

FAQs

Incorporating Joint Marketing Planning Processes Into Your Channel Strategy



This eBook presents a primer to help vendors design a Joint Marketing Planning (JMP) process into their channel strategy. It represents best practices gleaned from leading channel marketers and is intended for an audience who don't currently practice Joint Marketing Planning, but may be in the process of designing such a system and related policies. It is also beneficial for marketers who may be practicing JMP, but feel the current program and process aren't optimized to their full potential. The insights presented here offer general business practices and processes and are not bound by any special software or systems to implement.

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Introduction

Whether referred to as Joint Marketing Planning or Joint Business Planning, interest in collaborative sales and marketing planning between vendors and their channel partners is on the rise, and for good reason. Executed effectively, adding Joint Marketing Planning (JMP) to your channel management practices can bring many benefits:

- Pipeline visibility into partner sales and marketing activities
- Mutual alignment of sales and marketing initiatives
- Optimize resource planning (MDF allocation, SE support, etc.)
- Understand the true ROI of your investment
- Identify partner potential—help provide a plan for those partners to reach their full potential
- Capitalize on high-opportunity partner initiatives through discretionary investment

This document is an addition to CCI's first eBook on the subject entitled: [*Improving ROI on Channel Investments through Joint Marketing Planning*](#). Where the first focused on the mechanics of the JMP process and how the process can be optimized and streamlined through automation, the content presented herein will focus more on the philosophy of *when* and *how* to incorporate the JMP process into your channel marketing programming. Principles represented within this document require no automation to practice. Therefore, this particular eBook targets companies who are either new to the planning process, or those who are looking to redesign their current processes.



**SHOULD I BE DOING JOINT
MARKETING PLANNING WITH MY
PARTNERS?**

What is Joint Marketing Planning anyway?

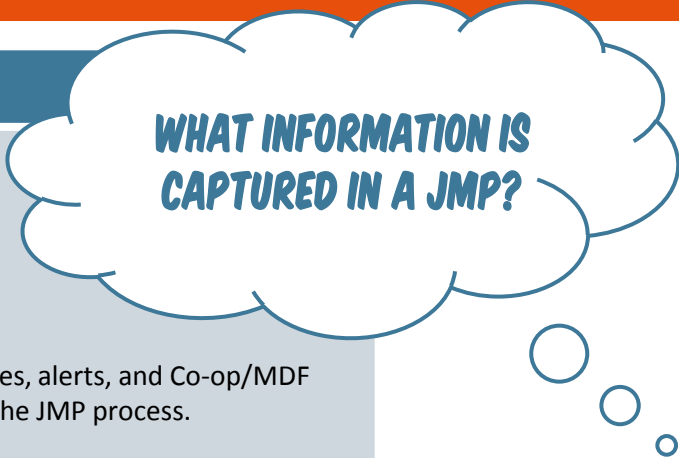
Joint Marketing Planning (JMP) is a collaborative process for vendors and channel partners to align sales and marketing efforts, establish sales goals for the vendors’ products, and to define a sales and marketing strategy to achieve those goals—including specific tactics.

Conducted successfully, JMP will provide compelling benefits to vendors and partners alike:



For Vendors	For Partners
<p>Help align sales and marketing strategies—by reaching a mutual agreement on which vendor’s products and initiatives best correspond with the partners own Go-to-Market (GTM) strategies.</p> <p>Provide a foundation to prioritize and allocate vendor resources—including MDF allocations, Sales and Marketing support, demo units and more.</p> <p>Provide a forecast of both sales and marketing activities. Effectively implemented, the JMP process will deliver a sales forecast by month, as well as a marketing calendar highlighting all planned marketing activities and related expenses across the entire planning period.</p> <p>Provide a gap analysis of aggregate partner strengths and resources by helping you understand where you don’t have complete alignment in reseller coverage—geographically, vertical market, or solution focused.</p>	<p>Help partners plan and focus their resources, ensuring the alignment of your products in their GTM, and providing a roadmap to attain those goals.</p> <p>Assure Predictability of MDF allocations and utilization because key strategies and associated tactics are planned and approved in advance.</p> <p>Create a disciplined approach for partner sales and marketing efforts to support your products. Approved tactics can be monitored throughout the life of the plan, and assistance can be provided where necessary to keep the partner on track.</p> <p>Allow Partner to identify new solution opportunities which extends their GTM by capitalizing their GTM by capitalizing on your planned initiatives.</p>

What information is captured in a JMP?



