Convey Services: Alive at 5

5 years ago, on August 1, 2013, Copper Services was acquired by PGI in Atlanta and Convey Services was created as a spin-off. This is the 6th company I have either founded or co-founded (selling 4 of them), starting with InterCall in 1991, 3 other conferencing companies, a wilderness therapy program and now Convey. I think it's worth looking back at the lessons we've learned in 5 years and looking forward to what's next.

Our Journey

The Convey team came from a conferencing company with 3,000 clients who used our unique software to promote & manage webinars and post those recordings on our content portal. We had technology, lots of potential clients, and a confused sense of what Convey's purpose should be. We tried to be a Learning Management System (LMS), a sales enablement tool for direct sales, and a portal to collect and monetize business training and content. None of those strategies worked.

We went back to our roots and focused on the telecom channel creating a new business process to accelerate revenue by being the connector linking vendors to sales partner and enabling sales partner to market to customers. Our content & marketing portal networks and drip marketing technology were the perfect vehicles to accomplish these goals for master agents and their partners. Today we have 45 portals with over 23,000 partners using our services. We expanded the program to insurance and foodservice with thousands of businesses using our services and creating new markets that will buy services from our telecom channel.

The Lessons We've Learned

Do your research and ask the customer. We thought we could be a lot of things: an LMS, sales enablement service, e-commerce for business content. However, we needed to go back to our customers get their feedback and decide if the market would support our solution.

Focus on a problem big enough to solve. Once we set out to help the channel, we analyzed where vendors, master agents and partners were struggling and how to solve those business problems. The entire community was wasting time and money getting valuable information into the hands of the sellers and their customers choking off the ability to generate revenue.

Don't over-design your technology. Our portal and marketing technology is the heart of our solution, but we spent quite a bit of time building in obscure features that nobody cares about. When we launched Conduct, our email marketing solution for partners, we learned to edit features out if they could potentially confuse the customer.

Know when to pivot. We learned you should make your mistakes more quickly and then be willing to pivot. When customers are not willing to pay for your solution, the market is crowded with bigger competitors, and you are not solving a problem worth solving, it's time to adjust.

Know what you're worth. Without Convey, the entire channel eco-system would have a much harder time communicating and engaging partners and customers. We've learned that our program has value commanding a much larger revenue share than we have asked for in the past.

What's Ahead?
Based on the lessons we've learned from our 5 years, we will continue to focus on 2 prime drivers in the channel – accelerating revenue and reducing cost through automation and efficiency. The channel is evolving and expanding their definition of who they are, the services they can sell, and the type of customer willing to engage. Convey will continue to expand our view as well to help partners evolve beyond telecom, find new services to offer, and new markets that are willing to buy. Not only are we alive at 5 but Convey and its customers are thriving.