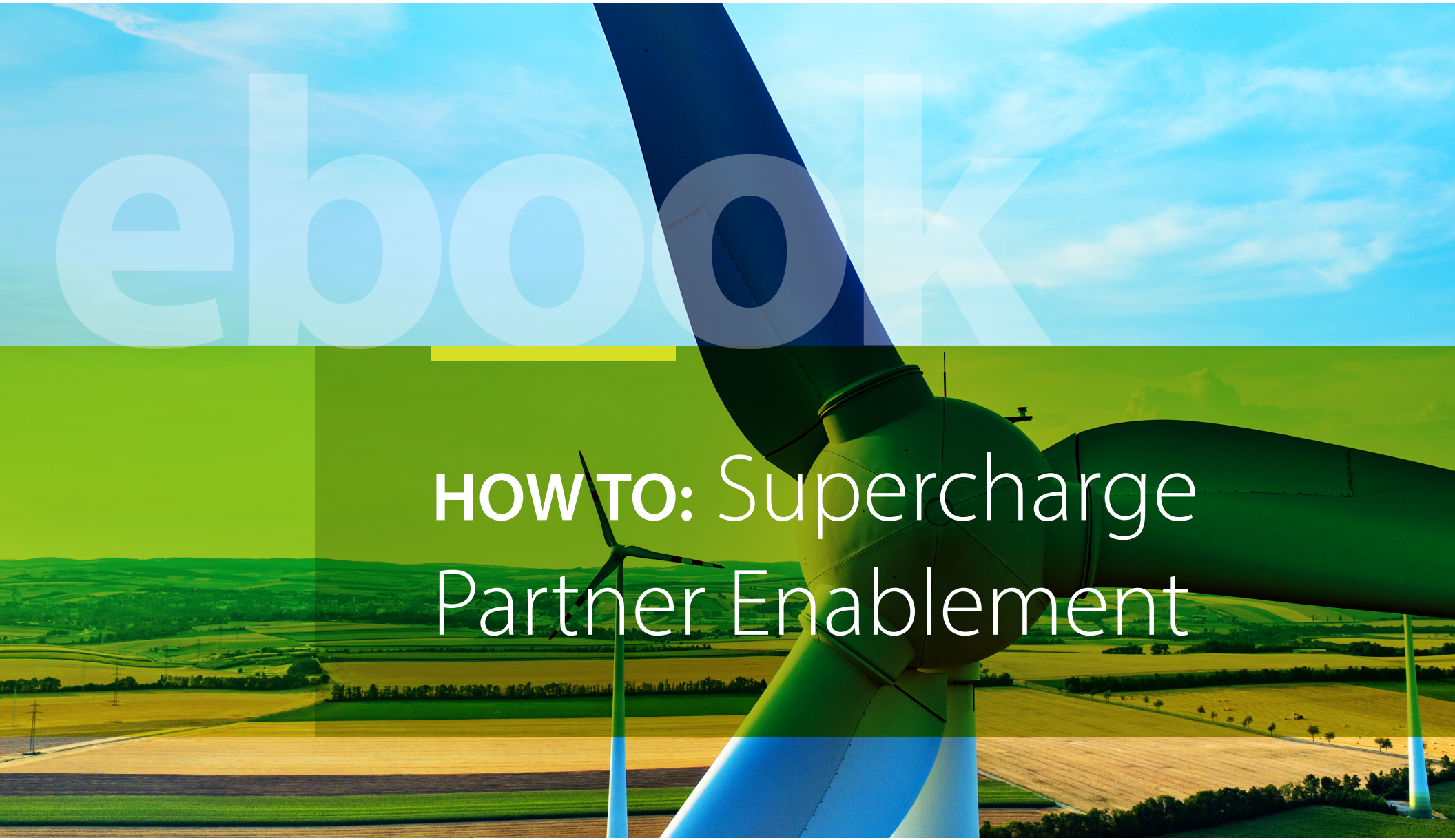
ZiftONE™




# HOW TO: Supercharge Partner Enablement





# First Comes Love; Then Comes Marriage.

**Courting doesn't end at the altar. In fact, the letter of intent is only the beginning. Converting prospects into partners is one thing, but converting prospects into engaged, loyal and high-performing partners is another altogether. In order to continue the positive momentum you generated during recruitment, you'll need to make enablement and training efforts a continuous extension of what made your new partners choose you in the first place.**

