

MARKETING TIP

Extra Mile Marketing | Best Practice

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What's New in Partner Marketing Strategy?



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In the near-decade since Microsoft released Azure and Office 365, channel partners have enjoyed an amazing array of products and services with which to court tech buyers. These revolutionary cloud computing and business productivity platforms feature a host of technical innovations that are easily communicable to C-level buyers. But as Brent Combest, general manager of One Commercial Partner (West Region) at Microsoft, noted in a recent [interview](#), there's a new budget-owner for channel partners to market to—the line-of-business (LOB) executive. This transition of spending power requires that partners reformulate their marketing strategy to speak to a new, and vastly different persona. So what's new in partner marketing?



Speak to the new buyers of technology.

Research firm IDC found that LOB executives own 61 percent of the overall IT budget—61%! And an LOB executive doesn't speak the same language as your typical CIO. That's why top partners are embracing the shift in their messaging from tech jargon and specs to tangible business advantages. Moreover, top performers are noticing that these new buyers are demanding a streamlined customer experience, where they don't have to search all over the web to get answers to their questions.

To achieve this, you can amp up your customer experience by:

- Modernizing your website with advanced content, such as blogs, eBooks, and videos, alongside features like a chat bot
- Making sure your website has a professional look and feel, with navigation that is well thought through, and information for every step along the buyer's journey
- Collecting actionable data across all touch points with prospects, so you can make continuous improvements
- Retooling your Search Engine Optimization to target the LOB executive

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STATS & FACTS

LOB executives own **61% of the overall IT budget** according to the research firm IDC.

Microsoft partners that spend 8% of gross revenue on marketing **grow two times as fast** as their peers.

IDC found that worldwide IT spending on servers, storage, and network equipment is forecast to total \$114.1 billion this year. Further, **LOB executive spending on these items will total \$52.9 billion.**

Emphasize added business value.

Promoting basic services like hosting on-premises email will get your foot in the door with a new client. But the LOB executive thinks more strategically, and for the long-term. Top partners seize the opportunity to push their advanced services—from system management and analytics to application development, widgets, and AI. Positioning your company as a comprehensive resource for cloud services encourages loyalty and opens wide the door that's been jamming your toes. At the end of the day, it's about positioning your company as a strategic partner for business innovation.

Nurture, nurture, nurture.

As Combest put it, "marketing is a marathon. It's not something you turn on and off as your company goes through an ebb and flow of revenue. You have to understand that your quality marketing today, 6 to 12 months from now, equates to revenue." Nurturing leads, with a long term strategy in place, helps partners see a return on their marketing spend, even if it takes multiple years. Get a nibble with a simple cut-over migration, then continue to touch and educate that client month to month about the transformative power of your other services. The truth is those clients will want and need those services. Make sure you stay top of mind when they are ready to buy.

Up the marketing spend.

The tech industry's top performing companies are outspending their colleagues on marketing. According to Combest, "those that spent 8 percent of their gross revenue are growing at a higher rate of about two times compared to their peers. They were seeing growth rates on gross revenue in the range of 30 to 40 percent and sometimes even higher. A traditional partner has EBITDA in the range of 4 to 9 percent; these guys were somewhere in the range of 12 to 18 percent."

If you're not investing at least 5% of your gross revenue on marketing efforts, it might be time to reconsider your strategy. Partners that build an effective and streamlined content machine and revamp their website now will be well poised to attract the new tech buyer in the years to come.

Whether your plan is to hire dedicated marketing personnel, to outsource to an agency, or somewhere in-between, it's time to update your strategy. Huge growth opportunities and loyal customers await.



Need a trusted consultant to help determine your best first step? Extra Mile Marketing is here to help, with a dynamic team of digital marketing experts and deep insight and experience marketing to your customers.

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