



Cisco Connected
Purpose Partners



Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership Playbook for Practice Leaders

The partner ecosystem is **shifting**, with rising expectations around growth, procurement, and ESG accountability.

Cisco's Mentor Partnership Initiative enables Large Partners to unlock new market access, drive incremental bookings, and strengthen ESG performance through ecosystem-led growth.

This playbook outlines the market forces, strategic alignment, execution priorities, and performance signals leaders need to confidently sponsor and scale the initiative within their broader Cisco growth strategy.

Select a tab below or turn the page to begin.

Establish

Identify

Activate

Scale



What Is the Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership?

Ecosystem-Led Growth with Purpose

The Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership is a strategic collaboration model designed to help Large (Mentor) Partners accelerate growth through structured collaboration with Community Enablement (Protégé) Partners.

It brings together scale, specialization, and responsible sourcing to unlock new market access, drive incremental bookings, and strengthen ESG performance across the ecosystem.

Unlike traditional partner relationships, the Mentor Partnership is structured around intentional capability building, joint execution, and measurable impact.

Why It Matters Now

The partner ecosystem is evolving. Customers, particularly in public sector and enterprise, are increasing expectations around:

- Strategic supplier inclusion
- ESG accountability
- Local sourcing and community impact
- Innovation and specialized expertise

The Mentor Partnership positions Large Partners to meet these expectations confidently while expanding into high-growth markets such as Operational Technology and Managed Services.

Strategic Advantages for Large Partners Includes:

Revenue and Market Expansion



- Access In Scope Supplier Development contracts
- Increase competitiveness in public sector bids
- Expand into OT & Managed Services
- Drive incremental bookings through joint selling

ESG and Strategic Positioning



- Strengthen ESG reporting and compliance
- Enhance enterprise and government credibility
- Demonstrate measurable ecosystem impact
- Align to Cisco Connected Purpose strategy



Click play to watch the video.

A Structured Path to Growth

The Mentor Partnership follows a deliberate four-stage progression; ensuring alignment, execution discipline, and measurable performance at every step. This framework guides leaders and sellers from initial engagement to scalable growth.

Stage 1: Engagement and Learning

Establish Strategic Alignment by **understanding** market dynamics, responsible sourcing drivers, and ecosystem opportunities, **defining** the business case, and **aligning** leadership sponsorship.

Stage 2: Strategy and Framework

Design the Partnership Model by identifying the right Community Enablement Partner(s) and establishing operating structure, engagement expectations, and success metrics.

Stage 3: Execution Plan

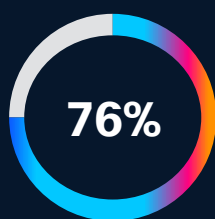
Activate Joint Selling & Operational Integration by translating strategy into pipeline development, marketing activation, and joint deal execution.

Stage 4: Growth

Scale Performance and impact by expanding bookings, optimizing collaboration, and formalizing reporting to drive sustained impact.

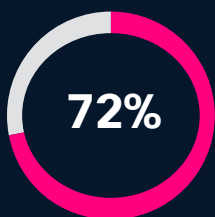
The Strategic Context

The Market Shift: From Compliance to Competitive Advantage



of companies say responsible sourcing aligns with their corporate culture

What was once compliance-driven, particularly in public sector, is now **embedded** in procurement, risk mitigation, and ESG reporting strategy.



of customers continue active support for responsible sourcing programs



Public Sector Procurement Is Reshaping Opportunity Access

Federal and state procurement thresholds are evolving in ways that increase access requirements for small and disadvantaged businesses. Key changes include:

- Micro-Purchase Threshold increasing from **\$10K** to **\$100K**
- Simplified Acquisition Threshold rising toward **\$10M** for commercial goods and services
- Larger contracts requiring small business set-asides or subcontracting plans



Public-sector supplier spend is projected to grow from ~\$550B in 2026 to ~\$600B by 2030.

[Click here for more information on the Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership](#)



The Business Case for Strategic Supplier Integration

Companies are investing in small and strategic suppliers to create more resilient and agile supply chains. Data shows that diverse suppliers often deliver:

14% + 23%

lower costs faster project timelines

Beyond cost and speed, strategic small partners contribute:



Innovation and Agility



Supply Chain Resistance



Risk mitigation in volatile trade and
tariff environments



Local Market Credibility





High-Growth Markets and Strategic Alignment

The Mentor Partnership sits at the intersection of responsible sourcing, OT expansion, regional partner development, and Cisco Managed Services growth.

