



Stop Building Partner Programs. Start Building Distribution Engines



Most partner programs fail because they were never designed to drive revenue in the first place. This guide features insights from Didrik Brekke Hansen, a 20+ year veteran of SaaS partnerships, including Trustpilot and Piwik Pro. Discover direct, actionable insights on how to make that shift.

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What You Will Learn

This guide breaks down how modern partnership teams can build programs that actually drive pipeline, revenue, and strategic influence.

- Learn why most partner programs fail, and why fixing the motion matters more than buying more software
- Understand where AI truly adds value in partnerships, including account mapping, attribution, signal detection, and workflow automation
- Discover how to identify the right partners based on deal influence, buyer access, and pipeline impact, not logo volume
- See why governance, clean data, and clear processes must come before automation can scale results
- Learn how to get sales teams to actively engage partners by tying partnerships directly to revenue outcomes
- Learn which partnership metrics actually matter and how to measure sourced pipeline, influenced revenue, and GTM impact instead of activity

These insights will help you build a partnership strategy focused on execution, revenue contribution, and long-term growth, not just partner activity.

Meet Your Expert Guide

Didrik Brekke Hansen

Global Partnerships Leader at **DBH Consulting & Invest**

With over a decade in partnerships and go-to-market leadership, Didrik has built his career around one core belief: the right partnerships don't just support growth, they become the engine of it.

At Trustpilot and Cookie Information/Piwik PRO, he sharpened his instincts on international partner growth, learning how ecosystem strategies actually move revenue when connected directly to pipeline and attribution. Now advising SaaS companies globally, he's applying that same thinking to partnership-led GTM, focused on measurable outcomes, not activity metrics.



Distribution Engine Strategist

Moving partnerships from programs to actual distribution channels

Ecosystem & Revenue Connector

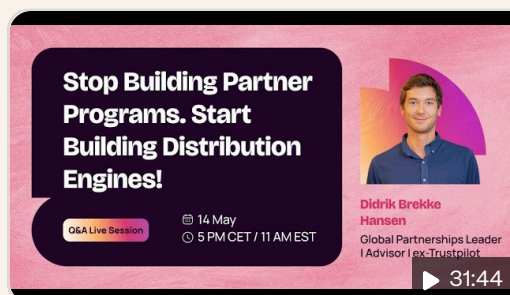
Designing partner motions that integrate sales, implementation, and ecosystem partners

Modern GTM & AI Advisor

Helping companies leverage AI to automate operational friction while keeping the human layer, trust, strategic fit, and deal influence

Didrik recently joined us for a live Q&A on building distribution engines instead of programs, covering partner selection as strategy, the foundations that matter before scaling, and how AI reshapes partnerships. His approach is practical and immediately actionable.

Watch the Complete Session



YouTube

Q&A: Stop Building Partner Programs. Start Building Distr...

Most partner programs look good on paper but don't drive revenue. The best companies don't run "programs"—they build...

Partnerships Must Own Revenue, Not Activity

The most fundamental shift in mindset Didrik advocates: partner teams must be tied to the same pipeline targets as sales. If they aren't, they're playing a different game than the rest of the company, and they'll be the first to lose budget in a downturn.

The common trap is trying to prove partnership value through reports and decks. That's the wrong approach entirely. Partners must show up in your pipeline. Sales must engage them early. When that happens, attribution becomes obvious; it doesn't need to be argued for in a slide deck.

The Wrong Metric

Measuring partner activity, events attended, emails sent, logos added, creates the illusion of progress while obscuring whether partnerships are actually moving deals forward.

The Right Metric

Pipeline sourced and revenue influenced. If partnerships aren't in your CRM attribution or your pipeline review, they are not part of your go-to-market.

The Leadership Test

Bring metrics in the language of your CRO and CFO. What they want to present to the board is exactly what you should be measuring and reporting.

