



Leading the Way to

with Partnerships

CAPITAL-EFFICIENT GROWTH (CEG)



Thank you!

Before you start diving into the playbook, we'd like to thank you for making it until page two. Really, with all the AI generated content out there you may struggle to find authentic information that is worth your time. For the sake of transparency, while we have written all text by ourselves, we did use AI for grammar and spell checking.

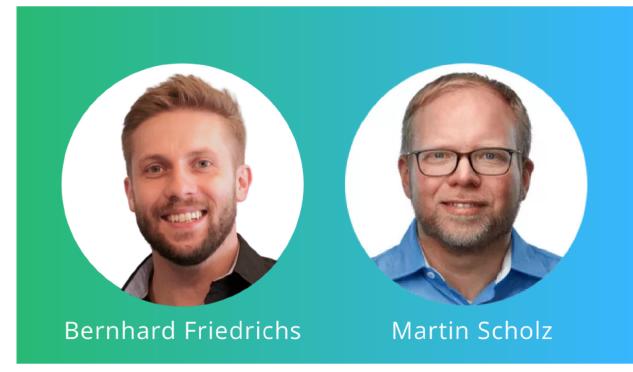
All insights you will find on the next pages are reflecting our own experiences. The learnings are distilled from two decades of hands-on experience, countless successes, and some educative mishaps.

We have decided to create this playbook in a time where business have to be more prudent with their capital and investors are becoming more selective with their investments.

This playbooks it dedicated to businesses and investors. There is a significant opportunity for those who understand the impact of partnerships in creating capital-efficient growth. On the following pages you will find guidance on how to leverage this opportunity for various business contexts.

Now have fun reading and reach out to us with any questions and feedback.





Growth needs to be efficient today

"Grow or die" - this was the mantra for startups in the last decade. Growth at all costs was the prime directive for founders and VCs alike. Since money was not a constraint, some companies generated significant revenue even without having a fully developed product, thanks to aggressive spending on marketing and sales.

With the turnaround of the economy and rising interest rates, access to fresh money became significantly harder. Not every idea put into a pitch deck gets funding anymore. The positive news is, good ideas and good companies still get funded. Ticket sizes in Series A and B rounds are still higher than before the pandemic as recent crunchbase research reveals.

However, a good company is not primarily defined by growth anymore. It's all about efficiency nowadays. "Capital-efficient growth" is the key to unlocking further funding and long-term economic success.

Good companies still receive funding

Investment amounts for US startups in Series A and B are above pre-pandemic levels





Source: https://news.crunchbase.com/venture/funding-rounds-average-mean-startups-charts/



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What exactly is capital efficiency?

The direct answer is:

"The measure of how well a company can use its capital to generate revenue."

There are two ways to improve your capital efficiency:

- 1. You achieve a higher outcome (e.g. revenue) with the same amount of capital (costs)
- 2. You achieve the same outcome with less capital.

Whichever way you are choosing, it's mission critical to have a clear understanding and measurement of your goal. "Revenue" is not a goal, it is the result of other parameters you can influence. Find Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are reflecting the results of your activities closely.

A great example for an efficiency KPI is

CLTV (Customer Lifetime Value)

CAC (Customer Acquisition Costs)

Increasing the revenue you generate per customer and/or decreasing the costs required to win a new customer will improve your efficiency.

However, even KPIs like <u>CLTV</u> or <u>CAC</u> are too aggregated already! Both are so-called blended metrics - which means they are created by using two or more underlying performance metrics. To increase your efficiency, you need to optimize these. Check the following plays to identify relevant metrics for your business.

Increasing your time-to-market or reducing your risk will also lead to an increase in capital efficiency. Hence we cover speed and risk mitigation as well.

Use this playbook to learn which partnership strategies will enable you to significantly increase your capital efficiency.



