

VENDOR SELECTION GUIDE

The evolution to ecosystems has made it difficult for many companies to stay on top of fast-changing ecosystem motions, and the consequences can be severe. Today, technology businesses are partnering with a variety of ecosystem partners including GSIs, ISVs, IHVs, SIs, and CSPs — to bring the most valuable whole solution to their shared customers. Data in such scenarios is scattered, and the value partner organizations contribute is difficult to quantify, so how can value be surfaced? CEOs hear ecosystems are important, but they don't see it inside their organizations, so what will make it tangible?

Partnering today is vastly different from the old days of “channel partners” where companies sold their products through distributors and resellers. To master the modern ecosystem as an engine of solution innovation and revenue growth requires a fundamental shift in expectations and approach. The adoption of Ecosystem Business Management applications can establish common business practices, reduce redundancy, improve partner engagement, and manage costs while maintaining a laser focus on delivering an outstanding customer experience.



The Ecosystem Operating Model

Think of your ecosystem operating model as the flywheel to revenue by co-innovating with partners to develop and refine offerings for the future, co-marketing with your partners to identify, create markets, and generate demand, co-sell the joint solutions to shared customers, and co-invest with partners to augment sales.

Ecosystem Business Management (EBM) solutions help you get your ecosystem business process flywheel going by digitizing your ecosystem operating model. Your partner management solution should support these partnering motions to truly manage ecosystems at scale.

Difference between CRM, PRM and EBM

For many years, companies have used Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to manage all processes around sales, closing, onboarding, and retention of prospects and customers in direct relationships with the company. As channel partners became more and more critical to growing business, companies wanted a way to manage their partners for these indirect sales channels.

In short, CRMs were built for managing direct sales teams. Partner Relationship Management (PRM) were built for managing reseller partners who can often have large teams of (indirect) sales professionals. Companies couldn't very well open their CRM systems to these

non-employee sales teams. So, PRM systems are essentially an extension of your CRM system but designed for partners to log in and share and receive information to help sell your products. Unfortunately, PRM solutions were built for managing the old style of partners reselling your products through a channel and were never built for these modern ecosystem partnering activities.

An Ecosystem Business Management (EBM) platform is the new way of managing your ecosystem partners in today's world of cloud computing and speed of innovation, where co-selling with your partners is taking over. With an EBM platform, you can easily share information, collaborate on co-innovation projects, engage in joint account planning, manage a shared book of business, co-sell with your partners, and more with your ecosystem partners.

Factor	CRM (Customer Relationship Management)	PRM (Partner Relationship Management)	EBM (Ecosystem Business Management)
Purpose	Direct Sales: When only my sales team sells my offerings.	Reselling: When my partner resells my offerings.	Co-Selling: When one or more of my partners sell joint offerings with me.
Functionality	Helps manage relationships with customers in a single system of record to drive customer retention and direct sales.	Helps manage relationship with indirect sales or reseller partner teams and focuses on the product and sales to ensure long-term returns.	Helps collaborate with partners on deals, exchange co-sell referrals, manage shared pipelines, automate cross-company manual processes and track performance.
Key Tasks	- Documentation and tracking of calls, emails, or other forms of communication - Campaign management for specific customers - Customer data - Customer's response to marketing activities - Sales opportunities and steps to close deals with customers	- Partner portal management - Leads, marketing campaigns, training, and performance management - Admin controls management - Partner program's metrics measurement - Integration with business tools and APIs - Communication, notifications, and alerts	- Send and receive referrals and opportunities connected to partner's CRM. Co-sell and manage a shared book of business. - Manage co-marketing programs with shared plans and activities, for joint execution. Collect and distribute leads fairly with partners - Manage joint funds, incentives, and claims with collaborative decision-making - Track, measure and report KPIs
Value	- Build and strengthen customer relationship - Improve customer service - Better decision-making - Increase internal efficiencies	- Facilitate partner program management - Centralize or consolidate partnering activities - Foster collaborative environment	- Build and strengthen partner relationship - Reduce friction among partner teams - Open new revenue sources - Increase ecosystem pipeline - Grow revenue
Solution Examples	Salesforce Microsoft Dynamics SAP C4C	Salesforce PRM Impartner Allbound	WorkSpan