Successful enablement is about more than building partner loyalty and satisfaction. As your most direct links to channel revenue, enablement and training are fundamental to securing positive return on channel investment. It is at this phase of the partner lifecycle that high-performing partners are made, as you impart the mission-critical skills, knowledge and tools needed for your partners to succeed. **Done right, enablement supercharges ROI and unlocks greater levels of partner productivity and performance.**

This is no secret for channel-reliant businesses, evidenced by the sheer amount of spend dedicated to training and enablement. In recent years, spend in this area has continued to rise. As a result, enablement efforts are under greater pressure than ever to perform and prove resulting business growth. But as every seasoned vendor channel professional knows, investment does not inherently equal return.

In order to realize its full business-building potential, enablement must be aligned with the evolving preferences and needs of the indirect channel. **Automating Channel Marketing and Partner Relationship Management (PRM) processes satisfies the heightened pressure to perform by bringing new meaning, engagement and analytics to training and enablement initiatives.**

## Addressing the Elephant in the Room

We all know it's there, and the first step in correcting a problem is acknowledging its presence. For most channels, up to 50% of functionality and content is ignored by partners.

This is an ugly reality for all channels, especially those that are dedicating significant effort and money to beefing up their training and enablement tools. The million-dollar question, however, is why? **Why are your partners neglecting up to half of the content offered?**

**The million-dollar answer is that relevance is a prerequisite for use.** In order to elevate the overall utility of enablement and training content and keep classrooms full, you'll need to optimally align that content with partner preferences, interests and needs.

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# How is enablement and training content broken and how can you fix it?

### 1. Digesting content is time consuming.

Historically, training and enablement have been arduous and inflexible. They are intensive and fall down when it comes to serving the fast-paced global channel. By **selecting succinct formats** that get the job done, you'll make enablement more efficient and increase your partners' receptiveness to content.

### 2. There is too much content.

The average partner is working with several vendors. As a result, partners are left to sift through copious amounts of enablement materials—making it virtually impossible to digest them all. By **presenting only the content that will lead to sales,** you'll increase the likelihood that partners are absorbing the most critical content.

### 3. Content is difficult to access and find.

Tangled portal presences with multiple disparate sign-ons are an obstacle for channel partners attempting to access enablement and training content. By creating an **intuitive portal presence with single sign-on**, you make it easier for partners to access the tools they need.

### 4. Content is dry and boring.

Content without interactivity or visual interest falls flat and is more difficult for partners to digest and translate into action. What makes your content more appealing than your competitors'? By creating **content that is engaging and interactive** along with incorporating tools for meaningful collaboration and feedback, you'll boost positive revenue impact and partner loyalty.

### 5. Content is not aligned with my needs.

When it comes to training and enablement content, one size doesn't fit all. Business models and technical competencies vary across partners. Content must speak to partners in a language they understand. By presenting **content that is targeted to partner needs** and is empowering your partners to self-pace through coursework, you elevate the relevance and flexibility of training materials.

### 6. Content doesn't build my business.

If partners perceive that there is little incentive or revenue impact associated with training and enablement, they are far less likely to engage. By **building meaningful incentives into enablement activities** and focusing on demonstrating a positive revenue impact, you more effectively communicate the value of training and enablement to your channel community.

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# Enabling Partners Effectively

**An army of channel partners reaching out to your end customers with a faulty understanding of your products and a cursory knowledge of how to service them is a big liability.**

Without effective training and enablement, your channel partners can create a mess with long-term consequences for your business. It is important to have established, intuitive and effective training resources that will help partners effectively generate sales and grow revenue, and avoid any misinformation in the marketplace.

Every vendor would agree that they want to effectively enable and train their channel partners, and the large majority have an internal understanding of what partners will need to learn. But what exactly do enablement and effectiveness mean?

In the fullest sense, **enablement is not just the practice of teaching your channel partners about your products**. Rather, it is the targeted practice of teaching them to fish—how to dynamically and adaptively articulate differentiation, and independently sell in a complex and evolving marketplace.

That brings us to effectiveness. In order to be fully effective, **enablement must accomplish the two-fold goal of driving sales and loyalty.** Without driving sales, enablement has failed to accomplish its purpose. Without driving loyalty, your enablement efforts could be used to build a competitor's business instead of your own.



