



QUANTUM
RELENTLESS ABOUT RESULTS

THE HANDS- ON GUIDE

TO THROUGH PARTNER MARKETING

Practical advice for tech vendors on the how, what, and why behind successful through-partner marketing.

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A harsh reality

Through-partner marketing. There are many out there in B2B-land who claim to have mastered it. To enjoy an engaged and empowered channel able to routinely boost their business' overall revenue targets. But then there are people who believe the earth is flat and that unicorns are real, so you never really know what's the truth anymore...

Turn to statistics, and they paint a worrying picture by suggesting that:

- Fewer than **15%** of partners engage in the marketing programmes their vendors deliver
- **53%** of partners view existing content provided by vendors as mediocre at best
- **72%** of partners aren't able to connect vendor assets to buyer needs and challenges

Look at the situation from the partner's perspective, and the situation doesn't get much better. Questions aimed at understanding why the lack of interest in vendor-led marketing will typically generate one of four responses:

1: A congested marketplace

The majority of partners are specialists in a discipline (e.g. supply chain optimisation) and offer a portfolio of products and services that include those of rival providers. Any proposed marketing activity that doesn't stand out, or lacks the right incentives, is often doomed to failure.

2: Few hands to man (or woman) the pumps

For channels comprised of mostly small to medium resellers in particular, the simple truth is that marketing resources are as rare as rocking horse poop (according to Sirius Decisions 84% of partners don't have a

dedicated marketing resource). As a result, any campaign deemed complex or difficult to run will quickly find itself gathering dust.

3: Conflicts of interest

Partner sales teams can often see themselves in direct competition with a vendor. This can certainly be the case if target accounts are not clearly defined, separated out, and ring-fenced. Running vendor marketing could therefore be viewed as 'aiding the enemy' - or helping a friend despite outstanding trust issues.

4: A lack of realistic enablement

Throwing an email template, social post, or sales sheet 'over the fence' is not going to cut it anymore. Instead partners want to understand the what, how, when, and (especially) the how. If no marketing resource exists then exploring the connection between an activity and best practice is obviously going to help.

Inspiring better

That's enough of the problem. Let's turn our attention now to finding a fix, and identifying those areas to focus your time and effort on.

However, before we get started it's important to note (or be reminded of the fact) that there's no 'one size fits all' solution. Of course there isn't. Partners are entities that excel through their distinct individuality. That's why our goal should not be on guaranteeing the success of every partner initiative, but rather to focus in on those areas proven to have a positive, long-lasting impact:

Motivation

Creating the desire within selected partners to run an activity or campaign successfully

Preparation

Offering incentives and guidance to make the most of their involvement

Delivery

Building up the tools needed to generate qualified marketing opportunities

Each of these sections will be explored over the next few pages.

We'll be discussing full spectrum channel programmes that include multiple touchpoints (which is important if, as the data suggests, it takes 6+ 'touches' to interest a contact enough to engage); and we'll also look to detail a standard bill of materials that can be used as a starting point or checklist for future campaigns.

With that in mind, it's time to go exploring.

The channel marketing model

Partner marketing in B2B typically covers three primary activities:

- 'To partner' marketing directly to the channel with the aim of promoting and educating them on current/future offers
- 'Direct to end user' to build awareness and drive demand for partners to then exploit
- 'Through' where partners are empowered to go to market with a joint value proposition and co-branded materials

This brochure covers the through model – keep an eye out for Quantum Ebooks on both 'to' and 'direct'.

Motivation

Getting your partners to do the do

So we've got partners ranging from those with little to no marketing resource to those with lost of headcount but a host of different vendors to work with. We've also got your requirements and expectations to add into the mix, which usually begin with the desire to boost through-partner leads and closing more deals.

Connecting these two together starts by answering some key questions like what exactly do your partners want? How can you grab their attention and spark interest in the latest activity? And how can you influence their behaviour so they actually do what you want them to do?

Here's our take on the solution, presented via the medium of '5 top tips':

1

Make partners feel good about working with you – an act that demands both trust and a clear sense of involvement. So at the risk of preaching the obvious, we strongly encourage you to run partner sessions to explain the background to a campaign, what you hope to achieve, and how you're delivering something unique to the market.

2

Be sympathetic to the partner's situation – and be up-to-speed on what their current strategy is guided toward, objectives in play, constraints, and progress to date. Aligning your resources and marketing plans to these ambitions is another obvious but critical factor for driving involvement.

