

The partner nobody could see, and what changes when Adobe can.

Sandbox pilot · real data · Oct 2026

FOR DISCUSSION

* Figures marked with a star have been altered by a percentage to protect Ensemble's confidential data. With Ensemble's approval, we can share the real numbers.

BEGINNING

21 years of partner work that Adobe can't see

THE HERO

The partner

Ensemble, Code and Theory, Slalom, and the huge set of unmanaged partners doing real Adobe work. Ensemble alone has 3,160 opportunities across 1,096 customer accounts since 2005.*

THE VILLAIN

The blind spot

Real work sitting in spreadsheets and CRMs that no vendor can see or verify. The answer so far: another portal per vendor. Partner managers back the loudest partners, AEs get cold pitches, registrations lapse, and unmanaged partners never register their first deal. Below: Ensemble, one of Adobe's strongest partners, as Adobe sees it today.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU AND YOUR TEAM

- **Registration and proof** of involvement and investment
- The relationship has to **feel good for the partner**
- A huge set of **unmanaged partners** need help to **register their first deal**

1,050+*

customer relationships
Adobe can't verify
self-reported, none with proof

112 of 138*

Adobe registrations likely expired
registered since 2018, then forgotten

32*

open deals past their close date
5 sellers; some 2+ years overdue

925*

accounts gone cold
last work 5+ years ago, unnoticed

Partners rarely leave a vendor. **They just stop investing in it.**

MIDDLE

One account, four people, no blind spot

1 PARTNER

History becomes a credential, shared on the partner's terms

Hot / Warm currency on a credibility ladder. Nothing is shared until the alliance manager decides.

2 ADOBE

The partner manager sees who really did the work

"My book" shows the best partner on every account, by real currency. Unmanaged partners appear too, from public evidence, and can be invited to a first deal.

3 ADOBE PARTNER

They ask Ensemble about Whirlpool, and Ensemble answers

One click asks for the intro. The alliance manager accepts and assigns the right seller.

4 PARTNER

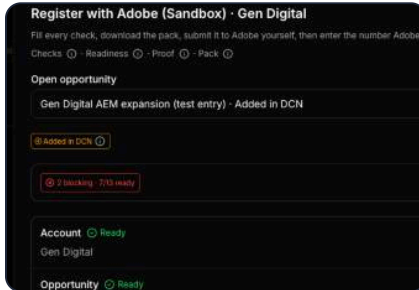
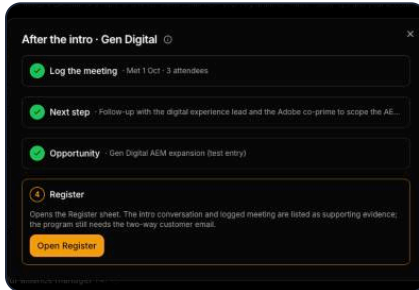
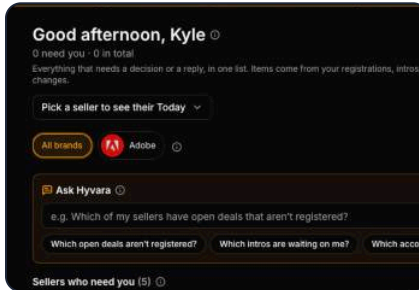
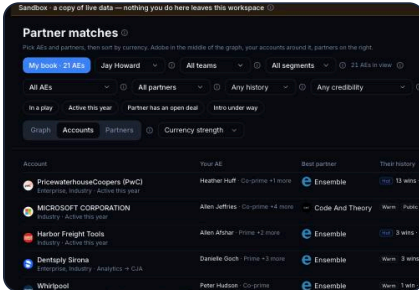
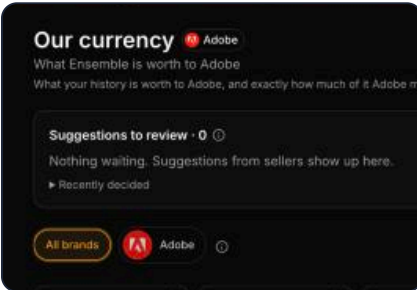
It lands on the seller's to-do list

"Adobe asked for an intro; assigned to you", with the AE and history. Then they're walked from meeting to registration.

