

Beyond Traditional Partner Relationship Management:
**Rethinking Your Tech Stack
for Ecosystem Orchestration**



Beyond Traditional Partner Relationship Management: RETHINKING YOUR TECH STACK FOR ECOSYSTEM ORCHESTRATION

In the immortal words of Bob Dylan, the times they are a-changin', and your tech stack needs to be a-changin' to match.

Ok, maybe he didn't sing the second part, but the sentiment still rings true. The ever-changing landscape of sales, marketing, and channel development is in constant flux, driven by technological advancements, evolving customer behaviors, and shifting market dynamics. To maintain a competitive edge in this dynamic environment, businesses must not only recognize the ongoing shifts but also proactively adapt their strategies and tools.

• KEY TRENDS INCLUDE:

- **Heightened customer expectations.** According to McKinsey, customer needs are becoming more complex. This requires organizations to provide support throughout every stage of the customer lifecycle, both before and after the sale. Businesses must understand their customers' evolving needs and preferences to create personalized experiences and foster long-term relationships.
- **Integration of channels.** With the rise of digital platforms and the proliferation of communication channels, businesses are recognizing the need to integrate their marketing and sales efforts across various touchpoints. This integration allows for a seamless customer journey and ensures consistency in messaging.
- **Complex tech stacks.** The increase in SaaS tools has revolutionized the way businesses operate, with organizations now utilizing hundreds of tools within their operations. Businesses must carefully assess their needs, select the right mix of SaaS solutions, and implement robust strategies to ensure seamless integration and maximum value from these tools.
- **Increasing automation.** Increasing automation powered by AI, ML, and RPA is fundamentally changing the way businesses operate. Automation enables businesses to streamline repetitive tasks, optimize processes, and make data-driven decisions at a faster pace. With the implementation of AI, companies can redesign their processes, allowing for better and more automated decision-making.



Ecosystem Era

UNDERSTANDING ECOSYSTEM VS CHANNEL

Every organization, regardless of its size, has an ecosystem that extends beyond its own employees, systems, and internal business processes. These ecosystems involve not only internal stakeholders but also external partners, suppliers, customers, investors, and other influencer communities such as analyst or trade organizations. Knowing how to orchestrate seamless, efficient interactions and workflows with all involved personas can be crucial to a business' success and this importance is only growing with the evolving market.

To do this well, the right tools are necessary. Building a modern, strong tech stack is crucial for businesses to stay relevant in an ecosystem-focused world and expand their reach. It allows organizations to leverage advanced technologies, streamline operations, and integrate various tools and platforms to effectively manage and orchestrate their ecosystem interactions. But what does this tech stack look like and how does it differ from tech stacks of the past?

“Every organization, regardless of its size, has an ecosystem that extends beyond its immediate business environment.”



UNDERSTANDING ECOSYSTEM VS INDIRECT CHANNEL

An ecosystem is... a complex network of interconnected organizations, partners, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders collaborating to create value and deliver comprehensive solutions. It represents a dynamic and interdependent system with multiple entities working together to achieve common goals.

A channel is... a component of the overall ecosystem, serving as a distribution pathway through which products, services, or information flow from a business to the end customers. While channels can take various forms, such as direct sales, retail stores, online marketplaces, or reseller networks, they play a critical role in reaching and engaging with target audience. Channels within an ecosystem are not standalone entities but are integrated into a broader network of collaborators, where multiple partners work together to deliver value to customers.



While channels can take various forms, such as direct sales, retail stores, online marketplaces, or reseller networks, they play a critical role in reaching and engaging with target audiences.

SIMILARITIES

Similarities between Ecosystems and Indirect Channels:

- Both involve collaboration and partnerships.
- Both aim to leverage the strengths and resources of multiple entities.
- Both can help businesses expand their reach and access new markets.
- Both require effective coordination and communication among participants.