3

Provide easy access to funding whenever possible – with money comes 'skin in the game'. It's also an easy way to stand out from the competition (indeed, Sirius Decisions research suggests high performing organisations invest 23% more in MDF than low growth businesses). A word of warning though: the number one complaint of partners is vendors being too slow to reimburse the co-op/MDF activity they run.

4

Offer training – another form of investment, training should feature both technical and sales content – and is an act that significantly boosts partner commitment to any campaign. That's why this form of education needs to be dynamic, and include practical guidance for conducting the sales pitch and an in-depth look at how the technologies involved complement the partner's existing offer.

5

Promote (and own) best practice – this last tip is all about confidence. Partners look to you for help in delivering success. They want to know what works, what doesn't, and what experiences you (and others partners) have had. So tell them, and back your words up with stats on SEO, blog reads, social activity etc. to get them thinking around how they can extend the campaign

Preparation

Give them what they need

Getting partners ready for the big push starts with the less glamorous brand conversation. Much has been written on this, so we'll just offer the highlights:

- Make sure the materials you provide are not 'locked' so partners (particularly those with stronger branding) can use the copy without your logo or design templates
- Create these assets in a way that doesn't scream 'you' – rather allow for the expression of the partner's brand, values, and market opinion
- Same with tone of voice, where you'll ideally deliver assets that align to the partner's way of speaking and the personality they want to convey – a nuance that can have a big impact on adoption rates

Keep it personal

As already mentioned, **53%** of partners might view vendor content as middling to poor, but **75%** of partners still see content as essential for driving lead generation – especially is they can adapt it to their own requirements:

- **33%** of partners rank customisation of assets as 'most important'
- This customisation is viewed as over **1.5x** more important than the content itself

Deliver the right content

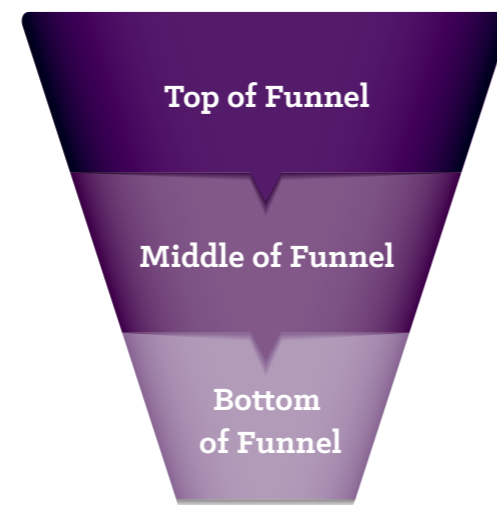
Next up we finally get to content assets, the crown jewels of any campaign. At least they should be, but based on our experiences of helping many of the world's leading tech brands optimise their channel activity, we can state with confidence that content development is a big problem for many partners and resellers.

They know what they want of course. They also appreciate the importance of developing assets that help inspire decisions at every stage of the sales cycle. The trouble is it's hard for them to keep up. Today's multi-faceted marketing campaign can stretch from infographics and blogs, to digital ads and video. What's important is giving partners choice, and offering access to a range of assets that can be adapted in line with what they're able to deliver.

Equally, such content should be as easily accessible as possible. Again, a stunningly obvious statement, but worth reiterating – especially when you consider that 65% of failed partner initiatives are due to poor content or assets considered too difficult to find.

Fitting content to the sales funnel

	ATTRACT	ENGAGE	CONVERT
eBooks / DM pamphlets			
Infographics			
Blogs			
Social selling			
Whitepapers			
3rd party thought leadership			
Case studies			
Introductory videos			
Social posts			
Video demos			
Digital banner ads			
Product brochures			
Press releases			
ROI calculators			
Product comparisons			



Rewarding excellence

Let's be honest: partners love incentive programmes because they get something in return for their efforts. That said, creating such a programme is a major investment and therefore requires full participation from your partners to drive home the necessary ROI. That means setting goals that are challenging yet achievable, alongside schemes that are tailored to the specifics of each partner (running a generic reward scheme is the quickest route to failure).

Our top tips here include:

- **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE** - and deliver incentives they actually want to earn individually and collectively
- **TAILOR YOUR EFFORTS** - starting with the sales/marketing teams showing the greatest potential for growth
- **LET THE WORLD KNOW** - rewards are pointless if nobody's aware they're available
- **KEEP THE RULES SIMPLE** - excessive complexity will just turn your audience off
- **MEASURE AND ADJUST** - incentives change behaviour, so make sure they're having the right results!

