

TOP 10 CHALLENGES

Partnership Leaders Faced in 2024 & Actionable Paths Forward

Introduction

As part of the GTM10 nomination process, Cello conducted over 50 semi-structured interviews with partnerships professionals from Big Tech giants, high-growth scale-ups, and GTM influencers. Based on these GTM10 interviews, Cello's research reveals the ten biggest challenges partnerships teams faced in 2024.

By aligning your priorities with GTM10 honorees' proven playbooks, you can transform past hurdles into growth engines:

Core Challenges:

Ranging from measurement & ROI accountability and scaling programs to managing diverse partner ecosystems and adapting to AI-driven inflection—each directly impacts partner-sourced pipeline, revenue contribution, and ecosystem health.

Actionable Playbooks:

Concrete tactics—quota frameworks, organizational designs, and strategic tech investments—that top performers have applied.

Next Steps

A concise three-point roadmap to benchmark your current state, prioritize high-impact initiatives, and set success metrics for continuous progress.

Insights from the Front Line

“Conducting in-depth stakeholder interviews to uncover the metrics that matter—and launching a unified KPI dashboard—doubled our partner-sourced pipeline.”

“By deploying a self-service partner portal with templated governance and incentive guidelines, we eliminated onboarding roadblocks and unlocked scalable growth.”

— GTM10 Interviewees

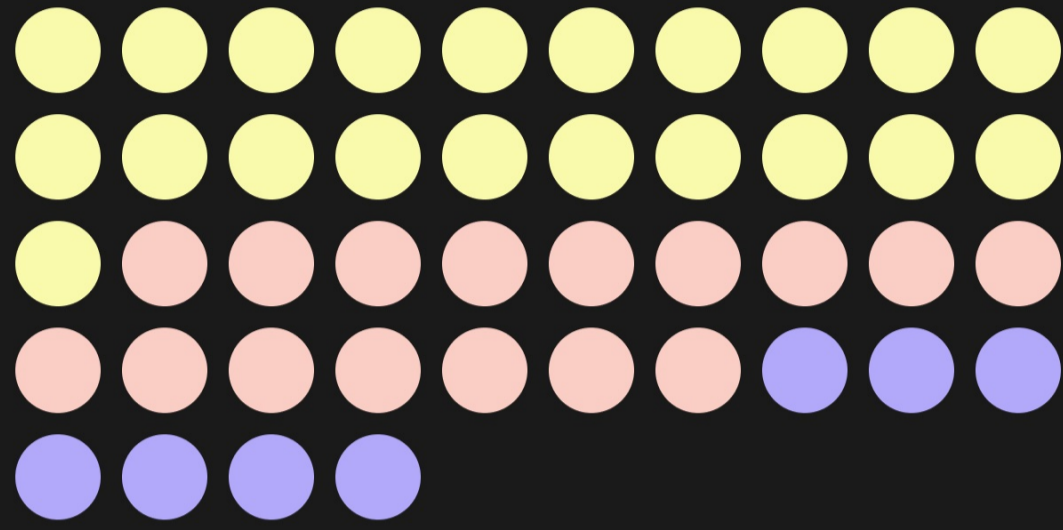
Top Challenges Overview

RANK	CHALLENGE	PREVALENCE	BUSINESS IMPACT
01	SCALING PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES	VERY HIGH	HIGH
02	RAPID MARKET DYNAMICS & AI-DRIVEN INFLECTION	VERY HIGH	MEDIUM
03	LAUNCHING NEW GTM & PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS	HIGH	HIGH
04	TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION & COMPLEXITY	HIGH	MEDIUM
05	COMPETITIVE PRESSURES & MARKET SATURATION	HIGH	MEDIUM
06	INTERNAL ALIGNMENT & EXECUTIVE BUY-IN	MODERATE	HIGH
07	ECOSYSTEM & PARTNER DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT	MODERATE	HIGH
08	RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS & LEAN RESOURCING	MODERATE	MEDIUM
09	PARTNER ENGAGEMENT & UTILISATION	MODERATE	MEDIUM
10	MEASUREMENT & ROI ACCOUNTABILITY	MODERATE	CRITICAL