Evaluate solution capabilities to manage ecosystems at scale

Like any industry, there are many competing solutions available that claim to provide a holistic solution to manage your ecosystem. Evaluating these solutions based on their capabilities, adaptability, ease of use, technology support and future upgrades can help in your decision-making process.

Capability Assessment Criteria Checklist

Partner Onboarding	Does the solution require onboarding partners everytime a new partner program or partner motion is established. Can the solution support an onboard-once process for allowing partners to collaborate across different programs?
Partnering Motions	Does the solution support the complete flywheel operating model of Co-Selling, Co-Marketing, Co-Invest, and Co-Innovation. Does the solution support the following partnering motions: • Co-Sell: Planning, opportunity collaboration, and workflows with partners. Allows bi-directional real-time referrals and opportunity sharing • Co-Market: Plan and develop joint campaigns, track progress up and down the funnel as needed. Share marketing activities and leads with partners. Timely, error-free and equitable lead distribution among partners • Co-Invest: Manage MDF lifecycle. Orchestrate the funds seamlessly between partners in either direction • Co-Innovate: Manage business processes with build partners for proposing, packaging, and launching joint solutions to the market
Joint Business Planning	Does the solution support defining of goals and the metrics for the ecosystem? Can partners define success and map the means for tracking against success? Does the planning include the rules by which the partnership will align against. For example, defining key shared market segments (e.g., region or industry) with a partner; define shared KPIs for each market segment?
Shared Workflow Configuration	Does the solution match cross-company workflows with company defined steps, actions, states, approvals? Does it offer pre-packaged business processes for co-innovation, co-marketing, co-selling and co-investment?
Quick Start	Can the solution enable partnering to start right from day zero after the implementation is complete. Does it allow visibility to partners over a network whom you can invite?
Multi-Party Orchestration	Does the solution allow multi-party ecosystem orchestration? (e.g. co-selling with multiple partners) • Login once to access all companies and programs • Securely share data and content (NDAs, sales plans, etc.) with all companies, all users, or all programs or a subset of companies, users, or programs • Have capability of cross-company messaging, tasks, comments • Have membership management on specific items – Invite, remove, and manage access • Configurable taxonomy mapping for improved communications and consistency

Capability Assessment Criteria Checklist

Referral/ Opportunity Sharing	Does the solution have bi-directional referral/ opportunity sharing across CRMs of partnering organizations. Does it allow customizations: • Can partners individually decide what fields in their respective CRMs are shared or are private to other partners OR what is standard and what is shared or private
Integration with CRMs	Does the solution support APIs to connect with any CRM at partner's end. (e.g., Salesforce CRM, Microsoft Dynamics, SAP C4C etc.)? Does the solution do vocabulary conversion between companies and data flows?
Integration with common workplace Apps	Does the solution support integration with popular collaboration and workplace applications like: • Slack • Email • WebEx • MS Teams etc.
Integration with complementary applications	• Account mapping applications (e.g., Crossbeam) • LMS systems for training and education (e.g., Docebo)
Integration with top hyperscaler programs	Is the solution approved and pre-integrated into the partner programs of top hyperscalers like Microsoft Partner Center, AWS ACE and Google Cloud Partner Advantage? Is the solution a neutral, shared, and co-equal network
Automation	Does the solution automate processes so you can eliminate manual and repetitive work while maintaining the compatibility with workflows and processes across different partner organizations? Does the solution digitally automate methodology (actions, cadence & measures) to propel tasks, activities and opportunities to close? Does the solution remove inconsistencies in the manual processes and helps measure? The steps in a workflow, once digitized, takes ad hoc behavior and standardizes actions.
Collaboration	Does the solution allow for multi-partner collaboration in a shared, neutral, co-equal space - where data can be shared bi-directionally from/to each partner's CRM/Partner portals? Does the solution allow every essential partner team member access to a shared system of record that provides accurate, reliable, and comprehensive records of their work and operations to leadership?