Operational Technology (OT)

Industrial IoT and OT represent a **\$250B TAM** by 2027. OT opportunities increasingly require:

- Regional presence
- Local certifications
- Specialized implementation partners

Mentor + Community Enablement collaboration **expands** access to these contracts.

Private Sector ESG and Ecosystem Impact

Responsible sourcing is now tied directly to:

- ESG governance and reporting
- AI-driven supplier discovery and tracking
- Tier 2 ecosystem measurement

Global supplier spend is projected to approach **\$1T by 2030**. Large partners that embed ecosystem strategy into their growth model will be positioned to lead.

Managed Services

Nearly **50%** of Cisco product revenue is projected to attach to managed services. Structured ecosystem partnerships enable:

- Recurring revenue expansion
- Lifecycle ownership
- Broader customer penetration

The Leadership Imperative

The Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership is designed to pair high-performing Mentor Partners with small, strategic Community Enablement Partners to unlock new market opportunities, expand reach, strengthen ESG impact, and accelerate bookings.



From Strategy to Practice: How Cisco Builds Suppliers

The market forces above make the business case clear – but how does supplier development actually work in practice? The following video walks through Cisco's own Supplier Development Program, the engine behind the Mentor Partnership. It breaks down the three-phase framework of investment, incubation, and continuity, and shows how the sponsorship model pairs small suppliers with experienced leaders to drive real, lasting growth.



Click play to watch the video.



Designing the Partnership Model

From Opportunity to Operating Model

Once leadership alignment is established, the next step is **intentional design**. The Mentor Partnership succeeds when it is structured, not opportunistic. Stage 2 defines how the partnership operates, scales, and integrates into your broader growth strategy. This is where Practice Leaders move from endorsement to execution architecture.

Define Your Ideal Community Enablement Partner Profile

Not all partnerships create equal value. Strategic alignment begins with clarity around:



Certifications and Designations

SBA 8(a), SDB, HUBZone, ED-WOSB, etc.



Geographic Presence

aligned to target accounts.



Technology Focus

OT, Managed Services, AI-ready infrastructure, secure architectures



Capability Maturity

Public sector, regional, and regulated industries.



Market Access

and Cisco portfolio alignment



Remember

The goal is not volume, but complementary capability and revenue alignment.

[Click here for more information on the Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership](#)

Aligning Partnerships to What Matters Most

As Mentor Partnerships scale, success depends on aligning efforts to the business outcomes that matter most. Rather than operating as standalone initiatives, partnerships must directly support measurable growth drivers and reflect broader organizational priorities. This requires clear alignment across leadership, functions, and strategy—ensuring that every effort contributes to tangible impact and long-term value.

Aligning to Growth Priorities

The Mentor Partnership should map directly to:

- OT expansion
- Managed Services attachment strategy
- Public sector procurement access
- ESG and sustainability commitments
- Regional and vertical growth goals



If it does not tie to a measurable growth lever, it should not move forward.

Internal Alignment: The Leadership Signal

Stage 2 requires cross-functional clarity. Practice Leaders should align:

- Sales leadership
- Marketing & demand generation
- Finance & compensation strategy
- Legal & compliance (for procurement alignment)
- ESG/sustainability leaders

The initiative should be embedded into planning cycles, not treated as an isolated program.



Governance, Structure and Success Signals

The strongest Mentor Partnerships operate with defined structure.

To translate strategic intent into measurable impact, Practice Leaders can follow a structured approach to partnership design.

1.

Establish the Engagement Model

Define a clear engagement structure that outlines executive sponsorship, sales alignment, and joint planning cadence. A transparent operating rhythm creates shared accountability and enables the partnership to scale with confidence.

2.

Vet & Select Strategically

Take a thoughtful approach to identifying Community Enablement Partners whose capabilities complement your growth priorities. Alignment in portfolio strength, market access, and Cisco readiness ensures the collaboration is positioned for long-term success.

3.

ESG & Purpose Integration

Integrate the Mentor Partnership into your broader ESG and sustainability strategy to reinforce enterprise alignment and brand credibility. When ecosystem collaboration is connected to purpose, it strengthens both business performance and community impact.

4.

Define Success Metrics Early

Establish measurable indicators that reflect both revenue performance and ecosystem engagement. Clear metrics provide visibility into progress and support ongoing leadership sponsorship as the partnership matures.



When thoughtfully designed, the Mentor Partnership becomes a repeatable growth engine, not just an initiative.



