

A SECRET WEAPON TO ENGAGE YOUR CHANNEL

ARE YOU IGNORING A SECRET WEAPON TO ENGAGE YOUR CHANNEL?

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Launching a new product, or trying to re-establish an existing product through a sales channel that you don't control, is like mounting an attack.

If the competition holds more market share, they will be ready to defend. If they have minimal market share, they will be launching their own attacks. And then there are your channel reps. Your biggest problem is not whether they will attack or defend but will they care? Will they pay attention to all of the features and benefits of your new product? Do they have the time to read all of the attractive and convincing materials you have created? And most importantly, when the dust has settled, will they take action?

But you have a big idea to combat these potential obstacles: to make sure you get maximum lift from your product launch, you've taken the additional step to put together an incentive for channel reps to get off to a fast start. You want to get them focused, emotionally engaged and ideally, setting goals around selling your new product – right away.

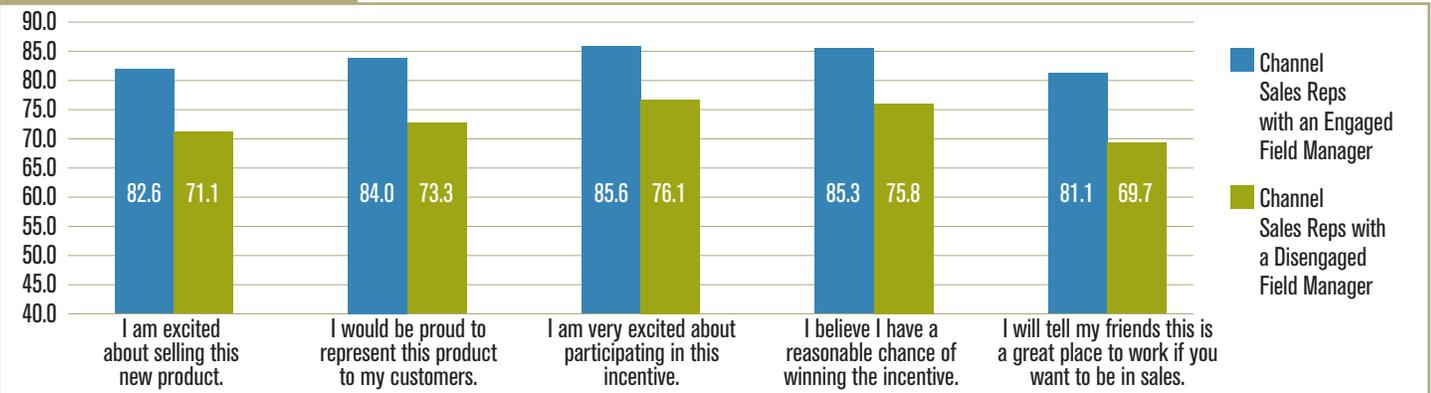
Now comes the time for your secret weapon: your field managers. All of your problems will be solved when you get these tools into the hands of your field managers to deliver the message, conduct training and get into the market to meet prospective customers.

But what happens if field managers from your company aren't engaged? What impact would a disengaged field manager have on the launch of your new product to the channel?

To gain insights into these important questions, we conducted a study to determine the impact a field manager representing the manufacturer has on the engagement of channel sales representatives. We looked at the impact of three important variables in whether a field manager was engaged in the eyes of channel reps. Specifically, was the field manager:

- Supportive of channel sales reps?
- Knowledgeable and passionate about the new product?
- Effective at working with customers of the channel sales reps?

Channel sales reps are far more enthusiastic in a new product launch when they are working with an engaged field manager:



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The results between the two groups are statistically significant.

When channel sales reps have an engaged field manager teaching them about a new product, their comments support the results above:

- I'm happy that I like the products I'm selling and the manager is positive and upbeat.
- The training and support from the manager, especially that he will join to meet the top prospects, which will enable him to do some selling on my behalf!
- I like how helpful the manager is. I really like passionate and helpful people when working with them.
- I think the manager presents a great opportunity to meet with customers.
- I'm selling products for a company I already think is great and get very good training.
- I like the incentive to sell the product and how well everyone works with each other.
- Because I believe in the product (manufacturer), and it will be exciting to sell something I believe in, I think I can be successful to win this program.

And when they are dealing with a disengaged field manager, there's a far different response:

- I do not want to be working with the manager. He is not helpful and makes me a little less excited.
- I may not be properly trained to demonstrate the new product due to the apathetic product manager's demonstration.
- Nothing seems bad about the actual program, aside from being forced to take along a manager who can possibly hurt your ability to sell the product. I think help from a manager would normally be a good thing, though.
- The manager's track record makes me a bit queasy and on edge about it.
- I don't like that I will be hampered by the field manager; if he's not excited about his products, it will make my job harder.
- I'm concerned that my work/success depends on the field manager that will be training me. He is not on the same page as I am.

You've worked hard to develop a terrific product for the marketplace and have high hopes your channel will embrace your offer. One variable you will need to manage is your field team, the "feet on the street", who are interacting with and supporting the channel sales force. Their ability to effectively engage with the field manager will have a significant impact on the ultimate success of your product launch.

Getting Your Field Managers' Attention

We're sure you've thought to yourself, at times, that it is easier to get the attention of your channel than it is your own field managers. We've even had customers who have employed tactics to "go around" their field managers, with things like direct mail campaigns and outbound phone calls to their channel reps to gain engagement. But the facts are clear – if you can engage your field managers, they will engage your channel.



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Here are four tactics that work to engage your field managers:

- 1 – Ask for their feedback and input up front.** When you care about your field managers, they will care about your message. Plus, they have valuable customer feedback that is vital if you are a product manager or VP of sales.
- 2 – Use their feedback.** If you ask, then ignore, you are worse off than if you never asked. Tell them how you are using their input. Use their quotes in the training. Show them their impact. Once they are emotionally engaged in your product or your message, they will become much bigger advocates.
- 3 – Change things up.** If you continue to do the same things over and over again, your field managers will put you on autopilot and every message you send them will start sounding the same. Use their input to create better purchase offers, new reasons to buy and new messages they can share when they visit their customers.
- 4 – And speaking of feedback, let them know how the channel is feeling about them.** If your field managers are doing an outstanding job with their channel reps, let them know. Recognize them and celebrate their efforts. On the other hand, if constructive criticism is warranted because they're not engaging their channel reps, make sure you offer guidance and develop a plan to help them recover.

To learn more about BI **WORLDWIDE** and how we can help engage your field managers and reach your channel reps, visit: [BI WORLDWIDE.ca](http://BIWORLDWIDE.ca) or email [canada@BI WORLDWIDE.com](mailto:canada@BIWORLDWIDE.com).

