TREAT YOUR PARTNERS LIKE CLIENTS

Every Channel Leader's Guide to Partner's Journey

INTRO

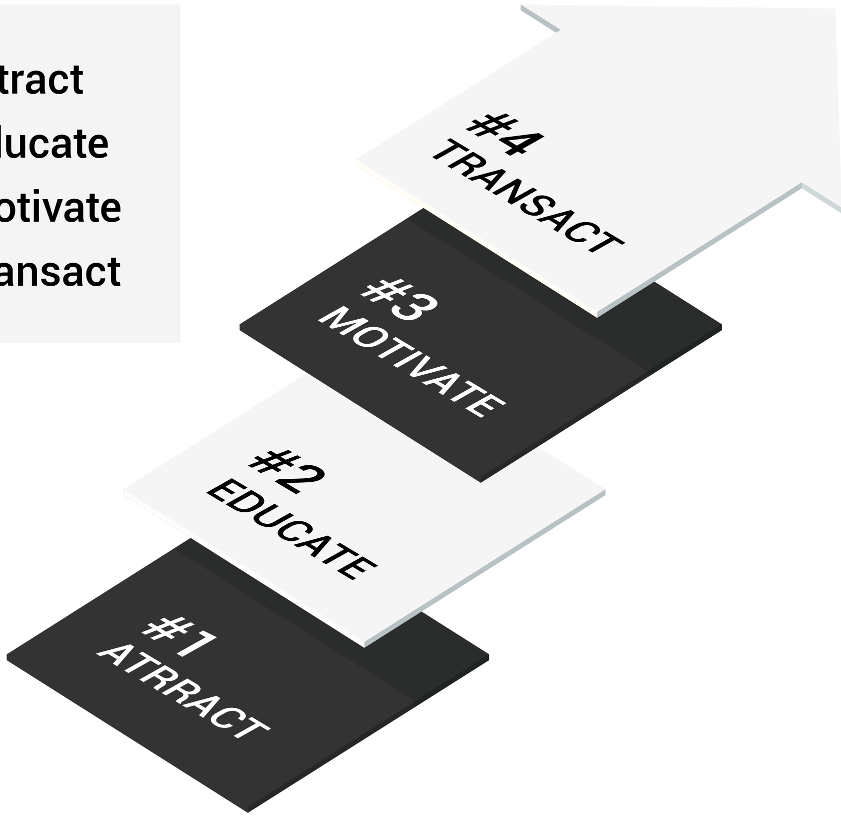
Everybody in the world (of marketing) has heard about the Buyer's Journey. Actually, more than just heard of it – most marketers live & breathe it! That's **NOT** what this guide is about.

Just like in direct marketing, we make the Buyer and their Journey the heart of everything we do, on the Channel side, we have the Partner's Journey which covers the key aspects every Vendor has to focus on in building their Partner Ecosystem.

EVERY JOURNEY HAS ITS STAGES.

For Buyer's Journey, the four key ones are Attract, Convert, Close, and Delight. **What about the Partner's Journey?** Here we can also identify four critical stages every Technology Partner goes through with their Vendors. They are:

#1 Attract
#2 Educate
#3 Motivate
#4 Transact



In our guide, we will look at each of these stages in more detail. But before we start, take a moment to ask yourself,

"Are you are making a conscious effort in tagging each of your Partners on the stage of their Journey in working closely with you?"

No matter what you answered, we can help you make that effort more targeted, impactful, and less time-consuming.

ATTRACT

1

What does this stage mean for Partners?

Well, for starters, let's remember that not all Partners have the same type of relationship and history with their Vendors. In fact, there are three distinct Partner scenarios:

THE GREENS

Brand-new Partners that are just starting their business venture, and while they seem to have the right skills and capabilities to succeed on the market, they don't have any strong Vendor solution partnerships yet. They could have great potential, but for now it's too early to tell.

THE LOYALISTS

Well-established Partners that have grown their skills and built partnerships based on the "first-come, first-served" basis. In other words, they have aligned themselves with the first major Vendor that took an interest in them and have since evolved with the product(s) that Vendor is selling. If that's the case, the Partners will be quite loyal to their Vendors and will depend heavily on their engagement.

