



CINNA MON
CONSULTING

FIELD REPORT
2026

Two problems, not one.

What 2,191 webinar attendees told us about their partner programmes — and why the number we published last year was wrong.

Two problems, not one

A field report on what partner leaders say is hurting, built from 9,028 poll responses collected across 27 of our own webinars — and an account of the figure we published last year, and withdrew.

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Four findings

39.7%

name generating
partner pipeline their top
challenge

38.9%

name recruiting the right
partners — a statistical
tie

21.8%

say investing in a partner
programme is not a
priority

9,028

de-duplicated poll
responses across 27
webinars

1 There is no single biggest problem. There are two.

Across 21 webinars using identical question and answer wording, generating partner pipeline (39.7%) and recruiting the right partners (38.9%) finished **17 responses apart out of 2,191**. That is a tie. It explains the failure mode we see most often in engagements: a programme built to solve one of the two, starving on the other.

2 We published a figure for a year that was wrong, and this report withdraws it.

"39.6% name recruiting as their #1 challenge" was a real count from a single webinar of 288 people — in which recruiting placed *second*. Chapter two is the full audit. Two further figures, a 2,591 respondent base and an 8,340 response total, correspond to no base in the corpus and are withdrawn.

3 More than a fifth of a warm audience is not buying.

21.8% of 1,617 attendees at a webinar about partner programmes said investing in one is not a priority. The commercial implication is direct: qualify on mandate, not on interest.

4 Enablement is the quiet 16.6%, and the thing most often actually broken.

It never wins the poll, because recruiting and pipeline have owners and enablement does not. The symptom that reaches leadership is "our partners aren't producing", which gets diagnosed as a recruiting problem and answered by signing more partners who also don't produce.

Which of the two problems do you have?

Fifteen minutes with Cédric — no deck, no discovery script. Bring your partner numbers and we will tell you which half of the tie you are on, and what it is costing you.

cal.com/cedric-cinnamon/cedric-15-minutes-call

About this report

This is not a market study. It is a record of what the people who came to our webinars said when we asked them, in the room, what was hurting most.

That distinction matters more than it sounds. Across 27 webinars between March 2024 and March 2026 we collected **9,028 poll responses**. Every figure here is recomputed from the raw exports of those sessions, and every one can be reproduced by anyone holding the same files. But the people answering were self-selected: they registered, they showed up, they chose to click. They are not a random sample of anything.

How much does that matter? In one session, 78% of the room were founders or CEOs. In another, it was 0%. The composition of the audience changes completely between sessions. So a pooled figure here describes the pooled audience — not “the partner software market”.

What you can and can't take from this

You can take it as a large, consistent body of evidence about what partner leaders who seek out help say is hurting — and as a description of the patterns we then see inside their programmes.

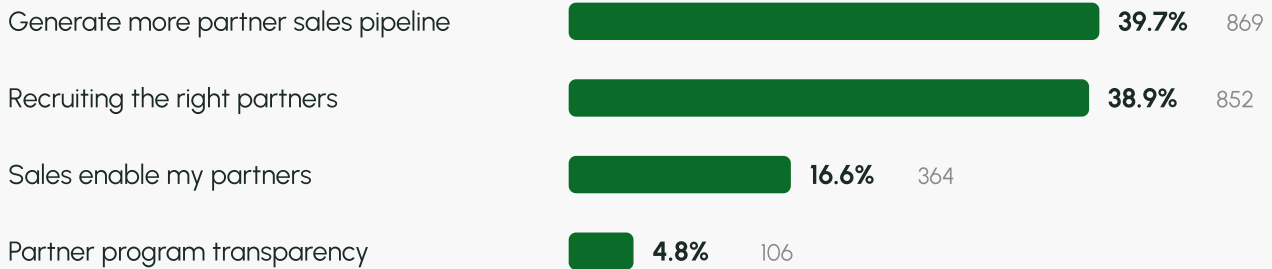
You can't take any figure here as a population estimate of B2B SaaS partner programmes. We don't have one, and neither does anyone else publishing this kind of poll.

We are this explicit because we got it wrong once already, publicly, and that account is chapter two. Chapters one to five are what the polls say. Chapter six is what we do about it in engagements, labelled as judgement rather than evidence. The three case studies that follow are client work — named, with results the clients have approved and will confirm as references. Chapter seven is the method, written so that someone trying to disprove this report would know exactly where to look.

