

SPECIAL REPORT | MARCH 2025

Why partnerships are key for success with AI

How the partner-customer ecosystem
is a foundation for successful AI strategy
and infrastructure

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Introduction

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has left many companies looking to level up their productivity, performance, and products by using the powerful AI tools roiling the enterprise world.

Crafting a winning AI strategy, however, can be a challenge, and implementing it can be harder still. A recent CRN report found that while 98% of companies were interested in utilizing AI, only 51% had moved past the planning stage and just 8% were confident that they had achieved full implementation¹. Of course, no organization is ever truly ‘done’ with AI, as it is an evolving journey—but this figure highlights how few businesses feel fully prepared to meet the demands of the present.

In the same survey, 48% of companies listed “having the right infrastructure” as one of the

biggest hurdles to AI success. AI infrastructure includes the hardware, software, and systems designed to support the development, training, deployment, and management of AI models.

AI success includes critical infrastructure, including high-performance systems, data storage solutions and, more recently, AI PCs. Deployed strategically, these assets can accelerate business productivity, foster innovation, and, ideally, a competitive advantage.

In this whitepaper, we explore how important it is to build an AI strategy with a strong foundation and the correct infrastructure.

We also reveal how channel partners can support their customers in laying out a strategy for AI success that reduces risk and maximizes returns, with insights from Dell Technologies. ■



Artificial intelligence in 2025

Although businesses have adopted AI in various forms for several years, the technology gained significant traction in 2024.

With businesses recognizing the transformative potential of AI and particularly GenAI, 2025 may mark a pivotal shift in businesses' investment in the technology.

That being said, most organizations are still at the early stages of their AI implementation. If organizations spent 2024 experimenting with GenAI applications, they will spend 2025 pushing these solutions into production and scaling them.

That requires help from trusted advisors.

Fuzz Hussain, Senior AI Portfolio Manager at Dell, said "I believe that as we go into 2025 and beyond, what we'll really be seeing is more enterprises adopting AI with the help of their partners. And that integration and implementation will go further with solutions tailored to customer needs, rather than a blanket solution."

Successfully integrating AI into existing processes has been one of the biggest hurdles that businesses have faced over the last decade. And one question remains for many organizations: how can they get started? ■



Crafting a winning AI strategy

Businesses have had a few years to adapt to the mainstream availability of AI, and a 2024 CRN report also shows that 78% of companies have moved past AI readiness and are already in the planning stages or beyond in their journey.

It's crucial for companies to get the planning stage right. A poor or ineffective AI strategy could result in a significant waste of time and money, not to mention the impact of lagging behind your competitors.

Every sound AI strategy starts with some critical questions. These may include: Why do we need AI? What can we do with it? What can't we do without it? How can we use it to make our business more successful and the lives of our employees easier?

Addressing these questions upfront is essential. An intentional strategy can be the difference between a smooth, effective AI integration and a costly, time-consuming misstep. It's crucial to plan carefully before diving into the technical aspects of AI deployment.

"AI is not a panacea that's going to solve everything," said Hussain. "You can't just say 'hey, use AI' and suddenly your organization has gotten better at doing everything. You have to focus on specific outcomes."

This is how solutions like the Dell AI Factory can help – the tech giant's approach to assisting companies in their AI adoption.

"With the Dell AI Factory," says Hussain, "we bring together data, services, and an open ecosystem of hardware and software partners to help address priority use cases you're trying to drive, that deliver the outcome you're trying to achieve. It's not about doing everything at once – it's about being really specific about what your goals are and how to achieve them."

By focusing on data-driven strategies and customized services, businesses can build scalable solutions that evolve to meet their changing demands. Partners are well-equipped to understand customer needs, offering value-added services and scalable solutions that adapt customers' evolving goals and targets.

Simply put, organizations can develop more effective AI strategies by collaborating with technology ecosystem partners who can provide specialized expertise and established foundations, rather than trying to go it alone.

With partners and customers working together and starting with specific use cases that align with business priorities, organizations can transform the promise of AI into tangible benefits, enhancing productivity, innovation, and long-term growth. However, achieving these benefits requires the right infrastructure. ■



AI infrastructure and choosing the right hardware

AI infrastructure encompasses the hardware, software, and systems essential for developing, training, deploying, and managing AI models, yet many organizations struggle to get it right. In previously cited research conducted by **CRN** last year, nearly half of companies cited “having the right infrastructure” as one of the biggest hurdles to their AI implementation.

