



# B2B Partner Marketing Insights 2022

Partner and channel marketers share their  
top challenges and 2022 priorities



To achieve success in a competitive landscape, vendors must improve the digital experience for partners. They must make their programs easier to participate in and put partner needs and goals first.

# Introduction: What's Working for B2B Partner Marketers?

Dear Reader,

Channel marketing is not easy in 2022. B2B business models are changing quickly. The relationships between vendors and their channel partners—resellers, distributors, consultants and system integrators—and myriad other technology partners are evolving. And more B2B vendors are juggling partner programs while vying for the attention of both end customers and partners.

What seems certain is that, in the coming year, vendors will still rely on their partners as much or more than ever to generate sales and diversify revenue. In fact, 96% of B2B leaders expect to increase revenue from partners in 2022, according to [Channel Marketing Report's 2022 Channel/ Partner Marketing Benchmark Survey](#). Organizations with the strongest partner ecosystems can consistently best their competition. But what's working well and where do the pain points lie?

Tendo Communications, a B2B digital content experience agency, conducted a survey of B2B partner marketers to learn more about their:

- Top challenges with implementing partner marketing programs
- Vendors' most successful marketing strategies and investments
- Partner marketing priorities for 2022

## The Big Takeaways: Invest in Digital Content—and Digital Experience

Partner marketers agree: Content sits at the heart of their strategy, and they are prioritizing content development in 2022. Since the start of the pandemic, customers' appetite for digital content has skyrocketed. Vendors need to produce more content to continually educate and support their partners and to help partners engage prospects at every step of the buyer journey.

Looked at holistically, these survey results also point to another conclusion: To achieve success in a competitive landscape, vendors must improve the digital experience for partners. They must put partner needs and goals first and make the value of their programs clear to increase participation and ROI.

That's one of Tendo's key recommendations, based on our deep experience with supporting partner marketing teams. Read on for the full survey results, followed by our insights and guidelines to help you succeed. Best of luck to your team in the coming year!

**Karla Spormann**  
CEO and Founder  
Tendo Communications

# About This Report

In Q4-2021, Tendo Communications conducted an online survey, reaching out to B2B partner marketers across major industries, from technology to financial services and manufacturing. This report captures results from 33 survey respondents along with analysis and takeaways from Tendo experts.

## Survey Participant Roles and Activities

Survey respondents identified as decisionmakers, influencers/advocates, or practitioners, depending on their roles in the following activities:

 **Role: Developing and refining their companies' partner program structure**, including offerings and incentives, roles and requirements, and key program strategies.

30% decisionmakers      45% influencers/advocates      21% practitioners

 **Role: Supporting the digital marketing needs of partner companies**, including the development of marketing programs, campaigns, and content for them to use.

52% decisionmakers      27% influencers/advocates      21% practitioners

 **Role: Communication and relationship management** with existing partners or marketing and promotion to recruit prospective partners.

58% decisionmakers      24% influencers/advocates      18% practitioners

## Definitions

**Vendor:** a B2B company that operates a partner program to support partner companies in selling its products and services. This support includes incentives, sales and marketing resources, and more.

**Partner:** a company that participates in a vendor's partner program. Partners can include value-added resellers, distributors, managed service providers, and others.

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# Challenges

## Partner Marketers Share Their Toughest Challenges

On the surface, the consensus challenges reported by survey respondents look similar to the challenges faced by any marketing team. But a closer inspection of their challenges reveals the unique hurdles that partner marketers must overcome.

### What are the greatest challenges you encounter when executing partner marketing programs or initiatives?



### #1: Challenge: Lack of Resources for Execution

Surveyed partner marketers made clear that they need more resources. Even though partner companies drive the majority of revenue at many B2Bs, partner marketing is traditionally under-invested compared to customer-facing marketing programs.

Vendor partner marketing teams with limited budgets and headcounts must make difficult, strategic choices about how to allocate marketing resources. They must help all partners, but also find ways to deliver greater support to the most engaged partners and those best positioned to generate leads and sales. On the partner side, organizations with small marketing teams simply may not have the staff resources and know-how to scale successful marketing efforts.

