

SPOTLIGHT

The Partner Opportunity For Microsoft AI Business Solutions: Spotlight On Microsoft 365 Solution Plays

COMMISSIONED BY MICROSOFT, JULY 2026

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Microsoft commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct a Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) study and examine the potential business opportunity partners may realize by building and scaling Microsoft AI Business Solutions practices.¹

To better understand the revenue streams, investments, and risks associated with AI Business Solutions practices, Forrester interviewed representatives from 37 partners and surveyed 24 respondents from organizations with AI Business Solutions practices. The case study builds on interviews from the past 12 years with more than 250 Microsoft partners and more than 200 organizations that buy their services.

AI Business Solutions covers three solutions area groups including Microsoft AI, core Microsoft 365, and core Dynamics 365. This abstract focuses on recent changes for Microsoft partners as it relates to the Microsoft 365 solution plays and the outlook for fiscal year (FY) 2027. This includes market trends and how partners make money.

The core Microsoft 365 solution area includes:

- **Secure AI Productivity.** The services partners offer for Microsoft 365 E3 and E5, SharePoint, identity management, data protection, and Windows 11.
- **Converged Communications.** The services partners offer for Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Teams Phone, and Microsoft Teams Rooms.
- **Cloud and AI Endpoints.** The services partners offer for Windows 365 (including Windows 365 Reserve and Windows 365 Link), Azure Virtual Desktop, and Intune.

Many of the interviewees' organizations had Microsoft 365 practices in addition to broader AI Business Solutions practices. In these discussions with Forrester, interviewees shared their views on the high-level trends driving growth today and those expected to become even more important in FY 2027.

To summarize, they said enterprise demand for Microsoft 365 solutions and services was strong. Key factors driving opportunities and growth included AI adoption, cost optimization, increasing solution area interconnectedness, product evolution, and Microsoft partner support. AI was sparking conversations, updates, and migrations. For example, AI drove SharePoint clean-up work with Microsoft 365 Copilot in mind, meeting rooms upgrades to take advantage of AI, and more. Cost optimization and vendor consolidation are driving migrations to Teams Phone, Windows 365, and Azure Virtual Desktop. The increasing solution area interconnectedness is creating more opportunities not only within Secure AI Productivity but also with Microsoft 365 Copilot, Agents, Dynamics 365 Contact Center, and Security. Furthermore, with Microsoft's support, the breadth of solutions and the addition of new capabilities and products like Microsoft 365 E7 and Windows 365 for Agents is making interviewees optimistic about continued opportunities and growth in FY 2027.