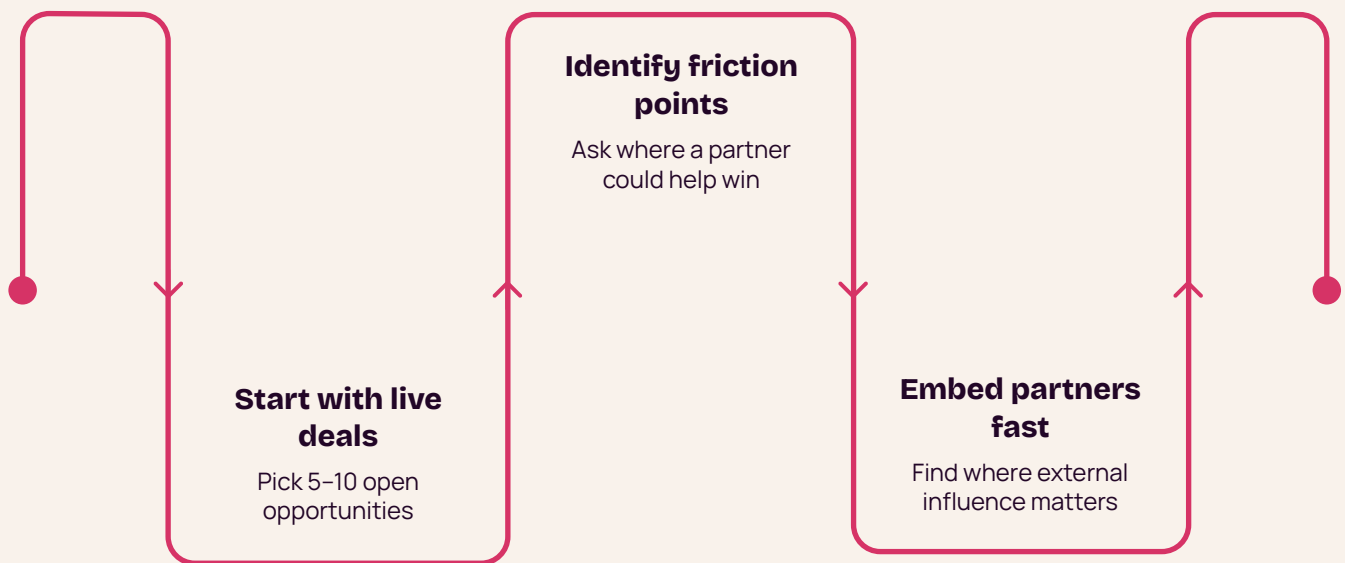
You don't prove partnerships with reports. You prove them in deals. If partnerships aren't tied to your pipeline review or CRM attribution, they're not part of your go-to-market.

– Didrik Brekke Hansen

Building from Zero: The First 3 Things to Do

One of the live audience questions was: "If you're starting a partner program from 0 to 1 and distribution is the primary goal, what are the first 3 things you would do?" Didrik's answer was deliberately blunt and counterintuitive.

Most partner programs fail immediately because they start with recruitment instead of revenue. The instinct to find partners, build strategy decks, and select tools is understandable, but it's backwards. The right starting point is always the deals themselves.



This deal-first approach forces you to identify friction points in the pipeline and find where external influence actually matters, before you've committed to any partner, tool, or program structure. Pipeline is built through execution, not theory.

- 📌 For your first 30 days internally: sit in pipeline reviews, join sales calls, review open deals and closed/lost deals. Ask every time, "**Who else was involved in this deal that wasn't us?**" Learn through deals, not documentation.

Your Best Partners May Not Be Who You Think

Most partnership teams have too many partners and not enough output. The instinct is to ask "how do we find good partners?" and "how many should we have?"; but that's the wrong frame. You don't need more partners. You need partners who show up in deals.

Didrik's provocative recommendation: stop chasing the traditional reseller who wants a 10% clip. Instead, look at VCs, PE firms, and tech agencies. A single strategic relationship with a PE firm can give you access to 40 or 50 portfolio companies as a standard tool. That's leverage, not just a logo.



PE Firms & VCs

One strategic relationship can unlock an entire portfolio of companies. Approach them like a portfolio, not a logo. Create value in their portfolio metrics and you earn their attention.



Tech Agencies

Agencies are close to the buying decision and active in the sales cycle. They want to be pulled into deals where they're needed, not just handed leads.



