



# SHOREVIEWS



## Online Channel Partner Handbook: Strategies and Practical Tips for Professional Publishing

by

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for

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## 1. REPORT PROFILE

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### FOCUS

**This Handbook on online channel partners provides definitions, economic models, and decision-support tools to help publishers formulate optimal partnering strategies.** It is designed to help managers make practical decisions about how to approach defining channel partner relationships for their own content.

### AUDIENCE

**Publishers who want to manage their online distribution channels to maximize profitability and develop closer relationships with their customers.** Publishers of professional content for a business, scientific, technical or financial audience are the primary audience, but publishers of any content that is valued by their primary customers, including enterprises that are approaching publishing their own content to support or promote operations that are not traditionally involved in commercial publishing or aggregation will benefit from the information in this Handbook. Content aggregators, affiliate network providers, search engine marketing companies, content e-commerce sites, online advertising companies, and technology companies that bundle content with their products will also find the information in this Handbook of value for their business development planning.

### CONTENT

**This Handbook contains essential guidelines, checklists, and models for deciding between channel relationships and direct sales outlets.** A comparison of traditional content aggregators and “new” aggregators that take advantage of Web infrastructure, standards, and tools is included. The concept of Total Cost of Partnering is introduced and used as a decision-support tool in formulating and managing a channel strategy. A three-page Partner Checklist for evaluating prospective partners in five different categories is a tool that can be used over and over.

### USE

**The Online Channel Partner Handbook will guide publishers in deciding how to construct content distribution plans that are best suited to their content and internal resources.** Publishers will find useful tips for reassessing existing partner relationships to determine whether to terminate, continue, or renegotiate current agreements. The Handbook also describes emerging methods for distributing content on the Web using a network of related sites to drive qualified traffic to your direct e-commerce system.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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With the widespread adoption of publishing software tools and Web standards over the past decade, the attributes that publishers require in a distribution partner have shifted away from technically-oriented content conversion assistance toward advertising and merchandising services. Today, many formerly-outsourced functions are conducted in-house with content management systems that provide flexibility in producing published products in a variety of formats. The Web provides a distribution and sales platform that allows publishers to develop direct relationships with a greater number of customers and segments than was possible before the broad access and e-commerce capabilities of the Web were available. As a result of these developments, publishers need to reassess the rationale for contracting with content aggregators, syndicators, resellers and other channel partners.

This Online Channel Partner Handbook addresses how this shift in control of production and distribution back toward the publisher changes the economics of partnering for online distribution, especially in light of the fact that online sales continue to grow in importance to professional publishers.

Key issues that are addressed and questions raised in this Handbook include:

- Why publishers should avoid aggregators that sell a broad mix of content for a fixed price.
- How to minimize seepage of your valuable content into channels where it may be undervalued—or even given away.
- Could you replicate the value added of the formatting and indexing done by traditional content aggregators with content management systems and procedures that you already have available in-house?
- Would you earn more revenue from direct content sales if you set up an e-commerce capability on your own Web site than you would from the royalties you receive from resellers?
- Have you compared the effectiveness of a search engine advertising campaign in directing qualified prospects to your site versus licensing your content to aggregators or using affiliate programs?
- Do you consider the costs of producing special feeds, providing marketing and customer support, monitoring compliance, and opportunity costs of conceding the relationship with a customer when you evaluate the net benefit of working with channel partners?