

CYTRACOM

eBook

Do Your Vendors Have Your Back?

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All About the Channel?

As an IT service provider you no doubt partner with a myriad of vendors to provide the best technology products, solutions, and services for your customers. You've worked super hard to build your client base, and making the decision to partner with a new vendor is a BIG deal. Let's face it, no matter how hard you evaluate and vet technology partners - it takes a leap of faith to initiate the relationship. Everything the vendor does, especially in the eyes of your customers, reflects on you. While you may be the indirect sales channel for the vendor, there is nothing "indirect" in what they do for you and your customers.

How often have you heard the phrase "we are all about the channel"? If you partner with a lot of vendors, I'm guessing this is a familiar phrase. For a vendor selling through the MSP channel, this makes absolute sense from a positioning standpoint. But, beyond the words, what does being all about the channel really mean?

Being all about the channel "should" infer that the vendor is 100% committed to you and your clients' success - period. There should be no conflict of interest. If a vendor is all about the channel, they shouldn't be selling directly to the end-user (or worse, your potential customers).

If they run a "hybrid" business model selling to both IT service providers and end-users, this needs to be communicated to you. Stealth selling doesn't exactly help build trust for a lasting partnership.



28% of MSPs list "Technology or Vendor Issues" as their top pain point. Partnering with the right vendors is critical.

(Datto2019)

Being all about the channel is also about providing a great end-to-end experience for service providers. Vendors that "get it" know how to create an awesome partner journey from initial onboarding and sales assistance, to ongoing technical support. Vendors that have dedicated "partner success" people are a step ahead of the game.

Lastly, being all about the channel is consistently going that extra mile. You want vendors that can alleviate your pain points, lower your blood pressure, and help you sleep better at night. Whether that's lead generation (who doesn't need more leads?), revenue growth initiatives, or customized IT solutions...vendors that can provide value in these areas can be catalysts for your business.

When a vendor is all about the channel, their **success** is contingent on your **success**.

Sell the Stuff That Sticks

The Covid pandemic has created unforeseen hardships in just about every industry - but not all. Courier services, online education, and retail liquor stores are some that have actually flourished during the global pandemic. In the technology space, the continued market uncertainty has many businesses taking a pause or rethinking IT investments. Buyer priorities have shifted towards IT solutions that can provide immediate value vs. longer-term projects. As a service provider, you want to implement solutions that quickly integrate with your client's daily routines and can get them to those "aha" moments as fast as possible.

Technology solutions that can be implemented quickly, consistently deliver value, and integrate into client's daily routines are more likely to be "sticky". When a solution is sticky, it becomes more difficult for a client to remove which is great for you as a service provider. But we're not talking bad sticky here. Bad sticky can imply long-term contracts, vendor lock-in, too complicated, expensive, or nearly impossible to make the switch. Bad sticky is not only bad for the customer, but can be detrimental for your business in the long run. You want solutions that the client does not want to remove because of the continuous benefits, value, and enjoyment they receive while using it. Get them hooked.

You want to partner with vendors that have sticky solutions!



The stickier the product - the higher the client retention rate.

When you're providing a solution that your customers need, or even love, it provides the value that engages the customer for a long-term relationship. Whether an awesome "one-of-a-kind" solution or a "many-of-a-kind" solution that provides a superior customer experience - you're providing good sticky!

In addition to selling sticky products, making your existing customer installations more sticky can help reduce product "churn". According to Unbounce, 31% of customers churn a product because it is **underutilized**, followed by too complicated, missing features, and too expensive. Product underutilization is the biggest threat to customer churn. You want vendors with products that drive high utilization through ease of implementation and accelerated time to value.

What you don't want are products that are inherently too expensive, too complicated, or missing key features. Would you want that product? Choose your vendors wisely, and make sure they have the solutions that help get your customers to value quickly.

Sell the stuff that sticks.

The Onboarding Experience

We all hear how an exceptional customer "onboarding" experience can be a gamechanger for companies. But why do so many companies continue to struggle in this area?

Over 90% of customers feel the companies they buy from "could do better" when it comes to onboarding new users/customers (wyzowl).

