ChatGPT

From Consulting to SaaS

Executive summary

The slide is describing a real transition pattern, but not a single universally standardized maturity model with one widely accepted name. The closest fit is a **composite** of two adjacent literatures: **service productization** and **SaaS go-to-market maturity**. In the productization literature, firms move from highly customized, knowledge-intensive services toward standardized, branded, repeatable offers; in the SaaS literature, firms then evolve from direct, sales-assisted acquisition toward progressively lower-friction, self-serve, partner, marketplace, and enterprise-hybrid channels. In other words, the slide is best read as a **service-to-product-to-SaaS GTM maturity model**, not as a named industry standard. [1]

Across the evidence, the key strategic idea is consistent: **channels do not compound until the offer compounds**. A consulting-led company can grow through founder effort, referrals, and bespoke delivery, but those motions scale mostly with senior attention and headcount. Productized offers start to break that constraint by standardizing scope, pricing, and proof points. Standalone products and SaaS then widen the top of funnel through inbound, trials, self-serve onboarding, and ecosystem extensions. Later still, enterprise sales and partner channels add scale when the company has enough product maturity, implementation discipline, and brand trust to support them. [2]

A practical stage model, synthesized from the research and case evidence, has six steps: **founder-led bespoke services → productized offers → standalone product wedge → sales-assisted SaaS → self-serve and product-led SaaS → ecosystem and enterprise scale**. The companies that compound best usually do not “jump” these stages. They sequence them by reducing custom work, shortening time-to-value, improving onboarding instrumentation, widening distribution only after packaging and delivery stabilize, and then adding partner or marketplace motions once implementations become teachable to third parties. [3]

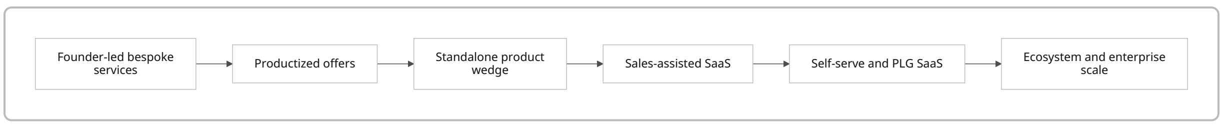
For a mid-stage services-led startup, the practical implication is straightforward. The next step is usually **not** “hire more sales” or “launch a channel program.” It is to codify a narrow repeatable outcome, sell that offer repeatedly under stable pricing, convert the repeatable core into a software wedge, and only then invest in self-serve growth, partner-led implementation, and enterprise overlays. In most cases, that path takes roughly **18 to 36 months** to produce meaningful SaaS ARR, depending on implementation complexity, buying committee size, and how much of the current delivery burden still depends on experts rather than product flows. That timing is an inference from the sequence visible in the case studies and from the implementation-partner literature that shows SaaS channel expansion usually follows, rather than precedes, operating standardization. [4]

The best-fitting maturity model

The strongest academic lens for this slide is **service productization**. Wirtz describes productizing services as using product-like concepts and tools to make services more structured and scalable, while also acknowledging trade-offs. Järvi's work on knowledge-intensive business services similarly treats productization as a managerial response to the scaling limits of highly customized service delivery. In both, the firm's problem is not merely "selling more" but designing an offer that can be sold repeatedly without recreating the solution from scratch each time. [5]

That first lens is necessary, but incomplete. To explain the later parts of the slide, a second lens is needed: **SaaS GTM/channel maturity**. The literature on B2B subscriptions shows that subscription offers vary by service focus and customer resource integration, while SaaS implementation-partner research shows that vendors often extend scale by keeping product development in-house and delegating implementation and extensions to partners. In practice, that is what turns a product into a channel-compounding platform. [6]

