THROUGH-CHANNEL MARKETING AUTOMATION · PARTNER ACTIVATION

THE ACTIVATED 20%

PROVIDED IS NOT USED

Why only a fraction of decentralized sales and marketing units become active — and why the inactive majority is the real growth lever.



≈ 20 %

generate most of the local marketing activity

≈ 80 %

are not a lost cause but untapped potential

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manufacturers, brands and retail cooperatives with decentralized distribution invest heavily in marketing infrastructure for their dealers, branches, franchisees and sales partners: portals, templates, asset libraries, campaign building blocks. The purpose is clear — local units are meant to turn the centrally provided resources and content into advertising on the ground.

In practice, only a minority of them actually does so. Across industries and program types, a recurring pattern has been documented: a small share of the units is active and performs well, while the **vast majority makes little or no use of the options provided**. The problem here is rarely a lack of will — it is an activation problem. Simply providing something does not, in itself, create any usage.

> The decisive metric is not how many units a network has, but how many of them are actually active. Providing a portal is not the same thing as actually generating usage.

This whitepaper puts the available data on partner and unit activation into context, identifies the structural causes of the activation gap and shows why the classic, support-intensive model often misses the point that matters most: it concentrates scarce resources on the minority that is already active and leaves the inactive majority largely untouched. For headquarters, this is a steering problem — and at the same time a major untapped lever within its own network.

A note on scope: while our whitepaper "The Unused Budget" deals with the budget and process level — why the funds provided are not drawn down — this paper addresses the activation level: why the tools and content provided are not being used. The two problems overlap, but they are not one and the same.

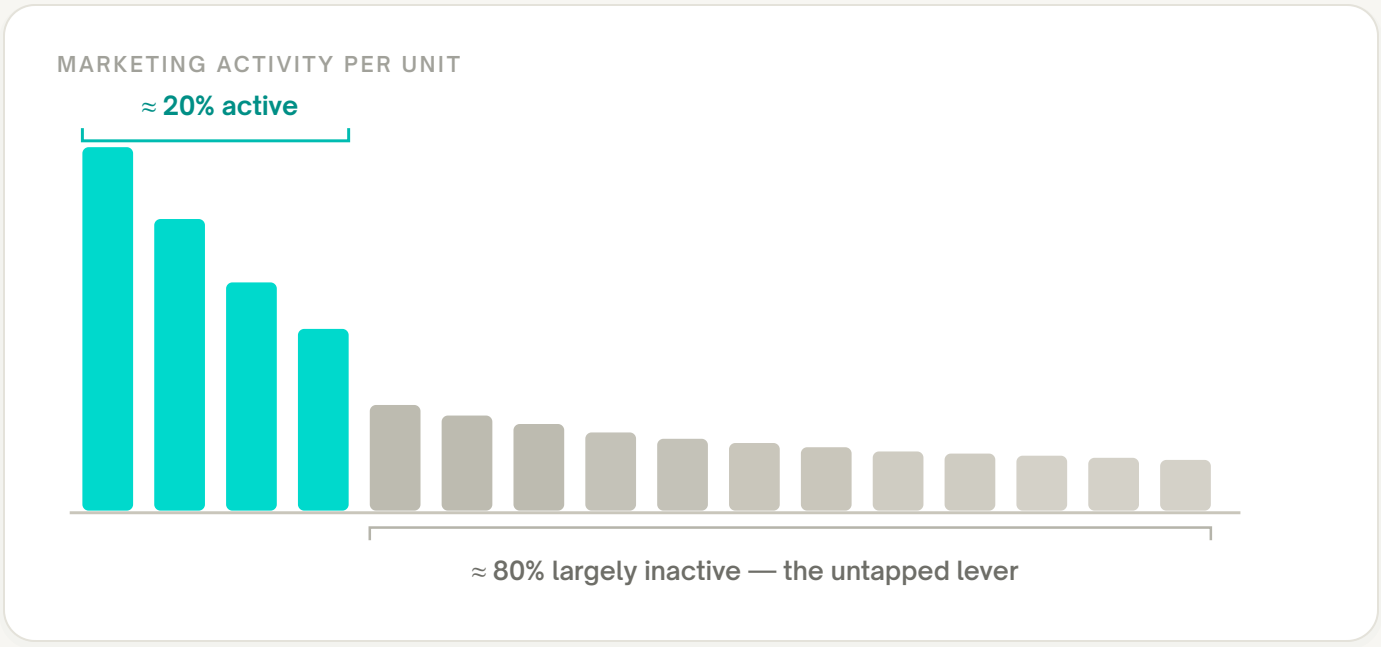
CHAPTER 01

THE 20/80 REALITY OF DECENTRALIZED NETWORKS

Anyone who manages decentralized sales or marketing networks knows the pattern, even if it is rarely quantified: a few locations are highly active, while a large remainder barely moves. Channel research confirms this observation across many programs.

