners don't want to invest the time in learning the solutions properly. Many partners just want to learn what they have to, then sell it, and lean on technical support from the vendor to make it work. Vendors also need to view the training of their partners as more of an investment instead of purely a cost."

**- MARC UMSTEAD,**  
President Of IT Services Provider,  
*Plus 1 Technology*

## Partners need training to be thorough but convenient. There are two sides to this.

- 01 Some vendors don't provide enough training.** They offer an initial stock "intro to product," but it doesn't go much deeper than that. Put very simply; sometimes there isn't enough training material to adequately prepare the partner to sell and service the solution.

There should be separate sales and technical training on the solution. While both funnel into growth objectives and ultimately revenue, the tempo, processes, and end goals vary greatly. To move up the tiers of a partner program, service providers should be **required to take additional training, particularly in professional services opportunities where they can make real margins.** After all, if they're receiving more programmatic benefits in terms of MDF, discounts, and marketing enablement, they should have a more in-depth product or service knowledge so they can stand on their own two feet and drive revenue for the vendor. In this sense, vendors should make this as easy as possible.

- 02 On the other end of the spectrum, some vendors require so much training that it becomes prohibitive.** They now must have all of these additional certifications, and not many have days or weeks at a time to dedicate to such in-depth processes. It takes time and resources to achieve such certifications. The time, effort, and cost involved often don't add up to a revenue-generating function, resulting in partners avoiding it altogether.

**The vendor's job is to get a team up to speed on their solutions so that the partner can relay that information up and down the chain.** The problem is that no one has a ton of extra time to dedicate to that kind of process. Every vendor and distributor is constantly flooding partner inboxes with new products and training they want them to execute. While it is vitally important to stay on the pulse of technology, cybersecurity, and the latest products, services, or enhancements are out there, most of them fail to be worth partners' time.

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Vendors need to be mindful of the fact that their product isn't the only product that partners have to learn. It's the vendor's job to make that training and knowledge transfer process as seamless as possible. Put out digestible information documented in an easy-to-read way that partners can access and engage within a self-directed manner. In this instance, **an idea for vendors is implementing more "at your own pace" training modules.**

"From what I've noticed with various partners, there's either too much information, and you get that overwhelmed feeling, or too little and you feel lost," says Eric Sanchez, founder and president of partner shop Parried. "There needs to be **a healthy balance of 'at one's own pace' training and information available to partners along with an effective onboarding strategy.** I'm big on mentorship. I feel vendors would have greater success in getting their solutions across to partners by offering designated implementation specialists and rollout plan."

Sanchez emphasizes the importance of having specific goals to hit together. **The vendor needs to show the partner how they can expand their businesses by adding the vendor's product/service to the offering.** Something as simple as providing a roadmap to success with an onboarding strategy and weekly call would go a long way.

**It all boils down to this: Partners who are well-trained on the benefits and best uses of a product or service are likely to have a better experience and higher opinion of the offering.**

They are more apt to be repeat customers because they have experienced the value of the said offering. The primary interest of a vendor is to retain customers – especially in this new remote work environment – so it is in their best interest to train partners effectively.

In the recent survey by Allbound in conjunction with JS Group, 45% of respondents emphasized the "at your own pace" training modules from vendors. Given that partners are crunched for time, **this model is ideal.** They also need to be trained fast and thoroughly on all of the new solutions and services they're now selling to equip remote workforces.



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# Marketing Enablement Tools

**Providing adequate training for partners goes hand-in-hand with delivering robust marketing enablement tools.**

Solution providers today need to be agile and evolve their business models quickly, which means that keeping them informed, equipped, and motivated to sell your products is more important and more challenging. This can be attributed largely to the evolving buyer's journey and everything moving to more digital touchpoints.

Vendors cannot just tread water if they want to succeed in today's channel – **they must foster strategic partnerships that drive revenue.** This requires a robust and reliable channel partner enablement effort that provides ready access to the sales and marketing resources, customer support, and training partners need on an ongoing basis.

**Marketing enablement is one of the most significant benefits of a solid partner program. But there is often a gap between what vendors think their partners need and what partners want.**

Vendors tend to want to market to their customers, which are the partners. What do partners really need? Marketing support to help them with their customers, the end-user. By and large, end-users don't care about all of the detailed features, benefits, and spec sheets that partners want to see. Instead, they want to drill down into the pertinent information on **how the solution can help them with their business.**

**So how can vendors address this gap? Let's first look at the benefits of marketing enablement tools.**

Whenever a channel partner decides to sell a vendor's product, there's some heavy lifting required to bring the offering to market. Vendor-provided marketing enablement resources can help get the new product to market as easily and quickly as possible. These contribute significantly to the success of the new offering and are a crucial component of a solid partner program.



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**Vendor marketing enablement resources can aid channel partners in educating their marketing and sales teams about the new offering, including:**

- Teaching the benefits of its features
- The value the offering brings to their customer base
- How to sell it alongside other offerings
- How to properly position it against competitors
- Pricing Structure

In addition, channel partners don't always have the time or capacity to develop marketing materials and campaigns for vendor products. **Being able to leverage marketing enablement resources provided by vendor partners can be a huge advantage.** Ideally, these resources can be easily tailored by channel partner teams. An example of this would be uploading an offering whitepaper to a channel portal and giving pre-approved partners the ability to co-brand independently.

## **Vendors need to make it simple for partners to sell their products.**

Anything that can be broken down into a 1-2-3 simple step process for the channel partners' sales reps to grasp and help them to sell is critical. Vendors with marketing enablement tools such as a PRM, configurator, and a demo program and a support process to help partners learn these tools demonstrate a commitment to channel partners.

**The bottom line is that partners are looking for vendors to put in the extra effort to uncover their pain points.**

Vendors should make a concerted effort to support partners and develop creative ways to help them through challenges. In turn, **partners will be far more likely to develop their relationship with existing vendors and prioritize selling their products.**

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