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Engaged,
inspired &
loyal channel
reps lead with
your products
consistently.

Mindshare To Market Share

As your organization develops strategies to increase Market share, focus on building and owning Mindshare in your sales and distribution channels.

In B2B sales, expanding channel partner Mindshare is a leading indicator of success in the channel and paramount to help expand your business reach and drive top-line growth.

How important is Mindshare?

Name the first PGA golfer that comes to your mind.

Your answer is on the next page...

Tiger Woods. In fact, 98% of you thought of Tiger.

His name, brand and by extension the companies he represents benefit greatly from the top-place he holds in the collective mindset of the public.

"When Tiger Woods enters a tournament and when he is in contention in the final round, we see a 30 to 50 percent increase over what is the 'normal' rating," said Neal Pilson, the head of a sports TV consulting company and former president of CBS Sports

His domination of Mindshare creates the Market share juggernaut he delivers to his sponsors which leads to increased merchandise sales and massive ad buys during tournaments he participates in.

In this paper, we will address the specific challenges faced by manufacturers and distributors that sell through resellers that carry competing brands.

The paper highlights the importance of building mindshare and loyalty in the channel as a precursor to achieving market share growth.

We will discuss strategies that if well executed, can help you outpace your competition.

We expect to provoke some strong debate within your company and welcome an opportunity to join in.

The Importance Of Mindshare In The Channel And Where To Focus

Companies invest heavily in building brand awareness and mindshare with their target end user customers. In distribution channels, you traditionally invest in gaining the commitment of senior management and product management of your major distribution partners. It's all good, but not good enough! With more and more companies moving from direct sales models to channel focused distribution, you need to dominate the mind share of the reseller's sales executive.

When your sales channels lead with your products, they sell more of your products – to more of their customers.

The sales executives that manage opportunities with their end-user clients and prospects make critical decisions regarding which products to propose for a specific scenario. They have important relationships with decision makers and influencers, from user groups to procurement teams. They can position your brand to win, or they can leave you on the sidelines. You want them leading with your products, every day, every quote. That's loyalty. That's mindshare.

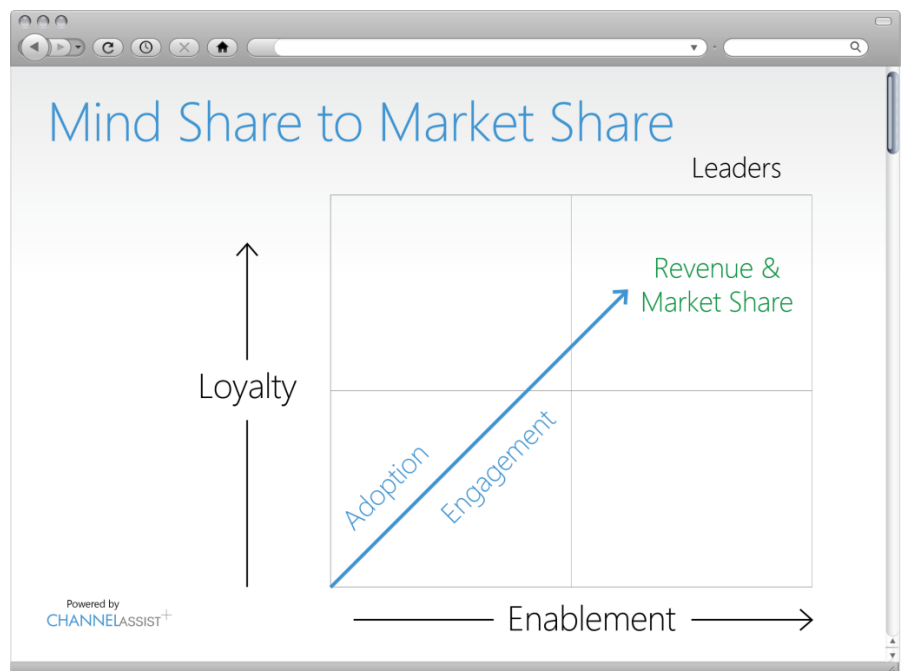
Reseller sales executives will often represent competing brands and have a choice on which to brand to lead with. So how do they decide? While there are a number of factors involved, it often comes down to sales reps recommending products and services:

- They are confident will meet the requirements
- They have successfully sold before
- Will perform well over the expected usage period
- Where they will earn the most money
- From companies that work well to support sales teams

Channel Loyalty & Enablement Drives Market Share

ChannelAssist's Loyalty and Enablement model.