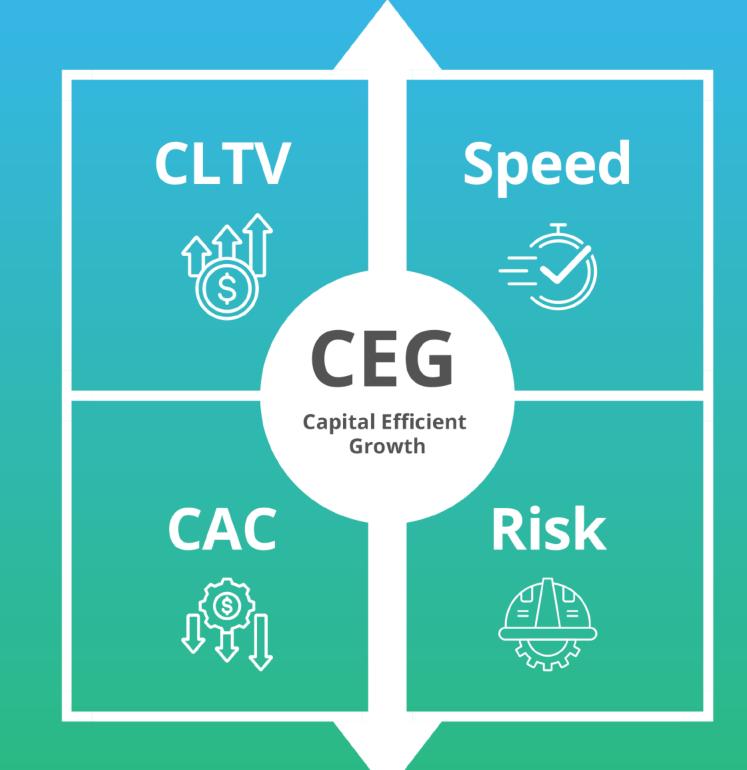
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How can you improve your capital efficiency?

This playbook will show you very specific ways to increase your capital efficiency - utilizing the power of partnerships and ecosystems.

You will find four main chapters reflecting particular areas of improvement and you will learn how to:

- lift your **CLTV**
- reduce your CAC
- accelerate your **Speed** to market
- mitigate Risks





How to find your perfect play?

We have created guiding parameters to make it easier for you to identify the most relevant plays.

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Applicability

How likely is it that this play will work for your business? Some plays are more universal than others. Some can be successfully implemented by literally any B2B SaaS company. Others only unlock their full potential for certain types of companies. Example: Is your product "plug & play"? Great! However, it's unlikely that you can partner with system integrators successfully. If you are unsure if a particular play would work in your case, check the details or reach out to us for a quick chat.

Simplicity

How difficult is it to implement this play? Launching a partner initiative always requires some work, time and resources. Depending on the partner type and strategy, some plays are less complex than others. They impact fewer departments, less commitment from a potential partner, or fewer resources. However, typically these less complex plays have less impact.

Speed

How long will it take to see the first results? Partnerships are no "growth hack" - as a general rule, they are always a mid-term or even long-term play. You need to lay the foundation and start today to benefit from it in the future. This parameter gives you an idea how fast you will be able to see results in your business.

Impact

How much will this play "move the needle" for your business? While all plays will drive your capital efficient growth, some plays will have a bigger impact than others. As a rule of thumb - the more impact a play will have on your capital efficient growth, the more time and investment it will require (see Simplicity and Speed).



Increase Customer Lifetime Value (CLTV)

CLTV is one of the main KPIs for B2B SaaS companies. It's the amount of revenue which you generate from a client over the lifespan. For SaaS businesses it is calculated by the revenue paid per period multiplied by the total duration of the engagement (number of periods). Typically, the underlying period is a month:

Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR) x Contract Duration in Months.

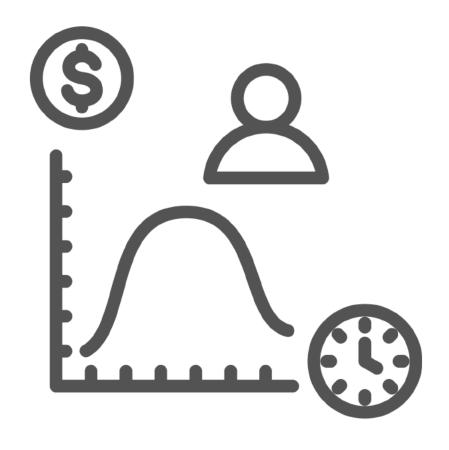
Increasing your (average) CLTV without increasing the associated costs results in an increase in your capital efficiency.

As shown above, CLTV is a blended KPI consisting of two other metrics.