The slide's argument that "services do not compound" also aligns with the operating logic visible in later SaaS channel models. Freemium and self-serve only work when activation is low-friction and the marginal cost to serve free users is manageable. Marketplace and partner channels only work when the product is stable enough that third parties can implement, extend, or resell it without relying on the founder's tacit knowledge. Enterprise sales only compounds when proof, deployment, onboarding, governance, and customer success are already systematized. [7]



So if the question is "what standard model is this?", the most accurate answer is: **there is no single canonical model with that exact label**, but the closest recognized framing is a **service productization maturity curve that graduates into SaaS GTM/channel maturity**. That framing fits both the academic literature and the company evidence far better than treating the slide as a generic "digital transformation" or "sales maturity" graphic. [1]

Stage model and the capabilities required at each step

The typical journey is not just a revenue-model shift. It is a coordinated change in **pricing, packaging, sales motion, marketing, delivery design, data collection, and organizational roles**. The stages below are written as a practical operating model rather than an abstract taxonomy. They synthesize the productization research with the GTM patterns visible in HubSpot, Atlassian, Shopify, Salesforce, ServiceNow, and the service-rooted transitions of Basecamp, Mailchimp, and Moz. [8]

Founder-led bespoke services

At this stage, the company sells custom work. Pricing is usually time-and-materials or highly customized fixed bids. The dominant channels are founder network, reputation, direct outreach, referrals, and a small amount of opportunistic inbound. Delivery is expert-driven. The most important metrics are not SaaS metrics; they are utilization, gross margin by project, win rate by offer type, sales cycle length, founder involvement in closing, and which customer problems recur often enough to deserve standardization. The stage is useful because it surfaces real problems quickly, but it does not compound well because every sale creates another delivery obligation. That is exactly the scaling bottleneck productization research describes. [9]

To move to the next stage, the company usually needs to:

- Pick one narrow customer problem that appears repeatedly in won deals.
- Separate “diagnostic” work from “delivery” work so the offer can be scoped predictably.
- Turn common deliverables into reusable templates, playbooks, and onboarding checklists.
- Replace opaque bespoke pricing with named packages and clear boundaries.
- Start collecting baseline outcome data so each engagement produces proof, not just revenue.
- Instrument CRM stages well enough to see which use cases close fastest and profit best.
- Reduce founder dependence by having a second person run calls, demos, and project kickoff.
- Track which parts of delivery could plausibly become software or guided workflow. [10]

Productized offers

Here the firm still sells services, but they are increasingly **offer-led** rather than **project-led**. Packaging becomes explicit. Pricing becomes simpler, often fixed-scope or subscription-like. The sales motion is still human-led, but selling gets easier because prospects can understand the offer without a custom proposal every time. Marketing shifts from generic thought leadership toward proof assets for a defined use case: case studies, ROI examples, implementation timelines, checklists, and comparisons. Delivery becomes more modular, and success depends on how often the team can deliver the same outcome with the same input assumptions. This is the stage where the company first builds a repeatable demand engine. [11]

To move from productized service to a real product wedge, the company usually needs to:

- Standardize data inputs, customer prerequisites, and onboarding steps.
- Collapse custom proposal variation into three or fewer core packages.
- Convert the most repetitive delivery work into internal tools or customer-facing workflows.
- Unbundle one high-frequency task from the service and make it purchasable on its own.
- Create a “light implementation” path so customers can buy the core outcome with less labor.
- Start pricing part of the value around access or recurring usage rather than labor alone.
- Document where customers ask for self-service access instead of managed execution.
- Train customer-success or implementation staff to deliver the offer without bespoke founder involvement. [12]

Standalone product wedge

This stage is usually the first real bridge from services into software. The company builds a narrow product that solves one painful, high-frequency step in the service workflow. Sales is often still assisted: demos, consultative calls, onboarding help. Existing service customers are the easiest early buyers because they already trust the team and understand the problem. Marketing becomes more educational and category-defining because the product must now explain itself without a thick services wrapper. Pricing shifts toward licenses, subscriptions, usage units, or seat-based models. Delivery starts to split into **product**, **implementation**, and **support**, which is a major organizational change. [13]

To move from a wedge product into sales-assisted SaaS, the company usually needs to:

- Instrument activation, feature usage, onboarding time, and support tickets from day one.
- Define a single “time-to-first-value” event and optimize for it ruthlessly.