The GTM10 Awards in Numbers

806

TOTAL NOMINATIONS



386

STARTUP/SCALE UP

276

BIG TECH

144

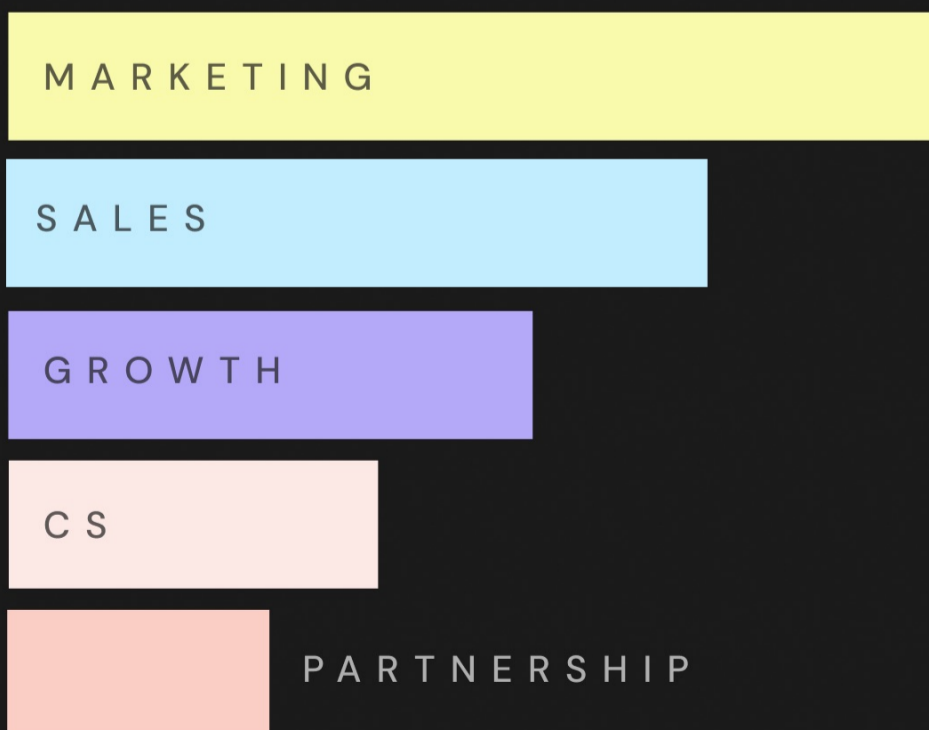
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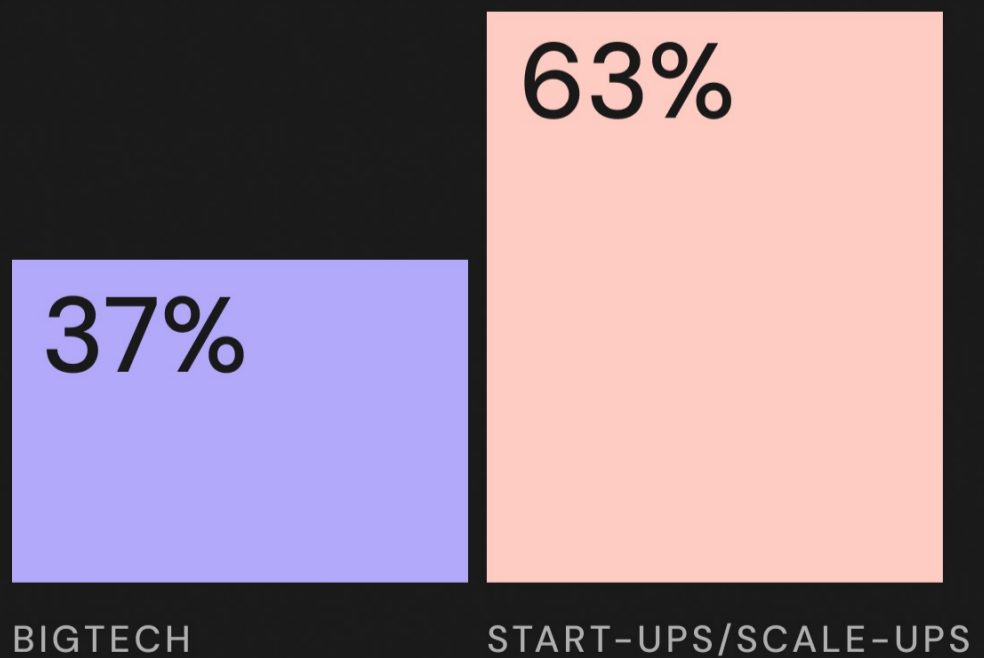
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COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