## Challenges

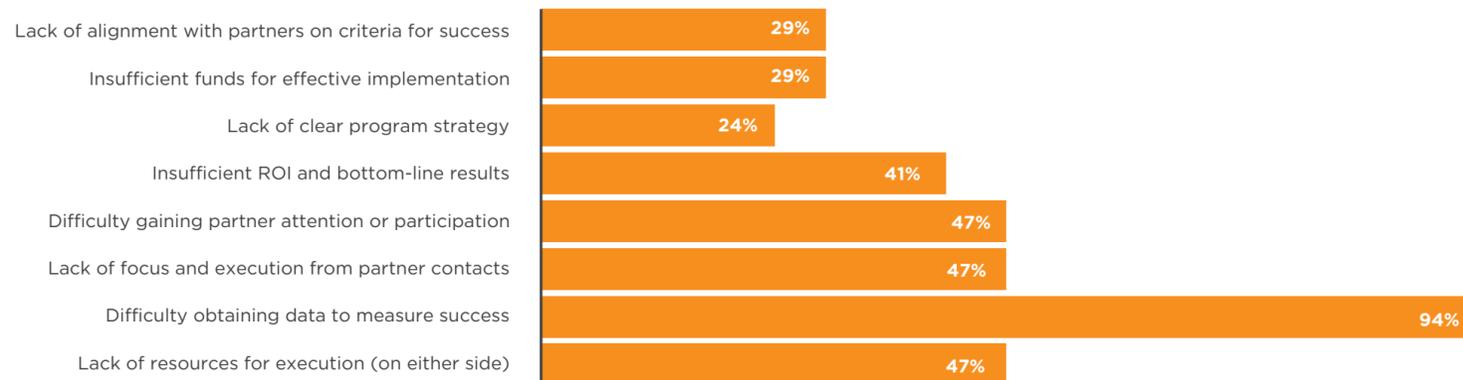
# Decisionmakers Emphasize Different Challenges

Decisionmakers on partner marketing teams prioritized their challenges a bit differently from their direct reports and other team members. Here's how decisionmakers in the following three practice areas ranked their top challenges.

### Decisionmakers on program structure, strategy, incentives



### Decisionmakers on partner marketing campaigns and content



### Decisionmakers on partner communication, recruitment, and relationship management



## Top Challenge: Difficulty Obtaining Data to Measure Success

Wrangling data from partners is the top challenge for 94% of decisionmakers in charge of partner marketing campaigns and content and for 60% of leaders who oversee partner communication and relationship management. They commonly struggle with tracking ROI and revenue attribution. Data can be difficult to extract from partner portals and platforms or, worse, must be chased down manually from dozens of partners. Without compelling ROI data, teams cannot make a strong case for increased budget and headcount.

## Another Challenge: Difficulty Gaining Partner Attention

Decisionmakers ranked getting partner attention as a major challenge along with a “lack of focus and execution from partners.” Too many partners do not engage with communications and others simply do not participate consistently in vendors’ partner programs. Some partner teams are stretched too thin with multiple vendors competing for their attention and participation in separate programs. Other partners express frustration at vendor programs that are too complex and time-consuming—or constantly changing. Still others simply do not have the digital marketing skills to execute the campaigns and funding available to them.

## Challenges

# 4 Guidelines to Navigate Partner Marketing Challenges

Countless partner marketers grapple with limited resources, reporting difficulties, and lack of participation from partners. In our experience, here's what successful vendors do to surmount these challenges:

### 1 Define clear priorities and invest in them.

A lack of resources is magnified when your partner marketing team has too many competing priorities. Partner marketing leaders: Make the tough choices and define the top priorities, then execute them well.

### 2 Listen to your partners, and understand their needs.

When was the last time you asked your partners about what they need to be truly successful with your product/service/brand? Learn their pain points and resolve them.

### 3 Improve the digital experience for your partners.

Give partners a superb experience, just like you do for customers. Make it easier for partners to participate in your program. A better digital experience means they find what they need quickly and effortlessly.

### 4 Invest in your partner portal or platform.

To create a better digital experience to partners, you must invest in ongoing improvements to your digital platform. Your partners' needs should drive your development priorities, from better reporting and tracking capabilities to interactive trainings.



“Align your partner program with your partners’ business objectives and you’ll increase participation and grow revenue.”

–**Zach Edling**, Vice President of Account Services at Tendo

[View the Full Guidelines](#)

For deeper insights into how to overcome your partner marketing challenges—and how to execute these four guidelines—read the Tendo blog post.