There is no single biggest problem. There are *two*.

Across 21 webinars using an identical question and identical answer options, generating partner pipeline and recruiting the right partners finished **17 responses apart** out of 2,191.

Biggest current challenge with your partner programme



n = 2,191 · 21 webinars, September 2024 – March 2026 · single choice

Counts shown to the right of each bar. The top two options differ by 0.8 percentage points — well inside what a different set of attendees on a different Tuesday would produce.

Treat that as a tie, because it is one — and a tie is a more useful finding than a winner. It explains the failure mode we see most often: programmes built to solve one of these two problems, which then starve on the other.

The recruiting-first programme

Leadership decides the problem is coverage. The team signs forty partners, then eighty. Nothing registers. They were recruited against a target rather than a motion, and nobody built the pipeline mechanics that would have given them a reason to bring a deal. The programme looks healthy on a slide and produces nothing on a forecast.

The pipeline-first programme

The opposite. A handful of partners, real co-selling, genuine deal flow — and a hard ceiling, because the partners who could carry the next increment were never brought in. Every quarter the same three logos do the same work and the number stops growing.

Both have the same root cause: someone picked one of two problems that the data says are the same size.

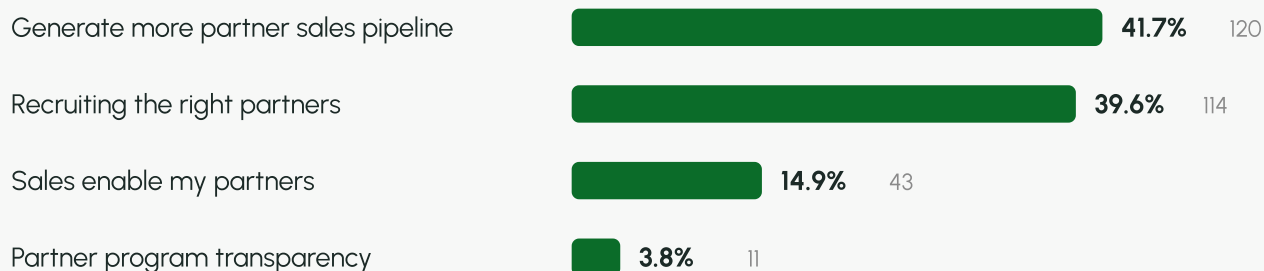
The implication is sequencing, not choice. Recruiting and pipeline are the same job separated in time — you recruit against a motion you can already prove, then use the proof to recruit the next tier. Programmes that treat them as competing budget lines pick one and lose the other. The KYP.ai engagement on page 12 is what the correction looks like in practice.

The number we got wrong

For most of a year we told people 39.6% of partner leaders named recruiting as their number-one challenge. The figure was real. The sentence was false.

Here is where 39.6% comes from — one webinar, 3 December 2024, 288 responses:

A single run: 3 December 2024 (webinar 84641042839)



n = 288, one session, reconciling exactly to the count Zoom printed. Recruiting scored 39.6% in this room — and placed second. Pipeline led it by six responses.

39.58% is recruiting's score in that one room, where it came **second**. Somewhere between that export and a slide deck, a second-place finish in one session became "the #1 challenge" for the whole dataset — then propagated into the website, the sales scripts and the outbound sequences.

How it survived so long

Because the surrounding claim sounded careful. We described a cohort — "1,351 leaders across seven identically-worded webinars in 2025" — and a specific label reads as rigour. Recomputed, the counts were right. The label was not: three of the seven were 2024 sessions, and it omitted fourteen further runs using the same wording. Add those back and the ranking inverts.