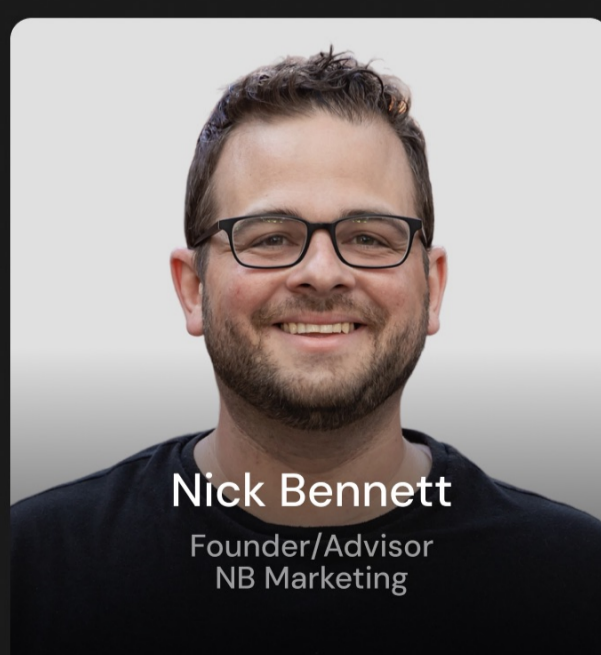
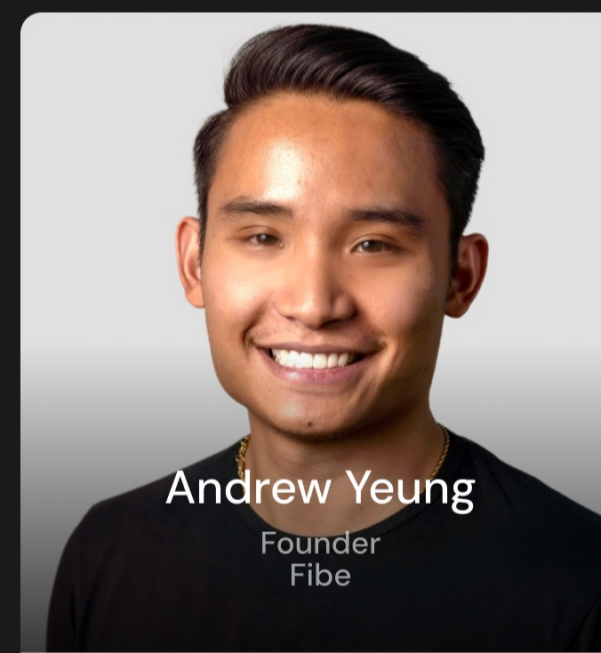
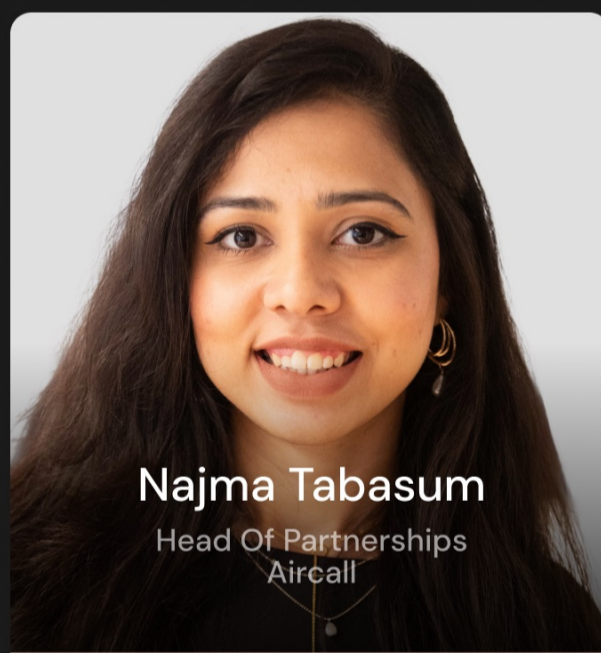