Is your company in the 'Leaders' quadrant?



Invest in building loyalty in the channel and providing the enablement required for success; and engagement levels will soar, leading to revenue and market share growth. It will be easier to acquire and on-board new channel partners and 'time to revenue' will accelerate with higher levels of engagement,

Loyalty and enablement go hand in hand. One without the other may yield short term wins, but is not a sustainable long term strategy.

Loyalty Matters

How invested are channel reps in your brand? Do they see it as a vehicle for more sales opportunities? Does your partner program ensure they have the tools, support and resources they need to win? Are they incented to sell your product or service?

Is your brand contagious? How influential is your brand to the channel rep in comparison to a competitor? Do they think of your product first when thinking of a solution for their customers?

Brand loyalty with channel sales executives is the building block of mindshare. By creating a positive bond with your brand, the rep will focus his/her energy on selling it and once your channel sales rep is onboard you must continue to reward their decision to use and advocate your brand to their customers. This is a crucial loop that must continue for your ongoing success.

With every interaction you have with your Channel rep, you have the ability to shape your brand and build loyalty. When your reps become enthusiastic loyal promoters, they will go out of their way to recommend your products and services to clients.

Build loyalty throughout the sales cycle. Recognize the commitment that channel sales reps make to your brand and reward them for it. Here's how.

- Develop sales incentive programs that are paid out directly to the channel sales rep (or the team) for representing your brand (as manufacturer or distributor). Make the program easy to understand, and easy to operate. Reps need to focus on selling, not admin.
- Reward channel reps for passing tests and/or earning certifications that develop their competency with your brand.
- Recognize channel rep activity in building their sales pipeline with your products. Focus on strategic alignment, and developing line of sight into key opportunities.
- Reward for closed sales.
- Incentive programs will vary from company to company based on your strategies, goals, and related elements of your channel programs. It will also vary based on the products and services being sold, the length of the sales cycle, the value (\$40 products or \$200,000 solutions, for example), the maturity of the market, the stage of the product life cycle.
- Design a program that channel reps can embrace. We've seen programs that lie dormant while others drive revenue growth for years.

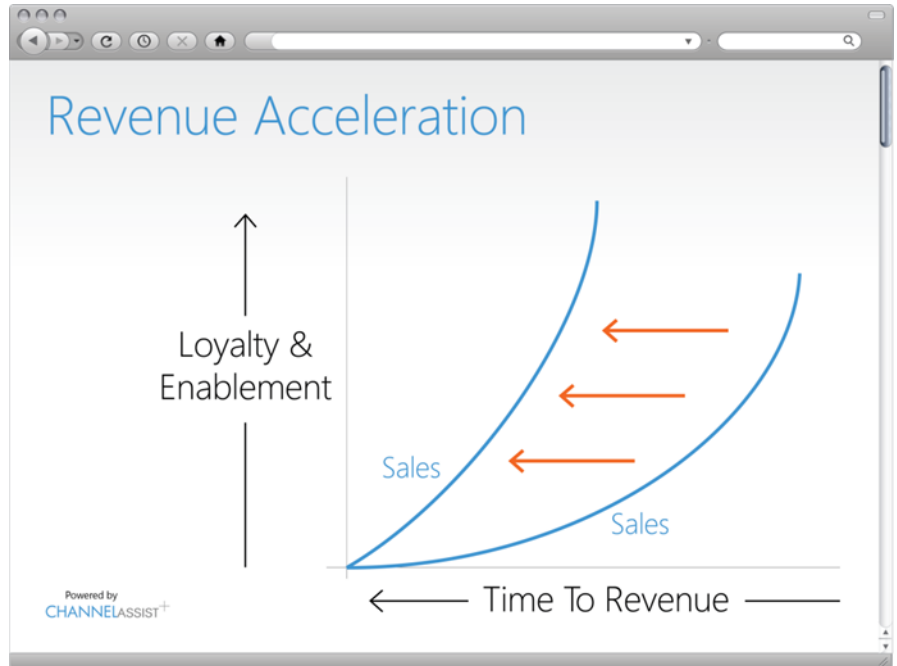
As Engagement Improves, Revenue Accelerates

