

# 5 STEPS TO Grow Sales with a High-Quality Partner Strategy



## Table of Contents

- 05** Step 1: Understand the Goals of Channel Partnerships
- 07** Step 2: The 4 P's of a Winning Channel Sales Strategy
- 09** Step 3: Ensure Success at Every Stage of the Partner Lifecycle
- 12** Step 4: Track Partner Performance
- 15** Step 5: Build the Partnership with Sales Cloud and Partner Community

### Introduction

## The Pipeline Potential of a Strong Channel

Picture this: your product has the potential to really take off. Your sales teams are working long hours prospecting and fielding incoming leads. But to grow customer acquisition and expand your geographic reach, you need to work with channel partners.

At first it's simple: you communicate and share leads through email, and you're closing deals. However, as your business grows, you need to expand your channel sales teams, but leads get stuck in endless email chains and Excel spreadsheets. Partners begin to lose interest as your sales team is juggling partner leads as well as their own. Communication slips, partners grow frustrated, and leads go cold.

Sound familiar? A lot of companies are not leveraging the right tools or implementing the right channel sales strategies. As a result, indirect channel lines fall apart and sales begin to dip.

By streamlining lead management, improving overall partner engagement and providing partners with on-demand access to the right enablement tools, you can see these incredible results.

**Extending Market and Geographic Reach:** When you're looking to expand your product or solution into new territories or niche markets, leveraging channel partners give you the most immediate and lowest cost route to market. Rather than building and scaling your sales teams, they can provide feet on the street who know the local market and can leverage their existing relationships.

**Reduced Costs:** Indirect channels gives you instant sales, marketing and other resources in your chosen market with no incorporation fees, no start-up costs and no need for recruiting personnel.

**Amplified Reach:** Indirect channels may seem like they just resell your products, but if properly enabled, they can add additional value beyond just reselling your products. That includes hosting local marketing events, driving webinar registrations or providing onsite training with customers.



However, understanding the value of this kind of potential is one thing, but implementing a solid plan with the right tools is another. If companies aren't smart about the vendors they choose and the strategies they implement, they could experience massive problems with lead backfill, low partner engagement, limited accountability amongst partners, and little visibility into what partners are producing. The main result? Poor sales growth and money wasted.

From onboarding new partners, to educating them on new products and pricing, to creating marketing development funds, there are many steps involved when creating a channel sales plan that guarantees sales growth. Whether you are just building out your channel management strategy or in need of a refresh to boost sales, this guide is going to walk you through how to build a successful plan to grow pipeline and close more deals with partners.



# Step 1

## Understand the Goals of Channel Partnerships

Before getting started with recruiting and onboarding partners, you need to have complete goal transparency between your sales teams and your channel partners. Channel partners are typically pulled in many directions. Not only do they face pressure from customers, but they also have to manage relationships with all of their vendors. As a vendor, you must set clear expectations and build a plan for success to create partner loyalty.

A good channel strategy aligns to the company's overall sales strategy. If your sales channel has meaningful and measurable goals, you will be able to make more informed decisions.

When developing channel sales goals consider communicating the following:

- Setting realistic joint expectations between direct and indirect sales teams
- Streamlining new partner recruiting and onboarding
- Outlining all sales and co-marketing activities and expected pipeline results with partners
- Creating rules of engagement (especially if the partners have clients that are your competitors)
- Clearly defining target market and product/solution offerings
- Establishing KPIs to track progress

Like any form of business, goals are what propels channel sales, creates better partner alignment and a flourishing relationship.



CHANNEL  
STRATEGY

COMPANY  
SALES STRATEGY

## Get to Know the Terminology

**Channel Sales** is the use of well-defined distributors, resellers, websites and/or retail stores to transact sales of your branded product/service.

**Resellers, Dealers and VARs** sell directly to end-users.

**Distributors** sell to resellers, not to end-users.

**Business Development** is cultivating a new market, or creating “new business” through partnerships with other companies to sell through their channels.

# Step 2

## The 4 P's of a Winning Channel Sales Strategy

Without a blueprint for the channel partnership, you could hire a great channel team, recruit partners, and spend a lot of time selling, but yield only minimum returns. Spelling out your strategy upfront, including how to sell, market and operate together, gives you a much greater chance of maximizing your returns.

