DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

The Partner Program Freshness Scorecard

A 10-function diagnostic for partner, channel, and ecosystem leaders

Why your partner program has an expiration date

Milk has a date stamped on the carton. Partner programs don't, but they expire just as fast. Nobody tells you until the whole thing sours: the process nobody's touched since 2019, the MDF policy that still assumes email is the main channel, the top partner list nobody's revalidated in two years.

AI didn't create that expiration date. It just made the clock run faster. Erik Brynjolfsson, the Stanford economist who has spent thirty years measuring what technology actually does to jobs, just published research showing AI has already cut employment 16 percent in the most exposed entry-level occupations. Not a forecast, already happened.

Key insight

Efficiency does not always mean fewer jobs. When something gets cheaper, demand can grow fast enough that spending goes up, not down. That is exactly what happened when jet engines made flying cheap: airlines did not shrink, they created an entire travel economy that did not exist before. The same logic applies to partner programs. When it gets ten times cheaper to register a deal or onboard a partner, the answer is not automatically fewer people. It can mean ten times more partnerships, run by the same team.

The Industrial Revolution took decades to show up in productivity numbers. Electricity alone took thirty years between installation on the factory floor and measurable output. Brynjolfsson is betting AI compresses that same arc into three to five years. Whatever expiration date was on your partner program, cross off a decade. It is closer than you think.

How to use this scorecard

Score each of the ten functions below from 1 to 5. A 1 means the Old column describes your program today. A 5 means the AI-Driven column already does. Be honest, not aspirational; this only works if the score reflects reality.

1. Score all ten functions.
2. Add up your total (10 to 50 points).
3. Find your freshness band on the following page.
4. Use the metrics menu to pick what you'll actually track.
5. Use the Where to Start section to plan your first move.

The scorecard

Function	Old (expired)	AI-Driven (fresh)	Score (1-5)
Deal registration & pipeline hygiene	Manual spreadsheets, partners email in registrations, someone eyeballs the pipeline every Friday for accuracy.	Registrations validated in real time, hygiene checks run continuously, humans spend the time on deals about to slip.	_____
Partner onboarding	A PDF welcome packet, a portal login nobody explains, six weeks to first deal.	Paperwork and setup automated, a guided first-90-days path, human time reserved for the strategic-fit conversation that predicts year-one survival.	_____
MDF / co-op funds	Requests sit in an inbox, reconciliation happens once a quarter, nobody can say which campaigns actually worked.	Requests and reconciliation processed automatically, campaign performance visible in real time, humans decide which bets to double down on.	_____

Partner enablement & certification	A static course built two product launches ago, one-size-fits-all content, certification proves attendance, not competence.	Content updates as the product does, certification adapts to each partner's gaps, your best people run a paid advisory tier for top partners.	_____
QBRs & joint business planning	Someone spends two days building a slide deck nobody reads past page four.	Data pulls and slides assemble themselves, freeing the hour for the actual conversation about where the relationship goes next.	_____
Partner recruitment & vetting	Sourced by whoever shows up at a conference, vetted by gut feel, signed because the deal was already in motion.	Fit scored against your best-performing partner profile before the first call, gut feel reserved for the judgment a model cannot make.	_____
Partner marketing & campaign execution	One campaign template stretched across every partner regardless of size, segment, or region.	Campaigns assembled and localized in minutes per partner, strategy and creative direction still owned by a human who knows the market.	_____
Partner support & escalations	Every question, big or small, lands in the same queue and waits for the same response time.	Routine questions resolved instantly, anything involving money, trust, or a damaged relationship routed straight to a human.	_____
Partner data, reporting & analytics	A quarterly export someone massages into a deck, three weeks stale by the time anyone can act on it.	Live dashboards flag risk and opportunity as they happen, freeing analysts to interpret instead of assemble.	_____
Renewals & partner health	Health is a gut call made the week before renewal, when it is already too late to fix anything.	Health signals tracked continuously, the human conversation starts while there is still time to change the outcome.	_____

Score your freshness

Add up all ten scores (10 to 50 points total) and find your band.

Total score	Band	What it means
40-50	Farm Fresh	Your program runs on the augmentation model. You are positioned to capture the next three to five years, not just survive them.
25-39	Best By Next Quarter	Some functions are already fresh, others are aging fast. You have a window, not a warning.
10-24	Past the Date	Most of this program runs on a playbook from before generative AI existed. The expiration already happened. Rebuild, do not patch.

A note on what to optimize for

This scorecard is not a proxy for how much you have automated. Ikea did not report how many jobs it eliminated; it reported 1.3 billion euros in new revenue from redeploying 8,500 people AI could have replaced. Klarna optimized for cost, hit its automation targets, and spent the next year quietly rehiring humans. Track partner-sourced revenue per FTE, not cost-per-touch or headcount reduced. That is the number that tells you whether you built a force multiplier or just a cheaper way to do the same thing.

