

We expected to show DCN to Sarah's technical arm. Instead we found the person holding the pen on Adobe's FY27 Partner Experience roadmap, a deadline, and an open invitation to help. This is the full picture: what we expected, what we found, what we did well, what we need to fix, and the opportunity in front of us.

21 September 2026. Kevin, Jon and Sumant Guha (Sr. Manager, Partner Engagement & Experience). Scheduled for 35 minutes, ran about 40. Sumant had a hard stop and lost his connection once. No demo was shown.

EXPECTATIONS VERSUS WHAT WE UNCOVERED

WHAT WE EXPECTED	WHAT WE FOUND
Sarah's technical arm, there to evaluate DCN after watching the videos.	The owner of the martech and data layer behind the PX Hub. Not the DCN buyer, and he said so: <i>"I may not be the right person to answer that."</i>
A demo. We reset the environment and built a run of show around Delta, BAE1 and PAE1.	A discovery conversation. He wanted to meet us and get guidance. The demo was never opened.
A full hour.	A hard stop at 35 minutes, which we learned about eight minutes in.
Interest in AE-to-partner matching and revenue.	A mandate built around engagement scoring, personalized partner journeys and next-best-action, focused on getting unmanaged partners to register a first deal.
End of October as a build deadline for an engine.	End of October as the date the FY27 roadmap and requirements need to be clear. He corrected this at the very end of the call.
Crossbeam as Sarah's problem, from the 9 September call.	Crossbeam owned by sales ops through Partner IQ, with heavy spend, poor adoption, and a simpler conversational UI now being built on top.
Ensemble as Kyle's connection.	Ensemble as Adobe's build partner on this stack: the Dynamics schema, Marketo and AEP audiences, and the Web SDK on the PX Hub. PwC is running a parallel six-week discovery.

THE OPPORTUNITY

"At this point of time, this is owned by the sales ops team, but I'm sure, as we move forward, it is going to be a common layer when it comes to the data."

SUMANT GUHA · THE SENTENCE THAT CONNECTS THE TWO HALVES

Adobe is writing the FY27 Partner Experience roadmap right now, and the requirements aren't locked. The person writing it asked us for guidance, has a team of three, and has no budget to spend in Q4. Free senior capacity from people who have run pre-sales orgs at Adobe, Oracle and Snowflake is the most useful thing anyone can offer him.

Our thesis is that the PX Hub and revenue generation aren't two opportunities. They're one data layer serving two objectives. Engagement data tells Adobe which partners are active. Currency and trust tell Adobe which partners are credible. Collaboration on a deal shows what a partner actually contributed. The Hub is where partners show up; the same foundation, extended to the AE and the deal, is where revenue shows up. Sumant built half of that sentence himself.

NOW PX Hub requirements Workshops and working concepts, no cost, before end of October. Earns trust and a seat in the design.	NEXT The common data layer Currency, trust and engagement shaped into one model the Hub and sales ops both draw on.	THEN Revenue, through sales ops DCN shown where it belongs, with the Delta attribution gap as the opener. The ask comes from Sarah.
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Why this is a better position than a demo would have given us. A demo to the wrong buyer ends with "interesting, let me take it back." Helping write the requirements puts our thinking inside the thing Adobe builds. When sales ops gets its session, we won't be pitching a second system. We'll be extending one they already helped shape.