ADOBE AE

The registration arrives filled in, with proof

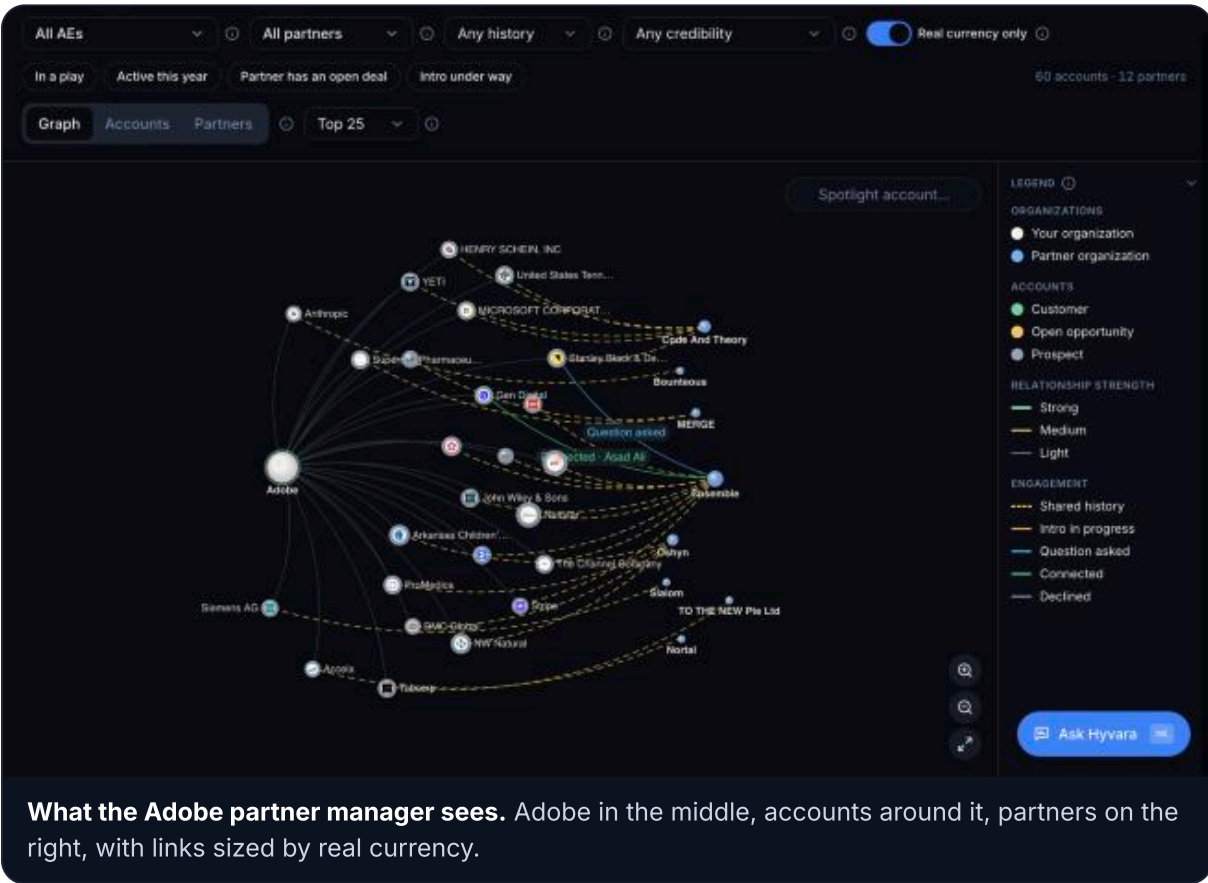
Every field marked Ready or Needed, the AE taken from the intro, and a proof page with no login.



