

ORACLE

Essential Strategies for Partner Relationship Management

 **Ignite Guide**



A TWELVE-MINUTE READ



Reduce complexity and drive revenue with strategic partner relationship management

In today's competitive business environment, companies are realizing they can't go it alone. There are sales goals to meet, leads to track, revenue to generate, and more. Many companies rely on third-party vendors—or channel partners—to help get products and services to market.

But with hundreds or even thousands of partners on your roster, managing those relationships can be a complex, time-consuming responsibility.

Partner relationship management (PRM) consolidates and simplifies how you work with partners. With a sound strategy in place, a PRM solution can help you realize the full benefit of channel partner relationships—and drive the results your stakeholders demand.

More than 90% of company executives and channel leaders expect to increase revenue directly attributed to their partner ecosystems this year.³

This guide will walk you through the many strategic considerations that make up PRM, and set you on a path to help you build your own strategy.

On average, 20% of a vendor's partners will generate 80% of the indirect sale channel's revenue.¹



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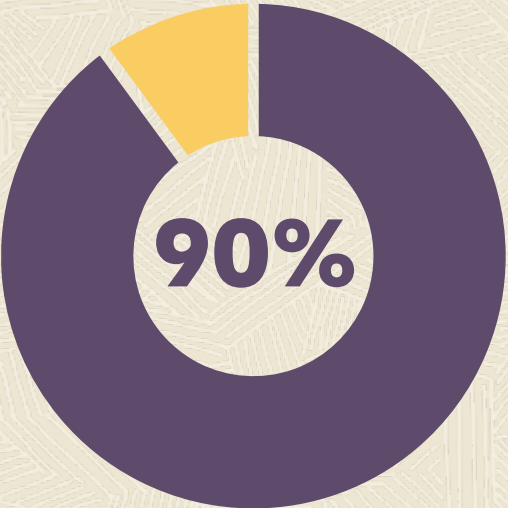


Reduce complexity and drive revenue with strategic partner relationship management

Inside the changing channel ecosystem

Business has changed in countless ways since the start of the 2020 pandemic. According to a recent Accenture survey, 76% of business leaders agree that current business models will be unrecognizable in the next five years. The same survey predicts that ecosystems—networks of cross-industry businesses that collaborate on new products and services to grow their customer bases and expand into new markets—will be the main change agent.³

So, while channel managers, sales and marketing professionals, and channel partners are already making shifts to account for the rise in digital customer journeys, their roles will likely become more complex—and more indispensable—in the coming years.



More than 90% of company executives and channel leaders expect to increase revenue directly attributed to their partner ecosystems this year.³



Partner relationship management, defined

For many companies, developing a channel partner program to scale revenue through resellers, retailers, brokers, distributors, and other partners is more cost-effective than building a direct sales organization.

However, managing all those partners is a continual challenge that requires tools, technology, and strategy to overcome. That's where PRM comes in.

Simply put, a PRM solution allows for better communication and improved productivity with partners, driving additional revenue and controlling marketing and sales costs. It allows you to spend more time building relationships and helping partners sell your products and services, and less time managing elements of the partnership tied to disparate systems.

Core PRM functions include

- Partner recruitment and onboarding
- Deal registration and lead management
- Account and territory management
- Incentives and rewards management
- Marketing development and cobranding
- Training and certification
- Partner communications and reporting

When implemented correctly, a PRM program can help companies realize greater return on investment, increased revenue, and improved customer loyalty. It can

- **Increase revenue faster** by helping partners spend less time searching for information to close deals, and more time selling products and servicing customers.
- **Aid marketing and branding teams** to help partners align with your brand's messaging. Doing so enables partners to create campaigns, build the pipeline, and increase ROI.
- **Ensure partners have real-time service** on their terms. On-demand content, videos, a partner portal, sales bots, and service personnel can help them access what they need so they can focus on selling and ensure customers are happy.

Let's start building your strategy for partner relationship management.