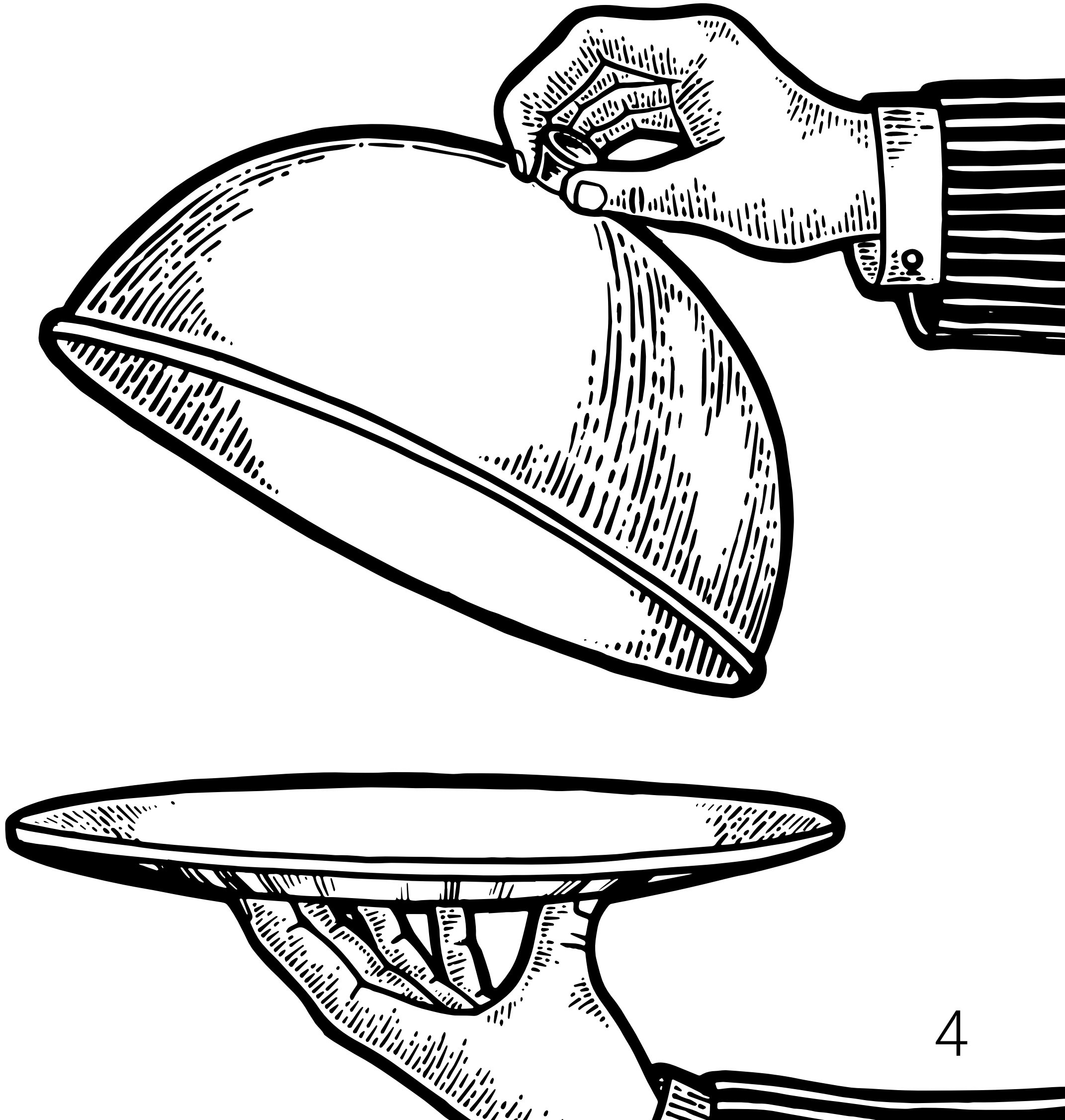
THE OPPORTUNISTIC

Established Partners that are fully capable of providing various solutions to their clients through a multi-vendor engagement. Such Partners can provide a more agnostic solution approach to their clients and as a result they have a more "opportunistic" relationships with their Vendors until (and IF) they become strongly aligned with just one of them Vendors and favour them (and their solutions) among others.

ATTRACT

1

For all three Partner scenarios, Vendors will have to showcase their competitive advantage over other similar providers and initiate early engagement for Partners to try, test and learn the functionalities of what you're providing.



However, the difficulty level when it comes to attracting The Opportunistic can prove to be much higher, as they would have a better idea of what other Vendors are offering (or have offered in the past) and as such it will be considerably harder to attract them without a really well-structured Partner Program. And one does need to keep in mind that at this early stage, Partners will be attracted to a wide variety of competing Programs.