**Enablement is the targeted practice of teaching your channel partners how to fish—how to dynamically and adaptively articulate differentiation, and independently sell in a complex and evolving marketplace.**

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# Aligning with the Product Lifecycle

**Enablement efforts must be tightly aligned with each channel partner's mission. As such, enablement is necessarily shaped by your offering's position in the product lifecycle. Are your partners making a market or filling demand in one that has already been established?**

## Moving Mountains, Making Markets

Generally speaking, partners prefer to grow markets, not make them. If you want more out of your partners, you'll need to motivate them to create a market through a highly restricted distribution model, higher margins or other compelling incentives. For market makers, training delivery looks a lot like internal staff training, marked by significant breadth, depth and complexity. **To make a market, training needs to be robust, dynamic and flexible.**

## Growing Markets, Filling Demand

Alternatively, if your product is mature in its lifecycle or has become a commodity, then you'll want to focus on building basic product knowledge and competitive differentiation. While marked by a simpler enablement process, this presents vendors with new challenges, including a lack of compelling margins or opportunities, pressure from competitive products and less motivation to engage in training and enablement. **To grow an existing market, training needs to be engaging, simple and accessible.**

## Content is King.

For market makers and growers alike, content is king. **But content creation demands significant time and effort.** For most vendor channel professionals, the manual management of training activities and certifications consumes a large share of internal resources. As a result, generating targeted and high-impact content becomes an afterthought.

Automating training and issuing certifications and accreditations in real time provides a distinct advantage. In addition to dramatically improving the channel's responsiveness to certification dependent deals, **this automation puts content back in the power seat as a driver of enablement impact and channel engagement.**

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# The Evolution of Content Delivery

Ten years ago, the lion's share of channel training was delivered face-to-face in a classroom environment. While highly personal, this approach dramatically limited the reach and flexibility of enablement efforts, requiring significant internal resources and partners to be physically present at one centralized location. **Today, computer-based online training delivery has superseded the large majority of traditional training efforts. It's easy to see why.**

1. **Online training delivery has dramatically improved the variety, quality and accessibility of enablement.**
2. **Internet access and bandwidth now support the delivery of multimedia rich content to any device.**
3. **Users are now well accustomed to using computers, mobile devices and the Internet for accessing content in multiple formats.**
4. **Few companies can now afford to operate in-house training functions or outsource these functions to third parties.**
5. **Specialized content and test-creation software has become easier to obtain and use, with increased market competition improving affordability.**
6. **Product lifecycles have become even shorter, increasing the frequency of training.**
7. **Online delivery offers flexibility and convenience of language, time and place.**
8. **Mobile technology offers anytime, anywhere convenience for channel partners no matter where they are located.**
9. **Self-paced online learning tools allow partners to access enablement on-demand—on their own time, at their on pace.**

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# Adapting Formats to Preferences and Performance

Some channels achieve online training delivery using a **Learning Management System (LMS)**, a tool primarily designed for the delivery of internal training content. While created for the express purpose of training, LMSs often have significant limitations when it comes to achieving the flexibility, specificity and measurement required by highly complex external channel programs.

The most advanced channels have integrated training and enablement functionality and content management within their partner portals to deliver and manage robust programs in multiple languages, at any time in any place. Through automation, these channels are able to streamline and systemize the creation, delivery, measurement and analysis of high-value enablement content.

**Even more powerfully, automation integrates dynamic measurement and testing mechanisms to verify participation and confirm knowledge transfer. Equally important as content delivery is content impact.**

Historically, adapting channel content to partner preferences was an exercise in qualitative listening, with conclusions drawn based on limited insights from a few choice partners. While feedback from the channel is always welcome, this method relied largely on opinion rather than evidence and failed to account for the entire channel.

**PRM automation leverages advanced metrics to measure the channel's receptiveness to key enablement and training content, then correlates these behaviors to partner performance, engagement and revenue.**

**AS A RESULT, VENDOR CHANNEL PROFESSIONALS ARE FINALLY CAPABLE OF CAPTURING THE UNSEEN BEHAVIORS OF THE CHANNEL, AND CORRELATING INDIVIDUAL ENABLEMENT CONTENT TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES. THEY CAN FINALLY ANSWER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS LIKE:**

- Which content is most correlated to positive partner performance?
- Which content & formats are the most useful to my channel community?
- What content & formats facilitate the most engagement with and between partners?
- What do content usage habits reveal about partner needs and preferences?

