



**TOP 3**

**BEST PRACTICES FOR**

**BETTER CHANNEL  
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

**ZiftONE™**

An aerial photograph of a marathon race. A large, dense crowd of runners in various colored athletic gear is moving along a city street. The street is lined with spectators and race infrastructure, including barriers and a large green sign with the word 'SPRINT' visible. The scene is captured from a high angle, showing the layout of the race and the surrounding urban environment.

IT'S A

MARATHON,

NOT A SPRINT.



The most important thing to remember about building and refining a channel program is that it cannot be done overnight.

It's a marathon, not a sprint.

A steady, patient approach to building your program will help you gain greater success over time.

We hope you'll be able to take the key lessons from this eBook and translate them into actionable steps to improve your channel program.



“ULTIMATELY, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FAILURE.

## IMPROVING YOUR CHANNEL PROGRAM

Your channel partners are the lifeblood of your business, so it's crucial to make sure they are representing your brand correctly and consistently.

An effective channel program drives the mutual success for both the supplier and the channel partner. This eBook was created to provide some important best practices to help you ensure your channel program is the best it can be. The key is to get the right partners into your program, enable them and get them to activate their first marketing program **within the first 90 days**. It can be done. It has been done. You're about to learn how.



**THERE ARE LESSONS LEARNED IN DIFFERENT WAYS.”**

**TWYLA THARP**



**THE BEST PRACTICES THAT FOLLOW REFLECT WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE SEEN TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THEIR CHANNEL PROGRAMS.**

**IN OTHER WORDS, THIS ISN'T JUST WHAT WE THINK. IT'S WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE OBSERVED TO BE SUCCESSFUL.**



**BEST PRACTICE #1:**

**SET CLEAR**

**RECRUITMENT GOALS**

Recruiting channel partners is about quality over quantity. But too often, companies take a “spray and pray” approach. They just keep adding partners and hope they deliver value. To have a successful channel program you have to first recruit the right partners into your program.

Our most successful customers clearly define their partner recruitment goals, then give their teams the tools and know-how to achieve those goals.

## KEYS TO EFFECTIVE PARTNER RECRUITMENT

**CREATE PARTNER PROFILES** so your marketing and sales teams understand how to identify candidates who are ideal partners.

**USE TO-PARTNER MARKETING** tools that attract and engage the right partners, drawing them into your program, just like sales leads.

**OFFER RECRUITMENT TRAINING** to sales and marketing staff so they are conducting recruitment efforts systematically, instead of on an ad hoc basis.

By setting clear, easy-to-understand partner recruitment goals, and giving your channel team the tools and skills they need to achieve them, you’ll see greater results coming from a smaller number of partners.

And that makes for a more effective — and efficient — channel program.

## PARTNER RECRUITMENT — REQUISITES FOR SUCCESS

Letting the wrong partners into your program leads to bad results — partners who aren’t engaged in the program, who are in it for the short term, or who simply offer poor performance.

### TO AVOID THOSE PITFALLS, DEFINE THE REQUISITES FOR SUCCESS IN CHOOSING THE RIGHT PARTNERS:

**PARTNER PROFILES** — The criteria for identifying the ideal partner

**PARTNER ASSESSMENTS** — An evaluation tool based on Partner Profile criteria

**RECRUITMENT SKILLS** — Training to help account managers know what to look for in possible partners

**TO-PARTNER MARKETING** — Tools and materials to communicate with partners and draw them into your program

A close-up photograph of a person's arm in a black long-sleeved shirt, holding a stack of white disposable cups. The person is wearing a black and red watch. In the background, several runners in colorful athletic wear (pink, blue, and black) are blurred, suggesting a race event. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface.

**BEST PRACTICE #2:**

**ENABLE**

**YOUR PARTNERS**



Once you have partners in your program, you need to drive their effectiveness by increasing their knowledge and giving them access to the skills and tools they need. This will take more than training; in fact, your enablement efforts should take into consideration anything needed to equip the partner to guide their customer through the buying journey.

### KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ENABLEMENT

**PROVIDE A PERSONALIZED LEARNING PATH** – Too often, partner training and onboarding materials are offered in an unstructured way. Webinars, documentation, and other resources are simply “dumped” on partners, and they’re expected to figure it out themselves.

**THINK PROGRAMMATICALLY** – Offer the materials to partners based on their persona and in an order that makes sense, so that one activity leads to the next. That improves engagement and facilitates better learning.

**MAKE IT EASY** – It’s important to remember that partners are busy. Consider their role in the program, what information they need, and when they need it. Some information is critical to have right away, while other information should be considered on an as-needed basis.

Provide the right information on pricing, product features, and other crucial areas in a simple, searchable format.



## BEST PRACTICE #2 CONT'D

**MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE** – People consume content in many different ways, and that goes for your partners, too.

It's important that you develop your enablement content materials in formats and channels that are commonly used by your partners. At a basic level, this means optimizing your content for both desktop and mobile device screens.

But it's also important to make the content scalable through automation. This allows you to reach your partners more effectively through timely, engaging content delivery, resulting in increased engagement and, ultimately, adoption.

**TRAIN YOUR TEAM** – In addition to partners, you also need to train your channel managers to manage your partner relationships. They need to have access to the same tools and training and be an integral part of the enablement process. This will allow them to offer step-by-step guidance to partners, answer their questions, and help them to be successful.

Finally, it's important to understand that enablement is not a one-and-done proposition. The most successful suppliers continually engage with their partners, helping them with activities on an ongoing basis.



## THE GOAL IS A GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

To nearly every company, customer experience is a crucial competitive advantage. This is especially true in companies where partners are the primary drivers of the customer experience. Is the partner's role in the customer experience tightly aligned with you as the supplier?