Pick your metric, function by function

Partner-sourced revenue per FTE is the right headline number, but it is a program-level view. Two more belong on that same dashboard: Partner LifeTime Value (PLTV), so a faster deal does not quietly become a worse relationship, and the percentage of long-tail partners actively engaged in the last 90 days, which tests whether freed-up time is actually reaching partners nobody had bandwidth for before.

Below that, each function has its own tell. A program-wide number can hide a function that is quietly failing. Use this table to pick the metric that would actually catch it.

Function	Metric to track	Why it works
Deal registration & pipeline hygiene	Partner-sourced pipeline per FTE	Tests whether faster hygiene turns into more real pipeline, not just a cleaner spreadsheet.
Partner onboarding	Time-to-first-deal (ramp time)	Proves the freed-up hours are shortening the path to productivity, not just the paperwork.
MDF / co-op funds	Campaign-influenced pipeline per dollar spent	Replaces funds reconciled on time with whether the money actually produced pipeline.
Partner enablement & certification	Certified-to-productive conversion rate	A partner who passed the quiz is not the same as a partner who can sell. This checks which one you built.
QBRs & joint business planning	Partner lifetime value (PLTV) growth	The point of a good JBP conversation is a partner worth more over time, not a prettier deck.
Partner recruitment & vetting	Fit-score accuracy at 12 months	Tests whether AI-assisted vetting actually predicts performance, not just faster signing.
Partner marketing & campaign execution	Actively supported partners per FTE	The elastic-demand bet only pays off if personalization reaches more partners, not the same ones faster.

Partner support & escalations	Partner NPS/CSAT alongside ticket volume	Klarna's automation numbers looked perfect right up until this number cracked.
Partner data, reporting & analytics	Signal-to-action lag	A dashboard nobody acts on faster than before has not actually changed anything.
Renewals & partner health	Renewal rate among AI-flagged at-risk partners	Directly tests whether the early warning changed the outcome.

The skill underneath every row

Every function above splits the same way: the execution work is what AI takes over, the judgment work is what a human still owns. The skill that decides whether your team ends up on the right side of that split for the next three to five years is not a technical one. It is knowing what to ask for and how to judge what comes back, while agents handle execution in between.

> *"Whenever you hear the words AI, think amplifying intention, not artificial intelligence."* – Erik Brynjolfsson, Stanford Digital Economy Lab

Brynjolfsson calls the person who does this well the CEO of a fleet of agents. The tools take whatever plan you already have and scale it. If you do not have a plan, they do not do much for you at all. The partner leaders whose programs stay fresh will not be the ones with the best tools. They will be the ones who know what to ask the tools for.

Where to start

1. Tactical, this week: run the prompt below against your two lowest-scoring functions.
2. Tactical, this month: check your partner dashboard. If the headline metric is cost-per-touch or headcount reduced, replace it with partner-sourced revenue per FTE and the function-level metric from the table above that matches your weakest score.
3. Strategic, this quarter: for every function scoring 3 or below, identify one adjacent skill your team could redeploy into, the way Ikea moved retail staff into design consulting.
4. Strategic, this year: rebuild your two lowest-scoring functions end to end. Do not just automate the parts AI can already do and call it finished.

Steal this prompt

Role: You are a partner ecosystem strategist who has audited channel programs for hundreds of B2B vendors, with deep fluency in both traditional PRM/partner operations and where generative AI has changed what's possible in each function.

Action: Score the "freshness" of my partner program function by function: deal registration, partner onboarding, MDF/co-op management, enablement, QBRs, recruiting, partner marketing, partner support, reporting & analytics, partner health. For each function, flag anything – a process, template, workflow, or tool – that hasn't been touched, redesigned, or reconsidered since before generative AI existed (treat November 2022 as the cutoff). For every flag, specify two things: (1) what's now automatable with current AI capabilities, and (2) what still genuinely requires a human judgment call, relationship, or negotiation.

