

Emerging Trends

EXTRACT



EMERGING

Ecosystems

Report

Feb 2024



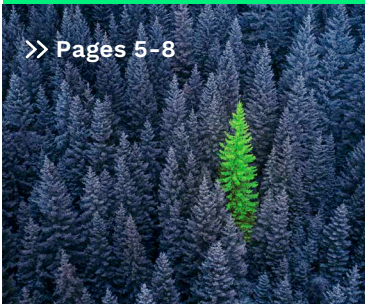
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What really matters

We identify the things that really matter to firms—a snapshot of the most important dynamics in the market.

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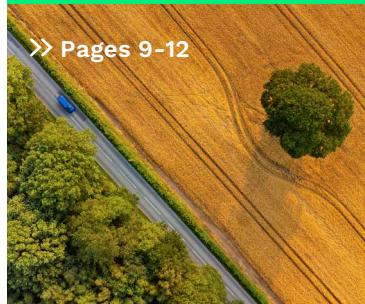


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Why are ecosystems important to clients?

We explore why clients use ecosystems and what they need from firms.

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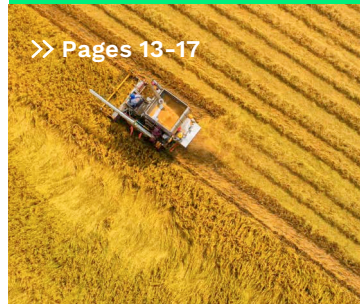


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How do clients interact with ecosystems in practice?

We consider who really runs the relationships with ecosystems and whether it matters.

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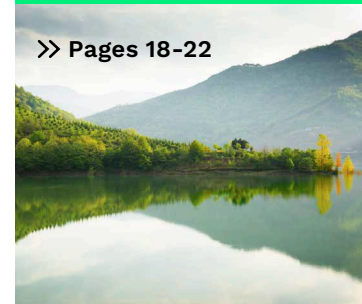


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Can your ecosystem win you more work?

We look at how ecosystems impact choice.

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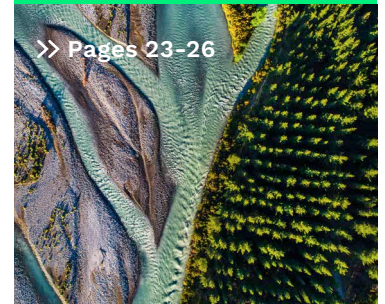


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How can firms differentiate their ecosystems?

Whether through value or offerings, there are ways to make your ecosystem stand out.

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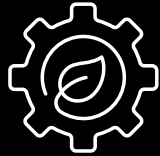


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86%

of clients think ecosystems offered
by firms **tend to be very similar**

“The increased pace of AI [development]—and how we are all transforming based on it—is an example of how new technology has turned into a bit of a technological war between the established players. It’s interesting [to look at] which one to adopt in your ecosystem, as they all strive to enhance their capabilities in these areas.”

Head of Strategy, financial services

Introduction

Barely a week goes by without the announcement of a new addition to a big firm’s ecosystem, and this trend is unlikely to abate any time soon. But when the majority of clients think that the ecosystems offered by firms are very similar, and the ecosystem itself can directly introduce your client to new providers that might quickly become new competitors, is your ecosystem giving you any discernible advantage in the market?

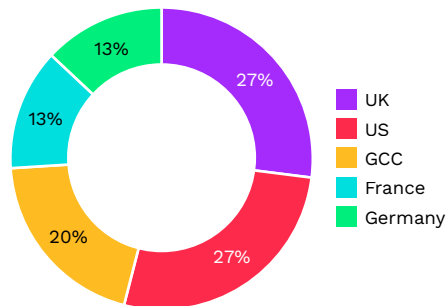
We surveyed 150 senior buyers of consulting to understand their views on firms’ ecosystems: how they work in practice, what clients really want from them, and how the relationship between the firm and third parties could play out.

Is your ecosystem worth maintaining, and if so, are there opportunities to differentiate yourself in what is a crowded marketplace?

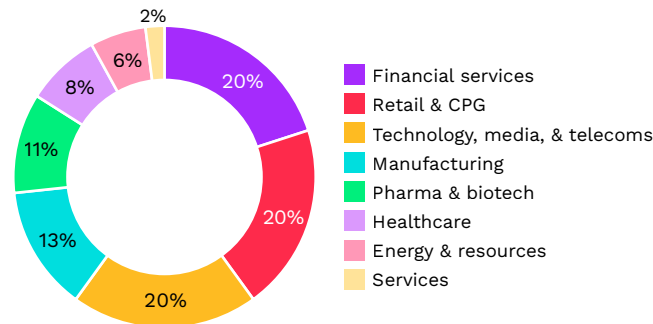
Methodology

We surveyed 150 senior executives in November 2023, all of whom are responsible for buying consulting services. Respondents came from five geographies, all of which are important in terms of scale and/or growth potential—the US, the UK, Germany, France, and the GCC. They were also drawn from a representative mix of sectors and functions. Three quarters came from organisations with more than 5,000 people.

