

The Salesforce partner ecosystem

Market Research · September 2026

The highest-priced consulting channel in enterprise software: 3,400 partners, 197 verified acquisitions, and a program rebuilt around Agentforce that cut required badges from 170 to 28.

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Executive Summary

Salesforce partners command the highest revenue multiple of any ecosystem in the dataset — 1.97x revenue, roughly twice what Dynamics partners fetch — and the channel is in maturity, with 197 verified acquisitions against roughly 3,400 consulting firms. Two vendor decisions define the next two years for a partner firm here. Salesforce collapsed four partner tiers into two in March 2026, with only about 7 to 8 percent of partners reaching Summit, which mechanically thins the top of the program. And it reoriented the whole program around Agentforce, cutting required badges from 170 to 28. Both moves reward IP and annuity and penalise staff augmentation, and both make an already-consolidating channel consolidate faster.

~3,400

CONSULTING PARTNERS

Consulting and services firms only (AppExchange, 2025) — directly comparable with ServiceNow and Workday.

197

VERIFIED DEALS, 2015–25

Roughly 6% of the channel already bought — third-highest density in the dataset.

1.97x

REVENUE MULTIPLE, HIGHEST OF ANY ECOSYSTEM

Against SAP at 1.10x and Dynamics at 1.06x. The badge itself carries a premium here.

Maturity

LIFECYCLE PHASE

Partner count falls as consolidation removes firms faster than the program admits them.

4 tiers → 2

PROGRAM COLLAPSE, MARCH 2026

Select and Summit only, with roughly 7–8% of partners reaching Summit.

170 → 28

REQUIRED PARTNER BADGES

Program reoriented around Agentforce delivery; Salesforce says its ecosystem leads 70% of Agentforce implementations.

91%

CUSTOMERS RUNNING A THIRD-PARTY APP

Across 4,000-plus AppExchange apps. Every install raises the customer's exit cost.

$700m

LARGEST DISCLOSED CONSULTANCY PRICE

TCS / Coastal Cloud, 2025 — 400-plus professionals and 3,000-plus certifications.

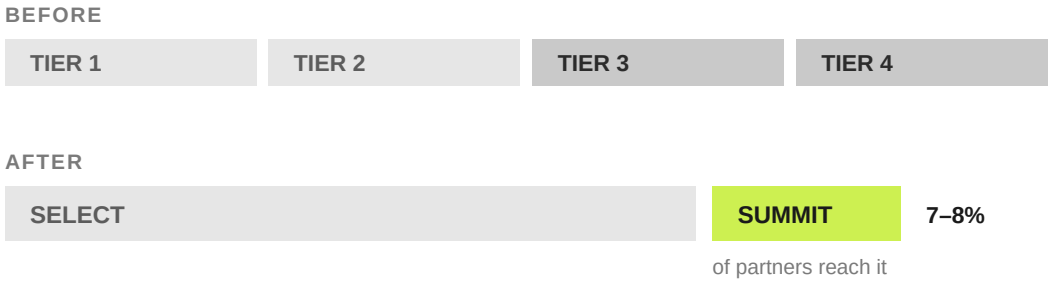
Sources: Salesforce consulting-partner count (AppExchange, 2025); Salesforce tier collapse to Select and Summit (March 2026) and badge reduction from 170 to 28; AppExchange app and install data; Aventis Advisors, 1,364 verified partner-firm acquisitions 2015–2025 (Salesforce 197) and ecosystem-level revenue multiples; TCS / Coastal Cloud (2025); all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

Scope & Definition

The unit of analysis is the partner firm, not Salesforce and not the end customer. Salesforce subscription revenue is out of scope. Unlike the hyperscalers, this ecosystem publishes a clean services-only denominator: roughly 3,400 consulting partners, counting implementation and services firms rather than resellers and registrants. That makes it one of the few counts in the study directly comparable with another vendor's, and it is why Salesforce deal density can be stated with confidence where AWS's cannot.

Four tiers into two, March 2026

Program rationalisation as a supply-side squeeze on the top of the channel



AND THE BADGE REQUIREMENT COLLAPSED WITH IT

170 → 28 required partner badges, as the program was reoriented around Agentforce delivery rather than product breadth.

Each rationalisation mechanically shrinks the count of top-tier firms and sharpens the scarcity that drives M&A. For a partner firm it means the tier on its website in 2025 may not be the tier it holds in 2027, so an acquirer must underwrite tier status against the new bar rather than the marketing page.

In scope, by partner function

Resellers; global and regional systems integrators; implementation and configuration consultancies, **the prime buy-and-build target**; managed service partners; ISV and technology partners building on AppExchange, **a distinct product economy**; training and enablement partners; and licensing-optimisation advisors.