PRM vs. CRM: what's the difference?

While the goals of PRM are fundamentally the same as customer relationship management (CRM), it serves different markets and includes different functionality. CRM focuses on a company's relationships with customers while PRM focuses on managing relationships with indirect sales teams and their partners' customers. Some consider PRM a specialized version of CRM focused on channel sales optimization, but PRM is much more robust, requiring significant processes, training, knowledge, and integration with other sources of crucial data.



Build your foundational strategy

Channel sales are an integral piece of your customer service experience, so be prepared to empower partners with end-to-end sales, service, account, and knowledge management tools to keep customers happy after the initial sale and ensure they return in the future.

However, as you embark on your strategy, keep in mind that the nature of partner-customer interactions is changing, due in part to COVID-19. For instance, partners who were accustomed to in-person sales now need access to well-organized online resources—content libraries, videos, comarketing campaigns, and more. Meanwhile, customers are now searching online for products and services. So, making it easy for them to identify your distributors, brokers, value-added-resellers, and others is key.

To add to the challenge, competition for partners is fierce. Channel partners today can afford to be more selective. They can and will switch to work with companies that support their success. You will need to be flexible, responding to a variety of partner demands by swiftly adjusting your programs, pricing structures, discounting options, and sales strategies to ensure partner success. And above all, partners want to feel like part of the team.

They need the same resources as your direct sales teams—like qualified leads and opportunities and predictable compensation. Modern partner sellers don't want to wait to get answers. They require real-time access to knowledge wherever they are and whenever they like via their mobile device or digital assistant.

To build a PRM strategy that accounts for these challenges, here are a few important factors to keep in mind.

1. Stakeholders

Audit your internal organization to determine who will play a role in managing partners and what their priorities are.

- **Sales wants to maximize deals and revenue**, and work with knowledgeable partners who can add value. Consider incentives that make it easier for partners to sell and create the necessary retention and loyalty for a productive partnership.

- **Service will support customers** and partner service inquiries, honor warranties and SLAs, and share best practices.
- **Marketing will work on joint marketing programs, branded collateral, and promotions** so they'll be eager to leverage partners who extend their reach and maintain consistent, on-brand messaging.
- **Education and training will develop programs and tiered certifications** to keep partners in compliance. They'll provide reporting that tracks partner progress and include certifications in partner profiles. Leads can then be auto-distributed to partners with the appropriate certifications, training, and qualifications.
- **IT will manage integrations and partner interfaces** with products, and provide security and access rights for partners to use the partner portal.



Build your foundational strategy

2. Processes and workflows

Consider your organization's priorities and needs alongside those of your partners. It's critical to build seamless, easy-to-implement workflows and processes that meet the needs of both.

- **Factor in how to recruit**, onboard, and certify partners.
- **Align go-to-market efforts** with cobranding and market development funds (MDF) that accelerate partner-driven, go-to-market activities. Survey customers to assess how partners represent your brand.
- **Create a two-way lead qualification process** that applies artificial intelligence (AI) to leads and synchronizes with your PRM/CRM.
- **Facilitate deal registration** with automated tools for fast approval and conflict resolution.

- **Help partners provide great customer support.**

Create articles, videos, and support materials so they can troubleshoot on their own, log service tickets, and share customer service best practices.

- **Constantly measure and incentivize** your best partners. Analyze your MDF spend with return. Are your partners complying with business plans? What is their speed of execution and customer satisfaction rate? If necessary, revamp your compensation plan to match industry and company trends. Ask your partners how they rate doing business with you. Take steps for improvement, if necessary.

3. Ease of doing business

73% of partners say vendor channel programs are too complex.⁴ Is yours? Identify internal systems that partners may need, and ensure they can access them quickly and easily. Make sure you have the right content available to help them to succeed. Marketing collateral, sales tools, training, and partner communications should be easily accessible from a single system that tracks usage and reviews. If your offerings

are complex or your SKU lists long, take steps to make it simple for partners to carry out configure, price, and quotes (CPQ) processes before billing and fulfillment.