Delivery

Structuring the detail

Time now to get into the weeds, and the detail needed to provide you with a checklist of assets to consider when constructing partner campaigns. This is the campaign Bill of Materials (BOM) that begins with the campaign brief:

Asset: Campaign brief	Purpose: summarise the campaign to help internal and external audiences understand where this campaign fits - and if it's right for them Components (to include) Description (why include them)
Components (to include)	Description (why include them)
Overview of usage	The key takeaway you want to give partners on why they should get involved
Funnel stage	Where the campaign fits in terms of early, middle, or late funnel (or multiple phases)
Target audiences and industries	This section details the specific audience (key job titles) and industry sectors (challenges addressed)
Product or solution involved	Clearly detail the offering you want to promote, the features (connected to customer challenges) and how this complements existing partner offers
Language	Detailing what localisation options exist, and any geographic restrictions
Campaign timings	With activation and expiration dates for how long the campaign is designed to run
Partner restrictions	Here you can include any specific requirements, from training to authorisation, needed to run the activity
Search engine keywords	Particularly those a partner should be using to boost their SEO

Supporting assets

In addition to the campaign brief, you're going to want to build out assets to help partners deliver the campaign. The basics here include:

- Sales pitch deck - a customer-facing presentation for partners to use
- Partner value proposition deck - which details how partners make money, including incentives etc.
- Campaign playbook - that explains how campaign assets should be used
- Battlecard - a short overview that offers a competitive guide and FAQs

Building your BOM

When creating content for any campaign, thought should be given to creating assets that span the full sales funnel – allied to the needs and capabilities of specific partners:

Phase: awareness / top of funnel	
eBooks and DM	Relevant, challenge and opportunity led stories that explore the art of the possible and lightly touch on potential solutions
Videos	Short, high-impact creative that demonstrates your affinity with the audience's pain points – and offers an aspirational view of the future
Blogs	Insightful opinion pieces, used by sales team members to convey an opinion that's in line with the campaign narrative
Copy blocks	Concise paragraphs that detail the campaign's positioning, to be combined with a partner's other marketing efforts
Web content	Impactful content that partners can drag and drop onto their own websites to drive search engine rankings
Infographics	Easy to consume, visual summaries of the key messaging behind the campaign, with links and statistics to attract interest
Social media content	Links, banners, and short opinion pieces that partners can quickly lift and drop into their social activity to promote the campaign
Emails	To promote the above content
Phase: consideration / middle of funnel	
Playbooks and guides	A more creative take on the standard eBook, that guides a prospect through the solution's features and benefits
Whitepapers	A longer form of eBook that offers the platform for detailing both problem and solution in more detail
Analyst and thought leader reports	Ideal for assuring your customers that the solution is proven and tested, and to offer an independent evaluation
Webinars	Where you can bring independent experts, customers, and product experts together for a discussion focused on benefits and outcomes
Demo videos	Used to showcase your product in action, thereby emphasising its primary benefits and ease of use
Ad banners	Artworked banners that partners can co-brand and run
Product trials	A try before you buy version of your product that customer can use to familiarise themselves with the technology
Emails	To promote the above
Phase: decision / bottom of funnel	
ROI calculator	An online tool for calculating the financial benefits of the product
Live events	To include presentations, registration/landing page assets and all the required emails to promote and follow-up on the event
Pricing guides	To detail the pricing options open to customers, including the latest sales offers and promotions
Case studies	Showing the successes achieved by existing customers, complete with ROI figures and quantitative benefits realised
Newsletter content	Copy blocks highlighting offers and promotions that partners can drop into their regular newsletters
Product configurator	Another web-based tool to help prospects configure their ideal deployment scenario

Summing it all up

This guide contains (hopefully) a combination of the obvious and the interesting. That's the thing with partner marketing: it contains many elements of the normal marketing mix, and just requires a different combination to deliver success.

What we've tried to do is give you some practical advice, alongside a tick box list of activities and assets to keep in mind when next constructing a channel programme.