Counting rules applied

- → **A services-only count, unusually.** The 3,400 figure counts consulting and services firms, not resellers or registrants — comparable with ServiceNow and Workday, not with hyperscaler headlines.
- → **Capacity is not count.** Coastal Cloud held over 3,000 certifications across roughly 400 professionals; certification density varies by an order of magnitude between firms of the same size.
- → **Vendor multipliers are cited, then discounted.** Salesforce publishes a 6.19-dollar partner-revenue multiplier per dollar of its own revenue, rising to 6.83 by 2028. Directional only.

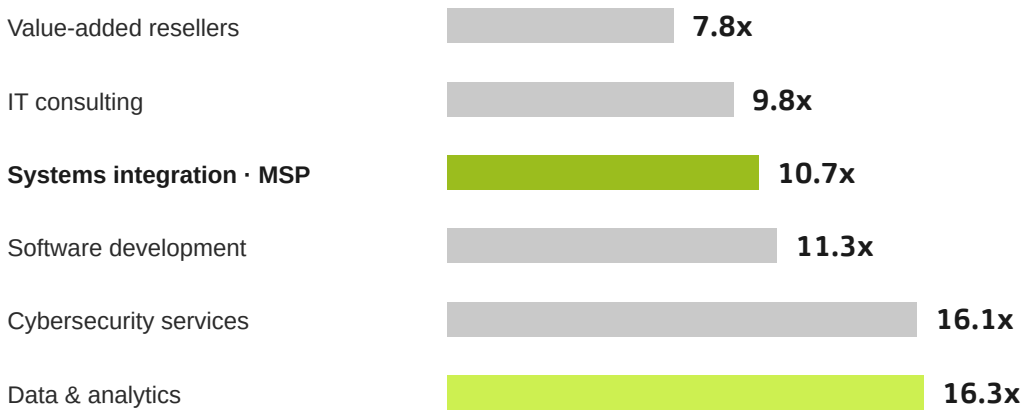
Sources: Salesforce program tier structure (four tiers collapsed to Select and Summit, March 2026; ~7–8% reaching Summit) and badge reduction from 170 to 28; Salesforce partner-revenue multiplier (USD 6.19 per dollar, rising to 6.83 in 2028 — vendor-sourced); Coastal Cloud certification data; verified partner-count reference table in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

Segmentation

Two things separate a premium Salesforce firm from a commodity one, and neither is size. The first is whether it owns IP — an AppExchange product, a vertical accelerator, a repeatable agentic-AI asset — because productised delivery prices toward a software multiple while billable configuration prices at the systems-integration band. The second is recurring share. In a mature ecosystem with a thinning top tier, those two attributes are what an acquirer is actually buying, and the rest of the segmentation grid modifies the price from there.

What each partner type is worth

EV / EBITDA, verified partner-firm transaction medians



THE ARBITRAGE

Entry at 5–8x on sub-USD 3m-EBITDA specialists, folded into platforms valued 10–14x. Scale alone is worth six turns: 6.7x below USD 5m EV against 12.7x above USD 500m.

Seven dimensions, applied

- → **Function.** Value rises from resale through SI and implementation to MSP and IP-rich ISV. An AppExchange product sits above the whole services band.
- → **Concentration.** A discount above 25–30 percent single-customer concentration and 1–2 turns above 35 percent; in maturity, multi-cloud breadth is rewarded rather than punished.
- → **Tier depth.** Summit among 7–8 percent of partners is the scarcity signal after the 2026 collapse; Select is not.
- → **Vertical.** Regulated and industry-specific depth commands one to two turns, because it carries embedded compliance knowledge a buyer cannot replicate quickly.
- → **Delivery geography.** Onshore go-to-market with offshore delivery is the dominant scaled model and sets the margin base.
- → **Recurring share.** The strongest single driver: pure-play MSPs are classed at 75-percent-plus recurring revenue and trade turns above identical-revenue peers.

Sources: Aventis Advisors subsector EBITDA medians (data and analytics 16.3x, cybersecurity 16.1x, software development 11.3x, systems integration and MSP 10.7x, IT consulting 9.8x, VAR 7.8x) and deal-size bands; Salesforce tier data (March 2026); CompTIA MSP recurring-revenue classification; all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

Complementary & Substitute Solutions

This is the ecosystem with the most developed complement market in the study, and the evidence is the app layer: 4,000-plus partner-built products with 91 percent customer penetration. A Salesforce partner therefore has a route off the project treadmill that most ecosystems lack, and the arithmetic is the usual one — recurring revenue prices at roughly twice project revenue. The substitute risk is concentrated in the same place as the opportunity: agentic AI, which Salesforce is building into the platform and pushing through the channel at the same time.

Complements, ranked by multiple effect

- **An AppExchange product.** A subscription business that runs only on the host platform, with install-base lock-in and a software multiple. The deepest app economy of any ecosystem here.
- **Data and analytics.** The highest-valued services adjacency at 16.3x EBITDA median, roughly 2.1 times the reseller floor — and the governed data foundation every Agentforce deployment needs.
- **Managed-services wrap.** A retainer at go-live moves a firm from a reseller multiple toward the MSP median of roughly 8.9x EBITDA.
- **Agent governance and MCP integration.** Emerging billable categories, because enterprises deploying agents need supervision, audit and integration.

