

THE RECESSION

FORGING THE RIGHT ALLIANCES
FOR GROWTH IN 2023

— *By Andrew Sambrook*

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Introduction

As economic difficulties loom, [recession marketing](#) is an increasing priority for B2B organizations in 2023. Traditional lead generation budgets and tactics are under scrutiny as go-to-market (GTM) teams feel the pressure to deliver demand generation ROI for sales teams and C-suite budget holders.

Therefore, forging high-value alliances with companies that enable and support performance-driven campaigns with audience, first-party data, and buyer activation know-how is paramount to capitalize on GTM opportunities in 2023.

Andrew Sambrook

SVP of Global Demand Generation



What B2B companies are looking for in a partner in 2023

According to a DemandMetric and Integrate survey, [only 42% of marketers feel that their budgets in 2023 will be higher](#) than in previous years—fears of a looming recession are to blame in this sentiment as companies prepare for a series of layoffs. Lower budgets put partners under more scrutiny to demonstrate value and ROI—and marketers will also be challenged to prove the performance of their partners during an economic slowdown.



Therefore, this necessitates alliances of the highest quality with terms and conditions that hold decision makers of each party accountable to achieve success. It is also important to futureproof alliances, evaluating if the chosen partner could damage existing or future brand relationships.

The need for partnerships has been compounded ahead of companies evaluating renewals with service providers at the end of 2022 and the start of 2023. Providers who do not meet the standards set by stricter buying habits and reduced budgets will not be renewed, even if they have achieved results that are not considered essential. This means there will be a gap in the market for profitable solutions, which will be filled with partnerships.

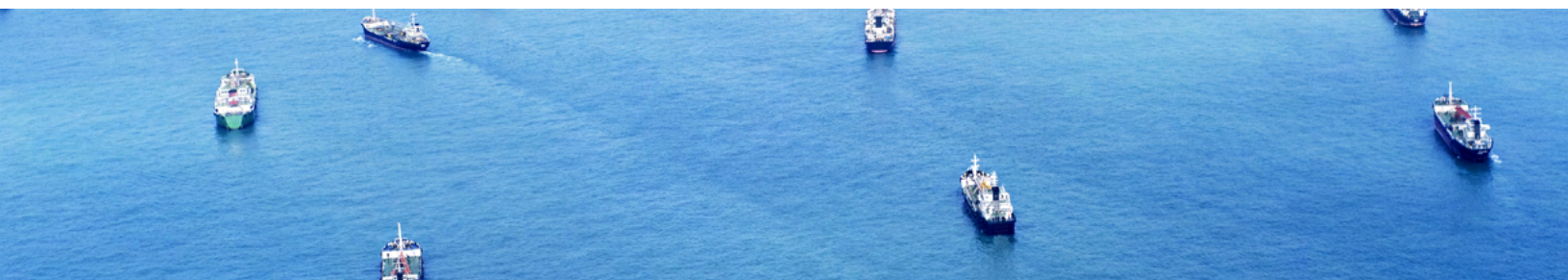
In 2023, an ideal B2B partner will be:



Data-driven, lean, and transparent

Performance-driven companies with lean tech stacks and transparent business processes are those most likely to prosper in 2023. In addition, partners who follow up in a timely manner, synchronize seamlessly, and can foresee challenges before they occur will be of great value.

Visibility of results in real-time will be a must, with partners enabling the other party to evaluate performance without any gatekeepers.





Agile and forward thinking

During a recession, seizing opportunities as they emerge is essential. Partners who are able to quickly adjust their plans or launch campaigns will be more beneficial than those who have to go through a long internal approval process due to a lack of agreement.

A keen eye on trends, empowered by tools such as AI forecasting, performance insights, and social listening will enable businesses to analyze new developments as they arise to engage audiences in a timely manner, which will be essential for partnerships to stay top of mind with leads and prospects.

Therefore, the ideal partner in 2023 will have a one-to-one relationship with their audience, identifying accounts and buying teams who are in-market to then deliver activated, actionable opportunities. This includes an “always-on” approach to identify which companies and buying teams were activated with content, to engage opportunities timely.

Outlook 2023

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By **Dan Freeman**,
Chief Revenue Officer



How to engage audiences with partners to achieve the highest ROI

Below are 4 steps to engage buyers with data-driven campaigns and granular analysis in 2023:



#1 Collaborate, integrate, and act upon data

The ability to track performance in real-time will be essential for both parties to understand the effectiveness of their campaigns and to make adjustments as needed. This will require the use of advanced analytics and reporting tools to provide insights into customer behavior, engagement, and conversion rates.

In addition, both parties must have access to the same data in order to make informed decisions. This will require the use of a centralized data platform that can be accessed by both parties. This platform should be able to integrate with existing systems and provide a comprehensive view of client data.

