

# How to boost supplier commitment without spending more money

## **Time to tune into those non-revenue goals**

Dale Vile, June 2021

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"I don't get it. We've spent a lot more than those guys over the years, so how come they got so much free support and pampering?"

I was sitting in the middle of a pretty big audience at a tech company's user conference a few years ago when I heard this question from the seat next to me. I learned later during the coffee break that the person who asked it did indeed work for a large corporate that was heavily invested in the supplier's products and services. His beef was that we had just sat through a presentation from a customer who was clearly very new, but seemed to have received a huge amount of expertise and support from the supplier's consulting group to deliver their project.

As the conversation went on, my fellow delegate complained that his organisation had implemented something very similar to the company on stage, but had got zero, zilch, nada help from the supplier while working on it. When I inquired whether anyone had actually asked the supplier to get involved, he looked thoughtful for a few seconds then said "probably not".

Zooming out from this specific instance, I frequently come across IT teams who don't get the most from their suppliers. A common reason is because they never consider that tech companies and the people who work in them are often interested in more than just taking their money.

At any given time, for example, a supplier might be looking for case studies to support sales and marketing activity, early adopters and beta sites to help them field-test new solutions, and customers with challenging or interesting use cases that their consultants and engineers can learn from.

Beyond this there's more direct commercial interests such as new customer acquisition to increase the company's market footprint, competitive knock-outs to undermine a rival's position, and customers willing to help them with strategic business changes, e.g. switching to a subscription model or a cloud-based delivery approach.

With this in mind, if you learn what your key suppliers care about, you can tap into the resources they allocate to help motivate and reward customers who help them achieve



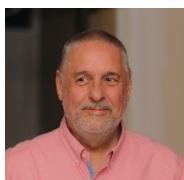
their non-revenue goals. This includes access to highly skilled and experienced practitioners such as senior architects and in-depth product specialists, 'free' consulting time to accelerate your adoption or rollout, and the attention of senior execs who can grease the wheels or apply internal pressure when you need something done.

So next time you are chatting with that sales rep, your account manager or a sales support engineer, start the conversation about what's going on in their world. Look for indications of how you can help them meet their objectives beyond revenue targets, or otherwise enable them, their boss or a senior exec within their business to boost their bonus or gain more kudos.

The lesson is, if you're not feeling the love or commitment from a supplier that's important to you, do your homework and figure out how you can become more important to them. Armed with that insight, you'll then be in a better position to table ideas that will benefit both parties. And the more you do this, the stronger and more rewarding that supplier relationship will become over the longer term.

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## About the author - Dale Vile



Dale is a co-founder of Freeform Dynamics, and today runs the company. As part of this, he oversees the organisation's industry coverage and research agenda, which tracks technology trends and developments, along with IT-related buying behaviour among mainstream enterprises, SMBs and public sector organisations.

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