

THE 24 CHANNEL PROGRAM LAWS

PART 1

INCREASE YOUR
CHANCES OF
PARTNERSHIP
SUCCESS



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INTRODUCTION

"A rising tide lifts all boats"

John F. Kennedy is credited with saying this.

As am I, he was an avid sailor, so I've always admired and related to his aphorism's elegant simplicity.

Channel programs were never meant to be a zero-sum game.

They were designed to empower and compliment those around them, and those they serve.

But, unfortunately, the mortality rate of indirect initiatives in the 21st century, and the departments who run them, remain high.

Suffice to say, we've still got a way to go.

While I was running a successful program @ my last org, someone asked me to write down the top laws that acted as my North Stars.

The rules I followed to create an indirect environment that drove 70% of all

commercial revenue through the company.

So, I came up with my top 24.

It's now time to drop these breadcrumbs in an effort to help others maximise their channel effectiveness and adoption.

They are meant for all as a guide to what leadership is looking for from their program operators, what created preferred outcomes and results for myself, and what will help foster an environment people will be proud to be part of.

Their primary aim - to help lift all boats in this industry I love and believe in.

So, please, spread these words.

Like, comment, reshare, post - let's raise the tide for all.

Help me convince more of the C-suite why channels and ecosystems are critical to their sustainability, and future-state economies at large.

TL:DR

- 1 STAY AS CLOSE TO THE REVENUE-GENERATING SIDE OF THE BUSINESS AS POSSIBLE**
- 2 DON'T WASTE TIME ON THOSE WHO DON'T GET IT**
- 3 SHRINK YOUR TIME-TO-VALUE LIFECYCLE**
- 4 PARTNERS ARE PART OF YOUR TEAM**
- 5 BE THE EASIEST TO DO BUSINESS WITH**
- 6 EDUCATE AND RELATE, DON'T TELL AND SELL**
- 7 POSITION YOUR PROGRAM AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY**
- 8 MAKE YOUR PARTNERS PEOPLE LOOK GOOD**
- 9 METRICS MUST BE TIED TO ACTION-POINTS**
- 10 CONCENTRATE ON HIGH-VALUE TASKS THAT MOVE THE PARTNERSHIP FORWARD**
- 11 NEVER SHAKE A HAND SITTING DOWN**
- 12 BUILD CULTURE WITH INTENT**

1

**STAY AS CLOSE
TO THE REVENUE-
GENERATING
SIDE OF THE
BUSINESS AS
POSSIBLE**

Stay as close to the revenue-generating side of the business as possible.

If you do, 5 things will happen -

- You'll be better aligned with the business goals
- You'll have a direct impact on revenue growth
- You'll enhance performance tracking and feedback
- You'll maximise resource allocation and optimisation
- You'll see an increase in interdepartmental collaboration and communication

Be Accountable

2

**DON'T WASTE
TIME ON
THOSE WHO
DON'T GET IT**

Your job as a channel program manager is to focus on what's best for the company's health, period.

An ongoing responsibility as part of that is to being able to quickly and clearly identify and qualify those internal/external stakeholders and organisations that understand and are fully committed to an indirect B2B growth-strategy.

That can be a tough ask, even under ideal circumstances.

Especially when you're operating in a culture that expects you to play the numbers game, which is always more apparent in the beginning.

It can difficult to effectively communicate to leadership that your program isn't simply a means to an end built on volume-led policies, but more about quality accomplishments that result in a good business outcomes and positive growth.

(here, for me, striking a balance between doing the work and telling the right people about the work you're doing, is key)

At the core of all business partnerships, by definition, is the mutually-beneficial

notion to work together to make business more profitable.

Not partnering up for partnering's sake.

You work for profits, not losses, and anyone or anything that does not align with that principle needs to be part of your disqualification benchmark.

Trust me when I say - executives teams demand it.

And communicating what partnerships mean within this context of a business is foundational.

Josh Wagner from In In Revenue Capital said it best in a recent article -

"Partnerships are not a person or a program. Partnerships have to be a clearly defined strategic priority for the organization, starting with the leadership. They have to have key performance indicators (KPIs) and action items attached to them, throughout the organization, so it's obvious what the partnership means at every level."

