Winning in the Modern Channel

Vendor Edition

A practical view to help vendors understand how to strengthen partner performance, reduce waste in the GTM process, while creating a measurable pipeline

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Introduction

This paper provides technology vendors with a clear, evidence-aligned understanding of the marketing capability gaps across their partner ecosystem.

It outlines why traditional enablement approaches - collateral, training, and campaign-in-a-box assets - are no longer sufficient to drive the pipeline.

It also highlights the structural, operational, and skills-based barriers that prevent partners from executing modern marketing and offers strategic recommendations for vendors seeking to increase partner-sourced demand

> **“Partners with mature marketing operations generate up to 5x more pipeline.”**

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Executive Summary

Most IT and security partners are not equipped to execute modern, multi-touch, data-driven marketing campaigns, even when vendors provide high-quality assets and training. The core issue is not motivation or willingness. It is a capability.

Across the channel, partners lack:

- Marketing automation platforms
- CRM integration
- Analytics and attribution tools
- Content creation capacity
- Digital marketing skills
- Dedicated marketing headcount
- Time and operational bandwidth

As a result, vendors consistently overestimate partner readiness and underestimate the level of support required to generate a pipeline.

This paper outlines the evidence behind these gaps and provides a vendor-focused roadmap for addressing them.

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Partner Readiness

Most sub-£5m partners have one person covering marketing, sales support, events, and admin, or no marketing headcount.

Partner Type	Sub-£5m Turnover	£5m+ Turnover
Systems Integrator (SI)	20-30% Equipped	50-60% Equipped
MSSP	15-25% Equipped	45-60% Equipped
MSP	10-20% Equipped	35-50% Equipped
VAR	5-15% Equipped	25-40% Equipped
Reseller	5-10% Equipped	20-30% Equipped

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Even above £5m, teams remain small, focused on brand, events, and sales support, with little marketing ops or analytics capability.

At both levels, marketing stays reactive and resource-constrained, limiting consistent, data-driven demand

No capacity for continual execution

Research from the UK Federation of Small Businesses shows that **over 80% of small tech firms have no dedicated marketing staff**, relying instead on ad-hoc efforts or vendor support.

This means partners simply do not have the bandwidth to run multi-channel campaigns, create content, manage follow-up, or track attribution. Vendors often underestimate how little time partners can realistically dedicate to marketing, even when motivated.

Enablement Challenges

Training doesn’t close the gap

Vendors frequently respond to underperformance by offering more training, certifications, and enablement sessions.

While valuable, these interventions rarely address the root cause. The UK Digital Skills Gap Report shows that **over 60% of SMEs lack the digital marketing skills needed to run data-driven campaigns**, even when training is available.

Partners often attend training but lack the internal structure to apply it, no marketing operations function, no analytics capability, no automation tools, and no dedicated time to execute. Training without infrastructure becomes theoretical knowledge with no path to execution.

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The skills gap; structural, not situational

The cyber and IT sectors face some of the most acute skills shortages in the UK. The government's Cyber Security Skills in the UK Labour Market report notes that **over half of cyber firms lack essential digital communication and marketing skills**, not just technical ones.

This is a structural issue: partners are built around engineering, service delivery, and technical expertise, not marketing. Expecting them to operate like modern demand-generation engines without significant support is misaligned with how these businesses are designed and staffed.

Most partners focus on delivering projects and maintaining customer environments, not building top-of-funnel demand, nurturing journeys, or analysing campaign performance growth, making marketing a reactive activity.

> **"Fewer than 30% of channel partners have the systems, skills and resources to run modern marketing."**

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Collateral isn't a substitute

Vendors often assume that providing partners with collateral, product sheets, and pre-built campaigns is enough to stimulate demand. However, multiple industry studies show that content alone does not translate into a pipeline. **Forrester reports that 70% of partner-delivered campaigns underperform** because partners lack the operational capability to execute them.

The issue isn't the absence of assets; it's the absence of the systems, skills, and processes required to activate those assets in a modern marketing environment. Without integrated tools, clear workflows, and ongoing support, even well-crafted campaigns fail to reach buyers or convert engagement into measurable pipeline outcomes.

> **"Ony around 20–30% of vendor-provided partner collateral is ever actively used"**

Pipelines need operational maturity

A pipeline isn’t created by collateral; it is created by consistent, repeatable, data-driven marketing operations. Gartner’s research on channel performance shows that partners with mature marketing operations generate up to 5x more pipeline than those relying solely on vendor-provided materials.

The differentiator isn’t access to content, it’s the ability to deploy campaigns, measure performance, iterate, and align marketing with sales.

Most partners lack this maturity, which is why vendor expectations often exceed partner capability.

