

Introduction

"Distribution" or "Manufacturing" or "Health Care" are not really verticals. You need to take it down a couple of notches. Use the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) listings to help you narrow down to industry segments. Hoovers Industry Reports will help you group together industry segments that share the same challenges.

Remember that focusing on one market doesn't mean abandoning all others, but without real immersion in the industry, it's hard to be taken as a serious player.

Once you have defined your vertical space and clearly outlined the benefits that you bring to the market, build your messaging around the pains of the industry and the benefits that you deliver. With the foundations of your messaging done, create an industry engagement plan. Share the commitment across the team, assigning different people to build their place in the industry.

Credit: <https://rcpmag.com/blogs/marketing-matters/2017/06/microsoft-csps-vertical-markets.aspx>

1. Follow industry experts

Learn all you can through the thought leaders already established in the industry. Follow them on Twitter to learn the hashtags they use and the events they attend.

2. Update your Partner Center listing

List your packaged services on your Microsoft Partner Center referral site profile (and any other vendor listing sites). In addition to a descriptive listing, add a downloadable solution overview and use cases.

3. Build a microsite

Build an industry-specific microsite that stands alone but links to your main Web site. The microsite allows you to deliver a very targeted message without alienating your horizontal market.

4. Use LinkedIn groups

Learn more about the challenges your prospects face by joining LinkedIn groups serving your industry. Join groups that appeal to different roles in your target companies to build your breadth of knowledge. Post when you can help solve a problem, but don't make sales pitches.

5. Attend a tradeshow

Tradeshows are critically important to building personal relationships within an industry. Look for opportunities to contribute -- like speaking and sponsorships -- to build your credibility. If you have a booth, follow up with every visitor with a personal e-mail or phone call. Follow-through is just as important as the initial contact.

6. Sponsor educational events

Create your own, or work with existing event organizers to participate in educational events serving the industry. Either in-person (if you serve a metro area) or virtual educational events will establish your place as a champion of the industry. Become a connector within the industry.

7. Build press relationships

Identify and follow the journalists and bloggers who cover your market. With an understanding of the types of stories they write, pitch an idea or offer to be a source when they write about a specific topic.

Microsoft CSP Program

The CSP program was specifically designed to help partners serve vertical markets. And while industry specialization is new to most partners, it's not as difficult or confining as it may appear. With a clear plan and consistent execution, you may be surprised at how quickly you can build your presence as an industry leader.



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