If you don't get in, then you have to get out - simple.

Orgs, colleagues, investors, stakeholders - it doesn't matter.

Vague rhetoric doesn't cut it in business.

Successful indirect motions are hard enough to build without foundational roadblocks tripping you up from the off.

So you need to -

- Understand how best your intended audience communicates and absorbs impact
- Have strict program qualification processes in place that naturally weeds-out the time wasters
- Create an environment that compels those who get it
- Build and maintain a buzz by working with your internal/external stakeholders to create evolving and preferred outcomes
- Align goals, vision, values and be comfortable knowing these may change

Indirect motions should be enormous sources of strength, stability and success.

Don't let yours become just another cautionary tale by wasting time on those orgs and individuals who don't get it.

Keep your eyes open.

Be Selective

3

SHRINK YOUR TIME-TO-VALUE LIFECYCLE

The world of business isn't slowing down anytime soon.

To keep up, it's incumbent of us to lead our partners to the 'ah-ha' moment in the shortest time possible.

How do we do that?

By focusing on simple, efficient and attractive processes that clearly demonstrate the value you can provide.

This follows along from what we were talking about in partner law #2

If potential partners don't see the value in the alliance, then they are likely to feel that their time is being wasted and go somewhere else.

Our research and experience here @ Arys tells us that this focus needs to include two core principles -

- attractive program procedures
- attractive primary metrics

Once aligned and qualified, partners should be -

- Onboarded
- Enabled
- Engaged
- Delivering

in the shortest time possible to help qualify your value.

And the 4 primary metrics partners will care about are -

- Deal size
- Deal margin
- Deal velocity
- Deal conversion

to prove the desired outcomes of the initiative.

You can facilitate this by -

- Ingraining yourself in the customer's tech stack/workflows
- Building in-program tutorials to improve adoption
- Offering concise, personalised onboarding
- Aligning with end-client expectations
- Co-developing email drip campaigns
- Creating use-case-driven templates
- Delivering value in phases

Reducing this time-to-value -

- helps to show you respect their most valuable asset - time
- helps to quickly identify and remove points of friction
- helps to motivate partners to take action

- helps to guide partners toward a goal
- helps prevent customer churn

The faster partners understand how your program can help them improve their business and solve feature-gaps, the happier and more engaged they will be.

They're looking for -

- net new conversations
- net new customers

Period.

Keep this process efficient and timely.

Keep it as a partner-first strategy.

And you'll reap the benefits.

Be Timely

4

**PARTNERS ARE
PART OF YOUR
TEAM**

In a recent survey, 56% of channel professional cited that a poor PX was their biggest challenge, and the primary driver behind the long-tail portion of their program.

Poor experience as a partner = poor rates of engagement and subsequent results.

From the 100's of channel partners and vendors I've worked with over the years, too many continue to treat partners as a separate entity to the business objectives of an organisation.

They are deprioritised because they come from without.

But imagine if Microsoft or Cisco took a similar stance.

They would lose around +80% of their entire commercial revenue.

Results like this teach us us 2 things -

- If orgs such as these recognise and prioritise making partners an integral part of their team, then why aren't more organisations with B2B partner programs practicing partner integration?
- Welcoming partners into an organisation, and treating them as an

important part of your team, produces desired or improved outcomes.

@ Arys we advocate and help others implement a 5-point procedure to help companies unlock, or improve, partner integration across a business -

- Listen - with intent
- Ask - with objectivity
- Plan - with predetermination
- Implement - with clarity
- Support - with structure

This aligned and strategic approach predicates a compelling and personalised partner experience.

It helps to create a horizontal relationship that includes internal/external stakeholders and customers, and fosters an environment where organisations and partners can firmly focus on common interests.

Channel and ecosystem initiatives are people-driven, tech-enabled and result-focused.

● People x platforms x environment = results.

When they work as one, partners are made to feel like they are an important part of your team.

They are, or should be, growth-multiplied - i.e. it's no secret that we grow faster together.