DIFFERENCES

Differences between Ecosystems and Indirect Channels

- Ecosystems are broader and encompass a network of interconnected organizations, while indirect channels focus on specific distribution channels.
- Channels are a component of a larger ecosystem.
- Ecosystems aim to create value through collective collaboration, while indirect channels primarily extend market reach.
- Ecosystems involve diverse stakeholders, including partners, suppliers, and customers, whereas indirect channels involve intermediaries between the manufacturer and the end consumer.
- Ecosystems foster innovation and enable a broader range of offerings, while indirect channels focus on distribution and sales.

Why Does This Matter?

• **The evolution** of indirect channels into ecosystems is a significant development that businesses need to grasp. Here are some reasons why understanding this shift is important:

- **Increased collaboration.** Ecosystems enable businesses to collaborate with partners beyond traditional boundaries. By leveraging the strengths of different ecosystem partners, businesses can access new markets, reach a wider audience, and offer more comprehensive solutions and customer support.
- **Enhanced innovation.** Ecosystems foster innovation through collaboration and knowledge-sharing among partners. By participating in an ecosystem, businesses can leverage the expertise, resources, and ideas of other ecosystem members to drive innovation and stay ahead of the competition.
- **Improved customer experience.** Ecosystems allow for the seamless integration of products, services, and experiences, resulting in a more holistic and streamlined customer journey. By understanding the evolution of indirect channels into ecosystems, businesses can design customer-centric experiences that span multiple touchpoints and deliver added value.
- **Competitive advantage.** Businesses that embrace the ecosystem approach can differentiate themselves from their competitors. By building strong partnerships and leveraging the collective strengths of the ecosystem, businesses can offer unique solutions and experiences that are difficult for others to replicate.
- **Ability to scale faster with less resources.** Embracing ecosystems allows businesses to scale more efficiently and effectively. In today's business landscape, where organizations are increasingly asked to do more with less, scaling through ecosystems offers a compelling advantage. By leveraging partnerships and outsourcing deliverables and costs to ecosystem partners, businesses can grow their operations while minimizing direct costs.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ECOSYSTEM ORCHESTRATION

Ecosystem orchestration plays a crucial role in today's interconnected business landscape. Just as an orchestra brings together talented musicians playing different instruments to create a harmonious symphony, ecosystem orchestration involves strategically managing and coordinating diverse stakeholders such as partners, suppliers, customers, and communities. By conducting this intricate network of relationships and resources, organizations can maximize the potential of their ecosystem, drive collaboration, and create mutual value for all participants involved. Effective ecosystem orchestration aligns the various elements to achieve a unified vision and propel collective success in the dynamic marketplace.

Motivating and incentivizing ecosystem behavior is an essential aspect of ecosystem orchestration. As different players within the ecosystem come together, it becomes crucial to encourage desired behaviors that contribute to the overall success of the ecosystem. By providing incentives and rewards that align with shared goals, organizations can foster engagement and active participation from ecosystem members.

Incentives for partners also encourage innovation and continuous improvement. It creates a sense of shared purpose and ensures that all participants are actively involved in driving the ecosystem forward. With effective motivation and incentives, organizations can create a thriving ecosystem that consistently delivers value and drives sustainable growth for all stakeholders involved.

MOTIVATING & INCENTIVIZING ECOSYSTEM BEHAVIOR FOR SUCCESS







PERSONAS INVOLVED

Successful ecosystem orchestration requires a deep understanding of the ecosystem dynamics, effective communication and collaboration, and a focus on creating mutual value for all participants. Therefore, understanding how the personas involved have evolved along with the rise of the ecosystem is a crucial first step for building the strongest tech stack.

Traditional Channel personas:

Before the ecosystem way of doing things became the norm, several old personas were involved in indirect channel interactions and would have used legacy PRM software. These personas include:

-  **Manufacturers:** Manufacturers relied on indirect sales channels to distribute their goods and services. They worked with distribution partners and intermediaries to reach customers.
-  **Channel Partners:** Channel partners, such as wholesalers, retailers, and distributors, played a crucial role in the indirect distribution process. They acted as intermediaries between manufacturers and end customers.
-  **Sales Representatives:** Sales representatives were responsible for promoting and selling products through the indirect channel. They worked closely with channel partners to drive sales and build relationships. However, in many cases conflict emerged between direct sales reps and channel partners due to misaligned incentives.
-  **Partner Account Managers:** Partner account managers were responsible for managing the relationships with channel partners. They facilitated communication, provided training and support, and monitored performance.