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# Enablement: Not Just for the A Students

**Who needs enablement? Typical channel practices demonstrate that the answer isn't so obvious.** It's natural for vendor channel professionals to identify channel moneymakers and continue focusing enablement efforts on these A students.

After all, it makes sense that investing in top performers is the easiest way to secure positive ROI. While zeroing in on the top performers may secure channel stability and represent a safe haven for channel investment, it won't secure channel growth. Instead, let's take a look at the whole class—A, B and C students—and examine enablement's potential impact on each group.

A

## A Students

High revenue partners aren't necessarily highly engaged partners. Larger partners naturally have greater market leverage and reach, but this doesn't mean that they are loyal to your business.

**Focus enablement efforts on aligning this group with your long-term goals, achieving a shared vision for mutual success and shifting relationships from transactional to engaged.**

B

## B Students

Enabled properly, medium-sized partners with good performance often have the highest potential for channel growth. These partners have already demonstrated some degree of capability in the marketplace, and their moderate size makes them easier to engage.

**Invest in growing, training and engaging these partners in key strategic areas and building long-term partner loyalty.**

C

## C Students

While the instinctive reaction to average performing partners is to provide more materials for training and enablement, this isn't necessarily the answer. It is infinitely more important to provide the right content to these partners.

**Focus on figuring out why these partners are not thriving, and fill critical capability gaps with targeted training and enablement materials.**

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# The Greatest Motivator & Global Enabling

At the end of the day, you can have the most attractive and engaging enablement materials in channel history, but without **partner motivation**, they will remain unused. It's important to note that **monetary incentives only go so far in securing long-term channel engagement.**

While monetary incentives can drive traffic to enablement and training programs and keep classrooms full in the near term, investing in building partner loyalty is much more compelling long term. The fact remains that allegiance that is driven by money can be easily won and lost, but loyalty is much more durable.

## Protecting your most precious asset.

Your channel's most precious asset is its proximity to, relationship with and influence over the purchasing decision of its end customers. Enablement and training is about strengthening, protecting and securing this link. Without it, channel sales can become a large-scale game of whisper down the lane.

## Enabling Partners Globally

If you have an expansive international channel, you know the intricacies that come with selling on a global scale. International differences run far deeper than language alone. **From differences in functional roles, to selling practices, to communication styles and market needs—bringing your offering to an international stage is no simple task.**

In fact, bearing responsibility for enabling your entire global channel can feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. To a certain degree, it is.

While your international channel partners are fluent in each of your various markets, that doesn't solve the problem of training and enabling them to grow your share of those markets. **Through partner automation, global channel-reliant businesses translate their enablement and training into the languages and selling practices of international markets, and dynamically respond to partner needs on a global scale.**

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# A World of Enablement Challenges

**Let's look at some key challenges presented by selling in a global context.**

### Languages

The most obvious obstacle is lingual. While you may have developed a wealth of enablement resources for your primary market, the challenge is translating these tools into a language that your channel partners in each market understand.

### Decision-Making

In every market, training and enablement must be tailored to the sales and decision-making process. How are decisions made? Is the sale collaborative or centralized? What are the primary decision making factors?

### Market Speed

At what pace does each market move? The ideal sales cycle may look different depending on the market in which you are selling. Enablement content and performance expectations will need to be adjusted accordingly.

### Business Roles

What key business roles will be involved in the sale? The answer will be different on an international scale, and you'll need to provide sales enablement support to address the unique priorities and concerns of each.

### Market Needs

At a fundamental level, how is your product or offering being used? Market needs and uses vary based on the market, so your training and enablement approach will need to adapt.

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# Power Global Partner Performance: On Top of the World

**How does automation drive universal partner performance and empower channel professionals to keep on top of global channel management? Here's a few reasons why:**

### 1. Anytime, Anywhere Access

**Automation transcends time differences and physical distance** by providing partners anytime, anywhere access to training and enablement materials. Partners simply sign in and tap into a world of enablement on-demand.

### 2. Multilingual Support

**Span multiple languages and character sets.** With multilingual support, channel professionals easily translate training and enablement into the many languages of their diverse global channel without having to obtain expensive internal resources to do so.