Capability Assessment Criteria Checklist

Access Control and Security	Does the solution provide attribute-based access control for securing data over a network? Is the solution fully SOC2 and GDPR compliant, and have previously passed the security reviews of the other similar technology companies in the world? Does the solution allow you to decide data privacy policies and ability to limit what's shown on your own screen when sharing over a conference call?
Cross Platform Compatibility	Is the solution compatible with multiple operating systems, browsers and platform types?
Content Library	Does the solution support building federated content libraries where each partner company can own and manage their content assets?

Features Assessment Criteria Checklist

Select	Select companies to partner with
Identify	Identify potential companies to partner with?
Log Requests	Log inbound and outbound partnership requests and posture (e.g., engage, do not engage, etc.)
Assign Owners	Assign owners to the partner plan/ program?
Explore	View history and track engagement with potential partners, access guides and template repositories to use to engage potential partners (email, etc.)
Assess	Business and technical assessments to score and prioritize potential partners.
Activate	Sign agreements, create business plans, and implement
Agreements	Supports building and managing agreement workflow with partners: create, review, sign, and manage (updates, expirations, renewals)
Repository	Agreement Repository: agreement templates, signed agreements
Business Plan	Business plan workflow, management, and repository: submit, assess, prioritize, approve, implement, manage, track issues, measure performance (including co-investments, solution development funds, skills, etc.)
Capture & Track Outputs	Capture commitments from agreements and business plans to track and measure performance against (co-investments, skills, etc.)
Implement	Implement global agreements in countries and markets

Features Assessment Criteria Checklist

Joint Funds	Manage joint funds, incentives, and claims with collaborative decision-making. Drive fund utilization. Comply with audit requirements.
Certifications	Certification workflows, tracking, and management: exams, expirations, renewals. New certifications available & certifications to focus on. Certification voucher and credit disbursements.
Training & Education	Training & education tracking & management: alliance training and sandboxes and 3rd party education
Talent Management	Nominate people to complete skills, training.
Measure Training & Education Quality	Ability to do survey on quality of certifications, training and education
Joint Solutions	Co-innovate and manage a portfolio of joint solutions delivering marketplace-ready offerings with speed and agility.
Develop	Develop joint solutions in n-way, have a data model to capture solution dimensions and have a workflow from idea to the launch of the joint solution
Offerings Catalog	Catalog of offering information by alliance partners, including offerings in development, offering SMEs, by hierarchy of Practice > Solution > Offering, prioritization of offerings for Business Development Executives.
Sales Enablement	Easy access to alliance & sales enablement resources (information, relevant news, tools, etc.) joint solution plays, use cases, unique value props, and case studies, partner & company roadmaps, product & service diagrams.
Content Library	A content library where you can classify and keep assets organized at one place that can align to one or more programs.
Joint Account Planning	Nominate, accept and execute on Joint Account Plans. Ability to automate and connect joint opportunities to joint accounts so that you can measure success.
Pricing	Handle requests for discounts, incentives and rebates based on sales motion e.g. inbound co-sell can receive an incentive while an outbound from you does not need a partner incentive.
Deal Support	Sales & technical deal support: Resources available & workflows: Alliance Market Development Funds (MDF) Alliance & company support contacts, Alliance tools & resources for deal, demos, technical pre-sales support, Proof of Concepts (POCs), migration landing pads.
Marketplaces	Register, configure, and upload solutions to alliance marketplaces.

