

PRESALES COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

SOL/CON

2026 Session Guide

August 26–27 · Chicago · Convene Willis Tower

*Two days dedicated to the solutions profession.
22 sessions. 3 tracks. 30+ speakers.
Build your Sol/Con schedule.*

● AI

● LEADERSHIP

● GTM

presalescollective.com/solcon-2026

Keynotes & Special Sessions

DAY 1 · 9:10–9:45 AM

Solutions: The Most Strategic Role in the AI-Era Sales Org

Jack Cochran

General Manager, Presales Collective

AI is collapsing the gap between products. When every vendor can demo a capable model, the differentiator is now the person who can architect the outcome, navigate the technical decision, and own the path from problem to value. That's Solutions. In this opening keynote, Jack Cochran, GM of PSC, makes the case that Solutions has quietly become the most strategic role in the modern revenue org, backed by data on the explosion of forward-deployed roles and the shift in how the function is scoped, leveled, and paid. You'll leave with a clear picture of where the role is heading, why this is the decade of Solutions, and what it takes to lead from the seat you already occupy.

DAY 2 · 9:10–9:45 AM

Stop Being a Hero

Nicole Jackson

Director, Brex

SCs love to be the heroes, jumping into every broken situation, coming to the rescue of the sales team and the customer alike. As organizations scale, these heroics lead to burnout. Join Nicole Jackson as she explores how you as a leader can set your teams up for long-term success by shifting them from reactive heroics to making systemic impact in the organization.

DAY 1 · 12:00–12:45 PM

Four Skills Driving Sales Outcomes

Presales Collective Podcast, Live Recording · Jack Cochran · Matthew James · Rew Dickinson

What actually separates the highest-performing Solutions teams from everyone else? In this special edition recording of the Presales Podcast, Jack, Matthew, and Rew dig into the four core skills that measurably move sales outcomes, backed by benchmark data gathered across dozens of organizations. Expect candid takes, real numbers, and a live audience exercise where you'll score your own team against the benchmarks and see where you stack up in real time.

DAY 2 · 2:30–3:15 PM

Closing Keynote

Dan Conway

CEO, 2Win

AI Track

6 sessions across both days

DAY 1 · 10:00–10:45 AM

Operationalizing AI in Presales: From Hype to Repeatable Proof-of-Value

Jay Mulakala

Sr. Director, Solutions Engineering & Architecture, DroneDeploy

AI deals die in presales when they stay at the “cool demo” stage instead of a clear business outcome. In this session, Jay shares how his team leverages AI tools like Glean, Gong, and Gemini to qualify opportunities, structure evaluation plans that prove value, align SE/CSE/SA roles around expansion, and define success metrics that connect every PoV to durable ARR.

DAY 1 · 11:00–11:45 AM

What Actually Works in AI Sales Engineering

Nashmia Burney · KJ Fenton · Jonathan Eyler-Werve · Rafael Coelho

There's a lot of AI hype right now, including the idea that it replaces the need for a human SE entirely. This panel is SE leaders with real experience using AI in ways that actually change how presales teams operate. An honest conversation about limitations, implementation realities, and how you prove value at scale.

DAY 1 · 1:30–2:15 PM

Human to Human Connectivity in the AI Age: It's All About the Bandwidth!

David Duffett

Chief EnthusIASM Officer, Let the Geek Speak

While we love to use AI tools to enhance and augment some of our work, our ability to communicate with other people, who are often less technical than us, is still of crucial importance, perhaps even more so now, in order to stand out in all the AI-generated noise. Your visibility and credibility can only be conveyed through the bandwidth of your connection with others. This fun, interactive, practical, and inspiring session will teach you 7 vectors to boost your bandwidth, enabling you to achieve whatever you want, faster, and with more buy-in from your coworkers, clients, and audiences.

DAY 2 · 10:00–10:45 AM

AI Presentation 2

DAY 2 · 11:00–11:45 AM

Future-Proofing Our World: Using Empathy and Judgment to Navigate the AI Era

Alex Nation · Hannah Bloking · Allison Macalik

While we embrace the future of AI with optimism, we prepare for its unpredictability by doubling down on the two things machines cannot replicate: deep empathy and seasoned professional judgment.

DAY 2 · 12:00–12:45 PM

From Hype to High Performance: Grounding AI Agents in Methodology

2Win

Most teams are drowning in AI output that's high in volume and low in trust, and the fix isn't a better model, it's grounding. In this lab you'll watch a single agent improve in real time across three versions: a generic prompt, the same prompt grounded in context, and a version grounded in methodology and proven practice. You'll see the jump in quality with your own eyes, then learn how to build a simple rubric to evaluate whether an agent is actually good enough to act on. You'll leave with a practical process for grounding your own agents, so they perform at the standard you'd hold a teammate to, not a notch below it.

