

The SAP partner ecosystem

Market Research · September 2026

The most-transacted partner channel in enterprise software: 369 verified acquisitions, more than any other ecosystem - spread across a registrant-inflated population of roughly 24,000 that makes the density look deceptively thin..

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Executive Summary

SAP has seen more partner-firm acquisitions than any other ecosystem in the dataset — 369 of 1,364 between 2015 and 2025, or 27 percent of all verified partner M&A. The apparent density of 1.5 percent is an artefact of the denominator: roughly 24,000 partners including free registrants. Against the services-delivery population the real consolidation is far advanced, and the ecosystem sits firmly in maturity, where the independent specialist count falls year on year. Partner firms here carry an 11.1x EBITDA median on 1.10x revenue — the highest EBITDA median of any named ecosystem — and the demand pool is dominated by one deadline: the S/4HANA migration wall.

369

VERIFIED DEALS, 2015–25

More than any other ecosystem — 27% of all 1,364 verified partner-firm acquisitions.

~24,000

PARTNERS IN THE PROGRAM

Includes free registrants. The services-delivery population is an order of magnitude smaller.

11.1x

PARTNER EBITDA MEDIAN

On 1.10x revenue — the highest EBITDA median of any named ecosystem in the dataset.

Maturity

LIFECYCLE PHASE

Independent specialists exist in numbers but the count falls as consolidation outpaces admission.

~1.5%

APPARENT DEAL DENSITY

Deceptively low: the denominator counts registrants, not delivery firms.

S/4HANA

THE MIGRATION WALL

A time-boxed, high-value services pool that ends — and the reason the channel is priced now.

CTPP

DESIGNATED UNDER DORA

Named among the 19 Critical ICT Third-Party Providers in November 2025.

Sell now

SELL-TIMING READ

Maturity plus a finite migration pool. Waiting shrinks both the multiple and the buyer's urgency.

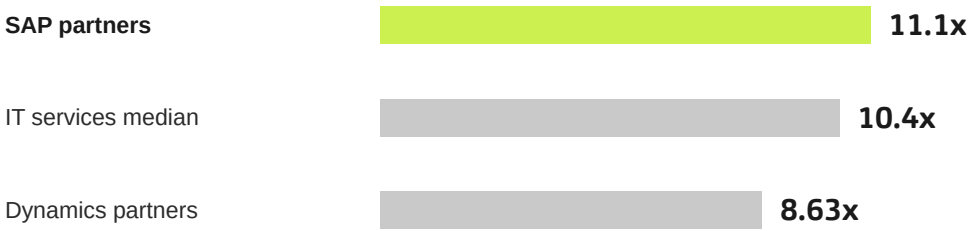
Sources: Aventis Advisors, 1,364 verified partner-firm acquisitions across eighteen ecosystems 2015–2025 (SAP 369) and ecosystem-level multiples (SAP 1.10x revenue, 11.1x EBITDA); SAP partner-program population (~24,000, includes free registrants, 2025); European Supervisory Authorities CTPP designations (18 November 2025); all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

Size, Growth, Trends & Drivers

Maturity means the firm count falls rather than rises, because consolidation removes independents faster than a gated program admits them. Growth in this channel therefore comes from revenue per firm, and the dominant source is finite: the S/4HANA migration estate. That is a high-value, time-boxed services pool with a deadline attached, which is precisely why SAP has produced more partner-firm transactions than any other ecosystem — buyers are acquiring capacity to service a wave they can see the end of.

The highest EBITDA median of any named ecosystem

EV / EBITDA and EV / revenue medians, by ecosystem of the acquired firm



ON REVENUE, THE PICTURE INVERTS

1.10x SAP partners \u2014 in line with the 1.1x IT-services median

1.97x Salesforce partners \u2014 nearly double, on lower EBITDA

SAP firms are priced as profitable services businesses; Salesforce firms as growth assets. The same badge logic does not transfer between the two.

Four drivers a partner firm can price

- → **The S/4HANA migration wall.** The structural demand pool: large, high-value and finite. It creates the urgency on both sides of every transaction in this channel.
- → **Regulated-buyer compliance.** SAP was named among the 19 Critical ICT Third-Party Providers designated under DORA in November 2025, and its regulated customers now require documented third-party controls from their partners too.
- → **Agentic AI.** Gartner projects 40 percent of enterprise applications will carry task-specific agents by end-2026, from under 5 percent — new implementation demand, and hour compression on the same work.
- → **Licensing complexity as a service.** Independent licence-spend and FinOps advisory is a recognised partner function and one of the few retainer positions the vendor does not compete for.

Sources: Aventis Advisors ecosystem-level multiples (SAP 1.10x revenue and 11.1x EBITDA; Salesforce 1.97x; Dynamics 1.06x and 8.63x; IT services median 1.1x and 10.4x); lifecycle growth-direction analysis; European Supervisory Authorities CTPP designations (18 November 2025); Gartner agentic-AI projection; all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

End-Users

SAP's buyer is the large industrial or regulated enterprise running the platform as its system of record, and that buyer cannot self-deliver a migration. Stated criteria are cost, functional fit and references; revealed criteria are risk reduction, certified depth and speed to value. Switching costs here are the highest of any category in the study — re-certification, re-integration, re-training — which makes embedded partner revenue unusually durable and makes account concentration a two-sided diligence question rather than a simple discount.

