Are You of Value to Me? A Partner Selection Framework for Software Ecosystem Orchestrators

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Abstract

SECO orchestrators have insufficient insight and lack academic guidance in the partner selection criteria and methods available to aid them in their partner selection process. Therefore, SECO orchestrators fail to vet, select, and engage suitable partners for their SECO, which in turn, leads to not fully reaching the potential of their SECO, both for the SECO orchestrator and their customers. This research presents the SECO partner selection framework. It contributes (1) an overview of partner selection criteria validated and ranked by domain experts, (2) six partner selection methods applied and evaluated by leading software vendors in the Dutch market, (3) a method to develop and evaluate partner selection methods, and (4) the SECO partner selection framework containing the relevant activities, sub-activities and concepts to aid a SECO orchestrator in their partner selection process. With the partner selection framework, SECO orchestrators can design, update, and evaluate their SECO partner selection process.

Keywords Software Ecosystems · Partner Selection criteria · Partner Selection method

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1 Introduction

For SECO orchestrators, competition is increasingly about who has the best platform, product, and accompanying Software Ecosystem (SECO), instead of solely product-based competition (Cusumano, 2010; Tiwana, 2013). As stated by Jansen, Finkelstein and Brinkkemper (2009), the inability of a software vendor to function in a SECO has already led to the demise of many of them. A SECO can be seen as a vital part of the platform offering by the software vendor. A software vendor thrives, both in sales and profit, when their ecosystem does. This is because an independent software vendor (ISV) creates value for customers by offering additional functionality to the ecosystem which customers can use by means of, for example, an application (Jansen, Finkelstein, & Brinkkemper, 2009). The software vendor in turn benefits from this because by utilising and mobilising partner capabilities (functionality) the orchestrator meets and ensures that current customers have access to a wide range of functionality, which is complementary to the software vendor's platform portfolio. This, in turn, attracts new customers. Therefore the software vendor should strive for growth of their SECO, in:

- The number of partners;
- The variety of apps offered in the ecosystem;
- The number of customers that make use of the apps offered in the ecosystem;
- Revenue and profit.

However, recently conducted research has shown that when a SECO grows in number of new partners and applications, it becomes harder for a SECO orchestrator to govern and ensure the optimal performance of their platform ecosystem. A software ecosystem orchestrator is an entity that provides a standard or platform technology that provides a fundament for the ecosystem (Jansen, Brinkkemper, & Finkelstein, 2009).

When a SECO grows, this can raise questions for an orchestrator. In recent conversations, which were held in the autumn of 2018 with two Dutch software vendor SECO orchestrators, various questions were raised: how do I decide whether to include or reject a certain new partner in my platform's ecosystem? Which criteria do I use to decide if a partner is a valuable addition to my ecosystem? As of yet, no research has been conducted on SECO partner selection, this becomes clear from the systematic literature reviews conducted by Manikas and Hansen (2013; 2016) in which SECO partner selection is not mentioned; no literature has been found discussing SECO partner selection or stating the need for such research to be conducted.

To aid SECO orchestrators with their partner selection process, a framework is developed that can be used by a SECO orchestrator to help guide the partner selection process. A SECO orchestrator can use this framework to determine if a potential partners is a fit for the SECO orchestrator's platform ecosystem and therefore should be accepted. Part of this framework is to ensure the successful onboarding of the partner. This in a key aspect for the orchestrator to consider: if a orchestrator manages to find the right partners but fails to properly onboard them and, as a result, does not retain these partners, the orchestrator loses the advantage it had built up by engaging the partners.

The framework has a benefit for future partners as well: when a SECO orchestrator makes their selection process publicly accessible to potential partners, they are aware of the conditions they have to meet in order to be able to join the ecosystem. We define partner accession as *"the procedure the partner goes through in order to join, get familiar with and participate in a software ecosystem."* Future partners can anticipate these conditions and properly prepare for their accession.

1.1 Problem statement

Manikas (2013) states that there is a lack of research on governance mechanisms that can be applied within a SECO and their effect on the SECO. They call for an in-depth analysis to create an overview of the aspects regarding SECO governance. This call is supported by Jansen, Brinkkemper and Finkelstein (2009), discussing the need for case studies in order to analyse the characteristics of individual SECOs and their effect on software vendors. Their request is in turn supported by the study of Barbosa and Alves (2011), revealing that current research into SECOs is lacks case studies to provide an analysis of a SECO in its natural setting.

However, in the two previous stated articles, there is no call for research on SECO partner selection. No research has been conducted on SECO partner selection as of yet. Manikas and Hansen (2013; 2016) do not mention the concept of partners, partner selection criteria, or the process of partner selection in any way. Based upon the two systematic literature reviews by Manikas and Hansen, and our own literature search, we observe that there is currently a gap in the literature with regard to partner selection in software ecosystems.

Subsequently, for the majority of SECO orchestrators it is not self-evident to acquire partners. Apple collaborates with 2.8 million developers to create applications in their app store (Evans Data, 2016) but for the majority of SECO orchestrators this is not the case. SECO orchestrators have to spend sufficient effort to vet, select and engage suitable partners. One should take into account that the majority of the SECO orchestrators has limited resources available for their SECO partner selection process. Therefore, a SECO orchestrator must be critical on which potential partners the orchestrator spends their resources. An orchestrator should focus on partners that really add value to their ecosystem, more is not better in this case.

We can summarise the above mentioned in the following statement: **SECO orchestrators lack guidance to aid them in SECO partner selection, a process which demands sufficient effort and resources. However, the majority of SECO orchestrators has limited resources available for their SECO partner selection process. A structured approach to SECO partner selection is required to aid SECO orchestrators in vetting, selecting, and engaging SECO partners.**

Motivated by these concerns and the business need as described in the introduction, this research intends to identify partner selection criteria and to develop various partner selection methods that aid a SECO orchestrator in their partner selection process. A method was chosen to depict the process of SECO partner selection because a method is based on a specific way of thinking, consisting of directions and rules, structured in a systematic way (Brinkkemper, 1996) to perform a certain task in a structured way. In this research, the task of partner selection.

1.2 Contributions to software ecosystem literature

This research provides the following contributions to the software ecosystem literature:

1. We provide an overview of partner selection criteria that are, subsequently, ranked by twelve domain experts in six case studies, in section 3;
2. We establish a meta-model of SECO partner selection, in section 4;
3. We introduce a method to develop and evaluate partner selection methods. We are the first to apply the technique of method engineering (van de Weerd & Brinkkemper, 2009) to the domain of software ecosystems partner selection, in section 4 and 5;
4. We create the SECO partner selection framework in which we present the activities, sub-activities and concepts that aid a SECO orchestrator in their partner selection process, in section 4;

5. We use the technique of method engineering and method comparison to construct, together with domain experts, three reference methods (van de Weerd, de Weerd, & Brinkkemper, 2007; Brinkkemper, Saeki, & Harmsen, 1999; Hong, van den Goor, & Brinkkemper, 1993), in section 5.

This research provides insight into SECO partner selection and introduces the SECO partner selection framework which aids SECO orchestrators in their partner selection process.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question for this research is: *"How can an assessment framework be developed to aid software ecosystem orchestrators in vetting, selecting, and engaging SECO partners?"* To help answer this research question, a set of additional, sub-research questions has been drafted:

- SRQ 1: *Which criteria determine if a potential partner is a valuable addition to an ecosystem?*

  The goal of this sub question is to collect partner selection criteria from the literature that can be used to determine if a partner is a valuable addition for an ecosystem. The findings gained are evaluated during the case studies. The outcome of this question is an overview of partner selection criteria.

- SRQ 2: *What are the activities a SECO orchestrator executes when selecting partners?*

  To answer this sub question, we investigate the different activities executed by the SECO orchestrator in the SECO partner selection process; which activities does the SECO orchestrator execute in order to select, vet and engage new SECO partners? To answer this question, case studies are conducted. The outcome of this question is a Process-Deliverable Diagram (van de Weerd & Brinkkemper, 2009) showing the activities, sub-activities and corresponding deliverables to the activities that are part of the partner selection process executed by the SECO orchestrator.

- SRQ 3: *Which criteria determine if a SECO orchestrator should prioritise a partner?*

  In SRQ 2 various partner selection criteria have been identified. Based upon the findings of the previous research question, we identify criteria that indicate that a partner needs to be prioritised over other partners. These criteria are collected in the case studies. The outcome of this question is an overview of criteria that indicate that a SECO orchestrator needs to prioritise a partner over other partners.

- SRQ 4: *Which SECO governance mechanisms are applied by a SECO orchestrator to govern their platform ecosystem?*

  Case studies are conducted to answer this question. The interviewees are asked which SECO governance mechanisms they apply to govern their ecosystem i.e. to keep it smoothly running and react to incidents to avoid escalations. The outcome of this research question is a list of SECO governance mechanisms applied by the different case study organisations.

Table 1 shows how the research questions stated above are answered.

Research question	**Answered using**
SRQ 1	Combination of literature study and case studies
SRQ 2	Combination of literature study, case studies and Method Engineering
SRQ 3	Case studies
SRQ 4	Case studies

Table 1: Research questions and which method is used to answer them.

1.4 Thesis outline

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows, chapter 2 describes the research method together with the data collection method and analysis. Chapter 3 presents a literature overview on the topics described in chapter 2. Chapter 4 analyses the results based on the various case studies. Chapter 5 contains an evaluation of the partner selection methods found. This research ends with a discussion including future research directions and a conclusion.

2 Research method

2.1 Research objective

The objective for this research is to develop a framework that can guide a SECO orchestrator to determine if a partner is a valuable addition to their platform SECO and therefore should be accepted to the SECO. In order to reach this objective, partner selection candidate criteria and (partial) partner selection methods are identified based on the literature. The gained knowledge from the literature study is evaluated using multiple case studies. Based on the case studies results, a partner selection method for each case study organisation is developed. Subsequently, these different methods are evaluated by means of creating three reference methods containing the best method fragments from the six partner selection methods identified during the case studies. Each reference method is tailored to a particular organisation, operating in a specific market or market segment, illustrating the process of SECO partner selection.

2.2 Research context

This research is conducted within the domain of software ecosystems. Specifically, in the field of SECO partner selection. This research tries to fill the existing gap in the literature by providing an overview of partner selection criteria, partner selection methods and the SECO partner selection framework that can be used by SECO orchestrators to help guide the partner selection process.

In order to draw conclusions, it is required to highlight the context in which the research took place. The research context influences the conclusion and the generalisability of the results (Petersen & Wohlin, 2009). This research took place in the Netherlands and involves organisations that are operating in the Dutch market. Multiple case studies are conducted to explore the topic of SECO partner selection. The participating case study organisations operate in different domains and have 30 or more partners in their SECO. Subsequently, all participating organisations have their origin either in Europe or the United States. We mention these three contextual factors since the findings gained in this research might not be applicable to market domains other than researched in this work, to organisations with fewer partners in their SECO since for those organisations SECO partner selection might be less relevant, and to non-Western markets or organisations that have non-Western roots.

2.3 Design Science

In order to determine the research method that suits this research best, the research decision-making structure by Wohlin and Aurum (2015) was used as inspiration. The decision-making structure helps guiding scholars in selecting the correct research method. Based on this structure, Design Science is selected as the research methodology for this work. Design Science is defined by Wieringa (2009) as "*an attempt to create or improve artefacts to serve the human purpose better.*" Design Science has as goal to create a purposeful artefact (Wieringa & Moralı, 2012) which aims to solve identified problems (Hevner, March, Park, & Ram, 2004; Hevner & Chatterjee, 2010; Gregor & Hevner, 2013). Design Science is considered as a suitable research method for this research given its goal of designing purposeful artefacts; six partner selection methods and three reference methods, which can be applied in the SECO domain to solve the relevant problem of SECO partner selection.

To design the artefact, the design cycle by Wieringa (2014) is applied. For this research, the following three phases can be identified: problem investigation, artefact design, and artefact evaluation. During the first phase, problem investigation, a literature study is conducted.

The artefact is a framework that aids a SECO orchestrator to determine whether a partner is a valuable addition to their SECO which is modelled in a Process-Deliverable Diagram (PDD) (van de Weerd & Brinkkemper, 2009). In a PDD, the process view (based on a UML Activity Diagram) is shown on the left-hand side. On the right-hand side, the deliverables corresponding to the activities are shown (based on a UML Class Diagram). A PDD is accompanied by two tables, an activity table that specifies the activities in the PDD and a concept table, specifying the concepts used in the PDD. During the evaluation phase, the six partner selection methods are evaluated by means of three evaluation case studies which results in the construction of three reference methods. Subsequently, we develop the SECO partner selection framework.

2.4 Literature study

The literature study conducted for this research can be divided into three categories: *software ecosystems, SECO partner selection criteria and SECO partner selection methods.* The category *software ecosystems* provides a general introduction to software ecosystems. The existing systematic literature reviews by Manikas and Hansen (2013) and Manikas (2016) were taken as a starting point and from there, further literature was added through snowballing, using both forward and backward searching (Wohlin, 2014).

In the category *partner selection criteria*, we search for partner selection candidate criteria in the literature. We make a distinction between candidate partner selection criteria derived from SECO governance mechanisms and criteria derived from other sources. For this search, we execute a structured literature study using the following query: *partner(ship) selection* OR *SECO partner selection* OR *software ecosystems partner selection* AND *criteria* OR *method*. Relevant publications are collected from Google Scholar and are reviewed to verify if they contain candidate partner selection criteria relevant for this research, meaning the criteria found must be applicable to the field of software ecosystems. When defining this approach, we used the work by Kofod-Petersen (2012) as inspiration.

We expect to see an effect of the chosen SECO governance mechanism on the partner selection process. SECO governance is a key aspect for the SECO orchestrator to consider because if a SECO orchestrator engages partners that add value to the SECO but fails to retain these partners due to failing to apply the right governance mechanisms, the SECO orchestrator loses the advantage it had built up by engaging the partners. In the last category, *partner selection method*, we search in the literature for SECO partner selection methods which service as a foundation and inspiration for the case studies.

2.5 Partner selection candidate criteria

The partner selection criteria candidates are based upon partner selection and governance mechanisms found in the literature. However, no literature has been found that is tailored to SECO partner selection. In order to select partner selection candidate criteria, we applied the following inclusion criteria which can be found below:

- All candidate criteria that have been selected are measurable and some form of value can be assigned to the criterion, answering a criterion with just *yes or no* does not suffice.
- All candidate criteria are applicable to the software industry;
- All candidate criteria that are relevant for and applicable to the Dutch market. This means that the candidate criteria selected for this research can be used by SECO orchestrators operating in the Dutch market to vet, select and engage SECO partners.

Below, we present some examples that show how we applied the previously stated inclusion criteria. For example, criteria that focus on the presence of certain certifications are excluded from this research since such a criteria can only be answered with yes or no. Secondly, criteria that are not applicable to the software industry, for example, criteria that focus solely on manufacturing, such as production speed or labour conditions, are not included in this research. Finally, criteria that are relevant for emerging markets such as Africa are deemed unfit since the Dutch (and European) market is not classified as an emerging market. Similar, criteria that focus on restricted industries, are excluded from this research.

2.6 Case studies

Case studies are a vital and a major part of this research since this research is of an exploratory nature. According to Hevner and Chatterjee (2010) a case study is *"an observational design evaluation method which can be used to study the designed artefact in its intended natural setting."* This is confirmed by Stol and Fitzgerald (2018), stating that a case study provides evidence of a phenomenon in its natural setting. When a researcher conducts a case study, the researcher should consider their case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case can be described as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context, being the *unit of analysis* (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The case for this research is the SECO orchestrator's partner selection process.

According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because the researcher deems these relevant to the phenomenon under study. For this research, an exploratory multiple case study is conducted. Yin (2013) reports that a multiple case study design can have multiple concerns. To increase reliability, a Case Study Protocol is created (Pervan & Maimbo, 2005). To strengthen reliability and validity (Chau, 1999), triangulation is applied, both data triangulation as well as methodological triangulation (Yin, 2013; Neuman, 2013; Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Runeson & Höst, 2009).

2.7 Case Study Protocol

In this section, the Case Study Protocol (Pervan & Maimbo, 2005) is created for this research.

2.7.1 General

This research *aims to* determine partner selection criteria and develop a partner selection framework to address *the existing gap* in the software ecosystem literature by providing an overview of partner selection criteria and provides a partner selection framework that aid a SECO orchestrator in their SECO partner selection process. This research starts with *a literature study* to identify partner selection candidate criteria and (partial) methods depicting the partner selection process. Subsequently, a *multiple case study* (Yin, 2003) is conducted to evaluate the criteria found in the literature as well as gain additional knowledge on SECO partner selection. Another case study objective is to develop for each case study organisation a partner selection method, showing how that particular organisation approaches the process of partner selection. After this process is finished, the six methods found are evaluated by means of three evaluation case studies. To do so, the technique of method engineering and comparison is applied (van de Weerd et al., 2007).

2.7.2 Case and interviewee selection criteria

In this section, the case and interviewee selection criteria used for this research are introduced. Proper selection of case and interviewee inclusion criteria contribute to optimising the internal and external validity of this research, especially since this research is of an exploratory nature with the aim to generalise the results found. In order to select candidate organisations that optimally suit this research, we use *ex post* case selection (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016) and use the following inclusion criteria:

- Organisations that offer a software product that comes with an platform ecosystem in which partners can place their application which can be bought by customers;
- Organisations that are of medium to large size in terms of number of employees;
- Organisations that offer a platform that can be bought and used in the Netherlands;
- Organisations that have a platform SECO that can be classified as a large ecosystem in the number of partners that are part of the SECO since a platform becomes more attractive when more customers use it and more suppliers provide complementary products and/or services (Hartigh, Visscher, Tol, & Salas, 2013).

We chose to adhere to a minimum of 30 partners. This because when an orchestrator has to govern and select 1, 2, 5 or 10 partners this can be achieved without a structured governance and partner selection approach. However, when the number of SECO partners increases, it becomes more and more difficult for the SECO orchestrator to successfully vet, select and engage new partners.

The sample used for this research is gathered using convenience sampling (Morse, 2010). Convenience sampling involves drawing samples that are both easily accessible and willing to participate in a study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Both the network of the researcher as that of Accenture Intelligent Cloud and Infrastructure Netherlands is used to select potential organisations for this research. When selecting the organisations that participate in the case studies, the case selection criteria that are stated above were applied.

As we already mentioned in the research context, the case studies are conducted to explore the topic of SECO partner selection. Since we conduct an exploratory study, no attention has been given to ensure that all case study organisations offer a similar platform, for example, all organisations offer an Enterprise Resource Planning platform. This was done on purpose to capture cross-domain perspectives which promote the generalisability of the findings and enable the researchers to create a SECO partner selection model which can be applied by SECO orchestrators domain unspecific.

Each case study organisation was either contacted by phone or email to gauge potential interest to participate in this research. When the interviewees were enthusiastic and willing to participate, an overview of the research objective as well as the case study setup was given, explaining what is expected from them. To prepare for the interviews, the researchers conducted an online investigation into the case study organisation, during which the, when available, the partnership programs were studied. The average duration of the interviews was 75 minutes and took place at the respective organisations' headquarters or via digital communication. The interview was recorded using an audio recorder. During the interview, the interviewer took notes and provided the interviewee with pen and paper to write information down or make drawings when they deemed necessary. The results were processed within 24 hours after the interview.

Two employees with different positions within their organisation are interviewed to ensure their different perspectives on partner selection since these may vary due to their position within the organisation.

Candidate interviewees adhere to the following characteristics:

- The interviewee is involved with the SECO;
- The interviewee is involved with SECO partners and their selection;
- The interviewee is involved with SECO strategy creation or with its execution.

Summarising, all participating interviewees in this research are involved with SECO partners and their organisation's SECO partner selection process.

2.7.3 Research instruments

The research element used for this research is a qualitative research instrument, i.e. semi-structured interviews (Drever, 1995). The data for this research is collected from multiple sources; different employees with a different position within their organisation are interviewed. Methodological triangulation is applied by using multiple methods to gather data, conduct interviews and observe. The technique of observation is applied when the interviewee executes the card sorting exercise, during the verification interview with both employees when they validate the partner selection method developed for their organisation, and during the evaluation case studies.

2.7.4 Interviews

For each case study, two individual interviews are conducted. During these two interviews, the following topics are discussed:

- General picture of the case study platform SECO;
- Card sorting exercise;
- Partner selection method;
- Partner prioritising;
- SECO governance.

After the individual interviews are conducted, processing time is scheduled in order for the researcher to analyse the data and develop an initial partner selection method based upon the results of the two individual interviews. This initial method is then evaluated in one verification interview with both employees present. Since both interviewees join this interview, the researcher has to consider the effects this might have on the results of such an interview (McGraw & Seale, 1988). Knowledge acquisition from multiple experts in a group setting has the potential to become an impediment (Hayes-Roth, Waterman, & Lenat, 1983; McGraw & Seale, 1988). Therefore, the researcher has to consider the different knowledge elicitation techniques that are available and their possible effects on the course of the interview and the interview results. For interviews in a group context, these are peer pressure effects and (power) relationships among interviewees (Gavrilova & Andreeva, 2012). For a complete overview of the interview structure, see the two interview protocols in Appendix A.

Schultze and Avital (2011) state that information systems research tends to provide very little insight into the research process and very few rely on a carefully chosen interviewing method. To prevent this, a brief literature study has been conducted on different interviewing techniques. Based upon this search, the work by Gavrilova and Andreeva (2012) has been selected to help determine the correct interviewing techniques for this research.

The interviews with both employees present are an expert-analyst collaboration. This category contains two variants, role games and verbal protocols. Using the role games technique, a game based upon certain scenario is played and roles are assigned, however, this technique is time consuming. The verbal protocol techniques enables the interviewees to think out loud. For this research, this technique is applied. The researcher presents the interviewees with the initial partner selection method and asks the interviewees their opinion and improvement suggestions. Together, a finalised partner selection method for the particular case study organisation is created.

2.7.5 Card sorting

Part of the individual interviews is a card sorting exercise in which the interviewees create a ranking in the partner selection criteria presented to them. We chose for card sorting because the research can clearly capture the rationale behind the ranking, it enables interaction between the researcher and

interviewee, and it creates variety during the interviewee; the interviewee does not only have to answer questions presented by the researcher.

A key aspect with regards to card sorting is to consider how to analyse the data gathered from the card sorting exercise (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013; Spencer & Warfel, 2004). Fincher and Tenenberg (2005) state various card sorting data analysis techniques, varying from manual analysis to statistical analysis when the researcher possesses a larger data set. For this research, manual analysis has been selected.

During the card sorting exercise, each interviewee is asked to sort six categories of cards, deemed from most to least desirable and applicable to their partner selection process. These categories vary in the number of cards per category. The interviewee is not allowed to move cards between the six categories. In case the interviewee is not willing to participate in the card sorting exercise, the particular case study organisation he represents is not considered when analysing the results.

The interviewee is allowed to rank multiple cards at the same level, for example, rank multiple cards at position 1. After the interviewee finished ranking a card sorting category, the interviewee is asked to give their rationale for the particular ranking. The researcher creates, for each category of cards, a top 3 of cards deemed most desirable and applicable with regards to partner selection. A top 3 is chosen because the card sorting category partner's knowledge assets consists of five cards meaning a top 5 exists anyway since the category consists of five cards.
The analysis of the results is executed as follows:

- The cards will be assigned their value based upon their ranking within a particular category. In case there are multiple cards ranked on the same position, these cards are assigned the same value, for example, three cards are ranked at position 1, all three cards get value 1 assigned. The values that normally would have been assigned to these cards (value 2 and 3), expire;
- For each card, the researcher counts the number of times the card is ranked at the same position, for example, five times at position 1, three times at position 2 etcetera;
- All rankings at position 1 are multiplied by three, position 2 by two and position 3 by 1; all multiplications are added up;
- In case of a draw, the distribution of the rankings is decisive;
- In case of still a draw, a shared position within the top 3 is assigned.

Summarising, when analysing the results two main factors need to be considered, first, assigning the correct value to each of the cards, and secondly, analysing the results based upon the rules defined above.

2.7.6 Data collection and analysis

This research is of an exploratory and qualitative nature. One major benefit of qualitative data is that it focuses on naturally occurring phenomena in their natural environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In any form of qualitative research, uniformity of method in data collection contributes greatly to the rigour of method and validity of results (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Each interview is recorded and transcribed afterwards. After the interview is transcribed, a summary of the answers is given by the interviewee is created for each interview. This summary is then merged with the results from the card sorting exercise in order to achieve data convergence. To ensure data triangulation, interviews are conducted with interviewees with a different position and rank within the organisation since this may affect their perspective on partner selection.