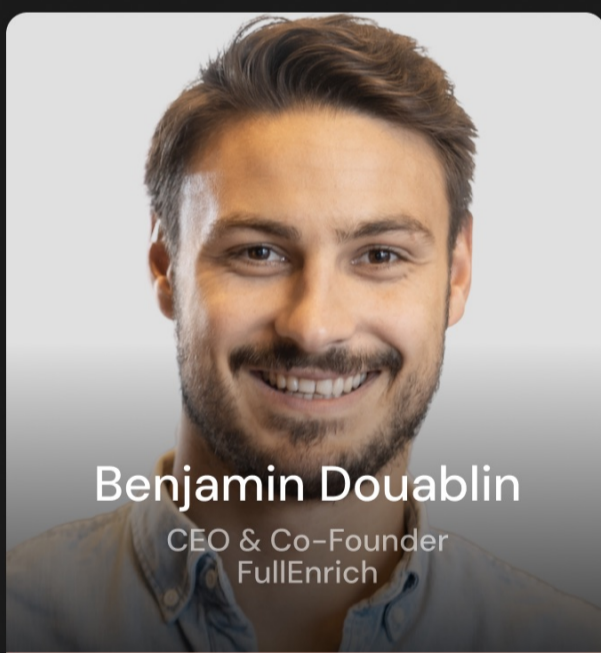
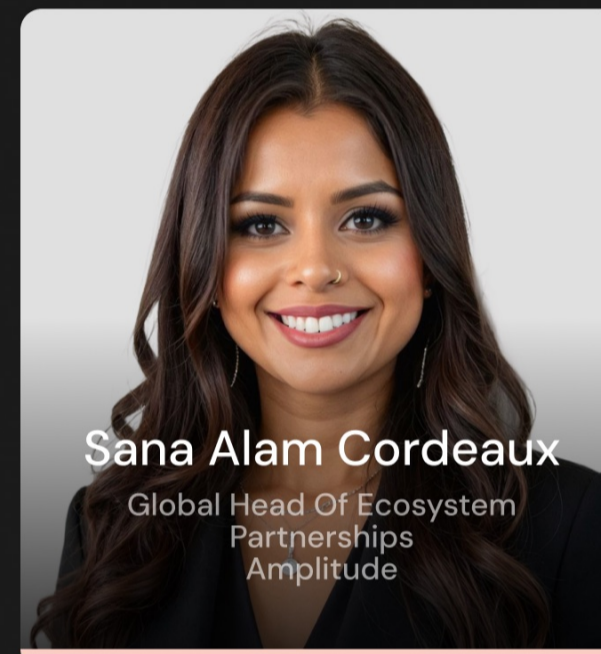
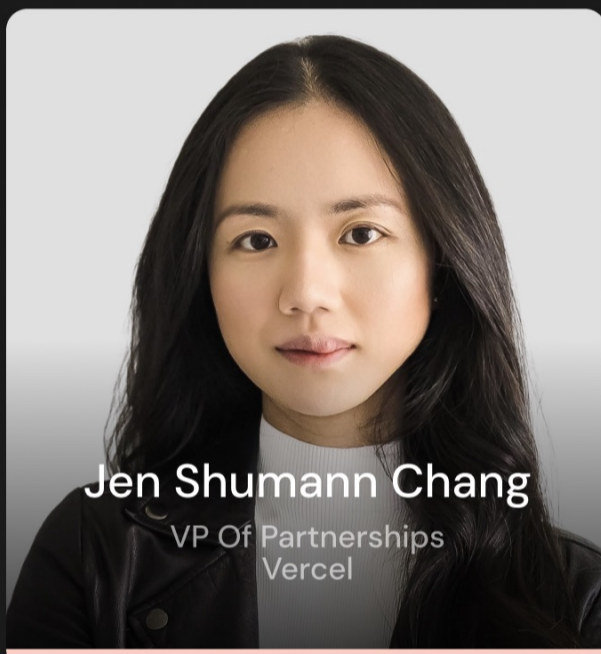