This research also showed that around a third of companies felt their infrastructure was put under pressure by the demand for AI.

By working with a partner like Dell, partners gain access to an end-to-end portfolio that allows them to address diverse use cases and deliver tailored AI solutions. This enables partners to provide their customers with cost-effective solutions and avoid over or under-provisioning by right-sizing infrastructure. Additionally, partners can bring value to their customers by creating proofs of concept that deliver quick wins, and by offering scalable products and solutions that adapt as customer priorities and needs evolve.

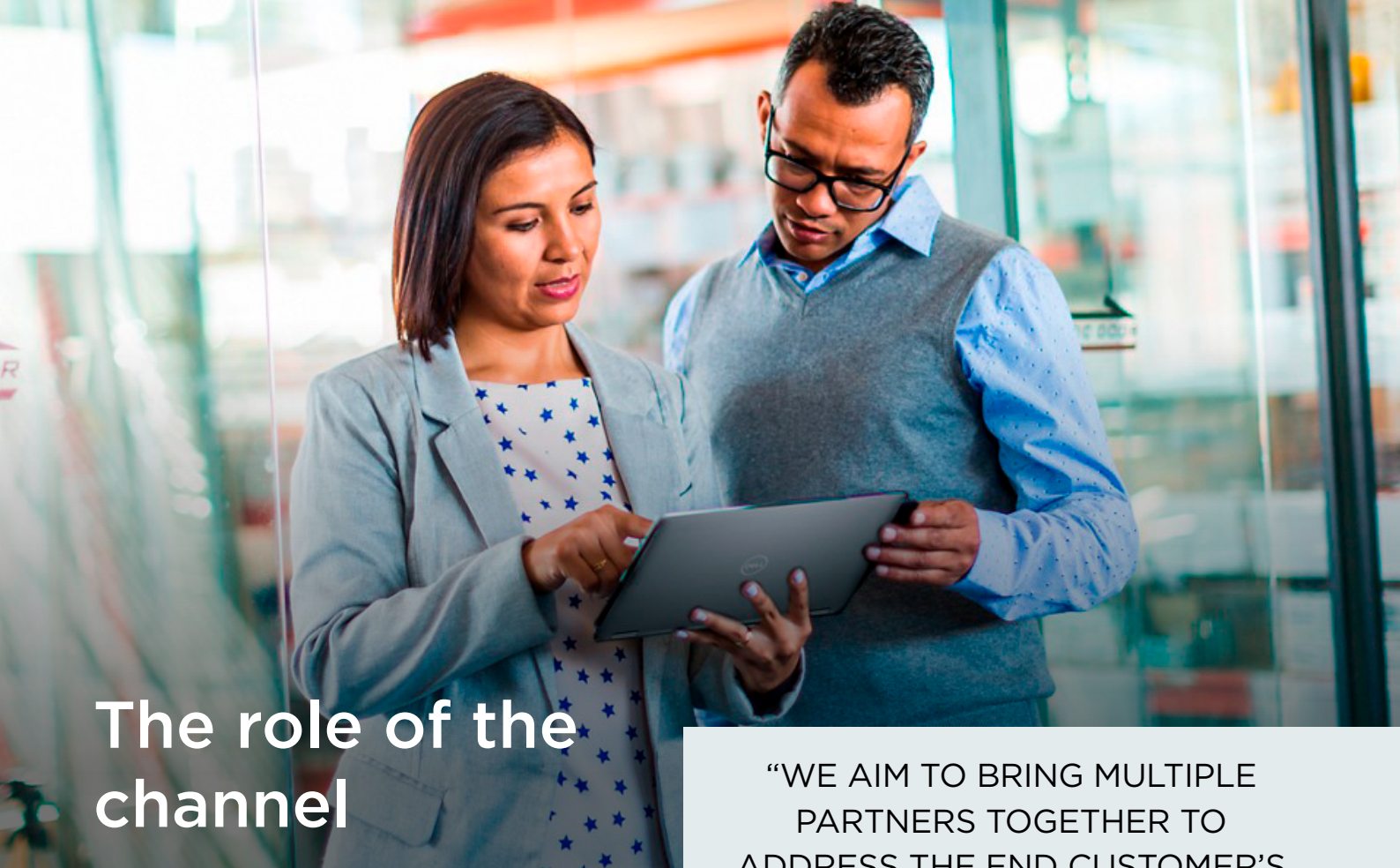
This can yield some powerful results. Research from Dell showed that right-sizing solutions can be up to 75%² more cost-effective in an on-prem data center compared to the public cloud, and customers saw up to a 70%³ improvement in user productivity when deploying AI efficiently and effectively.

