

Channel Program User's Guide: The IBM PartnerWorld Express Advantage Business Strategy

Three components of PartnerWorld provide a variety of benefits for the SMB channel.

By David Geer

HELPING PARTNERS BUILD proposals and skills as well as learn to deliver technical solutions are key to the IBM PartnerWorld Express Advantage (PWEA) business strategy, according to Shaun Jones, director of worldwide SMB marketing in the IBM software group. A few programs within PWEA accomplish those goals.

As part of Express Advantage, IBM built an enablement program called Solutions Builder Express (SBE) that helps partners create solutions and bring them to market. SBE helps SMBs design, sell, and deploy technologies built with Express Advantage components by providing sales materials, technical tools, and implementation guides, says Cynthia Conway, who handles global SMB media relations for the IBM software group.

SBE provides partners with the skills to assemble solutions, present them to clients, and implement them in repeatable ways. "If it's a smaller partner, their confidence in their ability to deliver a solution as they said they would [and do so] repeatedly is very important to the well-being of their business," says Jones.

Another program, the Software Value Incentive (SVI), rewards partners for software-related initiatives. SVI provides a payout based on the cash value of the software sold. According to Jones, the program pays out the most if partners do business with the software in the SMB world.

IBM is also gathering and using customer/partner success stories as part of its Built on IBM Express Advantage program. "We have hundreds of partners who are showing that they did something with their clients in a repeatable fashion," says Jones. "When they do that, we tell the world about them through Built on Express."

The Basics

Official name:
IBM PartnerWorld Express Advantage

Uptake: IBM has tens of thousands of partners, with about 20 percent of total revenues coming from SMBs and growing, according to IBM SMB marketing exec Shaun Jones.

Who should join: SMBs that focus on the midmarket

Dues: None at the member (entry) level

Membership requirements: Complete an online registration form and accept the PartnerWorld agreement.

PWEA information:
<http://ibm.com/PartnerWorld/smb>

Rewards for partners in the Built on IBM Express program include use of a Built on IBM Express Advantage logo and increased visibility for their businesses through marketing materials and inclusion in IBM midmarket Web portals.

PARTNER FAVORITES

The logo and pricing are key benefits of the program, according to SMB partner Vince Taravella. Taravella, director of channel sales with Vormittag Associates Inc., an ISV in Ronkonkoma, N.Y., says that IBM's partner programs bring solutions to SMBs at costs that are in line with their budgets. "The logo implies that we are a recognized IBM partner," he says, which adds to the organization's leverage. A hidden benefit, Taravella says, is exposure through IBM public relations efforts via Built on IBM Express Advantage.

According to Troy Webb, managing partner

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SHAUN JONES
DIRECTOR OF WORLDWIDE
SMB MARKETING, IBM SOFTWARE

at technology solutions provider InCentric Solutions LLC, in Morrisville, N.C., his favorite hidden benefit is that the Express Advantage demand generation marketing center brings his marketing efforts in sync with IBM's.

Is there room for improvement? "I could see us getting more exposure with the Express Advantage offering," says Taravella, suggesting a potential "next level" to which IBM might take its PR efforts.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: ATTENDANCE A PLUS

IBM PartnerWorld's international conference is being held this month (April) in St. Louis. "It's an opportunity to meet with the people on our extended IBM team," says Taravella. In addition, it's "an opportunity to establish other strategic alliances [and] meet potential resellers of our product," he says. "We go every year." •

DAVID GEER is an Ohio-based technology writer. Learn more about his work at www.geercom.com.

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