



AscendX Digital helps big tech brands connect with SMB customers via a multivendor through-channel marketing model

Overview

The customer journey has moved online, and since 2020, more than 80% of that journey has been digital. Buyers are increasingly searching, researching, comparing, and selecting products and services before ever connecting with a salesperson. In addition, over the last 2 years, we've seen that more than half of Google searches were local – indicating that while buyers are online, they are looking for local fulfillment of their needs more often.

Manufacturers are directly connected with their biggest customers, and their largest channel partners. They are less connected with the large number of smaller customers that are served by smaller partners – the ones that local customers are searching for. This is not a small problem. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has stated that 75% of world trade flows through indirect channels, and in tech, we know that 90% of those partners are SMB¹, adding up to a \$610B spend.²

Small and mid-sized partners often don't have the resources and/or expertise to effectively set up their own digital marketing to reach customers. In fact, 84% of them don't have in-house marketing resources at all³, making it very difficult for smaller partners to work with one brand, let alone multiple brands with multiple marketing programs.

To tackle these problems, AscendX Digital created a multi-vendor through-channel marketing as-a-Service model that allows corporate brands, distributors, and channel partners to integrate and automate their channel marketing. The improved model enables the distributor to be the orchestrator, and to bring a suite of corporate brands to resellers, so partners have one repository for the content and a single contact for automated marketing campaigns. The “set-it and forget-it” model eliminates the need for partners to actively manage multiple marketing and demand-generation activities and campaigns.

The AscendX Digital Marketing Suite for the Channel is a fully managed, fully automated through-channel marketing as-a-Service which is effortless for partners at the local level, and it enables distribution to provide more modern, revenue-generating digital marketing offerings that vendors want.

75% of world trade flows indirect

90% of tech partners are SMB

\$610B SMB technology spend

The Challenge

We encountered an evident challenge—big tech companies struggled to reach the vast SMB market with any kind of brand control. Because of the sheer volume of partners across large geographies, large corporate brands have traditionally underserved them.

Manufacturers have traditionally relied on their distributors to access the SMB partners and customers, but distribution marketing innovation hadn't kept up. Amazon Business has disrupted this even further as both end user buyers and resellers had increased their transactional sales on Amazon. The digital path to purchase was moving fast.

One large tech vendor in particular had recently modified their partner program and was auditing and scoring their partners on brand compliance and their participation in marketing campaigns. Few SMB resellers were engaged and had current, compliant content online, and therefore few were "passing" the audits. The vendor didn't know how to reach them.



With an average of 8 employees, small partners don't have the time, bandwidth, or marketing expertise to continually execute vendor campaigns. Research indicates that less than 15% of partners engage in the marketing programs their vendors deliver.⁴ Many SMBs don't have basic social channels that are important to drive awareness, interest, and digital traffic that leads to sales. Some may only have a website, and it is often dated and unresponsive.

How can big brands realistically offer a unique marketing solution that reaches the SMB market? We were determined to create an approach that helped the big brands, the distributors, and the smaller resellers capitalize on that need – but the journey had to be easy and seamless for everyone.



600,000
Technology
Resellers



90%
SMB



8 Average
number
of employees

The Solution

AscendX Digital created an innovative, multivendor model to overcome these challenges enabling corporate brands, distributors, and resellers to integrate and automate their channel activities. Our model – The AscendX Digital Marketing Suite for the Channel – is fronted by the distributor and offers partners a single, centralized location to learn about the program, embed a single set of code on their websites, connect their social accounts, and opt-in to take part. And after that, their work is done. Partners don't have to watch for emails or upload content on a regular basis. The content is regularly refreshed, current and it's always compliant. Resellers can be part of the digital customer journey without the heavy lifting.

The AscendX Digital Marketing Suite for the Channel achieves:

- **Seamless scaling:** Built-in automation and campaigns that make it just as easy for vendors to serve one partner as it is to serve hundreds or thousands.
- **Brand compliance:** Centralized management of all vendor messages and assets to ensure every partner remains in-tune with the manufacturers' marketing messages.
- **Smart, streamlined messaging:** Unique and demand-driven content that sends users to the right place on the right partner's website.
- **Lead attribution insights:** Analytics on traffic and engagement, ROI views, plus top lead generating partners and content.
- **Clean lead generation:** Leads go directly to partners.

Results

The AscendX Digital Marketing Suite for the Channel helps:

- Distributors to be the ecosystem orchestrator, providing a modern, profitable digital marketing solution to vendors and partners
- Provide a single point for multivendor, solution-focused content and marketing programs for partners
- Eliminate the need for partners to manage multiple marketing and demand gen programs
- Manufacturers and distributors to quickly (less than 60 days) spin up an automated through-partner marketing strategy without additional in-house resources
- Expand big brands' marketing reach (through distributors) to as many resellers as they want
- Partners effortlessly leverage the marketing investments big brands have made
- Social media and Email marketing management for SMB partners at no cost to them
- Partners have an elevated digital presence while generating thousands of impressions and new customer website visits
- Build stickiness and loyalty among partners, distributors, and vendors
- SMB partners have content they would not otherwise afford, enabling them to be seen, and to compete with bigger firms

“Distributors are really at the center of this approach, which allows them to offer new value to their vendors and resellers,” explains Sherry Foster, President and Co-founder at AscendX Digital. “The ability to take corporate brand content—like case studies and white papers—and push those out to thousands of resellers amplifies the entire demand process and drives credibility for the partner.”



“The automated marketing program has been effortless for us. We have rich, new content on our website updated each quarter from several vendors and the social media promotion has helped us to increase our existing presence online.” — Adam Sprague, CEO of New Brunswick-based VAR BrunNet IT Solutions

Foster says, “Resellers want this marketing support, but they don’t want it siloed through 10 different programs. They want a simple, automated, and centralized approach. Distribution can serve as the aggregator, ensuring it resonates with resellers and is efficient.”

A year into the program, nearly 1 million total impressions have yielded thousands of new visitors to *each* partner site. Click-through rates equaled 12% on social and 13% on web banners—6x the industry average.

Vendors can get metrics on MDF spend that they haven’t had before. They can now measure which content categories their customers are most engaged with, which topics and messages resonated the most, and how partners are performing across the system.

The AscendX Digital Marketing Suite for the Channel has helped vendors reach more customers, and distributors to take a new, leadership position as a digital marketing enabler with partners, generating new, profitable revenue. It has helped the partners generate leads, create unique, demand-driven content, and it’s delivered an excellent partner experience.

About AscendX Digital

AscendX Digital Inc. is the first and only TCM-as-a-Service marketing provider, and the only company with a revenue-generating model for distributors. Our team has many decades of technology marketing expertise, and we work with vendors and SMB partners every day. Whether you have a TCMA investment that needs some strategic and/or operational support, or if you are looking for a fully managed as-a-service solution, AscendX Digital can help.

¹ Jay McBain, Forrester Research

² CRN, Michelle Ragusa-McBain: 5 Marketing Tips for SMB-Focused MSPS

³ 20 Compelling B2B Channel And Partner Marketing Statistics

⁴ Sirius Decisions, 20 Compelling B2B Channel And Partner Marketing Statistics