Features Assessment Criteria Checklist

Joint Marketing	Manage co-marketing programs with shared plans and activities, for joint execution. Collect and distribute leads fairly with partners.
Joint Marketing Plan	Host joint marketing content and manage a marketing plan with activities.
Activities	Visibility to marketing activities: Events, tactics, campaigns, digital marketing.
Repository	Marketing asset repository for bringing visibility to marketing & partnership collateral: Presentations, customer templates (emails), solution briefs, whitepapers, etc.
Client References	Client reference workflow and management: Tag accounts as a joint reference and add a relevant contact. Each Partner Plan can keep a goal vs actual of successful reference accounts.
Joint Sales	Co-sell in joint accounts, share and receive referrals and opportunities connected to multiple partner's CRM and track KPIs.
Lead Pass	Bi-direction flow of leads between partners. Leads have a workflow to accept and mature into joint opportunities. Also, leads generated by mutual marketing activities done by agencies / partner or marketplace leads can be uploaded / sent via API to the company using APIs.
Deal Registration	Automated co-sell registration from your CRM to leading hyperscaler programs like Microsoft Partner Center, AWS ACE and Google Partner Advantage. Co-sell integration to others such as SAP, Cisco, HPE and Citrix.
Sales Performance Reporting	One view from systems of A&P performance - deal progression, pipeline, signings, revenue from alliances and service partners, growth, renewals, performance against targets. Dashboards for leadership, regions, partnerships, line of business, verticals. The performance reports can be shared with partners for Quarterly Business Reviews. The data should be able to be exported to other enterprise BI tools or data lakes for deeper analysis.
Management	Monitor partnership resourcing & compliance with agreed partnership terms and priorities
Partner Management System	Relationship management system - Collaboration to manage relationships, cadences, etc. link to agreement, etc., one view of all partner health (KPIs from agreements and business plans), communications with partner.
Future Opportunities	Identify future opportunities for partnership & additional use cases (e.g. new solutions, sales plays) by tracking new solution nominations, new account or opportunity nominations (also called pre-pipeline).
Financial Management	One view of alliance payments and revenue such as payment files, tracking revenue, rebates and discounts. Analyze & maximize profit.

Features Assessment Criteria Checklist

Payments from Partners	Manage requests for discounts, incentives and rebates received from partners to track across sales, marketing and solution development initiatives.
Payments to Partners	Fees, accounts billing/ procurement spend for: 1) resell to joint customers; 2) use in managed services contracts; 3) internal use
Participation	Manage program membership of partner programs your company participates in
Access and Administration	Create user accounts, user admin and access controls. Federate identity for company and partner users from partner users own SSO for a strong security posture.
Program Status	Create and manage program tiers, credentials, specializations, competencies, etc.
Track Requirements	Track program requirements: fees, authorizations, etc.
Track Benefits	Track program benefits, administration, disbursements, reconciliations.
Track Funds Programs & Workflows	Track vendor funding programs, eligible funds and utilization to maximize the amount of funds received and simplify reimbursement process.

Vendor Competency Assessment Checklist

Experience	Ask for a review and a brief history of the company's years in business.
Customers	Request a list of key customers and contact information for endorsers.
Training & Development	Review the system the vendor has in place for staff training and development and any initiatives.
Key Personnel	Meet with the people who will be involved with your account.
Recruitment	Learn how people earn key positions and understand the hiring criteria.

Vendor Capacity Assessment Checklist

Current and Future Orders	Gather information to determine total capacity; determine if there is sufficient capacity to meet your current and future requirements.
Operational Statistics	Check statistics that provide evidence concerning quality problems or service levels. This type of data is easy to acquire when the vendor or supplier has ISO accreditation.
Resources	Ensure that the necessary systems and procedures are in place to support good quality and high levels of service.

Vendor Consistency Assessment Checklist

Consistent Quality and Service Levels	Determine if the vendor will be able to deliver high levels of quality and service throughout the life of the contract. One indicator of customer focus is whether the vendor has a dedicated account manager or team of experts who can answer questions or service needs.
Statistical Process Control (SPC)	SPC measures the quality of the product, identifies trends to slip outside tolerance limits, and takes corrective action before a problem occurs in order to enhance quality and contain costs.