- Remove as much manual setup as possible from the first 30 days.
- Introduce recurring billing and align packaging to customer value segments.
- Build a support function distinct from service delivery, even if tiny.
- Create implementation paths by account size so small buyers can onboard more lightly.
- Produce educational content around the target workflow, not just the product UI.
- Decide which custom requests become product roadmap items and which remain paid services. [14]

Sales-assisted SaaS

At this point, the company is truly selling SaaS, but the motion is still relatively high-touch. AEs, founders, or solution consultants may still run demos, onboarding calls, and proof-of-value motions. Inbound starts to matter much more. Content, webinars, templates, academy-style education, SEO, and free tools often become top-of-funnel assets because the goal is no longer just closing identifiable prospects; it is generating repeatable qualified demand. Packaging usually expands into tiers. Metrics shift toward trial-to-paid conversion, activation, churn, expansion, onboarding duration, gross margin, and payback—not just project margin. [15]

To move from sales-assisted SaaS to self-serve and product-led distribution, the company usually needs to:

- Offer a trial, free tier, or free core asset that lets users experience value before buying.
- Reduce setup friction so the product can be adopted without mandatory live help for smaller accounts.
- Build lifecycle messaging around activation, adoption, and upgrade triggers.
- Align pricing fences to genuine segmentation, such as usage, users, compliance, or integrations.
- Improve in-product education, templates, and contextual guidance.
- Route larger or less activated accounts to human help without forcing every account into sales.
- Establish ownership of growth experiments across signup, first value, and expansion.
- Track cohorts by acquisition source so self-serve traffic is judged by retention, not signups alone. [16]

Self-serve and product-led SaaS

This is the stage where channels begin to compound materially. Prospects can discover the product through content, search, word of mouth, communities, or comparisons; start via trial or free tier; activate inside the product; and expand over time. Human sales still exists, but it becomes more selective and economically targeted at higher-ACV accounts, lower-conversion segments, or expansion opportunities. This is also where APIs, integrations, templates, and distribution loops start to matter much more. If the offering is complex, self-serve may only cover smaller accounts; that is fine. The point is not to abolish sales. The point is to **reserve expensive human attention for the deals that truly need it**. Atlassian’s early model is the clearest public example of this principle. [17]

To move from self-serve SaaS to ecosystem and enterprise scale, the company usually needs to:

- Build and document APIs, webhooks, and integration patterns that third parties can rely on.
- Launch a partner-friendly implementation path rather than keeping all services in-house.
- Create marketplace listings or integration directories that reduce discovery friction.
- Stand up partner operations: recruiting, enablement, attribution, deal registration, and support rules.
- Define a clean line between core product functionality and partner-delivered extensions.

- Add enterprise-readiness capabilities such as security reviews, governance, analytics, and admin controls.
- Introduce account expansion plays driven by usage, adoption breadth, or adjacent workflows.
- Measure partner-sourced pipeline separately from partner-served implementations. [18]

Ecosystem and enterprise scale

At this stage the company operates a **hybrid distribution model**. Self-serve and inbound still feed growth, but partners, marketplaces, consultants, cloud alliances, and enterprise account teams amplify reach. Implementation often becomes partly or largely partner-led. Pricing expands into enterprise tiers, negotiated contracts, usage elements, and platform monetization. Delivery becomes a mix of in-house customer success, solution engineering, and partner execution. Metrics shift toward NRR, ACV growth, partner-sourced pipeline, partner-influenced ARR, multi-product attach, large-customer counts, ecosystem activity, and remaining performance obligations or other forward-looking contracted revenue indicators. This is the stage where the business begins to look less like “a product” and more like “a platform with distribution layers.” [19]