Finally, both parties must be able to collaborate in order to ensure that their strategies are aligned and that they are working towards the same goals. This will require the use of communication tools such as video conferencing, chat, and project management software, and will enable both parties to stay connected and ensure that their strategies are in sync.



#2 Define the same KPIs for all partners

KPIs should be tailored to the specific partnership and regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant. This will help to ensure that the analytics and insights are still relevant to the partnership and that the goals are still achievable.

It is also important to ensure that the KPIs are measurable and that the data is easily accessible. This will help to ensure that the performance of the partnership can be accurately measured.

Finally, it is important to ensure that the KPIs are communicated to all parties in the partnership. This will help to ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals and accountable for their performance.



#3 Create a process for granular analysis of campaign success

To evaluate each element of campaigns, criteria should be established that go beyond just key performance indicators (KPIs). This criteria should be tailored to the specific type of campaign element, such as a social media post, an eBook, a [syndicated thought leadership article](#), and more. The criteria should be granular and include metrics such as engagement rate, click-through rate, lead rate, with additional qualitative criteria, such as the quality of the content, the relevance of the content to the target audience, and the overall effectiveness of the campaign element.

Having a clear framework for evaluating each element of campaigns will be essential when scrutiny from leaders increases. This framework should be used to measure the success of the overall program and to identify areas for improvement. Additionally, this framework should be used to track progress over time and to ensure that campaigns are meeting their goals.



Here is a framework for granular analysis of a campaign, utilizing an eBook as an example:

Tech Adoption Overview: 2023 Expert Guide

Campaign goal: Engagement

LinkedIn:
at least 450 reactions

Email:
at least 10 downloads

Content syndication:
at least 5 downloads

Criteria	Success/Failure (explain why)
Messaging	eBook mentions the rise of tech since 2020 and highlights the importance of not “lagging behind” with legacy software. The overall message is “update your tech stack.”
Quality of information	The eBook includes quotes by industry experts and data from Gartner and Forrester reports. Overall, high-quality.
CTA	The CTA invites readers to an on-demand webinar with the industry experts featured in the eBook. This is a relevant CTA for readers at this point of the buyer’s journey (top or bottom of the funnel).
Audience engagement	The eBook earned 500 reactions on LinkedIn and was downloaded 10 times via email. The eBook was published on a guest blog, but downloaded only once.
Generated leads	The eBook generated one lead from the guest blog.
Review (1 - 10)	8/10, because the content was high-quality but the engagement could have been better on the thought leadership piece (which did not meet the established goal).

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TO ASSESS YOUR DEMAND GENERATION PERFORMANCE IN 2023 —>



#4 Focus on buyers willing to spend

In order to maximize ROI, it is important to focus on buyers that have the budget and propensity to make a purchase. This means that marketers should be leveraging data, such as predictive analytics or segmentation, to identify buyers that are in-market and have the ability to purchase.

In 2023, when a recession is likely, it will be even more important to identify buyers that are in-market and have the ability to purchase. According to [Gartner \(2019\)](#), only about 5% of the total addressable market is available to buy at any given time—presumptively less in down years. Therefore, marketers should be leveraging data, including AI and machine learning, to identify buyers that are in-market and have the ability to purchase in order to ensure that the right buyers are being targeted and ads are being pushed to the right people.

Laser-focused approaches such as [performance marketing](#) and ABM will be top selections by budget-aware marketers, who will engage buyers willing to spend with highly personalized campaigns.

While [buyer intent](#) can assess propensity to buy, this must be combined with other [behavioral data](#) to evaluate sales readiness. By having multiple data points on buyer engagement, it becomes easier to evaluate who to prioritize in campaigns.

Even so, abandoning 95% of an addressable market is not ideal. While efforts should be overly focused on the 5% in-market, those who are not ready to buy now should be [nurtured with mindful and personalized evergreen campaigns](#), which warms leads up for a purchase when budgets are available again.

Partnerships are valuable to pool efforts to engage the 95% not ready to buy for opportunities in the future at a lower cost and effort than companies could manage individually.

Outlook 2023

Launch an Account Based Marketing Experience (ABX) that identifies opportunities and engages buyers with User Experience (UX) best practices →



By Mukesh Rajpurohit,
VP of APAC Sales



Marketing with a partner during a recession: 8 steps

Discover the steps to drive revenue from an alliance in 2023:



#1 Set healthy expectations

Even during a recession, businesses that secure a winning strategy and a stable position in the market can still experience modest growth. To ensure that marketing and sales teams remain motivated, it is important to set realistic KPIs and healthy targets.



#2 Establish campaign logistics

Once expectations have been set, it is necessary to determine the methods of marketing promotion for each party, such as the channels and strategies used to launch content and ads.