The Pareto pattern is considered a reliable order of magnitude: roughly **20% of partners generate around 80% of channel revenue** — the remaining majority stays structurally below average.[1] In the more pointed practitioner view, channel marketers report that a considerable share of partners generates **no marketing activity of its own** at all.[2]

What matters is reading this figure correctly. It is **not a statement about the quality or suitability of the partners** — it is a statement about headquarters' activation model. The 80% are not "the bad ones". They are the units that, for structural reasons, do not translate what is provided into activity.



Schematic representation of the activity pattern in decentralized networks. A few units generate most of the activity; the majority remains structurally inactive.

Why this matters economically: a substantial part of B2B market access runs through indirect channels — dealers, partners, resellers or local units.[3] An inactive local unit is therefore not just an unused marketing budget, but a missing market presence exactly where the purchase decision is being prepared.

CHAPTER 02

WHY PROVISION IS NOT THE SAME AS USAGE

The most common response from headquarters to low local activity is to provide *more*: more templates, more content, an even bigger portal. The data show that this approach misses the actual problem.

A recurring finding: a large share of centrally produced marketing content is never used. Forrester puts the share of unused marketing content at around **65%**; partner marketing practitioners estimate it to be even higher.[4] This is rarely just a content quality problem — more often, it is an activation problem.

≈ 65 %

of the marketing content provided goes unused

Forrester · practitioners estimate the share to be higher

The diagnosis behind this is consistent: local units lack the "marketing muscle" to turn raw material into finished, localized campaigns, and they get lost in complex onboarding and portal structures.[4] Putting content into a portal and hoping that it gets used simply does not work.

A well-stocked portal is a form of provision, not activation. The two are routinely confused in management — with the result that budget flows into infrastructure that hardly gets used.

This point is the central dividing line of the entire topic: the question is not *whether* headquarters has a tool or a content library available, but *whether the local unit actually uses it*. Any investment in decentralized marketing that does not make this distinction measures the wrong thing.

CHAPTER 03

THE COMPETENCE GAP IN THE LOCAL UNIT

Why don’t the inactive 80% become active? Across unit types, the cause is remarkably similar — and it rarely lies in a lack of willingness.

As a rule, the local unit is **not a marketing operation**. A branch manager runs a location, a dealer sells vehicles, a franchisee runs a business, a cooperative member runs a specialist store. For them, marketing is a side task without dedicated resources — they lack time, expertise and often priority.

THREE RECURRING HURDLES AT UNIT LEVEL

1 Lack of expertise
Channel selection, format, design, legally compliant execution — what is routine for a marketing department is a specialist task for the local unit, without in-house expertise.

2 Lack of capacity
Even where expertise exists, marketing competes with day-to-day business. A task that requires effort and is not immediately urgent gets postponed.

3 Complexity as a reason to drop out
The more steps, approvals and rules lie between “idea” and “published campaign”, the more likely the unit is to give up — not out of unwillingness, but because the hurdle outweighs the expected benefit.

This gap is the reason why the same provision works for the active 20% but not for the remaining 80%: the active units either have their own marketing capacity or enough routine to overcome the complexity. This is precisely the prerequisite the majority lacks.