To discover opportunities and measure improvements we need to look at the underlying metrics:

- 1. Recurring Revenue per period (e.g., month)
- 2. Duration of Engagement (contract)

The following plays improve these two performance indicators, resulting in an increased CLTV.





Enhance your product with valuable integrations

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Simplicity
Speed
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Summary

Building integrations with complementary products is an impactful way to enhance the user experience and raise your product value; ultimately increasing your Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR).

Why it works

Typically, your product will be utilized by your clients as part of a certain workflow or process they run. This means there are often other software providers that will be used before, after or in parallel with your product. Partnering and building integrations with these providers strengthens your offer. From a technical perspective it is a way to expand the functionality of your product without spending a lot of money and time on development.

Ensuring that your products work seamlessly makes your and your partner's product in combination more useful for your customers. Integrations also signal to potential customers that your offering is premium and trustworthy because other companies have vested interest already.

Retention jumps

36%

with 5+ integrations

For whom it works

Businesses that can clearly identify potential partners whose products or services complement their offerings. It resonates well with companies that have a clear and compelling business case for the integration. For instance, if the integration significantly streamlines workflows, reduces manual work, or unlocks new capabilities for users, there is a high chance of it adding value and hence justifying the effort. Therefore, it works best for businesses that have evidence (either through customer feedback, market research, or data analysis) that their customers value such integrations, and it would influence their decision about product usage and loyalty positively.

Essentially, before embarking on this play, businesses need to ensure that it aligns with their customer expectations and needs, and there's a demonstrable value-add that supports their MRR growth goals.

Pitfalls

Not every partnership or integration enhances your product. Verify the added value for your customer first. Be wary of public marketplaces or app exchanges from other (large) vendors without comprehending the costs and potential outcomes. Bad integrations without a proper use are a waste of time and resources. Ensure your partners are reliable and trustworthy and your business has necessary resources and skills for making integrations work.

Lift the full MRR potential through your partner's relation

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

Having a partner at your side which the prospect knows and trusts during the sales cycle can increase the deal size and helps to avoid Proof-Of-Concept (PoC) or ramp-up phases.

Why it works

Two ways a partner involvement can increase the MRR:

- 1. Your partner knows your prospect and your product well and can help create a Partner Offer which is tailored to their needs. Being an expert in your solution can uncover additional opportunities and support to communicate the value of your solution in the best way possible, ultimately leading to a higher MRR.
- 2. Since your prospect trusts your partner's expertise and recommendation of your solution, they will be less likely to request a PoC or start with a smaller deal first. No need for "land and expand" anymore get the full deal immediately!

For whom it works

If your product requires certain steps or the value increase with additional services around it, this play works for you. Services can include consulting, setting up or customizing the product, or providing support to get customers up and running. Typically, partners in this play are service businesses who already have a relationship with your prospect and are interested in offering their services together with you. If your focus is product-led growth, or your solution fully "plug&play", this play may not be the best choice for you.

Pitfalls

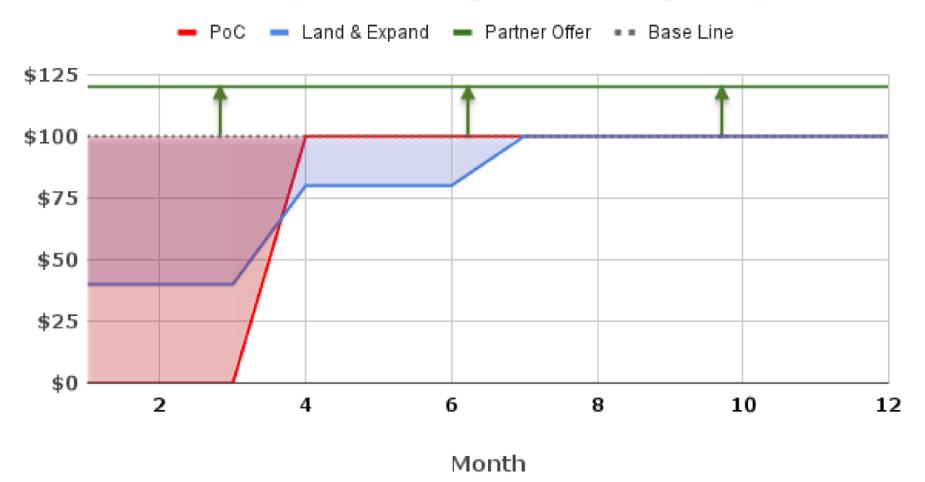
You are not able to outsource some services you provide due to lack of partner enablement or product maturity. Also, partners are not only attracted by commission payments but expect to charge service fees on top - this might be a blocker for your prospects.