The rule we adopted

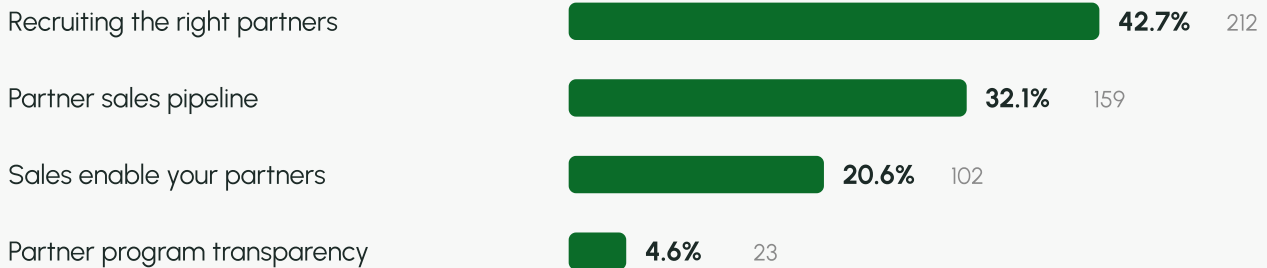
A cohort label is a claim and needs the same evidence as the number attached to it. "1,351 leaders" was checked; "across seven webinars in 2025" was not. The second is what made the first misleading.

We rebuilt every figure from respondent-level rows, dropped 941 duplicate rows found in the process, and reconciled each question block against the count Zoom printed in that export. Two published figures — a 2,591 respondent base and an 8,340 response total — correspond to no base that exists in the corpus at all. They are withdrawn.

Why the early sessions looked different

The first four webinars produce a different answer — recruiting clearly first, at 42.7%. It is tempting to read that as a market shift. We can't, and neither should anyone else.

Biggest current challenge — the first four sessions



n = 496 · 4 webinars, March – July 2024 · single choice

Same question text as chapter one, but different answer labels: "Partner sales pipeline" here versus "Generate more partner sales pipeline" later.

Between the May and September 2024 sessions we reworded the answer options. "Partner sales pipeline" became "Generate more partner sales pipeline". "Sales enable your partners" became "Sales Enable my partners". The question itself never changed.

The ranking flipped at exactly the same moment. Which means the two candidate explanations — the market moved, or the instrument moved — are perfectly confounded. There is no way to separate them from this data, and any chart showing a trend line across that break is claiming to have done so.

An option that names an action ("generate more") reads differently from one that names a noun ("pipeline"). That alone could move several points.

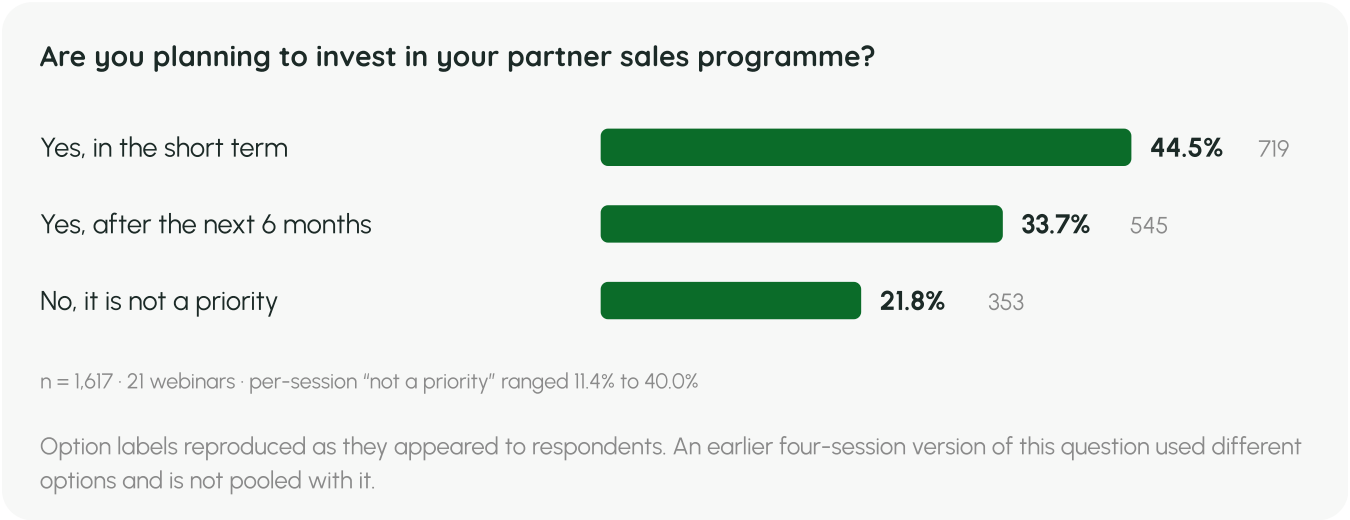
So the two cohorts are reported separately throughout and never pooled. The headline in chapter one rests on the 21 runs that share a wording, the larger and more recent group. The honest summary of the early cohort is this: in four sessions in the first half of 2024, with different answer labels, 496 attendees put recruiting first. That is all it supports.

