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In recent years, many business leaders have turned to online marketplaces to find new corporate technology solutions. Microsoft has made digital marketplaces such as “AppSource” and “Azure Marketplace” available to its community of customers and partners. These digital “storefronts” allow customers to find, try, and buy applications and services that accelerate their Digital Transformation, and help publishers like you grow businesses, thanks to an increased access to Microsoft’s customers and partner ecosystem. Microsoft invites you to take advantage of this opportunity and has created this guide to help you get the most out of your online marketing efforts.

An optimized marketplace listing can help you accelerate your customer acquisition growth, and thus can play a significant role in your cloud business strategy and engine. Get ready to list offers, provide customer trials, and connect with Microsoft customers and the partner community.

So where do you begin?

You will need to determine how best to leverage and market your new marketplace listing or “storefront”. This Best Practice Guide serves as a supplement to the Azure Marketplace and AppSource Publishing Guide. It is designed to provide you with marketing strategies and ideas that can help you draw more traffic to your listing, and engage with online prospects in more meaningful ways.

AppSource is the preferred online marketplace for business customers to find, try, buy, and deploy leading cloud applications that support business workflows and drive productivity. Azure Marketplace is the preferred online marketplace for IT professionals and cloud developers to find, try, buy, and deploy leading IT management, support, and development solutions.
Microsoft will drive qualified visitors to AppSource and Azure Marketplaces. Your responsibility is to ensure the messaging and supporting content in your listing is differentiated and stands out among other offerings, while being secure. Simply listing your solution’s features and functionality in a bulleted list is not very compelling. Focus on communicating more than just what your solution does or looks like by articulating why prospects need it. Effectively communicating the core value proposition and return on investment is paramount.

10 benefits of optimizing your marketplace listing

1. Gain new leads
2. Easily provide free trials during the buying cycle
3. Convert prospects to buyer faster
4. Lower cost of selling
5. Reach global markets
6. Leverage Microsoft’s investment in marketing and brand recognition
7. Make it easy for Microsoft team members to share your solutions with others
8. Showcase your core competencies and vertical domain expertise
9. Gain increased credibility
10. Test and validate new product or service offerings and market opportunities
Listing best practices

Below is a sample marketplace listing with content best practice recommendations, which will help you optimize your listing and maximize results. The key is customer relevancy. Each word read must resonant with the customer and inspire them to engage with your app.

Create an icon or logo that reflects the value proposition of your solution

Branding is important. Take time to consider what your app name will be

Customers often make buying decisions based on the information they read in peer reviews. Monitor this section closely

Get your prospects' attention by asking a compelling benefit-based question they can relate to

Customer trials and test drive call-to-actions increase engagement

Identify who your app is for

Describe why someone should try/buy your solution. Explain how you can help. Avoid long lists of features.

Select your primary product categories carefully. Too many selections can dilute relevancy

Include a 3rd party proof statement, statistic, or testimonial

To move prospects beyond interest and a free trial, take them to an optimized sales landing page on your website

Looking for a full enterprise restaurant management system that can streamline all your operations?

The comprehensive management system that covers your whole restaurant operations. Improve your efficiency with central management of prices, recipes and offers, offer quicker, better service, and cut costs by improving your stock and production management.

Manage your restaurant operations from front to back in a single platform. Whether you are looking for quick service, casual dining or fine dining, LS First Hospitality is the solution to meet all your needs.

Keep control over your business from headquarters, cut IT costs and gain agility by using one software solution across your entire business. The system instantly replicates your business data across the organization, so you can always take timely, informed decisions based on up-to-date data.

Boost your speed and accuracy of service: orders are sent from a mobile POS straight to the Kitchen Display System, decreasing table turn times, and enabling you to provide to more customers in a shorter time.

LS First Hospitality is interoperable with all the solutions in the Microsoft suite. Thanks to the flexibility of the cloud, it’s a highly scalable solution, ready to grow with you when you're ready.

With LS First Hospitality you can:

- Manage menus, recipes, ingredients centrally for your whole omni-channel presence
- Configuring the POS interface to suit your needs
- Manage inventory, production and kitchen display routing
- Publish offers to loyal customers across the channels
- Reduce IT cost using one platform instead of many integrated applications

LS First Hospitality is compatible with Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations and Dynamics 365 for Retail

Learn more at www.lshotel.com/products/ls-first-hospitality/
Optimizing your solution listing content

First impressions matter. Hook the reader by listing your top benefit(s) within the first sentence or two. Research shows it takes only seconds for a prospect to accept or reject your solution during the selection process. It is critical that you make your listing appealing so that it resonates immediately with your target audience.

