

Partner Marketing Survey – Partnership Leaders 2024



In August 2024, we asked partner marketing leaders to give us an inside look at how they are managing their business. We wanted to know how their resources were growing (if at all), and which challenges are preventing them from getting their best results. We also wanted a glimpse into their partner marketing technology – what they have now, and where they are looking to expand.

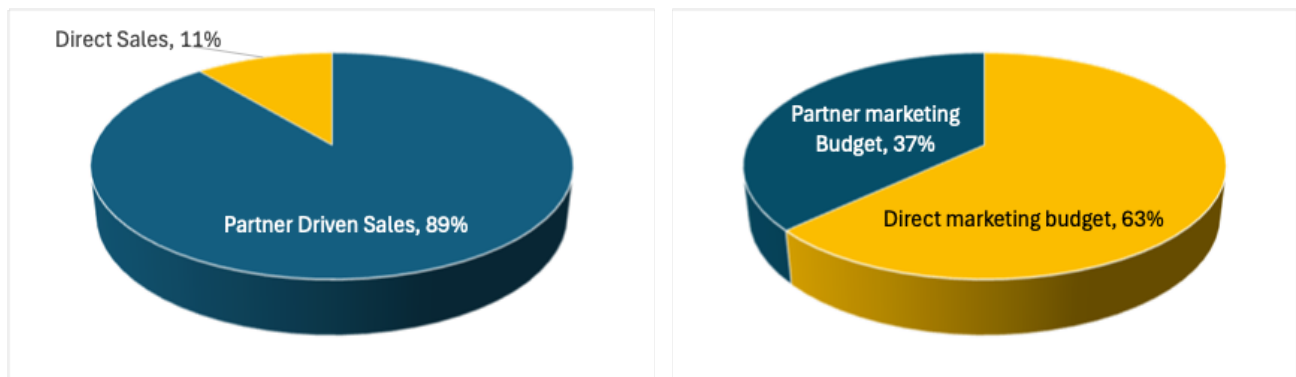
This report outlines the results and compares them to other industry reports for comparison and confirmation. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Partner Marketing Budgets Have Increased, But Not Enough

Partner marketing budgets have increased. Over 72% of partner marketing leaders in our study report that their 2024 budgets have increased over what they had in 2023. The rest were evenly split between budgets that stayed the same, and those that reported a decrease. Nearly two thirds of our respondents also said they expect their budgets to increase in 2025. This is good news and is consistent with Foundry’s research which also reported that partner marketing budgets are up. Foundry [reports](#) that an average of 37% of marketing budgets are directed at partner marketing, up from 28% in 2014. Additionally, the research claimed that 76% of senior executives plan to increase partner marketing spend.

While the increase in partner marketing budgets reported by Foundry is good news, it's still not enough. We know that business is increasingly trending toward a partner/ecosystem model. First, we've known for a few years that the World Trade Organization reported that 75% of world trade flows indirectly (i.e. – through a partner chain.) And just recently, Salesforce's Trends in Partner Selling reported that nine in ten sales leaders are using partners, with 84% saying that partnerships make a bigger impact than they did just one year ago.

All that is to say that more business is flowing through partner channels and is likely much more than 37% of a company's total revenue. This indicates a significant disconnect, but a huge opportunity to better align marketing spend with revenue flow.



Budgets are up, but what about marketing teams? In our study, about 40% stated that their partner marketing teams have grown this year, while 44% said they had no change, and only 14% said their teams have decreased.

Partner Marketing Success Metrics

We asked our respondents about how they measure success of partner marketing, and the responses ranged across a number of areas.

In our study, most partner marketing leaders said that revenue was their top measure, followed by pipeline/leads and partner participation and engagement. None of these is a surprise, and it seems to trend consistently with other industry studies.

Partner Marketing Success Metrics

Revenue	62.07%
Pipeline/leads	55.17%
Partner participation & engagement	31.03%
Partner growth (# of partners)	13.79%
Customer growth (# of customers)	10.34%
Market share growth	10.34%
Customer acquisition cost	3.45%

Top Partner Marketing Challenges

We asked respondents to tell us what challenges they faced, and we were a little surprised at what we found. We expected to hear that it was difficult to measure results, or that leaders didn't have enough resources (people/budget), and while those DID make the list, they weren't at the top of it.

Respondents were asked to choose their top 2 challenges from a list. You'll see in the chart that the most often cited challenges lie in organizational alignment and support.

While we were surprised that these were at the top of the list, we were not surprised that they were a concern. In order to be successful, partner marketing does need support.

Partner Marketing connects with many parts of an organization. It touches corporate channel strategy, partner sales and development, inbound & outbound marketing, corporate communications, and corporate digital marketing. It even connects with product development and marketing. For example, the Channel Chief determines the channel rules of engagement, while the field sales teams manage the specific partner participation in programs. Corporate marketing manages the company communications and product launches, while the channel marketing teams train the partners and retrofit the messaging for the partner audience. Alignment and support are necessary for success, and about half of all organizations struggle with it.