+45% bigger deals from ecosystem leads

REVEAL Rydoo Case Study: https://reveal.co/case-studies/rydoo

Additional CLTV through partners

Level of Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR)



The red line shows the development of the MRR when starting with a Proof-of-Concept (POC). The blue line represents a typical "Land & Expand" case where the MRR is growing over time.

The red and blue areas visualize the additional CLTV generated if you can close the deal at the base level of \$100 MRR immediately due to the trust your partner brings into the sales cycle.

The green line visualizes the higher MRR based on your partner's knowledge of the prospect's business.





Improve retention with a service partners

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

Churn, particularly due to poor activation and adoption, poses a considerable risk for SaaS companies. Partnering with companies that help your clients to quickly and intensively utilize your product enhances its perceived value and boosts retention.

Why it works

Offering onboarding, consulting or implementation services ensure smooth transitions, practical guidance, and immediate resolution of uncertainties that customers may have while adopting your product. While SaaS vendors know about the importance of delivering high-quality customer experiences right from the beginning, they often lack resources to provide it to all new clients. By using a service partner to provide dedicated support or onboarding services, new customers can recognize your product's value quickly and are more likely to use it consistently. This active and optimal product usage paves the way for better client retention, contributing to enhanced CLTV. Additionally, the unique expertise or approaches that service partners can bring might augment your product's usefulness and appeal to your customers, further consolidating their attachment and loyalty.

For whom it works

This approach works if your product needs implementation, customization or requires adjustments to client's business practices. Without these services the client won't be able to fully leverage the value of your offering. This approach requires that you are ready to transfer post sales steps to a partner. Furthermore you need to enable your partners to achieve a service quality comparable to an inhouse team.

Pitfalls

If you are not able to continuously train and enable your service partner like you do for your inhouse team, the customer experience may suffer. This could lead to the opposite of the desired result. In case the services are rather consultative than technical you may face challenges to measure and verify the proper execution. Depending on your product's average deal size your service partner may have problems charging a sufficient amount for the services.



Reduce Customer Acquisition Costs (CAC)

CAC is another of the main KPIs (not only) for B2B SaaS companies. It describes the (average) costs you have to win a new client. In particular, you are looking at the compensation paid to the marketing and sales teams (including SDR, if applicable), the costs for the relevant marketing and sales tools (CRM, marketing automation etc) as well as any kind of other marketing costs (e.g. for events, paid channels etc).

To calculate the CAC, you take the total amount of all these costs in a given period (typically, per month) and divide it by the number of (new) customers won in the same period. Decreasing the (average) CAC (without decreasing the CLTV of the won clients) results in an increase in capital efficiency.

However, similar to CLTV, CAC is also a blended KPI, consisting of two underlying metrics. Again, we need to look at the underlying composite metrics: total amount of costs and number of clients won per period. How many clients you can win depends on a couple of parameters:

- 1. Number of leads (generated in a particular time). Increasing the number of leads without spending more money and while keeping the same quality of leads increases your efficiency.
- 2. Quality of leads. If you can increase the closing rate (ratio of leads converting into deals to total number of leads) and/or increase the sales cycle (shorten the time from lead to deal), it increases your efficiency as well.

The following plays improve these performance indicators, resulting in improved CAC.





Drive high-value leads with co-marketing

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Summary

Aligning your marketing activities with another vendor targeting the same ideal customer profile (ICP) can generate high quality leads at lower costs, reducing your CAC significantly.

Why it works

Bundling forces with another company who is targeting the same ideal customer profile is a long established marketing strategy in many industries. This approach is especially effective when there is a joint value proposition, a reason why it makes sense to combine the two offerings from a user perspective.

An example for your co-marketing initiative could be a joint webinar - or in-person event - where you and your partner invite customers who are potential clients (leads) for the other partner. Since one party already has relationships with the invitees and because there is a clear value proposition, participation rates will be higher than average. Furthermore, these participants are pre-qualified by the partner resulting in a higher closing rate for these leads, even more so if you can create an environment where your existing customers are advocating for your product to the leads. And since you share the costs and efforts for organizing the initiative, you require less of your own marketing resources.