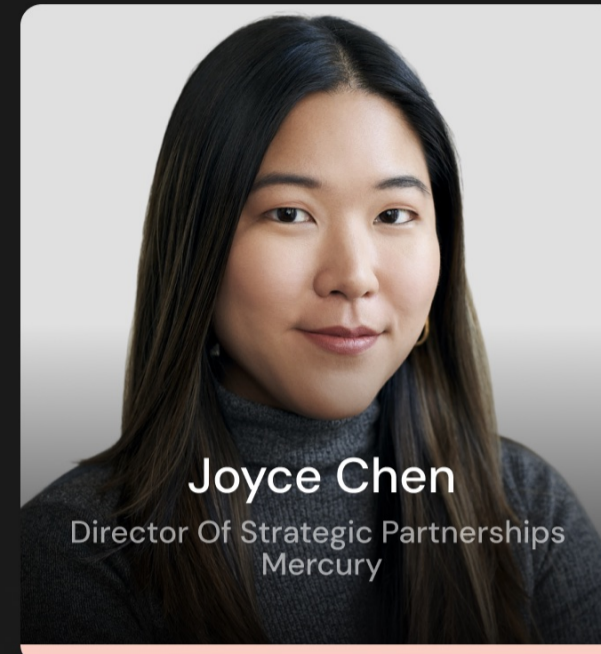
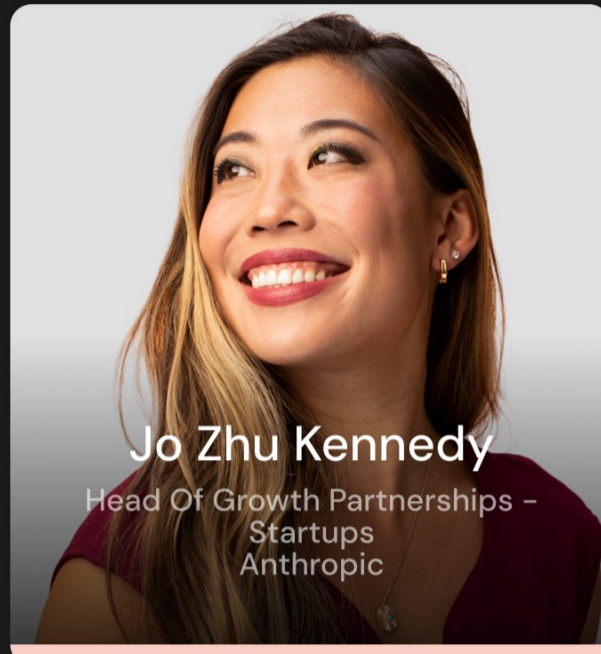
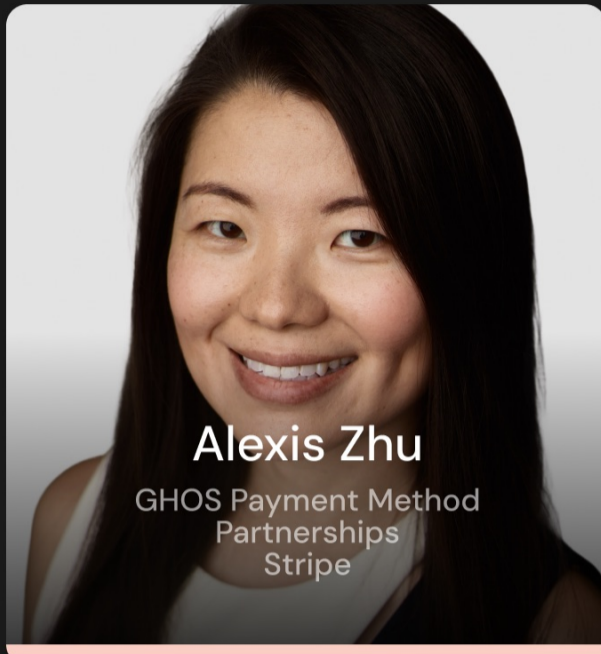
Most competitive category