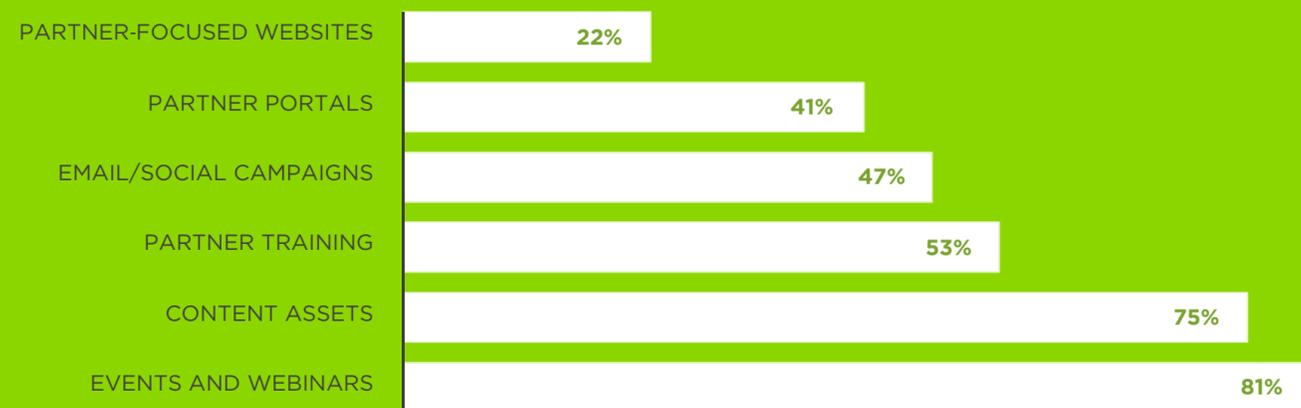
## Successes

# Partner Marketing Successes in 2021

### No Surprise: Digital Strategies Win

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a massive shift to all things digital—events, marketing strategies, and collaboration platforms, to name a few. Partner programs followed suit in 2021, with vendor teams relying more on webinars (as in-person partner events disappeared) and digital content to engage, educate, and empower partners, who can in turn do the same for their customers.

#### Which elements of your partner marketing program have been successful during the past 12 months?



Tendo Communications survey of B2B partner marketers, Q4-2021



of B2B partner marketers reported having **success with events and webinars in 2021.**

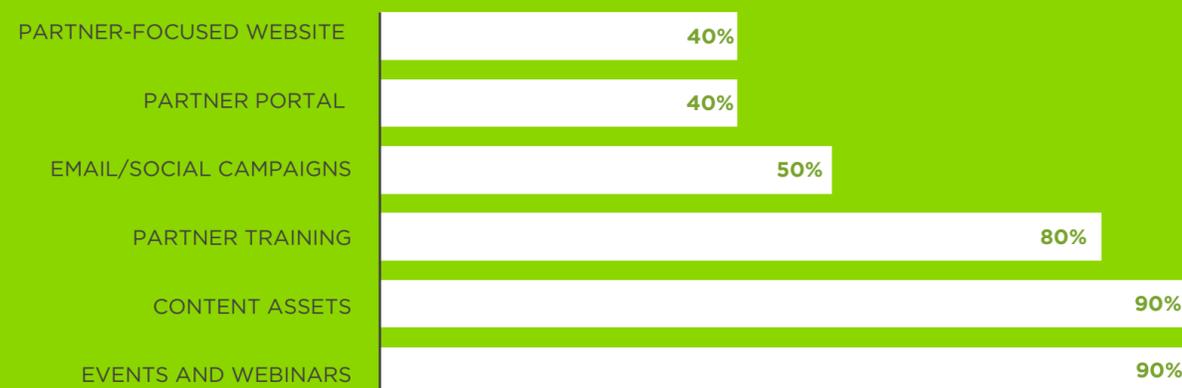
## Successes

# How Decisionmakers View Success

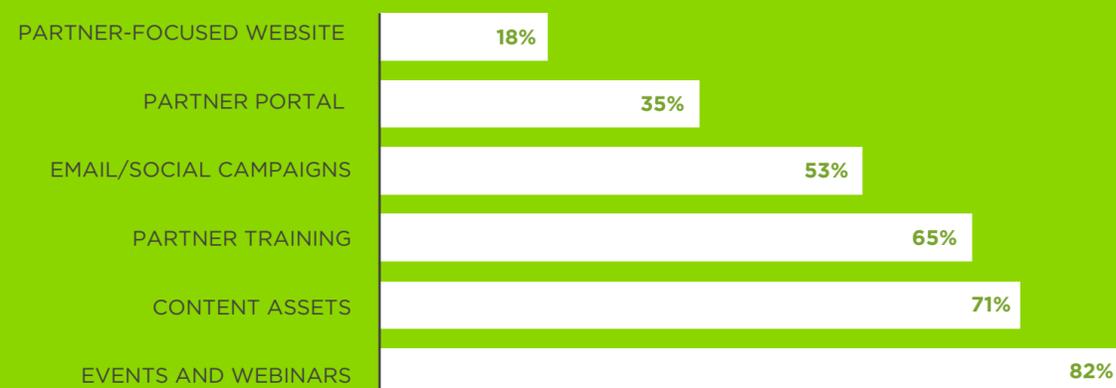
Decisionmakers concurred that events and webinars plus content assets were their greatest successes in 2021—by an overwhelming margin. In fact, 90% of leaders who oversee partner programs rated them as their top strategies.