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Click through the interactive
checklist to explore the criteria to
consider when selecting community
partners.



Activating the Partnership

From Framework to Field Execution

With strategic alignment and governance established, the Mentor Partnership enters the most critical phase: activation. **Stage 3** is where strategy becomes measurable impact. This phase focuses on translating design into coordinated, cross-functional execution—aligning sales teams, launching joint initiatives, and operationalizing how both organizations go to market together.

Success at this stage depends on execution discipline. Without it, even the strongest strategy will stall. With it, partnerships generate incremental pipeline, accelerate deal velocity, and strengthen long-term collaboration. The following actions ensure momentum is sustained and outcomes are realized.

Activate the Joint Growth Plan

A well-defined joint growth plan provides the structure needed to move from alignment to action. It ensures both organizations are focused on the same priorities, pursuing the right opportunities, and measuring success consistently.

This includes:

- Identifying priority accounts and target segments
- Aligning on OT, Managed Services, and regulated market plays
- Mapping complementary capabilities to specific opportunities
- Establishing pipeline visibility and reporting expectations

How to achieve this:

Facilitate a structured joint planning session with sales and practice leaders to align on top accounts, define ownership across opportunities, and document near-term pipeline targets. Establish a regular review cadence (e.g., bi-weekly or monthly) to track progress, remove blockers, and adjust priorities as needed.

Click here for more information on the Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership



Enable the Sales Motion

Even the best plans fail without clear execution at the seller level. Sales alignment ensures that frontline teams know when to engage, how to engage, and why the partnership matters to their deals.

Practice Leaders should ensure:

- **Clear and compelling partnership value proposition:**
Sellers must be able to quickly articulate how the partnership adds value to customers and differentiates from competitors.
- **Defined roles and responsibilities across joint sales engagements:**
Remove ambiguity around ownership—who leads, who supports, and how handoffs occur across the deal lifecycle.
- **Aligned incentives and compensation models (where applicable):**
Ensure sellers are motivated to collaborate, not compete, by reinforcing the right behaviors through incentives.
- **Integration into CRM and opportunity tracking systems:**
Make joint opportunities visible and trackable to drive accountability and enable accurate forecasting.
- **Repeatable engagement model for the field:**
Provide simple, scalable guidance so sellers can confidently replicate success across accounts.

When sellers understand how to engage and why it matters, collaboration accelerates.

How to achieve this:

Host a focused enablement session for sales teams that covers when to engage a Community Enablement Partner, how the partner-to-partner (P2P) process works, and how joint opportunities are tracked, supported, and rewarded. Reinforce with quick-reference guides, deal playbooks, and ongoing enablement to sustain adoption.



Operational Integration and Deal Acceleration

To ensure seamless execution, the following focus areas support coordinated growth across sales, marketing, and operational teams. Together, they create the structure needed to convert partnership intent into measurable revenue outcomes.

Align on the P2P Framework

Ensure clarity around the Partner-to-Partner (P2P) Sales Exception process and participation requirements. Early alignment reduces transaction friction and protects deal velocity. Confirm Cisco Registered status, documentation readiness, and approval pathways before pipeline accelerates to avoid late-stage delays.

Launch Joint Demand Generation

Collaborate on targeted marketing activities that amplify reach into priority markets. Joint events, campaigns, and solution messaging create shared pipeline and strengthen market presence.

Focus on high-growth segments such as OT, Managed Services, and public-sector modernization where ecosystem collaboration differentiates the bid.



Execution is where **strategic** intent becomes **measurable** growth.

**Coordinate
Deal
Execution**

Establish clear ownership across proposal development, solution architecture, and customer engagement. A unified approach reinforces credibility and improves win probability.

Define who leads the customer conversation, who owns technical validation, and how margin and positioning are communicated to avoid internal friction.

**Monitor
Performance
and Pipeline**

Maintain visibility into influenced bookings, joint opportunities, and growth trends. Regular performance reviews help refine strategy and sustain leadership sponsorship.

Track both revenue outcomes and partnership engagement metrics to ensure the collaboration is scaling – not stalling.



Scaling What Works

When the Partnership Becomes a Growth Engine

By Stage 4, the Mentor Partnership should no longer feel like an initiative...it should feel like infrastructure. This is the phase where collaboration becomes embedded in account strategy, forecast discussions, and executive conversations. The partnership moves from activation to acceleration. Sustained growth depends on **three** disciplines:

Revenue Discipline

Joint opportunities are visible, forecasted, and reviewed alongside core pipeline. Influenced bookings are tracked consistently and tied to performance conversations, ensuring ecosystem collaboration is directly connected to measurable business outcomes.

