



A GUIDE TO BECOMING YOUR CHANNEL PARTNERS' MOST VALUED BRAND

Do your channel partners prefer your competitors over your brand? Do your distributors and retailers give it all when it comes to driving sales for your rival brands but don't push it enough for you? Do they share a great rapport with other brands but have a cold, formal relationship with you? Have you ever wondered what motivates and drives channel partners to buy frequently, push sales, promote products, and refer some brands over others? Why are they so engaged with some brands while ignore the others?

THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ENGAGED CHANNEL PARTNERS

BI WORLDWIDE commissioned KANTAR to conduct a unique, in-depth research, focusing on channel partners' perspectives, aspirations, and ambitions. The research involved interactions with over 700 channel partners to understand the factors that make some brands more loved and valued over others. "As humans, we are all driven, inspired, and motivated by a complex mix of factors, based on our experiences, ambitions, emotions, families, authority, social stature, and so on. Our endeavour is to identify this mix for our channel partners so brands can develop a positive, meaningful, and profitable relationship with them.", said Sukesh Jain, CEO, BI WORLDWIDE India.

Extensive, in-depth interviews with distributors, retailers, and influencers, repeatedly shed light on certain parameters, giving us a clear picture of channel partners' expectations from brands. We deeply researched and understood the factors that drive channel partners' motivation, loyalty, and engagement. Our research helped us identify eight decisive parameters that drive channel partner engagement. These drivers are listed in order of importance.



The strongest driver that topped the list is the **Operational Excellence** of a brand. Channel partners value brands that provide faster resolution to billing/invoicing, sales claims, stock/product availability & packaging issues, and faster & transparent incentive payout mechanisms.



Following closely is the second driver of engagement – **Rewards & Incentives**. If understood well, these are the most versatile and powerful drivers of engagement. To drive the desired results, it is important to understand the impact of different rewards on channel partners – which rewards are emotionally gratifying, which make channel partners feel proud, which rewards can they brag about, and how do their family and friends respond to rewards? Brands need to design rewards to match the functional and aspirational needs of channel partners that help them grow their business and status in the market and society. Simultaneously, brands need to focus on ensuring timely delivery of rewards, with a tracking tool to receive instant updates.



Recognising channel partners for their efforts, achievements, and milestones can provide a big boost to their morale and significantly increase their motivation to deliver for the brand. Channel partners can be recognised during channel events, through certificates, badges, in-person meetings by brand executives, and promotion of top-performing partners on programme websites, brand newsletters, or even at brand events.



Brands that provide channel partners with Learning opportunities earn preference and advantage over brands that don't. Channel partners value self-development and expect brands to provide training courses on business improvement tactics and product knowledge to help them sell more. Similarly, designing courses or sessions on the latest market trends, products, and processes will help channel partners highlight key USPs.



Distributors, retailers, and influencers aspire their businesses to have better infrastructure, reach, and visibility. As a result, they have Affinity towards Brands that provide regular support to do their trade business efficiently, through infrastructure support to help them set up or run day-to-day business operations.



Foundational to all relationships, Communication is instrumental in forging strong channel partnerships. Channel partners expect brands to clearly and precisely communicate promotions, product information, incentives, rewards, and benefits in local languages. The key is maintaining balance and sensitivity. Partners are disdainful of communication leading to false promises, overcommitting messages, and being bombarded with promotions.



In India, family usually takes precedence over everything else. It is no different for channel partners who expect brands to cater to their and their family's mental, physical, and financial well-being. Treat channel partners as members of your organisation, and provide them with insurance plans, regular health check-ups, interventions/workshops on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and well-being classes – mental, physical, and financial orientation. Assist them in balancing their lifestyle, family needs, and personal health, and they will value and push themselves for your brand.



Lastly, organising business events, regular partner meetups, and running promotions go a long way in building a strong channel partners community. Brands should celebrate key milestones, recognise their channel partners' achievements, invite them to business events, and make them feel special in the channel partners ecosystem.

DRIVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Analysing the drivers in-depth revealed crucial nuances on profile-wise and industry-wise expectations of channel partners. While Operational Excellence is the topmost driver for Retailers and Distributors, it ranks second for Influencers, who are driven most by Rewards & Incentives. In Agriculture and Building & Construction, Learning is the third-most vital driver of engagement while in all the other sectors, Recognition takes that spot. Collectively, such insights discovered through the research can prove invaluable for a brand's channel loyalty programme.

Channel partners across India expect brands to **resolve their issues** and give them suitable **rewards and incentives**; they want to **learn and be recognised**; they desire **clear communication and affinity towards brand**; and they want brands to take care of their **well-being and organise business events** for them.

"Strengthening channel partnerships has been a constant subject of research, thought, and experiment at BI WORLDWIDE. We have realised that understanding the drivers of engagement is akin to understanding the expectations of channel partners. Testimonies from several brands have established that embracing these drivers of engagement is key to motivating channel partners. The secret lies in building the right strategy that addresses the needs and gaps specific to a brand."

– Siddharth Reddy, Managing Director, BI WORLDWIDE India

To learn more about how BI WORLDWIDE India can help engage and motivate your channel partners, visit: BIWORLDWIDE.co.in or email at: marketing.in@BIWORLDWIDE.com.