Four steps to get started with partner relationship management

01 Build a plan

It sounds simple, but it might be the most important step you take. Include timelines, budget, objectives, and scope for all types of activities you want as part of your channel partner program. These could include customizations, data cleansing, integration with other applications, training, and more. Consider your plan carefully and make sure it can scale to include future partners as opportunities arise.

02 Articulate business requirements and systems integrations

Identify all the systems your partners will need to access—sales and marketing, content, IT, pricing, inventory, CPQ, and more. Then, create a clear strategy for organizing the data those systems need to operate effectively. This should include data structure, configurations, and attributes as well as relevance, accuracy, and timeliness. If you plan to share CRM data with partners, set up a two-way integration so that any updates or changes are accessible to your internal team and your partners.

03 Involve partners and internal users

Involve your most trusted partners and internal users during the initial development process. Understand your partners' needs. Work with them to test your associated systems for functionality, data accessibility, performance, scale, and mobility. Getting feedback from partners as well as internal users in the initial phase can help alleviate issues after deployment.

04 Use a single sign on (SSO) system

Design dashboards that include all deals, pipeline, and opportunities at all levels, and make them available in a centralized portal along with any other materials. When partners only need one password to access all the resources and tools they need, they're much more likely to stay productive and succeed.



Realize the full benefit of partner relationship management

Partner relationship management can increase the effectiveness of channel management and drive revenue. And, when done strategically with the help of a PRM solution, you can reap the rewards well into the future.



1. Use data to drive decision-making

Create a complete view of each potential customer by connecting key selling processes to back-office cycles. Sales leaders will have the visibility they need to plan, forecast, and make critical business decisions confidently.



2. Retain top sales talent

Time is money. Top sellers know their time is better spent hustling than manually keeping tabs on their territory assignments and compensation. Automated, transparent compensation tracking and communication keeps sellers engaged and motivated and maintains their trust, so they can focus on closing deals and driving business.



3. Maintain efficient processes

Reliable automation eliminates the complexity created by multiple spreadsheets, integrations, and disconnected data so you can concentrate resources on your strategic sales objectives.

PRM in action

Panasonic Toughbook Europe uses Oracle Partner Relationship Management to let resellers and distributors request marketing support, share leads, and register deals. Partners can also use the platform to enroll in Toughbook University, a self-paced, in-depth training program on how to use, market, and sell Toughbook devices.

