

OPTIMISING SALES CHANNELS



INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL AGENTS AS A STRATEGY

This ebook provides businesses with a clearer understanding of how independent commercial agents can enhance their sales efforts, reduce costs, and expand market reach.

UNDERSTANDING COMMERCIAL AGENTS



What is a commercial agent ?

Commercial agents, often referred to as agents or manufacturers' reps, are individuals or entities responsible for selling a company's products or services. They act as intermediaries between the company and its potential clients and generate sales. There are various types of Commercial Agents, each serving specific roles within the sales process.

The key responsibilities of a commercial agents

Commercial agents have an important role in driving a company's growth. Their responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities, from identifying potential customers to closing sales and maintaining client relationships.



Prospecting and lead generation

Identifying potential clients through databases, events, networking, and personal connections.



Sales pipeline

Maintaining a pipeline of leads to create a steady flow of sales opportunities and mastering every step of that pipeline to have leads successfully moving from one step of the pipeline to the next.



Client relationship management

Developing relationships to ensure cross-sell or up-sell opportunities, understanding client needs, and ensuring a high level of satisfaction.



Closing sales and follow-up

Negotiating terms like pricing and terms of sales agreements, obtaining signed contracts or purchase orders, and following up with clients to ensure satisfaction.



Understanding market trends and identifying opportunities of growth

Keeping an eye on industry development and competitors' activities.



Setting sales goals and tracking performance

Achieving company goals includes monitoring and adjusting sales strategies.

DIRECT SALES EMPLOYEES VS. INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL AGENTS



Direct sales employees agents

They are employees of the company who receive a regular salary, often supplemented by bonuses or commissions based on their sales performance. They work directly for the company and are part of the internal staff.



Independent commercial agents

They are self-employed individuals who sell products or services on behalf of a company but are not considered employees. They typically work on a commission basis and have greater autonomy in how they conduct their sales activities.

Benefits of working with independent commercial agents

Cost-effectiveness

- ✓ **No need for full-time employees and benefits:**
Independent agent are not employees, so there's no requirement to provide a fixed salary, health insurance, retirement plans, or other employee benefits. This can result in significant cost savings.
- ✓ **Commission-based pay structure:**
They are typically paid on a commission basis, which aligns their earnings with their performance. This means you only pay for actual sales made, reducing financial risk and ensuring a high return on investment.

Flexibility and scalability

- ✓ **Ability to scale the sales force up or down based on business needs:** You can easily adjust the size of your sales team to match business fluctuations without the complexities associated with hiring or laying off full-time employees.
- ✓ **Flexibility in contracts and commitments:**
Commercial Agents work on flexible contracts, which allow long-term, short-term, or project-based agreements. This flexibility can help manage costs and adapt to changing business needs.

Expanded market reach

- ✓ **Leveraging networks and contacts of experienced commercial agent:**
Commercial agents often have established relationships and networks in their territories or industries. Leveraging these connections can provide quicker access to potential clients and accelerate market penetration.
- ✓ **Entering new markets with localized sales expertise:**
Commercial agents bring localized knowledge and expertise, which can be invaluable when entering new markets. Their familiarity with regional market dynamics, customer preferences, and competitive landscapes can enhance your market entry strategy.

Focus on core business

- ✓ By outsourcing sales functions to Commercial agents, you can free up internal resources and management time to focus on core business activities such as product development, operations, and customer service. This can lead to improved overall efficiency and business growth.

19
years

Is the average
independent
commercial agent
years of
experience.

Independent commercial agents tend to collaborate with the company!

Despite the assumption that independent commercial agents tend to be transient — coming and going based on their contracts — this is not the case. According to the Field Sales Benchmark Report, commercial agents will collaborate with the company for an average of 4.8 years, which is more than double the tenure of full-time workers, who only tend to remain at a company for two years.

PROS AND CONS OF DIRECT SALES EMPLOYEES VS. INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL AGENTS

Independent commercial agents

Pros

Cost-effectiveness

No need to pay full-time employees or benefits; payment is commission-based.

Flexibility

Independent agents set their own schedules and work independently.

Scalability

Easily scale the sales force up or down based on business needs.

Expanded market reach

Leverage established networks and localized market knowledge.

Cons

Less control

Since commercial agents are not employees, you might have less control over their actions. However, they are still expected to adhere to company policies.

Reporting and supervision

Less direct oversight and potential challenges in performance tracking.

PROS AND CONS OF DIRECT SALES EMPLOYEES VS. INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL AGENTS

Direct sales employees

Pros

Direct supervision

Close monitoring and evaluation by sales managers.

Alignment with company goals

Stronger alignment with the company's strategic goals and culture.

Better team integration

Employees are part of your internal team, making it easier to align sales efforts with marketing and customer service.