The data is analysed using thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011; Braun & Clarke,

2006) which is used as a qualitative data analysis technique and provides a deeper understanding about the data gathered (Wohlin & Aurum, 2015). Thematic analysis can be defined as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data (Wohlin & Aurum, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Part of this analysis is defining general themes and codes that are assigned to themes. This process is executed manually (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To analyse the results, both within-case and cross-case analysis is applied (Yin, 1981). Within each case, the different viewpoints from the interviewees on partner selection and relevant criteria are analysed and merged into one partner selection method per case study. Cross-case analysis is applied to analyse the similarities but also the differences between cases. During the evaluation case studies, using the method fragments gathered during the case study, the participants of the evaluation case studies develop a reference partner selection method, which is method tuned to a specific case.

2.7.7 Themes and nodes

Figure 1 shows the themes and nodes that are used for the data analysis.

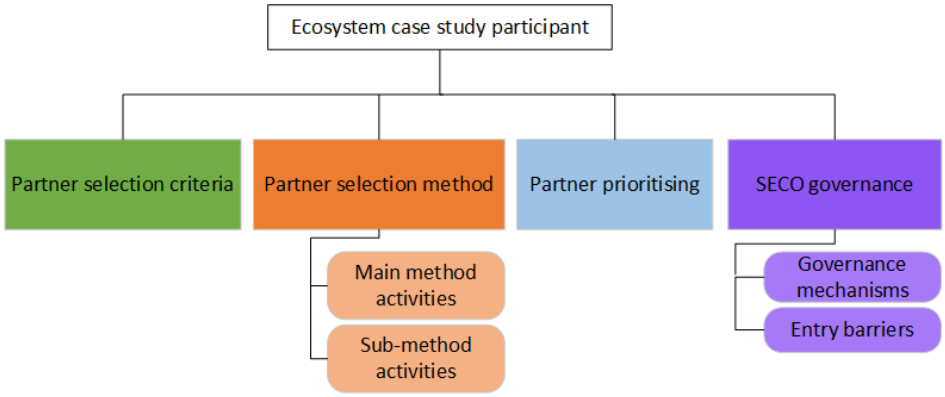

Figure 1: Themes and coding nodes used for data analysis.

The first theme is used to collect information on the partner selection criteria used by the case study organisation. The theme partner selection method contains the activities that are executed during the partner selection process. The third theme is used to capture the information given by the interviewee with regards to partner prioritising, what criteria determine if a partner needs to be prioritised over other partners. The final theme, SECO governance, is used to collect information on the governance mechanisms applied to ensure a smooth running SECO and the entry barriers that might be raised for a potential partner to enter a SECO.

2.7.8 Case study organisations

In this research, six case study organisations participated from which one organisation has been made anonymous at their request. They vary in their product offering, for example, FinTechComp offers a digital banking platform to their customers whereas SAP offers enterprise application software. They also differ in their size, for example, SAP has 96000 employees whereas AFAS 450.

One must note that the partner selection methods developed for Salesforce and Centric refer, respectively, to Salesforce Benelux & Nordics and Centric HR & Payroll. For SAP, we focus on SAP Build partnership in PartnerEdge.

In table 2, first an overview of the six case study organisations is given and, subsequently, the three evaluation case studies are introduced. One evaluation case study organisation has been made anonymous at their request.

Organisation	Product/service	Year founded	Year ecosystem founded	Number of employees	Number of ecosystem partners
FinTechComp	Digital banking platform	2003	2015	700	70
Exact	Exact Online	1984	2012	1400	200
AFAS	AFAS Software	1996	2009	450	210
SAP	Enterprise Application Software	1972	1989	96000	35
Centric	Centric HR & Payroll	2000	2018	4300	30
Salesforce	CRM Software & Cloud Computing Solutions	1999	2005	35000	120
Onguard	Credit & Debtor management	1994	2017	130	15
SnelStart	Bookkeeping software	1984	1990	140	90
RetailComp	Retail software	2004	2017	50	10

Table 2: Overview of case study organisations.

2.8 Evaluation

In Design Science research, evaluating the created artefact is a key part of the research method (Peffers, Tuunanen, Rothenberger, & Chatterjee, 2007; Peffers, Rothenberger, Tuunanen, & Vaezi, 2012; Hevner et al., 2004; Venable, Pries-Heje, & Baskerville, 2012). A researcher should evaluate an artefact using a set of criteria which are based on the context of the artefact implementation (Hevner et al., 2004). Various methods exist in order to conduct an evaluation in Design Science research (Peffers et al., 2012). Based upon the work by Peffers (2012) and Hevner et al. (2004), an observational evaluation method is selected, namely, a case study. During the case studies, the artefacts constructed as part of this research which are the six partner selection methods, are applied to a real-world situation, namely, three evaluation case studies which results in the constructing of three reference methods.

Venable et al. (2012), based upon the work of Pries-Heje, Baskerville and Venable (2008), propose a Design Science Research evaluation framework that guides a researcher in setting up their evaluation method. Their framework consists of two dimensions, one contrasting naturalistic (such as case studies) versus artificial (laboratory setting) and one dimension contrasting ex ante (uninstantiated artefact) versus ex post (instantiated artefact). For this research, *ex post naturalistic* evaluation has been selected as evaluation method.

For this research, we apply the technique of method comparison (Hong et al., 1993), resulting in a reference method for each evaluation case study. In order to evaluate the reference methods, a set of evaluation criteria is used. Prat, Comyn-Wattiau and Akoka (2015) provide a taxonomy of evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria that have been selected for this research from the taxonomy provided by Prat et al. (2015), are listed in table 3. In this table, the criterion definition given by Prat et al. (2015) as well as a definition drafted for this research are presented. Since the reference method is not evaluated when applied in practice but evaluated as if the method was to be applied in a real-word case, the evaluation criteria are phrased as *perceived* criterion, i.e. how do the interviewees perceive the reference method created during the evaluation case study, do they perceive the method as a valuable artefact for their partner selection process or not. The interviewees are provided with the six partner selection methods constructed in this research. They construct the reference method on paper. In case the evaluation case study was performed via digital communication, the six partner selection methods were sent to the interviewees and they draw the reference method on paper and send this to the researcher via digital file sharing.

The rationale behind the selection of evaluation criteria from the work of Prat et al. is as follows. First, we focus our evaluation on the effectiveness, completeness and usefulness of the reference method as if the method is used in a day to day operation. Based on these main evaluation goals, we selected seven evaluation criteria. Secondly, we solely focus on the reference method, not on a fit with another artefact such as, for example, an IS architecture. Thirdly, we are not focused on the performance of the artefact, such as accuracy, reliability or robustness. Finally, we do not focus our evaluation on the learning capability and scalability of the artefact, i.e. the capability of the artefact to be scalable in the amount of potential partners the artefact can verify to determine if a potential

partner is a match for the SECO orchestrator.

Category	Evaluation criteria	Definition
Goal	**Perceived effectiveness**	**Prat et al.:** the degree to which the artefact achieves its goal in a real situation **For this research:** the degree to which the SECO orchestrator achieves their goal of selecting the partners that are an optimal fit for SECO, both commercially and technically
	Perceived operational feasibility	**Prat et al.:** evaluates the degree to which management, employees and other stakeholders, will support the proposed artefact, operate it and integrate it into their daily practice **For this research:** the degree to which the SECO orchestrator and their staff make use of the method in their daily practice
	Perceived economic feasibility	**Prat et al.:** evaluates whether the benefits of the proposed artefact would outweigh the costs of building and operating the artefact **For this research:** do the benefits gained during the partner selection process, by using the partner selection method, outweigh the costs of implementing the partner selection method in the daily practice of the SECO orchestrator
Environment	**Perceived usefulness**	**Prat et al.:** the degree to which the artefact positively impacts the task performance of individuals **For this research:** the degree to which the method positively impacts the daily task of partner selection performed by the SECO orchestrator and their staff
	Perceived ease of use	**Prat et al.:** the degree to which the use of the artefact by individuals is free of effort **For this research:** the degree of difficulty for the SECO orchestrator and their staff to use the method, this includes getting to grips with the method, implement the method in their daily practice and modify the method; update, add, remove activities/concepts
Activity	**Perceived completeness**	**Prat et al.:** the degree to which the activity of the artefact contains all necessary elements and relationships between elements **For this research:** the degree to which the method is complete; all relevant and required activities and concepts are included in the partner selection method
Evolution	**Perceived modifiability**	**Prat et al.:** the ease with which the artefact can be changed without introducing defects **For this research:** the degree of difficulty to which the SECO orchestrator and their staff can modify the method without interrupting the flow of the method

Table 3: Evaluation criteria selected from Prat et al.

3 Related literature

3.1 Software ecosystems

We start this section by defining a SECO:

"*A SECO is a set of actors functioning as a unit and interacting with a shared market for software and services, together with the relationships among them (Jansen, Finkelstein, & Brinkkemper, 2009).*"

Looking at the definition stated above, it becomes clear that the *actor* plays a key role in the SECO. We identify partners as actors which can be any party, on the condition that they contribute to the SECO in a meaningful and software related way (Jansen & Cusumano, 2013). For this research, a partner is defined as *"an organisational entity that provides functionality, for example in the format of an application or via white labelling, which is integrated into the SECO orchestrator's platform which can be used by customers."* Subsequently, we introduce the term SECO orchestrator which is *"an entity that provides a standard or platform technology that provides a fundament for (part of) the ecosystem (Jansen, Brinkkemper, & Finkelstein, 2009)."* Jansen, Brinkkemper, Souer and Luinenburg (2012) define a special type of SECO orchestrator in their work, namely, the technology provider. This type of SECO orchestrator provides a platform ecosystem which can be extended by partner applications (Jansen, Brinkkemper, Souer, & Luinenburg, 2012; Ceccagnoli, Forman, Huang, & Wu, 2012). For this research we focus on platform ecosystems.

Campbell and Ahmed (2010) propose a view of a SECO consisting of three dimensions: business, architectural and social. The three dimensions are closely integrated through software engineering processes: the organisational business motivations enable the creation of an architectural platform and partners gain intrinsic benefits when they contribute in the form of new product development using the standard architectural platform. Based on the SECO dimensions stated by Campbell and Ahmed (2010), we again notice the importance of partners for a SECO.

Manikas and Hansen (2013) mention in their structured literature review two types of SECOs, *proprietary* and *open source*. In a *proprietary ecosystem* (for example SAP), the source code and other artefacts produced in the SECO are protected and new partners have to be verified before they are allowed to join the SECO. In an *open source ecosystem* (for example Android), partner verification is less strict and source code is freely available. For this research, we focus on proprietary ecosystems since partner selection is more relevant in this type of SECO due to the fact that partner selection is more strict since a proprietary ecosystem can be seen as more of a "walled garden" than an open source ecosystem, an orchestrator is identified by their customers as the responsible body to ensure that rotten apples are prevented from joining the SECO.

3.1.1 Benefits of a SECO

As a software vendor, why do I want to launch a SECO?

Kaistinen (2017) lists a several benefits for a software vendor to launch a SECO which can be summarised in two main benefits. First, having a partnership with various partners enables a software vendor to offer a platform portfolio to their customers with basically no limits. This results in an increase of their customer base, as partners deliver missing functionality required by the customer which in turn attracts new customers (Jansen & Cusumano, 2013). Secondly, when a software vendor offers a platform SECO around their product, partners that have a rare skill set can join the SECO and offer their product to customers. This gives the software vendor access to these skills and enables co-innovation or the potential for acquisition of a particular partner in order to secure their unique skill set for the future.

Iansiti and Levien (2004) mention that "if a SECO orchestrator continually improves their platform SECO, they ensure their own survival and prosperity." Besides an increased change of business survival, a SECO is a powerful source of competitive advantage for an orchestrator (Williamson & De Meyer, 2012). According to Williamson and De Meyer (2012), an orchestrator may reap the benefits of economies of scale by creating a platform ecosystem. This requires a lower investment than if the orchestrator would try to offer the functionality itself.

As a partner, why would I want to join a SECO?

When a partner joins a SECO, this leads to an increase in individual sales (Ceccagnoli et al., 2012) and access to a larger customer base (Rickmann, Wenzel, & Fischbach, 2014). Another benefit is that the SECO orchestrator shares knowledge with its partners (Hutzschenreuter & Horstkotte, 2010). Barbosa and Alves (2011) state that joining a SECO generally results in a decrease of costs for a partner as well as knowledge being shared between partners. Joshua, Alalo, Okololie and Awodele (2013) found additional benefits: improved requirement analysis and a decrease in development costs. Bech (2015) mentions that a SECO orchestrator closely collaborates with their partners. This can be seen as benefit for both the SECO orchestrator and the partner since the partner can learn from the SECO orchestrator and improve, and extend their product enabling the partner to offer a better product to their customers. Lantz and Weijden (2013) state two additional benefits: better scalability and less resources required.

Molenaar, van Vliet, Beelen and Jansen (2018), identified two additional benefits. Firstly, when a partner joins a SECO this improves their credibility as customers perceive the SECO orchestrator as a trustworthy organisation. Secondly, it increases the visibility of the partner as they can benefit from the SECO orchestrator's marketing channels.

3.2 SECO Governance

Governance is a widely used term across various domains, but no standard, all-embracing definition exists. Governance ensures that business and mission critical information is provided to the management in a timely, complete and accurate manner. Governance entails on a day to day basis, *"as the way an organisation is managed, including its powers, responsibilities and decision-making processes"* (Dubinsky & Kruchten, 2009)

Both governance and SECO governance ensure that the organisation or SECO meets the expectations from stakeholders or participants. The main difference between the two is their scope. For a SECO, governance focuses on the participants and their relationships, participant-participant relationship and participant-orchestrator relationship. For traditional governance, the focus is on the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders (Lantz & Weijden, 2013). Alves et al. (2017) conducted a systematic literature review on SECO governance. They state that the governance of SECOs is currently one of the largest challenges software companies need to deal with for the sake of their survival. This is one of the motivations to further investigate the topic of SECO governance.

Alves et al. (2017) present an overview of the definitions of SECO governance. Jansen and Cusumano (2013) and van Angeren, Alves and Jansen (2016) state that SECO governance *"involves the use of strategic procedures and processes to control and maintain or chance the ecosystem."* Van Angeren et al. (2016) also mention that SECO governance *"encompasses both technical and managerial aspects, including the management of the software platform and its interfaces, definition of business and partnership models, and establishment of entry barriers."*

Baars and Jansen (2012) define SECO governance as follows *"procedures and processes by which a company controls, changes or maintains its current and future position in a SECO on all different scope levels."* Alves et al. (2017) merged the above definitions into an integrated definition for SECO governance, this definition is used for this research: *"all processes by which an orchestrator creates value, coordinates relationships, and define controls."*

3.2.1 Partner selection criteria derived from governance mechanisms

In this section, we derive candidate partner selection criteria from SECO governance mechanisms found in the literature. These criteria can be found in table 3. We first define the term *mechanism*. The Oxford Dictionary defines a mechanism as *"a natural or established process by which something takes place or is brought about."* When we look at this definition we observe the following: firstly, an process of some sort is executed and, secondly, a certain desired state is achieved. Based on these two observations we introduce for this research the following definition for a mechanism *"an predefined process with the purpose of governing a SECO to ensure order, prosperity, and growth of a SECO."*

Partner criteria derived from Alves et al. (2017)
Based upon the governance mechanism promote innovation, we derived the candidate criterion *PSCcg11 innovation capabilities of partner*. As stated by Alves et al., the SECO orchestrator can apply a governance mechanism to promote innovation. In order to apply this mechanism, the partner must have innovation capabilities, otherwise the governance mechanism to promote innovation is not applicable. Therefore, a SECO orchestrator considers the innovation capabilities of a partner when a new partner wants to join the SECO.

As a SECO orchestrator you demand that your partner is willing to make investments in their product or service in order to be able to keep delivering the best product or service to your customers. Based upon the previous, we derived the candidate criterion of *PSCcg7 partner is willing to make investments*.

For a SECO orchestrator it is key that the communication within their platform ecosystem is effective and runs smoothly. In order to facilitate effective communication, the SECO orchestrator creates communication channels. Therefore, being effective in communication is a highly valued characteristic of a partner, based upon this, we derived the candidate criterion *PSCcg2 partner is effective in communication*.

The governance mechanism support autonomy has as goal to ensure that partners in a SECO can operate independently; being able to operate without much interference or guidance from the SECO orchestrator. Based upon this mechanism, we derived the criterion *PSCcg8 autonomous & independent operation of partner*.

The SECO orchestrator can the governance mechanism define quality standards and certifications to define and enforce certain standards for their platform SECO. However, if the partner is not committed to follow these standards, the mechanism is not effective and inequality arises within the SECO. Therefore, we derived the criterion *PSCcg9 partner is committed to standard practices*.

Partner criteria derived from Baars and Jansen (2012)
We previously identified knowledge sharing as a benefit for a partner when the partner joins a SECO. A SECO orchestrator should promote and facilitate knowledge sharing within their platform ecosystem. In order to achieve knowledge sharing, the partner must be willing to share knowledge. So the *PSCcg4 partner is willing to share knowledge* is identified as candidate criterion.

Partner criteria derived from Schreick et al. (2016)
Schreick et al. mention the concept of data governance and especially that of data security and privacy. We adopt these two concepts and introduce the the candidate criterion *PSCcg13 data privacy & security*.

Co-opetition is mentioned as a governance concept by Schreick et al. From this concept, the candidate criterion *partner is open for co-opetition* is derived. A SECO orchestrator initially selects their partners based on the functionality the partner offers; this functionality is complementary to the orchestrator's product portfolio, therefore we derive the criterion *PSCcg18 portfolio complementarity*. However, a partner could also offer a product similar to the orchestrator's product, therefore being a competitor.

This two-sided relationship should not mean that as a SECO orchestrator (or as a partner) you cannot collaborate. However, both parties must be open for collaboration. As this is not always the case we include *PSCcg17 partner is open for co-opetition* in our candidate criteria list.

Schreick et al. mention multi-homing as an aspect of platform ecosystem governance. Multi-homing is a strategy in which a partner publishes its products at multiple platforms (Hyrynsalmi et al., 2012). One can imagine that a SECO orchestrator would not prefer a partner who practices multi-homing because the partner offers the similar functionality in a competitor's platform SECO. A SECO orchestrator wants this functionality offered solely within their SECO. On the other hand, one could imagine that a SECO orchestrator identifies multi-homing as a positive aspect because it can lead to faster innovation (Tiwana, 2013) from which the SECO orchestrator's customers benefit. Therefore, we include the criterion *PSCcg16 multi-home* in our candidate criteria list.

For a SECO orchestrator, it is key that the customer is happy with the partner's product. Schreick et al. mention the concept of the relationship and contentment of the customer with the partner. From this concept we derive the candidate criterion *PSCcg10 customer happiness*.

The last candidate criterion derived from Schreick et al. is *PSCcg1 partner's reputation in the market*. For a SECO orchestrator, this can help to decide whether to accept a certain partner; a positive reputation will substantiate towards the feeling the SECO orchestrator might already has of the partner.

Partner criteria derived from Benlian et al. (2015)
Based upon the concept terms and conditions of the platform are transparent governance mechanism stated by Benlian et al., we derive the candidate criterion the *PSCcg5 partner is willing to commit to terms and conditions set by SECO orchestrator*. A partner wants to know the terms and conditions the SECO orchestrator has set for their platform SECO, the partner requests transparency of the terms and conditions from the SECO orchestrator. On the other hand, the SECO orchestrator demands that the partner accepts and adheres to the terms and conditions.

For partners in the SECO it is vital that the marketplace where they sell their application is transparent; the partner is aware of the decisions made and the reasoning behind those. The SECO orchestrator in return does expect their partners to be transparent towards the orchestrator in their intentions, roadmap etc., as well as be transparent to their costumers. From the previously stated, we derive the candidate criterion *PSCcg3 partner is transparent*. Building upon the previous, the partner should be transparent with the SECO orchestrator in their communication. This leads to more effective and enjoyable communication between the partner and the SECO orchestrator; we identify the candidate criterion *PSCcg2 partner is transparent in communication*.

A SECO orchestrator should focus their governance mechanisms on retaining partners for the long term, this to preserve functionality for their customers. Therefore, we identify the candidate criterion *PSCcg6 loyalty*.

Benlian et al. mention that the documentation provided by the partner must include all relevant development information. However, one could interpret providing documentation broader than just technical information. Customers and the SECO orchestrator require to receive clear and complete documentation, both on the technical side as well as information on how to use the application. Therefore, we propose the candidate criterion *PSCcg12 partner provides clear and complete documentation*. Secondly, customers demand that the partner offers support in case of issues. So *PSCcg15 partner providing customer support* is identified as candidate criterion. Finally, for a SECO orchestrator it is key that the partner makes use of the API as effective as possible in order to reduce the data usage and load on the API servers to reduce costs and ensure API availability. Therefore, we identify the candidate criterion *PSCcg14 partner has an effective API integration*.

3.2.2 Entry barriers

The difference between open and closed entry barriers in SECO governance is often discussed among SECO researchers and practitioners (van Angeren et al., 2016). Entry barriers determine to a large extent the openness of an ecosystem (Eisenmann, Parker, & Alstyne, 2009). Entry barriers may encompass technical, financial and business requirements to be met by potential partners (van Angeren et al., 2016). Van Angeren et al. (2016) suggest that a lower entry barrier is positively related to the number of app developers that are active in an ecosystem.

Van Den Berk, Jansen and Luinenburg (2010) state that when entry barriers are too low, the stability of the SECO might decrease because of uncontrolled growth and loss of quality in developers and the applications developed. Enforcing high entry barriers helps to ensure the quality of the ecosystem (Wnuk, Manikas, et al., 2014). The other way around, when entry barriers are too high, this might scare potential partners away and slows down innovation (Van Den Berk et al., 2010). Choosing the right balance between quality, entry barriers and innovation is key to ensure SECO health and prosperity.

Wnuk, Runeson, Lantz and Weijden (2014) state that the two main SECO entry barriers are the business model and technical standards set by the SECO orchestrator. The SECO partners that participated in their research mentioned that the SECO orchestrator selected their business model and the partner has to adhere to this business model. Secondly, partners acknowledged that technical standards set by the SECO orchestrator (such as the required protocols and strict rules for application development) could function as a barrier for partners to join the SECO. Jansen (2013) mentions that a restrictive API is an entry barrier for a platform SECO.

Wnuk, Manikas et al. (2014) found that the unclear role of the partner in the cooperation with the SECO orchestrator can be identified as an entry barrier. Secondly, partners indicated trouble with integrating their application in the ecosystem, variability in the connector performance and lacking debugging capabilities. Kukko and Helander (2012) mention the information gap as an entry barrier. SECO partners they interviewed mentioned that the SECO orchestrator could have improved their documentation on the SECO, such as more information about integration and debugging.

Financial entry barriers make it harder for a partner to join a SECO. Hilkert, Benlian, Sarstedt and Hess (2011) state various financial entry barriers. The first barrier is the specific costs of technical requirements, for example hard- and software required in order to place an application in the SECO marketplace. Another financial entry barrier is the costs of selling an application in the SECO marketplace, such as a membership fee. A third financial entry barrier is the restriction of distribution channels available to the partner meaning the partner is limited in the number, diversity and type of potential customers the partner can reach. Van Angeren, Kabbedijk, Jansen and Popp (2011) state various financial entry barriers for a SECO, namely, an annual fee, entry fee and devoting resources to product and platform development. Acquiring domain specific knowledge and skill-set and certification required to create an application in a specific domain can be seen as financial entry barriers as well (Rajala & Nissilä, 2007).

3.3 Partner selection

In this section, we introduce an overview of partner selection candidate criteria. These criteria were found in the literature during a structured literature study. However, the majority of the partner selection candidate criteria identified by fellow scholars were originally aimed at different domains than SECOs. However, we believe that the partner selection candidate criteria are applicable to the software ecosystem (software) domain. But since the candidate criteria were originally not meant for the SECO domain, we include the criteria in this work as *candidate* partner selection criteria; the card sorting exercise, which is part of the case studies, will show if the candidate criteria are applicable to the SECO domain. In the next paragraph, we show three examples of candidate criteria identified and how these are applicable to the SECO domain.

Take the criterion *product quality*. Originally this criterion was meant for the manufacturing domain. However, this criterion can be applied to the SECO domain since the SECO orchestrator can use this criterion to select a partner: what is the quality of their application, is it easy to use, does it contain no bugs, does the functionality offered fulfils customer demand? Another example is *financial KPIs*. This criterion is of equal importance for a SECO orchestrator to consider when selecting a partner as it is for a any other organisation. Finally, take the example of *sales experience*. This criteria is applicable to the SECO domain because a SECO orchestrator considers the sales experience the partner has before the potential partner is accepted. Because if a partner has limited sales experience, the partner can develop a great product but by not selling their product, the partner generates a low turnover which in turn results in a low or no profit. As a result, the partner goes bankrupt, therefore leaving the platform SECO resulting in a loss of value due to losing functionality and not offering continuity to the SECO orchestrator's customers that are using the partner's product.