When beginning to put together your channel sales strategy with an individual partner, consider the 4 P's: Product, Place, Price, Promotion





### Price

Price isn't just the price of your product in the market, but also includes how you will compensate partners for the business they bring in. You will need to determine how you segment channel partners, how you set pricing by category and whether you can make do with a simple model where distributors handle reseller pricing, or if you need something more complex. For example, a "Deal Registration" program that provides discounts to resellers who register opportunities is a good way to use price to encourage reseller activity.



### Place

Before seeking out and developing partnerships, you need to understand the market, and the resources you must devote to these particular markets. You will need to determine how many channel partners you need in each territory, as well as whether or not you need specialized partners for specific industries or market segments.



### Product

It may be that in order for the channel partnership to be as successful as possible, you must make some adjustments to your product. If you are using channel partners to enter new international markets, you might need to localize your product. You can work with your partners to understand how to make your product easier for them to sell and how to adapt it to suit specific markets.



### Promotion

You can't just expect your partners to start selling without any resources to support them. In addition to training and onboarding, you need to support the partnership with the right marketing materials. You need to create marketing plans with your partners and determine whether you want to offer a Marketing Development Fund (MDF) to cover the cost of these activities, or have partners share in the cost. Clear metrics for promotion help determine how leads will be handled and tracked, as well as which partners are meeting (or exceeding) targets.

With the right framework in place, you're ready to start your channel program on the right foot. To make sure your strategy runs as smoothly as you envision, you need the right tool in place – a partner community.

*“Consider ‘juicing’ compensated activity in the early days of the partnership to help develop the habit of driving awareness, leads and business your way.”*

**Matt Heinz**  
President, Heinz Marketing



# Step 3

## Ensure Success at Every Stage of the Partner Lifecycle

Partners are often managing multiple vendors, and they expect an effortless experience with access to instant information, personalization and one-to-one engagement. It's critical to partner success and sales growth that you meet their expectations so they can focus on selling your product or service.

A partner community creates a transparent bridge between two companies, combining joint business planning, shared pipeline, shared analytics, shared resources and more, all in one easily accessible, fully mobile location. The right partner community spans the entire partner lifecycle, from recruitment and education, to co-marketing and co-selling, to analysis.

“Create a common sales toolkit for partners... this should include sales collateral, messaging platforms, samples of emails and other ad copy, access to your webinars and whitepapers, case studies, etc.”

**Matt Heinz**

President, Heinz Marketing



**Recruit:** According to [Channel Insider](#), the average channel partner signs on with 2-3 new vendor programs per year. That means you aren't the only one vying for partner attention. Consider scorecards to ensure that each prospective partner is targeted based on the same criteria, and that the same scale is used for evaluation across all prospects.



**Educate:** The more educated a partner is, the more likely they are to sell and become evangelists of your product or solution. A partner community enables efficient onboarding and learning by providing easy access to training modules and certification tools. The entire training process can be automated, easily guiding your new partners at every step to boost engagement.



**Co-Market:** The right partner community makes it easy to jointly manage marketing development funds, budget for campaigns and track co-marketing ROI. The ability to track how your marketing funds are used brings transparency to both businesses.



**Co-Sell:** When lead data from your partners are integrated and synchronized with your CRM, the community becomes a crucial piece of the core selling process. The community can also be the hub of sales content like whitepapers, e-books and presentations, so reps only need to look in one place to get everything they need. Collaborate easily within the community for faster lead approval, management, and distribution in a way that is transparent and fair.



### **Service**

Nothing is more detrimental to a partner relationship than not giving partners the support they need. Partners need a single portal or source to contact product professionals for help and support. With a partner community it's easier than ever to connect with experts to close deals – no need to try to track down a email or phone number.



**Analyze:** Creating a sales process grounded in data and numbers requires transparency and communication among partners. Consider sales dashboards as they allow leaders to review key metrics like an updated pipeline, deal forecasts, team quota numbers, and performance by individual reps, so every person is working with the most up-to-date numbers.

# Step 4

## Track Partner Performance

You have a winning channel strategy and the right tools to execute, however, you need to also have a process to measure performance. From the partner perspective, nothing is more frustrating than excitement at the beginning of the year, with no ability to measure success at the close of the year.

Partners cannot get answers from legacy analytics tools – these fragmented systems don't provide a holistic of your business. Limited self-service capabilities mean partners can't do their own data discovery. And a lack of mobility means that partners and reps don't have the tools at their fingertips.