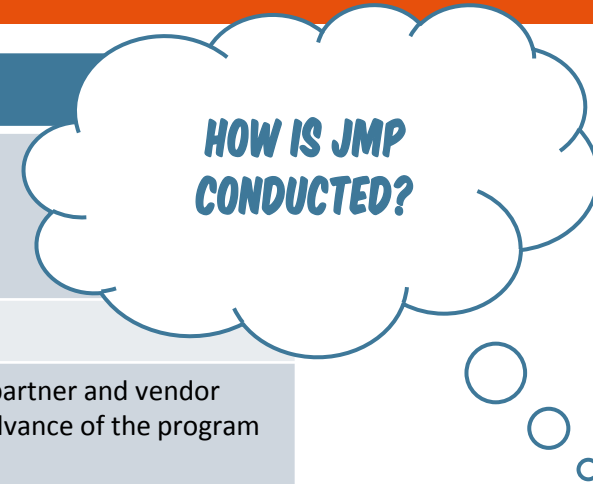
The basic foundation for a joint marketing plan is leveraged from the CHAMP template (an acronym for **C**hannel **A**dvertising and **M**arketing **P**lan. This template is a popular industry platform used by many global channel marketers). The specific information requested is adapted to the unique needs and GTM of the vendor initiating the process. The plan itself originated as a static document (for example, .doc or .xls) but have more recently been adapted to software applications that ensure data standardization and have corresponding business processes built into the application (for example, approval processes, alerts, and Co-op/MDF claim integration). CCI, for instance, offers such an application to manage and streamline the JMP process.

Consistent with the aforementioned CHAMP template, plan contents are Executive Summary, Company Profile and SWOT, Campaign/Initiative Summary, and Marketing Calendar. Typical contents for each are included below, and can be adapted for the unique needs of each vendor.

Executive Summary	Profile and SWOT	Initiatives & Campaigns	Marketing Calendar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan summary and goals ▪ Value proposition & GTM summary ▪ Value summary (for you) ▪ Critical success criteria ▪ Level of investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Company overview and market position ▪ Company demographics & contact information ▪ Vertical market coverage and/or solution focus ▪ Multi-year sales review ▪ Forecasted sales outcomes for current period ▪ Summary of value-added capabilities & certifications ▪ Sales and Marketing SWOT analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objective and related goals ▪ Corresponding vendor initiative ▪ Product focus ▪ Strategy ▪ Target summary ▪ Activity details, including: listing of activities, with associated start date, end date, and forecasted ROI for each) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned sales and marketing activities by week or month, with related costs. ▪ Information presented here directly correlates with activities listed in prior section

How is JMP conducted?

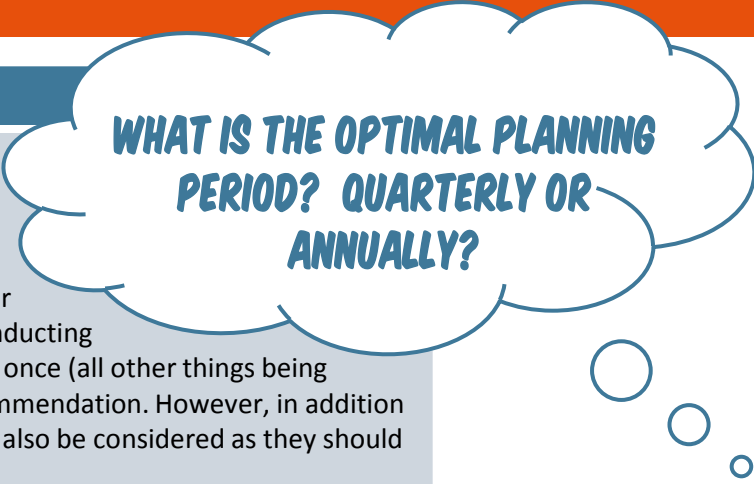
The planning process is traditionally conducted as a 1:1 process between a vendor representative and a senior member of the reseller organization responsible for the reseller/vendor relationship. These are the owners of the JMP and act as the key stakeholders responsible for plan follow-through. There are four phases to the planning process:



	Description
Creation	<p>The plan is created through an interactive session between two key stakeholders and the partner and vendor organizations. The goal is to complete the plan, including all goals and related tactics, in advance of the program period (typically either annually or quarterly).</p> <p>Best Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All goals are presented in a standardized format (to facilitate roll-up reporting and allow easier comparison between partners) and presented in a SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-Driven, Time-Bound). ▪ Each campaign or objective should be aligned with the vendor’s own GTM initiatives, if possible. ▪ Plans should be completed in advance of the planned period. ▪ ROI should be forecasted for the campaign/initiative overall (business outcome), as well as for each activity specified.
Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The plan is reviewed by senior stakeholders in the vendor organization. All planned campaigns and initiatives are reviewed and approved. ▪ In many cases, MDF funding may be allocated to offset the costs of approved activities.
Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing assessment of progress to date for all approved plans at designated touch points (either in specified review periods such as monthly, or through triggers identified in the plan as significant milestones).
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actual ROI should be reviewed, verified and compared with forecasts presented in the plan. The outcome should be a basis for best practices when creating new plans, or comparing outcomes between partners.

What is the optimal planning period? Quarterly or Annually?

There is no absolute answer as to whether the planning period should be quarterly or annually as both are common. However, a primary benefit for including the JMP process within the channel marketing portfolio is to capture forecast data from your partners. As this forecast data includes expected business outcome and investment forecasts, this long-term visibility is valuable insight that can facilitate planning on your end. What’s more, the planning process itself can be time consuming. Therefore, conducting that process four times per year will generally be less efficient than conducting it only once (all other things being equal). Those attributes alone would favor annual planning periods as a default recommendation. However, in addition to your preferences, the business planning behaviors of your channel partners should also be considered as they should be closely aligned.



While much of the benefits of employing a JMP process favor an annual planning period, there are extenuating circumstances that may favor a more frequent quarterly planning period. The table below presents some key considerations that will help you decide. Remember, this is only a guide, as there is not one right answer. While annual or quarterly are the most common, a six-month planning period is also a feasible compromise.

Consideration For Selecting Planning Period	Quarterly	Annually
Desire to Minimize MDF Liability to Shorter Time Periods	X	
Long Sales Cycle		X
Mature Product/Market		X
New Technology/Dynamic Market	X	
Seasonal Purchase Behaviors	X	X

Can planners be used with either Co-op or MDF Programs? Do plans even have to be aligned with promotional allowances at all?

The benefits of aligning the planning processes to promotional allowances include:

- The assignment of promotional allowances for approved activities acts as a “carrot” for partners to participate in the planning process. It is important that partners find mutual benefit in the planning process, and fund allocation is yet another perceived benefit for partners.
- When associated with an approved plan, MDF funds are implicitly more accountable for vendors. Therefore, vendors benefit from improved ROI, as the results of all funded activities are tracked throughout the planning process.

While many vendors that have a successful JMP practice don’t directly align funding with the plan, we believe that correlating promotional allowances with approved activities provides mutual benefits, and encourages both sides to monitor the plan’s progress throughout its lifecycle. The funding of approved activities is generally aligned with the partner’s attainment of key milestones designated within the plan, and therefore funding (or the reimbursement process) acts as another touch point to ensure tactical execution of approved activities, and provides a foundation for monitoring the plan’s progress throughout the planning period.