3.3.1 Partner selection candidate criteria

For an organisation, selecting the right partners is key to achieve access to the resources, capabilities and competencies to develop the best product or service possible to achieve maximum business value (De Reuver, Bouwman, & Haaker, 2008; Traitler, Watzke, & Saguy, 2011; Lau & Wong, 2001; Dong & Glaister, 2006; D. Wu, Baron, & Berman, 2009). When selecting partners, an organisation should apply a partner selection strategy or method (Doherty, 2009). Robson and Pant, Yu (2002; 2018) state that, although an organisation wants to maximise the value captured from a partnership, however, an organisation should strive for a partnership in which partners and organisation benefit equally. This makes it for a partner more attractive to enter into a partnership with the organisation. By capturing too much value the risk occurs of ecosystem exhaustion and the exodus of partners which can result in the collapse of the ecosystem.

An organisation can have different motivations for forging an alliance with a partner. According to Chen, Lee and Wu (2008) there are four type of motivations for forging alliances with partners:

- **Strategy-oriented**, for strategic objectives. For example maximising profit or increasing market share;
- **Cost-oriented**, to reduce cost. For example to reduce R&D or production costs;
- **Resource-oriented**, acquiring critical resources. For example exchange critical equipment and technologies with the partner and make use of the marketing channels of the partner;
- **Learning-oriented**, acquiring the newest knowledge and technology. For example, master a new technology together.

From the enumeration above, we learn that there are four mean type of motivations for forging alliances with partners, strategy-, cost-, resource- and learning-oriented.

Partners can be divided into two categories, strategic partners and non-strategic partners (Partanen & Möller, 2012). Strategic partners are partners that offer crucial and non-replaceable products or services. Non-strategic partners on the other hand offer replaceable and non-vital products or services. Subsequently, Partanen and Möller (2012) mention that, although studies have been conducted on partner-organisation relationships; studies in dynamic sectors such as the IT industry have been neglected. They call for more studies to be conducted on this topic in the dynamic sectors.

Lorenzoni and Baden-Fuller (1995) distinguish between an organisation with few large partners versus an organisation with many small partners. When it comes to large partners, the selection criteria are typically based on careful strategic considerations, matching capabilities and resources as well as considerations of competition. Another criterion that comes into play is that of the cultural fit between the organisation and the partner.

The partner selection criteria that we identified in the literature, can be found in table 4. In Appendix A.5, the partner selection criteria as they are presented to the interviewees during the card sorting exercise, are presented.

In order to create homogeneous formulated criteria, we use two templates:

A SECO orchestrator looks for <***partner selection criterion***> in a potential partner because <orchestrator goal for collaboration>

In case the partner selection criterion is focused on the potential partner's product, the following template is used:

A SECO orchestrator looks for <***partner selection criterion***> in a potential partner's product because <orchestrator goal for collaboration>

We define six categories of candidate partner selection criteria:

- **Partner's characteristics**, contains criteria that a SECO orchestrator applies to describe and test the general characteristics of a potential partner;
- **Partner's capabilities**, contains criteria that describe the capabilities a SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner's organisation and employees;
- **Partner's product**, encloses the criteria a SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner's product; criteria that describe characteristics of the potential partner's product and criteria the partner's product must meet;
- **Partner's knowledge assets**, contains criteria that describe the business and technical knowledge assets the potential partner has at its disposal;
- **Partner's sales capabilities**, sales capabilities a SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner; capabilities that enable a potential partner to sell their product;
- **Orchestrator perspective**, criteria the SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner from their organisation's perspective;

The six categories of candidate partner selection criteria introduced above focus on the characteristics and capabilities of the partner, the partner's product and the orchestrator's perspective. See table 4 for the candidate partner selection criteria.

Abbr	Partner selection candidate criterion	Literature source
	Partner's characteristics	
PSCc1	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***trustworthiness*** in a potential partner because it is vital for an orchestrator to be able to trust their partners in their ability to fulfil their obligations and being honest and transparent towards the orchestrator	(Robson, 2002), (Duysters, Kok, & Vaandrager, 1999), (Shah & Swaminathan, 2008), (Das & He, 2006), (Keung & Griffiths, 2008), (Chen et al., 2008), (Angeles & Nath, 2000), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010), (Franco, 2010), (Bierly III & Gallagher, 2007), (Kraus, Meier, Niemand, & et al., 2018)
PSCc2, *PSCcg1*	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***reputation and credibility*** in a potential partner because it is vital for an orchestrator that their partner is credible. The potential partner's reputation in the market is a key indicator for the orchestrator how the potential partner is perceived by their customers	(Mat, Cheung, & Scheepers, 2009), (Das & He, 2006), (Wu, Shih, & Chan, 2009), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010), (Dickson, 1966), (Franco, 2010), (Bierly III & Gallagher, 2007) *(Schreieck et al., 2016)*
PSCc3	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***collaboration history*** in a potential partner because if an orchestrator has previous collaboration experience(s) with a partner, this can influence the orchestrator's decision to initiate a new collaboration with that particular partner	(Mat et al., 2009), (Wu et al., 2009), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010), (Das & He, 2006), (Chen et al., 2008), (Jarimo, Salkari, & Bollhalter, 2006)
PSCc4	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***collaboration goals*** in a potential partner because these goals determine the rationale for initiating a partnership with the orchestrator; these goals should match	(Angeles & Nath, 2000)
PSCc5	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***culture compatibility*** in a potential partner because in order to facilitate smooth collaboration, both cultures must be aligned. An orchestrator looks for both the national and corporate culture of the potential partner	(Geringer, 1988),(Chen et al., 2008), (Bierly III & Gallagher, 2007), (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993), (Robson, 2002), (Zutshi & Tan, 2009), (Wu et al., 2009), (Franco, 2010)
PSCc6	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***objective alignment*** in a potential partner because in order to make a partnership work, the partner's objectives for the partnership should match with those of the orchestrator	(Partanen & Möller, 2012), (Wu et al., 2009), (Bierly III & Gallagher, 2007)
PSCc7	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***organisation structure and size*** in a potential partner because this can influence the partnership between the potential partner and the orchestrator. For example, an orchestrator may not want to collaborate with small partners	(Geringer, 1988), (Das & He, 2006), (Chen et al., 2008)
PSCc8	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***financial KPIs*** in a potential partner because it is vital for an orchestrator to know the current financial position of the potential partner before initiating a partnership	(Geringer, 1988), (Dickson, 1966), (Shah & Swaminathan, 2008), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010), (Das & He, 2006)
PSCc9	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***profitability*** in a potential partner because this can influence the partnership. For example, a potential partner not being profitable is not able to invest in their product	(Chen et al., 2008)
PSCc10	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***potential for growth*** in a potential partner because when the potential partner has growth potential in terms of profitability, market share and product offering, an orchestrator can benefit from this which can be a reason to initiate a partnership with a potential partner	(Chen et al., 2008)
PSCc11	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***content of business plan*** in a potential partner because this shows the orchestrator how the potential partner envisions to sell their product; a vital prerequisite for a partnership to work	(Doherty, 2009)
PSCc12	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***chemistry in relationship*** in a potential partner because when there is chemistry in the relationship, the partner and the orchestrator share a mutual and natural liking. This will have a positive effect on a potential partnership	(Doherty, 2009)
PSCc13, *PSCcg2*	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***transparent & efficient in communication*** in a potential partner because when the potential partner is transparent and efficient in it's communication with the orchestrator, customers and other partners, this helps an orchestrator to gain more from the partnership	(Duysters et al., 1999), (Angeles & Nath, 2000), *(Alves et al., 2017), (Benlian et al., 2015)*
PSCcg3	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***transparency in intentions*** in a potential partner because this enhances the collaboration between the partner and orchestrator; the partnership will flourish and this resulting in higher value created	*(Benlian et al., 2015)*
PSCc14	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***sharing culture*** in a potential partner because if the potential partner is willing to share with the orchestrator, such as expertise or knowledge, this will boost a potential partnership, enabling both parties to gain more from the partnership	(Wu et al., 2009), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010) (Kreiner & Schultz, 1993), (Emden, Calantone, & Droge, 2006)
PSCcg4	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***willingness to share technical and business knowledge*** in a potential partner because when a potential partner is benevolent to share knowledge with the orchestrator and fellow partners, this will positively effect and enable the ecosystem to flourish	*(Baars & Jansen, 2012)*
PSCcg5	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***willingness to commit to terms & conditions set by the orchestrator*** in a potential partner because an orchestrator wants to ensure that when they enter in an agreement with a partner, the partner will honour the agreement	*(Benlian et al., 2015)*
PSCc15	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***commitment to partnership*** in a potential partner because an orchestrator wants to collaborate with a partner that is fully committed to the partnership and the partner is willing to invest in the partnership	(Partanen & Möller, 2012), (Mat et al., 2009), (Chen et al., 2008), (Angeles & Nath, 2000), (Franco, 2010)
PSCcg6	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***loyalty to partnership*** in a potential partner because in order for an orchestrator to invest in a partnership with a potential partner, the orchestrators wants to be ensured that the partner is fully dedicated to the partnership	*(Benlian et al., 2015)*
PSCcg7	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***willingness to invest in partnership*** in a potential partner because the orchestrator searches for a potential partner that is willing to continually invest resources to ensure the successful development of the partnership	*(Alves et al., 2017)*
PSCcg8	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***autonomous & independent operation*** in a potential partner because an orchestrator wants their partners to operate autonomously and independently. A partner should try to independently investigate and review issues without causing unnecessary hassle for the orchestrator	*(Alves et al., 2017)*
PSCc16	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***flexibility in corporate principles*** in a potential partner because when the partner is willing to adjust their principles to facilitate the collaboration, this positively effects the relationship between the partner and orchestrator	(Wu et al., 2009), (Wu & Barnes, 2012)
PSCcg9	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***adherence to standard development practices*** in a potential partner's product because this ensures homogeneity within the ecosystem	*(Alves et al., 2017)*
PSCc17	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***customer satisfaction*** in a potential partner because for an orchestrator, the highest priority is satisfied customers. Without satisfied customers, there is no business	(Kannan & Haq, 2007), (Dickson, 1966)
PSCcg10	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***customer happiness*** in a potential partner because for an orchestrator, the highest priority is happy customers. Without happy customers, there is no business	*(Schreieck et al., 2016)*

Abbr	Partner selection candidate criterion	Literature source
	Partner's capabilities	
PSCc18	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***resource availability*** in a potential partner because the resources the potential partner has at their disposal determines to a large extent their short term growth potential	(Shah & Swaminathan, 2008), (Kraus et al., 2018), (Das & He, 2006), (Meffert & Swaminathan, 2017), (Hitt, Dacin, Levitas, Arregele, & Borza, 2000), (Möller & Rajala, 2007)
PSCc19	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***unique competencies*** in a potential partner because the potential partner has to differentiate himself from others	(Hitt et al., 2000), (Das & He, 2006), (Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc20	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***the ability to reduce cost through the partnership*** in a potential partner because a collaboration with a potential partner results in a cost reduction on the orchestrator's side	(Huang & Wu, 2003), (Wu & Barnes, 2012)
PSCcg11	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***innovation capabilities*** in a potential partner because an orchestrator searches for an unique product; a product leader. In order for a potential partner to offer something unique to the market innovation is required; this differentiates the partner from others	*(Alves et al., 2017)*
PSCc21	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***continuous focus on innovation*** in a potential partner because for an orchestrator it is vital that the potential partner continuously focuses on innovating and developing their product	(Chen et al., 2008)
PSCc22	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***management capabilities*** in a potential partner because the potential partner's management style and capabilities influence a potential partnership	(Zhong & Ren, 2015), (Das & He, 2006), (Wu et al., 2009)
	Partner's product	
PSCc23	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***quality*** in a potential partner's product because the partner's product quality is top priority for an orchestrator; the partner's product must be of high quality	(Wu & Barnes, 2011, 2012), (Das & He, 2006), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010)
PSCc24	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***pricing*** in a potential partner's product because the price of the partner's product is key for an orchestrator. The price has to be aligned with their product in order to offer the customer a complete product offering for a competitive price	(Wu & Barnes, 2011), (Kannan & Haq, 2007), (Xia & Wu, 2007), (Abratt, 1986), (Dickson, 1966)
PSCc25	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***reliability*** in a potential partner's product because the partner's product reliability is top priority for an orchestrator; the partner's product must be reliable	(Xia & Wu, 2007), (Abratt, 1986)
PSCcg12	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***clear and complete documentation*** in a potential partner's product because customers want, in case of issues, to have clear and complete product documentation available that guides them in solving the issue	*(Benlian et al., 2015)*
PSCcg13	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***data privacy & security*** in a potential partner's product because an orchestrator searches for a potential partner that values the data privacy & security of their customers, and invests sufficient resources to ensure data privacy & security	*(Schreieck et al., 2016)*
PSCcg14	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***effective API integration*** in a potential partner's product because it is vital for an orchestrator that excessive API usage is prevented, in terms of costs and resources. This requires that the potential partner makes effective usage of the API provided	*(Benlian et al., 2015)*
PSCc26	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***development standards*** in a potential partner's product because when the partner follows unquestionable standards, methods and techniques to develop their product, this ensures homogeneity within the ecosystem	(Chen et al., 2008)
PSCc27	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***continuous improvement*** in a potential partner's product because when the potential partner continuously improves their product, both bug fixing and development, this ensures that the potential partner stays ahead of the competition	(Chen et al., 2008)
PSCcg15	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***high-quality customer support*** in a potential partner's product because when the potential partner offers high-quality customer support to their customers, this has a positive impact on customer satisfaction	*(Benlian et al., 2015)*
	Partner's knowledge assets	
PSCc28	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***availability of technical & business in-house knowledge of their own and orchestrator's product*** in a potential partner because it is vital for an orchestrator that the potential partner has the knowledge to develop and maintain their product, and ensures seamless integration with the orchestrator's product	(Dekker & Van den Abbeele, 2007), (Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc29	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***ownership of intellectual property (IP)*** in a potential partner because IP is for an orchestrator an indication of the knowledge available, from both technical and business perspective, owned by the potential partner	(Huang & Wu, 2003), (Al-Khalifa & Eggert Peterson, 1999)
PSCc30	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***ownership of patents*** in a potential partner because this is an indication of the intellectual property owned by the potential partner	(Huang & Wu, 2003), (Wu et al., 2009), (Al-Khalifa & Eggert Peterson, 1999)
PSCc31	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***availability of technical expertise*** in a potential partner because without the availability of technical expertise within the potential partner's organisation, the development process is negatively affected	(Büyüközkan, Feyzioğlu, & Nebol, 2008), (Das & He, 2006), (Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc32	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***investment in R&D*** in a potential partner's product because investment in R&D ensures sustainable growth of the potential partner	(Chen et al., 2008)
	Partner's sales capabilities	
PSCc33	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***access to markets*** in a potential partner because the access the potential partner has to both national and international markets indicates the level of product market penetration and points out the growth opportunities of the potential partner	(Geringer, 1988), (Doherty, 2009), (Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc34	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***sales channels available*** in a potential partner because this provides the orchestrator with an indication regarding the means that the potential partner can use to sell their product	(Metallo, Agrifoglio, Schiavone, & Mueller, 2018), (Das & He, 2006), (Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc35	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***sales experience*** in a potential partner because this tells the orchestrator how much sales experience the potential partner has. The potential partner can leverage this experience to sell their product	(Metallo et al., 2018), (Das & He, 2006)
PSCc36	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***customer base*** in a potential partner because the potential partner's customer base can give the orchestrator opportunities for expansion. In case the potential partner has a large customer base, the potential partner likely has customers that are not yet orchestrator's customers	(Das & He, 2006)
PSCc37	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***availability of market knowledge*** in a potential partner because this is a key indicator for the orchestrator to what extent the potential partner knows the market. An orchestrator can benefit from this to enter together with the potential partner new market(s) or market segment(s)	(Mat et al., 2009), (Das & He, 2006), (Franco, 2010), (Wu et al., 2009), (Solesvik & Westhead, 2010)
PSCc38	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***market share*** in a potential partner because this provides the orchestrator with a picture of the potential partner 's current opportunities, which the potential partner can further expand	(Wu et al., 2009)

Abbr	Partner selection candidate criterion	Literature source
PSCc39	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***market coverage*** in a potential partner because this tells the orchestrator the level to which the potential partner currently caters the market	(Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc40	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***customer diversity*** in a potential partner because this provides an indication for the diversity of the customer base of the potential partner	(Wu et al., 2009)
PSCc41	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***partner's network*** in a potential partner because the orchestrator gains access to the partner's network trough the partnership. This network can result in opportunities for the orchestrator	(Giessmann & Stanoevska-Slabeva, 2012), (Angeles & Nath, 2000), (Bierly III & Gallagher, 2007)
	Orchestrator's perspective	
PSCc42	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***loose connections with competitors*** in a potential partner because an orchestrator can prefer their partners not to have strong connections with the orchestrator's competitors	(Giessmann & Stanoevska-Slabeva, 2012)
PSCcg16	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***multi homing*** in a potential partner because the orchestrator prefers/not prefers potential partner that develop cross-platform capabilities	*(Schreieck et al., 2016)*
PSCcg17	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***open for co-opetition*** in a potential partner because in case a potential partner is open for co-opetition, the potential partner is open to co-develop functionality with the orchestrator. This collaboration does not interfere with their other business activities	*(Schreieck et al., 2016)*
PSCc43	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***potential for co-development*** in a potential partner because in case the orchestrator wants to co-develop a product with a potential partner, the potential partner has the capabilities and characteristics required to develop functionality together	(Hitt et al., 2000), (Möller & Rajala, 2007), (Meffert & Swaminathan, 2017)
PSCcg18	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***portfolio complementarity*** in a potential partner's product because the potential partner's product has to be complementary with the orchestrator's product	*(Schreieck et al., 2016)*
PSCc44	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***partnership ROI*** in a potential partner because a potential partnership must reap financial benefits for the orchestrator	(Chen et al., 2008)
PSCc45	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***recommended by others*** in a potential partner because the orchestrator gets to know potential partners by word of mouth advertising, having the opportunity to verify if a potential partner is a match. Both customers and partners can recommend a potential partner	(Keung & Griffiths, 2008)
PSCc46	A SECO orchestrator looks for ***know-how of local regulations*** in a potential partner because when a potential partner has knowledge and experience on local regulations, this can help the potential partner to develop and sell their product	(Mat et al., 2009), (Das & He, 2006)

Table 4: Overview of Partner Selection Criteria candidates.

Legend:
PSCc1: Partner Selection Criterion candidate 1
PSCcg1: Partner Selection Criterion candidate governance 1

3.3.2 Partner selection method

In the previous section, partner selection candidate criteria have been introduced that can be used by a SECO orchestrator to determine if a potential partner is a valuable addition for their SECO. Besides partner selection criteria, we searched for literature on the activities executed by a (SECO) orchestrator in the partner selection process. However, no literature has been found that was specifically tailored to the SECO or software domain. The literature that was found was used as inspiration for the creation of the case study interview protocol.

Emden et al. (2006) introduce a theory that can be used for partner selection, see figure 2. In figure 3, the Process Delivery Diagram created of the method proposed by Emden et al. (2006) is shown.

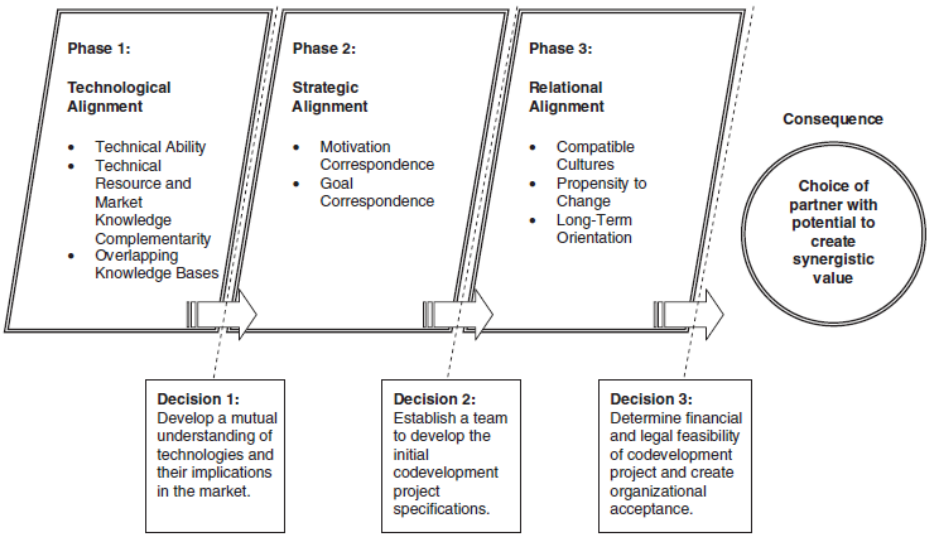

Figure 2: Emden et al. make a distinction between three main phases; technology, strategic and relational alignment. The order of the three phases is noteworthy, technical alignment before strategic and relational alignment. Emden et al. clearly puts emphasis on the technical alignment between the platform and the partner's product: the technical alignment must be understood, together with the market position of the newly created technology before the strategy for the collaboration, management commitment and legal feasibility is obtained. One could make a case for the intertwining of the technical and strategic alignment phases of a partnership; management commitment, financial and legal feasibility must be obtained at the same time as the realisation of the technical part of the partnership.

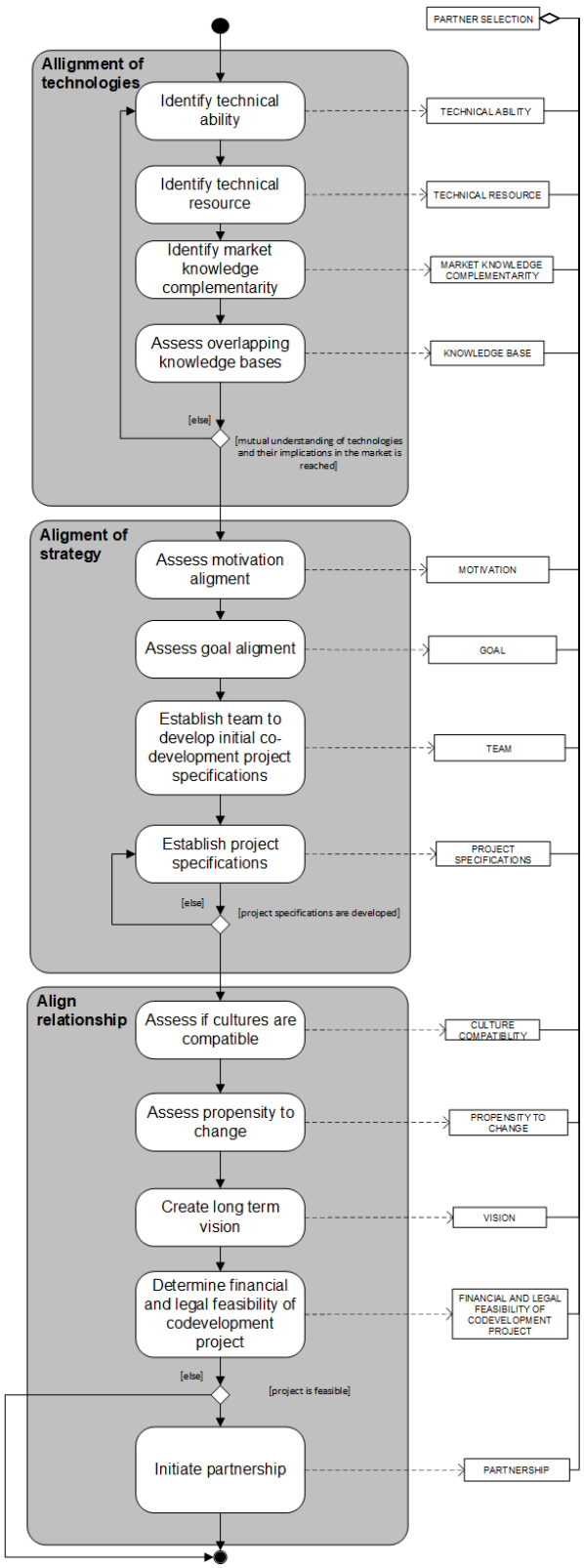

Figure 3: PDD of method developed by Emden et al.

Looking at the three activities described in figure 2 and 3, we can clearly see that Emden et al. (2006) put emphasis on technological alignment, stating it as the *first activity* in partner selection. Long term orientation, a long term partnership is part of the *third activity*, this can be seen as odd, since as a SECO orchestrator or any firm that initiates a partnership with a partner wants to make sure that a partnership is established for the long term. This to ensure continuity for their customers.

