



Channel Education

Extending and Strengthening the Relationship

You've built your organisation relying on a channel to help you bring new products to market. Your distributors, franchisees and partners are from diverse organisations linked to you by your market offerings. A strong channel can be your greatest strength; a weak channel can impact your bottom line.

Trends

So what trends are we seeing around the world in terms of channels and channel education. Firstly there is an increasing trend for organisations to use channel partners to increase sales. Although this strategy dramatically increases the selling reach of a company, it also means that a company is competing not just for the final customer, but also for the mindshare of the channel partner sales force.

A second trend is the move made by increasing numbers of companies to offer total packages of services and solutions, instead of merely offering a product or software package. "Solution selling," as it is most often called, is helping sales organisations move higher up their customers' value chains in pursuit of top-line growth and a greater ongoing share of the customer's spend. Education and training are vital parts to delivering an overall solutions package.

Finally, education offered to channel partners delivers clear benefits in repeat business, increased loyalty and lower costs.

Yet, although many companies have grown their internal learning channel, the partner channel often remains seriously under-funded. In addition, there are tangible benefits to managing that channel better from a learning perspective. Companies are starting to think about channel education from a more integrated perspective, ensuring that the end customer receives consistent, robust information and support, whether the sale is through a direct channel or through a partner. Channel partner education programs are gaining increased attention and focus as the complexity of the product and solutions available increases.



More knowledge- better business opportunities

Regular, ongoing education programs to your channel are essential to keep the knowledge of products and market alive. You want your channel to add value to every customer interaction to drive your revenue and theirs, you need to get them information, training and certifications to motivate them to sell the products and services.



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Characteristics of successful channel education

Here are a few things to consider in looking at implementing a successful channel education program.

- **Eliminate Redundancies** - Companies venturing into channel education can stumble over several kinds of redundancy that interfere with realising the final business goal. Many organisations have multiple training initiatives directed at their channel each with their own particular flavour directed at their product area. The result. A frustrated channel, trying to find consistent information that can help them serve their customers.
- **Maximise Content Utilisation** - Companies can also increase their investment return by minimising redundancy and inefficiency in content development. There may be, for example, a 60 to 80 percent overlap in the primary learning content of training for internal sales people, customers, partners, etc.
- **Make it relevant** - Successful companies help their channel partners find relevant learning opportunities quickly. You may offer a myriad of training opportunities but how relevant are they to the channel and how quickly can they find them?
- **Give channel partners flexibility in training delivery** - Yours will not be the only company offering training to your channel partners, so you can distinguish the offering by being flexible in how partners access it. If you lock your partners into five-day training courses to which they have to travel and incur expenses and three days of which are irrelevant, you are not going to make many friends. Flexibility also means going to your channel, rather than just making them come to you. Allowing flexible delivery options means that they don't need to send someone out of the business, therefore reducing their selling time.
- **Small chunks are more digestible** - Channel education needs to be especially flexible and “digestible.” Get granular. By creating a course through aggregation of learning “chunks,” you can be the company providing the most efficient and flexible training.



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So where does e-learning fit in?

The challenge of providing consistent and timely information to a distributed audience can be both time consuming and costly using traditional face-to-face delivery methods. By using the IBM e-learning solution set organisations can now deliver solutions to

- Improve the quality of solutions delivered by your channel partners and reduce associated product support to partners and end customers
- Increase sales by improving knowledge, sales skills and service techniques in shorter time frames with less time away from their key business of selling
- Deliver training in small, digestible, relevant "chunks" so that its available when and where its needed
- Provide flexible delivery modes to your channel, enhancing your product solution and education program over your competitors.
- Reduce the time and costs associated with communicating information to the channel.
- Create and deliver channel certification programs to improve performance
- Train new channel partners quickly increasing their time-to-value ratio by ensuring consistency of training and communication.

Contact us if you would like to discuss your requirements further or to arrange a meeting and demonstration.



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