CASE STUDY: Launching a Partnership Program

Background

CenturyLink is a global communications, hosting, cloud and IT services company enabling millions of customers to transform their businesses and their lives through innovative technology solutions. CenturyLink offers network and data systems management, Big Data analytics and IT consulting, and operates more than 55 data centers in North America, Europe and Asia. The company provides broadband, voice, video, data and managed services over a robust 250,000 route mile U.S. fiber network and a 300,000 route mile international transport network.

Challenges

- Companies in CenturyLink's Independent Software Vendor (ISV) vertical were engaged solely as customers, not as partners, creating missed business opportunities and revenue growth despite unmet need and high demand from the vertical

- Little focus and alignment on how to define and structure a partner program to meet the various needs of diverse ISVs while ensuring that the program can scale

- Needed to launch an ISV partner program in four months

Approach

- Utilized a 3S methodology that focused on building the right story for ISV partners, the right strategy and the right systems for execution

- Using insights gained from conducting primary ISV field research, developed a narrative that articulated CenturyLink's partner story and value proposition

- Developed an opportunity assessment, go-to-market (GTM) strategy and action plan that enabled CenturyLink to establish a partner program with multiple engagement options

- Identified target partners for each program engagement option

- Produced suite of marketing and sales enablement assets to support program launch and adoption

Result

- CenturyLink went to market with an integrated brand story that encapsulates how they work with software companies as both customers and partners

- CenturyLink successfully launched the Software Alliance Program at their Ascend Partner Conference with program validation from key partners

  - Program includes four engagement options
  - Re-named ISV vertical in response to partner feedback

- A new dedicated team was established to support and grow the Software Alliance Program