De Boer, Labro and Morlacchi (2001) define four main activities in partner selection: problem definition, criteria formulation, qualification and choice. In the first activity, it is decided if the organisation wants to initiate new partnerships, to access if there is a need for new partners. If this is the case, the organisation formulates the criteria the potential partner has to meet. In the third activity, the partner undergoes the partner qualification. In the last activity, the final selection activity, the organisation makes a choice and determines to start a partnership with a new partner. If there are multiple potential partners offering the same functionality, the organisation must choose between partners. The PDD created of the method proposed by De Boer, Labro and Morlacchi (2001) can be found in figure 4.

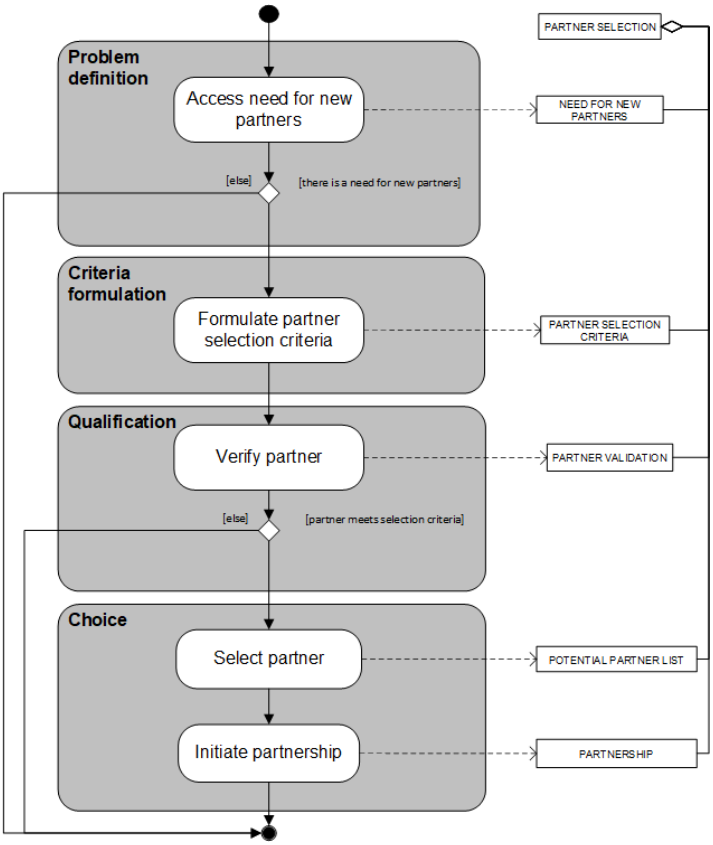

Figure 4: PDD of method developed by De Boer et al.

4 Analysis

The findings presented in this section contribute towards answering the previously identified sub research questions. By doing so, we answer the main research question *"How can an assessment method be developed to aid software ecosystem orchestrators in vetting, selecting, and engaging SECO partners."* Direct quotes from the interviews were used to support the findings. These quotes, provided by the two representatives of each organisation have been interpreted as the voice of their organisation as a whole, or, when explicitly stated in the case study introduction section, for a limited branch of their organisation. Quotes have been translated from Dutch to English by the researcher.

4.1 Perceived benefits of a SECO

The first benefit for an orchestrator is that you create *stickiness*. Customers do not just use your software but also the software from one or more of your partners. This makes it harder for a customer to switch to a competitor since they do not just have to switch their "core" product but also the functionality offered by partners. This benefit was not found in the literature.

As orchestrator you can offer a more *complete product portfolio*. This benefit was found by Kaistinen (2017). Strongly related to the previously mentioned benefit is that of an *increase in customer base* (Jansen & Cusumano, 2013; Kaistinen, 2017). Various interviewees mentioned that in order to be able to scale, you need an ecosystem. Therefore *scalability* can be seen as a SECO benefit as well (Lantz & Weijden, 2013).

Shortening of the integration time. An integration is predefined and does not have to be realised via customisation. Closely related is the fact that due to a SECO, sales cycles can be shortened since nearly all functionality is standard, no customisation is required. Both benefits were not found in the literature.

One organisation stated the benefit of *brand alignment*. This benefit is recognised by the scholars Molenaar, van Vliet, Beelen and Jansen (2018). However, they recognised it as benefit for SECO partners and not directly for SECO orchestrators. Finally, *reselling*. Partners include the orchestrator's platform when they sell their own product. This benefit was not found in the literature.

Subsequently, we introduce for the case study organisations their rationale behind launching their ecosystem.

Case 1: FinTechComp
For FinTechComp, the rationale behind launching their ecosystem is as follows. First, brand alignment: *"to be known due to the relationship with other brands."* Secondly, partnerships between partners and FinTechComp that originate due to FinTechComp platform SECO, have strategic value: *partner's products are complementary to our platform, together we offer a proposition to our customers, who can go faster and know that FinTechComp is their trusted advisor regarding which partners you should or shouldn't use.* Thirdly, as FinTechComp *"we offer certain capabilities and functionality, however, we cannot offer everything, this is were partners come in."*

Case 2: Exact
As mentioned by the interviewees, *"the rationale behind the ecosystem is three-fold; offering missing functionality, reselling and stickiness."* Exact Online is standard software. For some customers the functionality offered within Exact Online is too limited. To be able to serve these customers as well, Exact launched their platform SECO. Partners offer solutions that offer *"added value to our customers but also to our software."* Secondly, reselling. Companies that are market leader in a certain market segment see potential to partner up with Exact to include book keeping in their product offering. Such partners *"include Exact in their product offering, we nearly don't have to do anything, the partner says this is the price for our product and this is the price for Exact Online."* Finally, stickiness. As was mentioned by the interviewees, *"the more customers are connected with partners, the more stickiness you generate. This is very beneficiary for commercial purposes."*

Case 3: AFAS
For AFAS, their platform SECO is *"a very important part of our product offering."* AFAS launched their platform SECO with the goal to offer additional functionality to their customers; *"as AFAS we offer standard functionality which is sufficient for 90%, the last 10% is offered by our partners."* This is vital For AFAS because it enables them to offer a complete proposition to their customers.

Case 4: SAP
The rationale for launching the SAP ecosystem is mainly due to capacity issues. The main rationale behind the SAP ecosystem is to build an ecosystem to provide consultancy services to SAP customers: *"SAP simply doesn't have enough capacity to serve all our customers in their consultancy needs."* Alongside the previous introduced ecosystem, SAP launched the BUILD ecosystem, which is the focus for this research. In this ecosystem, with partners *"...we do co-development. This can be in specific industry solutions or in the core of certain modules."* One of the interviewees added to the previous that *"partners are vital to achieve growth, growth trough and with partners."*

Case 5: Centric
"Together you are stronger than alone." This is the main rationale for Centric to launch their ecosystem. Together with partners they enter certain markets. The overall HR & Payroll market is very large, consisting of various domains in which niche players operate, serving specific target customer groups. The market continually evolves, *"if you want to build all this functionality yourself, you start with a major backlog."* To prevent this, Centric HR & Payroll collaborates with partners to offer an extensive platform offering to their customers.

Case 6: Salesforce
"The most important element is that we cannot and do not want to do everything ourselves." Furthermore the interviewees added, *"you have to make use of the strengths of others, you cannot be strong in everything yourself."* Building on the latter, one interviewee added *"as company you can not approach the entire market, you're good at one product, for Salesforce this is mainly CRM related; CRM & sales & marketing. Salesforce can simply not offer all functionality within this product portfolio."*

4.2 Partner selection criteria

4.2.1 Partner's characteristics

		FinTech Comp			Exact			AFAS			SAP			Centric			Salesforce	
Position		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*
1	Commitment to partnership	15	1		4	3		1	6		19	1		4	1		1	1
2	Customer satisfaction	2	13		2	1		5	8		1	1		1	14		22	19
3	Customer happiness	3	13		1	1		5	1		1	8		1	14		22	19
	Reputation & credibility	3	16		2	3		7	4		10	8		17	17		9	1
	Partner is trustworthy	7	1		4	7		1	2		3	1		7	17		1	9
	Chemistry	7	1		4	15		12	22		5	18		7	6		5	18
	Loyalty	22	1		4	7		1	13		8	8		25	14		22	9
	Collaboration history	17	16		4	17		19	22		22	18		24	6		22	1
	Transparent & efficient in communication	7	1		9	7		7	15		11	18		19	11		16	9
	Transparency	7	1		9	11		7	20		3	18		4	3		9	1
	Sharing culture	7	1		9	21		19	20		8	18		7	6		19	22
	Willigness to share knowledge	7	16		9	7		23	15		12	8		21	11		19	9
	Flexiblity	5	9		9	11		7	8		22	18		14	11		16	22
	Partner's business plan	19	25		14	19		19	24		19	8		4	17		5	1
	Commitment to terms & conditions	22	9		14	19		1	3		7	8		23	24		5	19
	Collaboration goals	17	21		14	17		17	4		14	8		7	3		12	18
	Potential for growth	1	9		14	3		15	13		14	8		16	22		1	9
	Objective alignment	7	16		14	11		15	18		19	8		22	3		12	9
	Organisation structure & size	19	21		19	15		12	24		22	18		20	2		12	1
	Culture compatibility	7	1		19	21		19	17		5	1		1	6		19	22
	Financial KPIs	22	21		21	23		25	11		14	8		11	17		5	1
	Profitability	19	9		21	23		17	18		14	18		11	17		16	9
	Willigness to invest	15	24		21	3		23	6		14	1		13	23		5	1
	Commitment to standard practices	6	20		24	11		7	11		12	1		15	25		9	9
	Autonomous & independent operation	25	13		24	23		12	10		22	1		18	10		1	22

Table 5: Partner's characteristics, commitment to partnership and customer satisfaction/happiness are seen as the main factors with regards to the partner's characteristics whereas profitability is deemed not applicable by the interviewees.

For Exact commitment to partnership is mutual shared trust between the partner and orchestrator. One employee phrases this as *"you have to be able to rely on each other, have a common goal."* AFAS interprets commitment to partnership as *"the partner has to be really committed to certain agreements; if you conclude an agreement with us, you stick to it."* Salesforce sees commitment to partnership as a partner that wants to fully invest in a partnership, one Salesforce employee phrases this as *"an organisation that wants to fully cooperate with Salesforce, very interesting!"* Commitment to a partnership has to come from two ways, not just from the partner. This is expressed by one SAP employee as *"... is very important, both from our side as the partner's. Sometimes you have to do things that are not completely in line with your own interests but it is in the interest of the partner or customer."*

The interviewees ranked customer satisfaction and customer happiness on respectively the second and third position in the top 3. The two criteria are closely related according to the majority of the interviewees. AFAS states that *"you want happy customers, that's number 1. Make sure your customers are satisfied and happy."* For Centric the customer comes first, *"together with our partners we serve our customers."* Satisfied customers do not only *"remain a customer for longer and will yield more"* according to one Exact employee but also *"are earlier prepared to adopt innovations and buy new software, creating additional revenue"* according to one SAP employee.

4.2.2 Partner's capabilities

		FinTech Comp		Exact		AFAS		SAP		Centric		Salesforce	
Position		*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*
1	Innovation capabilities	2	2	1	2	4	1	3	3	2	1	2	3
2	Unique competencies	1	1	3	2	2	3	1	5	1	4	3	5
3	Continues focus on innovation	4	2	1	4	5	2	4	1	3	2	1	3
	Reduce costs	5	5	6	4	6	4	5	5	6	6	6	6
	Management capabilities	6	6	5	1	3	5	5	3	4	3	4	1
	Resources	3	2	4	6	1	6	2	1	5	5	4	1

Table 6: Partner's capabilities, innovation capabilities together with unique competencies are deemed as most desirable with regards to partner's capabilities. Management capabilities and resources are deemed less desirable whereas reduce costs is seen by the interviewees as not desired at all.

One AFAS employee mentioned *"I think innovation is important, that what they do is innovative, I like that. That makes me enthusiastic; I want to think if you (partner) can innovate and move in that market, that's super cool."* A Centric employee mentioned that *"by bringing something unique to the market, you're ahead of your competitors. To do so, you need these two capabilities, innovation capabilities and continuous focus on innovation."* However, just by having an innovative product when you join a SECO is not sufficient as is stated by one of the FinTechComp employees, *"partners have to keep going forward so innovation is crucial and has to remain crucial."* This statement is supported by both Centric employees stating that *"we want a product leader so innovation is important."* Both Salesforce employees mentioned that since they are "one of the most innovative companies in the world" according to Forbes (2018), they mention that *"the Saleforce innovative DNA has to match with that of a potential partner. Innovation is our thing, we find innovation very important and expect it from our partners."*

Closely related to innovation is the number 2 in the top 3, unique competencies. One Exact employee stated that *"both the people and resources the partner has at its disposal is very important to us."* For FinTechComp, they go in business with a partner because the partner has something unique *"otherwise, the partner is the same as everybody else so why a partnership then?"* This view is shared by AFAS, *"you have to add something additional, something unique."* We end with one SAP employee stating that *"... are definitely important, you bring business or industry knowledge together with product knowledge."*

Continuous focus on innovation is placed by the interviewees on the third position in the top 3. The interviewees state that this criterion is closely related to innovation capabilities, the rationale given for this criterion is therefore valid for the criterion continuous focus on innovation.

4.2.3 Partner's product

		FinTech Comp		Exact		AFAS		SAP		Centric		Salesforce	
Position		*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*
1	Reliability	8	9	5	1	1	2	1	1	6	3	1	8
2	Quality	4	7	1	1	2	6	4	1	5	3	3	3
3	Effective API integration	1	2	2	3	3	3	5	4	9	7	5	1
	Data privacy & security	6	5	4	5	5	1	2	4	8	3	1	9
	Customer support	9	8	6	3	4	5	3	4	1	6	5	3
	Clear & complete documentation	3	2	9	9	6	4	9	8	7	7	7	3
	Development standard	2	1	2	7	8	8	6	1	3	9	7	3
	Continuous improvement	7	6	8	7	7	7	8	4	2	2	3	3
	Price	5	4	7	5	9	9	7	8	4	1	7	1

Table 7: Partner's product, product reliability and quality together with an effective API integration are the criteria deemed most desired by the interviewees. That the partner provides clear & complete documentation is seen as not relevant.

In this category, the interviewees placed reliability and quality respectively on the first and second position in the top 3. One Exact employee mentioned *"from my point of view, it has to be a top partner who is and delivers a reliable product, we don't want issues."* Their colleague supports this statement by mentioning that *"reliability and quality are our top priority."* Both AFAS employees agree with their counterparts at Exact, stating that *"the partner's product must always be available and of high quality."* One AFAS employee added to the previous that *"for me it's important that the partner's product is reliable, the amount of data that is pulled back and forth between our product and the partner's product must be transparent."* For all case study organisations reliability is vital. However Salesforce does not directly use the criterion in their partner selection process since their platform ensures 24/7 up-time. We end with a statement from one SAP employee stating that *"if you're not reliable, this is annoying in a partnership."*

For FinTechComp it is key that partners *"can easily integrate their product using APIs."* Both Exact employees add to this that *"a partner needs a proper working API integration, not just working but also effective."* For Exact this is the *"common denominator"* why they initiate a partnership with a partner. Both AFAS employees mentioned that *"partners have to assure a proper working API connection."* One AFAS employee mentioned that *"an effective API integration makes sure we're in control"*, by which he means that if the connection is properly established, AFAS knows which data is pulled back and forth and can intervene in case issues arise.

4.2.4 Partner's knowledge assets

		FinTech Comp			**Exact**			**AFAS**			**SAP**			**Centric**			**Salesforce**	
Position		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*
1	In-house knowledge	3	2		1	1		1	1		2	2		3	1		2	1
2	Technical expertise	1	2		1	1		2	2		2	1		2	2		4	1
3	Investment in R&D	4	4		3	3		3	3		1	2		1	3		3	3
	Patents	5	5		4	4		5	5		3	4		5	5		5	5
	Intellectual property	1	1		5	4		4	4		3	4		4	4		1	3

Table 8: Partner's knowledge assets, in-house knowledge (partner's product and orchestrator's platform) together with technical expertise are desirable knowledge assets of the partner. Patents are not relevant for the IT market.

Technical expertise and in-house knowledge are prerequisites in order to make a partnership successful. One FinTechComp employees puts it as *"... has to be there, otherwise no deal."* For AFAS, the two criteria are of high importance with regard to the partner's knowledge assets, stating that *"if the partner has in-house knowledge and also the technical expertise to develop and maintain something, very important. If not, it costs us lots of time and in case something goes wrong, it takes much more time to fix it."* One AFAS employee added to this that *"the partner must have in-house knowledge with regards to both their product and our platform"* and that without technical expertise, in case of an escalation, *"it completely goes wrong."* Besides issues in case of an escalation, the lack of technical expertise is also seen as an inhibitory factor, one Exact employee stating that *"without technical expertise, it slows everything down."* Adding to the previous, their colleague states that partners who outsource their technical expertise is partially fine, however, it functions also as an inhibitory factor to development, *"it simply works too slow."* In the previous category, partner's product, effective API integration has been discussed. One Centric employee mentioned that *"in order to have a proper integration between our platform and the partner's product, knowledge and technical expertise are definitely required."*

In the paragraph above, in-house knowledge and technical expertise has been identified as something of a technical nature. However, business knowledge is key to possess, as can be seen from this statement made by one Salesforce employee, *"in-house knowledge, is not so much about only technical knowledge, business knowledge is vital as well."*

All organisations agree that R&D is a prerequisite to be successful. Centric describes it as *"with a proper working R&D department, you can become really successful as a company."* Exact puts it as *"R&D is important, not just for us but also for the partner, to become better in what they do."* For a partner but also for an orchestrator, R&D is not only required to become better and grow but also to survive. This statement is supported by a quote from one AFAS employee stating that *"if a partner does not develop and keep evolving and investing in R&D, the partner has a short life in the software market."*

4.2.5 Partner's sales capabilities

		FinTech Comp			**Exact**			**AFAS**			**SAP**			**Centric**			**Salesforce**	
Position		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*
1	Customer base	1	1		5	1		7	4		1	1		9	6		1	1
2	Market share	2	2		9	2		3	6		2	4		2	9		1	2
3	Market coverage	3	2		6	2		4	7		2	1		8	2		3	2
	Access to markets	4	6		1	2		9	3		2	4		1	5		3	2
	Sales channels	8	6		2	7		1	9		7	4		3	7		6	6
	Sales experience	7	9		2	6		6	5		7	1		4	4		6	2
	Partner's network	9	2		2	7		2	2		9	8		5	8		8	6
	Customer diversity	5	8		6	9		8	8		1	8		6	2		9	9
	Market knowledge	6	2		6	2		5	1		2	4		7	1		3	6

Table 9: Partner's sales capabilities, the customer base, the market share and market coverage are seen as desirable partner's sales capabilities. On the other hand, customer diversity is deemed by the interviewees as not relevant.

All interviewees were unanimous in the fact that the customer base of the partner is the most desirable partner selection criterion for them. The partner's customer base can lead to opportunities for the orchestrator to expand their current customer base. Exact phrases this as *"when the partner has a large customer base, there is a lot of potential for us."* Both FinTechComp employees share this vision, stating that *"the more customers they have, the better. The focus is on the customer base, I want to know which customers you have and what's the potential for FinTechComp."* One AFAS employee mentioned that *"its beneficiary and easy for us when a partner has a customer base in which we have few customers."* their colleague mentioned that *"it's valuable to us when a partner has customers because you then you start collaborating with a known brand in the market."* For Centric, the customer base is a selection criterion to verify if the potential partner is not a new entrant in the Dutch market, *"it must not be a new entrant in the Netherlands."* One Salesforce employee mentioned that *"the customer base is very important for me. Are they existing Salesforce customers?"* Their colleague added to the previous that *"if the partner has a large customer base, they will likely have customers in a market segment in which we are not yet active."*

Market share comes second and is closely related to customer base. Both are relevant to estimate the success rate for a potential partner. One Salesforce employee phrases this as *"the most important is the chance of the partner succeeding. That starts with what the partner has already in the market, which they can optimise and further expand."*

On the third position the interviewees ranked market coverage. According to FinTechComp *"the customer base, market share and market coverage must be in conjunction with each other."* Adding to the previous, Exact mentions that *"if a partner has a large customer base, they have in the majority of the cases good market coverage."*

4.2.6 Orchestrator perspective

		FinTech Comp			Exact			AFAS			SAP			Centric			Salesforce	
Position		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*		*1*	*2*
1	Portfolio complementarity	1	1		1	1		1	1		3	4		2	1		1	2
2	Partnership ROI	3	2		2	1		7	3		3	6		1	5		2	1
3	Recommended by others	4	5		3	3		3	8		1	1		5	6		5	2
	Potential for co-development	5	4		4	5		4	2		5	1		7	7		6	7
	Loose connection with competitors	7	7		5	5		6	6		5	6		3	2		7	2
	Open for co-opetition	8	8		5	5		2	7		1	4		4	8		4	2
	Know-how of local regulations	2	6		7	4		8	4		8	1		6	4		2	7
	Multi-home	6	3		8	5		5	5		7	6		8	2		8	2

Table 10: Orchestrator perspective, portfolio complementarity, partnership ROI and recommended by others are criteria that SECO orchestrators look for in potential partners. Multi-home, loose connection with competitors and potential for co-development are deemed as not relevant.

One Salesforce employee mentioned that *"portfolio complementarity is key"*, whereas one FinTech employee stated that, *"if there is no complementarity, there is no need for a discussion."* For both Centric employees, "*portfolio complementarity is 1, no discussion."* AFAS phrases it as "*the partner's product has to be an addition to our product offering, this is the most important."* Finally, Exact stated that *"portfolio complementarity is key, it has to be complementary with our software."*

Besides portfolio complementarity, there must be a financial incentive for both the SECO orchestrator and the partner to initiate a partnership. As one FinTech employee states *"the ROI has to be there, simple."* This point is shared by Exact where both employees are convinced that the partnership ROI has to be there in order to make it *"a win win for both parties"* and Exact *"has to make money with the partnership."* The latter is shared by Centric *"ROI, are you go going to make money with the partnership? If not, we do not initiate the partnership."* According to one SAP employee, partnership ROI *"is important for partnership continuity."*

The top 3 ends with recommended by others. One SAP employee mentioned that *"recommended by others is always a good thing, that you know potential partners due to word of mouth, you get an impression of a potential partner."* FinTechComp adds to the previous that it is a test for them to see if their customers would be interested in a partnership between FinTechComp and a particular potential partner, *"creates a bit of a pull whether the clients are actually interested."* For AFAS, recommended by others means that current partners advise AFAS to partner up with certain new partners. One employee mentioned that *"partners are very active within different market segments, if they tell us this partner is really an addition to AFAS, then we look in-depth into such a recommended partner."* Exact shares this viewpoint, but from the perspective of their customers, stating that *"if customers recommend a partner, there is a good chance of this partner being in our app center."* For Centric, besides getting to know a potential partner, recommended by others helps to gain market traction, *"it creates trust in the market if you partner up with a known brand."*

4.2.7 Merging cards

During the interviews, the interviewees indicated that some cards they were given are closely related to each other and should actually be merged. These findings are shared in this section.

First, *customer happiness* and *customer satisfaction*. All interviewees were uniform in the fact that these two cards refer to the same construct, namely, *customer happiness*. In order to be happy with a product as a customer you first have to be satisfied with the product. Therefore *customer satisfaction* is merged with *customer happiness* and is removed from the candidate criteria list. Secondly, *commitment to partnership* and *loyalty*. In the eyes of the majority of the interviewees, loyalty means that the partner is loyal to the partnership with the orchestrator. *Commitment to partnership* refers to exactly the same, therefore, both cards are merged into one, removing *loyalty* from the candidate criteria list. Lastly, *development standard* and *partner is committed to standard practices*. From the definitions presented in table 3, it becomes clear that both criteria ensure that a product is developed adhering to applicable (development) standards. This view is shared by the interviewees, for them standard practices are equal to unquestionable standards resulting in merging both cards and eliminating *partner is committed to standard practices* from the candidate criteria list.

4.2.8 Summary partner selection criteria

We summarise this section by means of table 11 in which, for each partner selection criteria category, the top 3 of selection criteria indicated by the interviewees as most desirable for that particular category, are presented.

Category	**Position 1**	**Position 2**	**Position 3**
Partner's characteristics	Commitment to partnership	Customer satisfaction	Customer happiness
Partner's capabilities	Innovation capabilities	Unique competencies	Continues focus on innovation
Partner's product	Reliability	Quality	Effective API integration
Partner's knowledge assets	In-house knowledge	Technical expertise	Investment in R&D
Partner's sales capabilities	Customer base	Market share	Market coverage
Orchestrator perspective	Portfolio complementarity	Partnership ROI	Recommended by others

Table 11: Summary of the top 3 partner selection criteria for each category.

