

FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER: Needles in the Channel Haystack

Tim Harmon, May, 2017





CLE members from these companies participated:

DELLEMC







## THE STATE OF PARTNER RECRUITMENT TODAY



## Why have a "right partner" recruitment program?

Vendors' demands for excellent partners now exceed the available supply. Vendors need "right partners" to help:

- Increase channel productivity
- Boost channel-generated revenue
- Achieve strategic roadmap

nuvello

• Wield new technology skillsets





## Partner recruitment today: 3 approaches

- 1. "Law of Large Numbers"
  - Open partner program anyone can register
  - First year's performance determines advancement
  - Assumes the best will "rise to the top"

The challenges:

- Passive approach that misses out on some partners (leaving them for more proactive competitors)
- Cost of supporting passively recruited partners can quickly exceed their revenue contribution





## Partner recruitment today: 3 approaches

- 2. "Outsource" recruitment to distributors
  - Common approach with a 2-tier distribution model
  - Distributors manage most partners

The challenges:

- Distributor accountability
  - Performance goals and metrics not always in place
- Distributor commitment
  - Distis have many vendor relationships and programs to juggle

## Partner recruitment today: 3 approaches

- 3. Vendor-controlled recruitment
  - Recruitment viewed as vital to growth and channel eco-system health

The challenges:

- Dedicated partner recruitment resources, programs, processes
- Technology to manage recruitment and onboarding



# THE "RULES" – BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITING THE *RIGHT* PARTNERS



#### #1 - Define "right partner"

- There is no universal "right" partner, but these characteristics are core attributes:
  - Partners who align with channel KPIs and corporate roadmaps
  - Partners with strong customer relationships
  - Partners who are willing to adapt and evolve as technologies change

"I am increasingly thinking that there is no such thing as the 'right partner.' Actually what VMWare and I think most vendors need is the 'right partner mix.'

Alanzo Blackstock, VMWare



## #2 – Assign responsibility

• Establish a single point for accountability in meeting recruitment goals





#### #3 – Set goals

- Partner recruitment time
- Funnel conversion rates
- Cost of partner acquisition
- Number of partners by:
  - Size
  - Region
  - Competency, and other categories





## #4 – Establish a virtual partner recruitment team

- Corporate/global framework
- Regional/local field execution involve your CAMs!





### #5 – Regional team collaboration

- Share best practices across regions
- Operationalize corporate frameworks with learnings from other regional teams





## #6 – Align partner recruitment goals with corporate goals

- Do you need to enter new markets?
- New regions?
- Expand product lines?
- Change delivery method?
- Reach out to a different customer decision-maker?



## #7 – Anticipate the channel partner loyalty factor

- New partners generally fall into one of these categories; each with it's own set of loyalty prediction attributes and each with a different investment-loyalty balance to consider:
  - Pre-developed competencies
  - Complementary/adjacent
  - Net new greenfield



## Balance your partner portfolio





	INITIAL REWARD	INITIAL INVESTMENT	INITIAL RISK
PRE-DEVELOPED	X	X	X
ADJACENT	X	X	X
GREENFIELD	X	X	X



## #8 – Tell a compelling story

- $\mathbf{N}$
- Motivate prospects to join your program with an attractive story and opportunities for success
  - What is unique about your brand and products?
  - Ease of doing business with you



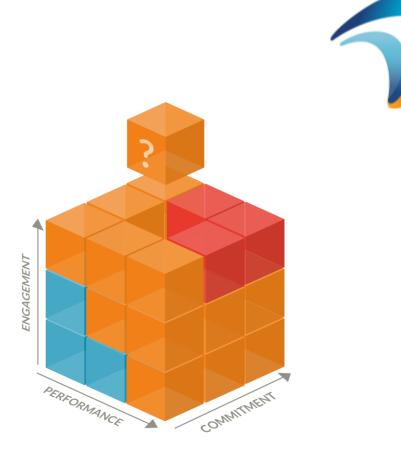
## #9 – Structure partner recruitment as a marketing campaign

- Treat your partner recruitment campaign as you would customer acquisition –
  - Marketing campaigns
  - Recruitment website and URL
  - Communication and follow-up



#### #10 – Score partner candidates

- Formalize your partner candidate vetting process with a scoring mechanism to identify "right" partners
- Technology enable the process for partners and your recruitment team



✓ICLP nuvello

## Use what you know to refine your recruitment process





# #11 – Shepherd new partners during a defined incubation period

• Defined onboarding process

**7**ICLP

• Technology-enable the process





#### #12 – New partner incentives

- Offer special incentives to new partners to help them gain traction
  - Not all monetary
  - Reward partners for more than sales
    - Training completion
    - Execution of a lead gen campaign
    - Submission of a business plan
    - Information sharing (expanded profiles, increased touchpoints for vendor)





## #13 – Continually refine the recruitment program and process

- Use first-year metrics to close the partner recruitment performance feedback loop
  - Feed insights back into "right partner" definition and review annually





#### #14 – Communicate!

- Evangelize a consistent understanding of "right partner" and align all stakeholders:
  - Recruitment program
  - Recruitment process
  - Marketing
  - Performance goals and progress
  - Corporate
  - Field team
  - AND...to partner candidates, distributors, etc.!





## CONCLUSION, QUESTIONS



# 14 rules for "right partner" recruitment

- 1. Know what makes a right partner
- 2. Assign responsibility
- **3**. Set goals
- 4. Establish a virtual partner recruitment team
- 5. Regional team collaboration
- 6. Align partner recruitment goals with corporate goals
- 7. Anticipate the channel partner loyalty factor

nuvello

- 8. Tell a compelling story
- 9. Structure partner recruitment as a marketing campaign
- **10.** Score partner candidates
- 11. Shepherd new partners during a defined incubation period
- **12.** New partner incentives
- Continually refine the recruitment program and process
- 14. Communicate





## **Questions?**

