



Ten Key Steps to Creating a Dominate Channel

I was recently asked by someone who was evaluating my formal channel methodology to “sum it up” into the most important steps to consider when creating an indirect go-to-market strategy and initiative. I readily agreed to this request and then quickly determined that I may have been a little too willing to try and distill 40-years’ worth of experience into a few pages. In fact, it is downright impossible. But I did manage to distill the information into a set of *Ten Key Steps* that I would like to offer as a brief outline.

It should be emphasized, however, that each of the ten steps could have ten sub-steps. Each of those having hundreds of moving parts. The key, therefore, is to understand the need for a formal **Channel Management Methodology**. And central to a formal channel methodology is the recognition of *three key components* that are absolutely required if you hope to dominate in your marketplace.

Key Component #1: Cultural Components of Your Program

Step 1: Establish/Validate the Indirect Channel Culture

- Why indirect?
- 100% indirect or a blended model?
- Rules of Engagement

Step 2: Create a Partner Framework(s) and an Opt-In Culture

- Separate investments and recognition from production
- Rationalize and acknowledge publisher goals & partner goals are consistent
- Remove “arbitrary” from the program altogether

Key Component #2: “Time to Revenue” - The Channel Framework and Program

Step 3: Create and Publish a Partner Profile(s)

- Truly understanding the partner reality
- Different profiles require different strategies and resources
- Platform for growth versus acceleration through maturity
- Recruitment methodology
- Partner Enablement – separate from Channel Management

Step 4: Role Descriptions, Compensation and Incentives Appropriate to the Component Being Managed

- Time to Revenue versus Manage to Revenue
- Building a practice versus building a pipeline
- Gaining mindshare versus maintaining mindshare

Step 5: Clearly Define the Partner Lifecycle – The Appropriate Allocation of Resources (mission-critical)

- Every partner operates from within a lifecycle stage
- Allocate resources appropriately (high touch, low touch, RIGHT TOUCH)

Step 6: Create a Competitive and Consistent Agreement

- Agreement doesn’t change – portal does



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Key Component #3: “Manage to Revenue” - Partner and Revenue Growth

Step 7: Channel Management

- Appropriate to the Partner Lifecycle
- Partner Business, Sales & Marketing Planning, Growth & Investments and Partner Reporting
- QBR’s, Sales Meetings, etc.

Step 8: Partner Portal, Partner Communications, Internal Systems & Platforms

- Marketing Enablement as well as Channel Management (mission-critical)
- Part of the *Message to Revenue* cultural component (outside scope of this document)

Step 9: Partner Advisory, Code of Conduct, Rules of Engagement

- Indirect means “outward facing”. Need appropriate mechanisms
- Building leadership within the channel
- Two-way communications
- Vetting program changes

Step 10: Partner Operations

- Perspective is key!
- Everything working from within a “motion”
- Every motion documented, measured and reported
- Clearly differentiate the “immediate present & past” from investments in growth
- Eliminate “inward” vision (analysis paralysis)





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Other Key Considerations:

The following components all fall within the Ten Steps listed above but are worthy of individual mention. They are important enough to warrant not only separate mention, but separate initiatives or focus. As stated above, each step could have ten other steps each with hundreds of moving parts. It is critical that you short-cut your learning experience by having someone help you understand where all the opportunities as well as land mines exist.

- **Strategic Alliances, Partnerships, Vendor Relationships** (additional Time-to-Revenue components to your Framework)
- **Creating a Stellar Experience for all Stakeholders** (including employees – the much maligned and often forgotten stakeholder)
- **Creating a Common Vernacular** (it is amazing how many ways we can confuse the situation)
- **Feet-on-the-Street** – access to resources is the single biggest issue impacting partner growth
- **Have You Defined Value Other Than Revenue in Your Program?**
- **How many is enough?** (how many partners are enough to dominate your marketplace?)
- **Grandfathering** (and other issues that screw up your channel.
- **Embracing the Idea That “Limiting is Empowering!”** (perhaps your biggest cultural challenge)
- **The Formal Handoff** (between time-to-revenue and manage-to-revenue)
- **Pipeline vs. Forecast** (moving from a reactive to a proactive culture, program and process)
- **Volume & Velocity vs. High Touch and Professional Services** (true for all organizations but especially true of your solutions are delivered in the cloud.
- **Customer Retention in the 21st century.** (the way people buy has changed dramatically. The way we sell has not!)
- **Marketing Development Funds (MDF) and Other Mismanaged Programs...**
- **Partner Events & Conferences** (making “one-to-many” marketing a part of your organizational as well as channel culture)
- **Thought Leadership** (get this right and you cannot lose!)

Ten Steps... It seems very manageable. It can be if you have these ten mission-critical steps clearly defined, articulated and published. These are formal steps that are part of a formal methodology that make up a very deliberate model for indirect channel success.

This model has been created, tested and proven successful for **complex solution sales**. If your company deals with products, services, support, long sales cycles, highly technical solutions, and a need for exceptionally high customer (or client) retention, then this approach is the one for you.

Should you be interested in learning more, please feel free to contact Geoff Ashley & Associates for more information.

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