These personas worked together within the traditional PRM framework to ensure the smooth functioning of the indirect channel and maximize sales opportunities.

Expanded personas:

With the rise of the ecosystem, there has been a significant expansion in the range and complexity of personas involved. Beyond the traditional roles of manufacturers, channel partners, sales representatives, and PRM managers, we now see the emergence of ecosystem orchestrators, platform developers, app developers, integration specialists, data analysts, and customer experience managers. This broader array of personas reflects the interconnected nature of modern business ecosystems, where collaboration and integration across multiple partners and technologies are essential for success. Some of these new personas include:

- **Partners:** These are organizations or individuals who collaborate closely with the orchestrating business to deliver products, services, or solutions to customers. They can include resellers, distributors, system integrators, consultants, technology providers, and other value-added partners.
- **Customers:** The end-users or buyers of the products or services provided by the ecosystem. Understanding their needs, preferences, and feedback is crucial for effective ecosystem orchestration.
- **Sales Professionals:** This includes sales representatives, account managers, and sales executives who engage with customers and partners to drive revenue, negotiate contracts, and manage relationships.
- **Marketing Professionals:** Marketing personas, such as marketing managers, product marketing specialists, and digital marketers, are responsible for developing and executing marketing strategies, campaigns, and initiatives to promote the ecosystem's offerings and attract customers.
- **Partner Managers:** These professionals are specifically dedicated to managing and nurturing relationships with partners within the ecosystem. Their role involves onboarding new partners, ensuring partner enablement, facilitating collaboration, resolving issues, and driving mutual success.
- **Product Managers:** Product managers are responsible for overseeing the development, enhancement, and lifecycle management of the ecosystem's products or solutions. They work closely with partners and other stakeholders to align product strategies with market demands.
- **Technology Specialists:** These individuals possess expertise in the technical aspects of the ecosystem's products or solutions. They provide technical support, enable integration with partners' systems, and ensure smooth implementation and usage.
- **Operations and Supply Chain Professionals:** These individuals manage the logistics, supply chain, and operational processes within the ecosystem. They ensure timely delivery, efficient inventory management, and optimized operations.
- **Customer Success Managers:** Customer success managers focus on building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers. They strive to maximize customer satisfaction, adoption, and retention by providing support, training, and proactive guidance.
- **Executives and Leadership:** Executives and leaders of the orchestrating business have a crucial role in setting the strategic vision for the ecosystem and ensuring its alignment with overall business goals. They provide direction, secure resources, and make key decisions to drive the success of the ecosystem.
- **Influencers:** In addition to the personas directly involved in the ecosystem's operations, there are also non-transactional influencers who play a significant role in shaping its success. These individuals include consultants, analysts, investors, and even social or community influencers.



ADOPTING A UNIFIED APPROACH

In the realm of ecosystem orchestration, a unified approach among all personas is paramount. Similar to a symphony, where every section of instruments plays a vital role in creating a harmonious masterpiece, each persona within an ecosystem contributes to its success.

This approach ensures data security and privacy by establishing clear guidelines and protocols for handling sensitive information, fostering trust and enabling seamless sharing of insights and resources.

Efficiency is another crucial benefit as streamlined processes reduce redundancies and inefficiencies, facilitating faster decision-making and timely responses to market demands. Just as a conductor guides each section of a symphony towards a common vision, a unified approach allows for cohesive collaboration among partners, customers, sales, marketing, and other personas, enhancing cross-functional teamwork and driving improved customer experiences, increased sales, and greater ecosystem success. Integrated systems and shared data repositories enable accurate tracking of metrics and analysis of performance indicators, supporting informed decision-making and optimization of resource allocation.

