



Why It's Time To Take Your Channel Mobile

Steps To Embracing The New Era Of Partner Communication And Collaboration

Introduction

Vendors, suppliers, brands and associations spend an exorbitant amount of time and money creating and maintaining partner portals.

These web-based destinations are designed as repositories for everything a value-added reseller (VAR), solution provider, system integrator (SI) or partner may need to sell effectively: from content marketing and sales assets, to product descriptions, technical support resources, and pricing information.

But the ROI of these investments is not living up to vendor expectations, as fewer than 5 percent of partners use portals on a consistent basis to amp up marketing and sales performance.

Other traditional means of partner engagement, communication and collaboration also are falling by the wayside. For example, 17 percent of partners open program emails and only 2 percent click through from these messages. Moreover, fewer executives are making in-person events and partner conferences integral to their business strategies.

As a result, vendors, suppliers, brands and associations are more challenged than ever to communicate with partners in an effective and timely manner, so that all organizations are up to speed on channel news, events and developments.

One way innovative vendors and suppliers are addressing these new realities is by mobilizing their content and resources via branded mobile experiences, and providing easy access to the latest channel marketing and sales developments.

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More than 90 percent of channel professionals now own a smartphone and/or tablet and use them regularly for business purposes. Vendors that embrace mobility as a key medium for communication and collaboration will have a valuable opportunity to develop personal, long-term relationships with partners. In addition, vendors will be able to guarantee that their partners always have access to the tools, information and resources they need to succeed.

This E-book will uncover how mobile communication tactics and branded applications can impact partner communication, collaboration and overall loyalty. In addition, the E-book will spotlight the five key features of successful mobile apps, which include:

- Social elements and features;
- Personalization and customization opportunities;
- Easy access to content, training and resources;
- Back-end integration with major systems; and
- Guaranteed user security.

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Understanding The Mobile Opportunity

Mobile usage is exploding, with 56 percent of American adults now using smartphones, versus 46 percent in 2012, according to the *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Additional research from Pew also indicates that tablet adoption has accelerated tremendously: 34 percent of American adults own tablet computers, versus only 18 percent using the devices a year ago. With more technical users, those numbers skyrocket to more than 90 percent.

And as mobile adoption continues to rise, so is the overall connection and reliance of sales and marketing teams to their devices. Heightened dependency on smartphones and tablets especially is being seen within channel networks, largely because value-added resellers, field sales reps and other resellers are constantly on the go. Whether they're visiting clients, attending out-of-office meetings, or participating in training programs and events, employees rarely are stationed at their desks for an extended period of time. They also are connected 24/7, constantly checking email, social and news sites on their mobile devices.

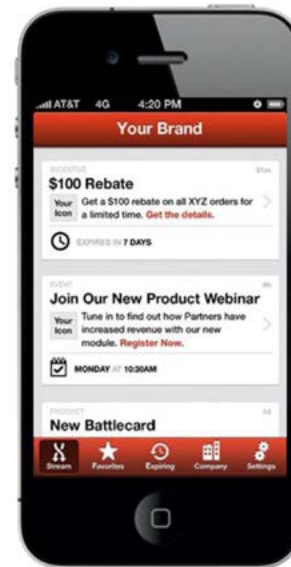
A vendor-branded mobile app provides instant access to must-have information and resources to ensure channel success, such as real-time access to product

news; technology bulletins and specs; content and resources; updates on what's new in partner portals; and information on upcoming events, webinars, educational sessions and training opportunities.

Driving engagement, sharing key sales and service enablement tools and real-time information are critical in today's channel environment. The traditional vehicles for disseminating resources and sharing information are no longer efficient. Now, it is imperative that vendors deliver the right information, to the right partners, at the right time.

By implementing a mobile channel experience, vendors can integrate a plethora of applications and features that are essential to sales and marketing teams' every day life: social networking tools, calendars, games, training materials, cameras, and geo-location technology. As a result, these branded mobile experiences will create engaging and relevant communication experiences, while offering information and resources partners need in real time.

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Embracing Partner Apps

The mobile app market is growing at an astounding pace, with more than 1.5 million apps currently available for both Apple iOS and Android devices. Task management and productivity apps are making headway, due to sales and marketing teams' ongoing need to be connected to business information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

A branded mobile app can become the go-to destination for partners worldwide by offering a snapshot of timely vendor channel information, news and updates in a streamlined fashion. Vendors that offer these more efficient experiences will see a number of benefits, such as improved:

Channel sales enablement:

Vendors can ensure their channel partners act as an extension of their sales team by delivering the necessary tools, resources and training to drive success. Additionally, vendors can publish motivational messages and incentives via a mobile-based social feed and even push notifications.