Branding is important

Choosing a name for your solution is a key decision. Avoid using technology-specific terms in your product name or acronyms that are emotionally meaningless. If you plan to offer more products in the future, consider branding implications and how you might expand the name to include a family of products or solutions. For example, the Microsoft Dynamics 365 brand includes a family of individual products targeting different market segments and business needs.

Benefit-based solution names are always more effective than descriptive ones. Ideally, your solution name will communicate the core value customers will enjoy. Adding an industry-specific reference or indicator can increase relevance as well as conversion rates.

Microsoft Dynamics 365 family of products:

Example of industry specific relevant product name and logo from IndustryBuilt Software Corp.
Example of extended product line from AXtension®

When choosing a name for your solution, keep the following questions in mind

- Does my product name convey anything meaningful to my prospects?
- Does it capture the essence of the product and indicate the value it delivers? Is it appropriate and appealing to my target audience?
- Is it short and memorable?
- Does it convey something relevant to my target customer’s business? Does my app name reflect what my business is about?
- Does it limit us in any way? How easily will it translate into other languages/cultures?
- Is it too similar to another product name, thereby potentially causing market confusion?
Positioning your product for success

Product overview and description
In the product “Overview” section of your listing, we recommend you include the following components:

Clearly stated product value proposition
Before jumping into describing WHAT you are selling, in the main headline of your listing, tell prospects HOW your solution can positively impact their business. The core components of your value proposition should be conveyed in the first headline and should answer the following:

- What is the product?
- Who will gain from it the most?
- What need or pain does it address?

For assistance in defining your value proposition, see here.

1. Pique their curiosity
8 out of 10 people will read headlines, but only 2 out of 10 will read the accompanying text. If you immediately ask a relevant question, you will attract prospects and pique their curiosity. This results in increased engagement. The best questions to ask are those that are benefit or pain based. For example, you could ask, “Tired of wasting valuable time and money manually processing invoices?” or “Want to reduce your invoice processing time by 20%?”

2. Identify pain points before benefits and features
If you want to list features on your solution listing, begin your statement by identifying the pain, followed by the benefit, and then conclude with the features.

For example, “Is production downtime costing you money?” (pain) Now you can automatically determine the primary reason for production gaps and high related costs (benefit). Our solution offers full maintenance management and preventative maintenance functionality (feature).

Emotional Messaging Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Messaging example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Non-emotion-generating feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We offer inventory management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>Somewhat emotionally appealing benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase your revenue and decrease your costs with more efficient inventory management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Best**  | Emotionally compelling and action-driven statement  | Stop losing revenue and customers due to stock outs and poor inventory management.

**Target customers**

Indicate who your solution is geared for, so prospects know right away if it is designed for them. Is your solution suited best for small businesses or large enterprises? Is it optimized for a specific type of company such as a franchise or restaurant business? In which regions is it available? Be clear and descriptive.

**What countries does Shopify Connector support?**

This app is available in: the US, UK, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Canada and Denmark.

3. **Don’t forget proof testimonials**

Include a quote, customer testimonial, or quantitative statistic confirming the benefit of your solution. Prospects want proof of any claims that you make.
Supporting content

Screen shots and videos

When scanning text, the brain quickly tires and moves on. Include images and videos to show rather than tell users about potential benefits and impact. What can you include that effectively demonstrates your key value proposition in pictures rather than text? More effective than text are dashboards, solution screen shots, charts/graphs, customer stories and product demonstrations.

Videos generate a much higher level of engagement and viewing time, while conveying more than you can ever say with words. Microsoft marketplaces allow you to add images and video to your listing, so be sure to maximize this opportunity.

Style and production best practices for videos

- Speak directly to your prospects, using “you” rather than third person language such as “customers” or “they”
- Reference your product detail page as a primary call to action
- Create a 30 second or less video that can be shared in social posts
- Make sure you underscore your visuals with high quality audio
- Add interactivity wherever possible, linking to text, charts, animation, etc.
• Include a call to action at the end of all videos. Viewers should feel inspired to take the next step toward purchasing.

• Track views and measure viewer patterns so that you can learn from prospects’ actual behaviors and identify preferences in order to improve future content.

• Let prospects view what they are most interested in seeing; keep product demos at less than 3 minutes.

• Videos featuring a customer as the hero are more powerful than those in which you tell your own story.

Help your audience learn
Keep the overview section of your listing simple and use this space to provide additional resources and information. Also, deliver a concise, engaging message about why your prospects need your solution, how you can help them, and what your product does to meet their needs. Provide a direct link to your own website’s conversion landing page to convert more viewers into buyers.

Sample Dynaway A/S learning resources:
Leverage ratings and reviews
Customer advocacy can be the biggest driver of sales, as prospects tend to consider peer reviews before making a buying decision. Having multiple, strong customer reviews helps bump up your offer in search results. Invite new customers to try your solution and leave a review. Make sure to check your reviews frequently!