With loyalty and enablement getting stronger, revenue cycles accelerate.

Revenue Acceleration:

Measure:

- ✓ Deal progression
- ✓ Lead to revenue management
- ✓ Time to revenue



Effective enablement accelerates sales. Steps you can take:

Are your sales channels inspired, supported and confident in leading with your solutions? You may have a globally recognized brand, yet a top sales executive will not risk his/her reputation without full confidence they can win each step of the sales cycle.

- Be easy to work with. Your sales and service culture needs must permeate every facet of your organization and extend across your entire partner ecosystem. Sounds simple, but ask your channel partners if you are easy to work with. Listen to the answers.
- Ensure processes are easy to understand and easy to execute. Put an SLA in place to set response times and service levels.
- Minimize change. If the rules of the game change too often, partners will find a more stable manufacturer or distributor to represent,
- Make resources available – sales sheets, scripts, proposals, competitive analysis, market trend data –whatever it takes. When channel reps can't find the information they need, they stop looking. The result is that those partners are not well-armed to win or they propose your brand less frequently.

- Have sales and technical support readily available to resellers throughout the sales cycle. Simplify the process to request and qualify for support.
- Build the required competencies. Is training on your products and solutions available, effective and delivered to channel sales reps in a way that's easy for them to consume and easy for you to measure?

When you provide the enablement your channel partners want, you increase their engagement and their share of wallet. You also grow your partner community as resellers migrate to your brand.

Mindshare Case Study

In early 2012, a Corporate Sales Executive for a major national computer reseller had an opportunity for 2550 printers for a national rollout for financial services organization. The prospect planned to replace printers in its branch offices across the country and had a specific printer brand in mind (and it's not the one they subsequently purchased – note the power of the field sales rep).

The sales executive reviewed the Channel Partner portal of a major hardware manufacturer, a vendor that had already invested in building loyalty and competency (and earned the lead mindshare position). The portal provided:

- Specifications for the vendor's printer line enabling the sales executive to develop a compelling proposal for printer models that met the requirements.
- Details of an incentive program that paid out \$40 per printer in sales incentive.

The printer with the sales incentive met the customer requirements, although this meant introducing a different brand to the customer. With an incentive to motivate him, and an excellent understanding of both the customer's requirements and the capabilities of the printer, the sales executive converted the customer to the printer carrying the incentive. The reseller sales executive scored wins for:

- **The Printer Manufacturer,**
- **The Reseller organization that the Sales Executive works for,**
- **The Sales Executive himself**

The entire case study "How one sales professional earned an extra \$102,000 in one year!" is available on our site [here](#).

In Conclusion...

Competitive pressures are intensifying. Increasingly, companies are shifting from direct to channel sales models. Partner programs are being revitalized as companies compete for mindshare and share of wallet of their reseller partners.

An effective channel partner program has many moving parts that must be tightly aligned to optimize performance. Invest in building loyalty and providing the very best in channel enablement. Expanding the mindshare of the sales executives will help you grow revenue and market share.

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Influence. Enable. Reward.

Since 1997 ChannelAssist has been helping clients engage with their channel partners, employees, and customers to produce sustainable and measurable results. ChannelAssist's web based platforms for channel partner management and employee recognition empower organizations to accelerate improvement in sales growth, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and profitability.

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