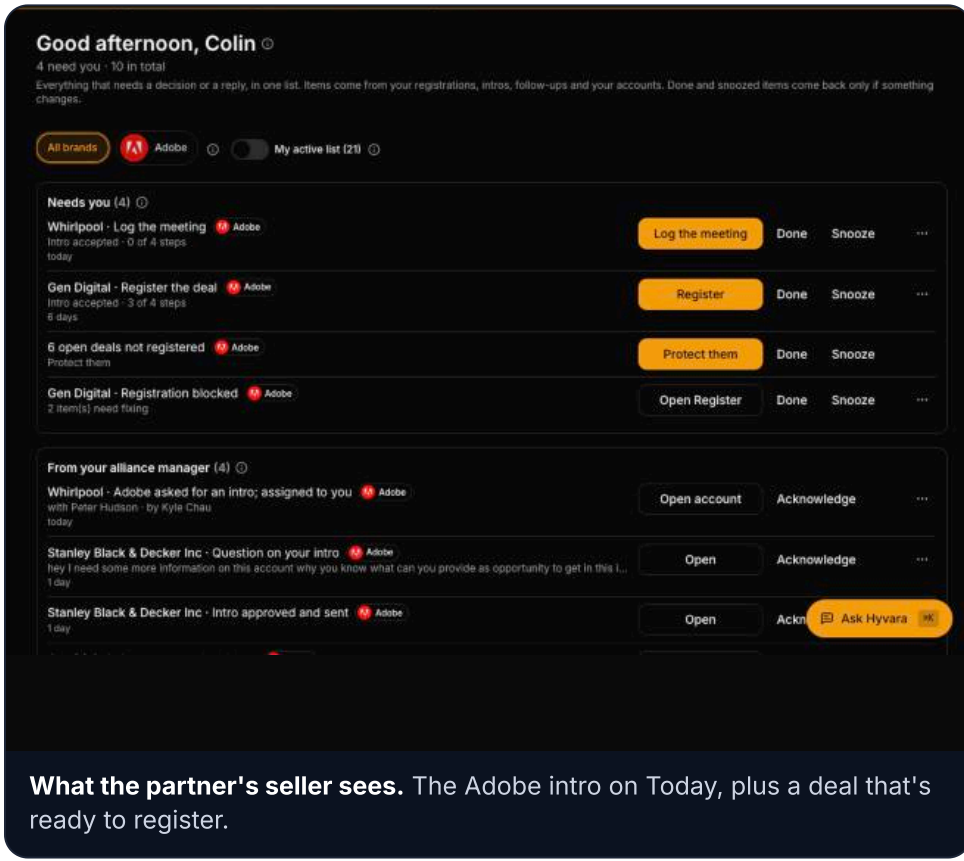
We don't want anyone to know we work with [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Those relationships are ours, and they stay completely confidential. DCN keeps them out of everything Adobe sees, even the counts, and we share the rest on our terms.

The concern we heard from Ensemble (paraphrased), and what we built in response

NEVER DISCLOSE: CUSTOMER NAMES REMOVED FROM EVERYTHING THE BRAND SEES



What the Adobe partner manager sees. Adobe in the middle, accounts around it, partners on the right, with links sized by real currency.



What the partner's seller sees. The Adobe intro on Today, plus a deal that's ready to register.

END Experiences change attitudes, and attitudes change results

EXPERIENCES What the partner lives with Adobe - History becomes a credential - The partner decides what Adobe sees - Adobe's asks arrive assigned, on Today - Registration pre-filled, with proof - One tool for the whole business	→ ATTITUDES How the partner feels about Adobe "Adobe sees our work." "We stay in control of our data." "Doing business with Adobe is seamless." "Adobe invested in technology that runs our entire business."	→ BEHAVIORS What partners do differently - Share their history with Adobe - Answer Adobe's asks the same day - Register on time, with proof - Bring Adobe in first - Advocate for Adobe to other organizations	→ RESULTS What Adobe gets - More registered, partner-influenced pipeline - The right partner on the right account - Unmanaged partners registering their first deal - Partners who advertise the Adobe experience
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MEASURE WHAT MATTERS (CAPTURED TODAY) · EXPERIENCES Time to answer an intro · time to register · registrations with proof	ATTITUDES Partner advocacy rate · trust (share of history shared)	BEHAVIORS Intros accepted · on-time registration · partners bringing Adobe in first	RESULTS Partner-influenced pipeline · partner churn · partner investment in Adobe · advocacy
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The quarter nobody talks about: Q4 upside goes cold, and Q1 starts from zero

Adobe's Q4 is happening now

Q4 · ADOBE: SEP-NOV
AEs close what's in commit and pull edge-of-forecast deals into commit. **Upside deals are parked.** No one has time for them.