In order for your channel partners to deliver the experience customers expect, they need the right skills and training, delivered through your enablement program.



**BEST PRACTICE #3:**

**KEEP DEMAND**

**GENERATION SIMPLE**

Without results all is for naught; so you need to help partners create demand which can be comprised of the products and services they offer.

With good partners in place, who have been enabled through effective training materials and resources, you can begin your demand-generating marketing programs.

But you can't just throw out some marketing materials and hope they work. It's important that you keep your partners in mind and build your programs around them.

Your partners didn't get into business to do marketing for you or anyone else. Spending too much time teaching them how to do marketing effectively is not going to have good results. Your partners have other things to worry about. So, make it as turn-key and prescriptive as possible.

## KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL DEMAND GENERATION

### PARTNER DATA

You need to know who your partners are and what kinds of assistance they require. Make sure you have enough data on all your partners — the ones who require more help, and the ones who are savvier — so you can create the right types of programs for them.

### MARKETING PLANNING

It's also important that you — and your partners — know the key data points around your marketing plan. Those data points include average selling price, the length of the sales cycle,

whether it's new demand or an established market, and others. All of that will be crucial information as you develop marketing programs that your partners can use effectively.

### CONTENT DELIVERY

Most likely, your partners are not marketing experts. They're typically small companies with people wearing many hats. You shouldn't require them to create content and other marketing activities.

Instead, provide content they find useful, and make it easy to select the marketing activities they need. Let them focus on delivery and execution.

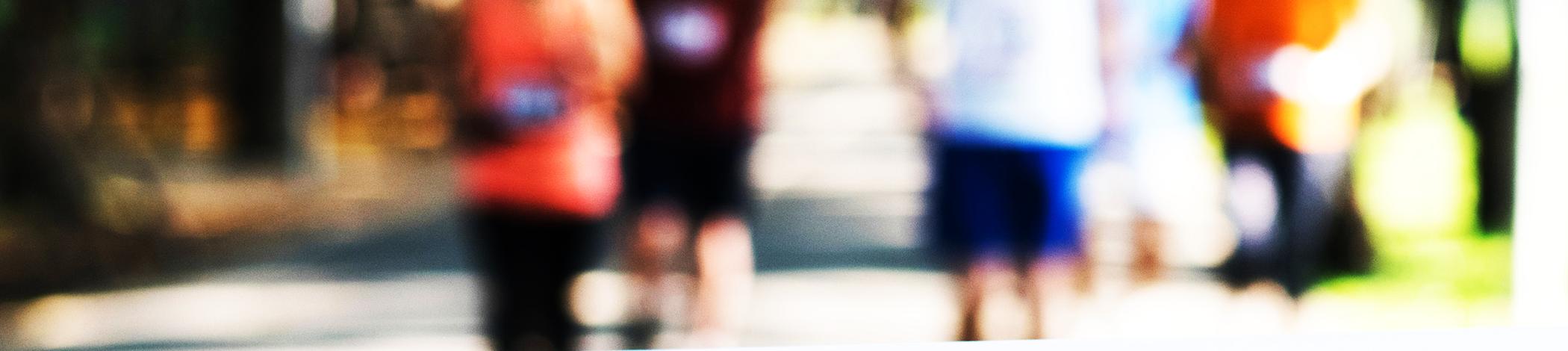
### PARTNER ADOPTION

Last, but certainly not least is adoption. It drives everything else, and without it, your channel program cannot survive. Make sure you get your partners enlisted in demand-generation activities.

To do that, you'll need to have a good grasp of who needs to understand and execute your campaigns — the owner, technical people, administrative staff, or all of the above. Know who you're dealing with, and tailor your messages to those individuals.

In short, focus on what you do best, and allow your partners to do what they do best. That way, you're not only helping them tell their stories, but you're potentially increasing partner adoption of your programs — driving their success. And yours.

NEED A HELPING HAND? ADVICE TO GET STARTED?  
WE GOT YOU. WE HEAR YOU. WE CAN HELP.

A blurred photograph of a crowd of people, likely at a public event or race, with various colors of clothing and motion blur.

**F I N**

**HOW DID WE GET HERE?**



# I S H

THE BEST PRACTICES OUTLINED IN THIS EBOOK ARE JUST SOME OF THE LEARNINGS THAT HAVE COME OUT OF THE ZIFT SOLUTIONS CHANNEL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (CCOE).

The mission of the CCoE is to drive the effectiveness of channel programs, increasing their success and optimizing their return on investment. We do this by providing training, readiness assessments and channel success plans to customers, helping to improve the performance of their programs.

Through the CCoE we are also able to obtain tremendous amounts of data about what creates successful channel programs. Data that allows us to continually refine our training and resources and offer actionable materials, such as this eBook.



# GET A PERSONALIZED

# CHANNEL PROGRAM

THE CHANNEL READINESS ASSESSMENT EXPLORES THE FOUNDATIONAL LEVELS, CURRENT CAPABILITIES AND OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR CHANNEL PROGRAM. BY TAKING YOU THROUGH SPECIFIC QUESTIONS, ZIFT CAN HELP YOUR ORGANIZATION:

- EVALUATE AND PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC AREAS OF YOUR CHANNEL PROGRAM
- UNCOVER GAPS OR CHALLENGES IMPEDING PROGRESS
- IDENTIFY MULTIPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY

# ASSESSMENT FROM THE EXPERTS

COMPLETE THIS SIMPLE FORM TO LET US KNOW YOU'RE INTERESTED AND WE'LL TAKE IT FROM THERE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO [WWW.ZIFTSOLUTIONS.COM](http://WWW.ZIFTSOLUTIONS.COM).



**Zift**solutions.

© 2020 Zift Solutions | All Rights Reserved