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Enable The Channel: Capture More Revenue from Your Existing Channel Partners

HOW A COMPANY REACHES ITS CUSTOMERS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES A COMPANY SELLS.



ften, using indirect channel partners such as system integrators, value-added resellers, consultants, and distributors enables a company to capture incremental revenue by reaching customers that are too difficult to reach directly.

Despite these advantages, many companies struggle to get the most from their channel sales model. It is hard to ramp new channel partners quickly and improve productivity once a partner is up and running. Companies provide a portal for partners to access, but too often this portal is a dumping ground for outdated or irrelevant information. Also, there is little visibility into what gets used, so the ineffective materials remain in the system, making it harder for channel sales teams to find sales assets that will be useful for closing deals.

To succeed, channel salespeople need Sales Enablement just as much or more than direct salespeople.

Consider the following:

- *Channel Sales Enablement is a big challenge.* A typical company may employ 10s or 100s of direct sales people, while their indirect channel partners can collectively deploy 1,000s or even 10s of thousands of sales professionals. Enabling all of these salespeople to have clear, compelling, and consistent sales conversations is a daunting task.
- *Mindshare is elusive.* The sales professionals in the indirect channels are one step removed from their vendors and most of them sell products and services from numerous manufacturers and service providers. It's hard for these salespeople

to know your offerings well enough to position and pitch them effectively.

- *The needs are complex.* The sales support needs of these resellers are as demanding as for a vendor. The complex mix of channels and sales situations means that vendors have to consider a number of different types of sales assets. This challenge can be overcome, but it requires understanding your channels well enough to meet their needs and developing just-in-time delivery models so that the channel salespeople can find what they need without digging.

What is Sales Enablement?

Through Sales Enablement, companies eliminate the traditional sales-portal content dig by:

- Making it easy to find and tailor the best materials for each and every selling situation
- Institutionalizing a network of experts to share the best insight across an organization
- Providing marketing with visibility into when and how materials are used in the field

In short, Sales Enablement harnesses the collective genius of an organization and drives that expertise into every sales conversation.

To succeed, channel salespeople need Sales Enablement just as much or more than direct salespeople. They must be armed with the best sales content, coaching documents, and expertise that their vendors have to offer. Vendors that do a better job of providing relevant resources just in time will do a better job gaining mindshare in the channel and enabling success in the field.

The Keys to Channel Sales Enablement

Central to any Channel Enablement strategy is a solution that gives partner salespeople the expertise and insight that they need to sell more effectively.

When considering a Channel Enablement solution, consider these keys to success:

- Push the right content for the partner and the sales situation.

Traditional partner portals send partner salespeople on an archeological dig because all of the content is dumped into the portal and partner salespeople are expected to go through this material to find something relevant to them and their situation. And yet only a fraction of the material may be relevant to any one partner and an even smaller amount is relevant to that particular visit.

KEY TO SUCCESS: make sure that a Channel Enablement solution only shows the right landing pages, formal marketing content, and informal coaching documents that are appropriate for each partner. For example, a VAR that only sells into the healthcare vertical should not have to see the content that applies to other industries. In addition, it should be easy for this VAR to find the appropriate materials—like a sales guide for a discovery conversation with a hospital executive—for this particular sales situation.

- Do more than share marketing glossies - share the informal 'tribal knowledge' and institutionalize training. Brochures, sell sheets, and white papers are important, but any successful salesperson will tell you that the most important resources are the people and informal information—success stories, responses to objections, and competitive differentiation—that enable a salesperson to have a better conversation with a prospect. And while most channel programs include costly training and certification steps, few have a plan for reinforcing learning by 'training at the point of activity' as partner salespeople go through their sales cycles.

KEY TO SUCCESS: make sure that a Channel Enablement solution helps partner salespeople to find people and informal information as well as approved marketing documents. Partners need to find resources in the channel management group

and the short snippets of insight that are often locked in a trail of emails. A solution needs to be able to find all of these types of information at once without having to log into three different places—a directory, email, and a portal—to find all of the insight needed to become an effective partner.

- Enable without draining scarce resources. Channel management teams often have fewer resources for enabling thousands of indirect partners than the resources available to enable hundreds of direct salespeople. Channel managers and marketers face a daunting task, and they need to spend less time doing administrative tasks like loading sales tools into a portal and more time doing strategic activities that bring in revenue. And since a majority of direct content is often reused for the channel, channel managers and marketers shouldn't have to reload direct materials into the partner portal.

KEY TO SUCCESS: make sure that a Channel Enablement solution enables an organization to publish, update, and delete sales assets once for both direct and indirect sales enablement. Loading any type of asset or creating a page should not require IT or a technical resource.

- Get feedback without creating channel conflict and track what's going on after deal registration. Channel managers need to know what works and what doesn't so that they can be more effective at making their partners productive. Increasingly, 'web 2.0' mechanisms like ratings and comments are being used to make it easy for partners to provide feedback. The problem is that in a channel, feedback has to be controlled so that conflict doesn't arise because one partner sees another partner's comments, for example.

KEY TO SUCCESS: make sure that a Channel Enablement solution has feedback embedded in the solution to make it easy to see what a partner is using with statistics that track what sales assets are viewed and downloaded. This sort of tracking gives visibility into how a deal is progressing after



the registration. In addition, make sure that partners can provide ratings and comments, but make sure your solution provides flexible ways to hide comments from other partners while still allowing channel managers to communicate with partners.

- Let channel partners tailor the message without obliterating the brand. Channel managers want consistent messaging and branding of the presentations, sell sheets, proposals, and other documents that partner salespeople use. A consistent message is critical to a vendor, but often the very reason for having partners is to enable them to tailor the message to a particular industry or other audience.

KEY TO SUCCESS: make sure that a Channel Enablement solution allows partners to personalize approved sales materials without having to worry about fonts and colors or using PDF editing tools.

For example, a solution should have the ability to automatically update generic sell sheets with a partner organization's boilerplate company description and the direct contact information of the partner salesperson.

Get Started

If you aren't truly enabling your channel partners, you may not hear about it—they may be selling someone else's products. Increasingly, the channel is expecting that vendors do more than just provide the traditional partner portal. Channel Enablement goes beyond portal functionality to push the best content, insight, and expertise that enables partner sellers to sell more proactively. When considering your Channel Enablement strategy, make sure you consider the keys to success that make it easier for your partners to sell your products.

About SAVO

Founded in 1999, SAVO is the industry's only provider of collaborative Sales and Channel Enablement solutions. SAVO's on-demand Sales and Channel Enablement platform maximizes the direct and indirect sales organization's ability to communicate value and differentiation in clear, consistent, and compelling ways. Combining proven sales and marketing best practices with award-winning technology, SAVO addresses all aspects of the Sales

Enablement challenge—spanning people, process, insight, and technology.

The combination of real-world client experience, an innovative consulting approach and award-winning technology uniquely positions SAVO to deliver practical solutions to enable the entire sales organization.

SUMMARY

For a more detailed discussion or to arrange a demo of the SAVO sales enablement solution, contact Karl Edmunds at 312-558-4866 or kedmunds@franklynn.com or Phil Corbett at SAVO at Phil.Corbett@savogroup.com