

DEEP DIVE: “Built to manage, not just built to go live”: How partners are moving from selling tech to owning outcomes

Customers don't just need help buying more tech. They are looking to strategic guidance and a partner who can own the full journey.



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🕒 27 May 2026 • 6 min read



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The role of the technology partner is changing, as customers shift away from point solutions and look for providers who can provide strategic guidance and own outcomes from end to end.

Technology spending is predicted to remain robust, however priorities are shifting, according to IDC's APAC IT spending outlook. Organisations are deferring big transformations and hardware refreshes in favour of AI with clear ROI, cloud optimisation and cybersecurity.

For partners, that's translating into longer deal cycles, greater pricing pressure and less predictable pipelines.

“Technology complexity has exploded. I’m finding our clients don't need help buying tech anymore. They actually need help making it all come together and work,” said Alex Belperio, executive GM, Atturra.

Organisations want more than just another point-solution. They’re seeking more advisory, guidance and outcome support as they contend with market conditions and the pace of technology change.



gone from sort of selling technology transactionally to owning outcomes in ship with our clients strategically,” Belperio said.

From delivery to strategy

Even partners that remain specialists in a particular service are seeing growing demand for advisory services within those engagements.

"The critical component of being a partner in the industry is can you deliver an ongoing outcome with your client," Belperio said.

But the shift needs to be deliberate. It may require internal restructuring — teams, skills, hiring — as complexity pushes customers toward partners who can manage the full journey.

"There's a shift to evolve into an organisation that can strategically support customers from end to end," Belperio said.

"It goes from that front-end strategic advisory through to the integration, delivery and the managed services piece," he added.



Alex Belperio, executive GM, Atturra

Nick Sone, chief customer officer, Brennan agreed, “Customers want partners who can help them improve resilience, control cost, reduce complexity and introduce innovation in a way that is actually accountable.”

Over the next couple of years, he expects the providers that rise to the challenge will have influence well beyond traditional service delivery.

"They'll play a much bigger role in helping organisations shape operating models, manage technology risk and extract real value from AI and automation," Sone said.

"It's becoming less about simply keeping systems running and more about helping customers run smarter. And the providers that combine operational discipline with innovation and commercial flexibility are the ones that are going to have the greatest impact," he told CRN Australia.

The MSP play

Managed services is now a strategic priority for 99 percent of organisations, according to KPMG's 2026 Managed Services Outlook Survey. Two-thirds of respondents expect the MSP model to drive major operating, business and strategic impact within 24 months.

As MSPs shift into the driver's seat, particularly on AI strategy, organisations expect partners to bring both tech proficiency and a strategic transformation mindset, the survey noted.

Sone is already finding more organisations are thinking about managed services earlier in the transformation cycle, rather than treating it as an afterthought once a project is finished.

"To me, that reflects a more mature understanding of digital transformation. It's not just about deploying a new platform or integrating systems — it is also about how that technology is run, optimised, governed and evolved as the business needs

" he said.



The demand for AI advisory services

Managed services are also emerging as an AI accelerator — a shortcut through capability gaps. Organisations are looking to MSPs for continued innovation through ongoing systems integration, cross-functional data management and AI governance, according to KPMG.

For Belperio, particularly in regulated industries, clients want to understand what AI means for their organisation, and how to adopt it responsibly, as things move quickly.

“There's a challenge with the pace and advancement of the technology versus how fast many industries can actually move,” he said.

Some sees organisations looking to MSP to “bridge multiple worlds at once”.

“They want help with AI, but they also need support across legacy infrastructure, modern cloud platforms, cybersecurity, compliance and day-to-day operational performance,” he said.

For MSPs, it requires broadening their capabilities from even a few years ago.

“It's not enough anymore to be strong in one lane. You need real depth across infrastructure, security, data, automation and governance, and you need to be able to bring those things together in a coordinated way,” he said.





Image: Nick Sone, chief customer officer, Brennan

In response to these growing demands, **Brennan** has been investing over the past few years to expand from being a traditional MSP into a broader systems integrator business.

“If you can simplify that complexity for customers and translate it into dependable business outcomes, then the increasing expectations are less a challenge and more an opportunity,” he said.

Changing customer conversations

The barrier for partners isn’t just expanding technical capability. Customers are becoming more deliberate in the partners they choose and there’s an emphasis on value and addressing uncertainty in the current climate.

AI has also compressed the timeline for expected returns and organisations want to see cost reduction and efficiency gains faster than ever.



"We're going through a period where organisations are conscious of every dollar they spend and where they spend it," Belperio noted.

As a result, the customer conversation has shifted to prioritise strategy and advice and not just solutions. It's less about 'here's what it costs' and more about 'here's what it's worth'.

Atturra is finding projects range from short, sharp engagements to longer strategic work. For AI in particular, that often starts with a pilot.

"If we anchor that to a real business problem, and there's clear measurable success criteria, then we can actually get to a point where there's a clear decision on a 'yes', 'no' or a pivot," Belperio explained.

For partners willing to make the shift, the opportunities are expanding — cybersecurity, virtual CISO engagements, advisory services and recurring revenue models are all on the table.

"If you look at the market for partners like us over the last decade, the biggest change we have seen is the move from selling tech to owning the outcomes," he added.

The partners that restructure, broadening capability, repackaging for recurring revenue and committing to the full lifecycle, will be better positioned as these forces play out.

Sone said this shift was something the business identified a while ago.

"It's one of the reasons Brennan has deliberately evolved beyond the traditional MSP model into more of a systems integrator model," Sone said.

"We think solutions need to be built to manage, not just built to go live."



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