[Defining the channels](#) before the content is better because partners can align the most cost-efficient channel mix. Content creation for channels that are deemed too expensive or low performing will not take place, allowing teams to focus their efforts on optimizing content for the channels that are prioritized.



Here are 4 campaign logistics that must be discussed:

1. Co-marketing: This approach sees partners splitting resources to market a campaign, asset, tool, or event together. This is ideal for partners with overlapping ICPs and who wish to promote their brands at scale, sharing costs.

[Learn more about co-marketing in our CMO Guide.](#)

2. Performance marketing: Methods such as Cost Per Click (CPC), which allows partners to pay per interaction to granularly evaluate the progress, value attribution, and overall success of each campaign. [Learn more about performance marketing in the Revenue Growth chapter of this Outlook.](#)

3. Content syndication networks: Partners must decide how content will be syndicated (either first or third-party) to an audience both parties can equally benefit from. Content syndication is crucial to expand outreach beyond what proprietary channels can organically achieve, which can be particularly fruitful for content such as thought leadership and lead magnets. [Learn more about ITCurated, the INFUSE content network with 28+ verticals and a 138+ million decision maker audience.](#)

4. Social media efforts: Social media has the potential to resonate with audiences beyond your followers, with social media partnerships having the power of feeding off the joint audiences of each brand to reach a higher level of genuine engagement. Therefore, deciding which content to promote on each brand channel, as well as key pieces that will be marketed, is crucial to understand the goals and the expected outcomes of this medium. [Read our Definitive Demand Generation guide for further advice on social media marketing.](#)



#3 Define the messaging and create content

In a partnership campaign, it is important for the messaging to be aligned (or at least complementary) for both brands, including the tone of voice. This will ensure that the desired action from the audience is consistent, and that the content meets the agreed-upon standards. To ensure this, it is beneficial to create a system of peer review for each party to evaluate the other's content.





#4 Align marketing and sales between partners

Alignment is crucial for the whole partnership process. Therefore, once most of the campaign assets and logistics have been defined, establishing a roadmap is necessary to make sure everyone knows what lies ahead.

[Marketing and sales alignment](#) for partnerships means that firstly, teams must be aligned internally, in order to then align them across organizations. Achieving cohesion is paramount for the success of the partnership as stakeholders from both sides must be held accountable. Creatives must be also in sync for content to promote messaging aligned with both businesses.

As for sales, teams will need to focus not only on promoting the wheelhouse of solutions from their organizations, but also positioning their partner's solutions when applicable to prospects. This will require training to make sure salespeople are not overwhelmed and understand key benefits of their partner's solutions.



#5 Share and qualify leads

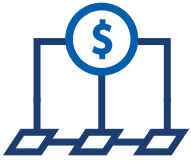
Joint promotion means shared lead generation and qualification. To ensure that leads are aware that their data will be shared between both parties, it is essential to ensure privacy compliance.

As for the demand generation process, assets that are co-marketed may generate leads that can then be assessed as a better fit for one partner or the other. The idea is for leads to find the solutions best suited for their needs after engaging with the content to provide an [optimal user experience](#) and meet buyers where they are in their purchasing journey.

Lead qualification must go beyond [lead scoring](#) and other run-of-the-mill criteria to include factors that deem a lead as qualified for one company or both (continued in the next step).

It is also important to have updated lead attribution that takes into account the origin of leads from each party as well as leads coming in from joint efforts such as [content syndication](#).





#6 Combine offers by both partners for upselling and discounts

Creating bundles and unique offers for leads from partnership campaigns can increase sales and client retention for both parties by offering a (potentially combined) solution set of greater value than competitors. As they say, the sum can be greater than its parts.

During a recession, similarly to B2C, buyers are looking for deals. Brands that offer the highest quality-price ratio of products will secure the most sales in 2023, independent of the niche.

Therefore, marketers at both companies should decide the best solutions to offer together as a bundle, what should have a discount, and what can be included in an upsell either when signing the contract or a few months down the line.

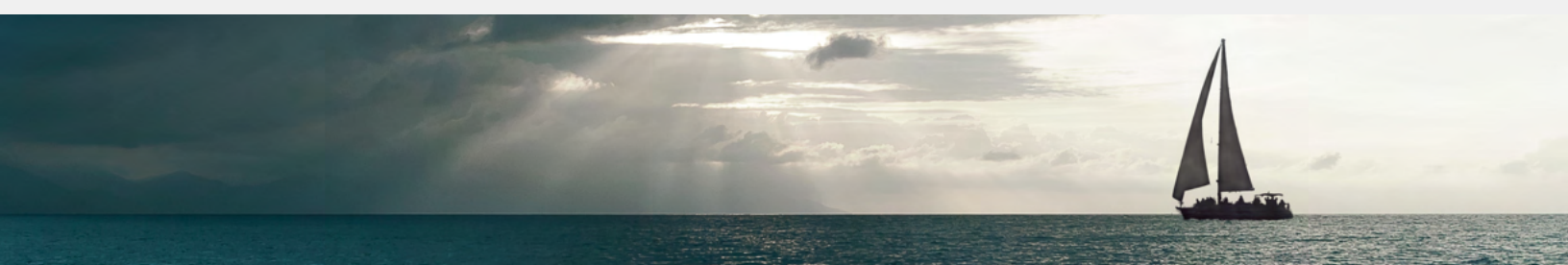
Engage committees throughout their buyer journey in 6 steps →