Partner education:

Building marketing knowledge and experience among partners has been an ongoing challenge for most vendors and suppliers. A partner app enables organizations to publish rich media, such as videos, white papers, case studies, training materials, quizzes and certification courses. As a result, vendors can raise the level of knowledge and capabilities of their partners, which has a profound impact on partner engagement, loyalty and overall sales results.



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Channel incentives and Marketing Development Fund (MDF) usage:

Partners often leave a large percentage of marketing funds on the table, simply because they're not up-to-date on new incentives and MDF opportunities. A mobile app helps partners stay tuned into channel developments and announcements most relevant to them. Partners can set alerts and notifications so they are notified when a new incentive is offered for a specific behavior or if a sales threshold is met.

Overall program participation:

To make the app experience more relevant and engaging, vendors can add customized features and applications, such as configurators, calculators, quoting tools, deal registration, quizzes and product information. In doing so, vendors are offering partners the necessary tools for improved sell-through, as well as more robust program participation.

Ongoing compliance with technical updates:

Every day, resellers, ISVs (independent software vendors), SIs and VARs are tasked to manage information from several other vendor/supplier partners worldwide. Companies can stay up to date by accessing tech bulletins, service fixes and other critical updates in real-time via a partner app. Users also can customize the app to receive push notifications, as well as generate dialogue with other members of the partner community, which improves communication and collaboration among the entire channel.



5 Must-Haves For An Optimal Partner Mobile App Experience

To drive adoption of partner apps, vendors must ensure they have the overall experiences that partners want and need. This includes everything from the resources, to the communication mechanisms and the overall user experience.

Here are five key elements to creating an optimal mobile experience:



Guaranteed user security: Best-in-class mobile applications ensure all partner and vendor information is protected. The best security method uses single sign-on to the in-house partner portal or partner relationship management (PRM) system, so there is one place to manage authentication. Other security methods enable vendors to manage access to the app at the partner level using partner invitations, or a whitelist of domains to verify that only trusted sources are accessing information.



Social elements to enable seamless communication: More channel executives are leveraging social networks to generate dialogue, as well as to find and share content with colleagues, customers and fellow partners. In fact, results from the B2B Content Preferences Survey, released by Demand Gen Report, indicated that social media sites such as LinkedIn (51 percent), Twitter (20 percent), Facebook (19 percent) and Google+ (18 percent), are helping organizations find relevant content for potential buying decisions and business relationships. Social media-inspired features, coupled with a more streamlined layout similar to social media discussion boards, will make the app experience more immersive. As a result, partners will become more willing and eager to ask questions, participate in conversations, and keep track of discussions and announcements being published on their feeds.



Personalization and customization opportunities: Due to the sheer variety of their existing partner networks, it is nearly impossible for resellers and solution providers to read and disseminate key vendor information in a timely fashion. In fact, the average partner deals with at least 10 vendors and distributors — with each sending multiple communications per week. Vendors can make it easier for partners to stay in tune with relevant information and announcements by offering the chance to customize app experiences. Empowering partners to tailor their apps based on content interest areas, language, partner tier or level, geographic focus, product line or program, as well as the types of alerts and announcements they want to receive based on their specific job role or access level, improves app adoption and overall sentiment.



Easy access to content, training and resources: Once vendors create a mobile app, they have the opportunity to include a variety of content resources, such as Twitter, RSS, blogs and industry news. These highlights can be scanned quickly by partners and selected for more information, resulting in a boost in traffic to web portals, marketing sources and landing pages. In addition, vendors can publish calendar invitations to upcoming events, webinars and training opportunities, as well as offer partners real-time access to white papers, E-books and other assets — including Presentation Decks formatted for the mobile device.



Back-end integration with major systems: Vendors can tie their partner apps with marketing and sales automation tools, as well as PRM solutions to help make information transfer as seamless as possible. For example, if partners register a deal from a form on the app, information will be transferred securely back to internal vendor systems.

AccessData Wins Partner Buy-In With ChannelCandy



AccessData Group, a provider of digital forensics, cyber security and e-discovery software, has expanded its partner program over the past six months. One of the key drivers of this growth was the release of a partner app.

