

Panacea ... for rent, cheap

Marketing Automation Platforms; Lead Generation Solutions in High Tech Sales Channels
... by Tony Serino

They're here, right now, and they work. Channel Marketing Automation SOLUTIONS can be a panacea for vendors or distributors relying on their sales channels for growth, new account development, and measurement.

Since the dawn of the high tech channel, c. 1960 and from the back of Tony Hamilton's station wagon in Southern California (with deference to Radio Row), joint lead generation efforts to promote a vendor's technology, solutions, products and services through/with its channel partners has been harder than it appears.

There was always a very good reason, or five, why the joint lead generation initiatives didn't produce as expected. That no longer needs to be true. Today, Channel Marketing Automation Platforms can SOLVE EVERY PROBLEM marketers and business development execs face in channel ecosystems. And they do so as inexpensive, "rentable" cloud service solutions.

Here's a brief recap of the traditional problems, some of their reasons, and the basis of the solution available from a host of Marketing Automation Platforms vendors. A comparative acronym will help explain.

Karma is such a great channel word, as is its bastardization, C A R M A. Karma, the "what goes around, comes around" Eastern philosophy is "channelian" and based on the *intention* of a thought or action resulting in its outcome. Good intentions result in "goodness..." Channel Marketing Automation platforms were created as win/win/win platforms. The vendor, channel partners (including partners further down the supply chain), and even end customer win when the platform works as intended. The root is honorable, unlike "Partner Portals" which were created with the intent of lowering a vendor's expenses, regardless of the impact to the partner and regardless of whether the partner even used it. (The vast majority of partners do NOT use partner portals.)

Using C A R M A as the acronym, let's explore why the Channel Marketing Automation platforms are panaceas. Simply stated, they can solve all the traditional problems and do so in a measurable manner that motivates all those involved in the business development effort. The acronym embodies the essence of all channel marketing activities, the good the bad and the ugly, sort to speak.

C A R M A ... Control; Accountability; Results; Motivation; and Acceleration

Control... Everyone WANTS to control something and everyone NEEDS to control some things. In the past the vendor's marketing guidelines dictated how communication must occur and provided little-to-no flexibility. The vendor controlled the entire message. As such, the channel company lost out. In that era of static marketing, "products" were promoted as solutions and technical skills and experience were subordinated. It did not make sense to the user audience, and frankly, it was condescending to people at many channel companies.

Now, the platforms can preserve the "vendor's technology/product message" *verbatim* (thus meeting the letter of the vendors' law) while helping the channel company to surround that message with description about their skills, experience and resources. And do so such that, *together*, the vendors' technology and partners' skills form a solution to a problem faced by their mutual audiences. The target audiences no longer have to be fed the line that "more feeds and speeds" is all that they need. Now, the message becomes *applied skill using this technology can resolve your business problem ...* and no longer has to be that *my disc is bigger than your disk*.



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Accountability, yikes! Who wants to be held accountable? Actually, more people than you think. But people want to be held accountable for things within their control and areas of responsibilities. The Marketing Automation platforms deliver (tactically execute) the Sales and Marketing plans. When deployed correctly, certain people are assigned certain responsibility (within the areas of their personal best interests and jurisdiction) and the platforms make it easy to do so and easy to audit. People feel empowered when they are asked to do what they are expected to do, given access to the tools they need (for example, in the form of content), and do not have to cover for someone else by doing their job in addition to their own.

Results. It had been so hard to follow an opportunity from discovery to close. Person A generated the lead, Person B logged, it, C qualified it, D followed it up, E was expected to close it, and F, G, and H were responsible to enter and report the outcome back to I. And (not because things weren't complicated enough) vendor and partner usually used different systems for internal communication and therefore used different systems to communicate with one another.

If a Marketing Automation platform can do anything good, it can keep track of opportunities throughout their sales cycles and even seamlessly interact with abutting systems. Now a lead can easily be followed from its genesis to its conclusion.

Motivation. People will only work for YOUR best interest when it is in THEIR best interest. (Accreditation; a Chinese Fortune Cookie)

Doesn't it sound so obvious? The platforms, when deployed correctly, ensure that everyone's best interests are being served by clear assignment of tasks, specifically aligned with what they do. The assurance of each individual's best interest being served also assures that "the whole's best interest" is being best served.

Those who come from a channel environment, (having worked *for* a channel business), realize that too many vendor personnel misunderstand the relationship and the mindset of their channel counterpart. In the vendor (superior), channel (inferior) mindset, it's expected that the channel person stay awake all night worrying about how to make the vendor rich (figuratively). This is a gross misinterpretation of intent ... and demotivating. Furthermore, vendors promoted their product, through the partner, in a manner that "dissed" the channel partners while expecting the channel people to perform unusual acts on the vendor's behalf (take this either figuratively or literally). The Marketing Automation platforms eliminate many of the root causes AND position the channel company and channel personnel as coequal partners in resolution of the end customers' needs.

Acceleration. Think! Can you name a good sales or marketing rep or manager that doesn't want to do more, more quickly and produce more results? More activities, to get more opportunities, to build a larger pipeline, more quickly, to close more orders, to make more money... And do it not just quickly, but MORE QUICKLY!

Marketing Automation platforms allow for one model (think "A sales AND marketing plan") template to be created and then have hundreds of "highly and specifically customized" versions of it be rolled out very quickly. Channel Marketing Automation platforms accelerate activities; from planning, to execution, to measurement, to assessing the measurement, to "repeating what works." They accelerate both producing and measuring results; for a single partner and/or for an entire indirect channel.

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So... if you need to develop leads, increase sales, measure results and promote accountability with your partners, then utilize a Marketing Automation platform. Not only is it good karma, that good karma manifests as ... C A R M A; Control, Accountability, Results, Motivation, and Acceleration.

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