

CHALLENGE:

Increase sales and profitability of a highly decentralized communications provider by building a nationwide indirect sales program and infrastructure

PROJECT SCOPE:

Director, Indirect Channels/18 month engagement

PRIMARY KEYS TO SUCCESS:

- ▶ Market focus
- ▶ Collaboration, communication and performance metrics
- ▶ Process definition, infrastructure development
- ▶ Ability to demonstrate short term success on limited budget

SUMMARY:

- ▶ **Step 1: Assess**
Soliciting input from the few existing field channel managers provided the basis for channel development and secured critical loyalty from limited initial channel resources.
- ▶ **Step 2: Establish and standardize an infrastructure**
While maintaining ongoing dialogue with the field, the introduction of standard contracts, compensation and operational processes eliminated market disparities, and laid the groundwork for growth and for communications and process automation.
- ▶ **Step 3: Level the playing field**
Competitive intelligence aided the process of bringing sales agent program benefits to parity with those of larger competitors where possible, while compensating for systemic shortfalls. Steady growth in agent business began within a month, while the still sparse field team started to rally.
- ▶ **Step 4: Remove conflicts of interest**
Inevitable channel conflict surfaced among the legacy direct sales force, the emerging indirect channel and a pre-existing channel program from a recent corporate acquisition. The net improvement in sales results proved that the market-driven "rules of engagement" adopted across the organizations struck the right balance between competition and well-defined channel focus.
- ▶ **Step 5: Set a new standard and scale for success**
Capitalizing on the buzz of a channel re-launch, a corporate competitive advantage of service and accountability, and leveraging cost effective implementation of web-based partner collaboration software, the indirect channel broke internal growth records. Sustained strong results spoke to a high level market satisfaction and the strength of the new operating infrastructure. Legg Mason touted the new program as a competitive advantage for the company, and direct sales managers clamored to adapt the infrastructure for their use.