The habit this is worth building

If you run polls in your own partner community — and you should — freeze the wording before you run the second one. The moment you improve an option label you have started a new series, and everything before it becomes a separate dataset. Most teams discover this after eighteen months of data they can no longer compare.

A fifth of the room isn't going to invest

Asked whether they planned to invest in their partner sales programme, **21.8%** said it was not a priority — 353 people who had voluntarily attended a webinar about partner programmes.



This is the most commercially useful number in the set and the one nobody publishes, because it is unflattering to everyone selling into this category — us included.

What it tells you about your own funnel

These are warm, self-selected attendees. If one in five of them is not investing, the equivalent share of your partner pipeline is people gathering information for a decision that has not been made and may never be. Two consequences follow.

First, qualify on mandate, not on interest. "Do you have budget assigned this year?" is a cheaper question than three discovery calls. Second, stop treating non-investment as a lost opportunity — it is a different opportunity with a longer clock. The content that works on this group is not a demo; it is whatever helps them build an internal case. The Wiiisdom brief on page 13 began exactly there: a leadership team that had grown on direct sales and needed the channel case made before it would fund one.

Note on the range: the session-level share of "not a priority" runs from 11.4% to 40.0%, and the 40.0% is 2 responses out of 5. Small sessions produce extreme percentages. This is why we quote the pooled figure and show the spread rather than the extremes.

Enablement is the quiet 16.6%

Sales-enabling partners took 364 of 2,191 responses. It never wins the poll. In our engagements it is the thing most often actually broken.

We think the gap is structural rather than mysterious. Recruiting and pipeline have owners — someone's target, someone's forecast. Enablement usually doesn't. It sits between partner marketing, sales and product, and the symptom that reaches leadership is never "enablement is broken". It is "our partners aren't producing", which gets diagnosed as a recruiting problem and answered by signing more partners who then also don't produce.

A poll asks what hurts. It does not ask what caused it. Those are different questions, and enablement is usually the answer to the second one.

The fourth option, programme transparency, took 4.8%. We read that the same way: partners complain about it constantly and their vendors rarely rank it, because transparency is a problem experienced on the partner side of the relationship and this poll only ever asked the vendor side.

The cheapest enablement test we know

Take your three most recent partner-registered deals. For each, ask who at the partner actually ran the sales conversation, and whether they could have done it without one of your people on the call.

If the honest answer is no in all three cases, you do not have a partner channel yet — you have a referral channel with a partner agreement attached, and recruiting more of them will not change that.

The Minit engagement on page 14 is the counter-example: onboarding, training, certification and dashboards built as one system, with the result that programme maturity itself became a factor in the company's acquisition by Microsoft.

What we do about it

Everything up to here is what the polls say. This chapter is what we do about it across the programmes we design and run — judgement, from engagements, not from the data. We label it separately because the two are not the same kind of claim.

Stop treating partners as one bucket

The most common structural fault we find is a single programme — one tier ladder, one margin table, one onboarding path — applied to partner types with incompatible economics. A large reseller, a boutique specialist, a referring consultant and a technology alliance partner want four different things. A programme tuned for the average of them fits none of them.

Pick one or two types and build for those properly. Coverage of a category you serve badly is worth less than depth in one you serve well. At KYP.ai this meant deliberately mixing boutique innovation partners with large enterprise players and writing different incentives for each, rather than one discount schedule applied to both.

Make deal registration answer fast, and mean it

A 24–48 hour response service level does more for partner trust than most incentive changes. And answer rejections properly: a partner told *why* a registration was declined, and what earlier engagement would have changed the outcome, registers earlier next time. A partner met with silence stops registering altogether — and you lose the visibility before you lose the deal.

The corollary is harder. Once a deal is accepted, stay behind the partner on it. The temptation to go direct on a large opportunity is the single fastest way to teach an entire ecosystem not to register.

Onboard fewer partners, further

Recruiting targets reward signatures; revenue rewards activation. Structure onboarding in modules with a first-deal milestone, and cap intake at the number your team can actually walk through that milestone. Ten partners who have registered a deal are worth more than eighty who have a login.