4.3 Partner selection method

In this section, we describe the six partner selection methods used by the case study organisations. One should consider the difference between *inbound* partner selection, a potential partner requests to become a partner, versus *outbound* partner selection, the orchestrator approaches potential partners to gauge their interest for a partnership. And thirdly, *hybrid*, which is a combination of *inbound* and *outbound* partner selection.

The PDDs and accompanying tables can be found in the appendix B.

4.3.1 FinTechComp

For FinTechComp partners fulfil MISSING CAPABILITIES in FinTechComp's product offering. Therefore, the focus of their partner selection method is *outbound* partner selection. The first activity in their partner selection method is **conduct internal research**. The main goal of this activity is to identify, create an overview and prioritise the current MISSING CAPABILITIES in FinTechComp's product offering.

The **scan market activity** has as goal to scan the market to identify POTENTIAL PARTNERS which are able to fulfil the MISSING CAPABILITIES identified in the previous activity. The marketplace team identifies POTENTIAL PARTNERS, validates them based on five VALIDATION CRITERIA which are COMPLEMENTARY TO PLATFORM, SOLUTION FOR CUSTOMER, CORE CAPABILITY, COMMERCIAL ASPECT and COVERAGE AND LEADING IN THE SPACE. The PARTNER VALIDATION process leads to the POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST that qualify for a PARTNERSHIP with FinTechComp.

The POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST is subsequently discussed in the **start discussion** activity to decide which partner(s) to select and to initiate a PARTNERSHIP with. In order to make this selection, two type of DISCUSSIONS are held, COMMERCIAL and TECHNICAL. The COMMERCIAL DISCUSSION focuses on which CURRENT CUSTOMERS the potential partner already serves, EARNINGS received due to the PARTNERSHIP with the POTENTIAL PARTNER and the opinion of the INTERNAL DEPARTMENTS that are involved in the COMMERCIAL DISCUSSION. PLATFORM FIT, INTEGRATION FIT and TECHNOLOGY are the three aspects considered in the TECHNICAL DISCUSSION.

After one ore more PARTNERS have been selected, the **engage partner** activity is initiated. First, the PARTNERSHIP LEVEL is determined. This PARTNERSHIP LEVEL influences the PARTNERSHIP between the partner and FinTechComp. Next, the PUBLIC RELATIONS are formalised. This includes the PRESS RELEASE to present a high-level introduction of the partnership to the market. Secondly, a SLIDE DECK is created, providing more information about the new PARTNERSHIP such as business introduction, value proposition and technical aspects. After the INTEGRATION is build, SUPPORT is set up (in case it is offered by FinTechComp which depends on the PARTNERSHIP LEVEL) and the PARTNER'S PRODUCT is inserted in the PRICING SHEET, the CONTRACT is signed and the PARTNER'S PRODUCT goes live, marking the end of the partner selection method applied by FinTechComp.

4.3.2 Exact

For Exact a potential partner is a MATCH when the partner adds value for Exact customers and the potential partner generates COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL. The focus of their partner selection method is *inbound* partner selection. After Exact receives a CONNECTOR REQUEST, this can be either an EXTERNAL REQUEST (customer, prospect or potential partner) or INTERNAL REQUEST (sales or support department), the partner selection method is initiated.

The first activity **verify potential partner** has the goal to verify if a potential partner is a MATCH with Exact. The incoming request is processed to determine if there already is a CONNECTOR between Exact and the application of the requested organisation. If so, the customer is referred to the partner. The partner manager determines if there is COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL for a partnership. In case the

requested organisation does not yet have a CONNECTOR with Exact, the partner manager conducts PARTNER RESEARCH into the potential partner. Part of this research is to determine opportunities, current customers, commercial potential and more. If there is a MATCH, the partner manager reaches out to the potential partner by means of a STANDARD EMAIL. When the potential partner is still interested in a partnership with Exact after receiving the STANDARD EMAIL, the partner selection process continues.

In the **engage partner** activity, the new partner is onboarded in the Exact ecosystem. First, the partner has to register for the APP CENTER by means of an APP CENTER SUBSCRIPTION and has to register their PARTNER'S APPLICATION. At the same time, the partner builds a CONNECTOR which is the integration between Exact and the PARTNER'S APPLICATION. When the partner has build the CONNECTOR and the CONNECTOR works properly, the PARTNER'S APPLICATION is reviewed by the app center team. A key aspect during this review is the SECURITY CHECK: which customer data is used by the PARTNER'S APPLICATION, for what purpose is this data used, does the partner accept the TERMS & CONDITIONS set for the APP CENTER and how approaches the partner DATA ASSESSMENT & PROTECTION (such as AUTHORISATION MEASURES IMPLEMENTED, EASY ACCESSIBLE PRIVACY POLICY and ASK FOR EXPLICIT PERMISSION TO USE DATA). After the APPLICATION REVIEW, a MEETING is scheduled with the partner for a MARKETING CHECK, discuss the FEE and enable the partner to show a DEMO of their application to the app center team. Another key topic during this meeting is the number of current LIVE CUSTOMERS. After this MEETING, when the PARTNER'S APPLICATION is approved, the PARTNER'S APPLICATION goes live in the APP CENTER.

4.3.3 AFAS

AFAS applies *inbound* partner selection in their partner selection method. The partner selection process starts with the REGISTRATION POTENTIAL PARTNER, a potential partner signs-up via the AFAS website for a PARTNERSHIP with AFAS. This sub activity initiates the partner selection method.

The method starts with the **verify potential partner** activity. First, the System Integrator verifies if a potential partner has already a CONNECTOR with AFAS. To do so, the System Integrator looks in the PARTNER BASE to verify the status of a potential partner. In case that the potential partner has already a CONNECTOR, the intake is performed by telephone. In all other situations, the potential partner receives a QUESTIONNAIRE which is the input for the PARTNER VERIFICATION REPORT. This report is used to verify the potential partner, to do so, seven criteria are applied: COMMON CUSTOMERS, TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE ON API DEVELOPMENT, WILLINGNESS TO INVEST, AFAS PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE, ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONALITY OFFERED, HOW IS THE PARTNER RECEIVED and PARTNER WORKS IN THE SAME WAYS AS AFAS. After the PARTNER VERIFICATION REPORT is created, the System Integrator calls the potential partner in order to discuss with the partner the QUESTIONNAIRE he filled in. Next, the potential partner's response is discussed during the DISCUSSION. The main objective of this DISCUSSION is to discuss exceptions to determine if a particular potential partner can be accepted to the AFAS ecosystem. When the result of the DISCUSSION is positive, the System Integrator verifies if the partner agrees with the TERMS & CONDITIONS for a PARTNERSHIP with AFAS. If the answer is yes, the PARTNERSHIP is initiated. Successively, the partner receives a TENDER, describing the formal offer to conclude a PARTNERSHIP that is offered to the partner by the System Integrator. When the partner is accepts the TENDER, the partner signs the TENDER resulting in the SIGNED TENDER. This marks the start of the next activity, **engage partner**.

The TECHNICAL ONBOARDING is first initiated. To do so, there is automatically a TEST ENVIRONMENT created which the partner can use to test their functionality and the integration with AFAS. Subsequently, AFAS sends COURSE VOUCHERs to the partner. These can be used to follow various courses such as the API COURSE. At this point, the System Integrator conducts the INTAKE to acquire more knowledge on how the partner will integrate their product with AFAS. This sub activity is followed, by simultaneously, provide support and development of connector. AFAS answers QUESTIONs that are asked by the partner with regard to the development of the CONNECTOR. The CONNECTOR itself depicts the integration between the PARTNER'S PRODUCT and AFAS. When the CONNECTOR is realised,

the partner shows a DEMO of their product to the System Integrator(s), showing their platform's functionality and integration with AFAS. This sub activity is followed by the FUNCTIONAL TECHNICAL CHECK which is executed by the System Integrator with the goal of verifying if the functionality offered by the PARTNER'S PRODUCT works properly. If this is the case, the partner writes their PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION which is in turn checked by the System Integrator to see if all elements are present. When complete, the PARTNER'S PRODUCT goes live and can be used by AFAS customers.

4.3.4 SAP

The partner selection method applied by SAP has its focus on *inbound* partner selection and starts with the sub activity sign-up for a partnership. When the request of a potential BUILD partner is received by SAP, the partner method is initiated, starting with the activity **verify potential build partner**.

First it is verified whether the potential partner wants to initiate a SAP PARTNEREDGE BUILD PARTNERSHIP. If this is the case, the Alliances team schedules an EXPLORATORY MEETING with the BUILD partner to verify if the potential BUILD partner is a MATCH with SAP. In case of a MATCH, the Alliances team sends the BUILD partner a DOCUMENTATION REQUEST to provide documentation, this includes FINANCIALS, BUSINESS PLAN, CERTIFIED CONSULTANTS and PARTNER EDGE BUILD CONTRACT. When the potential BUILD partner is still interested in the SAP PARTNEREDGE BUILD PARTNERSHIP after receiving the DOCUMENTATION REQUEST, and the partner provides the required POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER DOCUMENTATION, the verification process is started; the POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER DOCUMENTATION is inserted in the BUILD PARTNER VERIFICATION SYSTEM which executes various CHECKS to verify the documentation. When the VERIFICATION RESULT is positive, the partner is certified in SAP PARTNER EDGE, receiving a BUILD CERTIFICATION. This marks the start of the second activity, **onboard build partner**.

This activity starts with the ONBOARDING of the BUILD partner. In order to accomplish this, the BUILD partner first creates a SAP APP CENTER ACCOUNT. Subsequently, the BUILD partner has to agree with the TERMS & CONDITIONS that are set by SAP for the SAP BUILD PARTNERSHIP. When the BUILD partner accepts, the APP READINESS CHECK is initiated; this is the standard procedure by SAP to confirm the compliance of an application with the standard criteria set by SAP. Part of this check is the APPLICATION READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE which the BUILD partner needs to fill in consisting of various topics with regards to their application such as SECURITY, USER ASSISTANCE and FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS. Next, the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION is validated which needs to be passed before it can be placed in the SAP APP CENTER. After the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION is validated, the BUILD partner creates their SAP APP CENTER LISTING which includes SEARCH CATEGORIES. The MARKETING PROFILE is subsequently created by the BUILD partner, which contains marketing information for the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION such as title, description, demo and support information. Closely related to the MARKETING PROFILE is the next sub activity; determining the pricing model in which the BUILD partner provides pricing information for their BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This sub activity is followed by the set-up of the INTEGRATION with SAP. Finally, the BUILD partner sets up PAYMENT PROCESSING which contains the payment method the customers can use to pay for the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. When this is sub activity successful finished, the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION goes live in the SAP APP CENTER which marks the end of the partner selection process.

4.3.5 Centric

Centric identifies a MARKET DOMAIN of their interest in which Centric looks for preferred partners to collaborate with, adding value to the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING. To do so, Centric applies *outbound* partner selection.

First, preferred potential partners are identified during the **identify preferred potential partner** activity. This activity starts by identifying the MARKET DOMAIN of interest. Subsequently, the Centric HR & Payroll partnership team identifies potential preferred partners which are added to the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST. The potential partners on this list are then validated by means

of PARTNER VALIDATION which consists of two concepts, DEMO and PARTNER VALIDATION CRITERIA. The POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER shows a DEMO to the Centric HR & Payroll partnership team to convince them of the added value to the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING, the Centric HR & Payroll partnership team provides a DEMO of their product to the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER. During the PARTNER VALIDATION, five VALIDATION CRITERIA are used which are STRATEGIC PARTNER, COMPANY SIZE, EXPECTED CONNECTION, PRODUCT FEATURES and MARKET POSITION. Next, based on the PARTNER VALIDATION, one POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER is selected from the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST. With this POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER a MEETING is scheduled to discuss the details for a potential PARTNERSHIP. When both parties are interested in a PARTNERSHIP, the second activity of the partner selection method is initiated; **verify potential preferred partner**.

In order for the Centric HR & Payroll partnership team to launch a partnership with a partner, CENTRIC MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT is required. When the management is committed to the PARTNERSHIP, the PREFERRED VENDORSHIP PARTNERSHIP is launched. Subsequently, executed concurrently, OPPORTUNITIES that arise due to the PREFERRED VENDORSHIP PARTNERSHIP with the PARTNER are identified together with conducting initial CASEs in order to validate if the intentions for the PARTNERSHIP work in practice. Next, the EVALUATION OF PREFERRED VENDORSHIP is executed. Part of this evaluation is to identify REAL OPPORTUNITIES, discuss the COLLABORATION and PRODUCT EVALUATION of both Centric HR & Payroll and the PARTNER'S PRODUCT. When the outcome is positive, the next activity is initiated, **engage partner**.

First, the PARTNERSHIP is formalised, which includes the partnership level and personnel attachment between organisations (PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll). Part of formalising the PARTNERSHIP is to sign the CONTRACT which specifies the PARTNERSHIP between the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll. Next, various sub activities, divided into two groups, are executed concurrently. One group focuses on providing training; SALES TRAINING and CONSULTANT TRAINING. The other group has as goal to ensure the TECHNICAL INTEGRATION between the PARTNER'S PRODUCT and Centric HR & Payroll. Part of this TECHNICAL INTEGRATION is to align the FEATURE DESCRIPTION, establish the PROCESS FLOW (user journey), develop SPECIFICATIONS and define USAGE GROUPS. During this process, employees should give each other FEEDBACK, both on the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING as well as on the PARTNERSHIP in general, subsequently, this FEEDBACKis processed. Taking the PROCESSED FEEDBACK into consideration, the finalised product is developed which is the PARTNER'S PRODUCT, part of the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING. Part of the latter is SALES (relevant sales information), SET-UP PARTNER'S PRODUCT, which contains the relevant information for Centric HR & Payroll consultants to set-up and implement the PARTNER'S PRODUCT, and the ABILITY TO SELL PARTNER'S PRODUCT, Centric HR & Payroll is able to sell the PARTNER'S PRODUCT. By going live of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT in the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING, the partner selection method has reached it's final state.

4.3.6 Salesforce

Salesforce applies *hybrid* partner selection. The method starts with a choice, either *inbound* or *outbound* partner selection. In case of the latter, the first activity is **scan market** in which the ISV partner team creates a POTENTIAL PARTNER LONGLIST based upon INDUSTRY INFORMATION. The potential partners on this list are subsequently scored in order to transform the longlist into a POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST. The criteria used for this process are: ADDED VALUE, POTENTIAL PARTNER COMPANY SIZE and COMPELLING REASON FOR PARTNERSHIP.

After the POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST has been drafted, the activity **approach potential partner** is initiated. The ISV partner team reaches out to the potential partner to explain what a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce entails. When the potential partner is interested in a PARTNERSHIP, the next activity in the partner selection method is initiated; **engage partner**.

First, the partner joins the SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY. To do so, the partner creates a SALESFORCE PARTNER ACCOUNT. The partner uses this account as well to gain access to SALESFORCE PARTNER BUSINESS ORG, which is an environment for the partner to develop their PARTNER'S APPLICATION. After successfully joining both communities, the partner gets familiar with the APP EXCHANGE BASICS. To do so, the partner follows the APP EXCHANGE PARTNER PROGRAM, a resource for information is the ISV FORCE GUIDE together with TRAILHEAD which consists of various trails for an APP EXCHANGE PARTNER such as the DEVELOPMENT TRAIL, the API TRAIL and the SECURITY REVIEW TRAIL.

Next, the partner starts building their PARTNER'S APPLICATION, which marks the start of the **develop product** activity. This activity starts with the partner building their PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Two key pillars in this process are PRODUCT STRATEGY and APP DEVELOPMENT. Part of the development of the PARTNER'S APPLICATION is to create a DEVELOPMENT & TEST ENVIRONMENT which allows the partner to develop and test their application. This sub activity is followed by the define business strategy sub activity. Part of the BUSINESS STRATEGY are, but not exclusively, TARGET MARKET, DETAILED CUSTOMER DESCRIPTION and GO-TO-MARKET PLAN. After the partner submits their BUSINESS STRATEGY, the ISV partner team approves the partner's strategy. Part of this PARTNER'S APPROVAL process are BUSINESS STRATEGY APPROVAL, TECHNICAL APPROVAL and LEGAL APPROVAL. When the partner's strategy is approved, the ISV partner team and the partner review and sign the PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT which marks the official start of the PARTNERSHIP between Salesforce and the partner, which now has becomes an APP EXCHANGE PARTNER. Subsequently, the partner prepares and submits their application for the SECURITY REVIEW which is executed by the Security review team and has a goal to verify if the PARTNER'S APPLICATION meets the security standards and requirements set by Salesforce. When the partner passes the SECURITY REVIEW, the partner creates their APP EXCHANGE LISTING which describes the PARTNER'S APPLICATION to APP EXCHANGE customers who might want to use the PARTNER'S APPLICATION. After the partner has set up PAYMENT PROCESSING, the PARTNER'S APPLICATION goes live on the APP EXCHANGE.

4.3.7 Summary partner selection method

We can summarise the previous section by drawing a few conclusions. First, the distinction between *inbound*, *outbound* and *hybrid* partner selection:

- *Inbound*: a potential partner contacts the SECO orchestrator to request a partnership;
- *Outbound*: a SECO orchestrator approaches a potential partners to gauge their interest to become a partner;
- *Hybrid*: a combination of both types, potential partners approach the SECO orchestrator *(inbound)* and the SECO orchestrator approaches potential partners *(outbound)*. For example, the SECO orchestrator applies *inbound* partner selection in a market segment where the SECO orchestrator has a strong market position, and *outbound* partner selection in a market segment where the SECO orchestrator builds their presence.

Secondly, in case *inbound* partner selection is applied, we can distinguish the following overarching activities:

- **Verify potential partner**: the SECO orchestrator receives a request for a partnership with a potential partner, this can be from an internal or external source. When this request is received, the verification process of the potential partner is initiated, the potential partner is verified based on various criteria to decide if the potential partner is a match for the SECO orchestrator;
- **Engage partner**: In case of a match, the potential partner is onboarded in the ecosystem, the partnership between the SECO orchestrator and the partner is now officially initiated. This process can roughly be divided into two main processes: commercial and technical onboarding. During the commercial onboarding process all relevant sales & marketing information is created such as information about the partner's application for customers. The main objective for the

technical onboarding to build a connection (for example by means of a connector) between the partner's application and that of the SECO orchestrator. Before the partner's application can go live, an application review is executed; the application is validated, part of this process is a security check to validate if the partner's application meets the security standards set by the SECO orchestrator.

Thirdly, in case of *outbound* partner selection, we can distinguish the following overarching activities:

- **Identify potential partner**: based on missing capabilities identified in the current platform offering of the SECO orchestrator or based upon market knowledge, respectively potential partners that can offering the missing capabilities or partners that can add value to the SECO orchestrator's platform offering, are identified;
- **Verify potential partner**: similar to the corresponding activity of *inbound* partner selection. This activity results in a shortlist of potential partners from which one or more partners are selected whom, in the successive activity, are onboarded;
- **Engage partner**: similar to the corresponding activity of *inbound* partner selection.

Finally, in case *hybrid* partner selection is applied, we can identify the following activities. First, the identify potential partner activity which is similar to the **identify potential partner** activity we described above. This activity results in a shortlist of potential partners from which one or more partners are selected, whom, are onboarded in the **engage partner** activity. In case a potential partner requests to become a partner, the **identify potential partner** activity is skipped and the partner selection process starts with the **engage partner** activity.

4.4 SECO partner selection

4.4.1 Meta-model

The SECO partner selection framework models the relevant activities, sub-activities and concepts for a SECO orchestrator with regard to partner selection. To help create this framework, figure 6, we introduce a meta-model in figure 5. This model illustrates the relevant concepts and their relationships. We briefly introduce the various concepts and the relationships among them.

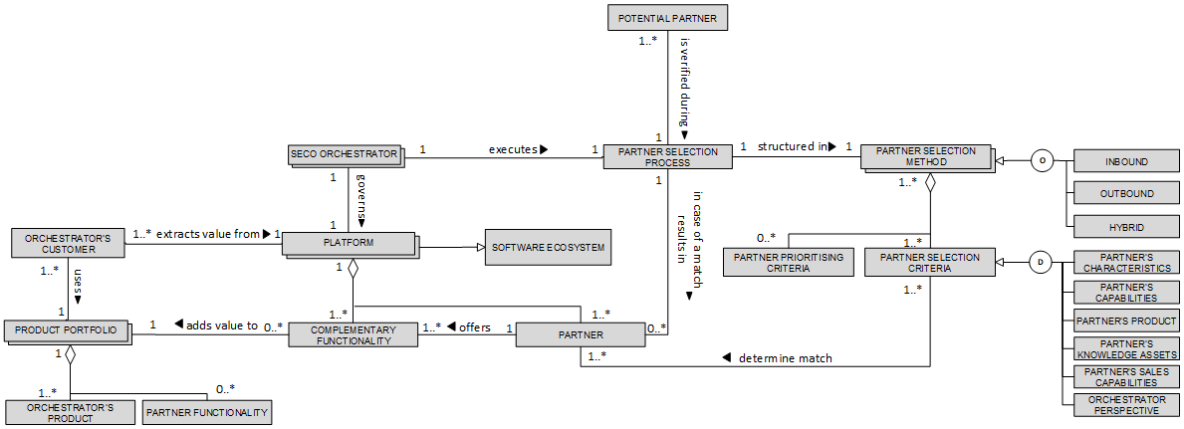

Figure 5: Meta-model for SECO partner selection.

A **SECO orchestrator** executes their **partner selection process** to determine if a **potential partner** is a match for the SECO orchestrator. In case of a match, this results in a **potential partner** becoming a **partner**. To determine if a potential partner is a match for the SECO orchestrator, the SECO orchestrator applies their **partner selection method**, which is a structured approach to partner selection. A **partner selection method** can be one of three types: **inbound** (a potential partner approaches the SECO orchestrator), **outbound** (the SECO orchestrator approaches a potential partner), and **hybrid**, a combination between inbound & outbound. In order to determine if a potential partner is a match, **partner selection criteria** are applied which are part of the partner selection method. We can distinguish six categories of partner selection criteria: **partner's characteristics** (contains criteria that focus on the general characteristics of a partner), **partner's capabilities** (capabilities a SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner), **partner's product** (criteria a SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner's product), **partner's knowledge assets** (the various types of knowledge a potential partner has at its disposal), **partner's sales capabilities** (sales capabilities a SECO orchestrator looks for in a potential partner), and **orchestrator perspective** (criteria the SECO orchestrator looks for in a partner from their organisation's perspective). In case two potential partners offer (very) similar functionality, **partner prioritising criteria** help a SECO orchestrator to determine if and how a partner needs to be prioritised.

When a potential partner is a match, the partner offers **complementary functionality** which adds value to the **product portfolio** offered by the **SECO orchestrator** to **orchestrator's customers**. This product portfolio consists of an **orchestrator's platform** and **partner functionality**. For example, a SECO orchestrator offers an ERP solution to their customers. A partner offers a scan & recognise application which is complementary and is fully integrated with the ERP solution. This adds extra value to the product portfolio and platform ecosystem which can be extracted by orchestrator customers. To do so, the SECO orchestrator governs a **platform**, which is a specific type of a **software ecosystem**, that enables partners to connect their application with the SECO orchestrator's platform (product portfolio) and to offer their application to **orchestrator's customers**, via, for example, an app store.

4.4.2 SECO partner selection framework

In this section, we introduce the SECO partner selection framework which can be found in figure 6. This framework contains the main activities, sub-activities and concepts relevant for a SECO orchestrator to shape and execute their partner selection process. In case *outbound* partner selection is chosen, the SECO orchestrator applies all three activities. *Inbound* partner selection consists of the same activities minus the first activity since the SECO orchestrator does not have to identify potential partners.

In the first activity, **identify potential partner**, the SECO orchestrator identifies missing capabilities in their current platform portfolio. In order to realise these capabilities, the SECO orchestrator conducts market research to identify potential partners that can realise the previously identified missing capabilities. This activity ends with a shortlist of potential partners.

The second activity, **verify potential partner**, has a goal to verify if a potential partner is a match for the SECO orchestrator platform ecosystem and, therefore, should be onboarded in the SECO. In order to determine if a potential partner is a match, first, the SECO orchestrator sends the potential partner a questionnaire in which the potential partner has to provide more information about their organisation, product and partnership intentions. Subsequently, the SECO orchestrator verifies if the potential partner is a match by applying partner validation criteria. These criteria can be divided into six categories which were identified as part of this research. After this sub-activity is finished, the SECO orchestrator discusses the potential partner's response. During this discussion, both the commercial and technical elements of a partnership with the potential partner are discussed, such as, but not exclusively, the potential partner's current customers, the earnings the SECO orchestrator can gain from the partnership, and the platform and integration fit. Afterwards, the SECO orchestrator selects a potential partner from the potential partner shortlist and initiates the third activity, **engage partner**.