Startups vs. BigTech



Meet the Partnership Winners



The Partnership Jury



David Parry-Jones

CRO • DEEPL

David Parry-Jones is CRO at DeepL; a 30-year enterprise software veteran, ex-Twilio, VMware, and Microsoft, with deep expertise in global expansion.



Jacqueline De Gernier

SVP • GWI

Jacqueline de Gernier is SVP & Global Head of New Business at GWI; she's a former sales leader at Twilio and DocuSign and a DEI advocate



Ollie George

HEAD OF EXECUTIVE TALENT • SEQUOIA

Ollie George is a Principal at Sequoia focused on executive talent; he previously recruited for Google Cloud and mentors UK university startups through Kickstart Global.



Javier Ortega Estrada

CRO • VIMEO

Javier Ortega Estrada is CRO at Vimeo; he previously scaled Dropbox from \$200 M to \$1.8 B and focuses on customer experience and GTM execution.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

1. Scaling Programs & Initiatives

The Challenge

Early partner wins rarely replicate at global scale without undue operational drag.

- Performance nosedives when programs expand into new geographies with unique compliance needs.
- Fragmented execution breeds uneven partner experiences.
- Momentum fades post-launch if infrastructure and staffing lag expansion velocity.

Playbook

- **Global Playbook, Local Guard-Rails:** Centralise core assets while inserting region-specific compliance checkpoints.
- **Tiered Segmentation:** Match enablement and MDF to partner potential, not headcount.
- **Quarterly Scaling Sprints:** Time-boxed, cross-functional pushes that harden ops and tooling before the next region rolls live.

Expected Impact

Respondents scaling with this formula kept win-rates flat while adding 3–4 new regions with no additional FTEs.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

2. Rapid Market Dynamics & AI-Driven Inflection

The Challenge

Generative AI and post-COVID shifts reset buyer expectations quarterly.

- Hard to keep pace without derailing core ops.
- GTM playbooks age quickly.
- Uncertainty freezes budgets.

Playbook

- **AI Partner Labs:** Quarterly hackathons co-creating new use-cases.
- **Gen-AI Demand Gen:** Automate personalised content streams for scale.
- **AI Governance Council:** Weigh risk vs. reward and codify best practice.

Expected Impact

Companies that formalised AI labs accelerated pipeline velocity by 22 % YoY while maintaining governance compliance.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

3. Launching New GTM & Partnership Programs

The Challenge

Zero-to-one channel builds juggle strategy, tooling, and partner recruitment simultaneously.

- No accepted blueprint for incentives, governance, or onboarding.
- Need immediate “quick wins” while laying long-term architecture.
- Scrappy teams often write enablement from scratch under tight timelines.

Playbook

- **Self-Service Partner Portal:** Pre-templated contracts, enablement, and incentive guidelines slash onboarding from weeks to days.
- **Modular Enablement Toolkit:** Mix-and-match content libraries, live webinars, and AI-curated playbooks.
- **Pilot-First Rollout:** 90-day beta with rapid-feedback loops before global GA.

Expected Impact

Pilot cohorts achieved sub-30-day onboarding and produced qualified pipeline inside the first 60 days.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

4. Technology Integration & Complexity

The Challenge

Disparate portals, CRMs, and marketing tools fracture data integrity.

- APIs and legacy systems hamper sync.
- Feature-rich integrations often intimidate smaller partners.
- Data hygiene suffers, eroding trust in reports.

Playbook

- **Unified Partner Hub:** Real-time data sync and auto-provisioned partner profiles.
- **Integration Roadmap:** Prioritise workflows that unblock revenue first.
- **Data-Governance Charter:** Enforce standards for naming, deduplication, and privacy.

Expected Impact

Interview data shows 60 % reduction in manual data-entry errors and days-faster deal registration.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

5. Competitive Pressures & Market Saturation

Challenge

Buyers and investors face fatigue in overcrowded categories.

- Differentiation on features alone stalls.
- Attention spans shorten; deal cycles lengthen.
- Incumbent ecosystems dominate mindshare.

Playbook

- **Exclusive Integrations:** Secure one-of-a-kind joint offerings in niche verticals.
- **Niche Solution Bundles:** Bundle partner tech with services to attack white-space.
- **Co-Branded Thought Leadership:** High-signal content that slices through noise.

Expected Impact

Participants reported +15 % lift in win-rate when an exclusive bundle was on the table.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

6. Internal Alignment & Executive Buy-In

The Challenge

Without C-suite advocacy, partnerships remain an afterthought.