Consider when tracking and sharing partner success metrics to include:

- Partner pipeline for the year
- Partner pipeline for the quarter
- Total revenue driven
- Partner leadership scoreboards
- Total marketing funds used for ROI

You can embed these dashboards right within the community so you can reference key metrics instantly and in real time. Plus, the data is always secure and you can set permissions and control visibility of the data so only the right people see the right analytics.





## Customer Spotlight:

# FLEXERA SOFTWARE

With Flexera's growth came more products, more partners, and multiple static partner websites. In 2014, after an enterprise cloud transformation, the company focused its attention on coming up with a channel management strategy that could streamline collaboration with its expanded partner network. As a Sales Cloud customer, launching a consolidated, fully branded one-stop-shop for channel partners with Partner Community from Community Cloud was the natural choice.

Additionally, one of the most valuable tools in Flexera's Partner Community was adding SteelBrick, Salesforce's Configure Price Quote (CPQ) tool. Previously, Flexera's

partners were juggling numerous Excel spreadsheets, often containing sensitive pricing and information. It became increasingly difficult to track and manage the flow of information, but with SteelBrick, partners were provided with up-to-the-minute pricing across multiple currencies (and that information was secure within Partner Community).

With the right technology and a fully-branded Partner Community, Flexera launched a comprehensive strategy that helped break down communication silos, give internal teams and partners a single platform to share leads, collaborate on co-marketing initiatives, and team up on deals.

*"Our partners are more engaged and we can collaborate on a much deeper level."*

**David Espindola**

Vice President, Information Technology & CIO

Flexera Software streamlines collaboration and tracks sales success with Sales Cloud and Partner Community

### **WHO IS FLEXERA SOFTWARE?**

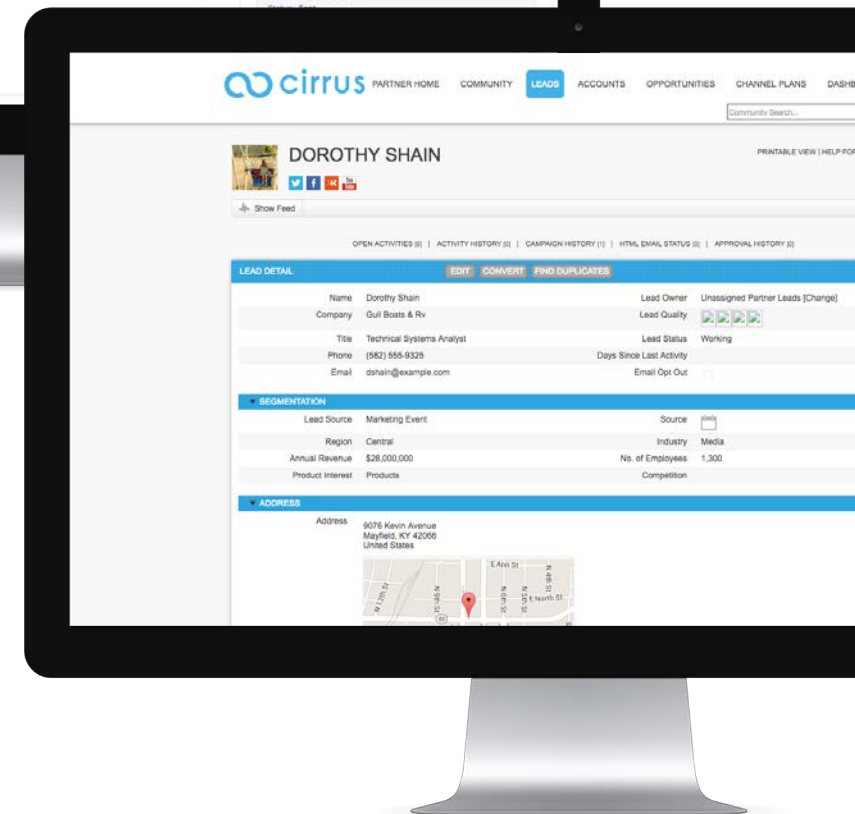
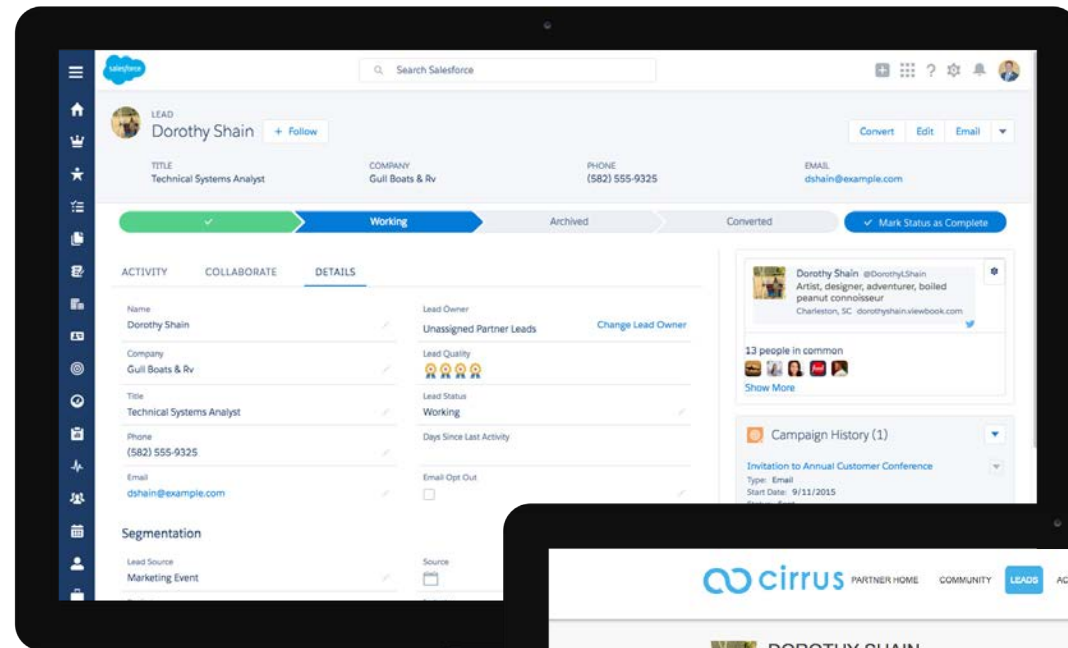
Flexera Software helps application producers and enterprises increase application usage and the value they derive from their software. The company's next-generation software licensing, compliance, and installation solutions are essential to ensure continuous licensing compliance and optimized software investments and to future-proof businesses against the risks and costs of constantly changing technology.