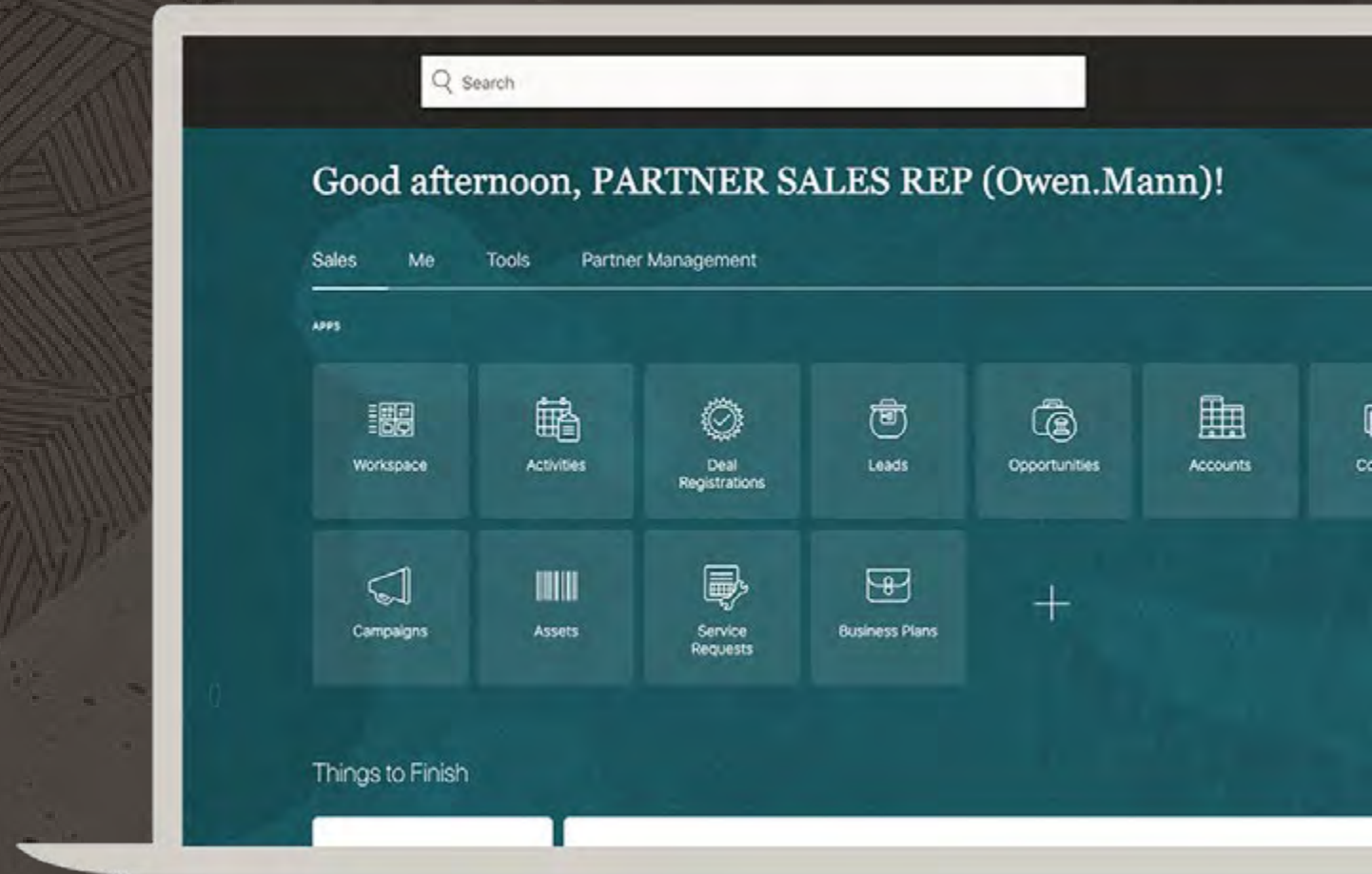
“This type of training used to take months to administer,” says Rhiannon Ainge, senior manager of customer service and business systems. “Now our resellers can get certified on all of our latest products and start generating revenue from them immediately.”



Make the most of your partner relationships with Oracle

Explore our integrated PRM solution to learn how we can help deliver a complete, connected, lucrative partner experience.

Want to learn how you can help grow partner sales channels to increase revenue? [Find out how.](#)



To the experience-maker who's always moving forward

As modern customers seem to shape-shift from one moment to the next, it's critical to maintain pace with their expectations. To help, we created the Ignite series to fuel your continuous pursuit of customer experiences that always hit the mark.

Guides like this one on partner relationship management aim to advance your expertise and help you craft foundational strategies in less time. So you can get back out there to captivate customers and drive revenue.

What will you discover next?

- [Essential Strategies for Sales Performance Management](#)
- [Essential Strategies for Artificial Intelligence in Sales Force Automation](#)
- [Essential Strategies for Customer Data Management](#)



About Oracle Advertising and CX

Make every customer interaction matter by connecting all your business data across advertising, marketing, sales, commerce, and service. Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience (CX) is a connected suite of applications that goes beyond traditional CRM to help you create and nurture lasting customer relationships. Build a complete view of every interaction and every customer, no matter how and when they engage. Empower your entire business to deliver exceptional customer experiences—from acquisition to retention—and everything in between.

Sources

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