YEAR END · FY27 STARTS IN DECEMBER
Territories and accounts are reshuffled. A deal that carries over typically gets about 30 days, with commission but no quota relief, so **no one owns it.**

Q1 · THE BOTTOM OF THE HOCKEY STICK
New AE, new relationship, the customer starts over. **Q1 is the hardest quarter of the year**, and slipped deals go cold.

THE PARTNER FIX
In Q4, Adobe's partner managers bring partners onto **upside deals and deals likely to slip**. The partner keeps the customer relationship through the reshuffle; the new AE inherits a warm deal with the partner's history and proof attached. **Q1 starts with momentum, not from zero.** Built: the partner manager's workspace now shows Adobe's own upside and likely-to-slip deals on each account, with the best partner to bring in and a ready-made ask (shown on sample data in the sandbox).

Adobe's fiscal year ends on the Friday closest to 30 November (Adobe 10-K). The year-end pattern is drawn from our team's years running sales and pre-sales at Adobe, Oracle and Snowflake. There's no public benchmark for it, which is part of the problem.

The math: A – B = C, on Adobe's own numbers

ATTITUDES Partner advocacy % promoters – % detractors = partner NPS "How likely are you to recommend partnering with Adobe?"	BEHAVIORS Registration leakage made – still valid = lapsed Ensemble today: 138 – 26 = 112 lapsed *	RESULTS Partner lift win rate with – without = lift Measured in the pilot; illustrative +50% below
RESULTS Partner churn active at start – active at end = lost DCN flags partners lost or at risk, with reasons	RESULTS Partner investment Adobe-active sellers now – last qtr = net Coming in the pilot: are partners leaning in or pulling back?	RESULTS Program ROI (value – cost) ÷ cost = ROI Value = extra wins + registrations recovered + partners retained

~70%

of global IT spend is partner-delivered

Canalys forecast for 2025

30 Nov

Adobe's fiscal year ends on the Friday closest to it, so Q4 is now and FY27 accounts land in December

Adobe Form 10-K

28% vs 18%

of revenue from mature vs immature partner programs

Forrester for Impact, 2019

WORKED EXAMPLE · ILLUSTRATIVE ASSUMPTIONS, NOT ADOBE DATA

Partner-eligible opportunities	100
Average deal size	\$250,000
Win rate without a partner	20%
With the right partner (illustrative +50%)	30%
Extra wins: 100 × (30% – 20%)	10
Value: 10 × \$250,000	\$2.5M

Where it stands today

3,160* opportunities turned into currency Ensemble · 1,096 customer accounts · 2005–2026	312* Adobe accounts shared on Ensemble's terms The partner decides what Adobe sees	180 Adobe accounts with public partner evidence 14 partners, incl. Slalom (39) and Code and Theory (38)	20* accounts where Ensemble leads on real currency 48 wins · 10 open deals
Partner-first Adobe gives something back before it asks for data.	Unmanaged partners in Public evidence finds them; a pre-filled registration gets their first deal in.	Trust by design Private until shared; the partner decides.	Partners as advocates One tool for every vendor, and partners who tell the market about Adobe.

* Figures marked with a star have been altered by a percentage to protect Ensemble's confidential data; real numbers available with Ensemble's approval. Sources: Canalys 2025 IT spending forecast (via Channel Futures); Adobe Form 10-K (fiscal calendar); Forrester Consulting for Impact (2019). Data sources: Adobe account and AE data come from the Adobe account whitelist from Mike Neumann's organization. Partner data is Ensemble's own history, shared on its terms, plus public evidence of partner work gathered by PCE. Built and working in a sandbox on real data; the Whirlpool intro was run live on 7 October 2026.