In order to onboard the partner, various sub-activities have to be executed which can be divided into two categories, commercial and technical onboarding. During the commercial onboarding, the partner, together with the sales team and SECO orchestrator, determines the pricing model that will be applied for the partner's application. Secondly, marketing material is created. Finally, support is set up. The main objective during the technical onboarding is to build the connection, for example via an API, between the partner's application and the SECO orchestrator's platform. When this connection is realised, the application is reviewed. Part of this review is to test if the connector works properly, to execute a security review to access if the partner's application adheres to the security standards set by the SECO orchestrator, and to do a data assessment; which data is used by the partner's application, why is this data used, and what data protection is offered by the partner to their customers. When the partner's application is approved, a final meeting is scheduled in which the partner shows a demo of their application to various stakeholders within the SECO orchestrator's organisation such as the sales, marketing and support department. If no further issues occur, the partner's application goes live.

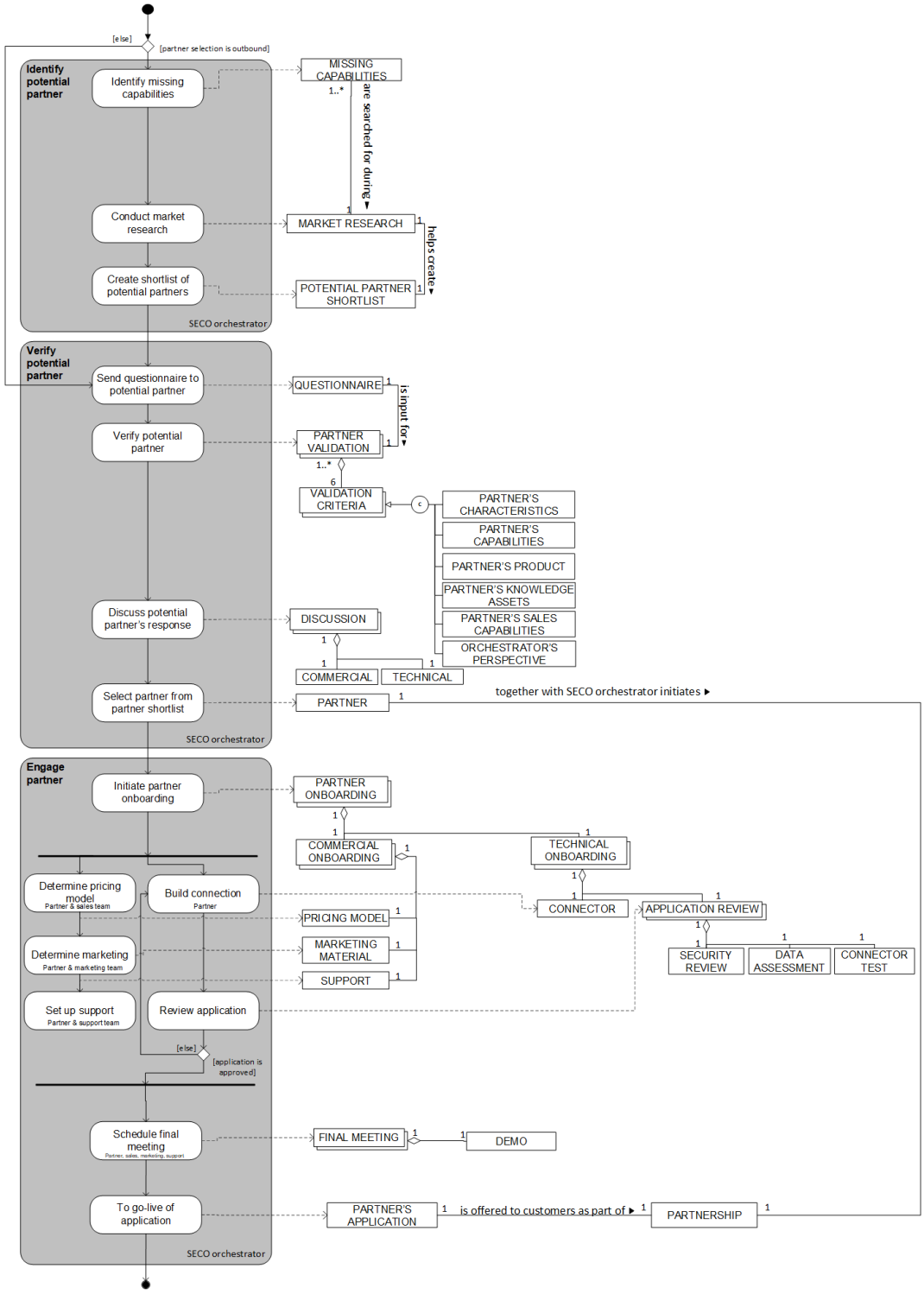

Figure 6: SECO partner selection framework.

4.5 Partner prioritisation

Imagine two potential partners that offer (very) similar functionality, which potential partner should the SECO orchestrator choose? The interviewees were asked what criteria they use to determine if a partner needs to be prioritised. One must consider, with regards to partner prioritising, the number of potential partners in the queue waiting to be onboarded to become a partner. One can imagine that if there is either a very short queue or none at all, partner prioritising is not required and deemed of less importance. In case of the latter, the SECO orchestrator can decide to onboard the two potential partners that offer similar functionality, simply because there are no other partners in the queue waiting to be onboarded.

Exact does not prioritise partners to the "outside world", their customers decide which partner they choose, as one Exact employee stated that *"everyone is welcome in our app center. The customer decides."* He added to the previous *"in conversation with our customers we present all partners that offer the requested functionality and let the customer decide. We want to be independent in this."* Within the organisation certain differentiation is applied but this is not communicated outside the organisation, *"as Exact we know that some partners have more chance to acquire a certain customer then others. Some have also more knowledge available."*

However, Exact does prioritise partners during the onboarding process, for two main reasons. First, certain partners are prioritised over others when *"our sales or marketing department needs to have a certain app in the our app store, if not, sales can not close a certain deal."* One employee gave the example of *"a renting application, sales has currently leads, customers want us to connect with that particular app, in such a case I can give priority to that particular partner."* Secondly, as one employee stated *"in case we already have six partners in our ecosystem that offer the same functionality, then we are really going to inquire about the benefit of adding a seventh partner. They have to come up with an ever stronger story to get onboarded in the app center."*

For FinTechComp, the partner's potential is key whether to prioritise a certain partner or not. Both employees employee phrase this as *"is there commercially a better deal possible with a certain partner, does a certain partner have more traction in the market."* Besides the commercial aspect, FinTechComp also looks at the responsiveness and eagerness of the partner, i.e. whether the potential partner really wants to become a partner.

For AFAS, similar to Exact, customer demand is key, as one employee stated that *"it's very simple, if there are two partners who sign-up that offer the same functionality, the criterion is: is there market demand for your application, which customers are already connected? If yes, you are allowed to join."*

Centric follows a completely different approach when it comes to partner prioritising, *"if we have the functionality, we have the functionality. We do not recruit a backup partner."* One employee mentioned that, however Centric does not recruit backup partners, *"customers can choose for different partners but we as Centric take zero responsibility."*

Both SAP employees mentioned that, similar to AFAS and Exact, customer demand determines if and how SAP prioritises partners. Besides market demand, SAP looks at the number of current partners and, similar to FinTechComp, at the potential of the potential partner, *"we look at the market demand together with the number of partners SAP already has and the potential of the new partner."* One SAP employee gave an example *"in case we have a number of very specific good partners in a certain market segment and then a new partner comes and this partner has little experience and actually just wants to grow with SAP, we look at it very critically."* However, as he mentioned, *"this does not mean we will not do it, it also depends on that partner's market potential. Especially when it's a market with large growth potential."* Finally, the performance of current partners is a factor of influence; if their performance is inadequate or the current partners do not grow, *"then the threshold to accept new partners is lower."*

One Salesforce employee stated that *"officially there are no rules, we onboard all partners, even if it are 100 of the same partners."* However, as he continues *"an partner account manager gets paid over the revenue the partner generates. When the partner account manager onboards a partner of which we already have 100, there is little chance that partner is going to generate some revenue and this makes it less interesting for the partner account manager."* He concludes with *"it's a natural process, at some point there is not interest from partner account managers to onboard certain partners, but also from the partner's perspective, at some point the market is saturated, there is nothing left to get."* Their colleague, a partner account manager, agrees by stating that *"there is no rule to deny a certain partner, all are welcome."* However, *"I do focus on the partner in which I belief the most and will generate the most revenue."* Similar to their colleague, he ends with *"market saturation is an important factor."*

4.5.1 Summary

We summarise this section by means of table 12.

Sales & marketing
New customer acquisition assessment
Commercial potential assessment
Market traction assessment
Potential partner's characteristics
Technical and business knowledge assessment
Partnership motivation assessment
Partnership eagerness assessment
Market
Customer demand assessment
Current partner base
Partner cardinally and offered functionality assessment
Partner performance assessment
Market saturation assessment
Internal
Partner revenue generation assessment

Table 12: Summary of partner prioritisation criteria. During the case studies we have identified 11 prioritising criteria divided in 5 categories. Customer demand, the commercial aspect and market saturation are for the majority of companies the dominant factor to decide to prioritise a certain partner over other partners.

4.6 SECO governance

In this section, we introduce the various SECO governance mechanisms applied by SECO orchestrators, this data was gathered during the case studies.

For FinTechComp, customer and sales department feedback are the two most frequently used governance mechanisms, *"what kind of soundbites we get from our customers about our partners (does it work, is there customer success) and does sales have conflicts in their sales cycles and with partners."* Based on these soundbites, FinTechComp decides if they want to continue a partnership, change a partnership or terminate a partnership. One employee added to the previous *"and of course we have a contract, if you're in breach with the contract, end of story."* Both employees did mention that *"regular contact with partners is a very important aspect with regard to governance."* Currently FinTechComp is developing a governance mechanism, namely, which is *"full relationship management."* FinTechComp created a matrix that says *"you're in the zoo of the partner, you are in the zoo of FinTechComp and you guys connect this way and here is the escalation path. Everybody has their counterpart."*

Both AFAS employee mentioned that AFAS has a service level agreement which *"clearly states what AFAS expects from the partner and what AFAS does with regards to development, in case functionality overlap occurs, we discuss it."* As already mentioned by FinTechComp, customer feedback is also for AFAS a key governance mechanism, *"if you (partner) make a mess of it, we do notice this quickly enough through our customers."* After AFAS receives such a message, they sit down with the partner to resolve the issue but in case this does not work, we terminate the partnership and push another partner forward, *"we give the partner the chance to solve the issue but in case this does not work, we terminate*

the partnership and push another partner forward." One employee stated that in the future, *"we should look in the data, what happens, which data is used and why."* He mentioned that *"it is difficult to keep track of all data that is used by partners, what kind of data is it, is the data safely stored, it the data usage really relevant and required."* He continued by saying that *"we can improve the ecosystem by removing data excesses, making the ecosystem more accessible for everyone."*

All potential partners that want to become a Salesforce app exchange partner need to pass the security review. Both employees stated that this is a *"hard requirement."* This governance mechanism is also applied when a partner is already an app exchange partner and develops a new version of their application, this version needs to pass the security review as well, if not, the partner is removed from the app exchange. A second mechanism used is to have a *"simple conversation with the partner, results in 99% of the cases in a solution. There is always a solution."* For the previous mentioned mechanism, one employee gave as an example *"a partner who does not report the correct revenue he generated, a partner has to pay a percentage over the revenue generated."*

SAP, similar to AFAS and Salesforce, applies the governance mechanism of having regular conversations with its partners. One employee stated that they apply *"communication and escalation when required."* He continued by stating that *"the most important thing is communication, in case of issues or problems, you have to sit down and talk."* Their view is shared by colleague, stating *"key is to keep talking with each other, keep the intimacy high."*

For Centric, *"trust, flexibility, and transparency"* are the three pillars on which Centric bases their SECO governance. These pillars come back in their leading governance mechanism, similar to SAP, AFAS and Salesforce, having *"regular conversations with partners to maintain account and relationship management and sit together regularly."* Both employees stated a second mechanism as well, *"specialist(s) allocated to an individual partner, having a central point of contact for the partner who easily connects with the partner's people."*

For Exact, similar to FinTechComp and AFAS, customer feedback and having a conversation are two valuable governance mechanisms. One employee stated that "*when customers start complaining, I receive these complaints and, subsequently, I sit down with the partner to find out what is going on."* He continued by saying that *"I work at Exact for over five years now, I never had to throw a partner out of the app center. It's simply common sense."* Exact, similar to all other case study organisations, has terms & conditions in place for the app center, this includes the security check, similar to Salesforce and API management (for example API rate limits). Finally, he stated that *"we have a API support department for partners to solve their API issues."* Their colleague adds to the previous stated that Exact, similar to AFAS, Salesforce and SAP, applies the governance mechanisms of having conversations with its partners, *"I sit down with partners in case of an issue to resolve it, in case the partner does not improve or does it again, I have a mechanism to deal with this* [*removal from the app center, disconnect API*]*, but first a conversation and a warning."* If this does not have the expected result, "*I remove the partner from the app center, however, customers can still connect with the partner's application. When this does not work, I slow down the data flow back and forth from Exact to the partner's application. As last resort, I disconnect the API connection."* When he was asked if this ever happened, he stated that *"I never had to draw this card so far and I hope to never have to draw it."* Finally, Exact has internally a *"sales and marketing blacklist, partners that do connect with Exact but with whom Exact does not collaborate with regards to marketing. The blacklist is about a competitive edge."*

We want to state two additional governance mechanisms, namely a contract and a partner community of some sort. Each of the six case study organisations apply both these mechanisms. The contract specifies the rules and regulations for the ecosystem whereas the partner community is a place for partners to ask questions and help each other to solve problems.

4.6.1 Entry barriers

This section is closely related to section 4.2 since various entry barriers are part of the partner selection method applied by the SECO orchestrator. An example are the seven partner selection criteria used by AFAS as part of the partner verification report. In this section, we focus on the entry barriers that were explicitly stated by the interviewees.

When both Centric employees were asked about the entry barriers they apply, their answer was simple *"no, we do not enforce entry barriers for new partners, we do not have hard requirements, such as a fee or security review, that partners need to meet."* This is similar for FinTechComp, *"no, just the criteria I stated earlier [partner validation criteria which are part of the partner selection method]."* Similar to Centric, SAP does not enforce entry barriers. For Salesforce, there is only one hard entry barrier which is the security review, as we already mentioned in the previous section, when the partner does not pass the security review, the partner is not allowed to place their application on the app exchange.

Exact does not enforce hard entry barriers. Yes, a new partner has to pay a fee in order to pay for the API costs that Exact has to make, however, Exact does not earn any money from this fee, solely to cover costs. Also, the partner has to pass the security check, similar to Salesforce, in order to go-live in the app center. One employee mentioned that *"I do not promote any entry barriers, I find it way more important to acquire partners and keep customers happy."* Their colleague agrees but does mention that *"we want a partner to have already a number of live customers."* Exact sees it as one of the forces of their ecosystem to not enforce any entry barriers. He continues by mentioning that *"you do slow down the market, you slow down a partner's go to market. And you should not forget that the partner spends time and money in order to connect with Exact."* He ends with *"...and as Exact you have to finance everything in case you enforce entry barriers, both staff and system wise."*

AFAS enforces three entry barriers, *"technical, connect with our API and get it working, a fee needs to be paid, and functional the partner needs to know our platform."*

4.6.2 Connect entry barriers results with literature findings

In this section we connect the case studies results to the literature findings described in section 3.2.2.

AFAS distinguishes between three types of entry barriers: technical (connect with API), financial (fee) and business (partner needs to know AFAS's platform). This distinction is also made by Van Angeren et al. (2016). Both Salesforce and Exact mention a technical entry barrier as well, respectively, the security review and security check. Exact enforces also a financial entry barrier in the form of a fee to be paid upon entry. This finding is supported by Van Angeren et al. (2011) and Hilkert et al. (2011). Finally, a partner has to have a number of live customers before the partner can become an Exact SECO partner. This entry barrier was not found in the literature.

4.6.3 Summary governance mechanisms and entry barriers

By means of table 13, we summarise the various SECO governance mechanisms stated in section 4.6. Table 14 summarises the entry barriers stated by the interviewees.

Before entry
Security review
Contract
Terms & conditions
Service level agreement
Feedback
Customer feedback
Internal feedback
Relationship
Relationship management
Communication
Central point of contact
API
API management
Data monitoring
Disconnect API
Support
Support department
Partner community
Internal
Blacklist
Removal from ecosystem

Table 13: Relationship management is indicated by the interviewees as the most used and applicable governance mechanism. Communication is key, having regular conversations with partners and in case of an issue, sit down and try to resolve it together. The contract specifying the terms & conditions communicates the terms & conditions for the SECO. Feedback, both from the customer and internal departments helps the SECO orchestrator to quickly become aware of potential issues in the ecosystem. These days API and data monitoring can no longer be ignored when it comes to SECO governance, as SECO orchestrator API management and data monitoring are key mechanisms to keep track of data usage. Finally, the security review which all partners need to pass before they are allowed to place their application in the ecosystem. This mechanism is applied during the partner selection process.

Financial
Fee
Technical
Security review
Working API connection
Functional
Functional knowledge about SECO orchestrator's platform

Table 14: In general, the interviewees mentioned a few entry barriers from which the security review and working API connection can be identified as the hardest entry barriers for partners to meet.

5 Evaluation results

5.1 Method comparison

Hong et al. (1993) introduce a formal approach for method comparison. For each method, a formal representation is created, in this research a PDD, which is then further analysed. Van de Weerd et al. (2007) provide an example of a method that has been analysed making use of the technique method comparison, proposed by Hong et al. (1993). The authors constructed a reference method for game production. They followed the following steps:

- *Method selection.* The researcher selects the methods he wants to compare; the six case studies executed in this research;
- *Method modelling.* For this research, we construct for each case study a method, using PDDs;
- *Development of super method.* The six methods modelled in PDDs are decomposed in sub-activities and concepts. An overview of the number of sub-activities and concepts per method can be found in table 15. For both sub-activities as concepts a comparison table is created which lists all activities and concepts that are part of the methods, which are part of the method comparison. However, due do the large number of sub-activities (120) and concepts (337) both tables would be gigantic and unreadable, and do not add value to this research. Secondly, many sub activities have been assigned a specific name which is solely used by one case study organisation, for example, SAP names the sub activity in which the partner's application is validated *initiate app readiness check*, Exact also validates the partner's application but calls this *review application* and, AFAS calls it *functional technical check*; three different names but similar in what they do and their outcome; the application passes or does not pass the validation check. This would cause the sub activity comparison table to present an incorrect picture, therefore, we take a different approach.
- *Construct reference method.* A reference method is an executable method that includes the best method fragments from the super method (van de Weerd et al., 2007). For this research, multiple reference methods are created. However, we take a slightly different approach than van de Weerd et al. (2007). Since the super method is not created, we create for each evaluation case study a reference method which includes the best method fragments from the partner selection methods identified during the case studies. To do so, the evaluation case study participants use the method fragments that are part of the six partner selection methods and select from this set the best method fragments, which suit their organisation (situation) best. This results in a reference method for each evaluation case study.

	Activities	**Sub-activities**	**Concepts**
FinTechComp	4	20	44
Exact	2	15	56
AFAS	2	22	39
SAP	2	21	51
Centric	3	21	50
Salesforce	4	21	97
Total	17	120	337

Table 15: The six partner selection methods constructed during the case studies consist of 17 activities, 120 sub-activities and 337 concepts.

During the three evaluation case studies, the interviewees will construct a reference method for each case study organisation. To do so, they are first presented with a choice: *inbound*, *outbound* or *hybrid* partner selection. After this decision is made, the interviewees are presented with the six partner selection methods constructed in this research. In order to prevent a bias response from the interviewees, for example, the interviewees select the methods by Salesforce or SAP because these are large firms and therefore their methods are tested and proven and should be copied, all six partner selection methods have been anonymised.

The interviewees are asked to select the relevant method fragments they want to use as foundation to construct the reference method for their organisation's partner selection method. To do so, the activities, the sub-activities and corresponding concepts are presented to the interviewees, see figure 7 for an example of how such a method fragment is presented to the interviewees.

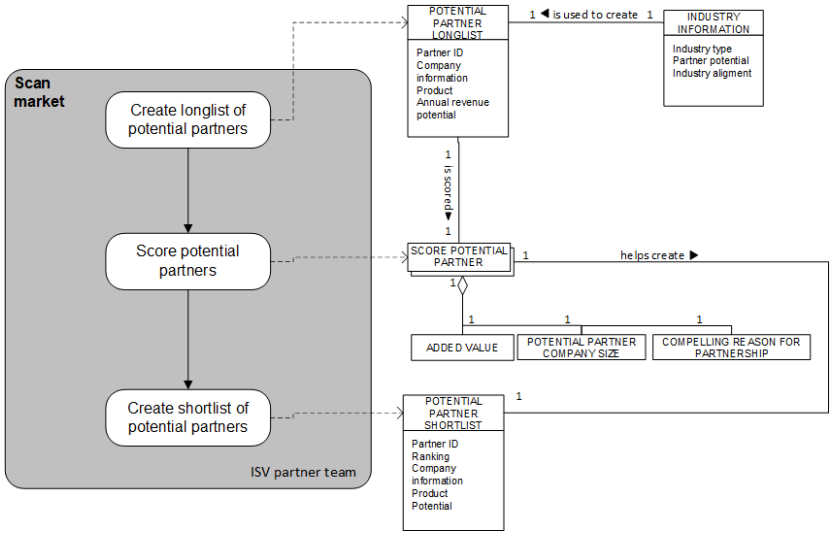

Figure 7: Example, taken from the Salesforce partner selection method, of how a method fragment is presented to the interviewees.

After the interviewees selected all the relevant activities and subsequently the sub-activities, they are allowed to include sub-activities from different activities and insert those in the activities they previously selected. Secondly, they are allowed to exclude sub-activities that are part of the activities they selected. Important during this process is the rationale behind the interviewees' decision to include and exclude certain sub-activities. After this process is finished, all selected sub-activities are merged with the previously selected activities and the reference method is constructed.

When the evaluation case study is finished and the results are processed, we applied a colour coding consisting of three colours to indicate how the interviewees perceived the evaluation criteria by Prat et al. (2015).

- Green, in case the interviewee(s) did fully agree with a particular evaluation criterion;
- Orange, in case the interviewee(s) did partially agree with a particular evaluation criterion or is not sure that when the method would be implemented, the criterion would be achieved;
- Red, in case the interviewee(s) did not agree with a particular evaluation criterion.

5.2 Reference method

In this section, we construct for the three evaluation case studies a reference method. Firstly, we introduce the case study organisation which includes the rationale behind launching their platform ecosystem. Subsequently, we discuss their current partner selection approach. We end with the reference method constructed and the evaluation of this method using the selected evaluation criteria by Prat et al. (2015).

5.2.1 Onguard

For Onguard, the rationale behind launching their ecosystem is as follows, *"in order to offer the complete order to cash proposition to the market, we need partners. This to meet customer demand."* Onguard *"believes in the value of an integrated ecosystem"* by ensuring seamless integration between their platform and the partner's product. According to both Onguard employees, for Onguard the main benefit of their ecosystem is that *"you create a larger market, you can offer a broad range of solutions to your customers and subsequently, funnel back towards your own product."*

Currently, Onguard does not apply a structured partner selection method. Each request received from a potential partner is assessed individually. The majority of their partners do approach Onguard to initiate a partnership, from this we can conclude that their partner selection method type would be *inbound*. The interviewees describe their current approach to partner selection as follows: first, the potential partner sends a request to Onguard to initiate a partnership, this request is send via a form on the Onguard website. This request is received by the Onguard marketing team who forwards the request to the lead partner manager who manages the Onguard partner team. Subsequently, the lead partner manager approaches the potential partner to discuss a potential partnership. During these discussions, both the commercial as technical part of a partnership are discussed. However, no formal approach is used during these discussions.

Both Onguard employees explicitly stated that, however, Onguard is currently not using a formal approach to partner selection, Onguard desires a method to guide them in their partner selection process. Currently, Onguard is working on developing their API platform. When this platform is live, Onguard wants to enable partners to connect their application with Onguard and by doing so, offer a more extensive platform portfolio to their customers. When their API is live, Onguard wants to apply a formal partner selection method.

The researcher and both employees walked through the six partner selection methods with emphasis on *inbound* partner selection; case 2,3 and 4. Both Onguard employees stated that they want to use case 2 and 3 as basis for their partner selection method.

