FINALIST 2014

B2B AWARDS

fox parrack singapour

Category number: 15

Category name: Best Channel Marketing Initiative

Programme/initiative name: Cisco Partner Activation Programme

Agency: Fox Parrack Singapour

Brand or client: Cisco

URL or microsite: http://bit.ly/TllqYU

[Summary page]

Cisco's Partner business represents one of their fastest-growing routes to market.

With over 27,000 registered Partners across EMEAR – driving in excess of $300m worth of sales via distribution annually – this represents a critical piece of Cisco's overall channel strategy.

Despite their importance, only 66% of the total EMEAR audience were active (i.e. selling), and, whilst each year saw 5,000 new Partners register, this figure was nullified by another 5,000 who disappeared (i.e. who became, and remained, dormant).

In order for this channel to realise its true potential, Cisco needed to address this churn and, given that Partner sales had been declining for the past two years, they needed to do so promptly.

Digging into the underlying causes of Partner disengagement – driving both churn and inactivity – FPS devised an innovative solution that delivered a meaningful and rewarding Partner experience.

But the solution sought to not only halt sales decline and reverse stagnation. It helped Partners offer more value to their customers, building differentiation and servicing longer-term profitability.

[Main submission]

About the client company

Becoming a Cisco Partner increases revenue opportunities through a number of sales programmes, incentives, promotions, and special offers designed specifically to help sell Cisco products and solutions.

Cisco's Partner Programme also provides access to a host of valuable tools, training and support to help Partners satisfy the needs of their customers' most important business issues.

Underpinned by Cisco's world-leading certification programmes, Partners differentiate themselves from the competition through accreditation, whilst driving sustained profitability and growth.

Strategy – broader business issues the company is facing

Through a series of focus groups held with Partners, FPS identified a number of key factors leading to their dormancy (i.e. registered but non-transacting).

At the heart of this sat the initial "on-boarding" process – the Partner registration and pivotal post-registration phase – typically characterised by a Partner's need to know '*What next?*' and *'How do I get started?'*

Upon registration, Partners were receiving an automated, lengthy and impersonal plain text email, full of embedded links. This represented the only touch-point newly registered Partners received from Cisco, providing little guidance to the aforementioned questions.

The embedded links directed recipients through to Partner content on Cisco.com. A wealth of information does exist here, but like the email, it was confusing and devoid of structure.

Partners are chronically time-starved and have little patience to go digging, let alone make sense of the content they were receiving.

In most instances, the question of *'What next?'* went unanswered, resulting in disengagement and Partner dormancy.

Objectives of the campaign

Our goal was to answer the question of '*What next?*' by providing a valuable post-registration experience. Done right, this could eliminate uncertainty for newly registered Partners, help guide them to the most crucial information, quickly, and establish ongoing engagement.

Step one of this journey was to enable Partners to sell as quickly, and effectively, as possible. We found that the primary enabler of this was alignment with a Cisco Distributor in a mutually beneficial business relationship.

Following alignment, we understood that accelerated and sustained growth could only be achieved through certification and specialisation. Accreditation is fundamental in broadening technology portfolios and driving competitive advantage.

Next, we recognised that increased margins and sustained profitability could be achieved by leveraging Cisco's latest Partner Incentives and Promotions. And establishing a more service-rich offering, with the introduction of Cisco Capital and Cisco Services, could help increase close rates and deal sizes.

What was most evident through our research was that Partner engagement and success were part of a journey – requiring commitment and time – predicated upon collaboration between Cisco, the Distributor and the Partner.

This insight gave rise to FPS's overarching campaign concept: **The Power of Partnerships**. (Defined as the combined strength of the Partner and Distributor, with Cisco's underpinning contribution.)

The target audience

Our target audience for the initial pilot phase was broken into two segments:

1: New Cisco Partners, registered between January 2013 and January 2014 with no purchase history

2: Pre-January 2013 Partners with no purchase history in the past year with no purchase history, this registered but entirely dormant audience served as the perfect test-bed for initial pilot roll-out.

Target Partners were located in UK&I, South Africa and UAE only.

These are typically smaller Partners looking to grow sales with Cisco. They are looking to sell a broad range of innovative and reliable technologies to existing customers, establishing a service-rich business with more margin.

Media, channels or techniques used

As Cisco's previous method of engagement failed to prioritise key content, confusing recipients, we created a solution that highlighted relevant material for Partners (aligned to specific buying personas) through a simple hierarchy. From this, a series of personal, straight-talking, benefit-led messages were created.

Underpinned by our central theme, **The Power of Partnerships**, a series of 4 emails were created. Deploying one email per fortnight, we simplified the messages through short copy and focussed on a hero call-to-action. Each deployment helped build the story, a sense of energy and a dynamic scenario that demonstrated successful Partnership performance.

Email themes:

1: Unlocking Opportunities with Distributors (increase revenues)
2: Explore Incentive/Promotion Opportunities (increase margins)
3: Take Your First Steps to Certification (grow expertise/profits)
4: Explore Cisco Capital/Services (increase close rates/deal sizes)

Each personalised email led Partners through to a campaign portal (also created by FPS) which expanded on the established themes. A dedicated tab was allocated to each, allowing recipients to self-serve content at their own pace.