Leadership Track

6 sessions across both days

DAY 1 · 10:00–10:45 AM

Building and Retaining World-Class Presales Teams

Joe Senior · Regina Takai · Faith Bevitz

How do you build presales teams that don't just survive but thrive? How do you create a team where top presales talent wants to join and wants to stick around and grow? Being an excellent team is more complicated than just having the right salary and the right product. This panel brings together leaders who have crafted industry-leading presales teams and have experienced both the good and the bad when it comes to presales leadership.

DAY 1 · 11:00–11:45 AM

Earned Influence: Leading Before You Have the Title

2Win

In presales, your impact rarely comes from positional authority, it comes from influence you've built with product, marketing, sales, and the customer long before you needed it. This workshop introduces the six pillars of earned influence: Clarity, Credibility, Trustworthiness, Curiosity, Courage, and Intentionality. You'll hear how building influence before you need it lets you move faster when it counts, then assess which pillars are strongest in your own approach and where you have room to grow. Working in your pod, you'll build a personal development plan for a real relationship you want to strengthen and walk away with concrete next steps, and people to hold you accountable.

DAY 1 · 2:30–3:15 PM

Raising the Bar: Building a Pre-sales Standard of Excellence

Katie Barends

Vice President, Value Engineering at Iterable

Most presales teams say they want excellence, but few define it clearly. In this session, Katie shares how she codified what "great" looks like for Enterprise Solutions Consultants using a 6 Cs framework, and how it shaped hiring, coaching, performance, and career growth. Practical ways to raise the bar without burning out your team, and how to build pride, accountability, and consistency at scale.

DAY 2 · 10:00–10:45 AM

The Leadership Ladder: What Changes at Each Rung

Meaghan Danielson · Amin Ibrahim · Shweta Kapil · Tony Francetic

Presales is a difficult career, and an even more difficult role to lead in. The skills that brought someone from novice to expert often do not apply to leadership roles, and success as a front-line leader often has nothing to do with success as an executive. Hear from our panel of leaders on their struggles moving from ICs up the ladder to various senior leadership roles.

DAY 2 · 11:00–11:45 AM

Busy, Liked, and Ignored: The Presales Leadership Trap

Ron Whitson · Chris White

Great presales professionals are often promoted into leadership because they are exceptional problem solvers and trusted partners. Ironically, those same strengths can make them ineffective leaders at scale. In this session, we explore why many presales leaders default to managing activity instead of leading change, and how avoiding friction quietly erodes influence, limits team growth, and keeps presales stuck in “support” mode. Attendees will leave with a practical leadership lens for deciding when to step in, when to step back, and where friction is not a failure but a requirement for effective presales leadership.

DAY 2 · 1:30–2:15 PM

Leadership Presentation 2

GTM Track

6 sessions across both days

DAY 1 · 10:00–10:45 AM

Bottling Lightning: Turning Your Instincts into Frameworks Your Team Runs Without You

Paul Vogt

Vice President, Head of Customer Engineering at GBG Plc

The best SE leaders often can't tell you why they're good. They read a room, save a deal, develop a rep, and never stop to ask what they actually did. That works, until it's time to scale. Paul's workshop is about turning instinct into frameworks your team can actually run, the kind that survive contact with real people instead of getting mandated and quietly abandoned. You'll leave with one you can put in front of your team Monday.

DAY 1 · 1:30–2:15 PM

Case Study: How Presales Built the GTM Motion for a Category Without a Buyer

Billy McDiarmid

Vice President, Customer Engineering, Red Sift

How do you enable a reseller to sell something their customers aren't yet asking for? Billy shares the practical case study of how a small presales function took a new security category to market through a global reseller, building a dual-funnel model that measured partner adoption separately from customer pipeline, using AI tooling and repeatable templates to help one technical resource produce customer-ready proof artifacts at scale, and creating a single, defensible value metric that let a non-technical seller run the conversation with confidence. You'll leave with a practical framework for scaling technical enablement through a partner, and a clearer view of how presales can shape GTM motion design rather than just support deals.

DAY 1 · 2:30–3:15 PM

The Specialist vs. Generalist Debate: Getting Resource Allocation Right

Art Fromm · Steve Klein · Logan O'Neil

Should you have teams who split into specialist roles, or who are generalists and can wear many hats? This panel discusses the tradeoffs and implications of taking either approach. Learn when specialization makes sense and what you need to do to justify the cost or shift in resources required to do so.

