



# The 6 C's of Channel Management

## How to Drive Growth



## A channel organization to drive profitable growth, they need to consistently and efficiently manage their network of distributed partners.

When managing any team, you must have processes in place to support your initiatives and help you streamline tasks more efficiently. This is especially true in the channel management.

Each type of channel's lifecycle is essentially the same – recruit, onboard, enable, transact, and manage. It's important that each of these components is considered when mapping out an overall channel strategy. After all, growth depends on the success of distribution partners.

Here, we highlight the 6 C's of channel management and how you should be applying them.

“ Organizations create a custom partner portal that is rich with content and functionalities allowing them to recruit, onboard, enable, transact, and manage partners with ease. ”



## 1. Create

The first step of your channel strategy is to know who your target partners are and how you're going to create programs to support them. Channel programs serve as a foundation – for both the product you're trying to sell and training. Consistently curating programs and relevant content can keep your partners engaged, and most importantly, informed. Knowing that you'll have the latest information to aid in their efforts will undoubtedly keep them coming back. Consider frequently including assets like web pages, documents, and videos.

Utilizing a platform to easily update and house these documents makes the process of educating partners even easier. ZINFI, for example, boasts a content library module in its partner portal platform that enables vendors to upload and update any collateral as needed.

## 2. Communicate

Communication is two-fold in channel management. You need to have both a communication strategy for new partner recruitment and existing partners.

### Recruitment Communication

To penetrate a market of new resellers, you'll likely have to rely on social advertising, online events, trade shows, etc. There should be a concerted effort to target verticals that will market your product directly to those most likely to become partners.

You will need to know who you want to bring on as your reseller, and what would entice them to partner up with you. Your messaging needs to focus on what business value you bring to them, and how you will help them win in the marketplace.

### Communication with Existing Partners

When you launch a product when you acquire a company, when you roll out an incentive program, when you launch a training program, you have to have a clear set of communication plans tied to those activities, initiatives, and programs.

It may seem overwhelming to have communications in place for each, individual initiative. But this is crucial to ensuring partners have the information they need to sell. Many channel management teams make it easy by utilizing a partner marketing automation platform that streamlines the process for you. Is it a social campaign? An advertising campaign? A trade show campaign? A partner marketing automation platform can enable you to create dedicated campaigns for each initiative and does the communicating for you.

## 3. Connect

You should be constantly keeping your partners informed. They need to know what's new, what's changing, what must get done, just like the way you communicate to employees on a regular basis for a management infrastructure—what the company goals are, what the quarterly objectives are, etc.

Consider connecting on a regular forum—whether it's an online event or regular email communications. You can also invest in a channel management platform, like ZINFI, that enables you to connect through mobile alerts and pop-ups so you have multiple touchpoints with partners.

## 4. Cooperate

Cooperation means working with partners to create a plan so that they can enter a market segment they may not be competent in. These are large

partners that you'll want to cater to as smaller partners may not produce the results to make the time commitment worth it to build entry into new segments.

Remember, the point is that it needs to tie back to your overall channel strategy. In the end, the entire goal of your channel management investment is to sell faster and at lower costs.

## 5. Collaborate

While cooperation in channel management is about organizations helping partners to create a contract and plan, collaborate is to do something together (vendor and the partner). For example, to cooperate a vendor might work with a partner to help develop their business plan or strategy to increase sales.

Alternatively, when collaborating, a vendor will work with partners to go after the end-buyer (prospect or installed base). This might mean you're cultivating a joint marketing campaign or running an event during a training program—you're collaborating with them to do something together rather than guiding them to go it alone.

## 6. Commerce

A channel, when it comes down to it, is about commerce – buying and selling on a large scale. With this in mind it's important that you're focused on making communications applicable to whatever stage of the lifecycle partners are in – the recruitment phase is different from the onboarding phase as is the enablement phase and transaction phase—because, it all comes down to the management of commerce.

Your communication should clearly tell the partner what steps they need to complete for them to be able and successful in carrying out transactions. The relationship with a partner organization is purely financial. Whether you have a referral partner, sales

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partner or a service partner, in the end the partner organization is out there to make money.

Therefore, all your communication, training, incentives, deal registrations, service competency development and related channel programs need to constantly link back to how the partners can make money from your products, services and programs.

### Automation is Key

In order for a channel organization to drive profitable growth, they need to consistently and efficiently manage their network of distributed partners. This means having processes in place beyond excel spreadsheets and quarterly in-person trainings. To scale fast and with purpose, you need to automate. That's where ZINFI comes in.

A leader in through channel marketing automation and partner relationship management, ZINFI is a state-of-the-art platform enabling vendors to expand their partner relationships and quickly scale. With the ability to choose features they need most, organizations create a custom partner portal that is rich with content and functionalities allowing them to recruit, onboard, enable, transact, and manage partners with ease.



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