Which is why the answer is to make it more interesting and engaging for them already at this stage. Some of the key tactics that could play a big part at the Attract stage are short yet catchy product demonstrations from a Partner perspective along with showcasing a strong Onboarding-To-Transaction plan. Other tried and tested approaches would involve social outreach, events, webinars, and guides that showcases the effective transition of onboarding with the new Vendor.

EDUCATE

2

At this stage, onboarding makes a transition into education.

Let's take a moment to make a critical yet often overlooked observation: A strong education program does **NOT** mean just a sound certification program. While getting Partners certified is without a doubt crucial, it is equally important to walk the Partners through how this education can lead into quick client engagement. The key tactics that should be employed here involve enablement programs, workshops, education sessions, and online learning modules.

And while online education is a lot more efficient – and in certain circumstances like e.g. the covid-19 pandemic can temporarily become the only real option – your early onboarding program needs to be implemented in a face to face environment. You Partners need to be able to see the key stakeholders in one meeting where the Channel Leadership, Channel Managers, and Channel Marketing Managers are able to give the new Partner the confidence of long term benefits.

Partner Education needs to structured on an ongoing, serial basis rather than just as a one-off, so that you have can establish how your Partner is progressing on their Journey.

Too often Vendor attempts at educating their Partners include sharing with them a bunch of assets together with a mix of marketing, technical and sales materials, which is neither educational nor effective. To simplify this process, your onboarding plan needs to link the Partner Journey in getting competent to confident in positioning the solution.

MOTIVATE

3

We have now arrived at the most vital stage of the Partner's Journey.

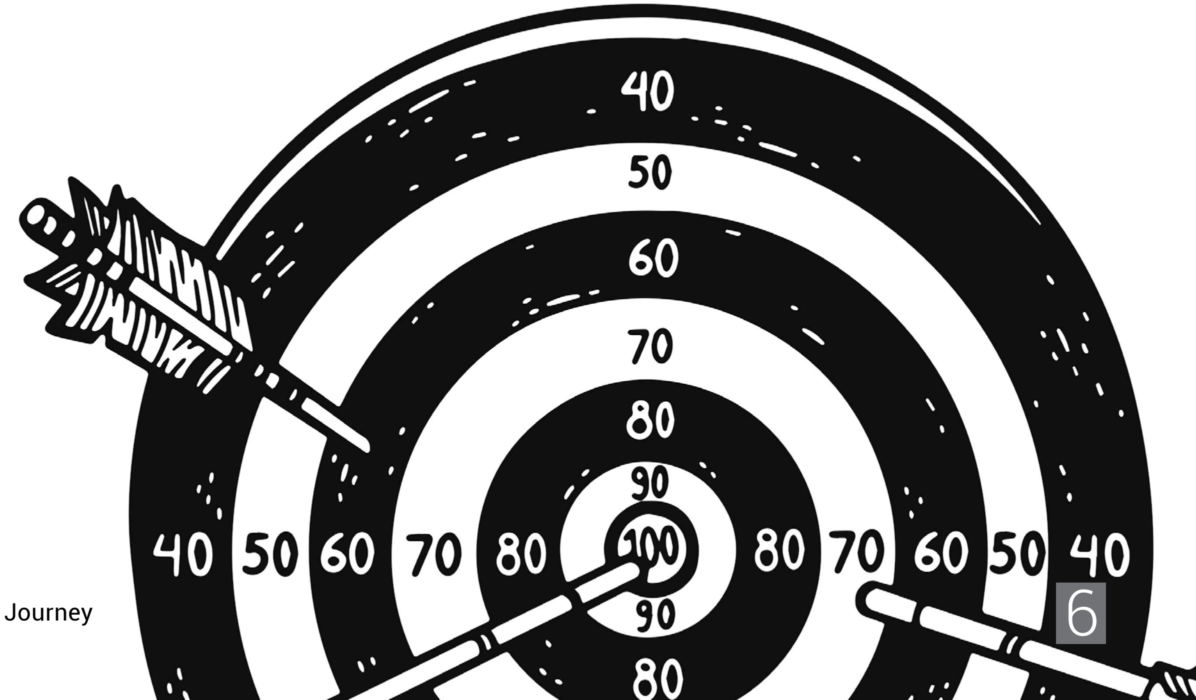
Let's start it by busting a common myth: Partners don't just expect incentives in terms of gift cards and vouchers – you have to be able to show them the bigger picture.

