

Background:

Our telecommunications client was dealing with massive changes driven by industry deregulation and competitive threats brought by emerging technologies through the redefinition of their business strategies and organization structure. Recent mergers, acquisitions and reallocation of geographic footprints had created major market disruptions and a series of management decisions that threatened the business relationship between our telecommunications client and their network of partners selling their “business solutions” product line.

The management decisions that strained the relationship required their partner network to accept a decreased commission scale, transfer the partner network’s high volume customers to direct sales as well as introducing increased direct sales competition across the channel. The impact and timing of these management decisions was not fully understood, suddenly business relationships were at risk across the channel, right before partner contracts were about to expire.

Business Issue:

Our Telecommunications client’s business strategy was dependent on a partner network capable of selling and implementing a bundled product solution in response to the needs of specific market segments. Sales and marketing objectives had just been established in order to:

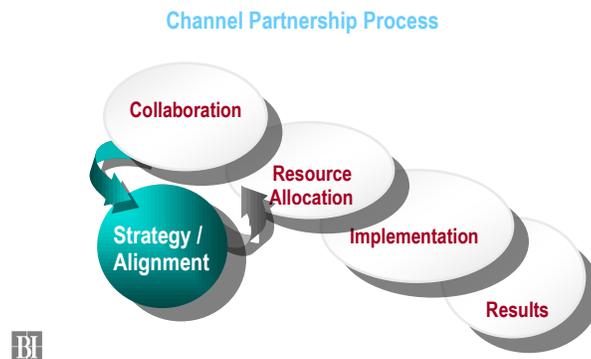
- Increase revenue from new customers in target segments
- Increase wallet share of existing customers in top-line products
- Initiate a solution selling approach providing bundled products to target markets

To implement their business strategy our telecommunications client needed to retain loyalty of high performing partners and improve performance of existing and or new partners. To meet their objectives there was a clear need to:

- Get broad based partner commitment to the new business strategy
- Get high performing partners in the indirect channel to remain loyal
- Get partners to support targeted programs to expand the partner customer base and sale of top line products

Change Process

To meet our Telecommunications clients objectives we implemented BI’s Channel Partnership Process to strengthen business partner relationship, identify the short-term wins and long-term commitments to create mutual gains.





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Strategy

Working with the Telecommunications company's sales organization leadership we set priorities on business issues, identified internal champions to lead the channel partnership process as well as the key stakeholders required for success. We assessed readiness to implement the strategy by immediately facilitating an open exchange at regional sales meetings with channel CEOs and the telecommunications company leaders. During the meetings, we introduced the channel partnership process and recruited partner representatives across all sales regions to work side by side with the telecommunication company leadership to redefine their business relationship and build a stronger partnership.

We established a clear interest among a representative group of partners in redefining and strengthening the relationship with the telecommunication company's sales organization. A series of meetings was designed over the next 6 months to selectively engage channel partners and key stakeholders to execute the strategy.

Collaboration

After the dialogues were conducted during the regional sales meetings' we facilitated a Design Conference with over 60 Stakeholders. The broader business strategy and market research was shared with channel partners, a common vision was created redefining the partner relationship. During the two-day meeting survey research identifying issues and opportunities from all partners was interpreted, priorities and recommendations were jointly identified

Alignment

Results from the design conference was shared with leaders inside the telecommunications company sales organization followed by an internal alignment meeting involving representatives from sales, marketing, product development, technical support and customer service. The joint business activities for the areas outlined below were reviewed and cross-functional implementation plans were developed.

- Training and Certification
- Web Based Marketing and Communications
- Referral Systems, Marketing Data and Funds
- Program Administration and Tracking
- Technical and Customer Support

Quick wins that emerged from the meeting were immediately addressed around contract language and increased access to marketing and product information, increasing momentum and commitment for the longer-term programs.

Resource Allocation

During this session leadership from the telecommunication, manufacturer sales and business, functions were chartered to develop and execute high priority partner recommendations. Accountability, action plans and resources required for execution of priority recommendations were agreed on.



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Implementation

Final recommendations and implementation plans were approved by Senior Leadership across Business Units, resourced and presented to all Partners at a National Sales Meeting. Executive Sponsors were linked to each initiative and Business Unit leaders were responsible for execution.

Results

The programs our client approved and resourced were implemented over the following six months, mid course corrections and progress reviews on partner recommended programs as well as recognition of partner performance was presented at the National Sales meetings that included:

- Partner Contracts with Language Recommended by Partners (Retained 100 % of High Performers)
- Implementation of a Web Based Marketing and Communication Platform that:
 - Provided segmentation data, customer prospects and referrals that increased partner revenue
 - Reduced overhead costs associated with order entry, product information and sales collateral
 - Training that provided information and skill development supporting the sale of top line product
- Partner Recognition For Meeting Sales Targets on Top Line Products Thru Marketing and Referral Support