WHAT WE DID WELL

Handed him the floor	"I want this to be your meeting, not my meeting," and later "what are the things you'd like to leave this call knowing?" That's what got him to name what he wanted: guidance.
The pivot	We read in real time that he wasn't the buyer and repositioned around what he does own. Jon's words afterwards: "you made a bad into a good." That's the most valuable thing that happened on the call.
Playback with permission to be wrong	"Here's my takeaway, tell me if I'm right or wrong." It invited correction and got one. That's how the October date got fixed.
Give-get, no cost	The right offer in a frozen Q4. We're not a line item on anyone's budget, and saying so plainly lowers the risk of saying yes.
Protecting him	NDA before any PRD, and "no one needs to get fired at Adobe." That builds trust with someone deciding how far to let us in.
Jon's question	Asking whether the work is in-house or outsourced was the right question. It surfaced Ensemble's actual scope and PwC's role.
Closing on clarifications	Re-asking the in-house question and letting him restate the timeline, even after he'd rejoined over time, stopped a misread from turning into a plan.
Concrete next steps	He owns three of them: talk to Sarah, schedule the walkthrough, and ask Sarah to reach sales ops. When the prospect owns the actions, that's a real next step.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO BETTER

1 Protect the first five minutes

Camera problems on a new Mac, hotel wifi, and the merge-audio experiment took the opening minutes of a 35-minute window. Test on the machine you'll use, on the network you'll use, before the call. If something is flaky, join audio only and move on.

2 Ask for the hard stop in the first minute

We learned about his 35 minutes after the small talk and before intros. Ask up front, then size intros to fit. Sixty seconds each is plenty, and Sumant's intro, which was the valuable one, should have come first.

3 Ask before telling

We said it was his meeting, then talked for long stretches: currency, the magic quadrant, multi-brand, the Q1-to-Q4 pull-in. His substance came in two long bursts and we asked few questions. Kevin named it himself on the call. Next time, go in with three questions and ask all three before any story.

4 Qualify the room early

We learned he wasn't the buyer about twenty minutes in. One early question would have told us, and saved the time spent pitching revenue to a martech lead: "What does a good outcome from today look like for you, and who else cares about it?"

5 Play back before reacting

We heard end of October as an engine being built and reacted ("that's crazy... bring it on"). He had to correct it after the call had nearly ended. Repeat dates and commitments back as a question before responding to them.

6 Match the story to the listener

The Q1-to-Q4 pull-in is a strong story for Lisa, Mike and sales ops. For Sumant it got no reaction. Revenue stories go to revenue owners, and experience stories go to experience owners.

7 Small slips that travel

"Oracle goggles" and "the Oracle ecosystem" were said in an Adobe context, twice. The joke about having dirt on Kyle from old HR interviews landed with someone who reports into the org Kyle advises, and it could get repeated out of context. On the call we also said Crossbeam "is not going to close business." Sales ops owns Crossbeam, and Sumant may relay that. Hold to the agreed line: we don't replace the mapping, we provide the experience that makes it work.

HOW WE RUN THE NEXT ONE

Before	Environment reset and verified. Machine and network tested. Hard stop confirmed by email. Three questions written down. Know who owns what in the room.
First five minutes	Confirm time. Ask what a good outcome looks like for him today. Short intros.
Middle	Ask before telling. One story at most, chosen for this listener. Play back what we heard.
Close	Owners and dates for each next step, said out loud. Confirm them in writing the same day.

NEXT STEPS

WHAT	WHO	WHEN
Follow-up email to Sumant, with the working-concepts tease	Kevin	Today
Formatted overview for Sumant to hand to Sarah	Kevin	With the email
Preview the working-concepts idea with Kyle, before Ensemble hears it elsewhere	Kevin	This week
NDA through Sarah	Kevin	Before the walkthrough if possible
Walkthrough of the data foundation, the PwC work and the Data Insight Engine roadmap	Sumant	Early next week

WHAT	WHO	WHEN
Draft the workshop agenda and one concept to show once earned	Kevin and Jon	Ahead of the walkthrough
Sales ops introduction from the top	Sumant, via Sarah	Separate track
Deep dive on Mike's accounts	Kevin	After Houston

WHAT THE EXTERNAL DOCUMENT LEAVES OUT, ON PURPOSE

The version going to Sumant and Sarah contains no pricing, no reference to Crossbeam, nothing about our tooling or build speed, nothing about Ensemble beyond "in concert with," and nothing about his informal backend contacts. It frames the revenue side as a natural extension of the Hub work, not a second pitch.