Vendor Commitment to Quality Assessment Checklist

Item or Service	Ask for reviews and endorsements from customers or independent sources regarding the quality of the item or service.
Quality Management	Look into quality processes that the vendor employs, such as total quality management (TQM) or quality control measures that quantify the standard of output.
Standards Compliance	When it is essential to your business, verify that potential partners adhere to standards relevant to their business (and yours). Standards may be related to product quality, compliance with regulations like the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS), the HIPAA standards for healthcare information, and the California Electronic Communications Privacy Act (Cal ECPA) may also be relevant to your business.
Continuous Improvement	Check for organizational culture and corporate value that focus on continuously achieving and improving quality.

Costing

Price	Price quotes should reflect quality, service, and industry competition. Engage the assistance of your purchasing or legal department to wade through the fine print and confirm that you understand all the pricing components.
Full Cost Analysis	Ensure that your vendor or partner has a well-run business based on variable costs, fixed costs or overhead, profit margins, and the break-even point.

Communication

Appropriate Channels of Communication	Ensure that the vendor can attend regular meetings, Skype events, or teleconferences.
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Culture

Values	A healthy relationship can foster a long-term and sustainable partnership that adds value to both parties.
Understanding Business Drivers	A partner or a vendor should understand what impacts your business, from the competitive environment to the latest innovations.

Consult your CIO office

In the SaaS space, features and functionality are important, but unlike a COTS (commercial off-the-shelf) product, with SaaS you are outsourcing some part of your security, innovation, uptime and support. That kind of relationship requires a much different assessment than the old ‘I’m going to buy the software, install it, support it all myself’ approach.

Consult your CIO office to look under the hood to understand if it is really a SaaS product. Learn whether the solution is one platform developed on one code line or if it is a bunch of on-premises solutions that, while hosted in the cloud, are integrated behind the scenes with a user interface on top.

SaaS providers can release frequent updates. As a customer, you have a real opportunity to influence the product roadmap and contribute to making it better in the long run. This collaboration is very important to make the product more user friendly.

You need a clear understanding of how the vendor manages ongoing updates. Do they have knowledgeable strategic people who can help you get to the next phase of your own strategy? Does the software company have the right people or partners who are going to help you longer term? When you purchase an enterprise SaaS, you need a partner to help you continually improve and leverage all the new features that are coming out. Is this vendor up to that challenge?

Tips to Improve the Vendor Assessment Process

The vendor assessment process centers on clarity and a time-based, four-phase approach: prepare (lay the groundwork); discover (perform due diligence); evaluate (perform a vendor comparison); and select (make decisions and sign contracts). Below are two key best practices to keep in mind when assessing vendors.

Assign Responsibility

Decide who in your company is responsible for the assessment. It’s often an employee in the purchasing department, but for high-dollar or complex situations, you may work with a consultant or a business analyst. The consultant takes over some of the time-consuming aspects of the process, including research, writing the request for proposal (RFP), and performing an in-depth financial analysis that may not be available in-house.

Set Up a Timeframe

Without a timeframe and process, getting to the final selection and hiring process can take a lot of time. A good rule of thumb is to decide a maximum time frame to complete the process.

Start Evaluating

You can apply these criteria to potential vendors, as well as use them to evaluate and rate current vendors. Select the top vendors, compare their qualifications, and review with stakeholders, legal, and business analysts.

[Download Vendor and Solution Assessment Criteria Checklist](#) to start evaluating Ecosystem Business Management Solutions and vendors.

VENDOR AND SUPPLIER ASSESSMENT

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Scores Available from 1-5. Basis for scoring must be listed with specific examples.

*Prior to use, update criteria as needed to be consistent with RFP.

