

Welcome to IF Consulting's weekly e-mail newsletter

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Our regular email tackles the topical issues that surround all marketing channels and their underlying strategies.

This newsletter is also available as a PDF on our Website (<http://www.i-f.com/E-comLinks02.htm>) if you want to download a version for your hard copy file.

IT Executives seek cooperation from Channel Partners

Executives from eight top high-tech companies concluded at a recent meeting that solution providers wanting to get help from their IT vendors must be willing to give a little back. Those involved in CRN Magazine's first Vendor Channel Roundtable included channel leaders from IBM, Microsoft, Compaq Computer, Hewlett-Packard, Sun Microsystems, Cisco Systems, Check Point Software Technologies and Symantec.

The executives agreed that solution providers who want more support, services, marketing dollars and personal attention must work together with their primary vendors to create new business, drive robust services, market their products as part of a solutions package and earn additional certifications.

The roundtable panelists' complaints about their channel partners was summed up by Kevin Gilroy, vice president and general manager of North America commercial channels at HP. He believes that too many solution providers are unwilling to refocus their business models to enter new markets, drive new technologies and vie for bigger margins.

<http://www.crn.com/sections/coverstory/coverstory.asp?ArticleID=34528>

IF Comment

Vendors have to do more than hope that their channel partners will "give a little back" in return for all of the program support provided. To do so would be to unrealistically expect that all channel partners perform like this example that IF Consulting recently encountered.

The brief given to an outsourced call centre was to merely provide information about available products and services to inbound inquiries. Our client actually wanted the call centre to actively close business and proactively increase its sales efforts. However, this was never specified in KPIs or as part of their written brief. Unbelievably, the outsourced call centre...

- realised that it would be a good idea - and a definite help - if they made a formal effort to actively sell tickets to the people making inquiries
- set their own internal KPIs
- trained their staff in selling skills
- developed a reward scheme to reward good performance, such as weekly prizes for the highest sales
- actively shared success stories among the staff

The call centre channel ended up being one of the most effective sales channels that the client had - not bad in the absence of a brief!



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With the exception of the above example, channel partners can't be expected to "guess right". Vendors need to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of both the vendor and the channel partner. These need to be specified, measured, reported and managed using quantitative selection and performance criteria. If there is a desire for channel partners to actively broaden their product portfolio, gain additional certification, enter new markets or pass on sales leads, these expectations need to be spelled out and measured. Otherwise, channel partners will simply "do their best" - which may not always be what the vendor really wants.

Snippets

In attempting to recover from the failure of its Internet ventures, Disney has reinvented its approach to technology. The aim is to get closer to its customers, but some feel that Disney is getting a bit too close.

<http://www.forbes.com/technology/ebusiness/forbes/2002/0610/081.html> (free registration required)

Domino's UK, a franchised pizza company, is regarded as a pioneer of interactive TV and e-commerce. Not content to rest on its laurels, the company is now bringing its TV and Internet ordering processes even closer together.

<http://www.mad.co.uk/mw/ev/home/stories/2002/05/23/0009.asp>

In an attempt to move up the wireless food chain, Japan's telecommunications providers have announced plans this week to offer high-speed wireless Internet connections at McDonald's, Mister Donuts and other fast-food chains in Tokyo.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/58987.htm>

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<http://www.i-f.com>