There is a strong link between support and alignment and the measurement and reporting of marketing activities. If partner marketing leaders had better tools to measure and report on their programs, it would be easier to demonstrate their success across the organization.

Partner Marketing Challenges

Cross-functional alignment with partner marketing priorities	48.28%
Lack of organizational support for partner marketing	37.93%
Lack of partner marketing staff resources	34.48%
Measuring and reporting on marketing activities	27.59%
Lack of partner marketing program budget	10.34%
Lack of partner participation in campaigns	10.34%
Keeping up with Marketing Technology	6.90%
Lack of marketing resources within the partners	3.45%

MDF Management

Market Development Funds and Partner Marketing budgets are two different buckets for most companies, and we wanted to know if partner marketing was in charge of both.

We found that there was no consistent way that companies are managing their MDF. As the data indicates, in most cases it can be partner marketing, partner sales, or both.

MDF Management

Partner marketing	34.5%
Partner sales	17.2%
Both Partner marketing & sales	24.1%
Sales Ops	3.4%
Business development	3.4%
We don't have MDF	17.2%

Partner Marketing Technology

Marketing Technology is big business. The applications used to create, manage, orchestrate and measure results of marketing activities have been growing. In fact, in 2023, [there were more than 11,000 applications](#), with many companies using more than 100 in their own organizations. And while the number is large, the real concern is the utilization of those investments. [Gartner reports](#) that CMOs are spending 26% of their marketing budget on marketing technology, but only utilizing 58% of those tools.

Which partner marketing tools are being used the most?

In our study, Partner Relationship Management (PRM) is at the top of the list, with more than half of respondents using one. Next are content creation tools and partner intelligence and segmentation tools. Nearly 7% of people say they use no channel marketing tools at all (we probably should have had “spreadsheets” on the list!)

Partner Marketing Technology

PRM	58.6%
Content creation technology/tools	34.5%
Partner intelligence and segmentation platforms	34.5%
Channel incentive management tools	27.6%
Channel learning & readiness tools	24.1%
Product data transfer tools	20.7%
TCMA	17.2%
CRMs (to manage partners)	3.4%
No channel marketing tools used	6.9%

We also asked people if and how they are looking to invest in partner marketing technology. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of people said they were not looking to invest in new technology at all. The potential investors were equally split between considering PRM and Through-Channel Marketing Automation (TCMA) tools. Both PRM and TCMA have strong market growth predictions, so this is consistent with what we would expect. In the case of PRM, the CAGR is [16.2%](#) and in the case of TCMA, it's [29.4%](#). If the people who are considering TCMA do invest, we will see TCMA move up the list significantly.

Should they invest in more tools?

In the case of PRM, we think the answer is “definitely.” For some of the others, we encourage companies to consider whether they want to buy another MarTech tool that they may not fully utilize, or instead, invest in services that will guarantee the delivery of the outcomes that they are looking for. As stated earlier, Gartner is reporting that companies are struggling to get the value from their marketing technology investments.

Some things to consider:

Should you invest in partner marketing technology?

- Do you have staff bandwidth to take on learning and operating a new technology?
- Do you have in-house expertise?
- How long will it take your team to get up to speed and then get the new technology and program to market?
- What happens if your tool SME leaves your organization? Do you have extra resources and how fast can they come up to speed? And what will be the risk to your partner experience?
- Do you need the flexibility to pay as you go?
- Would you benefit from experts and knowledge transfer?
- Can you be experts in both your business area and the technology to run it?

For many companies, working with a service partner who is an industry expert, who can get you to market faster, and who enables a pay-as-you-go model is worth exploring, and might be the best option.

Conclusion

Partner Marketing is in a fairly good place. Leaders are seeing their teams and budgets grow in most cases, and there is an increasingly broad use of technology.

The biggest takeaway in this survey is the glaring concentration of data around the lack of organizational support for and integration of partner marketing. There is much work for the industry to do, and for partner marketing leaders to do to improve this.

Having the right technology that can deliver real results and metrics can definitely help partner marketing leaders communicate across the organization. But it really starts before

that. Understanding the cross-functional goals in your company and aligning those to the partner marketing programs and activities helps internal teams to better understand the integration across the business. Having a common purpose facilitates cohesive marketing to more customers, through more partners, with superior results.

This was a fairly small survey to get a pulse on how partner marketing leaders are thinking about their budgets, teams, challenges, and technology. It would not pass a “statistically significant” test. But it’s real data from real partner marketing leaders. Comparing the results to other industry data helps to ground our data and confirm some of the conclusions we are making.