



6 Answers You Need Before Selecting a Hardware Partner

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Channel Success Has Always Hinged on Partnerships

Vendor partnerships have a far-reaching impact on value-added reseller (VAR) businesses. Vendors' hardware gives you the ability to solve your customers' pain points and achieve their business objectives with systems precisely targeting their use cases. Innovative vendors also offer options that meet your customers' needs today and give you the flexibility to incorporate emerging technologies into their solutions in the future.

If you form the right partnerships, the solutions you design will meet your customers' expectations for usability, durability, and manageability throughout their lifecycles, keeping total cost of ownership (TCO) low while producing a healthy return on investment (ROI).

The Answers You Need

Considering the role that vendor partnerships play in your business success, you need to approach channel relationships strategically. VARs should not base partnerships on just one factor. Answers to the following six questions will provide you with valuable insights so you can confidently invest time and resources into establishing a partnership that will benefit your business.



1. How does the vendor's product quality compare to others on the market?

VARs can easily find information on a product's speeds and feeds, but you need more information before choosing hardware for your customers. Ask the vendor to provide you with results of product testing and ratings. Look for high IP ratings for hardware that will be exposed to dust or liquids and MIL-STD certifications for resistance to damage from shocks, vibrations, or drops. However, also make sure you partner with a market leader that offers quality choices for use cases in controlled environments.

Dig deeper

Go beyond the information the vendor provides to learn more about its products. Read reviews and user feedback to understand how they perform, if they have any drawbacks, and how the vendor handled issues. When you discover that your market associates the vendor's products with quality, you can confidently leverage them when designing solutions.



2. Does the vendor's product portfolio meet all of your customers' needs?

Vendors typically have a well-defined, core focus. However, not all offer a breadth of products that meet every business's needs. For example, VARs may offer printing technology to customers in retail, restaurant, and other vertical markets and to both SMB and enterprise customers. When the vendor's line offers products that adapt to each market segment you serve, you benefit. Standardizing on one vendor's products helps you save time when training and certifying your technicians and when providing ongoing support. You also gain the economy of scale to keep solution costs low or to improve your margin.

Look ahead

As you evaluate the breadth of the vendor's portfolio, ask what's next. Talk to the vendor's team about their plans and where they're making investments in innovation. Make sure you're aligning with a company that is committed to staying on the forefront, to give you a competitive edge as technology advances, businesses' digital transformation continues, and end-user and consumer expectations evolve.



3. Will the terms of your channel partnership agreement help you grow your business?

You enter into partnerships with vendors to provide their customers with optimal solutions. However, you also enter into partnerships to benefit your businesses. A beneficial partnership will allow you to maximize your income. It must also be flexible enough to align with how you do business, rather than locking you into achieving tiers that are beyond your capabilities before you see financial benefits or dedicated support. The vendor must also offer comprehensive training, certification, and onboarding to give you a solid foundation for success with its products.

Increase your visibility

A partner program that includes marketing support will also help accelerate your growth. Ask the vendor about co-marketing opportunities, assistance with marketing asset development, and trade show participation, which can increase your visibility in your market. Another pivotal factor is whether the vendor has a lead generation initiative. Investigate whether they share those leads equitably with partners.



4. What's the vendor's brand reputation?

VARs must enter into channel agreements with the understanding that end-users will associate their vendor partners' reputations with their own. Any vendor you work with should have a brand image that communicates reliability, dependability, and integrity. Virtually every vendor has experienced occasional setbacks and had to adapt to supply chain disruptions and shortages in the 2020s. Investigate how the vendor conquered those challenges – and the impact those issues had on their brands. Vendors who emerged with better processes, more resilience, and more determination are the vendors you want in your corner.

Future-proof your business

You'll also find value in partnering with a vendor who is a known thought leader in your market. Does the partner understand the solutions that your market currently uses and understand how to improve on them? Consider what the partner advises when participating in industry event panels and look for the articles and insights they publish online and on social media. Closing deals is easier when your solutions include products from well-known, respected vendors that have a reputation for helping businesses move forward.



5. Does the vendor offer industry-leading service and support?

Give your business the advantage of a vendor partner that prioritizes support. Ensure you understand the experiences you or your customers can expect when calling with questions or troubleshooting assistance. Top vendors offer advanced customer support from highly skilled technicians and onsite service through a network of authorized service providers. Also, investigate extended service plan options including depot repair and remote support, which will help your customers get the most value from their investments.

End-to-end support

Evaluate potential vendor partners for support throughout the lifecycle of the account:

- ✓ Sales training and sales support, particularly to assist with large end-user deals
- ✓ Developer resources for partners interested in integrating their own IP
- ✓ Dedicated account representatives available for channel partners
- ✓ Accessible call center service where end users can reach skilled technicians



6. Is your vendor partner invested in your success?

A valuable channel partnership is one in which both parties benefit and are committed to each other's business growth. When you summarize what you've learned by asking the first five questions, you'll have a clearer picture of whether the vendor is committed to your success.

Your vendor partners should ensure they offer industry-leading products that you can adapt to a range of use cases, now and in the future, partner program terms that allow you to maximize your income, and the ability to increase your brand visibility. Your partnership should also mean you're associating your business with a well-known and respected brand that stands behind its products with comprehensive service and support.

You may have partnerships that aren't beneficial, but, fortunately, it's possible to make positive changes for your business and your customers. Collect all the facts you need and position your business for success.



About the Epson® EnvisionSM Partner Program

The Epson Advantage Partner Program is designed to maximize your earning potential with Epson and incentivize you to grow your Epson business with incremental earning opportunities.

Epson Envision Partners authorized within the Epson Advantage Program have access to financial benefits, advanced technical support, and marketing resources designed to increase revenue and create new business opportunities.

Upon entering the program, and then on an annual basis, Envision Partners are evaluated within one of four tiers (mSilver, Silver, Gold, or Platinum) based on their business profile, sales history, and technical and customer support capabilities.

When you become an Epson Advantage Partner, you have access to numerous benefits and advantages via our many different programs. Program documents are posted at the beginning of each quarter on the Epson Partner Portal. This will include any changes or updates to the program.

For more information on the Epson Envision Partner Program, visit <https://epson.com/epson-partners-program>

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