That said, as with all successful collaborations, this integration starts within an organisation on an individual level.

Each stakeholder must understand the importance and impact indirect motions hold, who that involves, then treat those as they would treat one of their own.

Organisations who ensure partners are integrated into a business are the winners, because they are force-multiplying their efforts by forging an inclusive environment for everyone associated with the lifecycle touchpoints.

It's then the 'you grow, we grow' paradigm.

So if you want -

- improved internal indirect understanding
- bigger and faster channel results
- improved partner dynamics
- a more attractive program
- a value-led experience

treat partners as part of your team.

Do your best to integrate your partners across your organisation, and use personalisation to differentiate and highlight.

If you can't internally/externally personalise this partner impact, the outcome is inevitable - you risk becoming a commodity that people deprioritise.

Be Inclusive

5

**BE THE
EASIEST TO
DO BUSINESS
WITH**

My #1 channel program differentiator,
and it's based on scientific principles.

Channel and ecosystem motions are
people-centric.

Because of this, systems and processes
mean nothing without prioritising human
behaviour in and around our channel
initiatives.

And this behaviour is often guided by the
rule of least resistance - an inborn
inclination to choose the easiest and
most effortless path available.

Everything usually does - it is a natural
leaning.

This is the secret sauce many channel
programs fail to prioritise.

But I get it - we inherently want to
provide our partners the most amount of
value available.

To give them the most bang-for-their-
buck so we're perceived as valuable.

But that runs the risk of adding
unnecessary complexities, and failing to
provide a value bridge that's easy to
cross so we can meet partners where
they are.

Programs play the long-game and, because of that, must be built for those using them accordingly, and with an emphasis on proactive and reactive ease-of-use.

We can compare it to the founding principles of UX and UI.

IMHO the partner experience must follow suit to remain effective.

It should never be - 'what is easiest for me?'

Our biggest competition in program adoption and retention is doing nothing.

We need to remain commercially attractive to those we want to partner with.

And ease of doing business is the keystone that will prove the difference between sustainable attraction, retention and mutual-success, and silent quitters who resign themselves to the depths of the long-tail portion of your program.

To avoid this, making sure the entire partner experience as simple and streamlined as possible is vital.

We must prioritise -

► Ease of onboarding

- ▶ Deal velocity
- ▶ Support services
- ▶ Responsiveness
- ▶ Proactive engagement
- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Business opportunities
- ▶ Flexible rules of engagement
- ▶ Frictionless processes
- ▶ Operational agility
- ▶ Access to relevant collaterals

This outside-in point of view is critically important in your partner processes.

It needs to extend across the partner experience and daily interactions that occur with your partners.

Treating them like another cog in the machine, rather than a true partner, only leads to one place.

A failure to recognise that their success is your success.

And that success relies on a professional relationship that prioritises your partners time by making it as easy as possible for them to do business with you.

Be Respectful

6

**EDUCATE AND
RELATE, DON'T
TELL AND SELL**

A faint, light gray background graphic featuring an open book with its pages slightly curved. Overlaid on the book is a clock face with a circular border and several tick marks, resembling a stylized alarm clock or a timer.

Hands up if you've seen this before...

You land a partner, they sign the agreement, you set them up with lead submission procedures... then crickets.

So many expect partners to proactively sell their solution for them, but it rarely, if ever, works out that way.

They are busy running their own business, and you must approach your partner operational systems with this at the forefront of your initiatives.

The biggest problems I see occurring are when program leaders adopt this 'if you build it they will come' approach, mixed with a 'drinking our own Kool Aid' attitude.

They are consciously setting up everyone involved to fail.

Therefore, building B2B relationships must be a reciprocal endeavour based on credibility and trust.

And the best way to do that is to educate your partners and helping them relate, rather than telling them about your solution then expecting them to sell it.

If you treat partners as purely

transactional (as many unfortunately do) you're doomed to fail from the off.

Partners need to be educated about your solution, which has to be relevant to them and compliment their SOP's. In this regard, it's never about us.

And this, in turn, helps us be relatable.