Onguard receives a request from a potential partner to initiate a partnership with Onguard. When this request is received, this marks the beginning of the partner selection method. The method starts with the **verify potential partner** activity. First, the partner's request is processed and the potential partner receives the partner selection questionnaire in which the potential partner has to provide more information about their organisation, describe their additional functionality for Onguard customers, list common customers, and describe their Onguard platform knowledge. Next, the partner team has a discussion within their organisation if the sales & marketing department know the potential partner and see commercial potential in a partnership with this particular partner. When the outcome of this discussion is positive, a meeting is scheduled with the potential partner. During this meeting, the partner's response is discussed and it's determined if the potential partner is a match for Onguard. In case of a match, the second activity in the partner selection method is initiated which is the **run trial partnership** activity.

By executing this activity, Onguard wants to try out if a partnership with the partner is fruitful, both for their customers as for Onguard. During this activity there are two main perspectives, the commercial and technical perspective. The commercial perspective focuses on added value offered to customers and

can have one of three outcomes: customers are not using the functionality provided by the partner or customers identify the functionality offered as additional value, however, the partner is not the right party to offer this particular functionality, or the customers identify both the functionality and the partner as added value. The technical perspective focuses on the integration between the partner's application and Onguard. Is the integration technical feasible? Does the API connection works as desired? To develop a proper working connector, the partner is supported to build the API, for this Onguard develops an API instruction manual. In case the partnership is fruitful, both from a commercial as technical perspective, the partnership is expanded and intensified; the functionality offered to customers is broadened.

In the third and final activity, **engage partner**, the partnership between Onguard and the partner is further formalised. First, the connector is tested, does everything works properly? Subsequently, the partner's application is reviewed. The focus of this application review is the customer data that is exchanged between Onguard and the partner's application. Another key aspect is the security review of the partner's application, does the application adheres to the security standards set by Onguard. After this review, one final meeting is arranged, in which the partner shows a demo of their application to Onguard. Various department (sales, marketing, support) delegates are present during this meeting. When no further issues occur, the application is approved and goes live.

After constructing the reference method, the two Onguard employees applied the selected evaluation criteria by Prat et al. (2015). The result of this evaluation can be found in table 16.

Category	Evaluation criteria	Evaluation result
Goal	**Perceived effectiveness**	*"All required aspects are present with regard to partner selection; both the commercial and technical aspect. The method also includes the partner validation part. We can reach our goal, selecting the partners that offer additional functionality to Onguard customers"*
	Perceived operational feasibility	*"When we would implement this method, we definitely use the method in our daily practice of partner selection. The method clearly structures the partner selection process and raises support for the work we do as partner team. The method includes all departments within our organisation that must be involved with partner selection, such as marketing, sales, and consultancy"*
	Perceived economic feasibility	*"The method we created is an internal method, an internal approach to partner selection. The costs to realise the implementation of such a method are low whereas the benefits are high; the method offers a structured partner selection approach. Definitely economic feasible"*
Environment	**Perceived usefulness**	*"Definitely. The method generates a clear structure for the partner selection process and includes the relevant steps to be taken in this process"*
	Perceived ease of use	*"Easy to use. The method is like a manual on how we approach partner selection"*
Activity	**Perceived completeness**	*"If we look at the method now, all concepts and activities we deem relevant with regard to partner selection are present. However, we can only be completely sure when we use the method for a longer time period"*
Evolution	**Perceived modifiability**	*"Elements can relatively easy added or removed from the method. For example, an extra sub-activity that you showed us from case 4, if we want to add such a sub activity, this is fairly easy to do"*

Table 16: Result of the appliance of the evaluation criteria selected from Prat et al. by Onguard.

5.2.2 SnelStart

For SnelStart, the main value of their ecosystem is that *"SnelStart can combine the value (functionality) that we are good at with the value offered by other companies, our partners. We do not have to invest in functionality that is already there and that applies to our partners as well. By bundling the functionality, you can create much better solutions for your customers."*

SnelStart does currently apply a structured partner selection method. Their partner selection method is both *inbound* and *outbound*, however, the majority of new partners are acquired via *inbound* partner selection, therefore the reference method created will be focused on *inbound* partner selection.

When the SnelStart partner team receives a request from a potential partner, they determine if the potential partner is an interesting partner that can add value to the SnelStart platform offering. To do so, first, the potential partner has to fill in a questionnaire on the SnelStart website. Subsequently, the SnelStart partner team applies various criteria such as: what functionality does the potential partner offer, does this functionality adds value to SnelStart's platform portfolio, the number of potential customers, what is the strategic position of the potential partner in the market, what is the marketing value of the potential partner, the quality of the support offered by the potential partner and the potential partner's business model. In case the partner team determines that is it interesting for SnelStart to collaborate with the potential partner, i.e. bring together a proposition to market, the partner team further onboards the partner. During this onboarding, there are two main perspectives, the commercial and technical perspective. There are two main objectives for the commercial perspective, first, to register the partner's application in the SnelStart's appstore and to make sure that customers are able to get the partner's application quickly and easily to work. For this a step-by-step plan is provided to customers. Secondly, the sales & marketing team determines the desired business case and marketing for the particular partner which can either be standard or personalised marketing. The technical perspective focuses on developing and testing, for example the efficiency and security of the API connection between SnelStart's platform and the partner's application. When both perspectives are realised, the partner is an official SnelStart certified partner and is added to the SnelStart partner page.

The researcher and the SnelStart employee walked through the six partner selection methods with emphasis on *inbound* partner selection; case 2, 3 and 4. The SnelStart employee stated that he wants to use case 2 and 3 as basis for the partner selection method.

The method starts with the SnelStart partner team that receives a request from a potential partner to initiate a partnership with SnelStart. When this request is received, this marks the beginning of the partner selection method. The method starts with the **verify potential partner** activity. Subsequently, the partner team contacts the potential partner to acquire more information about the potential partner and their organisation, and to verify if the potential partner adds value to the SnelStart's platform portfolio for SnelStart's customers. When this is the case, the partner team conducts an intake, during this intake it is determined whether added value can arise from a partnership with the potential partner. When the intake is concluded positively, the second activity and final activity is initiated, namely, **engage partner**.

During this activity, there are two main perspectives, the commercial and technical perspective. These perspectives are executed simultaneously. The commercial perspective starts with the SnelStart partner and marketing team together with the partner, to determine, first, the precise added value of the partnership between SnelStart and the partner to SnelStart customers. Secondly, the pricing model for the partner's application is determined. The next sub-activity is to register the partner's application in the SnelStart's appstore. Key is to create a step-by-step plan for customers how they get the partner's application quickly and easily up and running. Finally, the support structure is set up. During the technical perspective, the main sub-activity is to realise the integration between SnelStart's platform and the partner's product, via an API. In order to realise this integration, the development

teams from both SnelStart and the partner arrange a meeting and discuss how the integration is realised. After this meeting, the API connection is build and tested. When the sub-activities in both perspectives are finished, a meeting is organised in which the API connection is tested by means of a functional technical check and the partner shows a demo of their product to SnelStart. During this meeting various SnelStart stakeholders are present such as the partner team, the customer service team, the sales & marketing team and account managers. During this meeting, it is determined if the partner's application can go live. When the partner's application is approved, the partner's application goes live and can be used by customers.

After constructing the reference method, the SnelStart employee applied the selected evaluation criteria by Prat et al. (2015). The result of this evaluation can be found in table 17.

Category	Evaluation criteria	Evaluation result
Goal	**Perceived effectiveness**	*"The method maps out how a company approaches partner selection. A company can use the method as a template; a company wants to acquire partners for their ecosystem, this is how you approach partner selection. It is a very nice and useful template, the activities and sub-activities you have to perform apply to every company"*
	Perceived operational feasibility	*"The method contributes to systems thinking within a company. This method will prove an aid in ensuring everyone is on the same page"*
	Perceived economic feasibility	*"The method is a small investment, the benefits clearly outweigh the costs. The benefits are creating a structure within a company describing the partner selection process, training new colleagues and offering transparency to partners; potential partners know the conditions they have to meet in order to become a partner"*
Environment	**Perceived usefulness**	*"I am convinced that if all your employees follow the same method, you create clarity within your organisation. This method certainly contributes to this, the method clarifies the partner selection process. Also, you can apply data analysis/business intelligence, for example, how many partners are in which activity of your selection process, how many are waiting to enter the selection process etcetera"*
	Perceived ease of use	*"Definitely. Employees must be able to read diagrams but you expect that from your employees. However, the explanation attached to the method is key, how did you come up with the method, what are the thoughts behind it. A method alone is not sufficient"*
Activity	**Perceived completeness**	*"Definitely, all activities and concepts are present in the method created"*
Evolution	**Perceived modifiability**	*"Yes. You can easily insert a sub-activity in the method when required or, for example, merge sub-activities"*

Table 17: Result of the appliance of the evaluation criteria selected from Prat et al. by SnelStart.

5.2.3 RetailComp

For RetailComp their ecosystem *"helps us to create value for our customers in a faster and better way without the need for us to build this functionality ourselves."*

Currently, RetailComp does apply a structured partner selection method. This method is initiated by the product management team, who identify missing capabilities in the current platform portfolio and, subsequently, identify the potential partners that are active in the market that could fulfil these missing capabilities. This approach can be identified as *outbound* partner selection. Subsequently, the sales department approaches the identified potential partners and initiates a discussion with these partners. The most important part in this discussion is to discuss pricing and how the price relates to the functionality that is being offered by the potential partner. The RetailComp employee stated that during this discussion, various selection criteria are applied, such as, how easily can the potential partner offer value (functionality), which functionality is offered, and the price of this functionality. In case the sales department finds a match in a potential partner, the technical integration between RetailComp's platform and the partner's functionality is realised. Part of this integration is to define the scope of the integration; which functionality does RetailComp wants to integrate with their platform. A key aspect is to prioritise the functionality to be realised. When this is achieved, RetailComp and the partner run a pilot/proof of concept. When this pilot is perceived positively by the customer, the integration is further expanded.

The researcher and the RetailComp employee walked through the six partner selection methods with emphasis on *outbound* partner selection; case 1 and 5. The RetailComp employee stated that he wants to use case 1 as basis for the partner selection method.

The method starts with the **conduct internal research** activity. First, the missing capabilities are identified. For each missing capability, RetailComp decides if they want to realise the capability themselves or that they identify potential partners that can realise the capability. In case of the latter, the second activity, **scan market**, is initiated.

This activity starts with the identification of potential partners that can realise the missing capabilities identified in the previous activity. Part of this process is to identify potential competitors. In order to validate the potential partners to come to a potential partner shortlist, partner validation criteria are applied. The RetailComp employee takes over four of the five selection criteria stated by FinTechComp, namely, complementary to platform, solution for customer, core capability, and the commercial aspect. He adds to the previously stated criteria the three criteria we mentioned above, price, which functionality delivered and how easily is the value delivered. This activity ends with a shortlist of potential partners.

In the third activity, **start discussion**, discussions are initiated with the potential partners that are on the potential partner shortlist. The main goal of these discussions is to become further acquainted with the partner, explore partnership intentions, show a demo and further discuss the commercial aspect of the partnership. In case the commercial aspect has been identified as fruitful for RetailComp, the technical integration is initiated. This marks the beginning of the fourth and final activity, **engage partner**.

The final activity starts with the signing of a partnership contract. Subsequently, the integration between RetailComp's platform and the partner's functionality is realised. The next sub-activity is to set up the support structure. When this has been realised, a pilot/proof of concept is being held. The feedback that is received during this pilot is processed, resulting in the final product. This product can be sold to customers.

After constructing the reference method, the RetailComp employee applied the selected evaluation criteria by Prat et al. (2015). The result of this evaluation can be found in table 18.

Category	Evaluation criteria	Evaluation result
Goal	**Perceived effectiveness**	*"Yes, the method is fit for it's purpose, a suitable partner can be found using this method. The method is in line with our business processes. However, some sub-activities are more implicitly executed within our company and are currently not made that explicit as we saw in the method"*
	Perceived operational feasibility	*"The process of partner selection puts pressure on sales and product management. It can be a difficult process, you need the right people to bring the process to a successful conclusion. The method indicates which people are required for partner selection, both for the commercial and technical perspective"*
	Perceived economic feasibility	*"Definitely. In case there is no commercial benefit, the technical integration is not started and the partner selection process is terminated"*
Environment	**Perceived usefulness**	*"Yes the method is useful. The method provides clarity on the partner selection process, what actually is mostly an implicit process, the approach is not written in stone"*
	Perceived ease of use	*"Yes, the method does not contain difficult tasks, just a matter of doing. However, it remains a PDD. Colleagues might not grasp the idea behind it or find such a diagram useful"*
Activity	**Perceived completeness**	*"Seems complete to me. Important to note is that there is a clear relationship between sales "approval" and the start of the technical realisation. Without this approval, the technical integration is not initiated"*
Evolution	**Perceived modifiability**	*"There are few dependencies in the method, tasks can be easily added. Looks good"*

Table 18: Result of the appliance of the evaluation criteria selected from Prat et al. by RetailComp.

5.3 Summary evaluation results

In this section we summarise the evaluation results found during the three evaluation case studies. When we look at the three evaluation case studies, we see the use of two different method types, *inbound* and *outbound* SECO partner selection. Onguard and SnelStart selected *inbound* partner selection and followed the methods applied by Exact and AFAS to construct their reference method. The reference method constructed by Onguard differs from Exact and AFAS in the following ways:

- Onguard added an additional activity: **run trial partnership**. In case a potential partner is a match, Onguard wants to try out if the partnership with the partner is fruitful for both their customers and their organisation before the partnership is expanded and intensified. This activity has not been identified in the methods applied by Exact and AFAS, in case a potential partner is a match, the onboarding (**engage partner**) activity is directly initiated. A potential explanation for the lack of this activity in the methods applied by Exact and AFAS could be that these two organisations are better equipped (experience, method, criteria, trained ecosystem staff, lessons learned from mistakes made) to estimate if a potential partner is a match, and if a partnership is fruitful for their customers and their organisation;

- More explicit sales & marketing department approval. The two Onguard employees stated that the sales & marketing department have to give their approval in order for a potential partner to be onboarded. All organisations that apply *inbound* partner selection, Exact, AFAS and SAP, do involve their sales & marketing departments to determine if a potential partner is match, however, the three organisations do not state this explicitly in their partner selection method.

The reference method constructed by SnelStart differs from Exact and AFAS in the following ways:

- SnelStart mentioned that part of the **engage partner** activity, the commercial perspective, SnelStart determines the precise added value of the partnership with the partner. AFAS discusses the added value in the first activity, **verify potential partner**;

- SnelStart mentioned that they determine the pricing model of the partner's application. This sub-activity is not discussed in the method applied by Exact and AFAS. SAP, case 4, does determine the pricing model used for the partner's application;

- SnelStart arranges a meeting between their development team and the partner's development team in the **engage partner** activity. This to discuss how the integration between SnelStart's platform and the partner's product via an API is realised. Exact and AFAS do not arrange such a meeting, they provide the partner with their API and enable the partner to ask for support when developing the API connector;

- SnelStart, similar to Exact, involves various stakeholders such as the customer service team and account managers, in the final meeting in which it is determined if the partner's application can go live. This differs from AFAS, such a meeting is not part of their partner selection method.

RetailComp selected *outbound* partner selection, and selected the method applied by FinTechComp to construct their reference method. The reference method constructed by RetailComp differs from FinTechComp in the following ways:

- RetailComp decides in the **conduct internal research** activity if they want to realise the missing capability themselves or identify a partner who releases the missing capability. This is not included in the method applied by FinTechComp;

- Similar to Onguard, RetailComp puts more emphasis on sales & marketing approval. Before the technical integration is started in the **engage partner** activity, the commercial aspect has to be identified as fruitful by the sales & marketing department. In the partner selection method applied by FinTechComp, the commercial and technical perspectives are discussed concurrently, and afterwards, one or more partners are selected to be onboarded. The rationale behind discussing

the two perspectives sequential is that RetailComp does not want to spend resources on discussing or initiating the technical integration before the commercial aspect of the potential partnership has been identified as fruitful by the sales & marketing department, and therefore, the green light has been given to onboard the partner;

- RetailComp starts the **engage partner** activity with signing a partnership contract, similar to Centric HR & Payroll (case 5), whereas FinTechComp executes this sub-activity at the end of the activity;
- Before RetailComp releases the final product, they run a pilot/proof of concept. FinTechComp did not include this in their partner selection method, Centric HR & Payroll did; they realise a technical integration and enable parties to give feedback and after this feedback is processed, similar to RetailComp, the final product goes live. One note to make is that RetailComp focuses mainly on customer feedback whereas Centric HR & Payroll did not include customer feedback in their partner selection method.

All three organisations concluded positively on the three reference methods constructed. The reference methods enable them to find a suitable partner that offer additional functionality to their customers. The reference methods provide a complete and structured approach to SECO partner selection and involve the departments that are relevant to SECO partner selection. In case elements (activities, sub-activities or concepts) are missing in the reference method, these can easily be added. Due to the low costs for implementing the three reference methods and their high benefits, the three reference methods are perceived as economic feasible. The activities and sub-activities that are part of the reference methods are easy to use. One note to make is the use of a PDD to construct the reference method, not all employees that are involved with SECO partner selection might find such an approach useful. Also, a method alone, for example a PDD, is not sufficient, the explanation attached to the method is key for people involved in SECO partner selection to fully understand and to be able to extract the maximum value from the method.

6 Discussion and future research

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, it can be used as a foundation for future research into SECO partner selection. However, due to the fact that this research is of an exploratory nature and consists of case studies as main data source, there are validity threats that limit the generalisability of this research. On the other hand, this research and its methods can easily be applied or adapted to investigate partner selection in other SECOs. Therefore, this research is quite scalable. Subsequently, one of the strengths of this research is its use of real-world SECOs and, with that, provides useful insight for both the industry and scientific community (Manikas & Hansen, 2013; Jansen, Brinkkemper, & Finkelstein, 2009; Barbosa & Alves, 2011).

We have tried to minimalize the validity threats by following the Case Study Protocol by Pervan and Maimbo (2005) and by performing multiple case studies which should increase the precision of the results due to data triangulation (Runeson & Höst, 2009). However, this research was limited by the fact that only a small subset of SECO orchestrators operating in the Netherlands participated, this due to time constraints. By increasing the number of case studies, generalisability could have been improved. Secondly, we included SECO orchestrators that operate in different domains, this to capture cross-domain perspectives which enables the researchers to create a SECO partner selection framework which can be applied by SECO orchestrators domain unspecific. Similar to the previous point, by increasing the amount of case studies for each domain, generalisability could have been improved. Finally, the card sorting exercise might have led to a bias in the results. An interviewee created a particular ordering but if he is asked to do the task again later on, he might create a different ordering.

This research was focused on the SECO partner selection process executed by a SECO orchestrator. While we obtained a set of partner selection criteria, it would be very beneficial to conduct more research to expand the overview of partner selection criteria. We also developed a set of partner selection methods, more case studies should be conducted to gather more knowledge on how SECO orchestrators approach partner selection as well as evaluating the SECO partner selection methods found. Adding to the previous, to gain a more elaborate and deeper understanding on SECO partner selection, more research should be conducted to execute a thorough evaluation on various organisations that are currently shaping their SECO partner selection process. This to observe their partner selection process over a longer time period to investigate if, and how their SECO partner selection process changes. Finally, future research should be conducted to gain more knowledge on SECO governance, especially how to approach and organise data management in a SECO. Another SECO governance topic worth researching is partner engagement, how to properly engage and therefore retain SECO partners. In contrast with the previous stated topic but of similar importance are partner exclusion criteria and entry barriers, which criteria should a SECO orchestrator use to determine to exclude a certain partner from their SECO.

7 Conclusion

This research contributes to the software ecosystems literature by providing an overview of SECO partner selection criteria which are validated and ranked by twelve domain experts during six case studies. Secondly, six partner selection methods have been constructed that are applied by SECO orchestrators in the Dutch market to aid them in their SECO partner selection process. Thirdly, we developed a meta-model which illustrates the relevant SECO partner selection concepts and the relationships among them. Finally, this research provides a new approach to SECO partner selection by applying the technique of method engineering to the domain of SECO partner selection which results in the SECO partner selection framework that aids a SECO orchestrator in their partner selection process.

With regard to the partner selection methods constructed in this research, three method types have been identified: inbound, outbound and hybrid partner selection. During the case studies we have identified eleven partner prioritising criteria divided over five categories. Customer demand together with the commercial aspect are the criteria most used by the SECO orchestrators that participated in this research. With regard to SECO governance and entry barriers, relationship management together with feedback from customers on their experience with partners were the most used mechanisms. For potential partners, a security review and working API connection are the highest entry barriers to meet before they can become a SECO partner.

The six partner selection methods found were evaluated by means of three case studies. For each case study, a reference method was created, these reference methods are based on the six SECO partner selection methods constructed in this research. The interviewees identified an additional activity in the inbound partner selection approach. For outbound partner selection, two additional sub-activities were identified. For both method types, the interviewees put more emphasis on sales & marketing approval; their approval is required before the partner is further engaged, i.e. the technical integration between the orchestrator's platform and that of the partner is initiated. Subsequently, these reference methods were evaluated by means of a set of evaluation criteria. All three case study organisations concluded positively on the reference method they constructed, the reference method enables their organisations to find a suitable partner by means of a structured approach which is easy to use, involves the departments that are relevant to SECO partner selection and is deemed economic feasible.

The SECO partner selection framework contributes to a better understanding of SECO partner selection and provide SECO orchestrators with a structured approach to aid them in their SECO partner selection process. In the early phase of a platform ecosystem, SECO orchestrators can structure their partner selection process based on the activities, sub-activities and corresponding concepts identified in this research. The overview of selection criteria can be used by SECO orchestrators to determine if a potential partner is a match for their software ecosystem and organisation. When the platform ecosystem is more matured, i.e. more partners have joined the ecosystem, SECO orchestrators can evaluate their SECO partner selection method by comparing it to the methods applied by the organisations that participated in this research.

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Appendix

A Interview protocols

A.1 Individual interview protocol

Introduction

First of all, thank you very much for participating in my research! I already introduced my research to you but let me give you a quick refresher:

My research aims to improve the knowledge on partner selection within software ecosystems by developing a partner selection method that describes the partner selection process for a software ecosystem in order to be used by a keystone for vetting, selecting, and engaging software ecosystem partners. In order to do so, I will look at partner selection criteria that are used to determine if a partner is a valuable addition to the software ecosystem and (fragments) of a partner selection method that is been used to guide the partner selection process. I will also include SECO governance mechanism; how is the ecosystem governed?

I would like to record this interview to be able to listen to it at a later time, this to support my data analysis process. By the means of a consent form, I ask your permission to record this interview.

Start of the audio recording

General questions

When was your organisation founded? Which products does it sell? How many employees are employed?

What does your function encompass?

When was the ecosystem launched? What was the rationale behind launching the ecosystem? Which phases has the ecosystem lived through? How many partners are currently active within the ecosystem?

What is the value of having a software ecosystem?

How does the future of the ecosystem look like? What should be improved upon, what should stay the same? Where do you see opportunities? Where do you see pitfalls?

Partner selection criteria

Can you give me the top 5 of partner selection criteria your company uses? Why did you choose these 5 criteria?

Partner selection criteria: card sorting

In this exercise, I would like you to, for each category, sort the cards in the order from most important to less important with regards to partner selection.

Note: the criteria on these cards were found in the literature so it might be the case that not all of them are applicable to your organisation's partner selection process. If you see criteria that are not used by your organisation, please let me know.

Before we start, please look through the cards to see if all criteria are clear to you, if not, feel free to ask for a clarification.

What is your rationale behind this particular ordering?

With regards to the criteria that are not used by your organisation, why are they not used?

Partner selection method

What are the main steps in the partner selection process?

Are there alternative steps a partner can go through during the selection process?

What are the partner selection criteria that are used during the selection process?

Partner prioritising

What criteria are used by your organisation to determine if a partner needs to be prioritized? *This question focuses on partner selection, the partner not being a part of the ecosystem yet. For example, two partners that offer similar functionality, which partner do I chose?*

How are the ‘‘prioritisation criteria’’ determined, what's the rationale behind them? What influences these criteria?

Do these ‘‘prioritising criteria’’ change over time?

Change in the collaboration with a partner

What criteria indicate that the collaboration with a partner is about to change? For example, a partner becomes a gold partner.

What is the next step once such a collaboration change is in the air? How is such a change governed? What effect has such a change in collaboration on the position of the partner in the ecosystem?

Have you had such an experience before?

Governance of the ecosystem

What high-level governance mechanisms are applied by your organisation in order to keep the ecosystem smoothly running?

Does your organisation have special policies with regards to ecosystem governance?

Can you run me through the process after the partner is accepted to the ecosystem?