UNIFIED APPROACH FOR SUCCESS



Your Ecosystem orchestration Tech Stack:

You need the right tools to effectively orchestrate the diverse personas involved in ecosystem orchestration. By implementing robust and adaptable tech solutions, businesses can create an ecosystem that precisely caters to the distinct needs and preferences of each persona, facilitating collaboration and ensuring a symphony of success.

Legacy tools:

In the past, Partner Relationship Management (PRM) systems were primarily standalone tools focused on end-to-end partner management. After all, less involved personas meant a less complex tech stack was needed to create a unified, streamlined user experience. However, as ecosystems have become more complex and interconnected, it has become evident that PRMs alone are no longer sufficient to meet the diverse needs of modern businesses. Limitations might include:

- **Lack of functional depth.** It is impractical to expect a single system to encompass all the necessary capabilities. For instance, a Training Module in a PRM system simply cannot rival the comprehensive functionality offered by a robust global Learning Management System (LMS). Recognizing this limitation, businesses must strategically evaluate their technology stack and leverage specialized solutions to address specific needs.
- **Complexity and rigidity.** Legacy PRM software can be complex and rigid, with predefined workflows and limited customization options. This restricts the ability to adapt to unique requirements, processes, and workflows within an ecosystem, making it difficult to accommodate the specific needs of all stakeholders.
- **Inability to keep up with changing business needs.** Legacy PRMs, with their multitude of personas, tools, and systems, often fall short in providing the necessary flexibility to respond to changing requirements in real time. This lack of agility hampers organizations from effectively supporting dynamic needs as they arise.

Due to the limitations of legacy PRM software, many organizations turn to developing their own custom-built portals using developer frameworks such as Salesforce Experience Cloud.

But custom-built portals bring with them the burden of implementation, management, and maintenance falling on the organization. Despite the availability of templates and developer tools, the responsibility for ongoing updates, innovation, and user engagement remains with the organization, leading to continuous cost and execution risk. For many organizations, the investment of time, money, and talent with uncertain outcomes is becoming too big a challenge to take on.

THE NEW TECH STACK: CHALLENGING THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Just as a symphony requires multiple instruments to create a captivating melody, your tech stack should consist of various components working together seamlessly. So, instead of expecting one system to solve all your problems or embarking on the journey of building your own, take a moment to consider how you can leverage your existing and future technologies to create a well-rounded and powerful ensemble that amplifies your business's performance.

PRM, PLUS...

While not an exhaustive list, here are some of the key components of effective ecosystem orchestration:

KEY COMPONENTS FOR EFFECTIVE ORCHESTRATION

- **Collaboration and Communication Tools:** Platforms that allow real-time collaboration, communication, and knowledge sharing between different stakeholders within the ecosystem, fostering teamwork and alignment.
- **Training and Onboarding Support:** Resources, courses, and tools to educate and train partners, helping them understand products/services and onboard smoothly into the ecosystem.
- **Marketing Automation:** Tools that automate marketing processes like email campaigns, lead nurturing, and content distribution, empowering partners to engage with prospects efficiently.
- **Account Mapping:** An essential functionality that enables the mapping and visualization of partner accounts, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the ecosystem's network and relationships.
- **Lead Generation and Management:** Tools and features to generate and manage leads effectively, ensuring a steady stream of potential customers for partners in the ecosystem.
- **Deal Registration and Opportunity Management:** Functionality to register and track deals, manage opportunities, and provide visibility into the sales pipeline for better coordination and conversion.
- **Incentive and Rewards Management:** A crucial functionality for managing and tracking incentives and rewards for partners, motivating them to drive desired behaviors and achieve targets.
- **MDF and/or Co-Op Fund Management:** Streamlined management of Marketing Development Funds (MDF) and/or Cooperative Advertising (Co-Op) funds, enabling partners to efficiently access and utilize available funds for joint marketing activities, campaigns, and initiatives.
- **Marketplace Management:** Tools and features to manage an online marketplace within the ecosystem. This includes functionalities such as product listing and categorization, order management, inventory tracking, payment processing, and customer support. Effective marketplace management ensures a seamless buying and selling experience for both partners and customers.
- **Business Planning:** Resources and tools to assist partners in creating and executing their business plans within the ecosystem. This includes features like financial forecasting, goal setting, budgeting, resource allocation, and performance tracking. Business planning capabilities enable partners to align their strategies with the overall goals of the ecosystem and optimize their operations for success.
- **Performance Tracking and Measurement:** Metrics, dashboards, and reporting capabilities to track partner performance, measure results, and identify areas for improvement.
- **Data Analytics and Reporting:** Capabilities to collect, analyze, and derive insights from data generated by various ecosystem activities, enabling informed decision-making and performance evaluation.
- **Integration Capabilities:** The ability to integrate with other systems and applications to ensure smooth data flow, streamline processes, and enhance overall ecosystem efficiency.

