Improving Channel Partner Engagement
Finding ways to improve partner engagement can seem like a never-ending battle, but it does not have to be. With the right strategies in place and the tools to support them, you can improve partner engagement, increase productivity, and grow your business.

Though many factors contribute to the level of engagement your partners show – morale, time commitment, your ability to support their needs – one of the most important is proper communication. How do you encourage good communication among channel partners and deliver the tools for deeper levels of engagement? One way is to provide them with a forum to share ideas and challenges, a place to receive information and materials they need to get the job done effectively, and, above all else, a place that makes them feel empowered.

What do you stand to gain from deeper engagement? Loyalty. Loyal partners will work harder and perform better, and when they perform better, this leads to increased market share and increased profits for your company and theirs. Deeper engagement also leads to higher levels of satisfaction and morale. And as partners become more engaged, they are more likely to share successful strategies with their peers and with others up and down the channel.

**Sharing Your Best**

Creating the right environment is essential if you want to foster collaboration among your partners. They need to know that they are being heard and that you value their feedback in a secure environment. A Partner Relationship Management (PRM) software platform gives you the ability to create discussion forums where you and other channel partners can pose questions and post answers, share and review best practices, and communicate quickly and effectively to the right people within your channel.

A software platform that provides you with an environment to encourage collaboration comes with many other features that help improve communication between you and your channel partners. Managers can define system roles for groups of similar PRM system users (i.e., salespeople, service technicians, managers, etc.) to keep conversations need-to-know, allowing the people who need the information to see it, but keeping others out, thereby protecting potentially sensitive ideas or new strategies.

A PRM system also allows management to monitor and update the training, certification, marketing and support areas. These resources can be tracked and reported on to show what content has been the most, and the least effective in terms of engagement. Over time, a picture will emerge, revealing what’s having the greatest impact to building successful partner relationships.

**Cast A Wider Net**

In a corporate environment where the sharing of ideas is critical to success, you can cast a much wider net by including everyone from C-level executives to in-the-field sales reps and harnessing their thoughts and solutions. A PRM system is a critical tool in facilitating the collaborative process. A common barrier to sharing strategies and best practices is the fear that your ideas will be seen by those outside your organizational structure. A PRM system can alleviate these concerns by providing the security and encryption necessary to keep communication forums within the intended audience.
Collaborative Marketing Efforts

A software solution that encourages partner feedback allows you to harness the knowledge of their collective experiences which are frequently more in tune with the needs of your customers. Management can initiate the conversation with pointed questions such as “What can we do to serve you and our customers better?” or “What new features do our current customers want?” or “What’s your go-to strategy for converting a sale?” Automated response functionality allows the channel manager to receive instant notification of new responses to the discussion forum. This provides a simplified process that will encourage the direct feedback you need to make more informed decisions.

This type of collaboration is powerful and can be especially important when a manufacturer has a multi-tier sales channel that provides little to no interaction with the end-user. Hearing directly from service technicians and sales partners what customers are telling them is extremely valuable. Too often, however, that type of feedback is suppressed because the proper systems that promote partner collaboration have not been put in place.

Sales partners are on the front line and they’re armed with the education and marketing collateral you’ve provided them, but what if it’s not fitting their needs? What if your material is out-of-date or does not provide them with the information they truly need? With an easily accessible avenue to share ideas, you can arrive at solutions much quicker, reworking weak elements and arming your sales team with the tools they need to be successful.

Likewise, marketing can test ideas with sales partners simply by initiating the conversation and receiving feedback relative to what is best for your partners and the end-user.

Empowering Your Partners

When you provide your partners with a powerful PRM system that enables them to have a voice, they begin to feel empowered. This will lead to a more informed sales channel with increased mindshare and brand loyalty. Mindshare is critically important in any non-captive sales channel where partners are selling multiple brands which often include your competition. If partners feel incapable of sharing their opinions or that their feedback is not being heard, they will disengage and you will be left with isolated and ineffective partners.

And if you want to improve engagement even further, incentivize it. Give rewards for the most effective ideas, the most engaging partners, the most helpful strategies.

Greater Efficiencies = Greater Profits

Each component of a PRM system is meant to facilitate a specific process, each with a primary goal: to provide greater efficiency within your company by improving the lines of communication and making your company easier to do business with. Your ability to deliver content that is up-to-date and relevant to the specific needs of you partners increases the likelihood that your message will be heard. Greater efficiencies lead to greater profits, which lead to more investment in your what your channel partners truly need to be successful.

When you have greater efficiencies – marketing is developing materials that respond exactly to what clients are saying, service techs are on point and current with their product knowledge, sales has the support and materials they need
to move more of your product or service – each partner in your channel has more time to devote to doing their job better. With that additional time comes the ability to service more clients, call on more leads, close more opportunities, find new and innovative ways to grow as a company, and strengthen your long-term partner relationships.

**LogicBay Performance Center**
LogicBay's Performance Center can capture your sales process, enforce its compliance in your channel, train and prepare your sales force for success, and measure their progress. Take a look at how a successful performance management system functions by learning about our software.

**The Channel Manager's Blueprint Program**
Not sure if a measured partner relationship management program will help your company reach the next level? Let's find out. Through the channel manager's blueprint program, we will deliver a PRM blueprint to address any potential problems you may be facing in your indirect sales channel (even if that problem is not yet having an indirect sales channel).