DETAIL

For anyone who wants more

What the blind spot costs each person

WHO	TODAY	THE COST
The partner	Re-enters its history into a portal for every vendor; none stays current, registrations lapse	Invests in Adobe and can't prove it
Partner seller	Doesn't know which of Adobe's 548 AEs owns the account	Deals start late, without Adobe
Adobe partner manager	Backs the partners who speak up loudest	The best partner sits on the bench
Adobe AE	Gets cold pitches with claims no one can verify	Partners ignored; Adobe sells alone
Adobe	Registration feels like paperwork; proof is a burden	Partners quietly invest elsewhere

A day in the life: before and with DCN

WHO	BEFORE	WITH DCN
Alliance manager	Rebuilds a report for every vendor; doesn't know what Adobe sees	Decides what's shared, customer by customer; answers Adobe's asks in two clicks
Partner seller	Doesn't know the AE; registers late or not at all	Intros arrive on Today, assigned, with the AE and history; registration pre-filled
Adobe partner manager	Backs the loudest partner	Sees the best partner on every account, unmanaged partners included
Adobe AE	Cold pitches, no way to verify	Gets the partner's history and proof, with no new tool or login

A partner story in the making: Ensemble

Ensemble

Digital experience consultancy · history since 2005 · DCN pilot partner since September 2026

The experience builds trust

EXPERIENCES

- 21 years of history turned into currency, with no CRM project
- Decided customer by customer what Adobe sees
- Adobe's request for an intro at Whirlpool arrived on Today on 7 October

→

ATTITUDES

- "Those relationships are ours." Trust comes from staying in control of what Adobe sees (their concern, paraphrased; see page 1)
- Ensemble's own words to follow in our next update

→

BEHAVIORS

- Shared 312* accounts on Adobe's list with Adobe
- Accepted Adobe's request and assigned a seller the same day
- Seller has the intro and a registration ready on Today

→

RESULTS (EARLY)

- Leads on 20* accounts in the Adobe partner manager's view
- 48 wins and 10 open deals* now visible to Adobe
- Whirlpool intro in motion

Live in the sandbox today, since our last update

Built from what we heard from you and your team

Unmanaged partners: first deal The partner manager sees partners with public evidence on their accounts and invites them to a first deal. The partner confirms its evidence and lands on a pre-filled registration. Tested end to end: first deal submitted and approved.	Partner voice A one-question pulse right after the moments that matter (an intro answered, a registration decided), a quarterly partner NPS, and an asks board where partners post and vote on what would make partnering easier, with a "you said, we did" list.	Registration as proof, not paperwork The proof email is reviewed before a person sees it, competency is checked against the partner directory, and the brand gets a one-page decision brief, with "Ask for evidence" when something is missing.
Leadership view Five numbers against last quarter, by region; a Monday brief as a PDF; partners new, lost and at risk, with reasons; and every partner placed in Invest, Maintain, Develop or Watch.	Q4 upside, before the reshuffle Adobe's upside and likely-to-slip deals on the partner manager's workspace, with the best partner to bring in, so the relationship carries into the new year.	Trust, enforced Nothing is shared until the partner decides, a leader approves any move from private to shared, and never-disclose customers are removed from everything the brand sees, even the counts.

BUILT FOR EVERY VENDOR, NOT JUST ADOBE

Partners don't work with one vendor. A firm doing Adobe work is often doing Microsoft, Salesforce or AWS work too. If every vendor hands partners its own portal, partners end up with **five tools they never open**, and the data in all five goes stale.

DCN is **brand-agnostic by design**: the same screens for any brand, a partner's history captured once and shared per brand, on its terms. Adobe is the first brand configured. Partners keep the data current because it runs their whole practice, and that's what makes it trustworthy.

WHAT'S NEXT

We know the team was at an offsite last week. We'd love to hear what came out of it and whether this matches where you're heading.

We'll follow up with a short walkthrough video of the pieces above. If any part of this sparks a question or a "what if", we'd rather shape the next iteration around it than guess.

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