The key reason why they became your Partners is to increase their capability, capacity, revenue and acquire new clients. Which is why it's very important for Channel Managers to keep in mind that there is no bigger incentive than helping a Partner get in front of the clients and become profitable.

The key area to focus here is not just throwing MDFs (Marketing Development Funds) on the table and expecting it will rain down leads and opportunities as soon as they start cold calling thousands of people who never heard of them. While MDFs are extremely important, so is handholding the partner through the sales process.

The key tactics that could play a huge part at this stage are driving new pipeline progression, cool marketing frameworks, seller incentives on new opportunity identification, and introducing new clients to the Partners. "What about the MDFs", I hear you ask? They should be used to create the pipelines, and incentives to progress them.

Pro Tip: what if… all your Marketing funds, Incentives, Promotions and Offers, Sales plays and Marketing assets were all aligned? Wouldn't that make it so much easier for your Partners to take your solutions to market?



TRANSACT

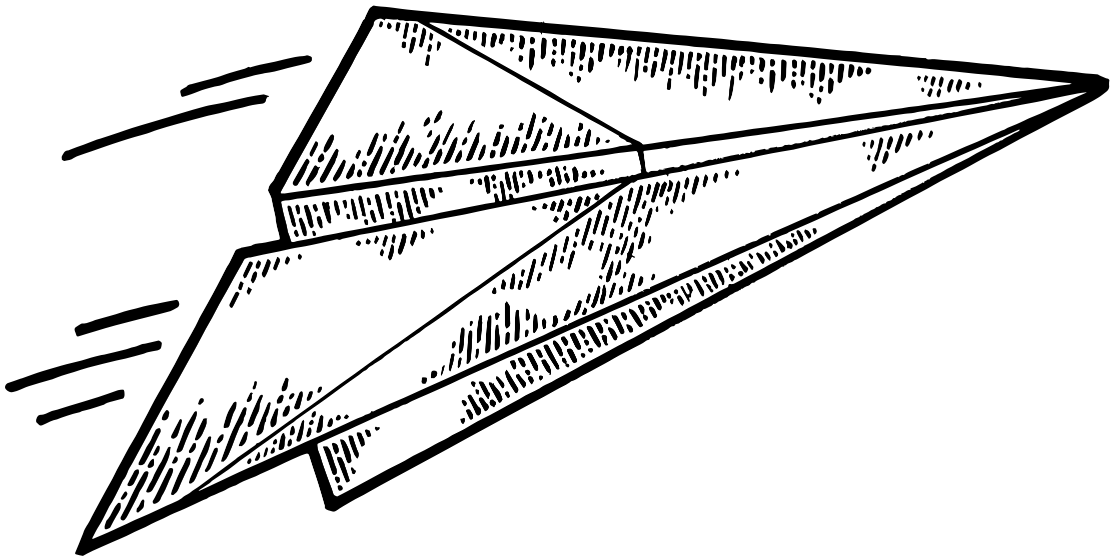
4

This is where the rubber meets the road.

What are the key areas where Partners really need help in their pipeline progression? Channel Managers need to run progression tactics along with the co-marketing setup. At the same time, Channel Marketing Managers should create integrated marketing campaigns where the Vendor LDRs (Lead Development Reps) and Partners can run progression tactics hand in hand.

When it comes to leads, it can't be overstressed enough that what happens you get a lead is just as important as the lead itself! Lead Registration process needs to be well verified - the quality of how the leads are being registered will directly correlate with how you are running your incentive programs. And it goes without saying that the speed with which the inquiries from Vendors direct marketing campaigns are passed to aligned Partners is what can make or break the success of your Partner Ecosystem.

Last but not least, one of the most important processes that often goes unnoticed is Lead Management: How has this lead been identified? How many hands did it go through before the relationship was established between the two correct individuals? Having the answers to these two questions is the key to improving the process for the future and making sure your Partners are maximising their opportunities.



SUMMARY

We created this guide to provide Channel Leaders with a handy overview of how treating Partners like clients by taking them on a well-structured journey leads to driving successful business outcomes in the long term for the entire Channel Ecosystem.

If you have questions or would like to talk about how we can help you design, elevate or overhaul the Partner Journey for your Channel, you can always slot some time to talk about it.

BOOK A MEETING