

GTM PARTNERSHIPS PLAYBOOK

The Definitive Guide to Building a Partner Ecosystem
that generates Compounding Revenues

FOR

CROs, VP Alliances & growth-stage
CEOs

INSIDE

7 chapters, frameworks & templates

OUTCOME

3x+ pipeline velocity in under 12
months

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CHAPTER 01

THE GTM PARTNERSHIP IMPERATIVE

01

THE BUSINESS CASE

WHY ECOSYSTEM-LED GROWTH WINS

The modern enterprise buying process has shifted. Buyers rely on trusted advisors — GSIs, system integrators, and channel partners — to validate and de-risk technology decisions. Vendors who fail to build partner ecosystems are selling into an increasingly expensive, resistant market. Ecosystem-led growth is no longer optional — it is the defining competitive advantage of the next decade.

3.2x

Higher pipeline velocity for ecosystem-led vendors vs. direct-only models

67%

Enterprise tech deals involve a partner at some stage of the sales process

38%

Faster average sales cycle when a GSI or channel partner co-sells

THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT

The Three Growth Multipliers of a Mature Partner Ecosystem

REACH MULTIPLIER

Every partner you activate multiplies your sales reach without proportional headcount cost. A 10-person partner sales team has access to accounts your own team could never cover.

TRUST MULTIPLIER

Buyers trust partners who have implemented, integrated, and validated your solution. Partner endorsement compresses the evaluation phase and reduces deal risk in the buyer's mind.

VELOCITY MULTIPLIER

Partners who are already embedded in your buyer's organisation can navigate internal politics, build the business case, and accelerate sign-off in ways your field team cannot.

— PAIN POINTS WE SOLVE

THE FIVE PARTNERSHIP FAILURE MODES

Partnerships Stuck in Pilot Mode

GSI and channel deals are signed but never operationalised. No joint business plan, no account mapping, no co-sell motion. The partnership lives on paper and dies in a drawer.

Strategy Without Execution

Consultants deliver frameworks, then disappear. No one is accountable for activating the recommendations. Twelve months later, the deck is archived and the problem remains identical.

Ecosystem Blind Spots

No visibility into which partners actually drive revenue vs. which consume MDF budget. The 80/20 of partner ROI is invisible — resources go to the loudest, not the most productive.

Slow New Market Entry

New geographies take 18-24 months to generate pipeline. By the time the first qualified opportunity appears, a competitor with in-market partner relationships has established the beachhead.

Under-Resourced Alliance Function

The alliances team is understaffed, under-resourced, and measured on relationship activity rather than revenue contribution. Partners are managed — not activated.

The Expansion Catalyst Promise:

We embed as your alliance function — accountable for pipeline outcomes, not advisory deliverables. Every engagement is measured against KPIs agreed upfront.

CHAPTER 02

ECOSYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

Designing Your Partner Tier Framework

02

TIER FRAMEWORK

THE THREE-TIER PARTNER FRAMEWORK

A structured hierarchy where investment and co-sell intensity scale with partner potential.

TIER 1 — STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

2-5 partners

Full embedded co-sell, joint QBRs, executive sponsors, MDF priority

- > Joint business plans with quarterly revenue targets
- > Weekly co-sell pipeline reviews with named partner AEs
- > Executive sponsor programme (C-level or VP-level)
- > Priority MDF allocation and co-branded marketing
- > Custom enablement tracks and certification paths
- > Product roadmap advisory input

TIER 2 — SELECT PARTNERS

6-15 partners

Active co-sell, portal access, standard MDF, quarterly reviews

- > Account mapping workshops (bi-annual)
- > Monthly co-sell reviews and pipeline tracking
- > Standard MDF programme participation
- > Partner portal, sales assets, and enablement library
- > Quarterly business reviews
- > Defined upgrade path to Tier 1 with clear criteria

TIER 3 — REGISTERED PARTNERS

Open enrolment

Transactional, self-service, deal registration, volume discounts

- > Deal registration and basic protection policy
- > Self-service partner portal and training library
- > Standard certification programme
- > Volume-based discount schedule
- > Upgrade pathway to Tier 2
- > Marketing collateral and brand usage rights

QUALIFICATION SCORECARD

PARTNER SCORECARD & QUALIFICATION MATRIX

Score every prospective partner before investing recruitment effort. Focus only on 6.0+ scorers.