\$88.70 per user per month

Expected revenue opportunity (with attach rates applied) for Microsoft 365²

The Partner Opportunity For Microsoft 365

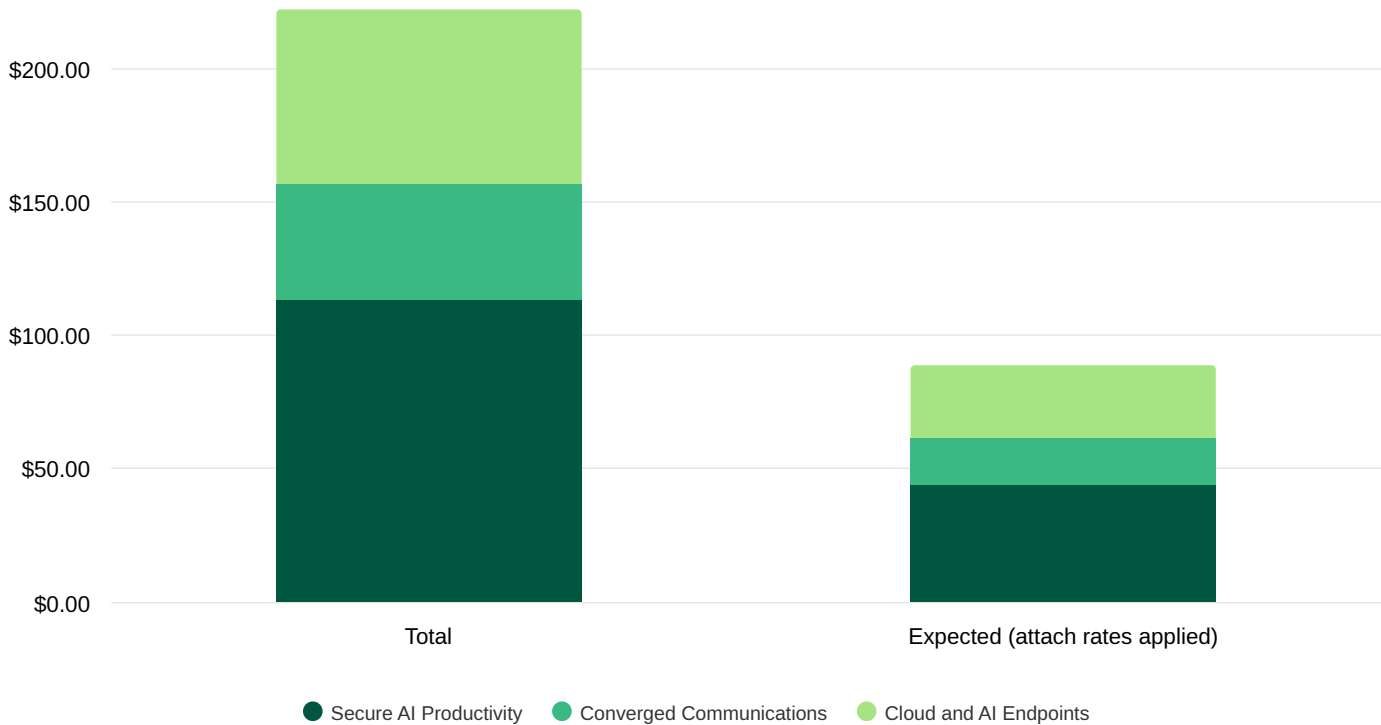
The trends discussed in the previous section have increased revenues across Microsoft 365 in terms of total revenue potential (i.e., what partners are offering) and the expected revenue associated with the likely bundles of services that customers are buying (attach rates applied).

In terms of those services, partners were doing more Secure AI Productivity-related deployment work and increasingly expanding their capabilities in areas such as identity management and data governance/protection to fully support their customers on an AI journey. Advisory services were also attaching more frequently due to tightening budgets — which necessitated partner support to maximize the ROI from technology investments — and AI’s influence. Solutions development remains important and increasingly involves AI agents. Lastly, many partners are more frequently attaching managed services, including basic data security. Microsoft 365 engagements almost always begin with Secure AI Productivity for new customers, but naturally extend to Converged Communications and Cloud and AI Endpoints as well as Security and AI, yielding additional opportunities.

Accounting for attach rates, Forrester found that the expected Microsoft 365 revenue opportunity for a new enterprise customer on a three-year journey is \$88.70 per user per month. This is up 5% year over year and up 65% since FY 2021.³

For details on the partner opportunity for smaller customers, please reference the accompanying CSP case study.⁴

Microsoft 365 Total And Expected Revenue Opportunity



Revenue By Solution Area				
Solution area	Total revenue per user per month	Blended attach rate	Expected revenue per user per month	Expected YOY revenue growth
Secure AI Productivity	\$112.95	39%	\$43.85	2%
Converged Communications	\$43.85	40%	\$17.55	14%
Cloud and AI Endpoints	\$65.60	42%	\$27.30	3%
Total	\$222.40	40%	\$88.70	5%

Revenue By Partner Service				
Partner service	Total revenue per user per month	Blended attach rate	Expected revenue per user per month	Expected YOY revenue growth
Deployment	\$17.70	65%	\$11.50	6%
Advisory	\$15.20	63%	\$9.50	10%
Solutions development	\$51.55	25%	\$12.70	2%
Managed services	\$137.95	40%	\$55.00	4%
Total	\$222.40	40%	\$88.70	5%

Secure AI Productivity. Secure AI Productivity is the broadest solution area and the core of Microsoft’s productivity story. This includes the various Microsoft 365 SKUs for knowledge and frontline workers, SharePoint, and Windows 11. Microsoft 365 also includes a range of security and compliance solutions. These services include:

- **Deployments, which can be a multiyear journey.** Because of the breadth of solutions that make up Secure AI Productivity, the full deployment for a new customer can take a long time. Furthermore, the constant addition of new capabilities means a partner can always do more in future phases. For E3 to E5 migrations, deployment at a small enterprise can range between one and six months, depending on the solutions and a customer’s maturity. A series of workshops, especially if funded by Microsoft, is the typical starting point and has a very high success rate in leading to enterprisewide deployments. Increasingly, security workshops and follow-on work are part of the process. There is also renewed interest in cleaning up existing SharePoint Online deployments because they are a primary repository for Microsoft 365 Copilot, and companies that are still on-prem need to migrate to the cloud to take advantage of AI. These migrations vary depending on the amount of content, with one partner describing a one-year \$500,000 project at a small enterprise as typical. Partners did not see significant Windows 11 deployment revenue opportunity.
- **Advisory services, which are increasingly important as companies try to maximize the benefits from their investments.** IT organizations are increasingly being asked to do more without increasing budgets for people or technologies. This is leading to wider adoption of the capabilities built into Microsoft 365, especially the E5 SKU. Achieving the desired benefits requires a range of advisory services, including strategy and planning, training for IT teams, and change management like business process reengineering and end-user adoption. Partners also reported that customers are more willing to pay for advisory services because of AI’s disruptive capabilities and the potential for large-scale benefits. Across all areas of Secure AI Productivity, these advisory services can be worth as much as 60% of the deployment opportunity when a customer asks their partner to lead the change management component rather than manage it in-house.

- **Solutions development, including in-house IP.** Partners continue to create IP that fills the white space around Microsoft's productivity solutions. These can be features that business users interact with, automation tools for IT organizations, and IP used internally by partners for processes such as SharePoint migrations. Partners reported more success transacting in the Microsoft online marketplace compared to previous years. Partners often put their IP in the marketplace to initiate sales conversations or to make Microsoft field sales aware of these offerings. Another growing area of solutions development is creating SharePoint agents and custom workflows.
- **Wide-ranging managed services, including L1 through L3 support contracts, attach as part of the Secure AI Productivity Journey.** In addition to the keeping-the-lights-on, evergreen, and user-support managed services that partners have offered for many years, there is an increase in basic data security managed services to support AI adoption. Many partners report investing in these new capabilities, and when their breadth and depth of security compliance expertise is exceeded, they will bring in a managed services security provider. For the more traditional managed services, an all-encompassing offering including L1 through L3 support can be \$50 per user per month or higher. For the newer security-related managed services, one partner example of a managed security offering covering the Microsoft estate was \$100,000 per year plus \$100 per user per year. When it comes to delivering managed services, partners said they are investing heavily in AI to automate processes, especially trouble-ticket handling.

"The E3 to E5 migration story is about innovation and security-tool rationalization. These also lead to Azure and endpoint opportunities."

VP, Microsoft partner

Converged Communications. Converged Communications includes everything within the Microsoft Teams solution family — Teams, Teams Premium, Teams Phone, and Teams Rooms along with the related Microsoft Places. These services include:

- **Microsoft Teams.**
 - **Deployment services.** Most deployment work for Microsoft Teams consists of small projects related to updating how the solution is used to integrate AI into the flow of work, although there are still migrations.
 - **Advisory services.** Partners continue to do work for Teams governance and have incorporated aspects of AI governance into these offerings. Advisory services also include training and change management services on using AI within Teams.
 - **Solutions development services.** Solutions development primarily consists of building Teams applications. Power Platform is the most common development tool for building applications and custom workflows. There is less advanced integration work than in the past because of the wide range of off-the-shelf connectors.
- **Microsoft Teams Phone.**
 - **Deployment services.** Teams Phone deployments are increasingly a move from another digital voice provider due to more companies being on the Microsoft 365 E5 SKU and looking to optimize technology spend. Partners spoke about the desire to keep upfront costs as low as possible to remove barriers to entry, with the goal of selling managed services and calling plans. Deployment revenue size is driven by two main factors: the similarity of the prior calling solution and the number of locations.
 - **Advisory services.** Teams Phone advisory services consist of planning work and change management. Voice continues to be fundamental to business processes and business productivity, and there are now more ways to communicate than ever before. As a result, a lot of effort is put into designing voice solutions and understanding the user impacts. Perhaps more importantly, the increased use of AI agents as part of voice solutions is creating new advisory opportunities. These include

reimagining business processes and establishing governance models for voice agent factories. Partners expect this to be a large area of growth for the foreseeable future.