Good partnership values create accountability and mutual-respect, great partnership values form attitudes and intent.

How?

- Frequent low-bandwidth, low-resource collaborative efforts
- Form deep relationships people want to be a part of
- Build systems that show you respect their time
- Help them get to where they want to go
- Build open and honest environments
- Provide direct and indirect value
- Connect them with community
- Focus on core goal alignment
- Be easy to do business with

Visibility and expertise increase the trust and credibility of your program, so exercising these with regular cadence is the key to building a relatable initiative.

People trust what they know.

People don't trust those who show up and throw up.

A small crack can become a great divide.

So don't tell and expect your partner to sell; educate and relate.

Be Relatable

7

**POSITION YOUR
PROGRAM AS A
STRATEGIC
PRIORITY**

Internal channel or ecosystem motions are not a company, a program, an initiative, or even a person.

They have to be seen as a strategic priority for doing business.

I was talking about this to the channel legend that is Harald Horgen earlier this week.

One of the biggest battles faced for successfully integrating channel motions into organisations is perception, and perceived value.

Partnerships need to be contextualised cross-departmentally to identify what that means at every level to attract buy-in.

And that starts with the executive team.

But what does this mean?

It means not only helping position indirect motions as a strategic, company-wide priority, it means clearly defining -

- roles and responsibilities
- expectations
- outcomes
- cadences
- metrics
- value

So it has to be obvious what a partnership motion means at every level.

But how?

- with strategic frameworks - such as MECE, SOSTAC AND MEDDPICC (links in the comments section to articles I've written about retrofitting these models to partner motions)
- with numbers - i.e. high-performing ecosystems drive on average 1.5x cost reduction, and generate 2.1x incremental revenue growth
- with results - indirect motions help sales and marketing attract and close larger deals, faster, and more often
- with value - making sure partners bring with them strategic enablement
- with people - partnerships are more about people than institutions. You must build relationships between key people throughout the operating levels of both organisations
- with strategy - selectively pursue partnerships that require both you and your partner to invest in capabilities that enable you to enhance both JVP's

A great partner professional thinks of

needing to re-earn their partner's business every day.

This helps focus on the processes and systems required to quantify your value and organisations preferred outcome.

And probably most important point here -

- Don't tell your internal stakeholders the intrinsic value held in your indirect solutions, show them.

Be Strategic

8

**MAKE YOUR
PARTNERS
PEOPLE LOOK
GOOD**

Spend enough time in B2B indirect channel initiatives and you'll hear the phrase - 'make your partners look good'.

It's an obvious action-point to build foundations of trust, mutual respect, preferred outcomes, etc.

Most go into alliances with this as their North Star, and rightly so - it's a sound part of a comprehensive better-together strategy.

But IMHO the adage skims the surface and slightly misses the mark.

It's not your partners who you need to make look good per say, it's your partners people.

True collaboration starts on an individual level, so making your partners look good starts with 'me' not 'we'.

And it all starts with a simple approach - just listen.

- Listen to their marketing department
- Listen to their sales department
- Listen to their customers
- Listen to their CS team
- Listen to their AE's

They are the hero's of their story, so you

need to find out how you can help them reach their preferred outcome.

If you're focusing on their story rather than yourself, you're automatically making your partner look good.

This means -

- getting behind your partners idea's as if they were your own
- doing what is necessary to make their goals work
- prioritising and celebrating their wins
- heightening preferred outcomes
- supporting their values
- feeding their passions
- inviting them in
- sharing

Most of the effective partner professionals I've ever worked with knew this...

- Making your partner look good means thinking about what you can give to the alliance rather than what you can take from it

And that usually starts with - 'how can I help you get to where you want to be?'

Prioritise this, and you'll quickly become everyone's new best friend.

Be Selfless

9

**METRICS MUST
BE TIED TO
ACTION-POINTS**

Context x clear line-of-site x competitive advantage = value.

So -

- why should I consider this
- how do I get there
- what can it do for me

Modern-day channel and ecosystem initiatives are -

- people-led
- tech-enabled
- data-driven
- result-focused

The days of 'growth-at-all-costs' underpinned by a 'if-we-build-it' approach are dying a slow death, and for good reason.