DAY 2 · 10:00–10:45 AM

Winning as One Team: Build a Deal Strategy That Actually Closes

2Win

In most deals, the win is decided by how well sales, presales, product, and marketing move together, yet teams rarely practice that coordination on purpose. In this hands-on session you'll take a real-world scenario, break into teams, and build a shared deal strategy using a proven win-plan framework you can take home and reuse. You'll work through the handoffs, decide who owns what, and pressure-test your plan with live coaching before presenting back to the room. You'll leave with a repeatable way to turn a group of talented individuals into one coordinated team that wins more often.

DAY 2 · 12:00–12:45 PM

Why Deals Don't Close the Way We Expect

Dmitri Lee

Founder, Presales Navigation System

Most presales teams focus on activities: demos delivered, POCs completed, support provided. Yet deals still slip, stall, or close smaller than expected. The issue is not execution, it is the absence of deal management. In this session, we explore how strong presales organizations manage deals as a system: how decisions are surfaced early, how evaluation criteria are enforced, how risk is inspected instead of assumed, and how leaders create consistency without micromanaging. This is not about skills, it is about operating discipline.

DAY 2 · 1:30–2:15 PM

Executive Engagement: Selling to the C-Suite

Wayne Brown · David Fung · Aubrey Almond

Selling to enterprise customers, and even often smaller companies too, requires selling to the C-suite. This panel covers how you can earn access to the executives critical to closing deals, and how to align your sales team when this is required. We'll unpack how to navigate complex buying committees, how to build your customer into champions, and how to communicate in the language of strategic business outcomes.

Day 1 — August 26

TIME	TRACK	SESSION
8:15–9:00 AM		Registration & Breakfast
9:00–9:10 AM		Welcome · Jack Cochran
9:10–9:45 AM		Opening Keynote: Solutions, The Most Strategic Role in the AI-Era Sales Org · Jack Cochran
10:00–10:45 AM	AI	Operationalizing AI in Presales: From Hype to Repeatable Proof-of-Value · Jay Mulakala
10:00–10:45 AM	LEADERSHIP	Building and Retaining World-Class Presales Teams · Panel
10:00–10:45 AM	GTM	Bottling Lightning · Paul Vogt
11:00–11:45 AM	AI	What Actually Works in AI Sales Engineering · Panel
11:00–11:45 AM	LEADERSHIP	Earned Influence: Leading Before You Have the Title · 2Win
12:00–12:45 PM		Four Skills Driving Sales Outcomes · Presales Collective Podcast, Live Recording
12:45–1:30 PM		Lunch
1:30–2:15 PM	GTM	Case Study: How Presales Built the GTM Motion for a Category Without a Buyer · Billy McDiarmid
1:30–2:15 PM	AI	Human to Human Connectivity in the AI Age · David Duffett
2:30–3:15 PM	LEADERSHIP	Raising the Bar: Building a Pre-sales Standard of Excellence · Katie Barends
2:30–3:15 PM	GTM	The Specialist vs. Generalist Debate · Panel
3:15–3:30 PM		Day 1 Closing · Jack Cochran

Don't have your ticket yet?

Tap to get yours

Day 2 — August 27

TIME	TRACK	SESSION
8:15–9:00 AM		Registration & Breakfast
9:00–9:10 AM		Welcome Day 2 · Jack Cochran
9:10–9:45 AM		Day 2 Opening: Stop Being a Hero · Nicole Jackson
10:00–10:45 AM	AI	AI Presentation 2
10:00–10:45 AM	LEADERSHIP	The Leadership Ladder: What Changes at Each Rung · Panel
10:00–10:45 AM	GTM	Winning as One Team · 2Win
11:00–11:45 AM	AI	Future-Proofing Our World · Panel
11:00–11:45 AM	LEADERSHIP	Busy, Liked, and Ignored: The Presales Leadership Trap · Ron Whitson, Chris White
12:00–12:45 PM	GTM	Why Deals Don't Close the Way We Expect · Dmitri Lee
12:00–12:45 PM	AI	From Hype to High Performance · 2Win
12:45–1:30 PM		Lunch
1:30–2:15 PM	LEADERSHIP	Leadership Presentation 2
1:30–2:15 PM	GTM	Executive Engagement: Selling to the C-Suite · Panel
2:30–3:15 PM		Closing Keynote · Dan Conway
3:15–3:30 PM		Thank You · Jack Cochran
3:30–4:30 PM		Happy Hour

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Tap to get yours