- **Solutions development services.** Agentic work is the new driver of solutions development. Traditional custom integration and development work continues, and partners still sell their own IP to make management easier. However, the interest and excitement are for building voice agents. One example of agentic work was at a multinational insurance company. There were multiple use cases, and each required several agents. Each use case was worth \$500,000, and the expectation is that there will be a couple of new use cases each year.
- **Managed services.** Partners have a wide range of Teams Phone managed services offerings, from basic support managing moves, adds, changes, and deletions to full outsourcing. With voice now being part of digital IT rather than a completely separate technology stack and skills base, IT organizations that use external managed services want voice bundled into that outsourcing. That said, the trend of fewer calls being placed is, in many cases, reducing calling plan revenues. Partners are looking to AI-related managed services to help compensate for these reductions in the coming years.
- **Microsoft Teams Rooms.**
 - **Deployment services.** Rooms that support the use of AI results in increased deployment revenues. Partners reported a reduction in bring-your-own-device buildouts because AI-optimized rooms require better hardware and room design/construction. They noted increased network infrastructure work being done to support better performance and the use of AI. Partners also reported building smaller rooms, which are less costly in comparison to larger ones but create downward revenue pressures. Like Teams Phone, partners are trying to keep upfront costs as low as possible to win the downstream managed services contracts. Microsoft Places deployments are comparatively much smaller, with most of the work consisting of mapping out offices.
 - **Advisory services.** Teams Rooms advisory services consist mostly of creating meeting room best practices, templated room designs, and training materials for using rooms. A typical project to create best practices and standard room designs can range from \$75,000 to \$150,000. There is also the need to create training materials and provide some change management services for using Microsoft Places.
 - **Solutions development services.** Partner-created IP is an increasingly important part of solutions development. Partners have created many tools for more efficient rooms management, including scheduling and remote diagnostics. This latter area is especially important because increased labor costs have made it harder to have as many on-site technicians. These tools increasingly incorporate AI agents to improve efficiencies and provide better service.
 - **Managed services.** Teams Rooms managed services are growing in popularity as meeting rooms become more critical. Per-room managed service prices vary widely depending on the service level required and typically range between \$50 and \$150 per room per month. More basic rooms are at the lower end of the price range, with remote troubleshooting and a set number of on-site support hours. More inclusive contracts include quarterly or annual room inspections. When it comes to the most sophisticated rooms, such as auditoriums and boardrooms, paying for onsite support is still the norm. Managed services for Microsoft Places are beginning to land, primarily for ongoing mapping of floor plans.

“We expanded our Operator Connect business into an agentic AI practice. Agents are now part of the management portal. This includes basic things like phone number management as well as advanced capabilities such as sentiment analysis.”

VP, Microsoft partner

Cloud and AI Endpoints. To support enterprise customers with cloud PCs, virtualization, and endpoint and device management, Microsoft partners offer services for solutions such as Windows 365, Azure Virtual Desktop, and Intune. These services include:

- **Deployment services, including increasing Windows 365 deployments.** Cloud and AI endpoint engagements often start with a Microsoft-funded assessment or workshop, followed by a pilot or proof of concept and then full deployment and rollout. Project sizes vary based on customer complexity, size, use cases and personas, and global scale. Partners said that deployment demand was stable or growing as enterprise customers face rising costs from legacy on-prem virtual desktop infrastructure. Many are shifting to modern cloud endpoints to optimize costs and consolidate vendors and tools. In particular, interviewees noted that Windows 365 deployments are increasing as Windows 365 Link and Windows 365 Reserve strengthen the value proposition and expand user bases. Partners also said they expect Windows 365 for Agents to drive future growth, alongside factors such as AI compute requirements, scenarios where employees need to run processes with laptops closed, and more.
- **Advisory services, which partners expect to grow because of Windows 365 for Agents.** Microsoft partners offer adoption and training, change management, communication, strategy, and other advisory services to enterprise customers deploying endpoints. To advise effectively, partners need to understand enterprises' existing endpoints, use cases, personas, and goals. This work took place during initial planning and future phases. Looking ahead, partners said they anticipate growth in advisory services tied to Windows 365 for Agents. One interviewee said: "The next phase of growth is Windows 365 for Agents. ... Risk mitigation is a big part of the Microsoft partner opportunity." They explained: "As soon as you give agents accounts and the agents are operating as a person, that becomes a more proactive discussion for partners. That is where we, as a partner, need to go in terms of providing that."
- **Solutions development services.** Partners commonly use IP to streamline the delivery of cloud and AI endpoint services. Some partners also sell their own IP, although it attaches less frequently. They also perform custom integration work for more complex environments.
- **Managed services, which are the largest part of the opportunity.** Post-deployment managed services offerings include managed Intune, Azure Virtual Desktop, and Windows 365, along with device management, monitoring, and support. One interviewee explained their organization's offerings, saying: "We have a managed Azure Virtual Desktop service. We look after autoscaling optimization, ongoing future-proofing of the environment, managed Intune advice, and managing across their entire cloud endpoint estate through to total device lifecycle management." Attach rates and revenue varied based on enterprises' in-house capabilities, the solutions deployed, and broader Microsoft 365 and managed services usage.