Instrument it before you scale it

Manual process survives twenty partners and collapses at eighty. Deal registration tied to your CRM, partner-visible status, and a shared view of the pipeline are what make the programme legible to your own leadership — which is, in the end, what keeps it funded.

This is the order that matters, and it is the one most often inverted. A partner portal bought before the operating model is defined encodes whatever confusion already existed. Define the tiers, the registration rules and the enablement path first; then choose the system that has to carry them. At Wiiisdom the platform went in alongside the programme design and was connected to the ERP and sales CRM from the start, which is why the channel was producing revenue in months rather than years.

A 90-day sequence that works

Days 1–30. Pick one partner archetype. Write the motion for it: who sells, who delivers, who owns the customer, and what each side earns. One page, agreed internally before a single partner sees it.

Days 31–60. Run it with three to five partners. Register real deals. Answer every registration inside 48 hours. Fix what breaks — it will be the handover, not the incentive.

Days 61–90. Now recruit against proof. A motion with a registered deal behind it recruits a different calibre of partner than a slide deck does, and the enablement material writes itself out of what you have just done.

None of this is exotic. What makes it hard is that each step is individually easy to skip, and the cost of skipping shows up two quarters later as a partner list that does not convert.

Fifteen minutes, no deck

Bring your partner numbers — how many partners, how many registered a deal last quarter, how long registrations take to answer. We will tell you which of the two problems you have and what we would do first. Cédric takes these calls himself.

cal.com/cedric-cinnamon/cedric-15-minutes-call

3× partner revenue in 90 days

A programme with plenty of partners and no sales orientation. We restructured it rather than replacing it.

The situation

KYP.ai already ran partnerships in-house, led by customer success and genuinely good at it — strong engagement, excellent presentations, documentation and process. What the programme lacked was a commercial spine. There was no co-selling, no partner-sourced lead generation and no go-to-market motion. Incentives did not fit the partner profile, the setup was fragmented across multiple contracts with no standardised tiers, and the internal team had no clear division of roles for partner management. In the language of chapter one, this is the pipeline-first failure in its purest form: real relationships, no mechanism to turn them into deals.

What we did

- Clarified internal roles and responsibilities for partner management
- Streamlined fragmented contracts into a tiered programme with clear incentives and discounts
- Launched acquisition campaigns targeting boutique innovation partners and larger enterprise players
- Established partner enablement and advocacy programmes
- Organised their first global partner event, with partners from four continents

3×

partner revenue in 90 days

2×

partner base within 6 months

4

continents at their first global partner event

"Thanks to Cinna Mon Consulting, we were able to kick off our partner programme very quickly and put structure in place. Within six months, our number of partners doubled, and our ecosystem now generates far more partner-sourced pipeline. We also hosted our first global partner event, bringing partners from four continents into one room — a milestone we couldn't have achieved without this guidance."

Felix, Global Head of Partners, KYP.ai

5× partner revenue in 9 months

No partner department, no platform, no contracts. Leadership wanted the channel structured, staffed and producing inside months — without pulling the direct sales team off its own number.

The situation

Wiiisdom had grown through direct sales and decided to open an indirect channel. There was nothing to build on: no partner team, no partner platform, no partner contracts. This is the brief behind chapter four's finding — a leadership team that had to be shown the channel case before it would fund one, and then wanted it proved quickly.

What we did

- Restructured and staffed the partner department from scratch
- Set up the partner platform — onboarding, training, certification, lead generation, dashboards — connected to the ERP and the sales CRM
- Designed the programme itself: contracts, commissioning and tiers
- Recruited and activated key partners through our own network of global system integrators and consultancies
- Handed over a running programme to the in-house team

5×

partner revenue in 9 months

0 → 1

staffed partner department where none existed

Live

platform integrated with ERP and CRM

The sequencing is the point. Programme design, platform and first partner recruitment ran together rather than in series, which is what compressed the timeline — and the handover to the in-house team was part of the brief from day one, not an afterthought.

"When it came to structuring indirect sales at Wiiisdom, I immediately contacted Cédric from Cinna Mon Consulting. In just a few months, he restructured and staffed our department from scratch."

