

How “Whole” Product Maturity Shapes Channel Strategy

Understanding the Whole Product

When companies launch a product, they often focus on the core offering, the product or service itself, rather than the full buyer experience. The buyer is purchasing the *whole product*. This includes not just the core functionality, but also the cost of implementation, integration, user training, and, particularly in early markets, the cost of switching from a legacy solution.

Route-to-market channels are an integral part of that whole product. Channels shape the buyer experience by setting expectations during the pre-sale process and often play a critical role in implementation and support.

As markets mature, the demands of buyers change. As a result, the way vendors go to market must also evolve. The maturity of the whole product directly impacts which channels are most effective.

Early Markets: Direct and High-Touch

In early markets, products are often incomplete and require a high-touch, consultative sales and implementation approach. Buyers are typically innovators who are willing to absorb risk in exchange for future value. These customers expect **direct access** to the vendor for expertise, customization, and guidance.

Growth Phase: Enabling Indirect Channels

When the market enters the growth phase, new buyers become more pragmatic. They seek proven outcomes, reliable support, and measurable ROI. At this point, **indirect channels** such as value-added resellers (VARs), systems integrators, and implementation partners become viable. Vendors begin investing in partner enablement and packaging solutions for repeatable delivery.

Mature Markets: Indirect Channels Take the Lead

In mature markets, the product is commoditized, and buyers focus on risk reduction, operational efficiency, and cost. In this stage, **indirect channels become dominant**. Trusted partners manage the full customer lifecycle, from selling to servicing. Buyers prefer convenience, bundled offerings, and local support. Vendors focus less on direct selling and more on enabling partners at scale, investing in automation, training, and digital self-service tools.

Whole Product Maturity Enables Scalable Channels

Ultimately, a vendor’s ability to scale through partners depends on the maturity of its whole product. Only when the offering is stable, standardized, and easy to implement can indirect channels deliver consistent, low-risk outcomes at scale.

If product launches are important to your organization and the sales growth you are seeking, then FL&A can help. Feel free to contact Stephen Martin at smartin@franklynn.com for further discussion.

