

## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR SALES CHANNEL?

Walter Ruckes, Vice President, Sales & Channel Engagement  
BI WORLDWIDE

A quick and  
easy exercise  
to help you build  
effective channel  
marketing strategies

One thing most companies agree on is that selling through channel partners like distributors, dealers and retailers gets more complex every day. New technologies, global markets and elusive customers make communicating, training and rewarding sales reps and managers tougher than ever.

When is the last time you took a good look at your sales channel? Not just your salespeople or your customers – but the touch points along the way? The critical transactions where your brand combines with the customer experience to create impressions that are hopefully positive – but potentially negative.

As you develop your strategic channel sales plan, you are probably already including key stakeholders such as:

- Your national and regional sales teams
- Distributors, dealers and retail sales management and reps
- End users of your products, including businesses and individual consumers

But do you know how each of these interacts with each other? Where are the overlaps and gaps? What vital data are you gathering? What critical information are you missing?

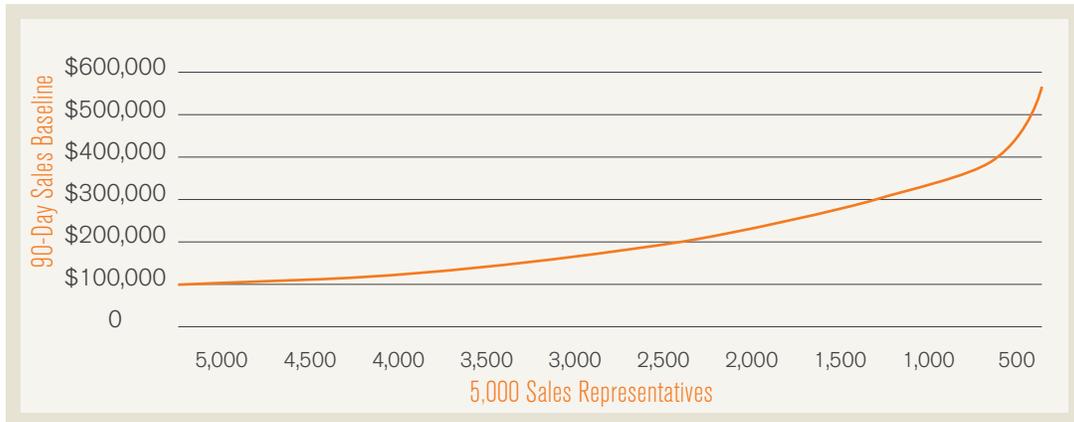
### Mapping and Monitoring Channel Performance

Research in the growing field of behavioral economics shows that high performing channel sales reps demonstrate the following:

- ✓ They have clearly defined goals for selling your product
- ✓ They have the necessary knowledge and skills
- ✓ They know where they stand and how to improve to meet their goals
- ✓ They are emotionally engaged with your brand
- ✓ They are focused on selling the right products

# HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR SALES CHANNEL?

WHEN YOU COMPILE THE DATA ON THEIR SALES PERFORMANCE, IT'S LIKELY YOUR DATA WILL LOOK LIKE A HOCKEY STICK:



This chart gives a glimpse of a typical channel sales force. To the right are your top performers, usually around 10-20% of all reps, who consistently set the pace. Unfortunately, **the other 80% or more of reps are flattening out the line – they aren't engaged with you – and they aren't selling for you.**

Well designed channel programs can give you an advantage over your competitors by supporting your efforts in a variety of areas:

- ✓ Gathering actionable data to help you drive sales performance
- ✓ Developing effective training programs
- ✓ Offering results-oriented incentives that pay for incremental performance
- ✓ Providing marketing tools to give your distributors, dealers and retailers the edge over their competition
- ✓ Creating mutually beneficial ways for you and your channel partners to build both of your businesses