AccessData released a partner app through ChannelEyes to improve partner communication and collaboration, leading to a boost in overall sentiment and loyalty, according to Chad Gailey, the company's Vice President of Worldwide Channel Sales.

Using ChannelCandy from ChannelEyes, AccessData partners and vendors can use any model of smartphone or tablet to access up-to-the-minute product and event alerts, program updates, and sales and education materials. In addition, the app's business social functionality allows channel partners to communicate and collaborate with one another.

Now, the ChannelCandy app is "the only way we communicate with the channel," Gailey explained. "We have standardized on the app from the very beginning and our partners love it because they're squarely in the mobile generation. No one lugs laptops around anymore — this is the new normal, especially in the cyber security field we're in. Our partners are constantly checking their social sites, news sites and now they check our partner app, too."



Out With The Old, In With The New

Because mobility is the new normal for many B2B and channel organizations, AccessData received a surge in partner participation: Approximately 144 unique partner domains registered in the last four months, leading to 100 percent adoption.

"The social media experience available through ChannelCandy allows us to streamline interactions with the reseller community," Gailey said. "Now we have a single, secure place for suppliers and channel partners to virtually connect every day."

Customization tools also enable partners to "cut through the noise and clutter" of irrelevant announcements and see information that is imperative to their respective businesses, Gailey added.

"One common issue in the channel environment is that sometimes partners just have *too much information*," Gailey explained. "Vendors think everything they do is important, but they have to remember that partners also are working for several other companies, so they get bombarded with messages on a daily basis — there's just too much clutter and noise. The great thing about the ChannelCandy platform is that it's easy for our partners to apply filters and get information that is most relevant to them in their news feed."

The new partner experience also has encouraged a drastic cost savings. Prior to implementing ChannelCandy, AccessData was spending more than \$50,000 a year maintaining code in its partner portal. For approximately 10 percent of the cost, AccessData now maintains "virtually everything in the cloud using ChannelCandy," according to Gailey.

"As soon as we push a document or announcement out, it goes out in the cloud and it instantly is available to our partners," Gailey said. "We have decreased our spending by approximately 90 percent, and at the same time, have gained all of the benefits and features that come with ChannelCandy."

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-Chad Gailey, AccessData



Amp Up Channel Performance With ChannelCandy



ChannelCandy is an enterprise mobile platform designed to help securely connect vendors and their partners and, in turn, streamline channel-wide communication and collaboration.

Using brand-specific logos, colors and splash pages, ChannelCandy creates an easy-to-navigate yet compelling app environment that can be personalized for each partner. Information from a variety of sources including RSS, Twitter, industry media sources and internal systems are collected and published to the app automatically.

The mobile solution was created by ChannelEyes, an enterprise mobile company developed specifically for organizations that operate in the channel. A variety of add-on modules also are provided to create a more compelling and memorable app experience, including:

- Event & Conference Modules
- Calculator, Quoting and Configuration Tools
- Deal Registration, Warranty and RMA Forms
- Live Chat Modules
- Document Library & Card Carousel

Schedule a demo

to learn how a branded mobile app will improve channel results.



Conclusion: The Evolution Of Channel Communication

As smartphone and tablet adoption continues to rise, vendors, suppliers, brands and associations must guarantee that they provide partners with always-on access to the tools and information they want and need.

A branded mobile app can provide key channel players with an open environment to publish news, announcements and upcoming events. Additionally, executives will have the ongoing ability to garner feedback and participate in relevant business conversations, leading to improved partner sentiment and loyalty.





About ChannelEyes:

ChannelEyes is reinventing channel communication. It is the next generation communication and engagement platform for suppliers and their Channel Partners to connect every day. Their newest product, ChannelCandy, is a custom branded mobile app designed for the Vendor community to deliver real-time program highlights, company news and sales tools into the hands of Channel Partners on the go. It runs on iPhone, iPad, Android, as well as all mobile-enabled devices.



About Channel Marketer Report:

Channel Marketer Report is an online publishing network for channel marketers and executives, with content focused on the latest solutions, trends and strategies to help vendors, resellers and distributors optimize marketing, both to and through partner networks. Tapping into the power of the Web 2.0 environment, the Channel Marketer Report network is made up of a monthly e-newsletter, podcasts and video interviews, special reports, web seminars, and a content-rich web site at www.channelmarketerreport.com