DIMENSION	WEIGHT	SCORING GUIDE (1-10 SCALE)	SCORE
Revenue Potential	25%	TAM overlap, historic deal sizes, close rate with similar vendor solutions	<input type="text" value="/10"/>
Customer Reach	20%	Enterprise accounts in portfolio matching your ICP and target verticals	<input type="text" value="/10"/>
GTM Alignment	20%	Shared target verticals, buyer personas, and go-to-market motion	<input type="text" value="/10"/>
Sales Capacity	15%	Dedicated sales headcount willing to invest time on your product line	<input type="text" value="/10"/>
Technical Depth	10%	Ability to demo, implement and support independently	<input type="text" value="/10"/>
Strategic Fit	10%	Exec commitment, competitive exclusivity, long-term vision alignment	<input type="text" value="/10"/>
WEIGHTED COMPOSITE SCORE Tier 1 threshold: 7.5+ Tier 2 threshold: 5.5+			<input type="text"/>

AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFIERS (REGARDLESS OF SCORE)

DISQUALIFIER

Active partnership with a direct competitor at Tier 1 level

DISQUALIFIER

No dedicated sales resource willing to invest in co-sell motion

DISQUALIFIER

History of channel conflict, margin erosion, or pricing violations

DISQUALIFIER

Insufficient ICP overlap — fewer than 20 target accounts in their portfolio

CHAPTER 03

PARTNER RECRUITMENT & QUALIFICATION

03

RECRUITMENT PLAYBOOK

THE 6-STEP PARTNER RECRUITMENT MOTION

STEP 01

TARGET LIST BUILD

Use three lenses: (1) partners your best customers already use, (2) partners your top competitors co-sell with, (3) in-market ecosystem leaders in your target geography. Aim for 30-50 targets per tier.

STEP 02

PARTNER QUALIFICATION

Run every target through the Partner Scorecard before first contact. Focus outreach on partners scoring 6.0+ — below that threshold, activation cost typically exceeds pipeline upside.

STEP 03

EXECUTIVE OUTREACH SEQUENCE

Lead with value: first contact is a market insight or named customer intro, not a partnership pitch. Sequence: warm email (D1) -> LinkedIn touch (D4) -> phone (D8) -> exec intro request (D14).

STEP 04

DISCOVERY & BUSINESS CASE

The discovery call has one objective: understand their revenue model and where your product creates a multiplier for them. Build a bespoke one-page business case showing incremental ARR.

STEP 05

JOINT BUSINESS PLAN

Every Tier 1 and Tier 2 partner requires a signed JBP before onboarding. JBP covers: mutual revenue targets, co-sell opportunity list, marketing commitments, and quarterly review cadence.

STEP 06

90-DAY ONBOARDING SPRINT

First 90 days determine long-term activation. Run structured sprint: product training (W1-2), account mapping (W3), first opportunity identified (W4-6), first joint buyer meeting (W8-10).

CHAPTER 04

PARTNER ENABLEMENT ENGINE

04

ENABLEMENT ENGINE

THE PARTNER ENABLEMENT ENGINE

Signed agreements mean nothing without infrastructure that makes partners genuinely sales-ready.

SALES ENABLEMENT

- > Joint value proposition (exec, technical, commercial versions)
- > Co-sell playbook with objection handling
- > Competitor battle cards (top 3 rivals)
- > ROI calculator and business case templates
- > Discovery question frameworks for partner AEs

TECHNICAL ENABLEMENT

- > Solution architecture training (live + on-demand)
- > Tiered certification programme with accreditation
- > Demo environment access and guided scripts
- > Integration documentation and API guides
- > Technical support escalation path

MARKETING ENABLEMENT

- > Co-branded campaign toolkit (email, social, events)
- > MDF application process with clear approval SLA
- > Joint PR and case study templates
- > Partner logo pack and brand usage guidelines
- > Events co-sponsorship calendar

COMMERCIAL ENABLEMENT

- > Deal registration portal and protection policy
- > Partner pricing and discount schedule
- > Quoting and proposal templates
- > Renewal and expansion playbooks
- > Incentive and commission payout schedule

MDF PROGRAMME PRINCIPLES

- Allocate MDF based on partner tier and historic ROI — not relationship age or seniority
- Require pre-approval for all MDF activities with a stated pipeline-generation objective
- Measure every MDF activity against an influenced-pipeline metric — never vanity metrics alone
- Reserve 20% of MDF for bottom-up partner proposals to drive co-innovation and engagement

CHAPTER 05

CO-SELL MOTION & PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT

05

CO-SELL OPERATING MODEL

CO-SELL MOTION & PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT

The co-sell motion is where partner revenue is actually generated. This is the operating rhythm.

DAILY	CRM hygiene — all partner opportunities updated, new intros logged, blockers flagged to partner AE
WEEKLY	Co-sell pipeline review with each Tier 1 partner (30-min structured call, deal-by-deal progression check)
BI-WEEKLY	Account mapping refresh — new whitespace identified, ICP matched against partner account base
MONTHLY	Partner performance review — pipeline contribution, MDF utilisation, enablement completion rates
QUARTERLY	Executive QBR with partner sponsor — targets reset, JBP updated, next 90 days planned in detail

ACCOUNT MAPPING WORKSHOP

A structured 90-minute session run quarterly with every Tier 1 partner.