For whom it works

This is probably the most deployable play in this book. Every B2B SaaS business can find a complementary product offering targeting the same customer profile. A good way to find potential partners is looking along your customer workflow: which other solutions and tools are they using before, during or after they use your product? A technical integration with these other tools is a plus, but not a prerequisite to start pushing a joint story and value proposition. Actually, testing the story first while having an idea about an integration can verify the market need before binding product and development resources.

Pitfalls

Co-marketing initiatives which work well for mid-sized companies may fail when targeting larger prospects. While both partners may be working with the same ICP, the positive effect fails when the user or buyer personas are different and separated in bigger organizations. Building an integration to be enlisted in a large player's marketplace, hoping for lead flow and co-marketing to happen without having built a relationship first will most likely fail.



Close deals faster with referral partners

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

By utilizing their networks, referral partners can introduce prequalified prospects who already trust their judgment, making it easier to convert leads and reduce the time and resources spent in the sales process.

Why it works

Referral partners usually have an established reputation and trust within their networks. When they refer your product to their contacts, it comes with a level of trust, skipping the time-consuming parts of establishing credibility.

In addition, referral partners are mindful to whom they recommend your product to not dilute the reputation they have within their network. That's why the leads are typically better qualified, resulting in a higher conversion rate for you. If you can motivate your referral partner to join you in a co-sell notion, their intel and influence can further shorten your sales cycle substantially. Your sales team gains capacity to close additional deals.

For whom it works

This play is suited for your businesses if you have a defined and replicable sales process that can be effectively communicated to referral partners. This includes a well defined ICP, including the buying persona and a crystal clear value proposition. Beyond a commission, you need to provide your partners with more reasons to promote your product continuously.

Pitfalls

If the only benefit you offer is a commission paid for referred deals, your time and resources invested into referral partners will be lost. Without a compelling partner value proposition, you will have a hard time to attract partners in the first place. Furthermore, after onboarding your partners they will only refer leads randomly. Ultimately, with only a few referral leads generated, this won't move the needle on your average CAC.

Deals described faster when a partner is involved

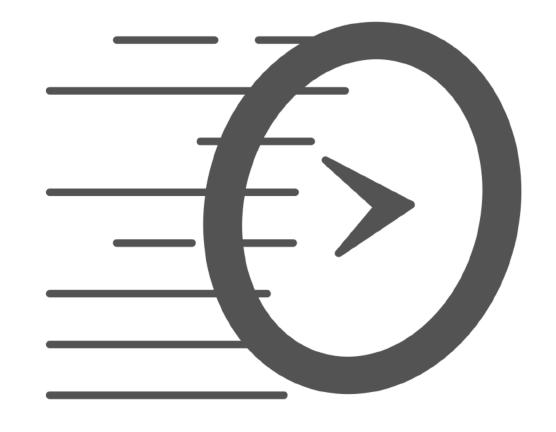
Crossbeam: https://insider.crossbeam.com/resources/the-2023-state-of-the-partner-ecosystem-report

Accelerate Speed

In the world of entrepreneurship, speed is not just a desire, it's a necessity. Companies are racing, vying for market share, introducing revolutionary products, or entering new territories. In this fast-paced scenario, your capital is your fuel that propels you towards your objectives. But what if you could reach your destination faster without burning all your fuel? This would be the ideal scenario in terms of Capital Efficiency.

To visualize this, consider a racing team forming a partnership with a top engine manufacturer. The partnership means access to high-performance engines, which enables greater speed and better fuel efficiency.

In the SaaS business, this translates to gaining credibility quickly, accelerating customer acquisition, and facilitating speedy product development. Alliances also lead to cost savings through shared resources, thus enhancing speed in capital efficiency. Partnerships are the key driver for a business to boost its speed while also improving capital efficiency.



Expanding into Japan from Germany during the pandemic

Success Story: Uberall & Recovery

The pandemic abruptly put a stop to international travel, turning in-person meetings into something of the past, as video calls became the new norm for business communication.

Yet, within this new reality, Uberall, a German-based company offering location marketing solutions, managed to break into the Japanese market and start winning big-name brands as clients.