#7 Co-create a unique product, if applicable

If the partnership is strong, and to this point both parties have benefited from the alliance, then it can be valuable to co-create a product that will be of value to the audiences of both brands.

Launching a product should never be done for its own sake, with adequate research into a need in the market being the first step for partners going this route. Therefore, only when a gap is identified should partners join forces to launch a product together to address the market need.



Here are 5 pointers for partners co-creating a product in 2023:

1. Vet your potential partner: Even if you have trust in the partner, an extra level of research to ensure credibility is important given the long-term nature of agreements centered on joint product creation.

2. Both companies must benefit from the solution: The new product strategy should outline goals and benefits for both parties to avoid disagreements later on.

3. Analyze the audience perception: It is important to [conduct a survey](#) with clients, prospective clients, and select audience members (preferably those with little brand contact) to evaluate if a co-created product would negatively impact the brand image of either party. A co-created product should better the image of both businesses, therefore assessing audience perception beforehand is paramount to not waste resources or brand equity.

4. Get marketers and sales from both companies on board: To ensure the longevity of the product, marketing and sales teams from each company should believe in its value, vouch for it, and promote it as a solution to their leads and prospects. Hosting meetings, listening to feedback, and getting involvement from marketers and sales in the planning stage helps to ensure that products will be well received when launched.

5. Established shared KPIs: Similarly to the aforementioned KPIs in this article, it is important for the co-created product to have KPIs aligned between both companies and agreed upon by their decision makers.



#8 If necessary, end the partnership

Although not a decision to be taken lightly, if necessary, the partnership must end. This should be the last resort, considered only when partners are not keeping up with their obligations, hindering your performance outcomes.

KPIs are crucial to evaluate any failures of the partnership and justify its end informed by data. Strive to end the relationship amicably—you never know when a former partner could be useful later on for referrals or even a co-marketing campaign.

Before ending the partnership, evaluate possible negative public reception and the extent to which Public Relations (PR) would be required to assist to avoid fallback and make the end of the partnership smooth.

Finally, assess the operational impact the end of the partnership will have. This will depend on the amount of shared tasks and whether your partner took on responsibilities from your business that will need to return in-house or be outsourced.

Key takeaways

These are the top three considerations from this guide to keep in mind when forging an alliance in 2023:

Empower the partnership with data

High-performance partnerships in 2023 will be data-driven, with campaigns and decisions made on behalf of each partner informed by integrated data on leads, prospects, and clients.

In 2023, B2B alliances will be driven to greater heights with the know-how and insights only a collective pool of data and experts can provide.

Align stakeholders and KPIs

Defining the same KPIs and having stakeholders champion them, as well as rallying teams to achieve goals, will be paramount for successful partnerships in 2023—eliminating silos and individual metrics must be a top priority.

Do not be afraid of making the right decisions

Partnerships need to be accountable on both sides, which means pointing out mistakes when needed and, in worst-case scenarios, terminating the relationship.

Being brash is unwarranted, however, it is also important to make mindful decisions to lower risks and save resources at a time when both sides of the partnership have no budget to waste.

Therefore, enable your decision makers and allow them to address problems when needed with partners to obtain the best value from alliances.

6-step checklist for forging high-performance alliances during a recession

- ✓ Integrate data and align
- ✓ Analyze campaign success, make adjustments, and focus on buyers willing to spend
- ✓ Define the campaign messaging, content, and logistics
- ✓ Share and qualify leads
- ✓ Create offers, upsell, and co-create a product when applicable
- ✓ End the partnership if it is not achieving expected outcomes



About the Author

[Andrew Sambrook](#) is a veteran in the demand industry. With 33+ years of experience in roles ranging from services to publishing, operations, and sales, he brings a wealth of practical knowledge to INFUSE's clients. He is a strategic thinker with a can-do attitude that unites ideas into actionable plans that deliver growth.

FORGE ALLIANCES THAT EXCEED YOUR INTENDED DEMAND GENERATION OUTCOMES

The 1000+ global team of INFUSE Demand Strategists know the partners your business needs to drive revenue and growth in 2023.

Get in touch with the team for advice on planning your high ROI demand generation alliances.

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