



WHERE CONSULTANTS, VENDORS AND THE CHANNEL CONNECT



The Consultant Liaison Program (CLP) Opportunity: Why Equipment Vendors, Service Providers and System Integrators Should Have a CLP

The independent Communications & Information Technology (CIT) consultant is a well-established, evolving and highly influential professional community within the industry's channel-to-market structure. Today, the CIT consultant can best be defined as:

“An independent, communications and information technology management, business process and/or network engineering consulting firm specializing in voice/data communications, information technology, infrastructure, and/or converged networks that integrate voice, data, collaborative and multimedia applications.”

These consultants are hired by their clients to help them:

- Understand the strategic, business and ROI impact of Communications and Information technologies;
- Assess, plan, design, and/or integrate communications networks;
- Recommend/choose the voice, data, and/or video network communications solutions best suited to their needs;
- Negotiate, procure, deploy, and manage the solutions.

A consideration triggers every sales process. Influence, of some kind, ultimately brings each to a close. Telecom consultants stimulate incremental considerations and ultimately influence their clients' buying decisions. More than 3,000 U.S.-based CIT consulting firms directly influence an estimated 25% of annual B-to-B CT sales – business communications/network equipment and network services; premised-based, network/cloud provided and/or hybrid.

What consultants know, including their market perceptions, drive the influence they have on the configuration and components of their clients' networks. Therefore, if equipment vendors or service providers are not effectively educating, supporting and building relationships with the consultants most active and influential in their served markets, chances are these consultants are not recommending the vendors' products and services to their clients, i.e., the vendors' customers. Or, the vendors' market share of consultants' recommendations are not what they should be. The more consultants know about a

vendor's network solutions – what they are, how they work, why they are better – the greater the likelihood the vendor will be recommended by the consultant.

Why is this a channel opportunity? More than 80% of consultants' recommendations are implemented by their clients, leading to the sale of the recommended solution. An effective Consultant Liaison Program can increase consultants' recommendations of vendor solutions by up to 20% per year.

A CLP is a relatively low cost/high ROI channel to market. Targeted program consultants are hired and compensated by their clients (not the vendor). Therefore, the costs to support consultants and generate qualified new sales opportunities are limited to the overhead associated with the program.

The bottom line essence of a vendor CLP, therefore, is to inform and support the RIGHT consultants on the RIGHT solutions to the RIGHT clients, and drive qualified new sales opportunities through consultants' recommendations and market influence. The sales-driven measure of CLP effectiveness is the annual percentage increase or volume of qualified new sales opportunities generated through consultants' recommendations.