The last operational move is not a different channel so much as a different discipline: **channel orchestration**. Companies that reach this level then spend their time managing channel conflict, partner economics, enterprise complexity, marketplace integrity, and multi-product expansion rather than simply “adding more leads.” [20]

Stage comparison

Stage	Primary sales channels	Critical roles	Core metrics	Representative companies
Bespoke services	Founder-led direct sales, referrals, outbound	Founder-seller, delivery lead, project manager	Gross margin by project, win rate, founder-close dependence, cycle time	Basecamp before Basecamp, early Mailchimp, early Moz [21]
Productized offers	Named packaged offers, referrals, light inbound, agency/reseller relationships	Offer owner, ops/revops generalist, implementation lead	Repeatable offer attach rate, onboarding time, package margin, case-study yield	Campaign Monitor’s agency-focused packaging, HubSpot partner ecosystem for service providers [22]
Standalone product wedge	Direct demos, upsell into service base, educational inbound	Product manager, founding engineer, support lead	Pilot-to-paid, time-to-first-value, product usage, % custom work outside roadmap	Basecamp launch, Moz Pro transition, Bidsketch-style proposal software model [23]

Stage	Primary sales channels	Critical roles	Core metrics	Representative companies
Sales-assisted SaaS	Inbound content/ SEO, demos, free tools, AE-assisted closes	Growth marketer, AE, CSM, support	Trial/demo conversion, churn, activation, onboarding duration, subscription gross margin	HubSpot, Mailchimp, Campaign Monitor [24]
Self-serve and product-led SaaS	Free tier or trial, SEO/content, in-product conversion, communities	Growth PM, lifecycle marketer, product analyst, support	Signup-to-activation, trial-to-paid, payback, cohort retention, expansion from low-touch cohorts	Atlassian, HubSpot free CRM, Shopify trial motion [25]
Ecosystem and enterprise scale	Marketplace, solution partners, cloud marketplaces, enterprise AEs, SIs	Partner manager, solution engineer, enterprise AE, security/ compliance, CS leadership	NRR, ACV, partner-sourced pipeline, large-customer count, marketplace installs	Shopify, Salesforce, ServiceNow, later Atlassian [26]

The table above is a synthesis, but each element follows the same ordering visible in the case evidence: standardize the offer first, then lower-friction acquisition, then ecosystem expansion, then enterprise orchestration. [27]

What companies actually did

The company record is clearest when the cases are split into two groups: firms that truly **started from services or service-adjacent work**, and firms that **illustrate later-stage channel layering** even if they were software-native earlier on. Taken together, they show the whole journey more accurately than any single company does alone. [28]

Service-root journeys

Company	Timeline	Key channel changes	Outcome
Basecamp	37signals began as a web design consultancy in 1999; Basecamp launched in 2004, with a free version and paid tiers from day one. [29]	Consultancy and client work generated the problem; the internal project-management tool became a sellable product; distribution shifted from client relationships to self-serve software purchase, trial, and ongoing subscription-style access. [30]	Today Basecamp reports more than 84 million accounts and more than 60 million managed projects, illustrating a durable, long-lived software business built from service pain rather than from a venture-funded software-first playbook. [31]
Mailchimp	Ben Chestnut and Dan Kurzius started the Rocket Science Group as a web design agency and built Mailchimp on the side; Intuit agreed to acquire it in 2021. [32]	Agency work exposed a repeated SMB need; Mailchimp shifted into software, later adding a free plan and large-scale integrations, moving distribution toward self-serve SMB acquisition and ecosystem-based expansion. [33]	At acquisition, Intuit said Mailchimp had 13 million total users, 2.4 million monthly active users, and 800,000 paid customers; total consideration was approximately $12 billion. [34]
Moz	Rand Fishkin describes the project as starting as a personal SEO blog in 2004, evolving into a consultancy, and then becoming a software company in 2007; Moz was acquired by iContact in 2021. [35]	The company moved from expert services into subscription software, but crucially it also built a large inbound engine through education, community, and SEO content—an early example of content-led SaaS channel expansion. [36]	Fishkin reported Moz had reached roughly a $40 million revenue run rate by 2016, showing that a service-rooted company could become a meaningful mid-market SaaS business before exit. [35]
Campaign Monitor	Campaign Monitor says it has served the market for more than two decades and explicitly says it “started out helping agencies with email.” [37]	Its channel evolution moved from agency-centric software to a strongly productized, white-label SaaS motion for agencies, with client-account management, private labeling, and integration partners layered on top. [38]	Campaign Monitor states that more than 200,000 companies use the platform, demonstrating substantial scale from an agency-oriented starting point. [39]

