

ISV Initiatives

From A Bird's Eye View

 Cheryl Strege

I recently had the chance to chat with Steve Malme, senior director responsible for Microsoft Business Solutions Partners at Microsoft, about the importance of independent software vendors (ISVs) in the overall Microsoft strategy. It was a chance to pick the brain of a person who thinks every day about Partners and ISVs and the way that they affect the delivery of solutions to customers on a worldwide basis. (Plus, I like picking people's brains – maybe that's why I chose marketing as a profession.)

Q: Steve, give me your "bird's eye view" on Microsoft's commitment to the ISV channel and the vertical strategy, which we've all been hearing about for a couple of years now.

A: It's my hope that Microsoft's message is loud and clear: to deliver an industry leading portfolio of vertical solutions, we need Partners. Partners provide deep vertical expertise, vertical software solutions, and vertical specific implementation services. Microsoft is committed to providing customers with end-to-end solutions to optimize their business processes, and we need Partners to deliver on this promise.

To think about this another way, let me give you some additional information. The Microsoft Dynamics team has prioritized 19 vertical markets. That's pretty expansive, but our Microsoft industry taxonomy includes a total of 64 verticals. Taking that one level deeper, every vertical solution may be constructed to address the specific business requirements across 1,100 solution areas. A solution area, for example, would be Public Sector, Personnel Management, or Durable Goods Distribution. Now multiply by the

number of countries and by language, and you get a clear picture and appreciation for the global scope of Microsoft's vertical strategy. In collaboration with our Partners, we are focused on delivering the unique vertical solutions required in each country, and in each language, on a global scale.

Q: What is the best way for ISVs to connect with Microsoft VARs and with Microsoft itself?

A: For our Microsoft Business Solutions Partners, there are several things I recommend:

1. Register as a Microsoft ISV Partner

If you're a Microsoft solutions developer, then enroll as a Microsoft ISV. Partners who register as a member of our ISV/Software Solutions Competency can tap into Microsoft resources and funding for marketing and development assistance. In addition, we're adding value to our ISV program with:

- » Microsoft Dynamics software that may be used by ISVs to run their own business,
- » ISV technical enablement via focused Microsoft events and resources provided by our Developer and Platform Evangelism (DPE) group,
- » Microsoft Dynamics code and developer guidance in our Microsoft Developer Network library.
- » A new ISV Telesales service to drive ISV demand generation.

If a Partner is interested in enrolling in the the Microsoft ISV Competency, then I would ask him/her to review the ISV/Software Solutions program description listed under "Competencies" on the Microsoft Partner Portal (<http://partner.microsoft.com>).

2. Engage as a Vertical Partner

In addition to the resources made available to our ISV Partners, Microsoft is also making additional resources, investments, and information available to our vertical Partners. We're making these investments because we want to ensure that our business Partners have the resources required to specialize, differentiate, and grow their business.

3. Architect Your Vertical Solution

Delivering vertical solutions that meet or exceed customer expectations is a challenge. To support our Partners in the development and integration of a complete solution, we have established a worldwide portfolio of vertical solutions (in Channel Builder and Solutions Finder) to reduce the amount of duplicate development and increase solution reuse and resale across the Microsoft Partner channel.

We have also identified a small inventory of global, fully integrated solutions as part of the Microsoft Business Solutions Industry Builder Initiative (IBI). Industry Builder solutions are available on the Microsoft Dynamics price list and are supported by Microsoft technical support. These solutions are available for Microsoft Dynamics™ AX today, and new IBI solutions will be made available for other Microsoft Dynamics products in the coming year. By making both a broad and deep inventory of vertical solutions available to our Microsoft Dynamics Partners and customers, we believe that we will reduce the time to market for our Microsoft Dynamics Partners and streamline the solution purchase process for our vertical customers.

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4. Engage in Microsoft Partner-to-Partner Events

To make sure that we keep a direct line of communication with our Microsoft Dynamics Partners, we've been conducting Vertical Pulse Surveys for the past year. One of the primary points of feedback provided by our Partners was that approximately 40% of our ISVs were actively looking for reselling Partners, and an equal amount of reselling Partners were looking for solutions to resell.

