

Top 25 Channel Exec Steps Down At Samsung

By [Steven Burke](#), ChannelWeb
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Chris Franey, a 20-year-plus channel veteran who led IT product giant Samsung to a channel comeback and big market share gains, is stepping aside as vice president of marketing and commercial sales at the multibillion-dollar conglomerate's Information Technology Division.

Franey, who was No. 9 on CRN's Top 25 Executive list this year, architected a complete overhaul of the Information Technology Division's channel efforts that led to a record six straight VARBusiness Annual Report Card (ARC) Awards and the vendor's first Channel Champions Award.

Franey, who is known in industry circles as a channel turnaround artist of sorts, laid the groundwork that allowed Samsung to deliver record market share in the intensely competitive and volatile display market. This came after he posted the same kind of impressive results at display maker ViewSonic before taking the Samsung job.

Samsung could not immediately be reached for comment on who will replace Franey or how it will impact the vendor's channel efforts.

Franey also oversaw Samsung's re-entry into the notebook market with a product lineup, including a 2.8-pound ultra notebook based on Intel (NSDQ:INTC)'s Atom processor, that won plaudits from solution providers.

"I am leaving Samsung next week after having the privilege of working with such a strong team for over two-and-a-half years," said Franey in a short note to colleagues and friends on Thursday morning. "My decision was not easy. I have made many new friends here at Samsung and in the industry and I truly have had a great time here."

When Franey came to Samsung, there wasn't even a channel team at the division. The Samsung comeback started with a revamped Power Partner Program that was launched in 2007.

Bob Venero, CEO of FutureTech, a Holbrook, N.Y.-based VAR 500 solution provider, said Franey's departure is a big loss for the vendor and opens the door to channel uncertainty at a critical period.

"It's going to be interesting to see the direction they take minus his leadership," Venero said. "The big question I have is, will they remain channel friendly? They just broke into the notebook market and this is not the time to change focus from a channel perspective. It puts risk out there, especially in a market that is very saturated like the notebook market. In order for Samsung to get their brand out there, they really need to intensely engage the channel. They have some unique offerings but those offerings will only be successful if partners are actually pushing

them."

Venero said he hopes Franey resurfaces at a major vendor floundering in the channel. "It would be great if he could resurface at an organization having channel challenges, as I would call them, and having trouble understanding who they are and what they want to be," Venero said. "There are a lot of OEMs that could use his skills and experience. Some OEMs out there are actually not sure which direction they should be focusing, whether it is direct sales or a partner centric direction. When you have lack of leadership you flounder and create risk in the channel." "My recommendation to Chris is to find the company with the most channel conflict out there and pop yourself in as the savior," Venero said. "He has done it before and I believe that he can make it happen again."