Provide a tangible experience
Customers like to try before they buy. Many marketplace visitors will quickly filter publishers by “free trial” or “test drive”. The stronger your trial experience, the more interested your prospects will be. Consider offering a “Test Drive” or other type of trial.

Consider product positioning
Customers often compare solutions, so it is important to differentiate yours from competitors, to hold a clear and unique position. Before you finalize your listing, benchmark your messaging and content against that of competitors.
Differentiation checklist

- Is the messaging on our listing different from that of competitors?
- Have we clearly highlighted the value we offer customers?
- Have we identified key compelling business pains and benefits rather than just listing features?
- Have we articulated what we are best at?
- Have we mentioned who will benefit most from our solution?
- Do we offer prospects a self-driven buying journey?
- Does our messaging and language speak to a specific buyer persona?
- Have we carved out a unique position in the market?
Once you have successfully optimized your Microsoft marketplace listing, you will want to drive prospects to a dedicated sales landing page. The Microsoft brand is powerful and compelling and will attract buyers; however, you will need to engage visitors further to convert them into customers.

Instead of sending prospective customers to your corporate website where they may get lost, create a dedicated sales conversion page. Be sure to provide a link to this page under the overview/description area on your Microsoft marketplace listing. Perform ongoing testing to optimize interaction levels on this landing page.
Sales landing page best practices

Review the following sample sales landing pages and recommended approaches and determine which elements will help you become more successful.

Leverage your company brand to give your new app credibility

Visuals create an emotional connection. Paint a desirable picture of your customers' future situation.

Do not give prospects too many menu choices. Narrow the scope of the buying journey. Use simple and descriptive menu options such as “pricing,” “demo,” or “buy now.”

Include a visual product logo.

State your value proposition early on the page.

Pain leads to action. Identify 1-3 of your prospects’ most prominent challenges.

Ask a provocative pain-based question to capture interest

Include videos to tell your story.
Sales landing page best practices cont.

Visually engage prospects. Use pictures, graphs and screen shots to enhance engagement.

Don’t be afraid to use humor.

Highlight the most significant benefits and rewards your customers will gain if they choose your solution.

Use bright, contrasting colors to call attention to buttons.

Offer options to try now: view a self-running demo, plan a scheduled walkthrough, or take advantage of a time-limited special price, etc.

Make sure you include a very specific next step, such as a call-to-action button with the option to try or buy.
Sales landing page best practices cont.

Include proof of value and benefits using customer quotes or testimonials.

Don’t make general and abstract claims. Use data as often as possible to support your claims.

Reduce prospect frustration by indicating where your app or services are offered.

Include a link back to your listing on AppSource and the Azure Marketplace.
Having an optimized solution listing and sales landing page enables you to leverage the marketplace opportunity to gain traction. However, you will also want to conduct your own marketing campaigns, which will create greater awareness and drive ongoing demand for your solution. Listed below are critical, foundational steps that must be taken prior to executing your marketing campaigns. Take time to complete each step to ensure your campaign investment yields a high return.

1. Define your target market

To effectively drive traffic to your solution listing, focus your marketing campaign efforts. Begin by defining high potential target market segments. A segment refers to a group of potential customers who share common characteristics, needs, and buying behaviors. Each market segment is unique; therefore, you will need to refine your content so that you can both engage your target prospects’ emotions, as well as provide relevant emails, blogs and other content that speak directly to these prospects while addressing their particular business challenges. Examples of market segments could include small businesses, emerging mid-size companies, or large enterprises.

**Know your key decision makers**

- What are their primary pains and challenges?
- What do they most want to achieve?
- What drives their decision making?
- Who influences them?
- What is most important to them?

2. Be specific about the industries you serve

Prospects want to know if your solution is optimized specifically for their business needs. Make sure to demonstrate your domain expertise by creating and sharing industry-specific case studies, by providing industry specific landing pages, and writing blogs that highlight key challenges facing your target industries.
The AppSource marketplace has an industry-related search box. Take advantage of this filter if you have industry expertise that customers are searching for.

3. **Speak to a specific persona**

Drafting an email, blog, advertisement or other marketing asset that appeals to a broad mass-market can be quite challenging. We often try to create content that resonates with all prospective buyers, but in doing so, we don’t reach any one prospect in a meaningful way. The needs of an IT Manager are different from those of a Marketing VP or CEO.