Expansion Discipline

Successful collaboration in one segment becomes a blueprint for others, extending into new verticals, geographies, and growth markets such as OT and Managed Services. Growth is driven by identifying repeatable plays and intentionally broadening participation across accounts, regions, and seller teams.

Leadership Discipline

Executive sponsors remain actively engaged, reinforcing the partnership as a long-term strategic lever rather than a short-term initiative. Consistent visibility in quarterly reviews, annual planning discussions, and ESG reporting signals organizational commitment and sustains cross-functional alignment.

When these disciplines operate together, ecosystem collaboration becomes scalable, predictable, and strategically embedded.

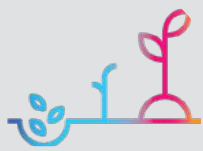
[Click here for more information on the Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership](#)



Organizations that institutionalize ecosystem collaboration will define the next phase of growth. The Mentor Partnership provides the structure to lead that evolution.

The Mentor Partnership Growth Dashboard

As the Mentor Partnership matures, performance must become visible, measurable, and repeatable. Leaders should be able to assess not only revenue impact, but also ecosystem engagement, market expansion, and long-term sustainability. The following lens provides a structured way to evaluate whether the partnership is truly scaling, or simply operating.



Are we Growing Revenue?

- Influenced bookings trending upward quarter over quarter
- Joint pipeline growth across priority accounts and segments
- Increased win rates in public sector and regulated bids
- Measurable contribution to OT and Managed Services revenue targets



Are we Expanding Reach?

- Net new accounts accessed through ecosystem collaboration
- Broader participation across regions or verticals
- Increased engagement in supplier-driven procurement opportunities
- Expansion into adjacent growth segments aligned to annual strategy



Are we Strengthening Brand and ESG Positioning?

- Partnership impact reflected in ESG or sustainability reporting
- Demonstrated contribution to supplier inclusion goals
- Enhanced credibility in enterprise and government engagements
- Positive executive and customer perception of ecosystem collaboration



Is the Model Sustainable?

- Defined executive sponsorship and review cadence
- Consistent joint planning and pipeline alignment sessions
- Adoption of the partnership model across sales teams
- Clear performance metrics embedded in leadership discussions



How Cisco Shows up for You

As Mentor Partnerships scale, Cisco provides structured support across three areas, from strategic recognition to go-to-market execution to ongoing governance, so Practice Leaders aren't building this alone.

Strategic Alignment

- Recognize and highlight partner performance and achievements
- Align partnership goals with community enablement Partner ecosystem objectives
- Evolve the P2P sales motion with the new 360 framework

GTM Execution

- P2P sales motion guidance and support
- Identify and align potential partner connections
- Align partner incentives to the P2P sales motion

Governance and Performance Support

- Provide and iterate framework for success
- Share industry insights, best practices, and trends
- QBRs with Partners

Here's what Cisco expects in return

Support flows both ways. To keep the partnership performing, Cisco asks Practice Leaders to bring the same level of commitment: clear ownership, active execution, and consistent reporting, across each of these three areas.

Strategic Alignment

- Designate an Executive Commitment
- Align partnership goals to revenue and growth objectives
- Incorporate partnership objectives into annual planning

GTM Execution

- Growth in bookings and pipeline with P2P opportunities
- Strengthen Partner-to-Partner engagements/relationships
- Execute demand generation activity with strategic partners

Governance and Performance Support

- Utilize framework & provide feedback
- Internal Opportunity tracking and performance reporting
- QBRs with Cisco

Leading the Mentor Partnership Forward

The Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership is not simply an ecosystem initiative, it's a revenue accelerator.

For Practice Leaders, the opportunity is clear: enable your sellers to access deals, budgets, and markets they cannot reach alone. When structured and activated intentionally, the partnership increases competitiveness in regulated industries, strengthens positioning in public-sector bids, and expands participation in high-growth segments like Operational Technology and Managed Services.

For sellers, the impact is immediate:

- **Expanded** access to supplier-driven procurement opportunities
- **Increased** win probability in public-sector and regulated bids
- **Entry** into new accounts and regional markets
- **Faster** deal cycles through complementary capabilities
- **Greater** relevance in ESG- and inclusion-driven conversations

When the model is embedded into sales planning and pipeline reviews, it becomes a multiplier.