Wiiisdom leadership · full reference available on request

A partner department built from zero

Programme maturity became a decisive factor in an acquisition. That is the clearest argument we have for treating enablement as infrastructure rather than content.

The situation

Minit was growing fast and needed to professionalise and scale its partner programme quickly. There were no structured foundations for onboarding, training, certification or lead management, and without a cohesive partner platform or CRM integration, channel growth was capped. This is chapter five's quiet 16.6% made concrete: nothing in the programme was obviously on fire, and the thing missing was the enablement layer nobody owned.

What we did

- Architected a partner platform covering onboarding, training, certification and dashboards
- Integrated lead management workflows with Minit's sales CRM
- Deployed a new partner portal for resource access and tracking
- Established clear processes for enablement, certification and pipeline visibility
- Coached the partner team to run the relationships and scale them

7x

partner revenue in 18 months

1platform for onboarding, training,
certification and dashboards**M&A**programme maturity a factor in the
Microsoft acquisition

"In just a few short months, Cinna Mon's impact was immediate, meticulously shaping and nurturing our partner department from the ground up. Their strategic contributions became the backbone of our success — and were definitely a winning factor that led to Microsoft engaging with us and ultimately acquiring Minit."

Emmanuel, CRO, Minit (now Microsoft)

All three clients have approved these figures and are reachable as references on request.

Method, in full

Everything here is recomputable from the raw Zoom poll exports. This chapter is written so that someone who wanted to disprove it would know exactly where to look.

The corpus

ITEM	VALUE
Webinars	27, from 26 March 2024 to 31 March 2026
Carrying the challenge question	25 (two were product sessions with a different poll set)
Question blocks	109
Response rows after de-duplication	9,028
Duplicate rows removed	941
Blocks reconciled to a printed count	100 of 109 — none failed

De-duplication came first. One session's export existed twice as a byte-identical file; three others had duplicate tabs inside the spreadsheet twin, re-sorted — and in one case hand-edited, with a set of answers blanked. All tallies were therefore taken from the CSV exports rather than the spreadsheet copies.

Every tally was then checked against the response count Zoom printed in the same file. One transcription gap was caught this way mid-work and corrected before any figure was computed. Two sessions carry no printed count at all, and their tallies are flagged as unreconcilable rather than quietly included as verified.