We'll be conducting Vertical Partner Summits in 40-plus cities in 20-plus countries in FY07. We piloted this concept last year, and the feedback has been super positive. Dates are being finalized, so ISVs should watch for additional information in the ISV newsletter.

5. Microsoft Dynamics ISV Portal

The Microsoft Dynamics ISV Portal is a fairly recent addition to our Microsoft Dynamics ISV community offering. Whether the Partner is new to Microsoft Dynamics or a seasoned ISV looking for additional ways to leverage his/her Microsoft partnership, this site provides the information necessary to capitalize on the market momentum of Microsoft Dynamics.

There are several significant benefits on

this site:

- » Microsoft Developer Network (MSDN) subscriptions provide priority access to technical information, along with the most current tools, platform, and server technologies.
- » An ISV Partner can get specific information about how to get started with Microsoft Dynamics, including detailed information on how to best develop, test, and market his/her solution.
- » The action item for Microsoft Dynamics ISVs is to complete the form on the site. They'll then be contacted by a Partner account manager to tailor the assistance that might be needed.

(Cheryl's note: As a marketer, I was delighted to see a whole page on the ISV Community Web site devoted to marketing, with tools, resources, articles, and even an "Ask the Expert" feature.)

Q: Moving to a subject near and dear to my heart....marketing. What are the best options for ISVs to leverage the many marketing resources provided by Microsoft?

A: We've made some pretty significant marketing resources available to our Partners. There are a few resources that are repeatedly used, so let me highlight those:

Partner Vertical Resource Center

The Partner Vertical Resource Center is a one-stop site where you can find information about Microsoft Dynamics industry/vertical strategies, testimonials, and evidence on the value of delivering vertical solutions. You can also find research and data to help you build a vertical marketing plan as well as reusable marketing collateral. Microsoft has published vertical marketing and sales tools for 19 verticals in 17 countries in nine languages!

The Partner Marketing Center

The Partner Marketing Center offers on-demand access to an array of professional direct mail templates, customer-ready materials, tools, and marketing guidance to build effective marketing campaigns. There are step-by-steps wizards that allow ISVs (and Partners) to create fully customizable templates for their marketing needs. And there have been continual upgrades to the Partner Marketing Center to accommodate reusable collateral across verticals. In addition to the collateral offered on the Partner Marketing Center and the Partner Vertical Resource Center, we hope to expand our Partner marketing value by providing outsourced marketing services to our Partners. We already provide Partner marketing services in a num-

Upcoming Microsoft Dynamics™ Bootcamps



Accelerate! Microsoft Dynamics™ GP Financials & Supply Chain Bootcamps

Microsoft is pleased to bring technology partners accelerated boot camp training sessions for Microsoft Dynamics™ GP.

Goals of Bootcamps:

- Help you gain technical understanding of Microsoft Dynamics™ GP
- Assist in building skills, relaying tips and tricks, and good implementation practices
- Aid in the preparation for Microsoft Dynamics™ GP certification exams

Coming to a city near you beginning in October and continuing through March.

For more information or to register, visit www.msusapartnerreadiness.com/gp.

Microsoft Dynamics™ CRM 3.0 Blended Learning Boot Camp

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- E-Live Instructor-Led Training
- Classroom Training

For more information or to register, visit www.msusapartnerreadiness.com/crmtraining.

Questions: usptr@microsoft.com



ber of countries, and we continue to expand this service across the globe.

Marketing Services for Partners

ISVs can use templates at the Marketing Services for Partners site to create brochures, emails, direct mail pieces, and more. The templates allow ISVs to add their company logo and specific company and product information, download high resolution files, order prints through the site, and launch email campaigns. List broker services are also available.

ISV Telesales Service

The ISV Telesales Service provides ISVs with access to experienced IT telesales professionals who take their prospect list and qualify their leads, based on specific information they have received about the ISV's solution and target customer. Once the campaign has been completed, ISVs receive a list of business decision makers who have agreed to a follow-up call, based on the original prospect list. (This is available to Gold Certified and Certified ISVs with the ISV/Software Solutions Competency.)