Prospects will only spend a few seconds scanning your Marketplace listing or landing page, or reading your email. Identify WHO your solution is for at the top of your page, so that visitors can immediately know they have come to the right place, and you have a solution just for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AppSource</th>
<th>Azure Marketplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target audience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Line of business decision makers (specialist roles include procurement, manufacturing, accounting, etc.)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Have a well-defined content strategy

Your prospects are very busy. In addition to fulfilling their many responsibilities, they are overwhelmed with daily emails pertaining to sales and marketing offers from outside firms. Most importantly, they also don’t trust the content of sales materials or advertisements as much as they used to. This means you want to focus less on selling and more on educating. All of your campaign content should teach prospects during the buying cycle, rather than focus solely on product features and functionality.

You earn trust by providing information that is valuable to them. This can include the sharing of:

- Interesting industry data or research
- Summaries of key trends
- Case studies and success stories
- Checklists, guides and self-assessments
- Educational blogs on important industry specific topics
- Other informative content

5. Avoid using too much emotionless text

Most vendors use too much text in their marketing materials and communications. Adding an image to an email has been proven to increase open rates. Provide a link to a video or demo to encourage prospects to move to the next step in the buying journey. Include a link to your marketplace on all your marketing assets. Attract buyers’ attention, show them something they won’t want to miss, stand out from the rest! Include dashboards, images and other graphics in campaign content to deepen visual interest and increase consumption time.

Sample compelling image, courtesy of Hitachi Solutions
6. Make video the hero of your campaigns

As discussed earlier, online video is the future of content marketing. Why? In our world of information overload, video is easy to engage with. Your campaign strategy should include video content. Even if you operate a small business, you can inexpensively create authentic customer stories, educational videos, employee video blogs and more. Share your videos on your website, embed links in your email campaigns, and post your videos on social media. Include a direct link to your marketplace listing at the end of all your videos.

7. Keep your campaign content simple

Keep your messaging clear and to the point. Use language your customers would use themselves to describe their needs or challenges, rather than using polished marketing verbiage. An abundance of text will be largely ignored. On your listing page, conversion landing pages, and in campaign emails, try eliminating everything that isn’t compelling or important.

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How to engage and not overwhelm the buyer’s mind

- Include lots of white space, cut text
- Use simple, descriptive, ordinary language
- Avoid emotionless stock photos
- Tell your story in infographic form
- Incorporate videos, trials, demos, and interactive content

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Now that you understand the critical steps required to launch marketing campaigns that engage viewers and bring results, here are some quick tips on how to draw greater traffic to your solution listing and sales landing page:

1. Indicate on your website and other marketing communications that your product or solution offering is available on Microsoft’s cloud marketplace, and that customers can easily access a trial offer there. Include social media share buttons on online pages and provide a link back to the marketplace from your landing pages.

2. Utilize trusted, well-researched, and targeted industry terms to increase PDP search engine optimization. Take advantage of keyword planning tools to choose your words more effectively.

   **Visit Bing:**

   **Visit Google:**
   [https://adwords.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/](https://adwords.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/)

3. Interact with those in your target segment. Make your presence known at industry events and conferences so that you can position your organization as a thought leader. Attempt to have links to your marketplace listing page posted on industry blogs, newsletters and other relevant online publications. Show that you are an active member in your prospects’ community. Cross links will help increase your search engine rankings as well.
4. Adopt the “conversational marketing” trend by engaging in two-way communication, creating a customer community, and aiming to provide customers and prospects with more than just a product experience. Create and post shareable educational videos. Help your customers gain recognition for their innovative implementations and showcase their successes. Leverage the power of referrals and focus on nurturing customer advocates.

5. Create links between channels (i.e. from your marketplace listing to your website, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter etc.). Whatever platforms you are using, if you create a network between all of your touchpoints, you will be sure to gain an increase in traffic flow.
To increase the chances that your listing will be found on the Microsoft marketplaces, you should also apply search engine optimization (SEO) best practices. SEO refers to the process of optimizing your listing or sales conversion page so that it will appear high in the organic search results. Search engines regularly send automated, web-surfing software called “crawlers” out into the web to review and analyze URLs (such as your Microsoft marketplace listing or sales landing page), searching for any updates and changes. These crawlers are gatekeepers to a search engine’s ranking system. The more relevant your landing page updates are, the more frequently these crawlers re-analyze your listing, which benefits you.

Example of how Tribridge links its 3 inputted keywords into its AppSource listing and lets bots crawl throughout the listing allowing the company to slowly make its way up in search rankings.
The AppSource Marketplace also lets prospects find your app using specific category filters. Be sure to align with these key search terms if you have industry domain expertise or workload specialization.

Here’s a checklist of the steps you can take to get a boost in your search ranking:

1. **Make your content fresh and relevant**

First, your content should be specific on a given topic and be kept up to date. Modify your listing and sales conversion pages regularly. Update screen shots, videos, text, and more. Search engines demand that you keep your listing current.