But decisionmakers diverged from non-decisionmakers on partner training: They were far more likely to rate trainings as a highly successful strategy. Partner trainings help staff at partner companies to build skills, on everything from B2B marketing best practices to delivering the right sales messages for a vendor's products.

### Decisionmakers on program structure, strategy, incentives



### Decisionmakers on partner marketing campaigns and content



Tendo Communications survey of B2B partner marketers, Q4-2021



of partner program decisionmakers said that **content assets and events/webinars were their two top strategies.**

## Priorities

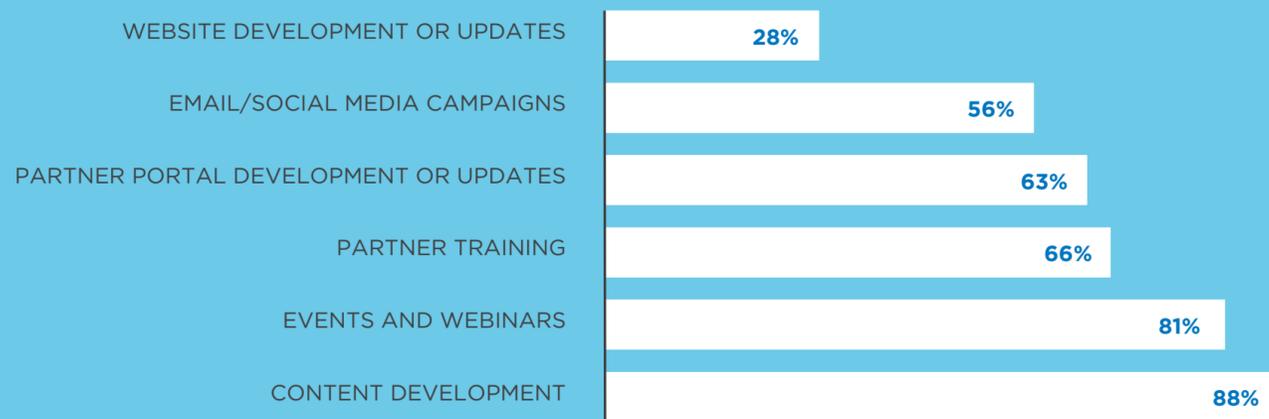
# Top Partner Marketing Priorities in 2022

### Marketers Recognize the Demand for More Content

While partner marketers reported the most success with webinars and events in 2021 (followed closely by content assets), these two strategies flip-flopped for 2022: Content development is now the top priority, with webinars/events in second.

This emphasis on partner content assets correlates to a larger trend: B2B digital content consumption [has increased significantly](#) since the start of the pandemic in 2020. Customers want to take greater control of the sales process, educating themselves as much as possible before contacting a sales representative. Successful vendors understand this and want to create a wealth of content that their partners can customize and share with prospects.