By partnering with an experienced provider, businesses can future proof their AI investments and apply a strategic approach by leveraging the appropriate technology ecosystem partners and Dell’s broad AI solution portfolio.

Meanwhile, the industry is approaching a natural PC refresh cycle, driven by the largest install base ever and the upcoming end of Windows 10 support in October 2025. According to Canalys⁴, there are 240 million PCs unable to upgrade to Windows 11, and approximately 40% of Windows PCs are over six years old - making the modernization of device fleets essential.

AI PCs are becoming highly sought-after, offering powerful capabilities such as text-based content creation powered by GenAI applications and chatbots, while ensuring data remains on-device to meet security and latency requirements. Dell uniquely delivers a comprehensive portfolio of AI-enabled PCs, including options with NPUs powered by Intel, Qualcomm, and AMD, as well as high-performance workstations with NVIDIA GPUs. Beyond enabling the use of pre-built AI tools, Dell empowers organizations to develop custom AI applications using their own data, all securely running locally on these devices with a unique set of AI tools from Dell Pro AI Studio.

With Dell’s diverse silicon options and advanced AI solutions, organizations gain unmatched flexibility to meet their unique needs. By engaging customers ready to refresh their aging fleets, adopt cutting-edge AI capabilities, and future-proof their operations, partners can seize immense growth opportunities leading up to 2025 and beyond. ■



The role of the channel

Customers expect more from their channel partners today, especially when it comes to AI. Solution providers are expected to be strategic AI advisors, bridging knowledge gaps, offering relevant resources, and maintaining ongoing, meaningful dialogue about AI with their customers.

The same applies to vendors and partners. Partners need clarity on how AI can impact their business and the opportunities it creates. Vendors must demonstrate how their solutions can be monetized and contribute to operational efficiency as well as helping identify relevant use cases.

“At Dell, we believe in the partner ecosystem,” says Hussain. “We aim to bring multiple partners together to address the end customer’s needs effectively.

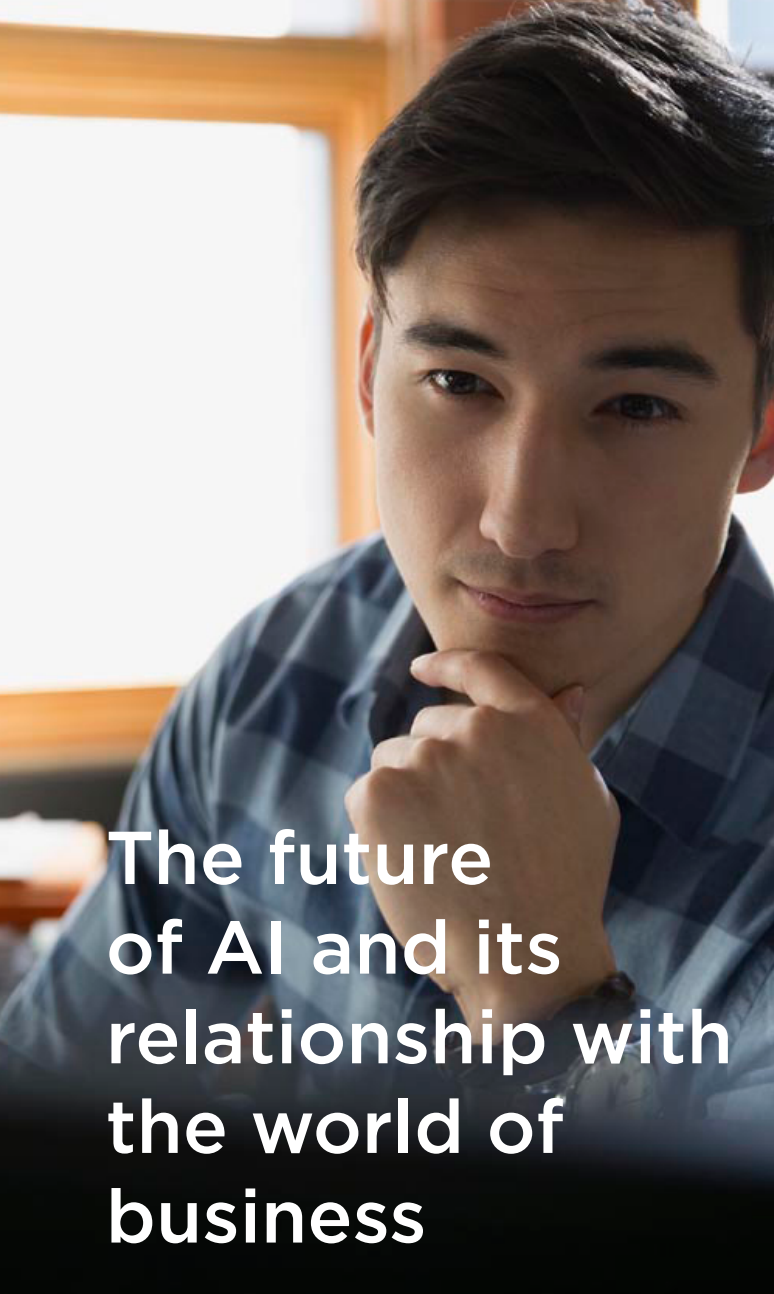
“From a partner perspective, there’s a range of opportunities. For example, what are the specific designs or vertical industry requirements a customer has? You might specialize in a particular industry. By collaborating within the ecosystem, you can focus on improving operational efficiency and reducing costs – both for the customer and for yourself as a partner.