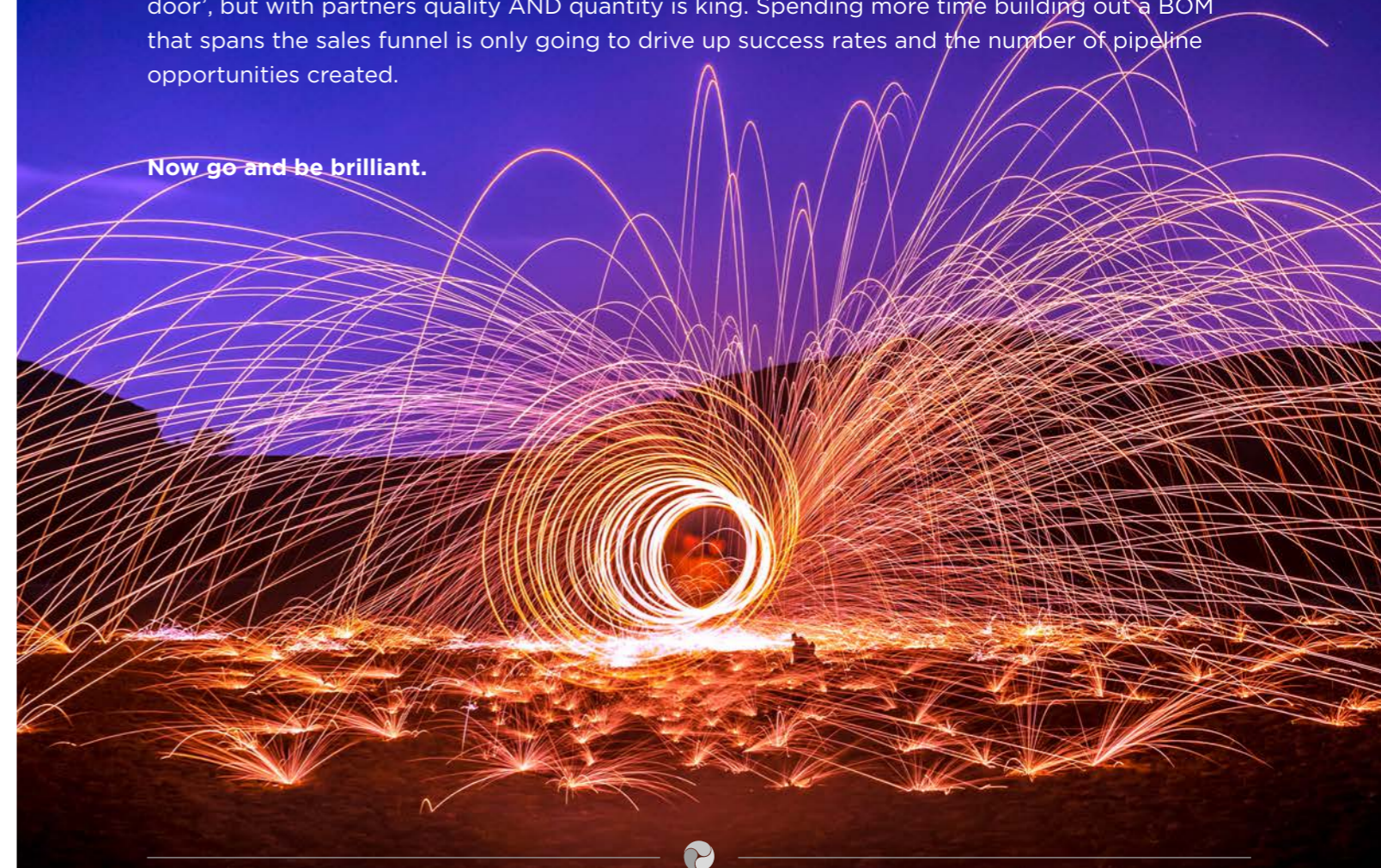
As for the key takeaways, we'd ask you always keep in mind:

THE IMPORTANCE OF SIMPLICITY: and making your campaigns easy to use, to fund and support, as a way of standing out from the crowd. Gain a reputation for doing this, and partners will soon be eagerly awaiting your next delivery.

LEAD THE WAY ON CUSTOMISATION: this reinforces the fact you take partners seriously, and recognise the fact that you're just one component in their overall business strategy. Creating assets that can be taken, adapted, and evolved is one of the best ways of driving up adoption rates.

DELIVER CHOICE: offering a limited range of content may help you get a campaign 'out the door', but with partners quality AND quantity is king. Spending more time building out a BOM that spans the sales funnel is only going to drive up success rates and the number of pipeline opportunities created.

Now go and be brilliant.



About Quantum Marketing

The one B2B demand generation agency for technology

At Quantum we can point to a long track record of running successful channel campaigns since first opening our doors in 1999. These are success stories centred on delivering a consistent ROI for large blue-chip tech brands, smaller mid-market businesses, and everything else in between.

All of which means we're passionate about activating partners, generating leads, and delivering opportunities that have an immediate impact on the sales pipelines (both yours and your partners).

To do this, we offer a range of services that collectively enable Quantum to offer a truly end-to-end engagement model:

- Demand generation
- Insights and data strategy
- Creative development
- Channel partner services
- GDPR compliance
- Audience building
- Account based marketing
- Digital & social marketing
- Marketing automation
- Inside sales
- Proposition enhancement
- Bid support & sales enablement



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