**Adobe Sign for Microsoft Dynamics 365**

Adobe

**Overview**

Easily send for digital signature and track & file contracts right within Microsoft Dynamics 365 CRM.

Close deals faster when you add the power of Adobe Sign, Microsoft’s preferred e-signature solution, to Microsoft Dynamics. Simply log in to Microsoft Dynamics and send documents for digital signature within the app. Recipients can then sign contracts on their desktops or mobile devices without installing software or signing up for an account. Once signed, the record is updated in Microsoft Dynamics and contracts are automatically saved and sent to each party—all in a matter of minutes.

Adobe Sign works seamlessly with Dynamics 365 Online and On-Premise to help you:

- Send contracts, agreements, and other documents for signature in a single click—without leaving Dynamics CRM.
- Recipients can sign and return contracts from a web browser or mobile device.
- Merge data from Dynamics entities into contracts and push data from
2. **Add outbound and inbound links**

Search engine developers understand the internet is a place of sharing. The more a URL is shared by relevant and quality websites, the more merit it receives relative to others. Reach out to industry analysts, bloggers, partners, or other technology consultants for a review, a mention, or even just a quick link (within context of course) to your listing. It’s also imperative to create outbound links as well. On your Marketplace landing page, nest resources within your page to optimize the customer experience. Nested content could include industry research or other educational content your prospects can benefit from.

3. **Optimize keyword placement and metadata headers**

Search engines will default to reading your body text if you don’t force them to read your site’s metadata first. Metadata includes page headers and descriptions of the page’s content found within its code (max 155 characters). Where possible, ensure your listing has a page header or title that includes keywords your users will typically search for. Every site has a meta description that is displayed on a search engine’s results page. Do not talk about product features and functionality in your meta description if that isn’t what your prospects are looking for. Make sure to research the words and terms that are typed the most within your prospects’ industry. This may be one of the most valuable, high return activities you can do. Finally, avoid keyword stuffing. Many search engines penalize you (or even remove your ranking altogether), if they find you’ve been adding a slew of completely unrelated but over-optimized words or terms.

4. **Search Engine Marketing (SEM)**

You may also choose to invest funds into promoting your Microsoft marketplaces listing and sales conversion page to increase their visibility in search engine results. In other words, your page can achieve a higher ranking in search engine results and appear above the organic search results, thereby increasing your
chances of click-through. This is referred to as search engine marketing (SEM) or pay-per-click (PPC)

5. Digital media advertising

There are also many paid options to gain increased awareness and attract higher visitor volumes using targeted display or banner advertising. Because of the complexity involved, we recommend working with a media buying agency or expert who can help you target and optimize your initial media plan in order to yield the highest return on investment. Hiring an expert will help you learn best practices and avoid mistakes. Important steps include choosing the right medium, defining your target buyer, assessing costs, identifying goals, designing effective advertisements, optimizing campaigns, and measuring and tracking results.

In summary, search (both paid and SEO) is one of the most powerful mediums for creating and capturing demand for your solution. However, it can be expensive to maintain over the long term.
Digital media advertising examples

SaaS Benefits... and Challenges
In addition to reduced overheads - the result of utilizing cloud hosting rather than maintaining servers on-site - there are many more benefits to utilizing this way of working. SaaS advantages include:

- Greater attraction due to minimized risk for users who are unsure about paying upfront costs
- More appeal to a wider, global audience as software can be accessed from anywhere, anytime
- Software is easier to use and maintain with automatic updates, rather than manual installation
- Ability to provide users with flexibility over which device they use to access the software
- Opportunity to predict monthly recurring revenue (MRR) from selling subscriptions
- Reduced risk of obsolescence due to the faster and easier updates of cloud based applications

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FORTUNE

The Challenge Every Tech Company Is Facing Right Now

Based on the recent Best Workplaces in Technology list findings, there are some key factors that the very best tech organizations utilize to develop a high performance, high-trust organization. But what about the thousands of other tech companies that cannot boast such incredible workplace cultures? Each be told, they should be worried. Whether they’re in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, or Austin, non-tech companies are aiming to match their most important resource: their people. So what can a company do to limit the potential brain drain?

1. Have a clear path for advancement and growth in the organization

It sounds simple and fairly obvious, yet the number of companies that don’t have career paths and opportunities for ongoing development is astounding. Almost more than any other field, it is imperative that tech professionals be able to see where their careers might take them and how they might learn whatever the next great skill or language might be. Don’t think you have the time to spend on career development conversations? Imagine how much time you won’t have if your critical tech staff leaves.

