

Why Managing Deal Registration as a Lead or an Opportunity Is Not a Best Practice

From its inception, deal registration has proven an effective means for a vendor to provide its channel partners with protection on an opportunity, special pricing consideration and often access to unique benefits. In exchange for these considerations, the vendor benefits from earlier visibility to the partners' pipeline and a higher degree of partner commitment. Presumably, it also provides a tool to better manage potential conflicts when more than one partner is pursuing the same opportunity

In the early days, deal registration systems were standalone, purpose-built applications; it was only by integrating them with a vendor's CRM that the ability to view the entire pipeline – direct and indirect became possible. This provided a vendor with the ability to see their entire pipeline in Salesforce, assuming they could entice their partners to share their opportunity data by offering deal registration and that the tools used to manage deal registration could improve the process and instill greater trust with partners. In our view there's still work to be done.

With the advent of PRM tools and partner portals, deal registration has often been designated as a "module" within a PRM system with the primary purpose is identity management/access and hosting enablement tools, co-branded content and marketing development funds in a centralized, on-line repository. The PRM registration "module" needed only two key qualities to be considered an improvement:

- Integrate with Salesforce CRM data to enable the holistic view of the pipeline
- Provide a user-experience marginally better than the Deal Registration module offered within Salesforce CRM.

The problem is there is no standard object native within Salesforce to manage the unique considerations required to manage the commitment between vendor and business partner inherent in a deal registration. Worse yet, efforts to treat a Deal Registration as if it were simply a type of **Lead** to be converted or an **Opportunity** pre-designated to be qualified by virtue of its source are problematic at best.

Neither scenario serves the purpose well — and perhaps that why nearly all of the major technology vendors have invested in creating a custom Registration object within their Salesforce environments to handle these unique requirements.

WHY NOT TREAT A REGISTRATION REQUEST AS A LEAD?

Most PRM systems took the simplest route — using Salesforce' Web-to-Lead tools to submit deal registrations as Leads into a vendor's Salesforce CRM. In fact, you don't even need a PRM tool since the forms can be captured straight from the vendor's website or partner portal/page.

While relatively easy to implement, this process has a number of shortcomings:

- **Partner Relationship**
If/when the Lead is converted to an Opportunity (as well as Account, Contact) visibility to many of the details are lost to the primary Salesforce users (CAMs) making it more difficult to manage partner relationships

- **Deal Registration Visibility**
Assembling a single view of all deal registrations from a partner requires manually aggregating data from both the Lead and Opportunity
- **Marketing Attribution**
Marketing attribution is made more difficult as upon conversion much of the Lead info is no longer visible and when partners are the lead source it's more difficult to ascertain impact of other demand gen activities
- **Holistic View**
When multiple partners pursue the same deal, only the Lead that is approved for deal registration is converted to an Opportunity and is the only one which remains viewable
- **Compliance Risk**
Audit trails required to prove compliance are not easily visible (Remember, deal registration is a legal commitment affecting pricing, protection, etc.)

WHY DEAL REGISTRATION IS NOT AN OPPORTUNITY EITHER

So if it's not a good idea to flow deal registration into the Lead object why not simply flow it directly to an Opportunity record? First and foremost, that's really not a scalable solution. It might work if the vendor had a very small volume of deals being inputted directly by a single source. But as with any Lead converted to an Opportunity, once assigned, it's only available to the owner of that Salesforce Account or Opportunity. Also, automatically treating a Deal Registration as an Opportunity distorts the pipeline. If it's denied or rejected for any reason, then there's an Opportunity lost that never was a real Opportunity. Worse, there may be many good reasons to approve a deal registration to protect the partner well before completely qualifying the Opportunity according to the vendor's criteria. The net result, at a minimum, there are more opportunities in the pipeline than are truly qualified.

WHY A REGISTRATION REQUEST SHOULD BE JUST THAT – A REGISTRATION

Deal registration is a complex component of a successful channel strategy. Multi-level approval processes, internal routing, historical reporting, even front-end partner rewards programs all have to be cared for in the process. Best practices require a system capable of enabling quick, concrete action to review and approve registrations, enabling internal and partner resources to help close the deal and effectively measure the impact as well as enabling more efficient tracking of influence and attribution to ensure alliance teams and marketing get proper recognition.

Here are five key reasons why using a custom Registration object in Salesforce to manage all deal registration requests is a best practice:

1. Enhancing Visibility

A custom Registration object provides a unique identifier within Salesforce. As with Leads, there can be multiple Registrations for what's essentially the same customer opportunity. However, unlike a Lead which is converted to an Opportunity and becomes no longer visible in its original form, with a Registration object, the date/time stamp and the original details are preserved, and mapping functions enable each submitted registration to be mapped to the vendor's Customer Account, Contact and Opportunity records.

This makes it easy for the vendor sales teams to identify if there's already an existing opportunity being worked and/or if there's another partner already engaging the customer. And

by using a Registration object, vendors can easily see all of a partner's registration activity – by date, by status, by sales rep, etc. via a single report. This task is made far more difficult when some registration requests are found in the Lead object and others in Opportunity.

2. Improving Deal Context

A Registration object also makes it easier to identify the Partners' employees involved with the opportunity, usually the Partner Sales Rep, the Partner Submitter for the firms managing deal registration centrally and the Partner Sales Engineer. This data makes it easier to collaborate but is often omitted based on an often-misplaced fear of requiring too many seat licenses.

The fact that there are multiple Registrations for the same deal is very rich contextual information for the CAM: it's nearly as important to know who's been denied — and why — as it is who's been approved. Customer preference will ultimately determine which partner gets the deal. Registration data often helps CAM better understand the customer dynamics.

3. Attributing Influence

The Registration object can also contain Lead Source for Marketing attribution or to track influence from alliance partners. Using a custom Registration object. Marketing attribution to MDF-funded partner demand generation activities is made possible.

4. Ensuring a Comprehensive Audit Trail

The partner submitted data in the uniquely identified Registration record is preserved including close dates, deal value and other data that may not be the same as that stored in the Opportunity record owned by the vendor's sales team. Since not all deal registration requests generate an Opportunity, it's important to keep all the details. And when registrations expire they can be re-submitted or the deadline depending on the vendor's business process – the data stays intact.

5. Maintaining Partner Trust

Deal registration is a contractual agreement — if the partner can close this specific opportunity with this particular customer in the allotted timeframe under these conditions then the vendor is committed to providing specific deal protection, pricing considerations and access to specific benefits.

But more than simply the contractual nature, it's about establishing and building trust. Being transparent and responsive are key to fostering a partner's trust. Being able to respond quickly and decisively to a deal registration request can only happen if the systems are in place to easily identify potential conflict, track program compliance and respond clearly within the published SLAs (or sooner).

The risk of losing the trust of the partner by missing a competitive situation or failing to respond as promised can far exceed the value of any single transaction; relying on sub-optimal approaches with obtuse reporting can prove costly.

For additional information about recommended best practices download the Deal Registration Best Practices for Technology Vendors e-book now.