What was the key to this achievement? A smart partnership with Recovery—a well-established Japanese marketing firm known for its strong skills in location marketing and excellent relationship to local customers. For a European company like Uberall, entering the market in Japan is known to be tough. But working with Recovery made this move quicker, smarter, and less risky than trying to do it alone, especially under the challenging conditions of the pandemic.

Their partnership, built on a foundation of trust with no physical meetings, was a demonstration of the strength of digital collaboration. Recovery's reselling efforts and market insights helped Uberall find the right place for their product in Japan. This meant Japanese companies could now enjoy a leading technology to improve how they appear online and interact with customers.

With this successful start, both Uberall and Recovery look forward to achieving more in the Japanese market. They've shown that even when facing global challenges, joining forces with a local partner can be an excellent strategy for international growth.



Enter new markets faster with resellers

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

Reseller partnerships offer a powerful play for rapid market expansion. Businesses can swiftly penetrate new regions, industries, or customer segments by leveraging the established networks and industry insight of resellers. This approach is often faster and more efficient than hiring and training a sales team from scratch.

Why it works

Resellers typically have expertise in their specific territory and industry, coupled with an established customer base. Therefore, by forming partnerships with them, your business gains immediate access to these valuable insights, an extended salesforce, and an established customer base. This relationship allows for a faster, more seamless expansion, bypassing the lengthy process of building your own sales force, connections, and industry-specific knowledge.

For whom it works

This approach is best for businesses striving for rapid growth across new geographical regions, industries, or customer segments. Businesses looking to scale quickly with minimal overhead and by leveraging pre-established connections will find value here. Notably, this play hinges on a product or service that can be readily transferred and sold by third parties.

Pitfalls

Working with an indirect channel can mean you are losing the direct client connection. That is especially relevant for early stage businesses that are reliant on customer feedback to develop their product. Without a proper partner qualification (we recommend the PXP 4C's Method) and a solid onboarding the resellers may not perform as expected.



Increase speed to market with technology partners

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

Technology partnerships can significantly expedite your speed-to-market when adding new product features. Rather than building it in-house or buying a company, aligning with an external provider who already possesses the expertise and capabilities can be a more efficient and cost-effective strategy.

Why it works

Technology partnerships can provide the advantage of time and resources. Instead of spending the time to build a feature internally or the high costs of acquiring an entire company, a technology partner already specialized in the feature can provide faster access. This accelerates the time-to-market, leaves your resource free to focus on the core product, and facilitates access to external innovations, while also limiting financial risk.

For whom it works

This strategy is ideal for businesses that need to quickly introduce new features to stay competitive in a fast-paced market but want to balance their resources and financial risks. It's particularly beneficial to businesses whose features of interest are not core to their product, thus making partnerships a less disruptive and more agile strategy. For a more detailed practical guide on choosing the right option between build, buy or partner we recommend to read this article: https://partnerxperience.com/article/deciding-between-build-buy-or-partner/

Pitfalls

Relying on a partner can come with challenges for quality, reliability, and compatibility. Furthermore, the level of control over development and potential integration issues should be considered. Dependency on the technology of others can involve future risk if the technology or the partnership becomes unsustainable.





Mitigate Risk

Taking risks is inevitable when running a company. It's an elementary part of entrepreneurship. You are investing capital and resources into something without having a guaranteed outcome. If you fail, your capital is gone without you receiving the output you were expecting or hoping for - the worst case scenario when looking at capital efficiency. Mitigating your risks is a powerful way to avoid or reduce failure and hence increase or secure capital efficiency.

There are various risks and ways of categorizing them. One is to separate them into internal and external risks. Internal risks are based on your decisions, actions or non-actions, like investing into going international. External risks in contrast are out of your direct control. This could include for instance market risks such as a dominant player or government changing the rules of engagement, a new disruptive technology entering the market or a shift in consumer behavior.

You can't eliminate all risks, but each risk mitigated is an important step towards capital-efficient growth. Use the following plays to start.





Minimize risk with local partners when going global

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

When expanding to global markets, collaborating with local partners can increase the speed-to-market and effectively mitigate risks associated with lack of market knowledge and cultural gaps. Partners, with their in-depth knowledge about the market, regulations, and customer behavior, can help you navigate potential pitfalls and ensure a successful international expansion.