"Windows 365 for Agents and other Microsoft solutions come together to build a good story."

Director of digital workplace, Microsoft partner

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

For more information on the enterprise customer opportunity, download the full study: “[The Partner Opportunity For Microsoft AI Business Solutions](#),” a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, July 2026.

For more information on the CSP opportunity, download the full study: “[The Partner Opportunity For Microsoft AI Business Solutions](#),” a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, July 2026.

Study Findings

While the value story above is based on the Microsoft 365 solution area, Forrester also examined the potential business opportunity for AI and Dynamics 365. Forrester created a partner opportunity model for customers based on what leading partners have recently achieved and, to a lesser extent, what they expect to achieve in FY 2027. This model quantifies the opportunities for deployment, advisory services, solutions development, and managed services. Accounting for attach rates, Forrester found that the expected revenue opportunity for a new enterprise customer across all of AI Business Solutions is \$124.85 per user per month.

\$124.85 per user per month

Expected revenue opportunity (with attach rates applied) for AI Business Solutions

Appendixes

APPENDIX A

Endnotes

¹ Total Economic Impact is a methodology developed by Forrester Research that enhances a company's technology decision-making processes and assists solution providers in communicating their value proposition to clients. The TEI methodology helps companies demonstrate, justify, and realize the tangible value of business and technology initiatives to both senior management and other key stakeholders.

² The total opportunity represents the typical portfolio of offerings a partner is selling to customers.

The expected opportunity has attach rates applied to the total opportunity. The expected opportunity equals the total opportunity multiplied by the attach rate.

An attach rate is the likelihood of a customer buying a given service/solution. Forrester applies attach rates to solution areas (e.g., ERP) and services (e.g., deployment, advisory, solutions development, managed services). In other words, attach rates apply to the typical mix of solutions and services a customer buys. This will vary based on how a partner has entered AI Business Solutions. For example, a Dynamics 365-focused partner will attach more ERP services, while a Microsoft 365-focused partner will attach more Secure AI Productivity services. Use this calculation: total opportunity x attach rate = expected opportunity.

³ Forrester has added, recategorized, and removed solution areas which affect the year-over-year growth numbers. Forrester's FY 2026 analysis includes Low Code (Power Platform), Sales, and Service as new solution areas. The FY 2025 analysis included a CRM solution area, but Forrester is not making year-over-year comparisons with Sales and Service solution areas due to the differing approaches for interviews and financial modeling.

⁴ Source: The Partner Opportunity For Microsoft AI Business Solutions, a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, July 2026.

Disclosures

Readers should be aware of the following:

This study is commissioned by Microsoft and delivered by Forrester Consulting. It is not meant to be used as a competitive analysis.

Forrester makes no assumptions as to the potential ROI that other organizations will receive. Forrester strongly advises that readers use their own estimates within the framework provided in the study to determine the appropriateness of an investment in AI Business Solutions.

Microsoft reviewed and provided feedback to Forrester, but Forrester maintains editorial control over the study and its findings and does not accept changes to the study that contradict Forrester's findings or obscure the meaning of the study.

Microsoft provided the partner names for the interviews but did not participate in the interviews.

Survey respondents were Microsoft partners provided by Microsoft.