Your Own Customers

The best source of strategic partners is your existing customer base. Ask them who sits in their ecosystem, who owns them, who influences them. Your customers will give you your best partners.

For legal and consulting partners specifically: they don't want your commission. They want to grow their own revenue and relevance. The question to answer is "how does partnering with you help them win more, bigger, or faster deals?"

Getting Sales to Actually Use Partners

A recurring challenge from the audience: how do you get the sales team to collect partner data and engage partners in deals when they already have so much to document? Didrik's answer cuts through the noise, you don't convince sales to collect partner data. You make partner data help them close deals. That's your only anchor.

The Real Objection

Sales reps aren't interested in partners that slow down the deal. If that's the perception, something is wrong with the partner or the attribution model.

How to Flip the Script

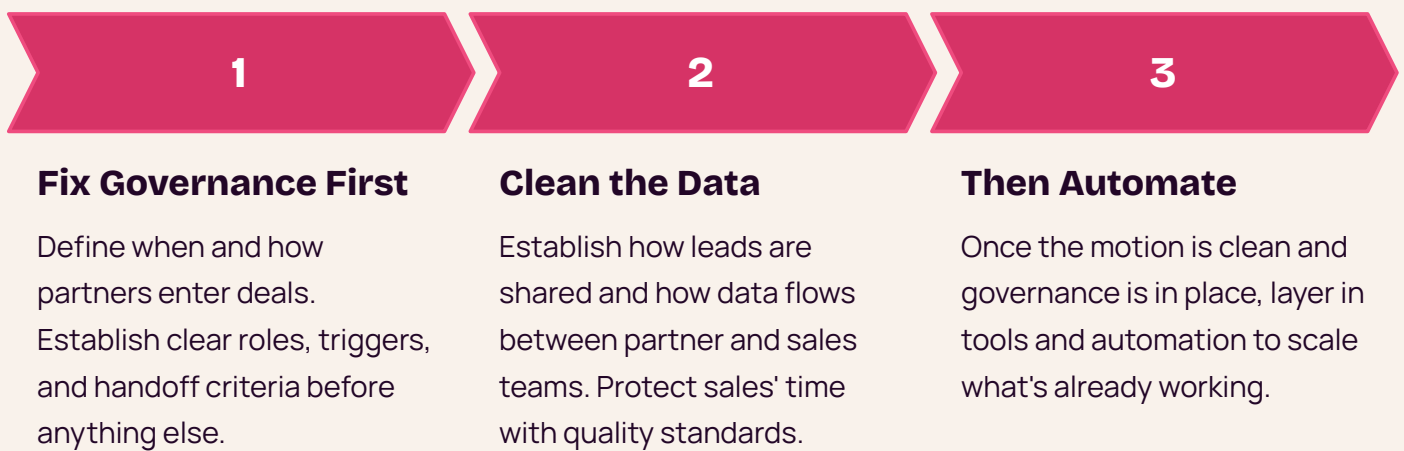
- Implement a **Partner Qualified Lead (PQL)** standard that mirrors your SQL criteria
- If the data isn't clean, don't pass it to sales protect their time and earn their trust
- Stop sending warm intros that are actually cold
- Measure partner win rate vs. direct win rate. If partner-led deals close 20% faster or carry 50% higher ACV, sales will stop seeing you as a slowdown and start seeing you as an efficiency play

- ☑ Smart sales people already know this: partners help them hit more quota. The goal is to make that value visible and measurable, not to argue for it in theory. **Partnerships is as much internal as it is external.**

Don't Buy Software Before Fixing the Motion

Execution is where partner programs die. The most common symptom: no one knows when or how to use partners. There are no triggers, no defined roles, no workflow. If sales has to *remember* to involve partners, the system is already broken.

The temptation, especially as programs grow, is to solve this with tools. But tools don't fix broken motions. They amplify them. A great platform like Kiflo is a fantastic amplifier, but if you amplify a messy process, you just get a louder mess.



Tools are amplifiers. If you amplify a messy process, you just get a louder mess. Fix your governance, your lead handoff, your data sharing, then automate it.