01 PREPARE	Share top-100 target accounts 5 days in advance. Request same from partner. Brief both AE teams.
02 OVERLAY	Map overlap: which accounts do both parties target? Who holds the relationship? Who has the active contract?
03 PRIORITISE	Rank joint accounts by deal size, close probability, and relationship strength. Produce ranked top-20 list.
04 ASSIGN	Agree top-10 joint pursuits. Name an owner on each side. Set date for first joint buyer meeting within 14 days.
05 TRACK	All joint accounts logged in CRM with partner-source tag. Reviewed every week in co-sell call.

CHAPTER 06

PERFORMANCE INTELLIGENCE & ECOSYSTEM OPTIMIZATION

06

KPI FRAMEWORK

ECOSYSTEM PERFORMANCE INTELLIGENCE

You can only optimise what you measure. The complete partner ecosystem KPI framework.

PIPELINE METRICS

Partner-Sourced Pipeline (\$)	New pipeline originated by a partner; target: 40%+ of total pipeline
Partner-Influenced Pipeline (\$)	Opportunities where partner assisted but did not originate
Pipeline per Active Partner	Key efficiency metric — prevents over-investment in low performers
Partner Pipeline as % of Total	Board-level metric; target trajectory 20% -> 40% -> 60%+

VELOCITY METRICS

Sales Cycle: Partner vs. Direct	Target: 30-40% shorter for partner co-sell deals
Time-to-First-Opportunity per Partner	Measures onboarding effectiveness; target: under 60 days
Co-Sell Meeting Conversion Rate	Joint meetings converting to qualified opportunity; target: 35%+
Deal Registration to Close Rate	Measures deal protection programme effectiveness

HEALTH METRICS

Partner NPS Score	Quarterly pulse; below 30 triggers relationship review
Enablement Completion Rate	% of Tier 1/2 partners certified; target: 80%+
MDF Utilisation Rate	Allocated vs. claimed; low utilisation signals disengagement
Active Partners (co-sell in 90d)	Core health metric; idle partners = wasted investment

ROI METRICS

Partner Revenue ROI	Partner-influenced revenue vs. total programme investment
Cost Per Partner-Sourced Opportunity	Total programme cost / partner-sourced opportunities created
Partner Attach Rate	% of closed deals with meaningful partner involvement
Ecosystem Revenue % of ARR	Trajectory target: 20% -> 40% -> 60%+ over 36 months

CHAPTER 07

90-DAY GTM SPRINT PLAYBOOK

07

FAST-START PLAYBOOK

THE 90-DAY GTM SPRINT ACTIVATION PLAYBOOK

Use this framework to fast-track ecosystem activation from zero — or to reset a stalled programme.

DAYS 1-30

DISCOVER & DIAGNOSE

- > Stakeholder interviews: sales, marketing, alliances, product leadership
- > Partner landscape audit — score all existing relationships on 6-dimension scorecard
- > Competitive ecosystem benchmarking vs. top 3 rivals
- > Target partner list development (30-50 prioritised names across tier categories)
- > Internal capability and resource assessment
- > Week 4 gate: Ecosystem Audit Report delivered to leadership

DAYS 31-60

ARCHITECT & BLUEPRINT

- > Tier framework design and partner investment model
- > Co-sell playbook and joint value proposition development
- > Account mapping workshops with top-5 target partners
- > MDF programme design and incentive structure build
- > Quick-win opportunity identification — 5-8 pre-qualified accounts
- > Week 8 gate: GTM Blueprint + Partner Playbook + Quick-Win List

DAYS 61-90

ACTIVATE & DELIVER

- > Pilot co-sell activation on 2-3 quick-win accounts with named partner AEs
- > Partner enablement sessions: joint value props and co-sell playbook training
- > Deal registration and CRM configuration for partner pipeline tracking
- > 12-month ecosystem roadmap with quarterly milestones and revenue targets
- > Internal team handover and playbook capability transfer
- > Day 90 gate: Executive Readout + Board-ready 12-Month Roadmap

Want Expert Execution of This Playbook?

www.expansioncatalyst.com -> Schedule an Alliance Strategy Sprint with Expansion Catalyst — we run this playbook embedded in your business, with full accountability for the 90-day deliverables.

READY TO BUILD YOUR

PARTNER REVENUE ENGINE?

Schedule a no-obligation GTM Strategy Review with the
Expansion Catalyst team — 45 minutes, zero commitment.

[SCHEDULE CONSULTATION](#)

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THREE WAYS TO ENGAGE EXPANSION CATALYST

GTM PARTNERSHIPS-AS-A-SERVICE

Flagship · Fully embedded

We become your partner alliance function.

ALLIANCE STRATEGY SPRINT

Advisory · 90-day intensive

Audit, blueprint & 6+ quick wins in 90 days.

MARKET ENTRY ACCELERATION

Expansion · Under 9 months

New markets via pre-built partner networks.