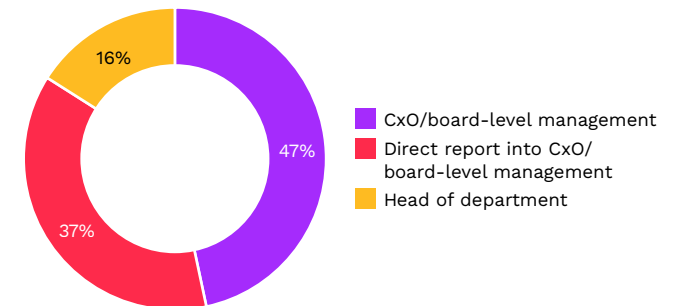
Respondents by geography



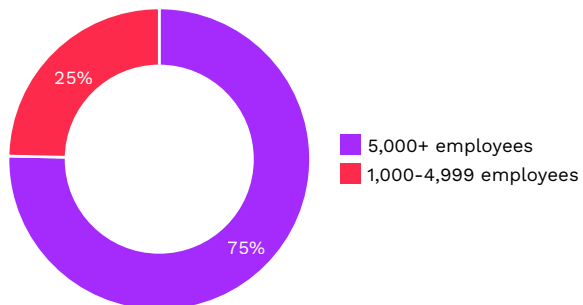
Respondents by sector



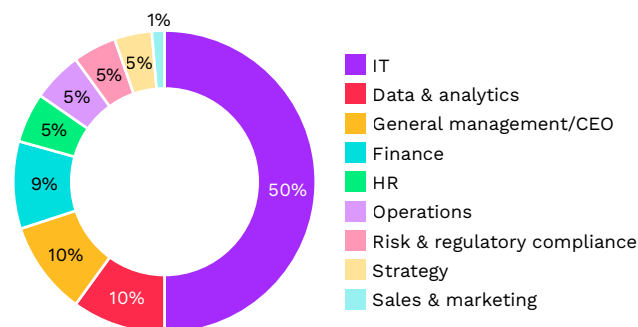
Respondents by responsibility



Respondents by headcount



Respondents by function



1

“There are many challenges in our industry, and without the right ecosystem of support, whether our own, or the ones we access through strategic vendors, we could not respond to them. We need our partners to understand our culture, capabilities and gaps, and to work with us to find the right solutions.”

Chief Risk Officer, logistics

What really matters

Clients want—and need—expertise 6

A firm’s ecosystem could be a threat to its own business in the future 7

Better, faster solutions are where ecosystems add their value 8

2



“How do we influence leaders in the market? By empowering our partner ecosystem to disseminate our vision and to breed clarity around our core value proposition and our vision of the company.”

Transformation Director, TMT

Why are ecosystems important to clients?

Clients are reliant on external networks to get work done	10
Clients turn to consulting firms for expertise, though innovation is also important	11
Firms’ ecosystems are widely used—particularly by those in crisis	12