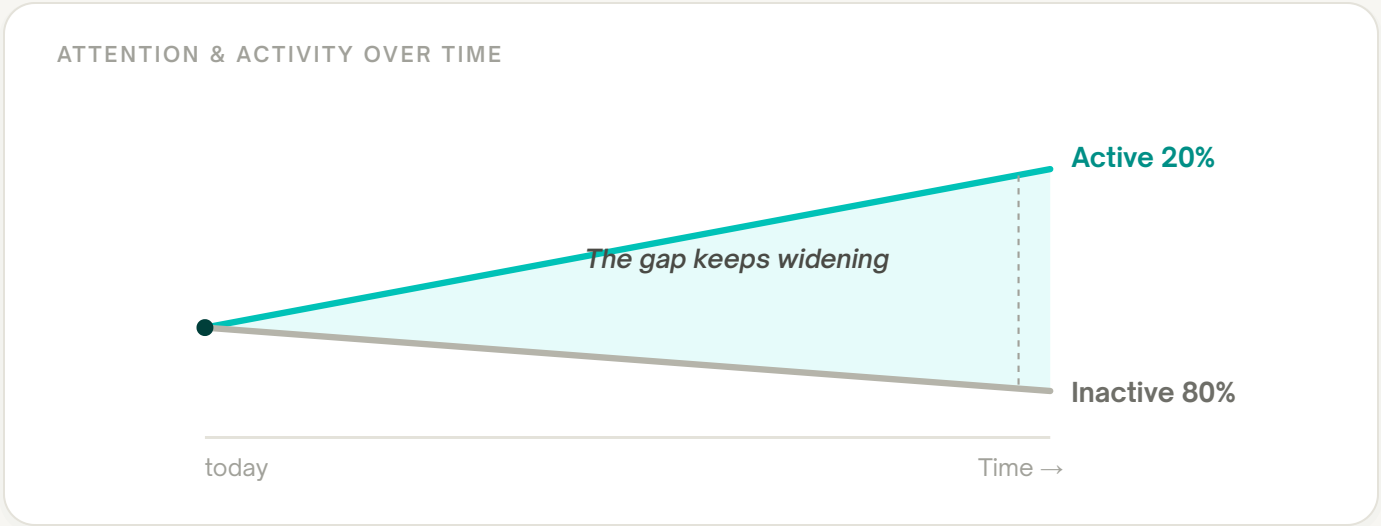
CHAPTER 04

WHY TRADITIONAL SUPPORT REACHES THE WRONG UNITS

The usual response to the competence gap is support: channel managers, field sales, agency assistance, training. The model has a structural flaw — it doesn't scale, and it scales worst precisely where the greatest activation lever lies.

Because personal support is expensive and limited, most vendors concentrate it on the units with the highest current performance. Forrester describes this pattern directly: many B2B vendors have a very large number of partners but not the resources to support them all equally — and therefore focus **exclusively on the 10 to 20% that currently perform best**.[5]

The result is a self-reinforcing effect: the units that are already active receive even more attention, while the inactive majority remains untouched. The support model **cements the 20/80 split instead of breaking it up**.



Manual support reinforces the existing distribution instead of breaking it up.

On top of this comes a communication problem. Many partners feel overwhelmed by the way vendors communicate with them; anyone who merely stores content centrally and hopes for local initiative loses out, while timely, relevant communication tailored to the unit works considerably better.[4]

More support is not automatically the solution, because support is the part that scales worst. As long as activation depends on personal effort, it usually remains limited to the minority that justifies that effort.

CHAPTER 05

THE LEVER: SELF-ACTIVATION INSTEAD OF SUPPORT

If the bottleneck is manual support that doesn't scale, the solution lies not in *more* support but in a model that enables the inactive majority to act **without individual effort and without training**.

This shifts the requirement from headquarters to the system: the local unit does not have to become a marketing department — the tools have to be so simple that even a unit without marketing expertise can create and launch a compliant, localized campaign in just a few minutes.

THE REQUIREMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

Preconfigured, brand-compliant campaigns that every local unit can localize, approve and launch without training, in minutes – and whose usage headquarters can measure.

The economic core behind this: the active 20% are usually already the most intensively served. Every additional percentage point of activation in the long tail of the remaining 80% increases the impact of programs already provided — often without proportionally rising central support costs. What a system specifically has to deliver to unlock this lever is covered in the final section on system design.

CHAPTER 06

MARKET CONTEXT: WHY THE PROBLEM IS GROWING

Pressure on the activation question is increasing — from three directions.

01

Purchase preparation is becoming local and digital

Visibility is not created only at brand level, but wherever buyers search for specific offers, contacts, branches, dealers or regional services. A central campaign does not fully replace this local presence.

02

Programs are becoming more complex

Besides classic advertising materials, there are now digital ads, social posts, local landing pages, print formats, co-op budgets, documentation requirements, approvals and compliance rules. For the unit, this increases not only the choice but also the operational hurdle.

03

Networks are growing faster than support

The more units a network comprises, the more strongly the structural flaw of the support model takes effect — and the larger the inactive majority becomes in absolute terms.