Fixed compensation

Potential for high earnings is capped by the salary structure.

Cons

Higher fixed costs

Requires paying employees, benefits, and other employee-related expenses.

Lower motivation

May lack the high incentive to close sales compared to commission-based reps.

Administrative burden

More HR and administrative work related to hiring and managing employees.

Geographical limitations

Employing direct sales staff can slow regional expansion due to the time and resources needed for recruitment, training, and deployment

WHEN TO COLLABORATE WITH AN INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL AGENT



A consistent demand for your product

If your sales are not growing, it is time to expand your sales efforts. Flat demand means new sales activities are needed. Commercial agent can bring you new customers without the need for a large in-house sales team.



Desire to enter new markets or regions

Expanding into new markets or geographic regions can be challenging with a limited direct employee sales force. Commercial agents bring local market knowledge and established relationships, making it easier and faster to penetrate new territories.



Existing sales team is overburdened

If your current sales team is struggling to manage all leads and opportunities, it might be time to bring in commercial agent. Overburdened sales teams can lead to missed opportunities and decreased performance. Commercial agent can alleviate this pressure by taking on additional sales activities, allowing your in-house team to focus on high-priority tasks.

INDICATORS YOUR BUSINESS IS READY TO USE COMMERCIAL AGENTS:

Here's a checklist summarizing the key indicators that your company is ready to hire a commercial agent:

- ☐ Do you have a clear understanding of your sales funnel and the customer journey?
- ☐ Do you have a well-defined understanding of who your ideal customer is, including their needs, preferences, and buying behavior? Are you able to give a clear understanding of your Ideal Customer to your agents?
- ☐ Have you created a sales playbook that outlines your successful sales process step-by-step, including strategies to overcome objections?
- ☐ Is your marketing strategy effective enough to generate a consistent flow of leads that your commercial agents can follow up on? Or do you feel that a local market expert could find prospective customers that your marketing strategy has been missing?
- ☐ Are you prepared to provide strong leadership and support to your agent, including coaching to overcome objections and maintaining a positive work environment despite facing rejection?
- ☐ Have you conducted thorough research on your direct and indirect competition? Can you effectively communicate your competitive positioning to your agents?

HOW AND WHERE TO FIND A COMMERCIAL AGENT WITH IUCAB?

Finding the right commercial agent is an important step for the success of your business. Here are some tips for locating and collaborating with a qualified commercial agent.

Partnership description

- ✓ **Role definition**
Companies looking to hire a commercial agent must clearly define the role and objectives of the partnership to ensure alignment and make it easier to find the right agent.
- ✓ **Commission structure**
Detail the commission-based compensation model, including rates and terms, to ensure alignment of incentives between your company and the agents.
- ✓ **Support and resources**
Highlight the support you'll provide, such as sales training, marketing materials, and lead generation tools, to empower the sales rep in their role.

Required skills and experience

- ✓ **Sales experience**
Look for candidates with a proven track record in sales, preferably in a related industry or selling similar products/services.
- ✓ **Customer relationship management**
Ability to build and maintain strong relationships with prospects and clients, understanding their needs and effectively communicating value propositions.
- ✓ **Negotiation skills**
Proficiency in negotiating terms and closing deals, overcoming objections, and managing a sales pipeline efficiently.
- ✓ **Industry knowledge**
Familiarity with your industry, competitors, and market trends to effectively position your product/service in the marketplace.

Leveraging Professional Networks (IUCAB)

- ✓ **Benefits of IUCAB platform**
IUCAB, a leading B2B platform that connects manufacturers and suppliers with commercial agents worldwide. The platform provides various tools to refine searches and connect with the most suitable agents for your product and market.
- ✓ **IUCAB offers legal advice and assistance**
IUCAB helps clarify legal matters, ensuring that both parties navigate the complexities of international sales agreements with confidence.
- ✓ **Access to the largest global network**
IUCAB offers access to the largest global network of independent commercial agents, making it a powerful resource for manufacturers looking to scale their operations through expert agent.



Leveraging commercial agents can be a game-changer for your business. They bring experience, established networks, and localized market knowledge, enabling you to expand your reach and scale your operations efficiently. Their flexibility and cost-effectiveness align perfectly with performance-based compensation, ensuring that your sales efforts are both efficient and impactful.

To harness the full potential of commercial agents, it's essential to prepare thoroughly—define roles, ensure a steady flow of leads, and provide strong support. The checklist provided in this e-book can guide you in assessing your readiness for this strategic move.

For finding the ideal commercial agents, we highly recommend visiting the IUCAB website. IUCAB offers a vast network of commercial agents globally, providing access to experienced sales professionals who can drive your business growth. Explore IUCAB's resources and connect with the right agents to take your business to the next level.



+43 5 90 900 3379



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