

OUTSOURCING SALES TO INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

International business development through outsourcing sales and other critical business development processes

Once a company has achieved initial success in its home market with an innovative product or service, it should start planning for International growth. If you are strong in your home turf, you can further invest in R&D to expand your product into new applications; but you soon face barriers of saturation, competition and complexity. So, why not selling the successful product abroad?

Going international is not as difficult as it seems at first glance if you articulate your strategy around outsourcing major business processes to local partners in foreign markets. When in fact international business development requires a local presence, you don't necessarily have to establish a local subsidiary with all the costs and risks that such a major commitment represents.

Instead of hiring permanent local employees, you can engage part-time, well qualified representatives, starting immediately on a small basis and grow. The common sense approach is to start with sales representatives who can rapidly identify business opportunities, evaluate local competition, catch RFPs in the early phase and manage marketing programs, promotions and local events, demos, field evaluations and so on.

Sales Outsourcing (also called 'Sales Insourcing') brings you the benefits of in-country sales representatives who fully understand the local culture, business scene and key players, idiosyncrasies and other factors, and who act as your bona fide agents (e.g. business cards, email address, etc). Specialized sales outsourcing companies such as Sales Force Europe can offer you representatives with suitable experience in all major countries. Most of these agents are former executives of major corporations with a solid background and a deep knowledge of international business. So, they can work relatively independently and take appropriate initiatives to develop business while executing the strategies you define.

Companies that offer complex products or services also need, in addition to sales representatives, local partner organizations able to perform technical tasks including installation, maintenance, support and other specialized jobs. In the high-tech sector, such organizations are local System Integrators, Service Providers, Distributors, Value-Added Resellers or similar companies that bring the following advantages:

- Increase your acceptance abroad through the window of a trusted local player
- Help you to understand the local culture and local ways and customs
- Decrease the burden on your home team (sales, support, etc.)
- Allow you to expand faster.

Your local sales representative will help you identify, qualify, attract, enroll and manage such partners, and, originally, to define a value proposition to potential partners. Such a value proposition is part of a partner program you have to develop. You have to productize and localize your offering so that it can be transferred with minimum efforts. This doesn't concern only the products themselves, but also all processes associated with these products, such as presentations, demonstrations, samples/demo units, sales and marketing methods, installation, integration, services and support. The program must also define the respective roles and responsibilities, the corresponding financial agreements and the necessary technical and administrative procedures.

A complete Partner Program allows you to present serious win-win value propositions and to show a true commitment to give full support to partners. The reward will be the creation of a productive long-term relationship with partners and the development of solid international foundations.