### 3. Partner Segmentation

Different markets are characterized by different needs. **Segmentation is an inherent aspect of partner relationship automation.** Grouping your partners by regions, languages and needs, streamline and improve the relevance and impact of your global enablement activities.

### 4. Collaboration Tools

Shorten the distance between you and your global partners by **offering dynamic collaboration tools for partner-to-partner and partner-to-vendor engagement**. Partners in like-markets are able to share critical knowledge, and you can provide ongoing support to your partners no matter where they are.



**Grouping your partners by regions, languages and needs, streamline and improve the relevance and impact of your global enablement activities.**

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# Achieve Global Fluency

**Achieving global channel fluency around your offerings involves more than translating content into another language. It also involves translating content into another context. Where language impacts content phrasing, context impacts content substance.**

## Automation empowers you to establish global fluency by supporting translation for multiple languages and contexts.

**Translating for Language:** By allowing vendor channel professionals to roll out multilingual or multicountry content dynamically, they can focus more time on delivering the right resources to their global partners.

**Translating for Context:** Segment your partners on the basis of country, region or language, and deliver only those enablement tools that are most relevant to each market's roles, needs and sales cycle.

Translating—whether linguistic or contextual— requires vendor channel professionals to master the science of relevance. **Success hinges on delivering the right resources to right partner in the right language.**

## Be Agile in Enabling Partners

For a moment, imagine something that is quick and graceful. Chances are, it's probably something small.

In most cases, size acts as an impediment to agility. But for large, complex channel ecosystems, automation removes this obstacle, making agility an inherent aspect of enablement and training practices for channels of any size.

**When it comes to your indirect channel, agility is built on visibility, responsiveness and adaptability.**

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# The Proof is in Your Partners

**Your partners may or may not be telling you what they need for effective enablement and training, but they are certainly demonstrating it.**

In the channel days of old, keeping a pulse on enablement effectiveness and impact was near impossible. There were too many variables, too many partners and too many manual processes to do so.

**But automation continually sheds light on emerging partner needs and empowers the vendor channel professional to adjust, renew and rejuvenate enablement and training resources.** Stale content can finally become a thing of the past.

Informed by analytics, vendor channel professionals understand what is working, what isn't, and how their overall enablement and training efforts are impacting their top and bottom lines. **Without analytics, enablement is just a guessing game.**

**WHAT CAN A SINGLE PIECE OF ENABLEMENT CONTENT TELL US?**

- How many partners have accessed it
- Once accessed, how long partners engage with the content
- What additional content are partners accessing
- The performance of those partners who have accessed the content
- When in the sales cycle the content appears to be most valuable
- How the content has impacted sales
- What related resources can be born from the content
- How the content can be adapted for greater usability and relevance

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# Responding in Real Time

Your partners' needs are evolving fast. Can you keep up? **Tools for collaboration and engagement have made it possible for vendor channel professionals to understand and respond to partner needs in real-time.**

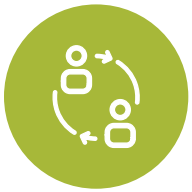
Meanwhile, partners are empowered to find their own answers and learn from high-performing partners through partner-to-partner collaboration tools and forums. When it comes to enabling your indirect channel, shared knowledge is power.

More than ever, enablement is about establishing a real back-and-forth conversation between you and your partners, and your partners and one another.

## Enablement is as Alive as Your Partners.

The reality is that while enablement is powerfully enhanced and animated through automation, it can never be placed on the shelf and left to fend for itself. **Enablement is as alive as the partners it serves, and in order to remain relevant and timely, it must undergo a continual process of dynamic measurement and adaptation.**

The most powerful channel presences have made enablement and training central to channel strategy as the link between market needs, partner priorities and your business' long-term goals for growth.



**More than ever, enablement is about establishing a real back-and-forth conversation between you and your partners, and your partners and one another.**

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## About Zift Solutions

*Zift is the Enterprise Channel Management leader, delivering the people, processes and technology organizations require to drive channel success. Zift boosts channel partner program productivity, and profitability by automating and aligning marketing, sales, and operational processes. The ZiftONE platform integrates seamlessly with established systems and infrastructure to speed time-to-sales, create an exceptional partner experience, and provide faster ROI.*

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