Why it works

Local partners bear native insights about their market, understanding customers, competitors, legalities, and customs that a foreign organization might struggle to grasp. Early-on a local partner can evaluate if you have a product-market fit and guide you to invest accordingly to adjust. As established entities, partners have built a base of trust with local consumers, which can be advantageous when marketing your products or services and looking for qualitative feedback.

For whom it works

This play is intended for businesses that are in the growth phase and are considering fast international expansion. It's beneficial for companies that seek to diversify their operations and tap into new customer bases across borders. It requires the availablity of local partners which have experience with products like yours. Depending on the partner type you have to be ready to outsource certain operational steps, like sales, marketing, support or development activities.

Pitfalls

Despite the significant advantages, partnering with a local entity for global expansion does come with potential challenges. Vetting the partner thoroughly is crucial; a wrong choice may harm your brand and operations. Additionally, you may depend on another company to represent your brand to its full potential, and misalignment of interests or approach can create problems.



Safeguarding your Brand with OEM Partnerships

Applicability
Simplicity
Speed
Impact



Summary

OEM partnerships offer a strategic way to venture into new market segments and adopt different go-to-market strategies without jeopardizing your existing brand positioning. By integrating your products into an OEM partner's portfolio, the risk of diluting your brand identity during market expansion is minimized.

Why it works

Your product becomes part of an OEM's established offerings, allowing it to reach new market segments while maintaining the integrity of your existing direct brand positioning. The OEM's brand association can equip it to break into new customer segments by presenting your product as an integral part of their offering. This indirect form of market penetration through white labeling your product can mitigate risks of harming your existing brand image while enabling diversification.

For whom it works

This strategy is useful for businesses aiming to explore new market segments or adopt different go-to-market strategies without risking their existing brand positioning. Companies willing to collaborate and adapt their products closely to an OEM partner's offerings while reaching out to different customer segments will find this strategy beneficial.

Pitfalls

There's the risk of dependency, particularly if the partner is substantially larger. This could trap you in a challenging relationship with unsustainable terms. Furthermore, your partner, already familiar with your product, could seize the opportunity to integrate competitive vendors or build their own, plunging you into unforeseen competition.



Making Enterprise level solutions accessible to SMBs

Success Story: Searchmetrics & IONOS (formerly 1&1)

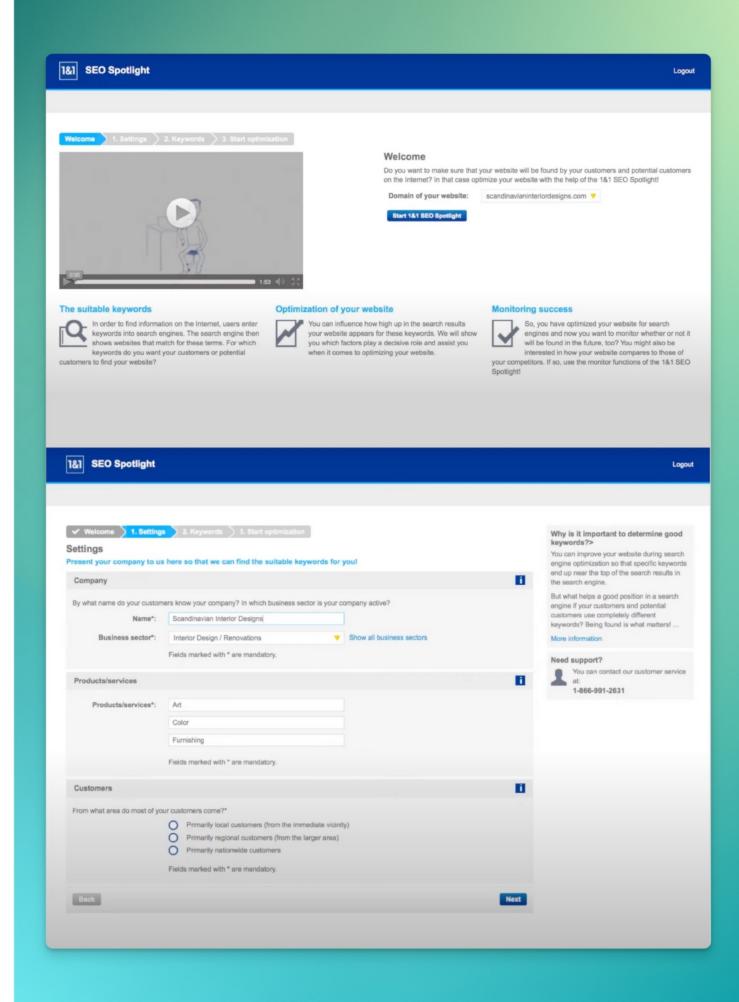
Back in 2012, Searchmetrics was offering one of the most advanced platform for Search Engine Optimization (SEO). It was used by global brands like Warner Music Group as well as disruptive e-commerce players like ebay.