Competition is shifting from the question of *how many* units a network has to the question of how many of them are actually active.

This turns activation from an operational detail into a strategic metric of network management.

CHAPTER 07

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The evidence is consistent across industries and program types: a small share of decentralized units is active, the majority is not — and the cause is rarely a lack of will, but an activation model that works mainly for the minority that is already active. The lever lies not in more content or more support, but in an access route that even the inactive majority actually uses without training.

PROVIDED IS NOT USED. AND ONLY WHAT IS USED MAKES AN IMPACT IN THE MARKET.

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NETWORK

? **Do you know your active rate** — the share of units that actually run campaigns — or do you only count the number of connected partners?

? **Do you know which of the content provided is actually used** — or do you only measure what you have provided?

? **Does your support reach the inactive 80%** — or does it in fact concentrate on the top units that are already active?

? **Can a unit without marketing expertise and without training** create a compliant campaign in minutes — or does activation require prior knowledge?

? **Is brand compliance built into the system** — or does every newly active unit create additional manual review effort that slows activation down?

IMPLICATIONS FOR SYSTEM DESIGN

Anyone who wants to activate the inactive units of a decentralized network does not simply need a bigger portal, but a different activation model. What matters is not the volume of content provided, but its operational usability for units without their own marketing resources. An effective system has to meet four requirements:

1 **Operation without training**
If activation requires prior knowledge, it only reaches the units that are already motivated. The level of operation must match what the unit is used to from everyday digital life — otherwise the inactive majority remains inactive.

2 **Radically simplify local execution**
The unit must not be forced to build a campaign itself from templates, assets, budget rules and channel options. The more the system preconfigures, guides and localizes, the lower the activation hurdle.

3 **Ensure brand compliance systemically**
The more activation scales, the less it may depend on manual individual review. Rules, mandatory information, approvals, budgets and design limits must take effect early in the process — otherwise every newly active unit creates additional review effort that, once again, does not scale.

4 **Make usage measurable**
The key steering question is not what was provided, but which units actually became active, which measures were used and where activation is still lacking.

This shifts the focus from provision to activation. Decentralized marketing management does not become more successful by putting more material into portals. It becomes more successful when local units without their own marketing expertise become **genuinely able to act**.

THE KEY METRIC OF NETWORK MANAGEMENT

NOT HOW MANY UNITS A NETWORK HAS — HOW MANY OF THEM ARE ACTIVE.

Activation is not an operational detail but the lever that makes programs already provided effective. The inactive majority is not a lost cause — it is untapped potential within your own network.

ABOUT LOCALYZER

Localyzer develops systems for local marketing activation in decentralized sales, dealer, agency, branch and partner structures.

SOURCES & NOTES

1 **Pareto pattern in the channel.** Several channel marketing sources consistently put the share at around 20% of partners, who together generate roughly 80% of channel revenue (incl. Allego, xAmplify, Forrester reference). The 20/80 distribution is used here as a recurring structural pattern, not as a universal industry benchmark.

2 Industry and practitioner sources (incl. Fifty Five and Five, referencing statements by channel marketing practitioners) describe a considerable share of partners as generating no marketing activity or revenue of their own. The figure serves as a practitioner estimate, not as an exact market rate.

3 Forrester and other channel marketing publications describe the high importance of indirect sales channels in B2B market access. The statement is used here as context for the relevance of local and indirect activation, not as an exact universal rate.

4 Forrester (cited by Fifty Five and Five, among others): around 65% of the marketing content provided goes unused; practitioners estimate the share to be higher. The same source describes a lack of marketing expertise at the local unit and portal complexity as causes, as well as many partners being overwhelmed by vendor communication (referencing statements by Jay McBain, Forrester).

5 Forrester, “The Channel Partner Segmentation Matrix”: many B2B vendors do not have the resources to support all partners equally and therefore concentrate on the 10–20% of partners that currently perform best.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The quantitative data come from channel marketing and partner program research, predominantly from a US/international context, as well as from industry and vendor publications. They demonstrate a recurring structural pattern of partner and unit activation. The 20/80 logic is transferred to branch, franchise and retail cooperative networks as a structural analogy; the figures cited should be understood as reference values, not as a universal metric for every type of network.

About Localyzer · Localyzer develops systems for local marketing activation in decentralized sales, dealer, agency, branch and partner structures.

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