

## **MBA- I semester, Paper- Marketing Management, MB 105, TOPIC- Selecting and training Channel Members.**

The success of any marketing channel lies in the foundation of right channel design decision. But channel design is just the planning part; it needs right implementation to be successful. The implementation can be taken care of, with the help of channel management decisions, it includes right from, selecting a channel member to training them to motivating them and to evaluating them on their performance. In case, the performance is not as expected, the modifications are done by the company in the channel arrangements.

### **Selecting Channel Members:**

The first priority for any company is choosing the right channel members. As the business is dependent upon the marketing channel partners, it becomes crucial for the success of any company to select the best channel partner. All the companies whether it's a product manufacturing company like Colgate or Onida or a service company like IMS or Career Launcher, needs a good channel partner to succeed.

Generally, all the companies advertise through newspapers and trade magazines to look out for channel partners. If the company is known and successful, it becomes quite easy for the company to find them. But in the case of a new company launching a new product, then finding a channel partner can be tough. In both the cases, the parameters for choosing a channel partner should be very clear for the company as well as the channel partner.

In some businesses, like opening a McDonald's franchisee, the location becomes more important than in any other business. As the business is dependent on the footfalls it can get. The company can evaluate any channel partner on the basis of business experience, financial capabilities, locational advantages, growth and profit record, experience of the promoters. In the case of exclusive distribution, these parameters become more important for the company.

The Selection Process Three steps are involved:

1. Finding prospective channel members
2. Applying selection criteria to determine the suitability of prospective channel members
3. Securing the prospective channel members as actual channel members

### **Finding Prospective Channel Members**

The most important sources for finding channel members are listed below in their order of importance.

- 1) Field sales organizations
- 2) Trade sources
- 3) Reseller inquiries
- 4) Customers
- 5) Advertising
- 6) Trade shows
- 7) Other sources

## **Training Channel Partners:**

Once the channel partner is selected, they need to be trained as they are the face of the company. All the companies have intensive training programmes for its dealers to tell them about their sales and service capabilities, product knowledge, expected service quality and operational procedures to follow. For example, LG Electronics India regularly trains its sub-dealers, direct dealers and service franchisees.

The training tries to facilitate performance, improve knowledge, skills and attitude of its dealers and sales staff. The training is given both through online and offline methods, which covers functional, technical and behavioural aspects. Similarly, Kirloskar Brothers Limited (KBL) makes the customers and dealers aware of the fundamentals and working principles of Centrifugal Pumps, enabling them to operate and maintain the equipment more efficiently. The training program is designed by KBL to offer best possible theoretical as well as practical knowledge to their valued customers and dealers.

### **Creating a Channel Partner Training Strategy That Works**

You're convinced – channel partner training is a must. But now you're wondering how to best approach it. Ensure you work through the following steps to create a strategy that pays off.

#### **1. Evaluate Channel Training Needs**

First, get a thorough picture of what your partners need. Some partners, such as vendors or franchisees, might need general training in marketing your products. Sales representatives and distributors may need more on-hands product training, like how to use the product's different features.

Determine what type of training would best enable your channel partners through regular surveys to identify frequently-encountered problems.

#### **2. Align Your Partner Enablement Goals with Your KPIs**

Your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) track how the business is faring against specific performance goals. Channel partners can become distant from these KPIs, or have outdated KPIs in mind due to a lack of training.

#### **3. Choose the Right Platform**

If you only have a small number of channel partners, then workshops and face-to-face training could be a great way to foster camaraderie among partners. But what if you have many partners, and worse, they're all over the world.

#### **4. Motivate Channel Partners**

Clear expectation management, a sense of reward and feeling like part of the business culture are all important for keeping partners motivated.

Once you identify your training goals, break them down into milestones that partners can work through during the program. This introduces opportunities to “top-up” on motivation by recognizing your partners’ work, while also making training more manageable.

#### 5. Make Communication Easy

Think about ways that you could build communication into your partner relationships and channel training.

Use LMS features like direct messaging in discussions and forums to make it quick and simple to ask questions. These features can also allow partners to communicate with and learn from other partners.

Making it super easy to ask questions (and receive answers quickly) means that your training materials, sales documentation, product information and other resources are more likely to be interpreted correctly.