HOW TO BRING IT ALL TOGETHER: EMBRACING ECOSYSTEM ORCHESTRATION

While Partner Relationship Management (PRM) systems were able to provide an all-in-one solution for traditional Channel Management, their ability to adapt to the needs of end-to-end Ecosystem Management across all key personas is not realistic.

Forward thinking organizations are recognizing the increasing importance of providing a unified and seamless experience to each specific ecosystem member whilst maximizing the value of their existing and future technology investments. Industry experts strongly advocate for a modern, cloud-native technology stack to keep pace with these changing dynamics.

Achieving this requires a new approach. It needs to include the variety of techniques, tools and technologies required while creating a centralized, integrated experience for the end users.

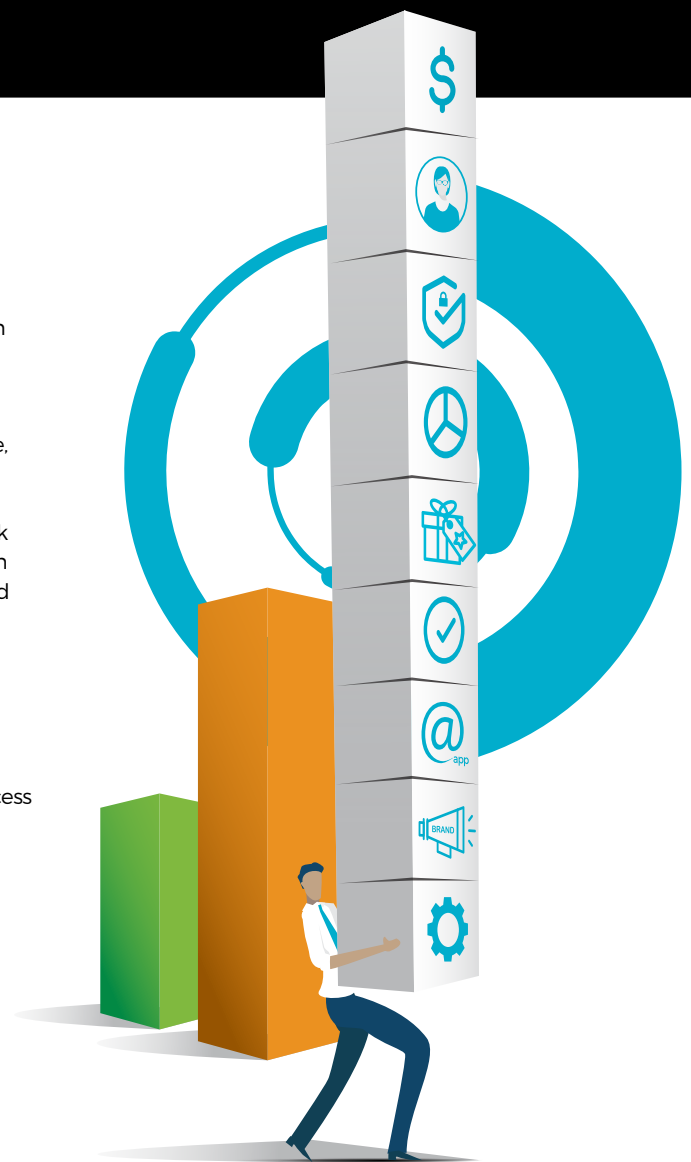
By leveraging such a technology stack, organizations can ensure that every persona within the ecosystem can collaborate with the relevant content, systems, and applications. This unified approach facilitates effective communication, streamlines workflows, and allows for data-driven decision-making. This is Ecosystem Orchestration – and it can drive scaled outcomes that will impact your businesses like never before.