2. Have a defined point of view on compensation

Technology employees, generally, are higher-paid, but the accuracy to keeping them isn’t just to raise salaries across the board. That is a zero-sum game. There is always going to be someone that pays more.
Give prospects control

After you are successful in drawing attention to your listing, it is important to provide prospects with the next immediate step that will move them along the buying journey. Purchasers want control throughout their decision-making process; they decide when and how they get the information they need. It is therefore critical to provide as many engagement options as possible, so that they can plan their own buying journey. Trials should be customer-led and require no purchase or configuration.

For more detailed guidance on offering trials within the Azure Marketplace, click on the link, here.

The strategic purpose and value of a free trial

When you offer a free trial and a competitor does not, you immediately have an emotional advantage. You appear more trustworthy and transparent, leaving your prospect with a positive bias towards your company. The aim of offering a trial is to drive the visitor from interest to desire. A trial can help you demonstrate your solution’s value and nudge a prospect toward commitment and activation.

Trial options

Offering prospects a trial experience increases engagement as well as exposure to your solution. Letting buyers try before purchasing also increases your chances of being found on the Microsoft Marketplaces.

There are different “trial” offer options and each has its pros and cons. By providing more than one option to visitors, you allow them to choose their own experience, based on where they are in the buying journey. Below are several types of trial options that you can offer prospects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key benefits</th>
<th>Choose this option if...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free trial</strong></td>
<td>Enables customers to try your product before they buy, and includes an automatic method to convert to paid use. Also provides proofs of concept for the customer and joint engagement with Microsoft sales teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose this option if...</td>
<td>Your solution is a virtual machine or solution template. Your solution is a SaaS offering, and you offer a multitenant SaaS product. You have a first-run experience to get a customer up and running quickly. You have a single tenant but are adding customers as guest users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Test drive</strong></td>
<td>Enables customers to try your product before they buy. Also provides a guided experience of your solution on a pre-configured setup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose this option if...</td>
<td>Your solution is a virtual machine, solution template, or SaaS app with a single tenant, or is difficult to provision. You don’t have a method to convert your trial to a paid offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-active demo</strong></td>
<td>Allows customers to see your product in action without the complexity of setup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose this option if...</td>
<td>Your solution requires a complex setup that would be hard to achieve in the trial period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A customer led free trial provides prospects with the most control over their trial experience. They can chart their own paths and self-determine their interactions on their own schedules. You may be able to limit how long a prospect can interact with the trial environment to a single visit, to a number of single visits, or to the full length of a trial period. By keeping your trial short, you encourage prospects to increase engagement and you create a sense of urgency, which can also compress your sales cycle. Include a call-to-action to accelerate conversion to paid use of your solution.

A test drive can be used when your solution is deployed via one or more Virtual Machines via IaaS or SaaS Apps. The benefit of this approach is the automated provisioning of a virtual appliance or entire solution environment, couched in a partner-hosted “guided tour” of the solution for customer evaluation, at no additional cost. The prospect does not need to be an existing Azure customer.

A partner-led interactive demo requires prospects to identify themselves and to wait for you to contact them to arrange a demonstration or trial. While this allows you to uncover more information, qualify prospects, and provide a more tailored and customized trial experience, it takes control away from prospects. It may also add an unnecessary hurdle in the buying process and increase your sales costs. The benefit of this option is you can provide a trial experience without provisioning for complex solutions. This option allows prospective customers to see the key features of your solution that they are most interested in, while in turn providing you with valuable leads that can be nurtured. Demonstrate sensitivity by providing other viewing options in addition to your partner-led demo.

If you are not ready to offer a free trial or test drive, or in addition to offering an interactive partner led demo, consider making self-running demos available on your sales landing page. These can provide prospects with a quick preview of your offering before they start a trial, test drive or while they are waiting for their interactive demo. However, while self-running demos can depict visually rich, simulated user experiences.
experiences, they offer limited interactive opportunity. If you do offer automated demos, it's better to have a few that are 3-5 minutes long instead of having one single extended demo. Prospects want to be able to dive in and out as they explore what is relevant to their specific needs. You can also offer a Chat option on your sales landing page that allows prospects to get answers to their questions throughout the buying process.

Regardless of which type of trial you offer, structure it in a way that speaks to a specific buyer persona. Offer use case scenarios if possible. As outlined earlier, determine who your target buyers are and what is driving them to look for a solution. Then ensure your trial guides them through what is most important to them and addresses their concerns. Each buyer type will be interested in different capabilities and benefits, so your trial should reflect these variances in focused and compelling ways.
Sample guided tour provided by Dynaway:
Once you have captured prospects’ interest on the Microsoft marketplace and they have started a trial, it is essential to have a clearly defined trial nurture process. Your goal during the trial is to help them understand how your solution can address their business concerns and challenges, which will trigger a deeper level of interest.

Whatever the duration of your trial, the nurture focus period should kick in immediately from the onset of customer explorations.

