

Article ArC021 – MSP & Vendor Process

Category: MSP

The Importance of Process in Maintaining Partnerships and Client Relationships

Your MSP has both clients and partners.

Both are critical to the operation, revenue, and profitability of your organization.

Unfortunately, many times a lack of process on the partnership side hinders your relationship with your clients.

For example, if the lines of communication between you and your VoIP partner or your cabling contractor aren't 100%, projects can be delayed.

This is where establishing processes is important.

But let's back up a little bit.

Processes require infrastructure. It's one thing to build processes into your operations for your partners, it's another thing to ensure that your partners have the backend infrastructure (people, tech, and capacity) to operate and scale with you.

Vetting a potential partner comes into play at this point, because you don't want a well-meaning (but functionally inadequate) vendor or service delivery partner to injure your relationship with your clients.

Sales and growth in your MSP can only happen when your sales force has confidence in the capabilities of BOTH your internal staff AND the external partners you rely upon for service delivery.

An MSP's partners must have their backend processes fine-tuned, otherwise, you end up with stop-and-go (and sometimes ALL STOP) relationships with your own clients.

Stress on Processes

One way to mitigate the stop-and-go of clients utilizing the services you provide through partners is to be very clear with your partners as to what each of you bring to the table – and each sticking to their side of the table. When partners try to get into the MSP business or when MSPs try to get into the vendor business, they (most often) spread themselves too thin, neglect best-practice processes, injure the partner relationship, and don't serve the client well.

Clients are very good at seeing the stress cracks that appear when lines between MSP and partners aren't clearly defined and affect service delivery. Knowing who is responsible for what and having the service delivery paths clearly defined is critical.

Helping Your Partners Develop While many of your vendor partners are multi-national firms that have robust processes that have been ironed out, MSPs also rely on local and regional partners that may still be building their operational maturity. Because happy clients (and profitability) are dependent upon your relationship, it's in your MSPs best interest to help that partner take steps toward that operational maturity.

This often means advising them in tech and helping them to build out processes that work for you both. The way to keep this from being seen as an intrusion into their business is to help them understand that

1. We're in this together and
2. We'll make more money together if we can streamline these processes.

It's a "Help Me Help You" pitch to your partner, and can be used to further grow the bond between the two companies as you increase participation volume and collaborative revenue.

Often this discussion begins with the phrase, "This is what we need from our partners" and ends with the partner saying, "This is going to work out well for both of us."

With the right approach, you can help partners with a lower maturity level, improve their game and serve you – and your clients – better.