Highest

Regulated enterprise

BFSI, healthcare, pharma, insurance. Compliance, audit and sovereignty demand certified partners and documented controls. **Sustains the onshore delivery premium.**

Programme

Large industrial

Manufacturing, CPG, retail, telecom. Cannot land multi-module S/4HANA programmes to deadline in-house. **The core demand pool.**

Mandatory

Public sector & federal

Clearance, sovereignty and physical-presence certification make onshore delivery compulsory — a distinct, less contested buyer pool.

No bench

Mid-market

Holds no SAP-specialist headcount. Buys fixed-fee predictability and single accountability from mid-market specialists.

Locked in

All embedded buyers

Highest switching costs in the study. Price-inelastic once embedded, which is why application-management annuity retains so strongly here.

Concentration cuts both ways

A firm with eight large embedded industrial customers has better revenue durability than one with forty mid-market accounts, and worse concentration risk. Both are true. Price contract length, renewal history, and whether the relationship sits with the firm or with two named people.

Pricing logic is moving

Value-based firms grew 8.7 percent against 2.1 percent for time-based, and buyers increasingly refuse to pay for hours AI has removed. Partner-firm retention benchmarks are not publicly disclosed with rigour; that gap is flagged, not filled.

Sources: end-user profiles, buying-criteria matrix and switching-cost analysis in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026); Deloitte 2025 Professional Services Benchmark.
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Complementary & Substitute Solutions

S/4HANA migration is project revenue, and project revenue ends. That makes the complement strategy in this ecosystem unusually consequential and unusually time-sensitive: a firm that attaches application management, data services and vertical IP before the migration wave passes converts a finite build into an annuity worth roughly twice the multiple. A firm that does not is selling a declining book. The substitute pressure lands hardest on exactly that hours-priced migration work.

Complements, ranked by multiple effect

- **Data and analytics.** The highest-valued adjacency at a 16.3x EBITDA median (first quartile 10.7x, third quartile 27.1x) — and every S/4HANA migration generates a data problem first.
- **Application-management annuity.** A support, monitoring and optimisation retainer at go-live moves a firm from project pricing toward the MSP median of roughly 8.9x EBITDA.
- **Vertical IP and accelerators.** Pre-built industry templates encode regulatory knowledge that is slow and costly for a buyer to replicate, and they price on a software multiple.
- **Licence and spend advisory.** A retainer position the vendor does not compete for, and the highest-trust entry point into an embedded account.

Substitutes, priced honestly

- **The captive GCC.** India hosts more than 1,700 global capability centres generating roughly 64.6bn dollars and employing 1.9 million people, heading toward 2,400 centres by 2030. ERP run work is exactly what captives insource.
- **Agentic AI and code generation.** Compresses standardised configuration toward zero marginal cost; fails on judgment, negotiation and accountable sign-off.
- **SAP's own services motion.** Takes the largest and most strategic accounts, backed by roadmap knowledge.
- **The end of the wave.** The most-underpriced substitute in this channel is simply the migration finishing. Hour-priced firms have a finite book; annuity-priced firms do not.

Sources: Aventis Advisors subsector multiples (data and analytics 16.3x with first quartile 10.7x and third quartile 27.1x; MSP median 8.9x; VAR 7.8x); Salt Creek Advisory recurring-vs-project pricing framework; NASSCOM FY24 GCC data; Gartner agentic-AI projections; all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

Value Chain

Eight stages carry the work from SAP licence to realised customer outcome, and in an ERP context each middle stage is a substantial engagement in its own right. That length is why the margin geography matters so much here: resale is pass-through, S/4HANA implementation is both the largest pool and the most AI-exposed stage, and the annuity stages at the bottom of the table are what survives the wave passing. The median private IT-services transaction fell to 8.8x EBITDA in late 2025 from 13.6x in 2023 as buyers stress-tested billable-hours models.

STAGE	REVENUE MODEL	WHO CAPTURES IT	AI COMPRESSION	MULTIPLE SIGNAL
Demand generation & co-sell	Referral / co-sell	SAP keeps most	Low	Neutral — but drives deal flow
Licence resale & provisioning	Pass-through margin	Distributor / reseller	High	**0.5x revenue · 7.8x EBITDA** — the floor
Advisory & architecture	T&M, fixed, outcome	IT consulting firm	Rising	**9.8x EBITDA**
S/4HANA implementation	T&M, fixed fee	Systems integrator	Highest	**10.7x EBITDA · 1.1x revenue**
Integration & data engineering	Project plus recurring	Data & analytics firm	Medium	**16.3x EBITDA** — the ceiling
Application management & run	Recurring subscription	MSP	Low	**10.7x, to 11.2x above USD 500m**
Optimisation & licence advisory	Retainer	FinOps / licensing specialist	Low	Retainer economics; vendor does not compete

The consolidator's instruction

Buy migration capacity for the wave, but underwrite the annuity for the exit. A book made entirely of S/4HANA implementation hours is a depleting asset priced at the most AI-exposed point in the chain; the same certified team attached to application management carries recurring revenue and sets the exit multiple.

Geography sets the base

EV/EBITDA medians run 11.2x in Asia, 10.9x in North America, 10.0x in Europe and 8.3x elsewhere, with emerging-market firms discounted for scaling and political risk. North America carries the largest median deal size at 73 to 85m dollars.

Sources: Aventis Advisors value-chain stage multiples, regional EV/EBITDA medians and the Q4 2025 median of 8.8x against a 2023 peak of 13.6x; partner-function taxonomy including advisory and licensing-optimisation partners; all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

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