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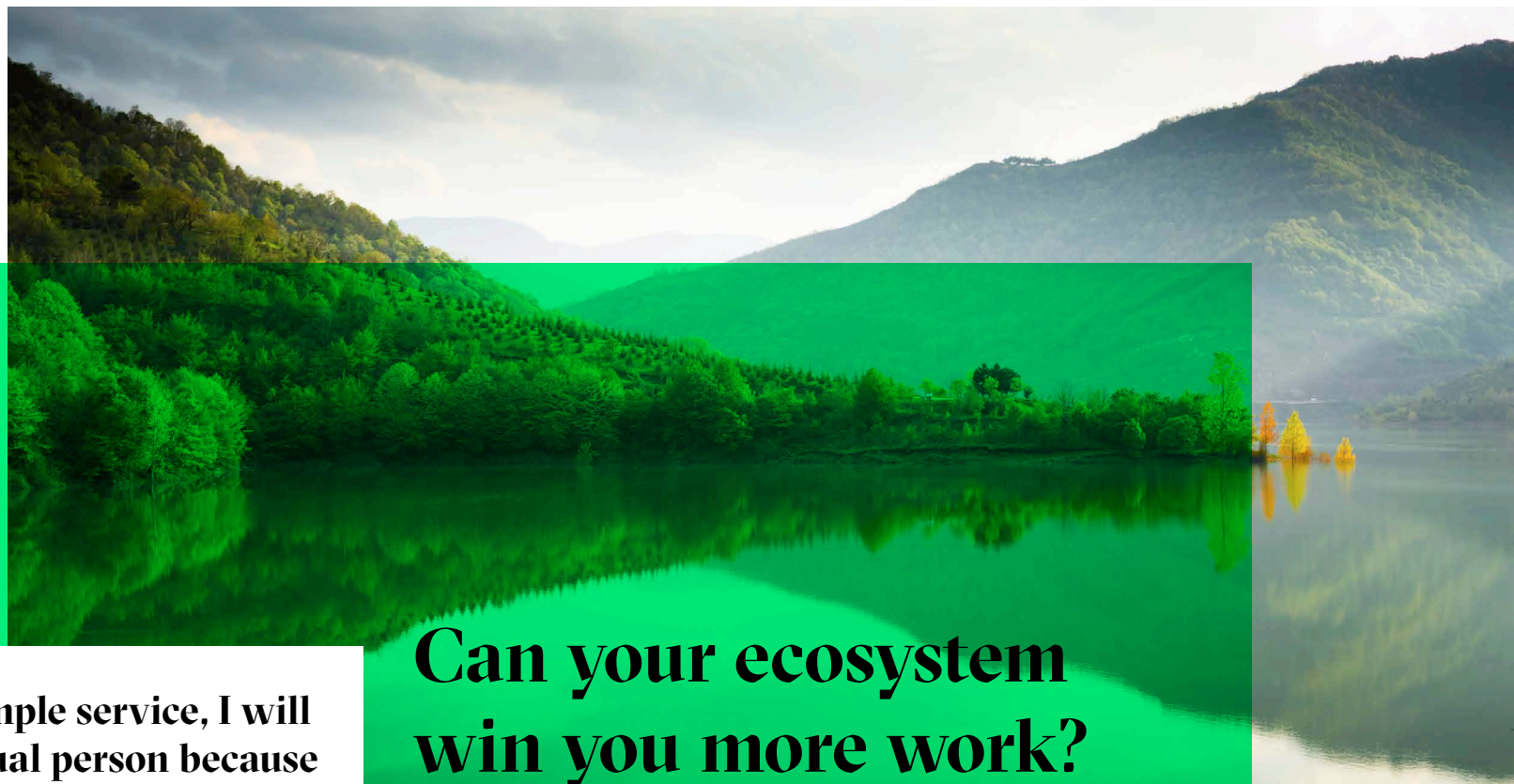
“SMEs are a key part of the ecosystem. It’s about leveraging the right people at the right time.”

CIO, public sector

How do clients interact with ecosystems in practice?

Firms are typically in the driving seat when it comes to ecosystems...	14
...and both clients and partners in the ecosystem appear happy for this to be the case	15
Those in crisis are particularly satisfied with firms’ management of their ecosystems	16
But it’s not always clear to clients where the expertise is coming from	17

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“If I’m buying a simple service, I will look at the individual person because that is who I will work with. But when it’s bigger than the individual, then I would rather look at wider assurance from the ecosystem of the supplier that provides it.”

Sales & Marketing Director, technology

Can your ecosystem win you more work?

Ecosystems impact buying decisions, with many turning clients off	19
But when they have a positive influence on choice, the reasons vary depending on seniority	20
The firm should be front-and-centre at the negotiation stage, though there’s scope for clients to have a closer relationship with the ecosystem when work is in progress	21
Ecosystems could turn out to be a Trojan horse—but not just yet	22

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“We’re looking into the supply chain of our primary providers and ensuring that we’re prioritising investments in those we feel are adding real value to us. We expect our partners to sign up to the values we hold dear as a company.”

CMO, consumer products

How can firms differentiate their ecosystems?

Clients are looking for a broad range of skills and offerings from a firm’s ecosystem	24
Clients seem to think ecosystems are all very similar—but they still prefer some to others	25
Ecosystems create value through better solutions, delivered faster	26

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“Firms must be clear on their messaging around ecosystems, they must be honest with clients about where they are using them rather than in-house expertise, and they must be very clear about what they are looking to achieve.”

Catherine Anderson, Source

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Meet the expert

Catherine Anderson

Catherine is Director of Market Trends & Analysis. She turns qualitative and quantitative data into meaningful, strategic insights on topics across the professional services market, from sustainability to managed services.

Catherine Anderson

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About us

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