



10 Channel Partner Reporting Best Practices for B2B Companies

Ours is a data-driven world. There's little doubt about that, and channel programs are no exception. But, as with all programs that aim to cohesively tackle both hard (quantitative) and soft (qualitative) measurement, establishing solid channel partner reporting practices is often viewed as both a science and an art.

Why Channel Partner Reporting is Vital to Partner Program Success

The old adage “you can only manage what you measure” is just as true in channel marketing as it is in any other enterprise. And while gut instinct is important, the higher-ups don't approve budget based on it: They expect to see — and be able to quickly understand and interpret — quantitative metrics. Which brings us naturally to a brief discussion about dashboards.

The Value of Channel Partner Dashboards

Dashboards can be extremely powerful tools for reporting and motivating. Reporting is essential to measuring and communicating performance, and dashboards make data analytics easier by showing you key metrics (and their trajectories) at a glance. Plus, dashboards play well in today's rewards-driven culture and can actually spark friendly competition among partners.

To unpack the goals and challenges of channel reporting — and to provide insights on best practices — we asked nine channel experts to share their thoughts.

1 Centralize Channel Partner Reporting Data

Complete, accurate and timely data is table-stakes in all aspects of business, including channels, and it continues to grow in importance. The silver lining to this message should become an action item for you; tackling decentralized data today can put you ahead of many in the channel. That's a textbook competitive advantage.

2 Select a Channel Partner Reporting Tool with a Strong API

We've said it before, and we'll say it again. Dashboard fatigue is real — your partners are given dashboards by nearly every vendor and have it worse than most. Your PRM should be able to pull in many data sources to deliver a holistic view of your channel operation, but it's vital that you help partners do the same. Ideally, you'll have a solution that delivers everything you need to know about your channel through native reporting and data imported from other sources via API.

3 Make Executive Dashboards for Channel Partner Reporting

Sometimes dashboards offer too many features and customizations for senior managers. The good news? You can supplement dashboards that are actionable for your channel specialists with summary data that the C-suite doesn't have to decode (presented via PDF or via customized executive dashboards).

4 Curate Shared Channel Partner Reporting Data for All Stakeholders

Introduce partners to dashboards and load them with data that measures shared goals. Look to get input from multiple parties in advance to help you establish the right data early. In fact, you might even want to consider leveraging a Partner Advisory Board to give you the metrics they want to see dashboarded.



5 Set Up Channel Partner Reporting with Consistency in Mind

Take the time to confidently choose data points you can leverage to drive improvements over a long period. And that can only practically happen if your metrics are stable (like using the same metrics month over month and year over year).

6 Leverage Channel Partner Reporting Dashboards to Build Partner Relationships

Partner-facing dashboards can be particularly helpful in keeping communication lines open and engaging partners. They can be used to inform one-on-one meetings, funnel reviews, deal updates and quarterly business reviews (QBRs). If you're tracking consistently (see #5 above), you can even use the results to help guide annual business strategy planning.

I find that many folks want to rely on their gut feeling when it comes to reporting. But you want to know that what you're doing for your partners is actually working – and that gut feeling won't always be correct. Piecing together real data is important and enables you to see what's going on in the business, as well as gather partner thoughts or feedback. And it's a quick way to accurately check return on investment (ROI).

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7 Balance Channel Partner Reporting Data with Relationship Building

Keep in mind that data analytics is vital, but it's only one tool in your channel success toolbox. Take care to use it in proper balance with other

strategies, especially a human touch. You have to establish relationships with partners first before you get into analytics. Avoid the temptation to become so enamored with data that you risk alienating potentially productive partners. "Hard data does not mean anything if you can't get along or develop trust," as one of our panelists explained.

8 Tell a Story with Channel Partner Reporting Dashboards

If you've recently visited the websites of leading news outlets, you undoubtedly noticed that data is used to tell stories. And as any successful content marketer will tell you, stories drive engagement. Are earnings increasing? Are deals accelerating? Visualizing key dynamics through your dashboards help your partners see the critical role they play in the story – and how it can all have a happy ending.

9 Track the Behavior of Your Partners' Customers, Too

Perhaps the most significant character in the story of your partnership is your joint customer. So, it's important to help partners track those customers' behavior data, too, since it can inform marketing, sales and customer success teams as they look to understand where they're losing customers and prospects.

10 Make Channel Partner Reporting About Your Partners' Businesses

Your partnership should have an audience of one – your partners. Reporting and/or dashboards built for partners should deliver value in ways that are meaningful to them, not just to you. Show them the value of the data to help them run their businesses and how it supports their KPIs and growth metrics.

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