

## **Customer Management & a Partner Management Program**

Your customers are at the center of your business universe. You need to reach them to deliver your message. Yet you are competing with established and new competitors trying to reach the same customer. To be effective, you must accept the challenge of delivering a positive branded experience across multiple communication channels, or customer touch points.

More than likely, your company does not view each customer as a single entity. For example, if your customer makes initial contact with you through your web site, then calls your service center, is the corporate message identical? If your potential customer contacts your corporate headquarters and is referred to a distributor, will your distributor be able to pull up the details of the clients initial contact, his interests and concerns? Are you working with your employees and suppliers to improve every customer experience with your company? Are your partners, distributors and reps delivering and are they conveying your intended message?

The networked economy was expected to reduce the role of intermediaries. In reality, intermediaries (distributors, strategic partners, OEM partners, marketing companies etc.) have become more important than ever in response to your company's needs for extended market reach, mobility and speed.

To effectively partner, both organizations must adopt a consistent strategy that identifies goals, expectations, process, technology and human resource alignment.

The goal of a planned Partner Management Program (PMP) is to gain a sustainable competitive advantage for both parties. This tailored strategy strengthens the enterprise and partner organizations by creating positive experiences with the organization's employees and customers. The most positive aspect of a PMP initiative is to create loyalty between the enterprise and its partners. Loyalty within your partner base will contribute to expanding your customer base and, at the end of the day, translate into more sales.

Building a PMP strategy can help your enterprise identify effective partnerships and manage partner lifecycle relationships. Technology in the networked economy has made it possible to integrate partner processes with those of the enterprise, to facilitate mindshare with partners and equip them with the resources necessary to excel and get the most out of the defined cooperation.

A PMP program begins with the development of an overall partner strategy that:

- Builds a PMP infrastructure to support growth
- Enables improved communications
- Makes it easier to do business and share intelligence
- Increases sales productivity
- Evaluates performance and rewards excellence

An effective enterprise relationship strategy is built upon customer loyalty - loyalty that has evolved from earned trust and keeps your customers steadfastly yours in the face of any and all competitive attempts to lure them away. Only if your customers remain loyal

can you fully realize the value of their lifetime purchases that create future revenues and profits for your business. In the new-networked economy, creating loyal customers has become even more challenging. Customers now have access to comprehensive and real time information. They expect their experiences to be customized and infused with knowledge about their individual tastes and desires.

Today, your customers choose both the medium and the message and expect consistency throughout. Creating positive branded experiences and delivering them efficiently through multiple customer touch points and partnership programs is both the greatest challenge and greatest opportunity to create long-term customer loyalty.