#### 2022 priorities: Which of these tactics or activities will you prioritize in the next 12 months?



Tendo Communications survey of B2B partner marketers, Q4-2021



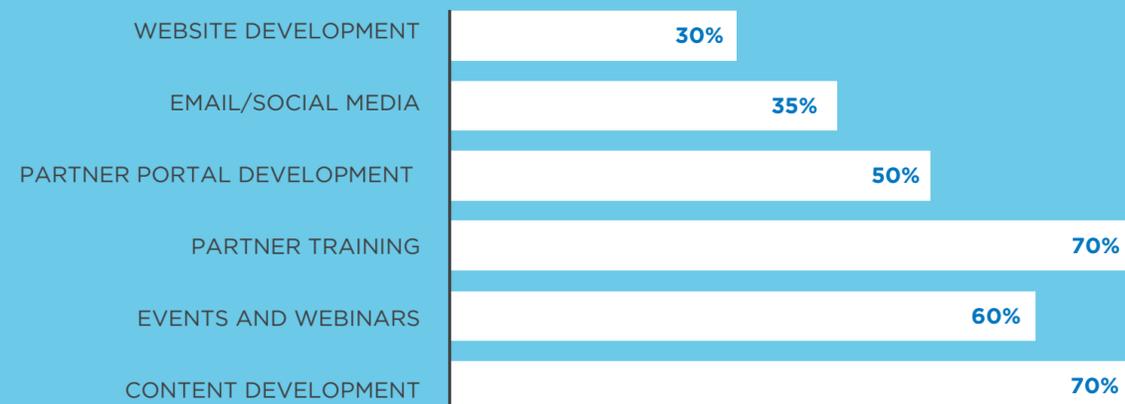
## Priorities

# Decisionmaker Priorities 2022: Content, Events, and Partner Training

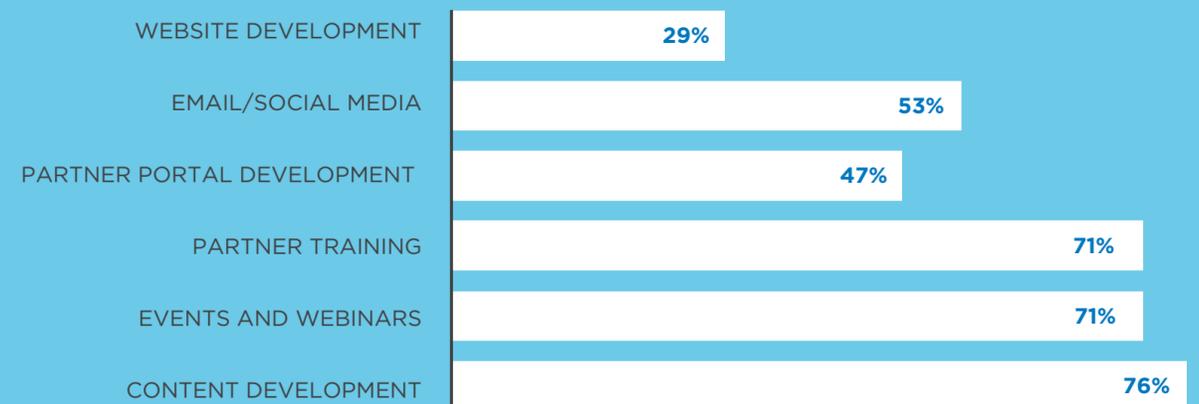
In 2022, partner program decisionmakers will invest more resources in content development and events and webinars. But partner training is also a key priority, as leaders recognize the need to empower partners with new skills to generate revenue and prioritize selling their products over other vendors.

Which of these tactics or activities will you prioritize in the next 12 months?

### Decisionmakers on program structure, strategy, incentives



### Decisionmakers on partner marketing campaigns and content



Tendo Communications survey of B2B partner marketers, Q4-2021

## Priorities

# 3 Content Best Practices for Partner Marketers

If your partner marketing team intends to create more content in 2022, follow these guidelines to maximize its impact:

### 1 Share content that coaches partners.

Vendors reap long-term benefits when they invest in helping partners improve their digital marketing capabilities. Show them how to be great at marketing in your particular industry—the best marketing tactics to reach key decisionmakers, the latest trends in the B2B marketing world.

### 2 Create engaging content experiences.

Think more holistically about the content assets and webpages you create. Create a [connected content experience](#) that allows your partners to progressively engage audiences with related content elements that all work together to fulfill their informational or transactional needs.

### 3 Explore thought leadership together.

Collaborate with your partners to create content assets that serve their marketing needs and speak directly to their customers. After all, your partners are on the front lines—they can share customer success stories, and they understand customer pain points and needs in detail.

[View All Content Best Practices](#)

For the full details on these recommended content best practices for partner marketers, read the Tendo blog post.



“Give your partners related content assets and webpages that all work together to help them progressively engage their audiences. That’s the essence of a great content experience.”

–**Lindy Roux**,  
Executive Vice President  
and Partner at Tendo  
Communications



# Elevate Your Content Strategy with Help from Tendo

Are you banking on better content to help you meet your partner marketing goals this year? Then you need a content partner that understands how to make the puzzle pieces fit: content marketing strategy, content creation, content operations, digital content experience, and more.

World-class B2B brands—from Cisco and Salesforce to VMware and Autodesk—trust Tendo Communications as their go-to content agency. In fact, we've helped Cisco build one of the industry's most successful and innovative partner experiences.

Realize the power of content. Contact a member of the Tendo executive team to share your partner marketing challenges and goals. We're ready to help.

[Talk to Tendo ↗](#)