	VENDOR 1	VENDOR 2	VENDOR 3	BASIS FOR SCORE
1. Competency				
Experience: Review				
Customers: A list of				
Training & Development: Staff training and development				
Key Personnel: Meet with key personnel				
Recruitment: Learning hiring criteria				
2. Capacity				
Current and Future: Determine if there is capacity				
Operational Statistics: Quality problems on the vendor or supplier				
Resources: Ensure it to support good quality				
3. Consistency				
Consistent Quality: to deliver high levels of contract. One individual dedicated account in service needs.				

SOLUTION SCORECARD

CAPABILITIES CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Scores Available from 1-5. Basis for scoring must be listed with specific examples.

*Prior to use, update criteria as needed to be consistent with RFP. Update basis for yes to have qualitative scoring details.

	VENDOR 1	VENDOR 2	VENDOR 3	BASIS FOR SCORE
1. Partner Onboarding				
Does the solution support collaborate across different				
2. Partnering Model				
Does the solution support Selling, Co-Marketing				
Co-Sell: Planning, opportunity Allows bi-directional relationship				
Co-Market: Plan and the funnel as needed. Timely, error-free and				
Co-Invest: Manage in partners in either direction				
Co-Innovate: Manage packaging, and launch				
Repository: Agreement Repository				
Business Plan: Business plan prioritize, approve, implement investments, solution development				
Capture & Track Outputs: Capture track and measure performance				
Implement: Implement global				
3. Joint Funds				

SOLUTION SCORECARD

FEATURES CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Scores Available from 1-5. Basis for scoring must be listed with specific examples.

*Prior to use, update criteria as needed to be consistent with RFP. Update basis for yes to have qualitative scoring details.

	VENDOR 1	VENDOR 2	VENDOR 3	BASIS FOR SCORE
1. Select - Select Companies to Partner With				
Identify: Identify potential (do not engage, etc.)				
Log Requests: Log inbound (do not engage, etc.)				
Assign Owners: Assign owners				
Explore: View history and template repositories to use				
Assess: Business and technical				
2. Activate - Sign agreement				
Agreements: Supports build review, sign, and manage (o				
Repository: Agreement Repository				
Business Plan: Business plan prioritize, approve, implement investments, solution development				
Capture & Track Outputs: Capture track and measure performance				
Implement: Implement global				
3. Joint Funds				

VENDOR EVALUATION

Make a copy of this sheet, in case of more than one vendor.

VENDOR NAME		CONTRACT REFERENCE NUMBER		
CONTRACT DESCRIPTION		TIME PERIOD COVERED		
EVALUATING PARTY NAME		DATE EVALUATION COMPLETED		
EVALUATION CATEGORY	PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS	SCORE	CORRECTIVE ACTION DESCRIPTION - IF NECESSARY -	ADDITIONAL INFO
ADMINISTRATION	Required documentation / reports submitted	5		
	Invoices submitted on time	4		
	Invoice accuracy	3		
	Contract completed on budget	2		
	Competitive change order pricing provided	1		
	Financial aspects monitored and tracked	0		
		N/A		
ADMINISTRATION TOTAL SCORE		15		
	Deliverable completed to quality standards			
	Adhered to specifications of contract			
	Demonstrated flexibility			
	Provided innovative input			
	Substantiated change orders			

ABOUT WORKSPAN

WorkSpan is the #1 co-sell management network that empowers companies to turbocharge and scale their co-sell revenue growth. Partnership and Sales teams use WorkSpan's secure SaaS solution to collaborate with partners on deals, exchange co-sell referrals from inside their CRM, manage shared pipeline, and track performance on a live dashboard.

As the industry's leader in Ecosystem Business Management, we power the top 10 business ecosystems in the technology and communications industry today, managing over \$50 billion in joint pipeline, 6x faster speed to market for joint solutions, and 2x partner manager productivity. Customers include Microsoft, Cisco, SAP, VMware, HPE, Accenture, Ericsson, Citrix, Red Hat, and others.