These four cases all support the same proposition: the path out of services is rarely “stop selling services overnight.” It is usually **identify recurring work, package it, build a narrow product around it, and then widen channels as the delivery surface becomes more teachable and productized**. [40]

Channel-scaling variants

Company	Timeline	Key channel changes	Outcome
HubSpot	By the time of its IPO filing, HubSpot had 10,194 customers in 2013; by 2026 it reported nearly 300,000 customers and 2025 revenue above $3.1 billion. [41]	HubSpot scaled through inbound education and certification, added free CRM to lower entry friction, and then expanded through a formal solutions partner program and app ecosystem. [42]	The company shows how inbound content, free entry-point product, and partner-enabled implementation can coexist in one hybrid motion. [43]
Atlassian	In its F-1, Atlassian said it did not have a direct salesforce with traditional quota-carrying reps; by late 2025 it reported 350,000+ customers and over $5.2 billion in FY2025 revenue. [44]	The company used low-friction self-serve acquisition and trials early, then layered partner programs, enterprise packages, and a large marketplace on top of that base. [45]	Atlassian Marketplace reports $6 billion in lifetime sales, 6,000+ apps, and 2,000+ marketplace partners, illustrating what channel compounding looks like after product-led adoption is already established. [46]
Shopify	Shopify’s current SEC filing says that as of December 31, 2025, more than 21,000 apps were available in the Shopify App Store; Q4 2025 revenue grew 31%. [47]	The motion evolved from self-serve merchant acquisition into a large partner ecosystem of developers, designers, marketers, and service professionals; Shopify then improved partner economics by giving eligible developers 100% of the first $1 million in annual app-store revenue and 85% above that. [48]	Shopify is a strong example of a company that turned product adoption into ecosystem-led growth rather than trying to do all services, integrations, and extensions itself. [49]

Company	Timeline	Key channel changes	Outcome
Salesforce	Salesforce reported fiscal 2026 revenue of $41.5 billion and total remaining performance obligation of $72 billion. [50]	Its motion combines direct enterprise selling with referral partners, ISVs, and AppExchange consultants; Salesforce's filings explicitly note partner referral fees and continued investment in additional distribution channels. [51]	AppExchange is positioned as a marketplace for apps, solutions, and consultants, making Salesforce a canonical example of enterprise SaaS scaling through a partner and marketplace layer rather than direct sales alone. [52]
ServiceNow	ServiceNow founder Fred Luddy is credited by the company with creating the business in 2004; the firm says it became the fastest-growing enterprise software company to reach $7+ billion in annual revenue organically. It also reported 2,109 customers with more than $1 million in ACV as of year-end 2024. [53]	The company's later growth model puts major weight on its partner ecosystem, strategic alliances, and partner-led customer transformation; its annual report explicitly frames partners as a core ecosystem component. [54]	ServiceNow shows how enterprise SaaS compounds when the vendor combines platform depth with a formal partner program and large-account expansion motion. [55]

