

content syndication

e-commerce

business integration

# A Beginner's Guide to Channel Content Syndication

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# *A Beginner's Guide to Channel Content Syndication*

All organizations that maintain a partner community know that there is a significant amount of time and resources spent on keeping these relationships active, up-to-date and profitable. As of April 14, 2010 a Forrester report called Trends in Cross-Channel Campaign Management stated, “the top challenges in campaign management are coordinating communications across channels (49%), personalizing messages based on consumer behavior across channels (48%) and measuring results (43%).” Sample was based on the response of 167 marketers.

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## *Did you know?*

**Organizations can syndicate any type of digital content from microsites to videos and lead capture forms.**

## *Executive Summary*

With growing needs in communications, personalization and metrics, new channel marketing and content syndication solutions become more and more popular among large vendors and distributors. Businesses today are starting to explore what types of tools are available to fulfill these growing needs. This whitepaper looks at the basics of what channel content syndication is, how to determine whether it's a good fit for your business and also provides some basic questions to ask when shopping different vendors.

## *What is Channel Content Syndication?*

Channel Content Syndication simplifies marketing processes, enhances the overall experience within the channel and, in some cases, used as a tool to generate leads for partners. Vendors providing this type of solution utilize a hybrid of syndication, email deployment, marketing automation, and web analytics as tools to aid organizations to reach their specific channel goals. This end-to-end model provides businesses with the ability to see and interact with the channel like never before.

What it is:



- Automated Distribution of Digital Content to Partner Websites
- Fully Automated (cobranded) Marketing Materials
- Customized Partner Specific Web Content
- Lead Generation for Partners
- Reporting and Web Analytics on Content Performance
- Complementary Solution to Web Content Management and Digital Asset Management Systems

What it isn't:

- RSS Feeds
- Slow or Limited Content Updates
- Content Harvesting or Content Scraping
- Web Content Management System
- Digital Asset Management System

### *Is Channel Content Syndication Right for My Organization?*

B2B professionals explore channel content syndication for a number of reasons. Some difficulties and challenges include:

- Keeping channel partners consistent online - all presenting the same message
- Delivering co-branded marketing materials to the channel in a timely fashion
- Understanding how content is consumed throughout the channel
- Understanding which partners attract the most (or least) attention
- Needing new ways to generate more qualified leads for partners
- Needing real-time performance metrics on active content and campaigns

These challenges can be boiled down into two main themes.

1. Businesses don't have the time and resources to distribute up-to-date, co-branded marketing materials to the entire partner community every time their products change.
2. It's a combination of the first pain point with additional pressure of finding new ways to generate more qualified leads for partners.

If your business is experiencing any of the points above, your team has an opportunity to seriously optimize your channel marketing efforts and programs.



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## Did you know?

Outside of channel marketing, content syndication is being used to monetize content for publishers and media companies.

## What are the benefits to Channel Content Syndication?

For Channel Marketing Professionals:

- Gain more, qualified leads for partners
- Reach more end users with confidence of a consistent message across the board
- Eliminate fragmented branding throughout the channel
- Create a clear view on Return-On-Marketing-Investment with the channel
- Optimize channel deployment
- Enhance the experience of the channel
- Dramatically increased time to market
- Out market your competition by aligning the online channel once
- Track which online marketing activities impact traffic, leads and sales from both a high level and a partner-by-partner basis
- Instantaneously provide customized, co-branded campaigns and marketing materials for all partners
- Grow the partner network without needing to add more resources

For the CEOs & Directors:

- Generate more revenue through the channel
- Reduce marketing costs
- Reallocate resources to higher priority items
- Reallocate resources to craft additional campaigns to stimulate the channel

## Q&A: What Type of Questions Should I Consider When Shopping for a Channel Content Syndication Solution?

In this new market of channel syndication solutions, new vendors pop up frequently. The following list is a group of questions a typical channel content syndication vendor should be able to answer.

*Question: What is the enrollment process for partners?*

**Answer:** Enrollment should be a simple, one-time straightforward process. The easier it is to enroll and implement, the more successful the channel alignment will become. Partner sign up and code dispersal should also be automated. This automated step allows partners to access the tools they need to implement at the time of sign up.

Please note: code implementation should happen once. New or updated content should be supported by the original code snippet - no replacements.