Case Study Development Assistance

ISVs can showcase successful implementations of their solutions deployed on the Microsoft platform through case studies that are fully or partially funded by Microsoft. The case studies are written by an independent vendor with extensive industry experience and are posted on www.microsoft.com as well as made available for the ISV to use as sales collateral. This benefit is available to Gold and Certified ISVs with the ISV/Software Solutions Competency.

Partner Engagement Promotion

The Partner Excellence Promotion is a program to build awareness of the through-Partner marketing tools and resources and to drive participation and excitement through a worldwide competition. The goal of the promotion is to strengthen Partner marketing readiness so that Partners are better prepared to launch their own marketing initiatives, create demand, and nurture customer opportunities to close. All Microsoft Dynamics Partners are encouraged to participate.

In the sessions and the Partner marketing workshops, we work side-by-side with our Partners to develop marketing plans and provide guidance on how to effectively execute a marketing campaign. In addition, for our top performing (marketing) Partners, we show up with additional dollars to help fund ad-

ditional marketing activities. With this program, we have a goal of building the marketing skills of 1,500 Partners worldwide.

Q: *In your opinion, what are the top two to three strategic steps or investments an ISV needs to make to maximize their relationship with Microsoft?*

A: No question, one of my top priorities would be to profile the ISV's company and solution in the Partner Solution Profiler. The Profiler feeds our customer-facing Solution Finder Web sites, and we have 18 sites deployed across the world. These sites serve as an online lead generation tool, allowing Microsoft customers to quickly search and find solutions that uniquely fit their business.

Microsoft has spent millions to create and expose Solution Finder to potential customers. We're just getting started, but we already have 5,000 or more users per day. With our investments in the Microsoft "People-Ready" campaign, we're seeing additional volume since Solution Finder is THE engine for finding solutions on our People Ready Web site. One additional note is that we also use the information captured in Partner Solution Profiles to prioritize marketing investments, and we will use this same information for distributing leads.

I would also encourage Partners to engage deeply with your local Microsoft team. Make the effort to connect with them at Quarterly Partner Briefings, monthly meetings, and so on. Our country and area field teams are focused on driving market demand and supporting Partners in the sales process. As a Partner, I would tap into my local Microsoft team and really understand the value they can deliver.

One final priority: take stock of your assets, expertise, and solutions, and then advertise this focus and specialization to both Microsoft and other Microsoft Dynamics/MBS Partners. When Partners ask for my opinion on what opportunities they should prioritize to grow their business, my response is to identify the things you do well already and then multiply your efforts to drive more value and more velocity. The key to success (and I measure success in profit) is repeatability and focus. 🌐

Cheryl Strege loves marketing in all its various forms. After 17 years with Microsoft Business Solutions, today she derives her energy from working with Partners on their marketing strategies. Cheryl has recently been named one of only 12 of Microsoft's Partner Marketing Advisors worldwide. She can be reached at Cheryl@thepartnerchannel.com or 605-574-9432.

TIP: When a customer searches for a particular product, or searches a particular geography, the Partners that come up in that search are ranked by the number of customer references they have. The more references you submit for your Profiled Solution, the closer to the top you're ranked. Try it yourself at <http://directory.microsoft.com/mprd/>.

TIP: So how do you tap into all these Microsoft resources? Here's a quick list of sites to get you going:

Microsoft ISV Community Page (U.S.): <http://microsoft.mrmpslc.com/ISVCommunity/Index.aspx?BZCID=8QT282PQ8B9C>

International Assistance for ISVs: <https://partner.microsoft.com/global/program/competencies/isvsolutions/40029093>

Microsoft Dynamics ISV Portal: <http://www.microsoftdynamicsiv.com>

Partner Vertical Resource Center: <https://partner.microsoft.com/global/vertical>

Partner Marketing Center: <https://partner.microsoft.com/global/40019331>

Marketing Services for Partners <http://www.mspartnerdirect.com>

ISV Telesales Service <http://partner.microsoft.com/isvtelesales>

Quick Reference Card Generator (US only) <http://www.msivquickreference.com/>

Customer Solution Finder: <http://www.microsoft.com/dynamics/solutionfinder>

Partner Learning Center: <http://www.msreadiness.com>