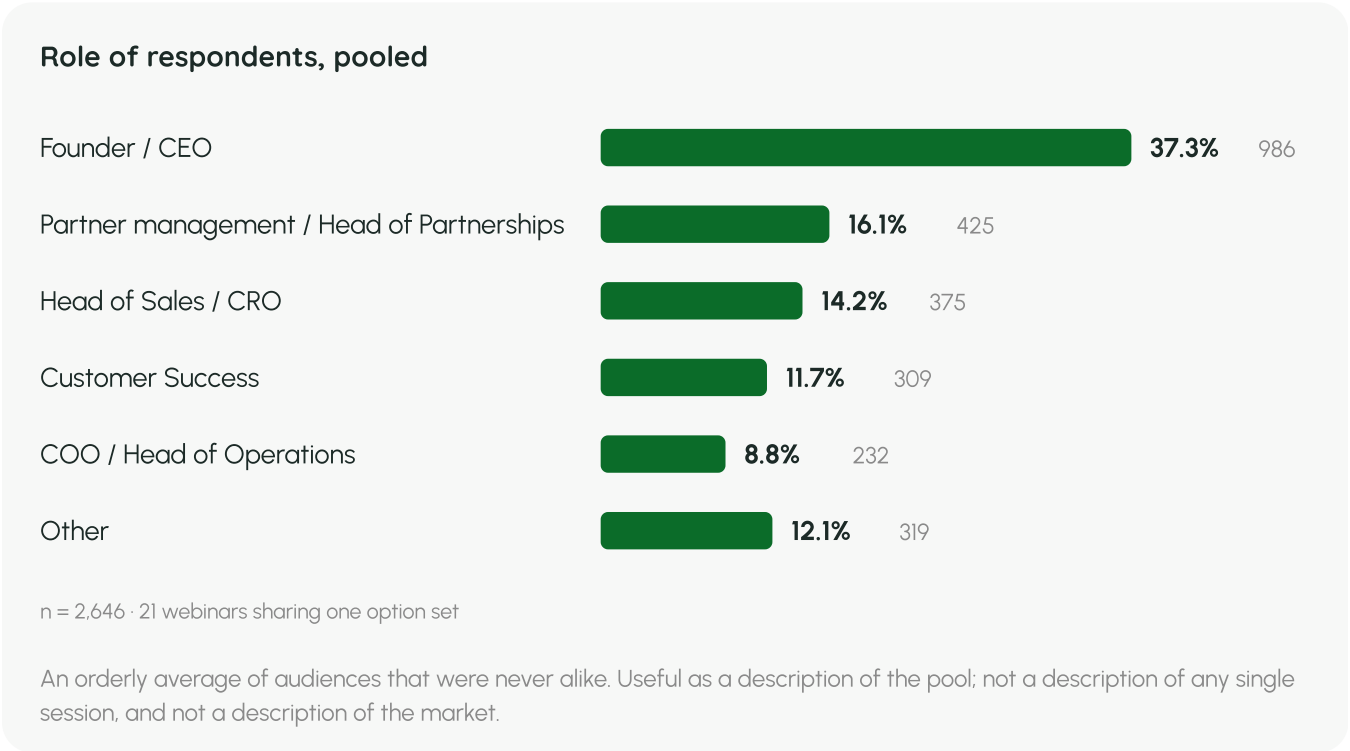
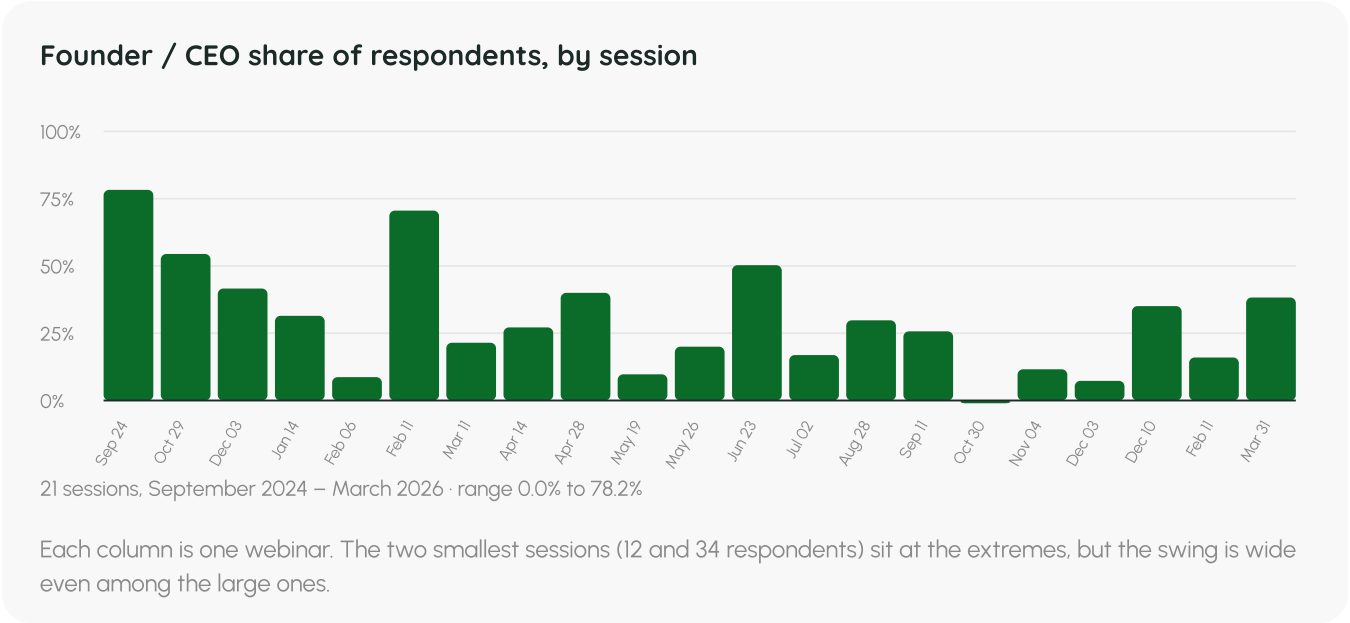
What we will not publish

- Any figure pooling the two challenge wordings, the two role option sets, or the two investment-intent questions — in each case the answer options differ.
- The in-session discovery-call poll, at any base. It is a sales instrument whose wording and options changed at least four times.
- The multi-select product-feature question, which has no denominator.
- Any per-session figure from sessions with fewer than 20 respondents, unless quoted alongside its n.