Onboarding sounds simple enough, but in the technology world it means getting new users trained and up to speed on new platforms, solutions, features, and functionality. As a service provider, this often means you need to be onboarded before you can effectively onboard your customers. Or, you may prefer that your vendors conduct the customer onboarding on your behalf. Either way, it's a critical experience that can set the tone for the relationship with your customers. First impressions matter, and if the onboarding experience is poor many customers will begin to experience buyer's remorse...or even worse, churn. Effective onboarding also leads to faster time-to-value and higher product utilization. Remember the top reason for client churn (product underutilization)?

For resource efficiencies, most vendors utilize videos, online tutorials, and a host of digital "self-help" tools to move a new customer through the onboarding experience. While these tools can be quite effective, you definitely don't want to overlook the **human element**. Vendors that have people dedicated to the onboarding process can do wonders for your business. Many technology vendors now have employees in "Partner Success" roles that are focused solely on the success of partners and their customers. As a service provider, you want your onboarding experience to also include proposal and sales support to ensure that you can effectively sell the product to additional customers.

Make sure your vendors deliver a best-in-class onboarding experience. As a valued partner, you deserve the white glove treatment and should be comfortable with every aspect of the onboarding process. Whether you onboard your customers during training, or rely on the vendor - make sure it is the BEST experience for your customers.

This not only sets the tone for your relationship with the vendor - but also the relationship you have with your customers. Onboarding concerns is not a headache you need or want. Deliver that awesome experience.



Best-in-class onboarding WILL help set you apart from your competitors in the technology service industry.

"Dedicated" Customer Support

Today's technology is expected to work all of the time. And if not all of the time, then at least 99.99%!

When your customers experience technology issues, they need help fast. Some issues are minor annoyances while others can be more severe, impacting business operations for them and their end customers.

None of this is good. Support should always be a quick phone call, chat, or email away. As a service provider, if you handle all of the tech support for your customers, great! But with most MSPs, tech support is a shared responsibility between MSP and vendor. Many MSPs will handle level 1 support issues, and leave level 2 and 3 to the vendor.

In any case, your vendors need to be flexible to work within YOUR tech support model.

What should you expect from your vendors? Well, you should expect a lot. Customers want a "live" response when they encounter technical issues. Typically, a dedicated phone line to a certified technician.

Adding web-chat options for customers is even better. In those instances where a customer needs to leave a message, someone needs to be monitoring and responding in a timely manner. Nothing is worse than leaving a customer in limbo while they are encountering issues.

Customers have strong expectations when encountering support issues, consistent across research channels. These are metrics that you absolutely want to obliterate in a good way. **Accessibility is very attractive.** You want vendors that can provide 24x7 availability. Late nights, weekends, and holidays are also working hours for businesses - the world never sleeps.



75

PERCENT

of customers believe it **takes too long** to reach a live agent

(ServiceNow).

11

MINUTES

Average time **customers stay on hold** before hanging up.

(NewVoiceMedia).

45

SECONDS

Average time customers are **willing to wait** for live chat response

(Com100)

Your vendors should also have certified technicians responding to support calls. The more complex the issue, the more expertise that's needed to quickly resolve.

US-based support. While some off-shoring of support can be top-notch, be careful that your vendors have not compromised the quality of support to cut costs. Nothing beats technical support on staff, ideally located in the region of service.

Similar to onboarding, the quality of technical support can be a HUGE differentiator for your business. Your customers deserve best-in-class technical support.

Forging Strategic Relationships

You have choices when it comes to choosing your IT vendor partnerships. These decisions are often not easy. Your vendors are an extension of you in the eyes of your customers where missteps can lead to loss in income, business, and even your reputation.

And, it's also about relationships... relationships where you need the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts. You want to amplify your business with partners that compliment your business vision and growth objectives. Can they deliver both tangible and intangible benefits - a true strategic partner?

“In business it's all about people, it's about relationships”

- Anonymous

At the end of the day...
Do Your Vendors Have Your Back?





Let's Talk

If you have any questions or comments about this eBook (available at: [Cytracom.com/blog](https://www.cytracom.com/blog)) or would like to learn more about Cytracom's UCaaS solutions - please reach out to me:
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Connecting the Modern Workforce