WHY VISION IS EVERYTHING

An ecosystem-centric product roadmap drives the evolution of your tech stack, ensuring it stays ahead and avoids stagnation. By integrating technology with behavior-driving rewards and incentives, it fosters engagement and orchestration within ecosystems. Choosing tools that align with this roadmap future-proofs your tech stack, making it scalable, flexible, and compatible with emerging technologies.

Brands like 360insights exemplify this approach, evolving their tech stack alongside their ecosystem. Instead of being limited by legacy systems, an ecosystem-centric roadmap encourages innovation, leveraging advanced analytics, and prioritizing collaboration. It enables data-driven decision-making based on insights from the ecosystem.

Ultimately, adopting this approach ensures your tech stack remains aligned with your long-term vision, promoting seamless integration, collaboration, and growth. By building an ecosystem-centric tech stack, organizations can orchestrate their ecosystems effectively and drive success in the ever-evolving partner landscape.



360insights offerings include:

A non-traditional approach to PRM

360insights is revolutionizing the PRM landscape by challenging traditional approaches and positioning itself as a leader in ecosystem orchestration. But don't just take our word for it. Here's what the Forrester 2023 PRM Wave Report had to say:

"360insights is challenging traditional approaches to PRM...positioning itself for a future in which ecosystem management and orchestration are integral for B2B organizations that rely on collective partner productivity and performance," the report reads.

"It's ecosystem platform strategy focuses on easy integration with other software to support the partner journey, data management, and customer experiences. Combined with its leading incentives management capabilities, 360insights' PRM activates ecosystem engagement."

“360insights is challenging traditional approaches to PRM...positioning itself for a future in which ecosystem management and orchestration are integral for B2B organizations that rely on collective partner productivity and performance,”

Forrester 2023 PRM Wave Report



Channel Success Platform

360insights provides a comprehensive platform that helps businesses manage channel incentive programs effectively. This platform allows for the customization of incentives, payout formulas, and engagement rules to suit partners and specific programs.



Points-Based Reward Incentives Module

360insights' platform includes a module specifically designed for points-based reward incentives. This module enables businesses to track and reward sales team performance based on targets and themes.



Partner Enablement Resources

360insights offers various resources, such as email campaigns, educational webinars, and informative blog content, to support partner enablement. These resources help partners better understand products, enhance their selling capabilities, and drive engagement.



Ecosystem Orchestration

With 360insights' ecosystem-centric approach, businesses can create personalized and streamlined partner enablement solutions. This includes incenting sales team behavior and fostering brand loyalty within the ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Brands like 360insights serve as prime examples of how an ecosystem-centric product roadmap can drive the evolution of your tech stack. By adopting this approach, you can ensure that your tech stack remains aligned with your long-term vision and goals, enabling seamless integration, collaboration, and growth.

ABOUT 360insights

360insights is the leading channel engagement and business optimization company, that enables brands to better influence, manage, and engage with their complex channel ecosystems. The company offers a suite of channel solutions including a SaaS-based platform that empowers brands to fully orchestrate their complex partner networks, while also delivering a powerful Incentive Automation solution for consumer rebates, SPIFFs, volume incentives, MDF/Co-Op, sales allowances and points programs. Combining incentive management and ecosystem orchestration with a powerful data analytics engine, 360insights serves more than 300+ enterprise organizations globally, across multiple industries, helping them boost their indirect business. Learn more at 360insights.com



ARE YOU ON THE RIGHT PLATFORM TO SUPPORT YOUR CHANNEL?

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