SaaS Channel Research, Part 1: Subtle, Deadly Change for ISV Channel Partners?

Description: Software as a Service (SaaS) and Cloud Computing are disrupting the business model of traditional ISV channel partners. Our research shows that many of these channel partners are in danger, while those who succeed will do so by embracing the SaaS/Cloud model, even to the extent of beginning to resemble SaaS/Cloud providers themselves.

Our research into buyer preferences indicates that the channel is critical to the continued growth of SaaS. This is particularly true for SMB buyers, who show a marked preference for buying IT, including SaaS, through channels rather than directly from vendors. Even in the large enterprise market, there is a significant percentage of executives who wish to purchase SaaS through partners. Last, executives view non-traditional channels such as business services providers or online marketplaces as viable sources from which to acquire SaaS solutions.

Channel partners themselves, however, are polarized as to the impact SaaS is having on their business. At one extreme are those whose experience is telling them that SaaS will not have a significant impact on their business – their customers are not yet asking for it, and the deployment model doesn't fit their customers’ businesses. At the other extreme are channel partners who have embraced SaaS in their own businesses, and who believe that in a market that values the quality of a solution, no solution should be excluded solely on the basis of its deployment model.

Because of the importance of reaching new customers – and supporting them – to the growth of SaaS/Cloud (particularly in the current economic climate), We believe that we will be seeing a strong increase in channel-focused outreach, positioning and marketing by SaaS/Cloud providers. These providers will be looking to build out strong partner ecosystems and will look to appeal to the channel by offering healthy margins, billing support and connections to a plethora of potential solution partners – as well as potential customers.


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