“WE AIM TO BRING MULTIPLE PARTNERS TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THE END CUSTOMER’S NEEDS EFFECTIVELY.”

The great thing about Dell is that we not only offer the broadest AI infrastructure⁵ from PCs and workstations to data centers and cloud, but industry leading products (number one in server and storage⁶) too. We also pair these with validated designs and energy efficient technologies that help partners meet customer time-to-market deployments, and training and enablement programs. Combined, these allow partners to save time and effort spent in selecting, testing, and optimizing - leading to faster implementation times and higher customer satisfaction.”

The successful implementation and monetization of AI in the channel depends on close collaboration and a strategic evolution of programs. Vendors and partners must form partnerships aligned with their AI readiness and business objectives.

These partnerships signal a shift in priorities compared to a decade ago, emphasizing the importance of use cases and measurable results. At its core, AI empowers partners to do what they’ve always done more effectively: build relationships, tailor solutions to unique needs, provide timely support, and drive productivity. ■



The future of AI and its relationship with the world of business

By the end of the decade, AI will almost certainly become a fixture at home and at work. Beyond changing the way we work and process information, it will also change the way we socialize, travel, interact with loved ones and navigate daily life.

To once again quote Michael Dell, today is the “worst that AI will ever be”⁷. AI will continue to improve and evolve, and getting in on the ground level is beneficial for long-term success.

“The best time to start is now,” continues Hussain. “Customers are eager to adopt AI - and need help doing so. Partners can help customers to get started by leveraging customer knowledge and working with companies like Dell, to get up and running quickly.”

According to figures published by the FT⁸, big tech companies like Meta and Google collectively poured upwards of \$100bn into AI and infrastructure like data centers in 2024 - large dollar amounts that normal enterprises had no hope of matching.

“What we’re seeing in 2025,” concludes Hussain, “is that customers are realizing that you can get started with a much smaller amount and scale as needed.”

“There has never been a better time to get started.” ■

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Citations

¹ Based on CRN research, July 2024

² Dell: [Maximizing AI ROI: Inferencing On-premises With Dell Technologies Can Be 75% More Cost-effective Than Public Cloud](#)

³ Dell: [Accelerating GenAI adoption and productivity with an AI factory](#)

⁴ Canalys: [The end of Windows 10 support could turn 240 million PCs into e-waste](#)

⁵ Based on Dell analysis, August 2023

⁶ IDC: [IDC Quarterly Server Tracker 2Q24](#)

⁷ LinkedIn: [“This is the Worst AI Will Ever Be” - Michael Dell](#)

⁸ FT: [Big Tech groups say their \\$100bn AI spending spree is just beginning](#)

About the sponsor



Dell Technologies is among the world's leading technology companies, helping to transform people's lives with extraordinary capabilities. From hybrid cloud solutions to high-performance computing as well as ambitious social impact and sustainability initiatives, their mission is to create technologies that drive human progress.