A warning for vendors as nearly a quarter of partners say programs not important

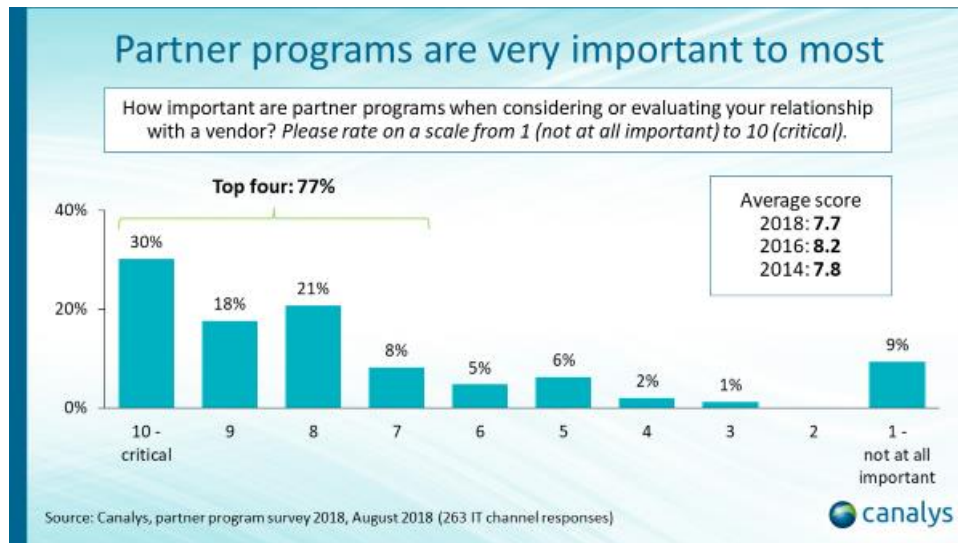**Palo Alto, Shanghai, Singapore and Reading (UK) – Monday, 3 September 2018**

[The latest research from analysts at Canalys reveals that the importance of IT vendor programs to channel partners in 2018 has fallen compared with 2016.](#) **77% of those surveyed in August 2018 rated partner programs as important when evaluating vendor relationships. This was down from 94% when the same question was asked in 2016 as part of Canalys' biannual partner program survey on Candefero, the unique online channel community**. 9% of respondents surveyed in 2018 rated partner programs as "not at all important", while almost a quarter rated them as lacking importance (six or less on the ranking scale).

A warning for vendors as nearly a quarter of partners say programs not important #Canalys #channelinsight - via @Canalys https://tinyurl.com/y7n9524p

The results come as a warning to vendors that they must get partners aligned as the market faces disruption from cloud and digital technologies. "Increasingly, the ball is in the channel's court," said Alex Smith, Senior Director of Channels Research at Canalys. "Partners have more levers to pull. They can provide more of their own services or make new technology vendor partnerships to fulfill specific opportunities. Meanwhile, vendors often change programs to reflect changes in partner business models and to spur loyalty, but such changes can have the unintended consequence of increasing complexity, leading to frustration."

Partner programs are very important to most

How important are partner programs when considering or evaluating your relationship with a vendor? *Please rate on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 10 (critical).*

Top four: 77%

Average score
2018: **7.7**
2016: **8.2**
2014: **7.8**

Source: Canalys, partner program survey 2018, August 2018 (263 IT channel responses)

A lack of consistency/changes to programs was the top complaint, with 16% of respondents selecting it among their top issues. Complexity in achieving certifications and specializations was the next highest at 15%.

Singapore-based Canalys Analyst Sharon Hiu said, "This research clearly highlights the difficult balance that vendors need to strike. They must continue developing programs to remain relevant to their partners' evolving businesses, while also minimizing the level of disruption and frustration that changes often create."

Complexity high on complaints about programs

What are your biggest complaints about partner programs? *Select your top three, starting with your highest ranking choice, to your lowest ranking choice.*

Percentage of partners to select as the biggest complaint

Complaint	Percentage
Vendors keep changing their programs/lack of consistency	16%
Achieving certifications and specializations is too complex	15%
Too many partners in the program	14%
Discount/rebate programs are too complex	11%
Too much administration (forms, etc)	10%

Source: Canalys, partner program survey 2018, August 2018 (263 IT channel responses)

Canalys believes partner programs will continue to be vital to partners as they are fundamental to how they navigate relationships with vendors. Canalys' ongoing research with channel partners shows vendors must involve partners more in their program planning and strategy discussions to ensure programs are valuable.

"As partners develop different service models, the most successful vendors will be those that effectively help partners adapt their technical capabilities. The huge challenge is to keep programs simple while our industry embraces complex new technologies," said Hiu.

"Vendors must take action, such as investing in stronger digital tools, including integrated automation and AI-enabled capabilities, to help reduce partners' manual administration work. Partner managers must also become more empowered and offer personalized support for individual partner needs. The channel is pressuring vendors to do just this."

About the partner program survey

The Canalys 2018 partner program survey was conducted in July and August 2018 to capture channel partners' opinions on what aspects of partner programs, including cloud services, are most important to them and what channel leaders should pay attention to when implementing programs.

Partners were asked to provide feedback via an online questionnaire on Canalys' Candefero website. The survey captured feedback from a total of 263 channel partners from 51 countries.

About the Partner Program Analysis service

This service is unrivalled in its independent analysis of the leading IT vendors' program offerings, focusing on issues facing vendors when building and maintaining partner programs. It provides qualitative information designed for senior worldwide channel management within vendors from across the IT spectrum.

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About Canalys

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