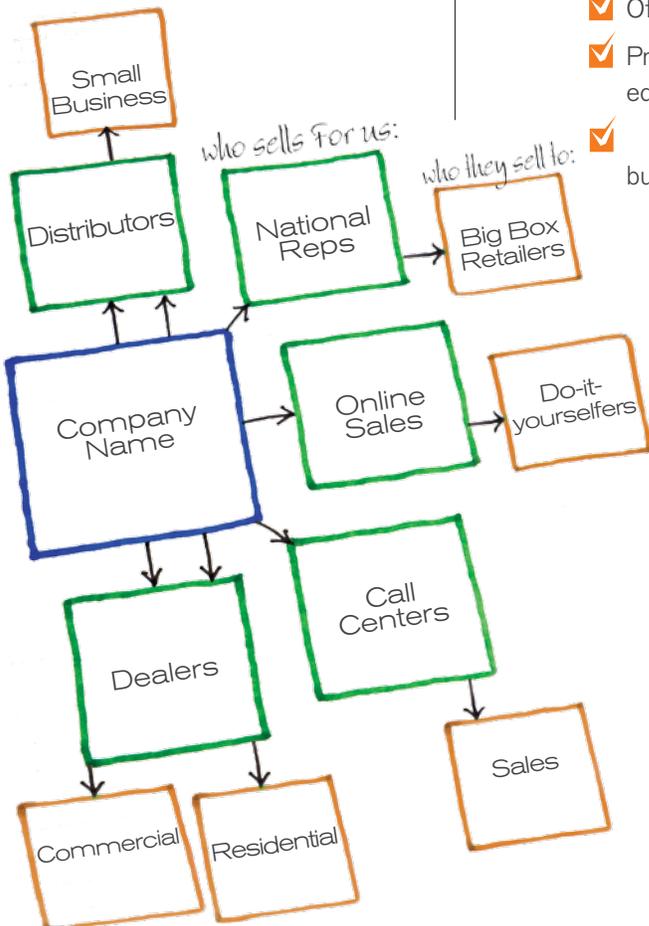
## Improving Channel Performance in 15 Minutes or Less

Use the following exercise to help you identify areas for improvement in your sales channel. It will quickly tell you where to focus and where you can get the biggest results.

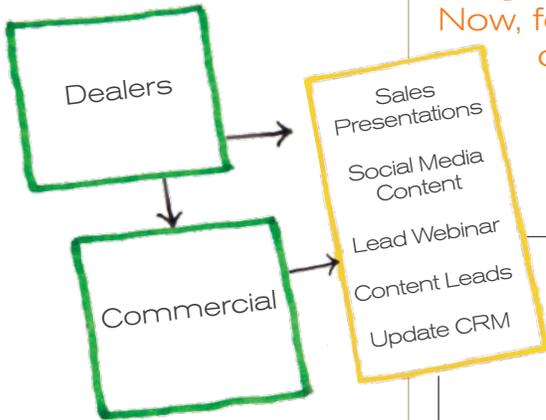
### Step One:

Starting with your product leaving the factory, write down each hand-off that your product goes through. Don't forget about online channels.

◀ When you are done, ideally you should have a visual that looks like this.



# HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR SALES CHANNEL?



## Step Two:

Now, for each hand-off your product goes through, write down the different transactions that need to happen.

## Step Three:

For each transaction you noted, circle **Yes** or **No** to the following questions.

### Do's and Don'ts When Designing Effective Channel Programs

Emily Roy:  
Account Supervisor BIW

#### Do's:

Keep it simple.

- Program results often show a correlation between participation levels and simplicity.

Personalize goals.

- Create a framework within which reps can self-select a goal and you will get them more engaged.

Identify your target audiences.

- You'll gain insights just by creating a flow chart of your distribution channel by starting with your organization reps all the way through the end user.

Determine how you will measure success.

- This is often overlooked but it is one of the basic rules of program design. Make sure your data will be captured in a way where you will be able to measure against your goals.

Transactions	DEFINED GOALS?		ACCURATE DATA?		NECESSARY SKILLS?		REWARDS FOR SUCCESS?	
	Do your sales partners have clearly defined goals for selling your product?		Do they receive timely and accurate data on how they are performing? How about their management? Ownership?		Do they have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively sell your product?		Are they rewarded not only for success, but for improvement?	
Sales Proposals & Presentations	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Develop Content for Social Media	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Lead Webinar or Seminar	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Contact & Qualify Leads	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Other Steps to the Sale	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N

**Congratulations!** You just created your To-Do List.

Every NO answer requires focus to create a high performing channel.

# HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR SALES CHANNEL?

## Do's and Don'ts When Designing Effective Channel Programs

Emily Roy:  
Account Supervisor BIW

### Don'ts:

Don't limit your communications to only your target audience.

- Most incentives fail because all audiences are not aware of the initiative. Get creative – make sure your reps have a story to tell. Look for public ways to get your message out: think social media if appropriate.

Don't communicate only at the launch of the initiative.

- To increase engagement and participation in your program, develop a plan to touch the audience multiple times throughout the duration of the program, using multiple methods (print, digital, mobile/text and live meetings).

Don't get discouraged by your lack of data.

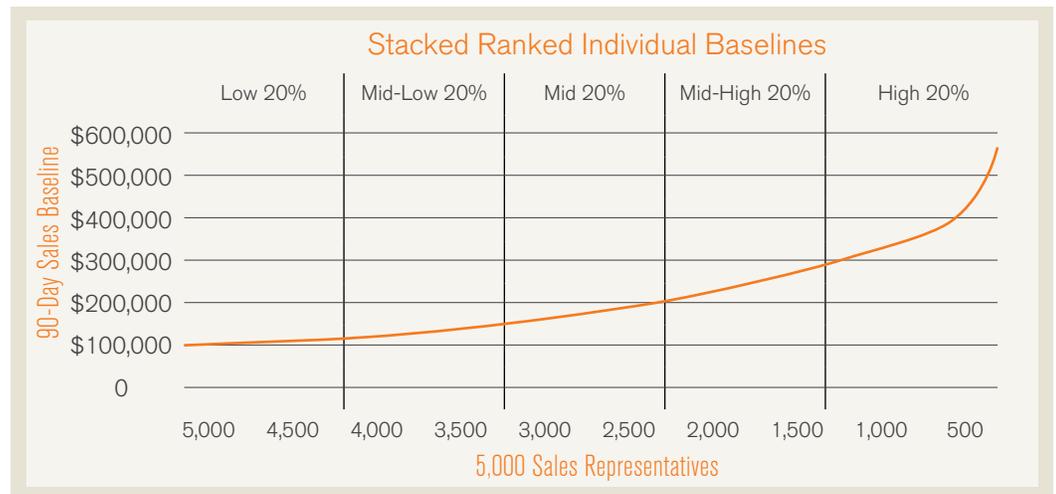
- You can still develop programs to drive results.

Don't forget a deadline.

- Targeted promotions of 30-60-90 days drive the most focus, and the best results.

But before you dive in, consider segmenting your audience. Different levels require different focus.

- **Top Performers** need recognition and motivation to stay on top. They are naturally competitive and need to be retained.
- **Middle Performers** need open lines of communication – and they need to be rewarded for improvement. Help them set achievable goals, appeal to their emotions and consistently give them a reason to focus.
- **Low Performers** need training, coaching and tracking.



Segment your audience into top, middle and low performers. Each level requires different expectations and actions.

## A partner to help with your channel partners

As you begin to plan your year, don't go it alone. BI WORLDWIDE helps companies of all sizes improve the performance of their sales channel partners.

Here are some examples:

- ✓ **Blueprinting** including field research and analysis to understand how your channel currently works and develop an action plan
- ✓ **Learning** to increase product and sales skills training
- ✓ **Incentives and promotions** for both sales reps and customers
- ✓ **Platforms** to communicate personalized messages and offers to reps and customers
- ✓ **Experiential marketing events and logistics** allowing prospects to experience your products
- ✓ **Advisory councils including** travel services to bring your elite dealers together, strategize and build long-term relationships
- ✓ **Sales recognition tools** like personalized URLs for top performers and recognition events in unique locations

For more information on Sales and Channel Effectiveness programs visit [BI WORLDWIDE.com](http://BIWORLDWIDE.com) or email us at [information@biworldwide.com](mailto:information@biworldwide.com).