“Partners with mature marketing operations generate up to 5× more pipeline than those relying only on vendor-provided materials.”

Lack of data intelligence and systems

Driving demand and building robust pipelines requires integrated CRM systems, marketing automation platforms, analytics dashboards, content engines, and nurture frameworks.

Yet, according to HubSpot's State of Marketing report, **only 27% of small B2B firms use marketing automation**, and even fewer use it effectively. In the IT channel, this number is even lower.

Many partners still rely on spreadsheets, basic email tools, or vendor portals that don't integrate with their sales processes. Without foundational infrastructure, even the best vendor-supplied campaigns cannot be executed, measured, or optimised.

"Organisations lacking integrated data and analytics are up to 3× less likely to meet their sales targets."

Support capability, not just turnover

Revenue does not predict marketing maturity. A £3m MSP may have better marketing capability than a £50m VAR that would usually attract more funding.

Vendors should segment partners by:

- Marketing infrastructure
- Skills maturity
- Resource availability
- Execution capability
- Strategic alignment

This allows vendors to allocate support where it will generate the highest return.

“Partner revenue size does not predict marketing maturity or pipeline performance.”

Implications for vendors

MDF is still one of the most powerful levers vendors have to stimulate partner-led demand. But funding alone doesn't create a pipeline.

When time, skills, tools, and resources are missing, MDF is either left unclaimed or spent on an activity that never converts. Too often, MDF is weighted toward visible, short-term tactics, especially events.

Events matter. They generate attention and open doors, but without structured follow-up, nurture, and sales alignment, most of that investment stalls at the point of first contact.

Vendors should rebalance where effort and funding go to force outcomes-backed funding models:

A simple rule of thumb: if there is no plan for contact progression beyond the initial interaction, **more than half of that MDF investment is effectively wasted** through poor follow-up and lack of conversion.

The fix is practical; turn MDF from discretionary spend into a repeatable, performance-led growth engine.

Direct MDF into programmes with the capability to execute, providing the time, skills, tools, sales intelligence, and marketing resources needed to run campaigns, manage follow-up, and measure outcomes.

Time: Realistic capacity to run campaigns and follow up consistently

Skills: Marketing operations, data, and campaign management expertise

Technology: Revenue network, execution engine, intelligence platform.

Resource: Dedicated ownership to execute and optimise across multiple delivery channels.

Without addressing these four gaps, MDF utilisation will remain low regardless of how much vendor funding is allocated.

From "enablement" to "execution support"

The vendors seeing the strongest partner-sourced pipeline growth are those who provide extended support beyond what's been traditionally needed:

- An extended support team
- Funding to support entire buyer journeys
- Campaign execution
- Shared marketing automation platforms
- Co-funded agency support
- Content creation resources
- Analytics dashboards partners can use

This shift recognises that partners need operational muscle, not just materials.

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Recommendations

- Build **structured partner marketing operations** programs, not just training and operational support.
- Provide **shared infrastructure** where possible, such as MAP, CRM integrations, and analytics dashboards.
- Offer **concierge or supported execution** because partners need hands-on help, not just assets.
- Invest in **partner digital skills** development to include workshops, certifications, and practical coaching.
- Create **tiered support models** based on capability and match investment to partner readiness.
- Measure **partner performance on capability growth**, not just pipeline.
- **Reward partners** who build long-term marketing maturity.

Conclusion

The majority of IT and security channel partners are **not yet equipped** for modern, scalable marketing, even though they are expected to fund and drive their own sales growth.

This capability gap directly impacts pipeline generation, MDF utilisation, and vendor ROI. If partners remain **a core route to market**, the answer isn't more collateral or campaigns. It's aligning support to the areas partners actually lack, the systems, skills, structure and time required to execute consistently.

Vendors that shift from asset-based enablement to **capability-based support** will see stronger partner performance, higher loyalty, and more predictable pipeline contribution.

The future of channel marketing belongs to those who help partners build real marketing engines, not just run isolated campaigns.

About Amigos Network

The Amigos Network platform and service is built to solve the core challenge vendors face: partners don't just need more content, they need help keeping them competitive using investment in their partner programmes.

Our platform combines a **buyer network, execution engine, and sales intelligence** capability to help vendors and partners turn channel engagement into measurable growth.

Going far beyond traditional deal-registration systems and asset repositories, it provides the tools, support, and execution frameworks partners need to generate high-intent leads, build a pipeline, and convert opportunities

Crucially, it introduces what most channel programmes lack: a scalable way to improve partner marketing maturity, not just increase partner activity, enabling vendors to drive sustained momentum and stronger commercial outcomes across their ecosystem.

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