Corporations are now demanding more and more indirect initiatives align with existing systems and processes.

A typical rationalisation by consolidation approach, which makes sense.

And to help them do that, they use data to streamline and signpost what systems and processes are working, or not.

As channel professionals, we are slowly getting into the habit of tying specific

metrics to our initiatives, which is great to see.

This is helping us speak the language required to qualify our motions.

But many are failing to complete the circuit.

It's all well and good to have the data, but if you fail to tie that data to actionable next-steps it's completely redundant.

Leadership will ask two questions once you've presented your metrics -

- What has this data proved about our partner program?
- How is this going to shape our subsequent actions moving forward?

And it's the second question they will be most interested in.

It's where the rubber meets the road.

So how do we transform this data into actions?

- Not all insights are equal

They must be ranked by impact and feasibility. By focusing on the insights that have the highest potential for

driving results, you can then run effective resource allocation and make strategic decisions that lead to tangible outcomes.

i.e. - if your data shows that a certain set of partners are driving the highest converted leads, develop a targeted marketing campaign to attract and retain leads from that set.

- Create a data-informed action plan

Set desired outcomes based on your data insights. Keep it simple - what are your goals, and what strategies and tactics are you going to deploy to reach them? Base your decisions on both data-sets and what aligns with the company's objectives.

i.e. - you want to increase your partner pool by 10% within the next quarter. Develop personalised loyalty programs and targeted promotions based on what the metrics are telling you.

- Implement and monitor the plan

You then need to implement the plan by deploying the strategies and tactics you've decided on, and monitor the progress against your defined metrics. Flexibility is also key because

circumstances will change, so you need to ensure it remains effective and aligned.

i.e. - launch, monitor, key performance indicators such as partner revenue, partner-generated customer acquisition, and partner retention to assess the effectiveness of your actions.

By aligning your actions with the insights gained from data analysis, you can create a roadmap for your program's success.

Be Analytical

10

**CONCENTRATE
ON HIGH-VALUE
TASKS THAT
MOVE THE
PARTNERSHIP
FORWARD**

The No. 1 metric to base the success of your program on?

The adoption-rate of your solution by customers via your channel partners.

It's why a partnership department exists.

And, along with the associated costs of running your program, what the leadership team will be keeping a very close eye on.

It also supports a bunch of other data-points, like -

- how well your marketing, attribution and enablement strategies are working
- the effectiveness of your internal and external comms initiatives
- the health of your overall partner experience

So focusing on these high-value tasks that move each partnership forward is paramount to a healthy program.

In the business world, these are called HVA's (high-value activities).

If adopted effectively, this approach can change your program workflows entirely for the better.

So what does this mean in practice?

First we need to determine whether an activity is high-value or not.

Questions like -

- Does this activity bring me closer to my partner and their preferred outcome
- How does this activity ultimately impact the bottom line of my program
- Does this activity bring me closer to accomplishing my program goals

Then it's time to focus.

You can approach program HVA's from a few different angles (because we all operate differently) -

- Intentionally catalogue your daily activities for a full week. That way, you don't inadvertently forget about low-value activities and/or underestimate how much time you actually spend doing them. You need to get a detailed, honest view into how you're spending your time. After all, you can't improve what you don't measure.
- Make it a habit of removing distractions, like email and your phone, and spend a dedicated portion of your day working on a small set of high-value activities that requires your complete attention - say 2 to 3 hours in the AM.

- Create a focused list of 2 or 3 HVA's that will move you closer to your goals, and look to outsource your low-value work via 3rd party subcontractors or, even better, automate them.

But what could these tasks or activities consist of?

- Internal stakeholder augmentation
- Partner experience development
- Key opportunity exploration
- Onboarding optimisation
- Incentive planning
- Partner marketing
- Account mapping
- Enablement

The bottom line is that our time in channels and ecosystems is constantly under pressure.

