

# Communiqué

## Characteristics of Successful Channel Managers

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What is the profile of a successful channel manager? Can a company use members of its direct sales team to manage its channel partners? Should it find sales professionals with different talent profiles for the channel manager role?

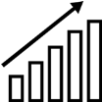


Management teams often grapple with these questions as their companies' sales through their indirect sales channels become increasingly important to their success. When companies generate inconsistent sales results or they consistently miss their sales targets through their channel partners, the management team may wonder if the sales professionals responsible for managing these relationships are a root cause of the problem. How can they determine if this is a problem?

The range of titles for the sales professionals in this role speaks to the diversity of perspectives and expectations regarding it. While some companies refer to these sales professionals as Channel Managers or Channel Account Managers, other companies call them Territory Sales Managers, Business Development Managers, Regional Sales Managers, Account Managers, Sales Reps, etc.

Not surprisingly, given this range of titles, companies' expectations for salespeople in these roles can range from purely tactical and executional to a combination of strategic and executional based on the functions they want them to perform (see Figure One).

**Figure One— Range of Expectations for Channel Managers**

			Tactical	→	Strategic
Design Channel Strategy		Design/refine channel strategy			•
		Assess market opportunity			•
Assess and Plan		Assess market share			•
		Select target markets (e.g., geographies, industries, applications, customer segments, etc.)			•
		Assess channel partners' performance capabilities		•	
		Create territory plans		•	
		Define requirements for channel partners			•
Target and Recruit		Define recruiting process		•	
		Identify, pre-qualify and vet candidates		•	

			Tactical	→	Strategic	
Onboard and Ramp-up		Complete contract			•	
		Set-up, educate, and train new channel partners	•			
		Collaborate with channel partners to create and execute initial commercial ramp-up plans				•
		Periodically assess channel partner performance			•	
		Dynamically adapt commercial ramp-up plans to improve channel partner performance				•
		Recognize and reward channel partner performance	•			
Manage and Grow		Develop annual business plans			•	
		Manage sales funnels			•	
		Manage periodic interactions			•	
		Periodically review channel partner performance			•	
		Recognize and reward channel partner performance	•			
		Improve channel partner performance				•
		Offboard channel partners			•	
Execute and Optimize		Design channel management cadence			•	
		Execute channel management cadence	•			
		Coach and mentor channel partners				•
		Periodically assess and evolve channel management practices, processes and tools				•

The range of functions a company expects its channel managers to perform informs the competencies required to succeed in the role. Oftentimes, they include a combination of: 1) domain specific knowledge; 2) skills and abilities consistent with business development or account management roles and supplemented by high levels of business, financial and analytical acumen; and 3) personal attributes common to sales professionals (see Figure Two).

**Figure Two—Examples of Channel Manager Competencies**

		Attribute
Know-ledge	Key market stakeholders and purchasing dynamics	Company's offering and value proposition(s)
		Company's programs and enabling tools
		Competitive environment and dynamics
		Strategic thinking
Skills and Abilities	Communication (verbal and written)	Business, financial, and analytical acumen
		Maximizes results by continuously monitoring channel partner sales pipeline
		Maximizes results by realizing quota attainment through channel partners
		Competitive
		Confident
Personal Attributes	Perseverant	Resilient
		Emotionally intelligent

Since companies' expectations for the channel manager role often vary considerably, management teams should create competency models that reflect their specific expectations. The teams can then use the models to assess their sales professionals and determine if they

demonstrate mastery of the required competencies, need some level of training and coaching, or are not capable of mastering them (or not willing to master them).

Based on these assessments, management teams can determine if the existing channel managers can successfully support and execute the company's channel strategy or if they limit its performance. If they are limiters, then management teams can define the actions required to align their sales talent.

If you'd like to discuss the channel manager role or how a company can evaluate and identify the variables that limit the performance of its channel strategy, then you're welcome to contact Jim Fogarty @ [jfogarty@franklynn.com](mailto:jfogarty@franklynn.com).