The pattern across the scale cases is that **new channels layer onto old ones**. HubSpot did not stop using education when it launched free CRM; Atlassian did not suddenly become a field-sales company when it introduced enterprise packages; Shopify did not replace self-serve with partners; Salesforce and ServiceNow did not abandon direct sales when marketplaces and partner ecosystems grew. Mature SaaS companies orchestrate multiple motions at once, but only after the product and operating model can support the complexity. [56]

Recurring patterns, failure modes, and readiness signals

The most recurrent pattern is that the **first product is usually born inside the service workflow**, not in isolation from it. Basecamp came from client project coordination, Mailchimp from agency-side email needs, and Moz from a consulting and publishing engine around SEO. That is why many successful services-to-SaaS transitions begin with a wedge that feels “too small” to outsiders: it is solving the most repetitive, annoying, high-frequency part of the work first. [21]

A second pattern is that **education becomes a distribution asset** before full self-serve monetization does. Moz's content and community, HubSpot Academy's inbound programs, and Mailchimp's guides all show that inbound works best when the company can teach the job-to-be-done, not just advertise the product.

This matters especially for service-rooted companies because they usually possess unusually rich domain knowledge to turn into educational demand generation. [57]

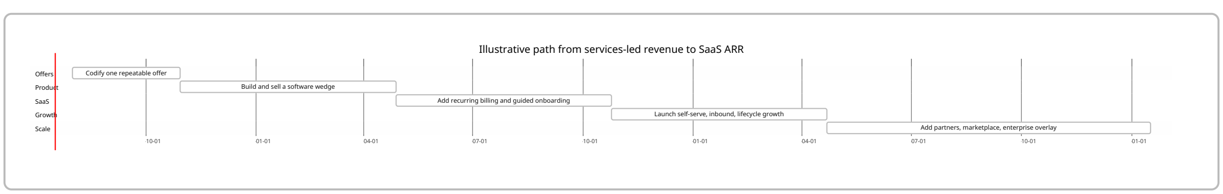
A third pattern is that **partners arrive after standardization, not before it**. The implementation-partner literature explains why: partners are most efficient when the vendor keeps product development centered while external specialists help customers adopt, configure, and extend the solution. Shopify's app ecosystem, Atlassian Marketplace, Salesforce AppExchange, HubSpot's solutions partners, and ServiceNow's partner program all fit that sequence. [58]

The common failure modes are also remarkably consistent. One is **false productization**: the company markets a packaged offer, but every deal still needs custom scoping, bespoke delivery, or founder-level diagnosis. Another is **premature channel expansion**: launching a marketplace, reseller program, or aggressive self-serve motion before onboarding is predictable and supportable. A third is **pricing incoherence**, where the company keeps labor-era pricing structure while trying to sell software economics. A fourth is **channel conflict**, especially when services teams, partners, and direct sales all fight over the same accounts without clear rules of engagement. These failure modes are implicit both in the productization literature and in the way mature SaaS firms formalize programs, tiers, marketplace rules, and partner economics. [59]

The best readiness signals for shifting channels are therefore mostly operational, not cosmetic. A company is likely ready to move from bespoke services into productized offers when a small number of use cases dominate wins and margins. It is likely ready to move from productized offers into a software wedge when the same inputs, decisions, and deliverables occur every time. It is likely ready to move from sales-assisted SaaS into self-serve only when time-to-first-value is short enough that a customer can meaningfully start without mandatory expert intervention. And it is likely ready for partner/ecosystem channels only when implementation logic, documentation, APIs, and support boundaries are stable enough for third parties to succeed repeatedly. Those are inferences—but they are strongly supported by the ordering visible across the cases and by the partner-implementation literature. [60]

A practical roadmap for a mid-stage services-led startup

For an unspecified mid-stage services-led startup, the realistic goal is not to "become a SaaS company" in one move. It is to **change the mix of revenue, delivery effort, and acquisition channels in sequence**. The most practical roadmap is usually a four-phase progression over roughly two years, with a fifth phase for scale. The timeline below is illustrative, but it aligns with how the case studies layer channels over time. [61]