And when our time is eaten up by a bunch of low-value tasks, it becomes easy to slip into a pattern of ignoring what's required to get you to those all important goals.

Low-value activities need to be done, sure.

But moving the needle is a daily habit that will get your program, and your partnerships, to where they need to be.

Be Productive

**NEVER SHAKE A
HAND SITTING
DOWN**

One of Warren Buffet's famous 10 guides for success is a classic etiquette rule-of-thumb which states you should never shake a hand sitting down.

It's simple yet powerful personal and professional advice.

- It shows respect and professionalism
- It demonstrates that you are present and engaged
- It communicates you are taking the meeting or interaction seriously and as an equal

Or, in other words - right weight, right outcome.

Undertaking any partnership is a serious commitment that needs to be treated with the respect, care and the time it deserves.

If either side takes the alliance lightly, or if expectations are unaligned and miscommunicated, then it's doomed to fail from the off.

And this alignment starts before you have even approached a partner.

By clearly identifying and agreeing on your organisation's -

- Goals - what

- Beliefs - why
- Mission - how
- Core values - who

- you are setting the foundation for every stage of the partnering journey.

When these are subsequently matched with a partner, the respect, understanding and resources required to generate results will be clear and aligned from day 1.

Successful partnerships need deep trust to work.

They involve sharing of information, technology, financials, people and resources between two entities who start out as complete strangers.

So when that agreement is made, make sure you're not 'sitting down'.

Give each and every partner the utmost respect they deserve by making them understand that you'll -

- Support them through the good and bad times
- Give them your undivided attention
- Show full commitment
- Help them succeed
- Celebrate their wins
- Use active listening

It's about making it work for them.

If you can show that you are willing and capable of wrapping your program around them at this early stage, instead of expecting them to wrap around your program, you will have laid the foundations for a partnership that remains and sustains.

Be Upstanding

12

BUILD CULTURE WITH INTENT



Last but not least, the all-important foundation of building a strong culture within your partnership program.

But what does it mean exactly, and how should it operate to be effective?

Building a partnership culture within your organisation with intent simply means developing high stakeholder engagement.

It is an intentional act using culture-building processes, systems and goals which are then deployed to foster -

- Internal cultures - maximising internal stakeholder buy-in and building an inclusive and useful program that your colleagues want to be a part of
- External cultures - directly related to your partners by making them part of your team, and connecting them with a strong sense of community

Building a positive partner culture with intent is a proactive endeavour, and something that isn't left to chance or develop organically.

It is an intentional process in which you consciously choose what you want to create within the context of your own organisation's vision, mission, goals and values that relates to your program.

It's making sure your internal and partner stakeholders feel like they belong by using diversity and inclusion strategies.

It's about building a purpose-centric motion.

So how do we do that?

- Incorporate Perspectives

Actively seeking partners and peer insights on the complex interplay between partnership purpose and profitability builds a sense of inclusivity, ensuring all stakeholders feel valued and an integral part of decision-making processes

- Integrate culture goals into incentive schemes

Weaving culture-driven metrics into colleague and partner reward programs ensures that performance evaluation is holistic, accounting for both business outcomes and alignment with company and interdepartmental ethos.

- Increase clarity to reduce silos

Clarity is key for a good working environment and, as a result, a good partner program culture. Too often, work is siloed between teams and tools, making it hard to find. Make sure you

have a clear, tangible way to connect daily work to company and partnership goals.

- To be trusted, you must trust

A culture of mutual trust is imperative in partnerships. If you force oversight, or worse, taking over instead of guide, it will directly conflict with building the trust required to build sustainable internal and external culture sets. Your culture should encourage ownership.

- Utilise individualised celebration

Recognise your internal stakeholders and partners drivers and celebrate what is meaningful to them on an individual level. You'll increase confidence and motivation, leading to more productive partners and stronger culture.

As the former CEO of IBM, Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., once said " I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organisation is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value."

Be Cultural



Be Accountable

Be Selective

Be Timely

Be Inclusive

Be Respectful

Be Relatable

Be Strategic

Be Selfless

Be Analytical

Be Productive

Be Upstanding

Be Cultural



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