Funding approved activities specified with the plan is generally presented to the partner as “discretionary” and therefore more befitting an MDF program. As most co-op programs are funded based on a fixed percentage of sales from a prior period, partners perceive co-op allowances to be more of an entitlement by partners, and therefore not allocated to them as a benefit of completing the planning process.

**CAN PLANNERS BE USED WITH
EITHER CO-OP OR MDF PROGRAMS?
DO PLANS EVEN HAVE TO BE
ALIGNED WITH PROMOTIONAL
ALLOWANCES AT ALL?**

Do all MDF expenditures have to be represented on the planner?

Ideally, all expenses for offsetting the partner's sales and marketing activities should be included within the planner, but there are many times when this is not practical. Such circumstances may exist when reimbursable activities transcend planning periods, address multiple initiatives, or are too small to be specified within the plan. However, these expenses should be considered the exception and the process for identifying and funding these activities should be standardized for all partners.



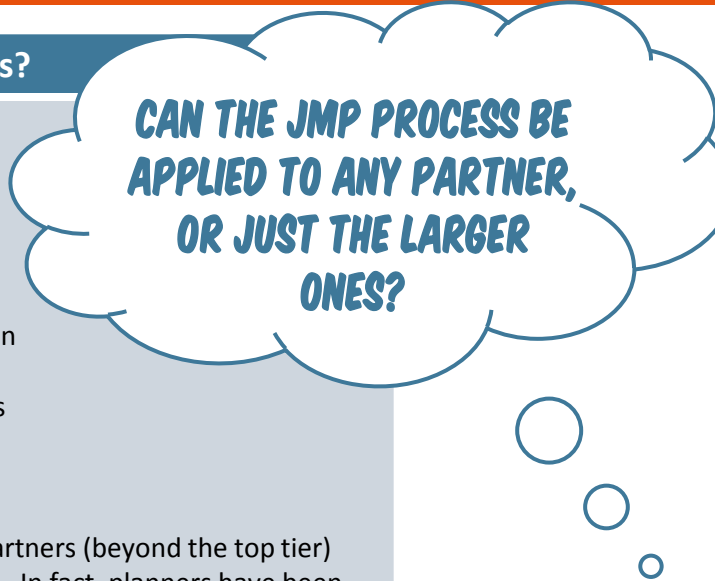
**DO ALL MDF EXPENDITURES HAVE
TO BE REPRESENTED ON THE
PLANNER?**

Can the JMP process be applied to any partner, or just the larger ones?

In the past, the process of conducting and managing a planning process has been labor intensive for vendors and partners alike. The plans themselves were captured on word processing documents or spreadsheets; and the processes of plan creation, plan review, and plan attainment required multiple touch points. Today, the planning process can be highly automated to streamline this process. Plus, all data captured in the plans can be standardized. This standardization allows many partners to complete the plan on their own—with minimal vendor oversight. What's more, data standardization allows the vendor to roll-up plan data from multiple partners to get a clear forecast of sales potential, MDF expenses, and resources necessary to achieve approved goals across their partner ecosystem. These benefits clearly encourage expanding the JMP process to more partners, rather than limiting the process to fewer partners.

Also, by expanding the JMP process to a larger base, vendors can better identify which partners (beyond the top tier) have the most potential for growth—an important attribute in this dynamic environment. In fact, planners have been deployed with success to unmanaged partners by giving them a platform to present their business plan to justify investment when no formal MDF program was otherwise offered.

It is when the planning process is extended to a broad partner base that the true benefits of employing a JMP process becomes a strategic tool for channel managers. For more information on automating the JMP process, see CCI's eBook entitled: *Improving ROI on Channel Investments through Joint Marketing Planning* found at <http://www.channelmanagement.com/resources.html>.



**CAN THE JMP PROCESS BE
APPLIED TO ANY PARTNER,
OR JUST THE LARGER
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About CCI

CCI delivers comprehensive incentive solutions to optimize sales channel performance. For more information, visit www.channelmanagement.com or contact us at info@channelmanagement.com.