# Step 5

## Build the Partnership with Sales Cloud and Partner Community

When working within a channel partnership, the biggest hurdle to clear is silos: siloed sales teams, siloed information, siloed analytics. Finally, the world of siloed information is disappearing.

Partner Community doesn't just give your partners the data they need; it also helps you find information and insights you didn't know you needed. With Community Cloud, you can develop a Partner Community and easily tailor and extend the community for each individual partner.



You can set up groups within the community to foster more seamless collaboration, and share files, in context with Salesforce Files. Salesforce gives you the tools to have your partnership running like a well-oiled machine from Day 1. And if your partner also uses Salesforce to manage their business, Salesforce to Salesforce allows you to easily connect, share and update Salesforce data.

Everything is built on the secure, trusted, and scalable Salesforce platform, so even your most sensitive processes and data are safe. On top of that, you can customize settings within the community to ensure that your partners only see the data they should – and nothing they shouldn't. Collaboration doesn't have to mean over sharing: with Sales Cloud and Community Cloud, it means precisely targeted cooperation according to your business's unique needs.





# Conclusion

The benefits of a channel partnership are vast, but without an effective way to manage partnerships, you're missing out on a gold mine of value for your business.

With a partner community, you gain valuable insight from everyday partner interactions that are more connected, transparent, and collaborative. With the right plan in place and the right tools to execute, your partners can help boost your sales.