## Many Uses

Content syndication has many uses in the marketplace. Some popular ways of using content syndication include:

- Channel Marketing for VARs
- Channel Marketing for E-tailers
- Content Monetization for Publishers and Media Companies

*Question: What is the implementation process for partners?*

**Answer:** Directly following sign up, the implementation process should be easy and only take 5 to 10 minutes. Partners simply copy and paste their custom code snippet into their designated webpage. Vendor should provide additional documentation for partners who need additional assistance.

*Question: For a typical partner implementation, how many code snippets are needed to successfully syndicate content?*

**Answer:** Depending on functionality, partners should only need to implement one snippet of code. For more advanced implementation, sometimes more code is necessary.

*Question: What type of technical knowledge is needed to implement into a partner's website?*

**Answer:** Basic HTML knowledge should be the only requirement for implementation.

*Question: What is the process for the vendor to update content?*

**Answer:** Many vendors approach this differently. Some 'scrape' or 'harvest' the content off of your website. Some have web based consoles that allow you to upload new content into the partner community yourself. Others are able to pull the content from internal or external content management systems.

The best choice here is what complements your own business and partner model.

*Question: Does your service utilize content scraping as a main means of syndication?*

**Answer:** In some experiences, content harvesting (a.k.a. content scraping) takes too long and does not reach the channel in a timely fashion. Content scraping has also been associated with slow and limited updates.

*Question: What type of content can be syndicated to partners?*

**Answer:** Vendors should be able to syndicate a vast array of digital content types. All in all, there shouldn't be a limit to the type of content that can be syndicated. Just to double check, make certain your materials are supported with the vendor.

## Did you know?

You can connect your Content Management System (CMS) with a content syndication solution for automated publishing to the channel.

*Question: What if my content lives within several systems? Can your service pull from more than one source at a time?*

**Answer:** Some vendors cannot provide this type of functionality. Depending on your requirements, this might be a deciding factor.

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*Question: Does the syndication solution allow me to enrich my content with external sources?*

**Answer:** An example of this would be if your business wants to blend content with a third party's content. For example, you're a consumer electronics vendor or distributor that wants to utilize CNET content and reviews. Some vendors can allow you to enrich your content with others.

"70% of online users said they found ratings and reviews the most helpful feature when researching products." (JupiterResearch: [www.jupiterresearch.com](http://www.jupiterresearch.com))

"Reviews not only help conversions but also drive traffic." (MarketingSherpa: [www.marketingsherpa.com](http://www.marketingsherpa.com))

Some vendors cannot provide this type of functionality. Depending on your requirements, this might be a deciding factor.

*Question: Can your syndication solution create custom marketing materials that include my partner's contact information? If so, what type of marketing collateral?*

**Answer:** Some syndication solutions can create custom marketing materials, on-the-fly. This can be especially helpful for vendors that need to distribute customized brochures, data sheets, technical documents, etc. to a large global partner base.

Some vendors cannot provide this type of functionality. Depending on your requirements, this might be a deciding factor.

NOTE: Partners should be able to upload contact information, logo and other important information once and all materials should be automatically updated. Make sure this is true for all documents existing before the partner signed up as well.

## Contact us

For more information on content syndication solutions please contact:

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*Question: Can my partners choose what type of content is syndicated to their website? If so, how granular can it get?*

**Answer:** Most content syndication vendors can syndicate different levels of content. One area to consider is the level of detail your partners can opt in (or opt out of) with their syndication. For example, some syndication vendors can only allow partners to add or remove entire product lines. Other syndication vendors can allow partners to select all the way down to per product. Depending on your requirements, this might be a deciding factor.

*Question: Can my partners update their own syndication? If so, how?*

**Answer:** Depending on the scope of your project, this may not be a necessity. If so, partners should be able to have some type of online dashboard to update their syndication and any other related information.

*Question: Does your service provide lead generation capabilities for partners? If so, how?*

**Answer:** Some channel syndication vendors promote themselves as having lead generation tools. Make sure to fully understand this process. Some only provide online forms for lead capturing. Others provide an entire closed-loop approach.

Some vendors cannot provide this type of functionality. Depending on your requirements, this might be a deciding factor.

*Question: If the service provides lead generation capabilities, do they provide CRM integration? For example, can partners import leads into their Salesforce account? What's the process for this?*

**Answer:** Depending on the scope of your project, this may not be a necessity. If it is, make sure to see how fluid this process is from both a vendor and partner perspective.

## A Message to the Readers

Thank you for your interest in one of our TIE Kinetix whitepapers. We hope it was informative and helpful.

If your organization is interested in improving their channel marketing or content syndication process, please don't hesitate to call. Our phone number can be found in the left column. If you're not ready for a phone call, feel free to learn more on our website.