– Didrik Brekke Hansen

Partner Selection Is Strategy

Choosing partners isn't an operational task; it's a strategic decision that determines whether your distribution engine works at all. Most teams default to volume: recruit broadly, add logos, hope something sticks. The result is a long list of partners and very little pipeline output.

The two non-negotiables for your Ideal Partner Profile (IPP), according to Didrik: the partner must be close to the buying decision, and shared pipeline matters far more than shared ICP. Lots of teams say "they sell to the same ICP", but that's not enough. You need access to decision makers, influence during the sales cycle, and presence in active deals.

1

Access to Decision Makers

The partner must have real relationships with the people who sign off on purchases and not just familiarity with the same customer segment.

2

Influence During the Sales Cycle

The partner must be able to shape buying conversations, not just make introductions. Presence at the right moment in the deal matters.

3

Presence in Active Deals

Shared ICP is nice. Shared pipeline is what really matters. The partner should be showing up in live opportunities, not just in theory.

When approaching PE firms specifically: speak their language. Find out what metrics they track for their portfolio, adapt your pitch to those metrics, and present win rates and revenue outcomes that help them hit their own goals. Once you pass that door, you gain access to the entire portfolio.

How AI Changes Partnerships

AI is reshaping what's possible in partnership operations, but it comes with the same caveat as every other tool: it doesn't fix broken motions. It amplifies them. The foundation must be right before AI can add value.

Where AI genuinely helps: account mapping, signal detection, attribution frameworks (many teams are still doing this manually in spreadsheets), and workflow execution. These are the tasks that partner teams have always called "too manual", and AI handles them well when the underlying data and processes are clean.

What AI Can Do

- Automate account mapping at scale
- Detect signals for partner engagement timing
- Build and run attribution frameworks
- Execute operational workflows
- Eliminate manual RevOps tasks

What AI Cannot Do

- Build trust with a partner
- Create strategic alignment
- Open doors into real buying conversations
- Get you into a CFO conversation through a partner
- Replace the human judgment needed to identify the right partners

The practical upside: AI allows partner teams to do more without growing headcount. By eliminating manual work, teams can redirect their energy toward what actually creates value such as building trust, getting into conversations, and involving partners in the right deals at the right moment. If partnerships still don't drive pipeline after AI handles the ops burden, it's no longer an operations problem.



Key Takeaways

To sum things up:

- 1 Own the Revenue**
Tie partner teams to pipeline targets. Prove partnerships in deals, not decks. Get into CRM attribution and pipeline reviews.
- 2 Start with Deals**
When building from zero, pick 5–10 live opportunities first. Ask where a partner could help win, not who to recruit.
- 3 Choose for Leverage**
Quality over quantity. Prioritize PE firms, VCs, and agencies with portfolio access. Ask your customers who influences them.
- 4 Fix Before You Scale**
No tool fixes a broken motion. Establish governance, clean data, and clear handoffs and then automate what works.
- 5 Use AI Wisely**
Let AI handle account mapping, attribution, and workflows. Reserve human effort for trust-building and strategic conversations.

Most companies treat partnerships as a side function like logos, integrations, campaigns, lots of activity metrics. The companies that really succeed treat partnerships as a **distribution strategy**. That's what actually drives pipeline and revenue.

– Didrik Brekke Hansen, CEO, DBH Consulting

Make Your Partner Program a Revenue Engine with Kiflo

You've discovered all the tips & tricks how to build a strong partner engine. Now, see how Kiflo helps partner teams **measure, scale, and optimize** that impact across every motion: from onboarding to revenue.

What You'll See in our Demo



Track and Measure Revenue

Gain full visibility into partner-sourced and influenced deals to understand your ecosystem's true impact.



Empower and Engage Partners

Collaborate seamlessly through partner portals, deal registration, and real-time performance dashboards.



Automate and Integrate Everything

Sync partner data with your CRM and streamline enablement, payouts, and reporting, all from one platform.



Ready to build stronger partnerships?

Experience how Kiflo can scale your partner program.

[Book Your Demo →](#)