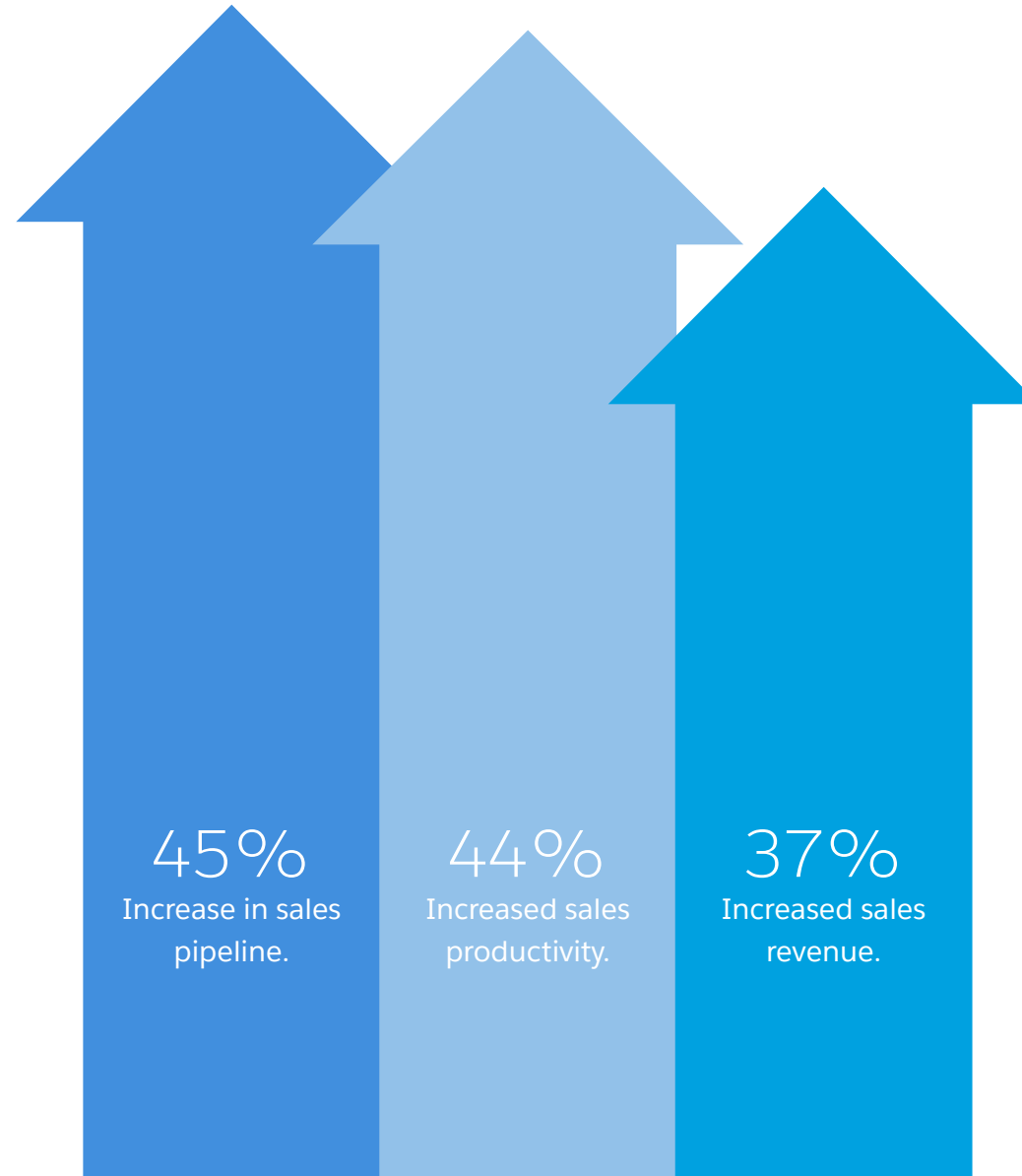


## A sales tool as powerful as you.

Even the best sales people need the right tools to close the deal. Salesforce is the industry leader in customer relationship management and was designed with top sales performers in mind. From the world's most loved CRM features, to cutting edge new functionality that is redefining the industry, Salesforce is focused on one thing: making you successful.

Close more deals, get more leads, gain more insight, and accelerate productivity, with Salesforce Sales Cloud.

[LEARN MORE](#)





**CONNECT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS  
IN A WHOLE NEW WAY**



The information provided in this e-book is strictly for the convenience of our customers and is for general informational purposes only. Publication by salesforce.com does not constitute an endorsement. Salesforce.com does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of any information, text, graphics, links or other items contained within this e-book. Salesforce.com does not guarantee you will achieve any specific results if you follow any advice in the e-book. It may be advisable for you to consult with a professional such as a lawyer, accountant, architect, business advisor or professional engineer to get specific advice that applies to your specific situation.

© 2016 salesforce.com, inc. All rights reserved.