**Define a marketing nurture process**

Trial users should be nurtured and monitored along a deliberate evaluation path and nurture process. Touchpoints for trial users must be well thought out — both during and after signups. For best results, you will need to monitor, guide, and nurture users along a path that actively removes obstacles while encouraging a high level of engagement and interest.

Your nurture tracks will vary based on whether or not you have in-app intelligence to monitor trial user behavior throughout interaction with your application. If you have these insights, you can trigger an action-based email sequence that gently nudges users towards a desired outcome. If your users are overlooking key features, offer them auto-resources, tips, guides, tutorials, and other documentation, all of which will help them use the product more effectively while deepening their understanding of your solution.

If you cannot monitor trial user behavior, you should plan your nurture track based on a timed sequence of pre-determined nurture emails. Striking a balance between staying top-of-mind and being aggressive is important. Don’t encourage users to buy until the end of this sequence, after you have educated them and earned their trust.
Nurture cycle

Regardless of the nurture track, the following types of emails are effective during the nurture cycle:

**Welcome Email**
It is important to welcome your trial user. This type of email has the highest open rate of any email at 60%. Within the email, explain the value that users can expect from your solution, and provide resources or guidance on how to easily get started. Tell them you will be keeping in touch with them to ensure they have a positive learning experience.

**Education Email**
Send a recurring email containing useful content designed to help users get the most out of your trial. Send practical guidance and tips that encourage testing of your key features. Links to videos can be helpful as well.

**Aspiration Email**
In this email, describe an inspirational customer case that provides social proof and aligns with the outcomes your prospect is looking for.

**Trust & Thought Leadership Email**
Send an email that highlights your company’s expertise, experience, and awards, and shows you are a safe choice. Create a sense of fear if prospects choose someone else or if they miss out on this opportunity to join the hundreds of other companies just like theirs that have enjoyed significant benefits with your solution.

**Urgency Email**
If possible, create in-app messaging to remind users of how much time is left in their trial period. Emails should state how many days they have left in their trial. This creates a sense of urgency.

**Offer Email**
Create a one-to-one email with a personalized, limited offer. Include a reminder of the key benefits prospects will enjoy with your solution.

**Take Away Email**
Send them a final email stating you will be removing them from the trial process. Allow them one last opportunity to opt into a marketing nurture program if they are still interested, but not yet ready to make a decision.
Tracking leads

To receive leads from AppSource and Azure Marketplace, you must enable your CRM (Marketo, Microsoft Dynamics, or Salesforce) to accept lead data.

Pricing

The Azure Marketplace allows you to transact. You have Pay-As-You-Go and Bring-Your-Own-License billing options. When the Pay-As-You-Go Transact publishing option is used, your usage-based software licensing revenue is shared 80% / 20% between you and Microsoft respectively. A single offer can be priced at both Pay-As-You-Go and Bring Your Own License billing models, and can co-exist at the offer level as separate SKUs. This can be configured in your Offer in the Cloud Partner Portal.

If directly transacting with customers on the Marketplace is not available to you, and your prospects have completed a free trial, test drive or interactive demo, they will want to know if they can afford your solution. However, they may not yet be ready to engage with a salesperson to get a quote or proposal. Provide prospects with pricing information on your sales landing page and if possible, present them with sample packaged offers; this will allow them to get started with your solution right away. Shorten your sales cycle by giving prospects the opportunity to buy immediately after a trial.

Sample packaged implementation services from XRM Vision

On AppSource you can also offer services. This is a great opportunity to showcase your domain expertise and move the prospect from interest to purchase.

To accelerate the buying decision, provide 3 or 4 different tiered packages to choose from. Your middle offering should be your highest-margin, most popular option. A low entry package will encourage a quick buying decision and remove barriers to purchasing. A high-priced package will make the middle option more attractive and also allow you to provide a premium option for more complicated implementations. In addition, consider offering fixed price, “quick start” 30 day or less deployment packages or a pilot project to speed up purchasing decisions.
**LS Express pricing**

No upfront fees, just pay as you go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Premium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>$199</td>
<td>$449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Billing</strong></td>
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<td>$199</td>
<td>$449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features</strong></td>
<td>Single outlet&lt;br&gt;1 Point of Sale (POS)&lt;br&gt;Unlimited staff login on POS&lt;br&gt;Free login for External Accountant&lt;br&gt;Unlimited products&lt;br&gt;Free onboarding&lt;br&gt;1 Office 365 Business Premium user</td>
<td>Single outlet&lt;br&gt;2 Point of Sale (POS)&lt;br&gt;Unlimited staff login on POS&lt;br&gt;Free login for External Accountant&lt;br&gt;Unlimited products&lt;br&gt;Free onboarding&lt;br&gt;1 Full Financials user&lt;br&gt;1 Office 365 Business Premium user</td>
<td>Single outlet&lt;br&gt;5 Point of Sale (POS)&lt;br&gt;Unlimited staff login on POS&lt;br&gt;Free login for External Accountant&lt;br&gt;Unlimited products&lt;br&gt;Free onboarding&lt;br&gt;2 Full Financials users&lt;br&gt;2 Office 365 Business Premium users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional users and POS**