However, SEO was a topic which was top of mind also for small businesses (SMB). Whenever 1&1, the leading European hosting company, asked their customers which product to launch next, "SEO" was taking the top spot. Of course, the requirements, the skill set and the budget of these customers were far from the usual Searchmetrics customer.

To fulfill the needs and to meet the price expectations of the typical 1&1 client, the product needed to be reduced to the pure essential functionality. Offering the tool under the brand of Searchmetrics would have created two major issues:

- for the customers and prospects of the Searchmetrics platform it would be quite irritating to see the comparably very low price point of the SMB version.
- for others it would have been confusing to see the brand Searchmetrics on such a "basic" product.

An OEM partnership was the way to avoid these constraints and offer the 1&1 customers the best SEO tool for their needs, powered by the leading provider. In this setting Searchmetrics powered the backend and the "engine" of the SEO tool which came in the look & feel of 1&1.



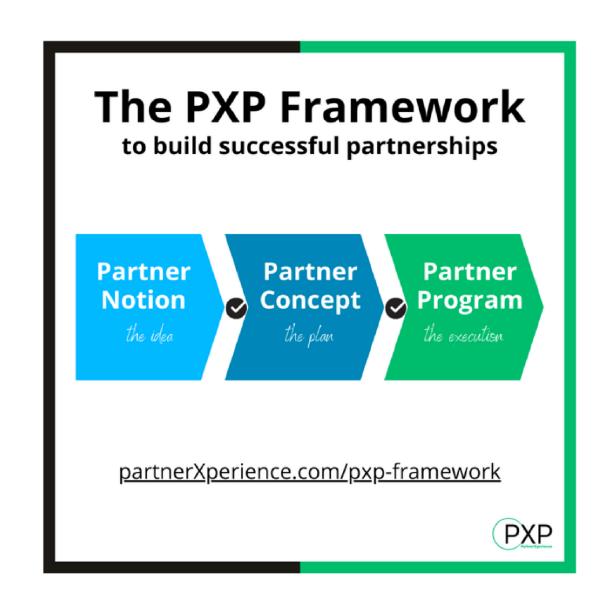
At a glance

		Applicability	Simplicity	Speed	Impact
CLTV	Enhance your product with valuable integrations	****	***	***	****
	Lift the full MRR potential through your partner's relation	***	***	***	****
	Improve retention with a service partners	****	***	***	****
CAC	Drive high-value leads with Co-Marketing	****	****	****	****
	Close deals faster with referral partners	****	***	****	***
• •					
Speed	Enter new markets faster with resellers	****	***	***	****
	Increase speed to market with technology partners	****	***	****	***
Risk	Minimize risk with local partners when going global	****	***	***	***
	Safeguarding your Brand with OEM Partnerships	****	****	***	****

What's next?

- Define your CEG strategy with your team
- Choose the right play for your company
- Create your Partner Concept
- Launch your Partner Program

Utilize our PXP Assessment and Framework to guide you on your way to Capital-Efficient Growth!





Let's improve your capital efficiency!

Achieving Capital-Efficient Growth has become a fundamental success factor. Improving your CLTV/CAC ratio, increasing your speed-to-market or mitigating your risk - there are various ways to increase your capital efficiency. And for each of them there is an effective partnership play enabling you to achieve your goals. That's the power of partnerships in business.

Ready to leverage partnerships for optimized capital efficiency? Start a conversation with us today, to craft the Partner Strategy with plays tailored to your business.



Bernhard Friedrichs



Martin Scholz

Write Us: CEG@partnerXperience.com



Leading the Way to Capital-Efficient Growth