Substitutes, priced honestly

- **Agentic AI in the product.** The badge cut from 170 to 28 is itself evidence of how much configuration knowledge the platform has absorbed. Hour-priced configuration is the exposed position.
- **Salesforce Professional Services.** A direct substitute with roadmap knowledge, taking the largest accounts.
- **The captive GCC.** India hosts more than 1,700 global capability centres employing 1.9 million people; recurring administration moves in-house above a volume threshold.
- **Low-code and admin self-service.** Substitutes for well-documented configuration; fails on complex integration, migration and regulated work needing accountable sign-off.

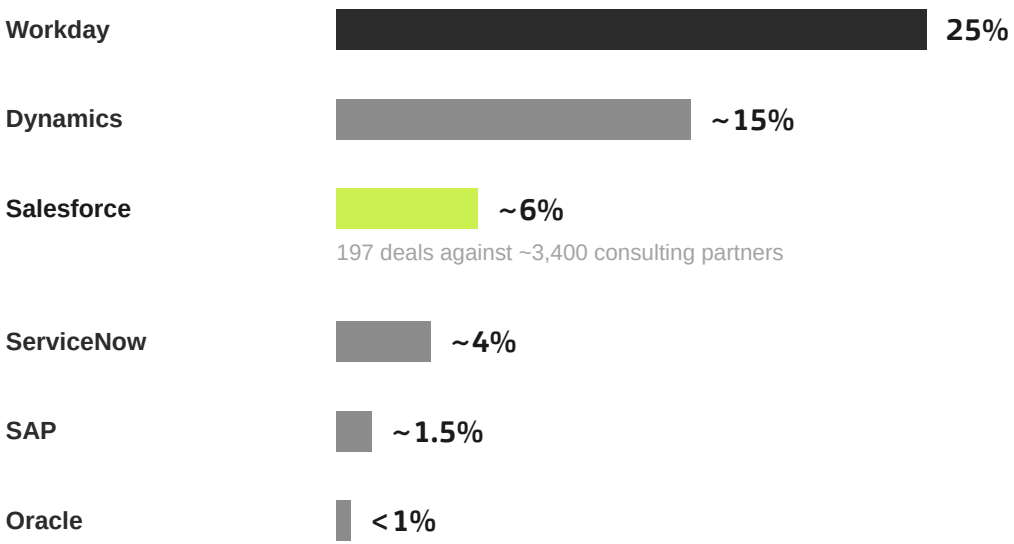
Sources: AppExchange app and install data; Aventis Advisors subsector multiples (data and analytics 16.3x, MSP median 8.9x, VAR 7.8x); Salt Creek Advisory recurring-vs-project pricing framework; Salesforce badge reduction and Agentforce reorientation; NASSCOM FY24 GCC data; Gartner agentic-AI projections; all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

M&A Landscape

One hundred and ninety-seven verified deals against roughly 3,400 consulting partners puts Salesforce at about 6 percent density — third behind Workday's quarter and Dynamics' fifteen percent, and far ahead of SAP's 1.5 percent. The sell-timing read is unambiguous: sell, because the GSIs and the platforms are buying and the program's own tier collapse is reducing the number of firms that can credibly claim the top. Waiting in a maturity ecosystem means waiting while the pool of comparable independents shrinks around you.

How much of each channel is already bought

Verified deals as a share of program population, 2015–2025



Denominators differ in scope; the ordering survives any reasonable counting choice.

Five recurring deal theses

- → **Certified-bench acquisition.** Coastal Cloud's 3,000-plus certifications across 400 professionals is the profile that clears the highest prices.
- → **Agentic-AI capability, bought not built.** The named gap in gate and maturity ecosystems, and the explicit rationale for the 2025–26 Accenture run.
- → **Vertical IP.** Horizontal implementations miss industry compliance and process nuance; pre-built vertical accelerators command one to two turns.
- → **Multiple arbitrage.** Sub-3m-dollar-EBITDA boutiques at 5–8x folded into platforms valued 10–14x.
- → **Recurring-revenue conversion.** Attach managed services and IP, then sell the scaled annuity to a strategic.

Sell-timing read

Sell — the buyers are already here. GSIs and sponsor platforms are both active, and the March 2026 tier collapse means fewer firms will be able to claim top-tier status going forward. Map the two or three most likely acquirers by archetype before opening a process: even in a crowded buyer market, a single bidder with no tension anchors the price low.

Sources: Aventis Advisors per-ecosystem verified deal counts, density and sell-timing reads (Salesforce 197 deals against ~3,400 consulting partners, ~6%; Workday 38 / ~150; Dynamics 210 / ~1,400; ServiceNow 97 / ~2,200–2,700; SAP 369 / ~24,000; Oracle 115 / 20,000–30,000); deal-rationale and GTM-gap analysis; all as cited in Baker Tilly, *The Enterprise Software Partner Ecosystem* (Sept 2026).

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