- Point of Sale (POS): $79
- Full Financials user: $49
- Office 365 Business Premium: $12.5

*Sample pricing page from LS Retail*
Measure and optimize

Marketing is both an art and a science. Know what you want to achieve in terms of revenue generation and new customer acquisition. Set objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for all your campaigns. Benchmark your monthly results and assess the impact of changes you make to your solution listing, landing page or trials along the way.

Set targets and regularly measure the following KPIs to gain insight and improve your listing, landing page and campaigns:

**Sales funnel efficiency**

- Number of contacts/visitors generated per month
- Number of conversions from visitor to trial sign-up
- Number of conversions from trial to purchase
- Number of paying customers
- Average number of days in each stage of the funnel
- Annual churn rate
Track traffic source performance

You will utilize many different marketing mediums to promote your new solution, including your Microsoft marketplace listing, SEO, possibly paid advertising, social medial campaigns, targeted email campaigns, and more. Tracking prospects by lead source will be important to ensure marketing effectiveness. Closely track and measure your results by medium and lead source in relation to your goals in order to ensure a high return on your marketing investment, and to further refine your messaging when necessary.

Your success is our success. You can visit the Cloud Partner Portal to uncover your analytics. Here you will gain insight into your Microsoft marketplace listing performance, identify the leads you have generated, and learn how to maximize your campaign activities.

In the Insights section of the Cloud Partner Portal, you will also see a high-level overview of your offer’s performance. The reports included in this section are:

- Summary snapshot of orders
- Usage
- Deployments
- Customer trends
- Detailed orders, usage, and customer data
- Orders and usage listed in a monthly summary or as a six-month trend view
- Usage/orders categorized based on several criteria
- Detailed reports showing customer information, including company name and geographic location down to the zip/postal code, so you can compare your customers and compensate your sellers

Here are the specific attributes we provide about your page visitors and trial users:

- Reseller
- First Name
- Last Name
- Email
- Company Name
- Transaction Date
- Subscription name
- Azure Subscription Id (PAY customers only)
- Cloud Instance Name
- Order Count
- Customer Country Region
- Customer City
- Customer Communication Culture
- Customer Zip/Postal Code
You can make optimal use of the information in these reports by reconciling it with your own internal data and by using it to better prioritize your marketing campaign actions.

The Analytics section of Cloud Partner Portal Insights provides a rich dashboard based on Power BI, which enables you to monitor traffic on your solution detail page. New features for this dashboard are constantly emerging. Also, within the Cloud Partner Portal, you can learn about the Microsoft Campaign, a mechanism by which you can set up campaigns and track them within the portal.

**Web Analytics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User distribution by referral domain</th>
<th>1/1/2018</th>
<th>1/31/2018</th>
<th>Campaign filter (Multiple Selections)</th>
<th>Campaign performance</th>
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<tr>
<td>dynamics.microsoft.com</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Map prospect interactions**

Knowing how many interactions (e.g. emails, demonstrations, content downloads, blog visitations etc.) it takes before a customer will sign up for a trial and convert to a buyer will enable you to plan and tailor your marketing efforts accordingly. This may take some time to determine, but the insight gained will be priceless in the end.

**Marketing budget forecasts**

Most vendors under-invest in marketing. Business to business firms typically spend between 7%-10% of their gross revenue on marketing. Allocate adequate budget to (a) ensure you have the marketing resources to follow up and qualify leads, (b) drive marketing nurture programs and campaigns, and (c) develop marketing content that educates prospects.
Questions to ask when making marketing investment decisions and establishing budget control measures

✓ What is my allowable cost to acquire a new customer?
✓ What is the customer’s estimated lifetime value?
✓ What can I expect the average monthly value of each new customer to be?
✓ What is the average acquisition timeframe for each customer in months?
✓ What is the expected annual churn rate?

*Track the above in one place and stay on top of performance with a simple marketing key performance indicator dashboard.*
## Appendix

### Additional resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner Marketing Center</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch and grow your business with the support of the Microsoft GTM Services team</td>
<td><a href="http://www.microsoftgotomarket.com">www.microsoftgotomarket.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a living document as marketplace marketing best practices are continually evolving.

Be sure to check back for new ideas and updates to this guide.