- Budget and headcount battles favour core product or sales.
- Revenue teams juggle conflicting priorities.
- Partner metrics often fail to translate into board-level language.

Playbook

- **Monthly GTM Council:** CRO-, CMO-, and CFO-level forum that vets partnership OKRs.
- **Executive-Ready Briefing Decks:** Map partner KPIs directly to corporate strategic goals.
- **Steering Committee:** Cross-department squad that unblocks escalations in <72 h.

Expected Impact

Examples show 30 % faster budget approvals and materially higher CSAT among internal stakeholders.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

7. Ecosystem & Partner Diversity Management

Challenge

Tech alliances, agencies, affiliates, and VARs each demand bespoke motions.

- Engagement cadences fracture across partner types.
- Brand consistency erodes across sprawling networks.
- Channel conflict flares without clear swim-lanes.

Playbook

- **Segment-Specific Tracks:** Distinct comms, incentives, and certifications for each archetype.
- **Partner Community Forum:** Shared best-practice hub that reinforces brand voice.
- **Conflict-Resolution Protocols:** Pre-agreed escalation paths and deal-registration rules.

Expected Impact

Programs citing this approach cut partner churn by 25 % while boosting NPS across all tiers.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

8. Resource Constraints & Lean Resourcing

The Challenge

Small teams are tasked with enterprise-grade outcomes.

- Bootstrapped GTM targets despite minimal regional boots-on-ground.
- Every initiative competes for the same two headcount slots.
- Burnout looms as priorities stack up.

Playbook

- **Lean-Team Framework:** Reusable playbooks and AI automation keep output linear.
- **Build vs. Buy Calculator:** Quantifies ROI of in-house tools vs. vendor spend.
- **Prioritisation Matrix:** Ruthlessly ranks projects by impact-to-effort.

Expected Impact

A team following this approach delivered 7-figure deals across EMEA with <5 FTEs and held burnout scores below industry norm.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

9. Partner Engagement & Utilisation

The Challenge

Signed partners \neq revenue-producing partners.

- Activation stalls; many accounts go dark after contracting.
- Co-sell/co-market engagement rates stay below 20 %.
- Output varies wildly between similar-tier partners.

Playbook

- **Gamified Tiered Activation:** Points, badges, and MDF unlocked at usage milestones.
- **Hands-On Workshops:** Joint solution labs that sharpen use-case clarity.
- **Partner Success Desk:** Dedicated CSM-style support for top-potential accounts.

Expected Impact

Organisations using gamified activation lifted active partner ratio from 40 %
→ 70 % within two quarters.

Challenges & Actionable Steps

10. Measurement & ROI Accountability

The Challenge

Stakeholders insist on irrefutable proof that partner programs generate pipeline and revenue.

- Disconnected data makes it hard to correlate partner touches to closed-won deals.
- Multi-touch attribution is murky, so marketing credit is routinely disputed.
- Budget approvals stall when partnership ROI cannot be benchmarked against other channels.

Playbook

- **Unified KPI Dashboard:** Roll up partner activity, sourced pipeline, and revenue in a single view consumed weekly by GTM leadership.
- **Standardised Attribution Model:** Align sales, marketing, and finance on definitions of influenced vs. sourced to stop “credit tug-of-war.”
- **Quarterly Metric Reviews:** Re-score each KPI every quarter, retiring vanity metrics and doubling-down on revenue-correlated ones.

Expected Impact

Interviewees that adopted the dashboard framework reported 2x partner-sourced pipeline and faster budget sign-off cycles.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The ten challenges outlined here represent the shared battleground for partnership leaders in 2024, regardless of company size. By adopting these playbooks—ranging from unified dashboards to AI-powered partner labs—teams can turn today's obstacles into tomorrow's competitive advantages.

Next Steps for Your Team

Benchmark

Map your organization against each challenge area to identify strengths and gaps.

Prioritize

Select one "quick win" and one "strategic shift" to tackle in the next quarter.

Measure & Iterate

Establish clear KPIs, review progress quarterly, and refine your playbooks based on results.

Prepared by the GTM10 Awards Research team at Cello.

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