In the first phase, lasting about **three months**, the company should not start with broad product building. It should first isolate one repeatable offer around one ICP and one use case. The team should create fixed packages, a standard onboarding checklist, one customer scorecard, and one proof narrative. Resource implication: founders remain heavily involved, but one operator or revops generalist becomes essential, and delivery leads must help document scope rather than just execute it. The KPIs for this phase are share of pipeline tied to the named offer, gross margin by package, average delivery duration, and founder dependence in sales and kickoff. [62]

In the second phase, usually **six months**, the company should build a narrow product wedge that removes the most repetitive expert work. The goal is not feature breadth. It is repeatability. The team now needs a clear product owner, one to two engineers, and a support/implementation owner who can capture every friction point during onboarding. Existing service customers should be the first customer base because they provide fast feedback and shorten the trust gap. The KPIs become active use of the wedge, time-to-first-value, implementation hours per account, support ticket categories, pilot-to-paid conversion, and the percentage of delivery performed without custom code or custom process. [63]

In the third phase, also often **around six months**, the company should turn the wedge into a true SaaS motion. That means recurring billing, tiered packaging, implementation paths by segment, usage instrumentation, and success ownership after go-live. Marketing should shift toward repeatable inbound assets: templates, guides, calculators, webinars, customer proof, and search-led content around the workflow being automated. Resource implication: add a growth marketer and make customer success distinct from project delivery. The KPIs here are activation rate, demo-or-trial-to-paid conversion, first-90-day retention, expansion from early cohorts, and onboarding completion time. [64]

In the fourth phase, over another **six months**, the company should make smaller accounts self-serve where economically sensible. That does not require eliminating sales. It means introducing lower-friction signup, better in-product guidance, lifecycle messaging, and content-led acquisition so the company is not forced to acquire every customer through a human conversation. This is the phase where CAC discipline matters, because self-serve can create vanity signups if activation is weak. Resource implication: the company needs product analytics, growth experimentation, and a customer support model that can handle more users without re-creating bespoke service work. The KPIs become signup-to-activation, cohort retention by source, free-to-paid or trial-to-paid conversion, support cost per active account, and payback by channel. [65]

Only after those four phases should the startup invest heavily in phase five: **partners, marketplaces, and enterprise overlays**, typically another **nine months or more**. At this point the product should have stable APIs, implementation documentation, security answers, onboarding playbooks, and clear packaging boundaries. Then a partner manager, solution engineer, and enterprise-capable seller become highly leveraged hires. The KPIs now shift upward: partner-sourced pipeline, partner-implemented launches, enterprise ACV, expansion rate, NRR, large-account concentration, and governance or procurement cycle times. [66]

A useful way to manage the whole journey is to track one **revenue-mix ladder**. Early on, the important question is whether the same packaged service keeps winning. Later, the question is whether software revenue grows faster than service revenue. Later still, the question is whether self-serve and partner-assisted ARR begin to outgrow founder- or AE-originated bookings. The slide’s central intuition is correct: service revenue is often necessary at the beginning, but it only starts to compound when the company uses it to build repeatable packaging, software leverage, and multi-channel distribution. [67]

A final KPI set for the board or leadership team can therefore stay simple:

- **Offer repeatability:** percent of new bookings from the top one or two standardized offers.
- **Delivery leverage:** implementation hours per new customer and percent of delivery handled through product flows.
- **Product activation:** time-to-first-value and activation completion rate.
- **SaaS quality:** gross retention, net retention where relevant, expansion rate, and support burden per account.
- **Channel quality:** share of pipeline and closed-won revenue from inbound, self-serve, partners, and enterprise sales separately.
- **Revenue mix:** percentage of ARR-like revenue versus one-time services revenue.
- **Founder dependence:** share of wins that require founder participation to close or onboard. [68]

If those metrics move in the right order, the company is not just “adding a SaaS product.” It is building the operating conditions under which channels can finally compound. [69]

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