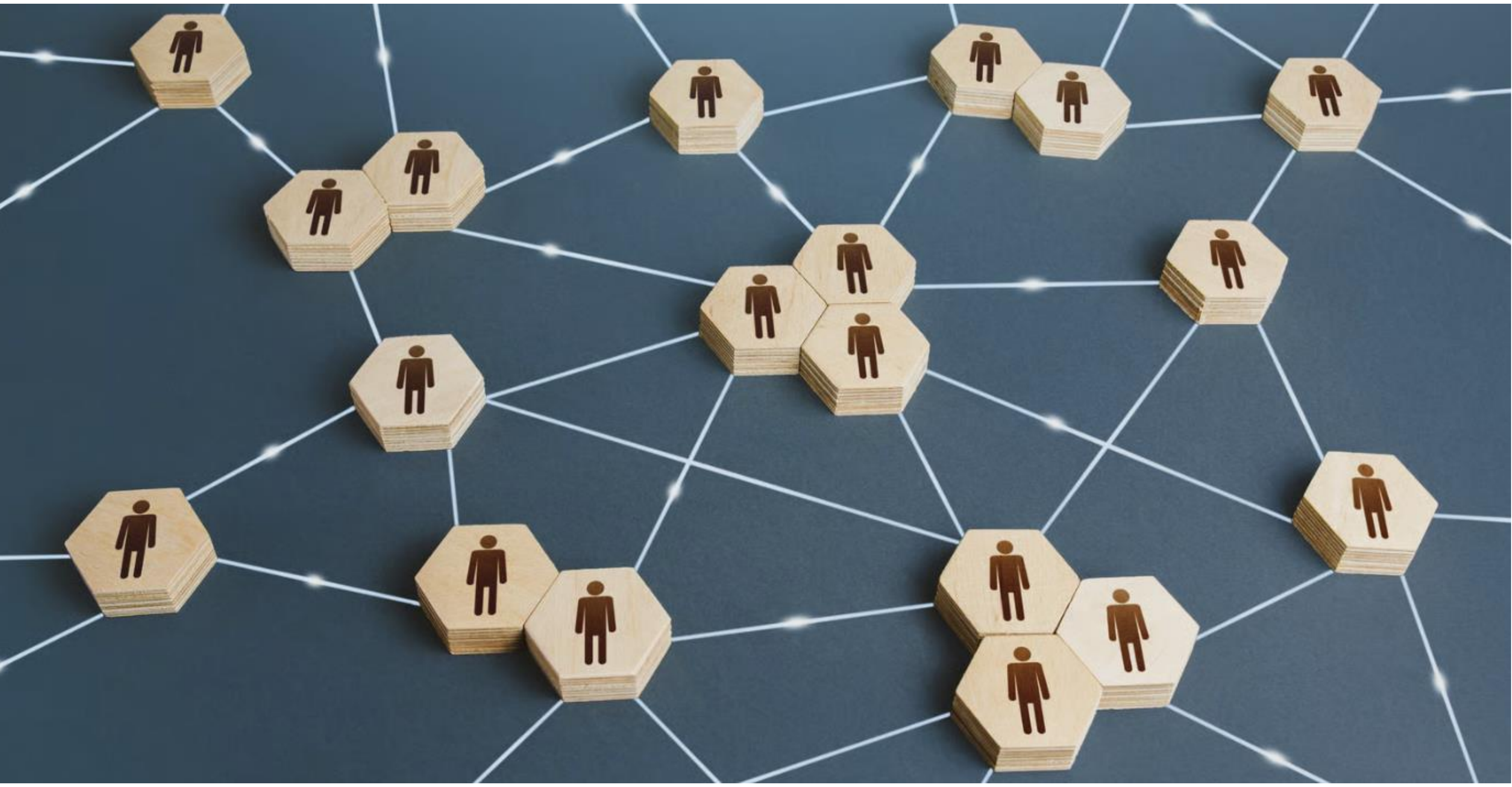
Context: [Insert: your PRM/tech stack, current process docs or workflows for each function, last-updated dates if known, program size/partner count, and any known pain points]. If I don't have last-touched dates handy, tell me what to go pull before this analysis can be accurate – don't guess at dates or fabricate a score.

Expectation: Deliver a scorecard with one row per function containing: freshness score (1–5), evidence for the score, what's now automatable, what still needs a human, and one recommended next action. Close with an overall program freshness score and the single highest-leverage fix. If a function's staleness or automatability can't be assessed from what I've given you, say so explicitly rather than filling the gap with a generic answer.

Important note: this only works well if you feed it real inputs for the Context section – actual process docs, last-modified dates, current tools.

Get Yourself a Dashboard

Once you have your scores, you will need to track and measure them to see if you are headed in the right direction. Your dashboard should look something like this:



How AchieveUnite helps

This scorecard is a lighter version of the audit we run with clients before any decision: score the program, find the adjacent skill, rebuild the metric, then execute the refocus function by function. If you want a second set of eyes on your results, or want to walk through what a freshness rebuild looks like for your specific program, reach out. Learn More >

Jessica Baker, Chief Innovation Officer, AchieveUnite | jessica@achieveunite.com

Sources:

- *Erik Brynjolfsson interview, Silicon Valley Girl (Stanford Digital Economy Lab research on AI and entry-level employment).*
- *Ikea/Klarna case comparison: Stephanie Davis, "Instead of Laying Off 8,500 Workers Because of AI, Ikea Used This Radical Leadership Playbook to Grow Revenue," Inc., June 23, 2026.*