A note on what Zoom records: only options that someone chose appear in an export. An option offered but picked by nobody is invisible. So every option set described here is the set of options *chosen*, which is a lower bound on the set offered.

The audience does not hold still

This is the single most important fact about the corpus, and the reason every pooled figure here travels with a caveat. The founder/CEO share of each session, across the 21 runs sharing a role option set:



Cinna Mon Consulting and *CinnaLab.io*



CINNA MON
CONSULTING

Cinna Mon Consulting designs, builds and runs partner programmes for B2B SaaS and software vendors. A team of eight senior consultants across six countries, with Cédric leading every engagement — no junior delivery on senior strategy work. The firm has launched more than fifty partner programmes, implemented eight PRM platforms, and works across Europe, EMEA and North America.

Engagements are fixed-fee and fixed-timeline: a Diagnostic that establishes what is actually broken, a Strategy & Build that puts the programme in place, and a Fractional Partner Leader arrangement for companies that need the function run before they hire for it. The work is modular by design, so it maps to the stage a programme is actually at rather than to a standard template.



CINNALAB.IO
POWERED BY CINNA MON CONSULTING

CinnaLab.io is the partner relationship management platform built alongside that consulting practice, and one of the first PRM platforms with a native MCP server. It covers partner onboarding, training and certification, deal registration tied to the vendor's CRM, partner-visible pipeline status, and the reporting that makes a programme legible to its own leadership.

The two exist together deliberately. Most partner programmes struggle either because there is a strategy with nothing to run it on, or a platform bought before anyone decided what it was for. Clients get the operating model and the system that carries it, from the same team.

Not ready for a call?

The twelve-question partner programme assessment takes three minutes, scores your programme across six dimensions, and names the two things worth fixing first for your band:

cinnamonconsulting.tech/assessment

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cédric Le Rouzo



Founder & CEO, Cinna Mon Consulting

A global sales and partnerships leader with more than 25 years helping software companies expand their go-to-market. Across that career one pattern kept repeating: capable software vendors stalling not on product but on the absence of a structured partner ecosystem — partnerships treated as an afterthought, or tooling bought without a strategy to put in it.

He founded Cinna Mon Consulting to work the other way round, and built CinnaLab.io so that clients would not have to choose between an operating model and a system to run it on.

Under his leadership the firm has launched partner programmes in under fifteen consultant-days, and helped SaaS vendors multiply partner revenue — 3× in 90 days at KYP.ai, 5× in 9 months at Wiisdom, 7× in 18 months at Minit, whose programme maturity became a factor in its acquisition by Microsoft. He is also Head of Sales for Oppscience, which keeps the practice honest: the advice in chapter six is advice he has to take himself.

He wrote this report, including chapter two.

Which of the two problems do you have?

Fifteen minutes, no deck and no discovery script. Bring your partner numbers — how many partners, how many registered a deal last quarter, how long registrations take to answer. You will leave with a view on which half of the tie you are on and what we would do first.

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Sources, corrections and copyright

Sources

All poll figures in this report are recomputed from respondent-level rows in named raw Zoom poll exports held by Cinna Mon Consulting, covering 27 webinars between 26 March 2024 and 31 March 2026. The method is set out in chapter seven. Client results in the three case studies are supplied and approved by the clients named, who are reachable as references on request.

Chapter six and the operating guidance elsewhere in this report are the author's professional judgement drawn from client engagements, and are identified as such wherever they appear. They are not derived from the poll data.

Corrections and withdrawals

Figures published by Cinna Mon Consulting before 17 September 2026 that are not reproduced here are withdrawn. Specifically: a respondent base of 2,591; a total of 8,340 poll responses; the claim that 39.6% of partner leaders name recruiting as their number-one challenge; a cohort described as "1,351 leaders across seven webinars in 2025"; a partner-programme failure rate of 73%; and any figure attributed to a poll of 997 attendees. Chapter two explains how the principal error occurred.

If you hold an earlier document from us citing any of those figures, it is superseded by this one. We would rather hear about a mistake than have it quoted back to us: write to us through cinnamonconsulting.tech/contact.

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