

Don't Be Channel Program Oblivious

Taking the time to understand your vendor partner programs is a key to hitting your double-digit growth goals.

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What are some of the less obvious differentiators among the various channel programs out there?

One of the less obvious differentiators among various channel programs is program integration. A well-integrated program is more efficient and doesn't create additional cycles. As partners well know, time is money and spending time navigating a complex partner program is not the best use of their sales team's time. A partner should consider how easy it is to get the tools they need, to get the support they are seeking, and ask themselves if the program supports them in closing deals more efficiently.

Partners should seek vendors that allow them to access the right sales materials and tools — including efficient lead-management tools — that can help them through the sales cycles quickly and productively.

In some partner program portals, lead registration can take hours — and those hours can be used more effectively actually interfacing with customers and selling products and services. Partners should investigate if the program provides the right components to help them utilize resources efficiently and create a positive profit at every stage of the sales cycle.

What are some of the biggest pitfalls VARs fall into when comparing channel programs among similar vendors?

It is very important to consider whether the program helps a partner reach their goal of growing their business. Does the program require additional cycles, or does it actually assist them in reaching the sales goals?

Even the best conceived channel program will suffer if the vendor does not stand behind it at every level. Someone can paint a nice picture, but unless they are willing to back it up day-in and day-out, it is a lot less reputable.

Beyond having a good program, partners should ensure that their interaction with the vendor's sales and marketing teams supports, and is consistent with, all the elements of the program. Just because something may look good on paper doesn't mean it functions as advertised. To ensure things go smoothly, it is important to have day-to-day interaction with pertinent people and make sure they are standing by their program and practicing what they preach.

What are some of the most overlooked channel program opportunities VARs fail to take advantage of?

Partners should always be looking at new ways to grow their business. A key consideration should be demand generation. They should explore everything available to them through the channel partner program, which will then help them drive pipeline and ultimately revenue.

Additionally, partners should consider every option available in a program, seeking creative ways for working with vendors to develop ever greater pipelines. Whether it's through market development funds (MDF), volume rebates, call blitzes, or demand generation campaigns, partners should make a concerted effort to capitalize on all programs available to them.

For example, as a vendor, FalconStor Software is prepared to go to great lengths to help drive business for our partners. Yet, we still find that partners aren't asking the right questions. Partners should consider designating someone on their team to help them capitalize on all the things vendors make available to them.

The ultimate outcome for a partner is to drive more business. However, they don't always explore every opportunity to capitalize on what a program offers to their advantage.

Can you offer any anecdotes or examples of how a channel program helped a VAR grow its business?

Since FalconStor has established its PartnerChoice program a little over a year ago,

we have seen a number of partners utilize the program to grow their businesses. Our program offers market developments funds, comprehensive field marketing, and demand-generation campaigns. Through this program, one particular partner built a pipeline of over \$1.3 million and was able to close business worth over \$500,000 in a six-month period. Another partner was able to work closely with our channel marketing and sales team to develop a custom event campaign that netted the partner several new logo customers and increased year-over-year revenue by 130%. Through the PartnerChoice program and its new intuitive lead management console, we have seen partner lead registrations grow 45% year-over-year. ●



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Brendan Kinkade is responsible for managing FalconStor's channel program and strategic partnerships in order to increase the company's market presence and reach of its sales channel.