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# 5 Ways to Boost Manufacturing Channel Strategies for Year-Round Growth





As America's manufacturing sector grinds and polishes its way out of a slump, many organizations are starting to feel optimistic.

Yes, really.

According to a Q1 National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) survey, more than half (56%) of respondents predict sales will increase over the next four quarters. And they're notably rosy on the slope of that growth: more than a third (34.5%) believe orders will rise 5% or more over the same period.

Such news is exciting on its merits, but even more so for those companies who are poised to capture as much of that expansion as possible, as soon as possible. We're talking about makers of goods who rely on strategic partnerships with third-party entities — distributors, brokers, resellers, wholesalers, and so on — to bring their products to market. Such companies are uniquely positioned to leverage these relationships to meaningful advantage. Which is to say, when manufacturers get better at nurturing their channel partner relationships, growth is that much more likely to get turbocharged.

**THE UPSHOT:** By taking a closer look at their “channel strategy” — i.e., the way organizations think about distribution partnerships — manufacturers can significantly strengthen their sales engines. Tracking and incentivizing the performance of channel partners can be a key way to increase sales, drive revenue, and turbocharge delivery of ambitious year-over-year results.

Heading into Q2, we offer five best practices for elevating manufacturing channel strategies that make year-round growth and revenue resilience a slam dunk for your company's revenue outlook.

**Channel Partner (n.):** The third-party organizations and individuals that bring your product(s) to market. For manufacturing companies, channel partners can include distributors, brokers, resellers, wholesalers, and more.

**STEP 1:**

# Get a fresh perspective on the manufacturing sales channel

When you're setting out to meet ambitious goals, it's useful to take a step back and get a fresh point of view.

The manufacturing sales channel is often seen simply as a conduit for sales composed of the various channel partners that bring goods to market. That view compels manufacturers to push their channel partners toward a single goal: selling more.

But this outlook is no longer accurate. More than just a conduit for sales, the manufacturing sales channel is now an entire ecosystem, encompassing marketing, sales, delivery, and service experiences.

This evolution presents new opportunities for manufacturers to optimize distribution networks and drive success through strategic alignment and targeted tactics.

For instance: Manufacturers might work with channel partners to implement integrated marketing strategies that help match marketing efforts to sales objectives. Or they might leverage technology to streamline operations and facilitate collaboration among teams, ensuring a unified approach to customer engagement throughout the channel.



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Adopting this new perspective on the manufacturing sales channel is not merely a near-term goal. It must become a habit: Continual monitoring and adaptation are essential for staying on target. By regularly evaluating channel performance and adjusting strategies as needed, companies can ensure alignment with evolving market dynamics and sharpen your competitive edge.

**STEP 2:**

# Align the needs and actions of channel leaders and partners

Regular assessment of the needs and challenges of channel executives — i.e. those responsible for developing and managing channel partnerships — is another effective habit for pumping up year-round growth.

In our recent survey of manufacturing channel leaders — [“What’s Keeping Channel Chiefs Up at Night?”](#) — we found significant misalignment between what channel leaders say they value in their channel partners, and what they are actually incentivizing.

Consider: More than three out of four channel chiefs find lead development to be the most valuable attribute among their channel partners, yet only 32% incentivize it. This is a missed opportunity.

In addition, study participants reported significant dissatisfaction with their visibility into KPIs, sales forecasting, and inventory management.

These findings should prompt manufacturers to consider the following:

**Do channel leaders have access to real-time data and insights on KPIs, including sales performance, partner engagement, and customer satisfaction?**



This helps channel leaders understand (at a glance) what is working — and what is not.

**Are you leveraging historical data, market trends, and predictive analytics?**



This enables channel leaders to accurately forecast sales, identify growth opportunities, and mitigate risk.

**Are your channel leaders actually incentivizing the things they value most in channel partners?**



This helps ensure alignment between the priorities and the efforts of channel leaders.

## MISSED OPPORTUNITY

# 77%

Portion of Fielo survey respondents in the manufacturing sector that value lead development most in their channel partners

# 32%

Portion of those respondents that actually incentivize their channel partners to develop leads

### STEP 3:

## Empower channel partners

Our survey of manufacturing channel leaders also demonstrates what they value most in their distributors and other channel partners: product knowledge, selling particular products, and developing leads.

Knowing that these are top priorities should prompt manufacturers to consider more key questions, specifically around empowering channel partners:

**Are you providing channel partners with a full understanding of the products they are selling?**



This allows them to effectively communicate the features, benefits, and value propositions to potential customers.

**Are you allowing channel partners to focus on targeted product offerings?**



This helps them better address the needs and preferences of their target market segments and tailor sales efforts accordingly.

**Are you providing channel partners with the tools and resources they need to identify and nurture leads and expand their customer base?**



This lets channel partners most efficiently increase sales and drive business growth.

**75%+**

Percentage of manufacturing respondents in manufacturing who identified “product knowledge” as the most valuable quality among channel partners

**STEP 4:**

# Incentivize goal-oriented behaviors

Incentivization is an effective bridge between strategic goals and successful execution. But incentives are often misunderstood or misapplied.

Many manufacturers simply offer incentives for near-term revenue boosters, such as improved sales. But it would be advantageous for organizations to think more broadly and incentivize goal-oriented behaviors — i.e. those that contribute to higher revenue, profitability, and customer satisfaction as much over the long-term as in the next week, month, quarter or even year. Examples include effective marketing campaigns executed or deals closed in new markets.

With any incentive program, it's essential to define measurable criteria and articulate clear metrics. The concept of "goal-oriented behaviors" and their central role in corporate strategy should be as clear to partners as revenue targets.

Once a program is underway, manufacturers should:

- 1 **Monitor partner performance to evaluate progress.**
- 2 **Provide partners with timely feedback and support.**
- 3 **Consider rewards that go beyond bonuses, since instituting various modes of recognition can be highly effective.**

## MISSED OPPORTUNITY

**75%+**

Portion of Fielo survey respondents in the manufacturing sector that value "sales of particular products" most in their channel partners

**58%**

Portion of those respondents that actually incentivize their channel partners to sell particular products

**STEP 5:**

# Prepare for the future with the right tools

Another key question to ask is whether you're providing channel partners with the most effective tools. Some technology advancements that are driving manufacturing sales channel success include:



**User-friendly platforms and tools** that enhance partner experiences and facilitate seamless interaction and collaboration.



**Streamlined program management solutions** that allow manufacturers to design, implement, and monitor incentive programs.



**Centralized marketing assets** that ensure consistency in branding and messaging across the channel, strengthening brand presence and driving engagement with target audiences.



**Training and support** that empower partners to leverage incentive programs effectively and drive results.



**Tracking and performance management systems** that enable manufacturers to track partner performance, identify trends, and make data-driven decisions.

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The right technology tools allow companies to continually refine and optimize their channel strategies for maximum impact and success.”

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## Conclusion

The manufacturing slump is real. But so, too, are the opportunities to seize the mounting boom, and to hit ambitious growth goals.

Fielo offers a modern channel engagement solution that empowers brands with streamlined program management, enhanced partner experiences, and a plethora of resources to equip channel partners with everything that they need to drive successful marketing, great customer experiences, and more revenue.

To learn more about how manufacturers use Fielo to drive their channel strategy, [contact Fielo today.](#)

