

4 Crucial Factors that Cloud Solution Providers Need to Consider when Building a Services Portfolio

By Steve Spiewak

For Cloud solution providers, selling product to the SMB market is only the first step towards building a successful business that will grow and expand over time. The initial sale is just the beginning of the customer journey, and only scratches the surface in the effort to build lasting, trusted and profitable customer relationships. The key to that growth is creating additional touchpoints and ways to offer added value, especially in a commodity-driven marketplace. These touchpoints can make or break a business and help to ensure that sales efforts are optimized.

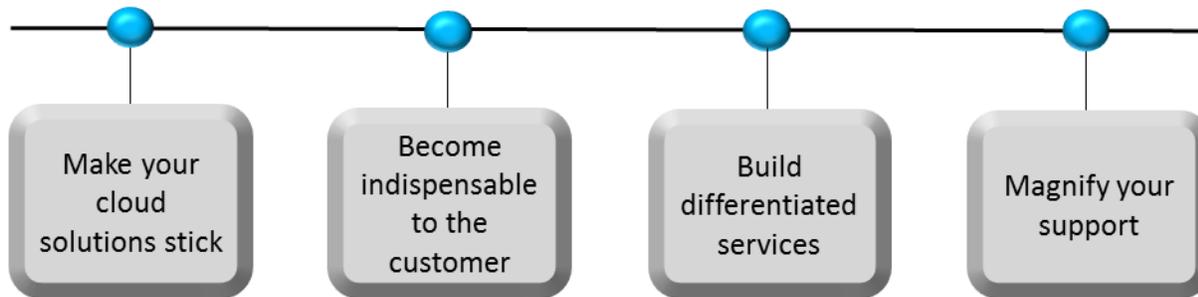
In today's market, solution providers can no-longer rely on steep pricing discounts to differentiate themselves. Adding touchpoints and value will help retain customers and create growth opportunities that will strengthen customer relationships and build share of wallet.



Using services as a differentiator

One area of focus where a solution provider can differentiate their business is offering services that add value which are not offered by the competition. These services strengthen customer relationships by supporting their business goals. High-quality services offer much more than just customer support, and can include anything from reactive and proactive end-user support to security monitoring and disaster recovery. Services should be viewed as an integral part of a solution provider's offer to SMBs. They add revenue opportunities that help to win deals and build customer relationships for better retention and additive sales.

When building a services portfolio, a solution provider should consider 4 crucial factors that will greatly affect their results:



The 4 factors to consider when building a services portfolio:

1. **Make your cloud solutions stick.** Ensure product retention by offering services that are instrumental in helping your customers achieve their business goals. When your solutions satisfy your customers' requirements for meeting productivity and revenue goals, they will never consider removing them. Products and services that remain in their environment provide a continuous revenue stream and an opportunity to increase monthly recurring revenue through the prospect of positioning other products and services to augment their results.
2. **Become indispensable to the customer.** Position yourself as a market leader with solutions that solve problems and achieve goals. Your customers will view you as their trusted partner and rely on your services around the clock. They will, in turn, act on your recommendations for future enhancements and additional products and services to expand their cloud footprint and support their business goals.
3. **Build differentiated services.** Provide a full suite of services that allow your customers to achieve their objectives and expand their environment as their needs evolve. Don't leave a window open for a competitor to offer complimentary services. For example, an SMB with concerns about security associated with moving their business-critical data to the cloud will be more inclined to choose a partner with a comprehensive services menu that covers their needs, and a demonstrable track record of success.
4. **Magnify your support.** Offer 24x7 technical support services to resolve customer challenges anytime from anywhere. While many solution providers have support on call from global locations, this business model can pose challenges in terms of language barriers, time differences, and depth of knowledgebase. Your customers will benefit most from around the clock support service availability by the most qualified, certified US-based technicians in the marketplace. Don't settle for business-hours support services, or service hours impacted by in-house technician holidays or sick days. No one works 9-5 anymore – your support services shouldn't, either.

Adapting to meet customer requirements

It's no secret that the cloud is changing the way that businesses operate. Solution providers must adapt to those changes or struggle with gaining and retaining customers. Those that are working to optimize cloud solution sales must offer services that are purpose-built for a business' unique needs, and modular to allow for solution customization when needed.



In addition, large software vendors, such as Microsoft, mandate a level of support that ensures their products are being sold with the confidence that customers will use them successfully to achieve business goals. These large vendors no-longer offer the first lines of support services that solution providers are accustomed to, and have relied on in the past. The solution provider is now responsible for fulfilling that mandate, which can be challenging or impossible to achieve using in-house resources.

Scalable services enable solution providers to differentiate their service offerings from others on the market. Solution providers working with a services partner can provide individualized services that help achieve customers' business goals with expedited response time and problem resolution, and without the added cost and risk of building and maintaining in-house expertise. These efficiencies strengthen customer relationships and increase customer satisfaction, which drives recurring revenue and increased profits.

Unlock the full potential of the cloud.

Offer services that stick, and build a business model for continued success.

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