



Illustration by Ryan Fritz for The Partner Channel



You Say You Want a Revolution?

Five Ways to Keep Up Momentum with Sales Goals

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To be or not to be revolutionary? For Partners considering growing their companies, that is the question. It's one thing to start the new decade with a new sales plan. But it would take a revolution of commitment and follow-through for most Partners to keep momentum going after 90 days. In this article, we'll show you five key ways to be revolutionary, build momentum, and thrive – or else, as Hamlet put it, suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

There are three things that all Partners should consider before deciding whether or not to be revolutionary:

Be Honest

Be honest about your company. Is it a lifestyle business or a growth business? There's nothing wrong with either one, as you long as you understand what you want and can plan for it.

According to Nobscot CEO Beth N. Carvin, lifestyle busi-

nesses are a viable source for types of growth that may be just as important to the Partner as financial growth. For example, these types could be growing personally as well as professionally. Providing a fun, challenging work environment to employees. Serving as a trusted advisor to clients. As Carvin says in her blog, Nobscot's WebLog, "There is a pot of gold at the end of the lifestyle rainbow, and perhaps more importantly, the rainbow itself is a pretty great (and profitable!) path to follow."

A growth business is another matter entirely. How much growth are we talking about? Assuming you are not trying to be the next Amazon or Google, or generate \$200 million in sales, what does growth mean to you? In the 1990s, Amazon was the revolutionary leader, and at the end of the decade, its CEO Jeff Bezos was named Person of the Year by Time magazine for popularizing online shopping. Amazon is again leading the way with its Kindle wireless reading devices. And in the 2000s, Google, with a stated mission

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“to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful” (from google.com/corporate), was able to raise \$1.67 billion in its IPO in 2004, implying a total value of \$23 billion, according to Wikipedia.

For most Partners, being a growth company is not going to look anything like what Amazon or Google have been able to do. Your company may be doing \$5 million with goals of growing 30 percent year over year and having a 10-year exit plan. If so, you need to consider if you can get there by following the same approach you’ve always used, or if you need to be revolutionary. Again, either answer is fine.

Be Willing

The second consideration for Partners to keep in mind when choosing whether or not to be revolutionary is how willing you are to engage with your market, community, and customers in the powerful, meaningful new ways available. The access to audiences that has become available through social media within the last three years is staggering. Online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and so on can help you keep the relationship going like never before – and can even put you in a position to win new business.

We’ve written previously in The Partner Channel Magazine about the power of social media for Partners’ growth, and most companies now at least have a presence within these online communities. However, according to the 2008 Cone Business in Social Media Study, just “being there” won’t cut it: “85 percent of social media users believe that a company should go further than just having a presence on social sites and should also interact with its customers.” Imagine how high the percentage must be now, a mere 18 months later!

Having an interactive blog that gets your audiences talking is the best way to stay top-of-mind with these social media-using customers. But before you decide whether or not your company can afford to commit to full participation in online communities, go

through the following Social Media Readiness Checklist:

- ✓ **Have a champion.** If the CEO is not going to have the time, passion, or skill to write blogs or frequent status updates, who will? The director of marketing is a good choice, or even a member of the marketing staff, if closely supervised. Someone needs to have a plan and a willingness to stick to it (more on this later). Check this box if you have someone who wants to be the online voice of your company.
- ✓ **Have a topic.** What are you best in the world at? Technology is a crowded field – check this box if you feel you have sufficient depth of knowledge on a specialized topic to create and post valuable content regularly.
- ✓ **Have a voice.** Let’s face it, reading can be boring. Online, there is always something else to read. Check this box if you feel that the person writing your social media content can express himself/herself in a clear, interesting, and distinctive voice (funny is good, if he/she can pull it off) that rises above the noise of your competitors.

Be Consistent

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Change is inevitable. Progress is not.”

The third choice Partners need to make about being revolutionary is to decide whether or not they can be consistent in their pursuit of progress. As we said earlier, for most Partners, it would take a revolution of commitment and follow-through to keep momentum going on the 2010 sales plan for the first 90 days of the new year.

Being consistently revolutionary is what the rest of this article is about. Have you decided that being revolutionary is what your company must do? Great! Let’s get started.

Five Ways to Be Revolutionary, Build Momentum, and Thrive

If you are like many technology companies, 2009 represented a revenue dip for you. The majority of Partners we worked with ex-

perienced declines between 10 to 30 percent in 2009, but they were feeling better about their future by the start of 2010. Many of them created thoughtful and ambitious sales plans. But the real challenge is keeping up the enthusiasm and urgency, with execution as a finish line. Following are five critical tips.

1 Maximize Partner Events. Convergence gives Partners a great opportunity to meet a lot of people and reinforce contact with other Partners and vendors. But being revolutionary is actually not about the events. It’s about the follow-up. Now that you’ve made the investment, what will you do to follow-up in a meaningful way?

- » First, aggregate all of the contact information into your customer relationship management (CRM) solution. Next, assign someone responsible for maintaining contact. Third, go into your Outlook calendar and schedule the following:
 - » Weekly blog post – as discussed above, having an interactive blog that gets your audiences talking is the best way to stay top-of-mind. Remember: it must be maintained and updated every week.
 - » Monthly newsletter blast – this is not a new tool, and e-mail is not a new delivery mechanism. What’s revolutionary is getting your company to execute consistently.
 - » Quarterly review – did your champion post a blog for each of the 12 weeks? Did he/she send out the three newsletter blasts? Rank your success. If it’s a perfect 13 out of 13, then repeat for the next quarter. If it’s 10 out of 13, then you need to examine the stumbling blocks. If the score is under 10, you probably have the wrong champion.

2 Focus. And by this, we mean hyper focus. In her article in the Harvard Business Review titled “This Year, Say Yes to Saying No”, Alexandra Smith talks about the value of doing just a few things extremely well and being committed to constant improvement. To

...relationship going like never before –
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stay focused, she recommends: “Sort your projects according to priority, and set aside all but the top-priority items that can only be handled by you personally.” Once you do this, you have a clear list of go-do’s to execute against that will help you stay on top of your goals.

Thank Everyone. There’s a great quote by an anonymous source that goes, “Who I am is in other people.” What this means is this: you may think you are a revolutionary company. You may think you provide outstanding customer service and innovative thought leadership. But it only becomes true if others believe it and act on it by keeping their business with you. The only sane thing for your company to do at this point is reward them with steady and sincere thanks. This can be a link that you e-mail them.

It can be a book that you send, an outing you invite them to, or a sponsorship you offer to support one of their initiatives. Again, put it in Outlook, measure your activity, and review it quarterly.

Ask for Referrals. They love you, right? What better way to keep the momentum going than to have a stream of inbound leads originating from satisfied customers? Sometimes these will come on their own. A more proactive method is to ask, “Is there anybody else you know in the business who might benefit from knowing us?” Asking for referrals gives them a way to say “thank you” right back.

Give Referrals. At our company, at the end of every year we re-examine all of our vendor relationships. When it comes time to decide whether or not to keep our accountant, for example,

we might look at how many referrals he made to us. If he made none, while another accountant vying for our business did refer us some business, which one are we more likely to want to work with? Same goes for your customers and prospects. The more business you can drive their way, the more they will view you as indispensable, and the longer they will stick with you.

In summary, get even closer to the people who are going to make your growth goals happen – the customers themselves – by implementing the five ways to keep momentum going. In Hamlet, Shakespeare creates a character that is tragically unable to make a decision. Make the decision to stick with your plan and commit to following through, and you will revolutionize your sales growth. 🌀

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