Key Takeaways for Revenue Impact

1. Responsible sourcing has evolved into a strategic lever that directly influences deal qualification, procurement access, and competitive positioning.
2. Thoughtful alignment with the right Community Enablement Partner creates meaningful differentiation in regulated and public-sector opportunities.
3. Structured joint planning and clear role alignment increase deal velocity, reduce friction, and expand opportunity coverage.
4. Influenced bookings provide measurable evidence that ecosystem collaboration is contributing to pipeline growth and revenue performance.
5. Sustained executive sponsorship is the catalyst that drives seller adoption and transforms partnership strategy into consistent revenue impact.



When sellers understand how to leverage the Mentor Partnership, collaboration becomes a competitive edge.



Test Your Knowledge: Turning Strategy into Revenue

The following knowledge check reinforces how the four stages of the Mentor Partnership translate into seller advantage and measurable growth.

As you complete the quiz, consider:

- How can this partnership expand your sellers' pipeline?
- Where can ecosystem collaboration increase win rates?
- What would stronger activation mean for next quarter's forecast?

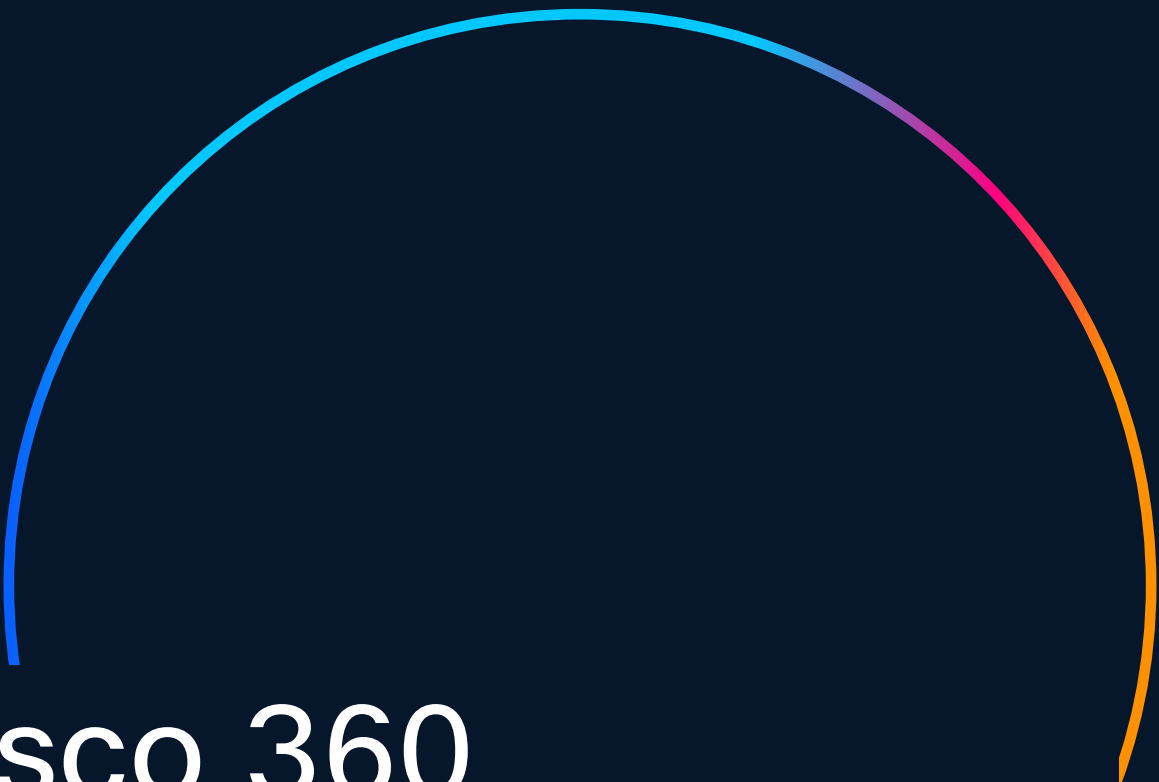
The strongest Practice Leaders don't just understand the framework, they enable sellers to win with it.



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The Mentor Partnership Initiative creates an opportunity for large partners to accelerate growth, expand market access, and strengthen ESG impact through ecosystem-led collaboration. Success depends on clear strategic alignment, leadership commitment, consistent execution, and disciplined performance management.

The opportunity is real. The framework is in place. The next step is leadership action.



Cisco 360 Mentor Partnership Playbook



Created by Skyline-ATS