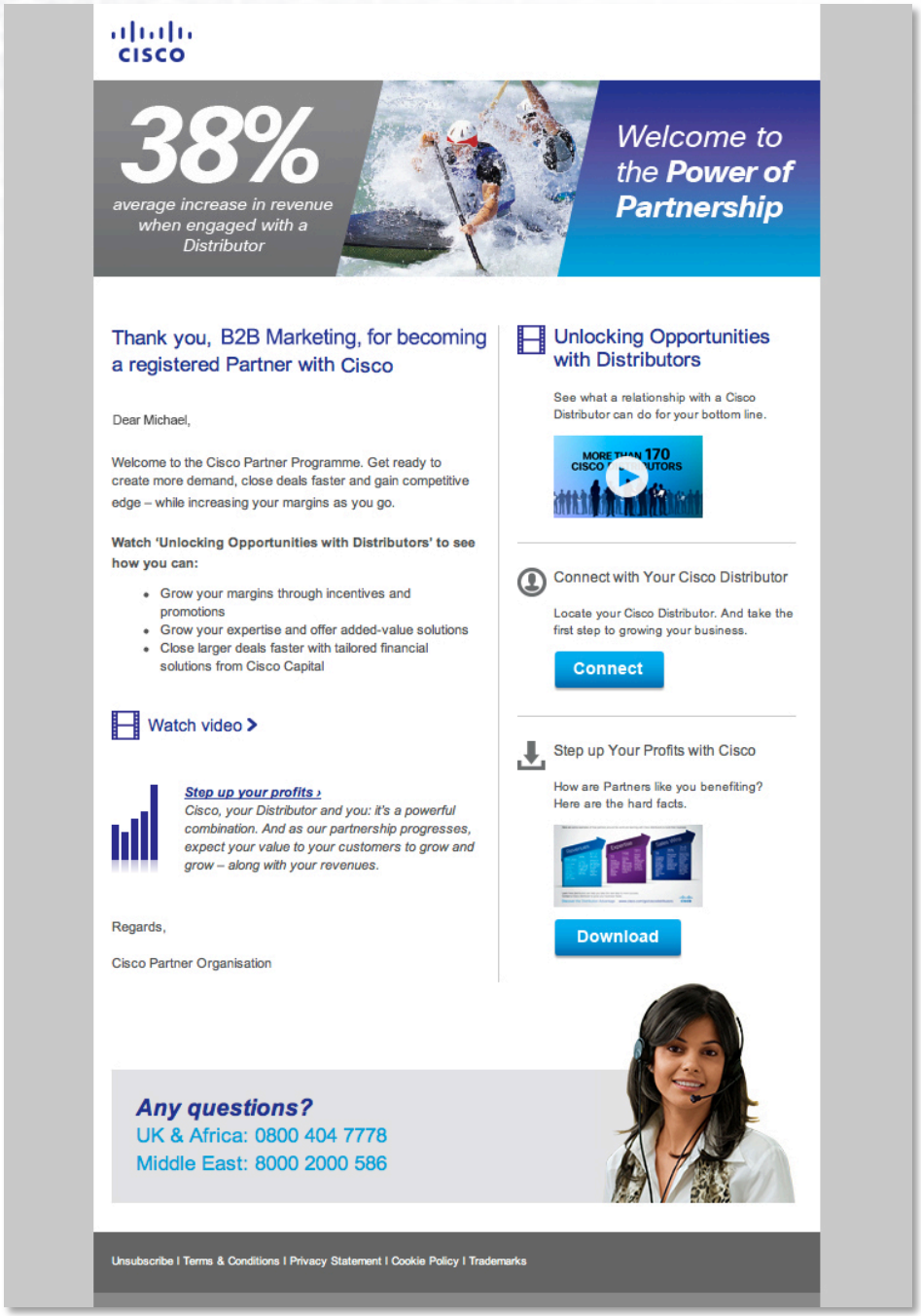
Given the time-starved nature of our audience, the portal allowed for quick and easy content consumption (leveraging videos, infographics and deep-links to specific content pages on Cisco.com) again, only serving-up content most pertinent to their needs at that stage.

This simple and intuitive architecture put everything at Partners' fingertips.

The portal was personalised by recipient name and region. Driven by back-end intelligence (through Eloqua), it served dynamic content for the UK and Ireland, South Africa and UAE (our pilot countries), with dedicated calls-to-action presented accordingly.

Overall the **Power of Partnership** solution delivered a simple, intuitive, personal, content-rich and rewarding experience.

Email 1 – Introducing the importance of aligning with a Distributor to unlock opportunities and increase revenues.



Email 2 – Outlines the potential margin increase by exploring incentive and promotion opportunities.



Email 3 – Taking the steps to become certified enables a growth in expertise and profits.



Email 4 – Cisco Capital and Services can help to increase close rates and deal sizes.



The Portal provides a simple and intuitive architecture that dynamically serves personalised content based on the user's geographic location.



Content was purposed in easily digestible formats including videos, infographics, animation etc.









Timescales of the campaign

Owing to client requirements, we worked to an extremely condensed time schedule, requiring multiple streams of activity to run concurrently:

FROM: Planning and Strategy commencement:	16.12.13
TO: Launch:	19.02.14

Budgets

These details were provided to judges in the original submission but are commercially sensitive and therefore confidential

Results

In just 3 months of the pilot campaign rolling live, it has already generated total booked sales (not pipeline) of **$3.25M**. **An ROI of 4,004%**

Given the absolute dormant nature of these Partners since registration (from January 2013 to date) the Client has specifically singled-out this programme for all resulting engagement and sales activity.

Owing to this success, the programme is now fully automated across EMEAR with newly registered Partners receiving the emails as they sign-up.

Client testimonial

"Even discounting the rapid turnaround the agency managed from briefing to final delivery, this has been an exceptional campaign. FPS's insights into the market and understanding of the Channel combined to deliver vastly improved Partner engagement and an outstanding ROI. The programme is delivering remarkable results – so much so that our Global teams are now looking to roll it out across the Americas and APAC".

Head of Marketing Communications, Partner & Distribution Marketing EMEAR, Cisco

Submission ends