What could trigger your organisation to change the ecosystem governance model?

Governance: entry barriers

Are there any entry barriers to the ecosystem?

What's the rationale behind these aforementioned entry barriers?

Do you have anything to add before we stop this interview?

Again, thank you for your participation in my research! The recording is now stopped.

A.2 Informed Consent: individual interview

Universiteit Utrecht
Faculty of Science, Informatica
Princetonplein 5
3584 CC Utrecht

Master Thesis: Partner Selection in Software Ecosystems

First of all, thank you for your interest in my master research. This research aims to improve the knowledge on partner selection within Software Ecosystems by developing a partner selection method that describes the partner selection process for a Software Ecosystem in order to be used by a keystone for vetting, selecting, and engaging Software Ecosystem partners.

During this interview, I will ask you questions concerning general characteristics of your software ecosystem, partner selection criteria, partner selection method and ecosystem governance.

The interview will be recorded (only audio). This enables me to listen to your answers in a later stage of my research, this helps me to better analyse your answers. The recording will only be used by individuals directly involved with this research, meaning myself and my supervisors from Utrecht University; the recording will not be published in any form. When requested, the data can be anonymised.

Your participation in this research is on a voluntary basis which means that you can withdraw your permission at any time. You are not obliged to give an answer and you are free to indicate this at any moment in time.

The results are used for my master thesis, part of the master Business Informatics at Utrecht University. If you have questions about my research or when you are interested in the results, feel free to contact me.

Luc Beelen
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+31 (0) 6 24247970

Consent

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the text above. I am correctly informed and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I do understand that my participation in this research is on a voluntary basis and that I can withdraw at any time. I do understand that the collected data will be used in further phases of the research but is not shared with third parties. With this signature I give permission to use my data for the above mentioned research purposes.

Signature interviewee _____ Date _____

Signature interviewer _____ Date _____

A.3 Second session interview protocol

Introduction

In this interview, I will discuss my findings of the individual interviews. Based on these findings, I created an initial partner selection method, I like to run through this method with you in order to see where changes need to be made. Secondly, I want to verify the concepts used in the partner selection method to get consensus on the definitions of each concept. Finally, I like to run through the partner selection criteria that you mentioned during the individual interviews.

I am aware of the fact that there might be a difference in knowledge with regards to partner selection due to the different functions you fulfil in the process. This is very valuable to me, getting different perspectives on the partner selection process.

I would like to record this interview to be able to listen to it at a later time, this to support my data analysis process. By the means of a consent form, I ask your permission to record this interview.

Start of the audio recording

Partner selection method

- Run through the different partner selection methods, based on the individual interviews.
- Analyse the differences between the methods, why are there differences? What's the rationale behind these differences?
- Run once more through the final version of the method

Definition of concepts

- Define together the concepts, run through definitions.

Partner selection criteria

- Discuss the rationale behind the "top 5" criteria given by the three interviewees, see table 1.

Table 1. Top 5 partner selection criteria.

Interviewee 1	**Interviewee 2**	**Interviewee 3**
Criterion 1	Criterion 1	Criterion 1

Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2
Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Criterion 3
Criterion 4	Criterion 4	Criterion 4
Criterion 5	Criterion 5	Criterion 5

- Discuss the rationale behind the card sorting solutions

Questions regarding the individual interview protocol, missing knowledge, contradictory answers etc.

Do you have anything to add before we stop this interview?

Again, thank you for your participation in my research! The recording is now stopped.

A.4 Informed Consent: second session interview

Universiteit Utrecht
Faculty of Science, Informatica
Princetonplein 5
3584 CC Utrecht

Master Thesis: Partner Selection in Software Ecosystems

During this interview, I run through the partner selection method I developed based upon your input. Together, we come to one partner selection method that shows your company's partner selection process.

The interview will be recorded (only audio). This enables me to listen to your answers in a later stage of my research, this helps me to better analyse your answers. The recording will only be used by individuals directly involved with this research, meaning myself and my supervisors from Utrecht University; the recording will not be published in any form. When requested, the data can be anonymised.

Your participation in this research is on a voluntary basis which means that you can withdraw your permission at any time. You are not obliged to give an answer and you are free to indicate this at any moment in time.

The results are used for my master thesis, part of the master Business Informatics at Utrecht University. If you have questions about my research or when you are interested in the results, feel free to contact me.

Luc Beelen
l.g.n.m.beelen@students.uu.nl
+31 (0) 6 24247970

Consent

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the text above. I am correctly informed and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I do understand that my participation in this research is on a voluntary basis and that I can withdraw at any time. I do understand that the collected data will be used in further phases of the research but is not shared with third parties. With this signature I give permission to use my data for the above mentioned research purposes.

Signature interviewee 1 _____ Date _____
Signature interviewee 2 _____ Date _____

Signature interviewee 3 _____ Date _____
Signature interviewer _____ Date _____

A.5 Evaluation session interview protocol

Introduction

First of all, thank you very much for participating in my research! I already introduced my research but let me give you a quick refresher:

My research aims to improve the knowledge on software ecosystem partner selection by developing a partner selection method that describes the partner selection process for a particular software ecosystem in order to be used by an orchestrator for vetting, selecting, and engaging software ecosystem partners. In order to do so, I looked at partner selection criteria that are used to determine if a partner is a valuable addition for a software ecosystem and I constructed six partner selection methods that are used to guide the partner selection process.

During this interview, I like to evaluate the various partner selection methods found and to come up with a reference method tailored to fit your software ecosystem.

I would like to record this interview to be able to listen to it at a later time, this to support my data analysis process. By the means of a consent form, I ask your permission to record this interview.

Start of the audio recording

Part I: Your company's current approach to partner selection

In this part of the interview, I like to discuss your current partner selection process. I am aware that the partner selection process is currently being designed, and it not finalised, however, I am curious about your current vision on partner selection.

First, a few general questions. When was your organisation founded? Which products does it sell? How many employees are employed?

What is for your company the value of having a software ecosystem? What was the rationale behind the decision to initiate the process of setting up the ecosystem?

With regards to your current method, what is for your company the main rationale behind your partner selection method? What goal(s) does your company wants to achieve by applying a partner selection method?

What are the main activities in your current partner selection process? Which concepts are used as part of these aforementioned activities?

In your current vision, which partner selection activities are fixed and which are still being discussed? Which steps are currently being taken and are going to be taken in the further, in order to realise a fully established partner selection method?

Part II: Evaluation of methods found during case studies

During this part, you are asked to construct a reference method tailored to your software ecosystem, making use of the six partner selection methods that I constructed during my case study. I did anonymize the methods to prevent a bias response. Before we start the construction of the reference method, firstly, a decision needs to be made.

For the reference method, you have to decide between *inbound*/*outbound*/*inbound+outbound* partner selection. *Inbound:* potential partner requests to become a partner, *outbound*: SECO orchestrator approaches potential partners to gauge their interest to become a partner. *Inbound+outbound*: a combination of both, potential partners approach the orchestrator and the orchestrator approach potential partners. Important to consider are the costs of choosing a particular approach, costs versus benefits. I am curious for your rationale behind the decision between *inbound, outbound, inbound+outbound* partner selection.

Case 1	**Case 5**	**Case 2**	**Case 3**	**Case 4**	**Case 6**
Outbound	*Outbound*	*Inbound*	*Inbound*	*Inbound*	*Inbound+outbound*
Conduct internal research	Identify preferred partner	Verify potential partner	Verify potential partner	Verify potential partner	Scan market (outbound)
Scan market	Verify preferred partner	Engage partner	Engage partner	Onboard partner	Approach potential partner (outbound)
Start discussion	Engage partner				Engage partner (inbound+outbound)
Engage partner					Develop product (inbound+outbound)

Table 1. Partner selection activities executed by the various SECO orchestrators.

Start constructing the reference method

I provide you with the various method fragments (activities) which you can use to construct the reference method. I do also provide the six partner selection methods as a whole so you have an overview of the context of the individual method fragments.
Please look briefly through the fragments if you see any sub-activities and/or concepts you do not understand, if this is the case, please let me know so I can provide an explanation to you.

Interviewees go through the provided activities to see if they have any questions if so, interviewer provides clarification

Now that everything is clear, I ask you to select the activities you want to use to construct the reference method for your organisation.

Interviewees construct initial reference method

You are allowed to include sub-activities from other method fragments and exclude sub-activities from the selected activities.

Can you give me your rationale behind the construction of the reference method, why these activities? Why the inclusion/exclusion of sub-activities?

Part III: Evaluation criteria

In the last part of this interview, I present you seven evaluation criteria. Based on these criteria, I like you to run once more through the reference method you constructed. If criteria are unclear, feel free to ask for clarification!

Category	**Evaluation criteria**	**Definition**
Goal	Effectiveness	The degree to which the artefact achieves its goal in a real situation.
	Operational feasibility	Evaluates the degree to which management, employees and other stakeholders, will support the proposed artefact, operate it and integrate it into their daily practice.
	Economic feasibility	Evaluates whether the benefit of the proposed artefact would outweigh the costs of building and operating the artefact.

Environment	Usefulness	The degree to which the artefact positively impacts the task performance of individuals.
	Ease of use	The degree to which the use of the artefact by individuals is free of effort.
Activity	Completeness	The degree to which the activity of the artefact contains all necessary elements and relationships between elements.
Evolution	Modifiability	The ease with which the artefact can be changed without introducing defects.

Evaluation criteria by Prat et al. (2015)

I would like you, for each of the criteria, to run through the reference method constructed to identify if there are areas in which improvement is required. Afterwards, I like to discuss shortly the rationale behind your answer.

Do you have anything to add before we stop this interview?

Again, thank you for your participation in my research! The recording is now stopped.

A.6 Informed Consent: evaluation session interview

Universiteit Utrecht
Faculty of Science, Informatica
Princetonplein 5
3584 CC Utrecht

Master Thesis: Partner Selection in Software Ecosystems

During this interview, I like to evaluate the various partner selection methods found and to come up with a reference method tailored to fit your software ecosystem.

The interview will be recorded (only audio). This enables me to listen to your answers in a later stage of my research, this helps me to better analyse your answers. The recording will only be used by individuals directly involved with this research, meaning myself and my supervisors from Utrecht University; the recording will not be published in any form. When requested, the data can be anonymised.

Your participation in this research is on a voluntary basis which means that you can withdraw your permission at any time. You are not obliged to give an answer and you are free to indicate this at any moment in time.

The results are used for my master thesis, part of the master Business Informatics at Utrecht University. If you have questions about my research or when you are interested in the results, feel free to contact me.

Luc Beelen
l.g.n.m.beelen@students.uu.nl
+31 (0) 6 24247970

Consent

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the text above. I am correctly informed and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I do understand that my participation in this research is on a voluntary basis and that I can withdraw at any time. I do understand that the collected data will be used in further phases of the research but is not shared with third parties. With this signature I give permission to use my data for the above mentioned research purposes.

Signature interviewee 1 _____ Date _____
Signature interviewee 2 _____ Date _____
Signature interviewee 3 _____ Date _____
Signature interviewer _____ Date _____

A.7 Card sorting cards

Abbr	Criterion	Definition
	Partner's characteristics	
PSCc1	Partner is trustworthy	The SECO orchestrator can trust the partner; the partner is honest, transparent and fulfils their obligations
PSCc2	Reputation & credibility	The reputation and credibility the partner has in the market, how the partner is perceived by other companies in the market
PSCc3	Collaboration history	The previous experiences the SECO orchestrator and the partner have had so far
PSCc4	Collaboration goals	The goals the partner has set for the collaboration with the SECO orchestrator
PSCc5	Culture compatibility	SECO orchestrator and partner mutually respect the opinions and customs subject to national culture characteristics (national culture compatibility). Both partner and SECO orchestrator respect, belief and value each other (corporate culture compatibility)
PSCc6	Objective alignment	The objectives the partner has for the collaboration with the SECO orchestrator matches with the SECO orchestrator' objectives for the collaboration. This includes strategic objectives
PSCc7	Organisation structure and size	Corporate structure of the partner and the number of employees
PSCc8	Financial KPIs	KPIs describing the current financial position of the partner
PSCc9	Profitability	The partner is profitable
PSCc10	Potential for growth	The partner has the potential to grow in terms of profitability, market share and product offering
PSCc11	Partner's business plan	The business plan the partner follows for selling their product and/or service
PSCc12	Chemistry	The partner and the SECO orchestrator share a mutual and natural liking
PSCc13	Transparent & efficient communication	The partner is transparent and effective in its communication with the SECO orchestrator, customers and other parties
PSCc14	Transparency	The partner is transparent in their intentions towards the

		partnership with the SECO orchestrator
PSCc15	Sharing culture	The partner is willing to share knowledge or expertise with the SECO orchestrator
PSCc16	Willingness to share knowledge	The partner is benevolent to share knowledge with the SECO orchestrator and other partners, for example technical information and lessons learnt
PSCc17	Commitment to terms & conditions	The partner commits to the terms and conditions set by the SECO orchestrator
PSCc18	Commitment to partnership	The partner is committed to the partnership with the SECO orchestrator
PSCc19	Loyalty	The partner is loyal to the partnership with the SECO orchestrator
PSCc20	Willingness to invest	The partner is willing to continue investing resources to ensure the successful development of the partnership
PSCc21	Autonomous & independent operation	The partner is capable to operate autonomously and independently from the SECO orchestrator. A partner should try to independently investigate and review issues without causing unnecessary hassle for the SECO orchestrator
PSCc22	Flexibility	The partner is willing to adjust their principles to facilitate the collaboration with the SECO orchestrator
PSCc23	Commitment to standard practices	The partner follows standard practices to develop their product
PSCc24	Customer satisfaction	The degree to which the customer is satisfied with the product and service the partner provides
PSCc25	Customer happiness	The customers of the partner are satisfied and happy with the provided product and service
Partner's capabilities		
PSCc26	Resources	The resources the partner has at their disposal, for example, skill set of employees, code repositories
PSCc27	Unique competencies	The partner has unique competencies that help the partner differentiates from others
PSCc28	Reduce costs	The collaboration with the partner results in cost reduction on the SECO orchestrator's side

PSCc29	Innovation capabilities	The partner has the appropriate capabilities to continue developing their product in an innovative way
PSCc30	Continuous focus on innovation	The partner continuously focuses on innovating their product
PSCc31	Management capabilities	Partner's management style and capabilities
Partner's product		
PSCc32	Quality	The quality of the product the partner provides
PSCc33	Price	The price of the product the partner sells
PSCc34	Reliability	The reliability of the product the partner sells
PSCc35	Clear & complete documentation	The partner provides both the customers and the SECO orchestrator with clear and complete documentation about their product
PSCc36	Data privacy & security	The partner values the data privacy and security of their customers. The partner invests sufficient resources to ensure data privacy and security
PSCc37	Effective API integration	The partner uses the API provided by the SECO orchestrator in an efficient way, preventing excessive API usage
PSCc38	Development standard	The partner follows unquestionable standards, methods and techniques to develop their product
PSCc39	Continuous improvement	The partner continuously improves their product; bug fixing, development of new functionalities
PSCc40	Customer support	The partner provides high-quality customer support to their customers
Partner's knowledge assets		
PSCc41	In-house knowledge	The knowledge that exists in the partner's organisation
PSCc42	Intellectual property	Intellectual property rights the partner holds
PSCc43	Patents	The patents the partner owns
PSCc44	Technical expertise	The technical expertise of the partner, for example, on code development
PSCc45	Investment in R&D	The resources the partner makes available for R&D, for example: number of employees, training of employees, funding R&D projects
Partner's sales capabilities		

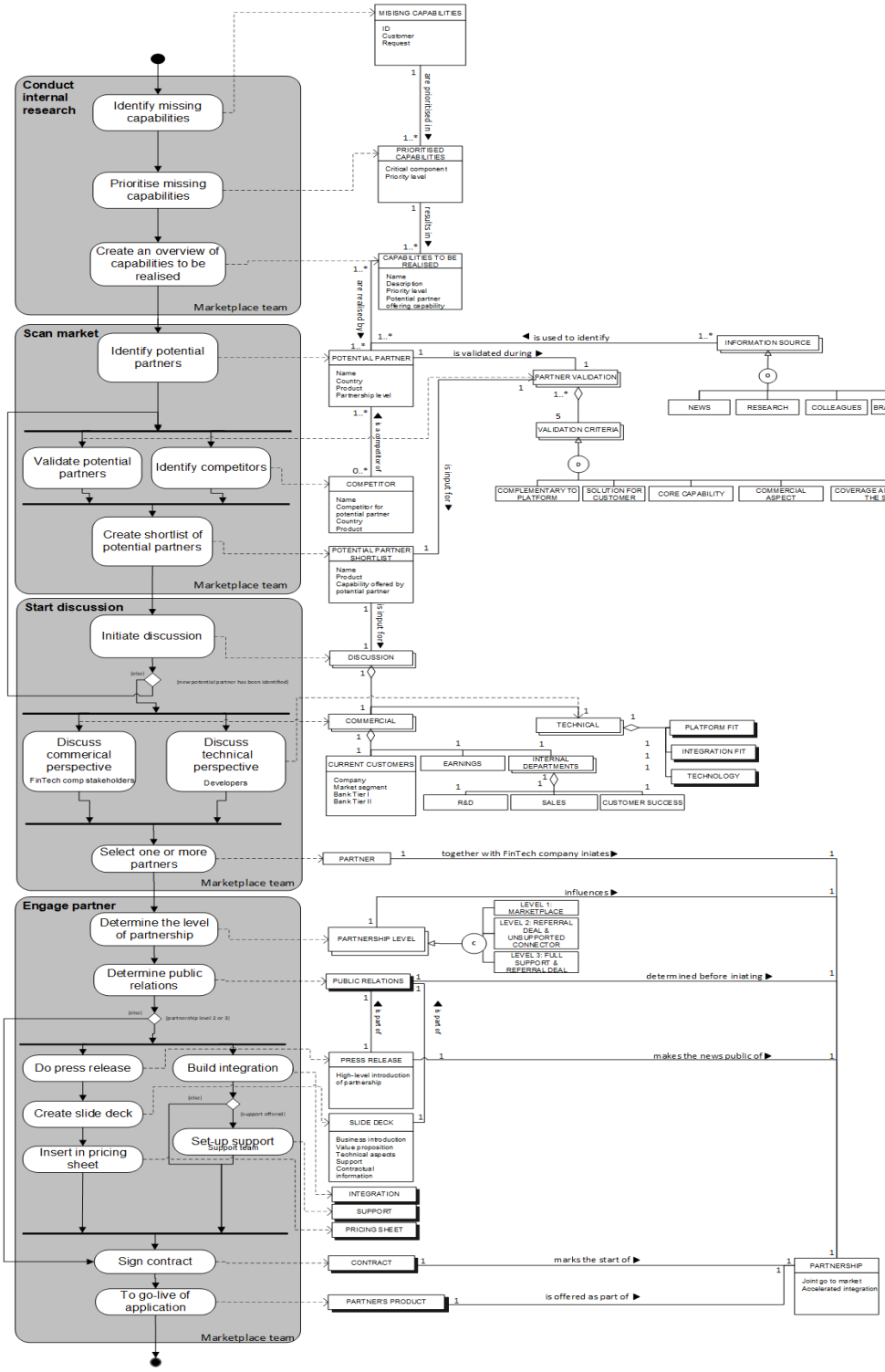
PSCc46	Access to markets	The national and international markets and market segments where the partner has access to
PSCc47	Sales channels	The sales channels that the partner leverages to sell their product
PSCc48	Sales experience	The sales experience the partner has built up across time
PSCc49	Customer base	The customer base of the partner
PSCc50	Market knowledge	The market knowledge of the partner
PSCc51	Market share	The collaboration with the partner increases the SECO orchestrator's market share
PSCc52	Market coverage	The degree to which the partner caters the market
PSCc53	Customer diversity	The range of target groups to which the partner sells their product
PSCc54	Partner's network	The network of the partner to which the SECO orchestrator will get access as an outcome of the developed partnership
SECO orchestrator's perspective		
PSCc55	Loose connection with competitors	The partner does not have strong ties with SECO orchestrator's competitors
PSCc56	Multi-home	The partner develops a product that is cross-platform accessible
PSCc57	Open for co-opetition	The partner is open to co-develop functionality with the SECO orchestrator, however this partnership will not interfere with their other business activities
PSCc58	Potential for co-development	The partner has capabilities and characteristics that can make the SECO orchestrator consider the option to co-develop functionalities with the partner
PSCc59	Portfolio complementarity	The functionality provided by the partner can harmoniously be combined with the functionality provided by the SECO orchestrator. The combination of both partners' and SECO orchestrator's functionalities lead to a more "complete" product and increases the customer satisfaction
PSCc60	Partnership ROI	Return On Investment the SECO orchestrator receives from the partnership with the partner
PSCc61	Recommended by others	The partner is recommended by other parties to the SECO orchestrator

PSCc62	Know-how of local regulations	The knowledge and experience that the partner has on local regulations

Overview partner selection criteria accompanied with their definitions as they are presented to the interviewees.

B PDDs and accompanying tables case study organisations

B.1 FinTechComp



Activity table

Activity	Sub-activity	Description
Conduct internal research	Identify missing capabilities	The marketplace team identifies capabilities that are currently missing in the FinTechComp product offering.
	Prioritise missing capabilities	The MISSING CAPABILITIES are prioritised in order to determine the order in which to fulfil the MISSING CAPABILITIES.
	Create an overview of capabilities to be realised	An overview is created of the MISSING CAPABILITIES. In this overview, the various priority levels are included as well.
Scan market	Identify potential partners	The marketplace team identifies potential partners that can realise MISSING CAPABILITIES.
	Validate potential partners	The marketplace team validates potential partners to see if POTENTIAL PARTNERs are a fit for FinTechComp and their product offering.
	Identify competitors	COMPETITORs of the earlier identified POTENTIAL PARTNERs are identified to see if they might be a candidate partner for FinTechComp.
	Create shortlist of potential partners	The earlier identified POTENTIAL PARTNERs and COMPETITORs are merged into a POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST, the potential partners on this list will be discussed during the DISCUSSION.
Start discussion	Initiate discussion	The marketplace team initiates two discussions, the COMMERCIAL and TECHNICAL DISCUSSION. During these DISCUSSIONs, it's determined with which potential partner FinTechComp initiates a partnership.
	Discuss commercial perspective	The COMMERCIAL perspective of a potential PARTNERSHIP with a

		potential partner is discussed. During this discussion, various stakeholders join the DISCUSSION.
	Discuss technical perspective	The TECHNICAL perspective of a potential PARTNERSHIP with a potential partner is discussed.
	Select one or more partners	The marketplace team makes a selection out of the potential partners that are on the POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST. One or more partners can be selected.
Engage partner	Determine the level of partnership	The marketplace team determines the level of the PARTNERSHIP. This can either be MARKETPLACE, REFERRAL or FULL SUPPORT.
	Determine public relations	The commercial side of the PARTNERSHIP is shaped.
	Do press release	FinTechComp does a press release for the new PARTNERSHIP with a PARTNER.
	Build integration	The integration between the partner's product and the FinTechComp's product is built.
	Create slide deck	The marketplace team creates a slide deck in which they introduce the PARTNERSHIP.
	Set-up support	Support for the partner's product is set-up within the FinTechComp.
	Insert in pricing sheet	The pricing aspects of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT are inserted in the pricing sheet.
	Sign contract	The contract between FinTechComp and the PARTNER is signed, this marks the start of the PARTNERSHIP and the release of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.

	To go-live of application	The joint go to market of the PARTNER and FinTechComp.

Concept table

Concept	**Description**
MISSING CAPABILITIES	Describes the capabilities that are currently missing in the FinTechComp product offering.
PRIORITISED CAPABILITIES	Describes the prioritisation of the MISSING CAPABILITIES. Important is the fact if the MISSING CAPABILITY is a critical component.
CAPABILITIES TO BE REALISED	The capabilities that are to be realised for the FinTechComp product. Attributes of this concept are name, description, priority level, potential partner offering the capability.
INFORMATION SOURCE	Information sources that help identify POTENTIAL PARTNERS.
NEWS	Information about POTENTIAL PARTNERS is gained from the NEWS.
RESEARCH	Information about POTENTIAL PARTNERS is gained from RESEARCH conducted by FinTechComp.
COLLEAGUES	Information about POTENTIAL PARTNERS is gained from FinTechComp employees.
BRAINSTORMING	Information about POTENTIAL PARTNERS is gained from BRAINSTORMING.
POTENTIAL PARTNER	This concept provides information about a POTENTIAL PARTNER. It contains attributes such as name, product and partnership level.
PARTNER VALIDATION	This concept contains the VALIDATION CRITERIA to determine if a POTENTIAL PARTNER should be placed on the POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST.
VALIDATION CRITERIA	These criteria are used to validate a POTENTIAL PARTNER.

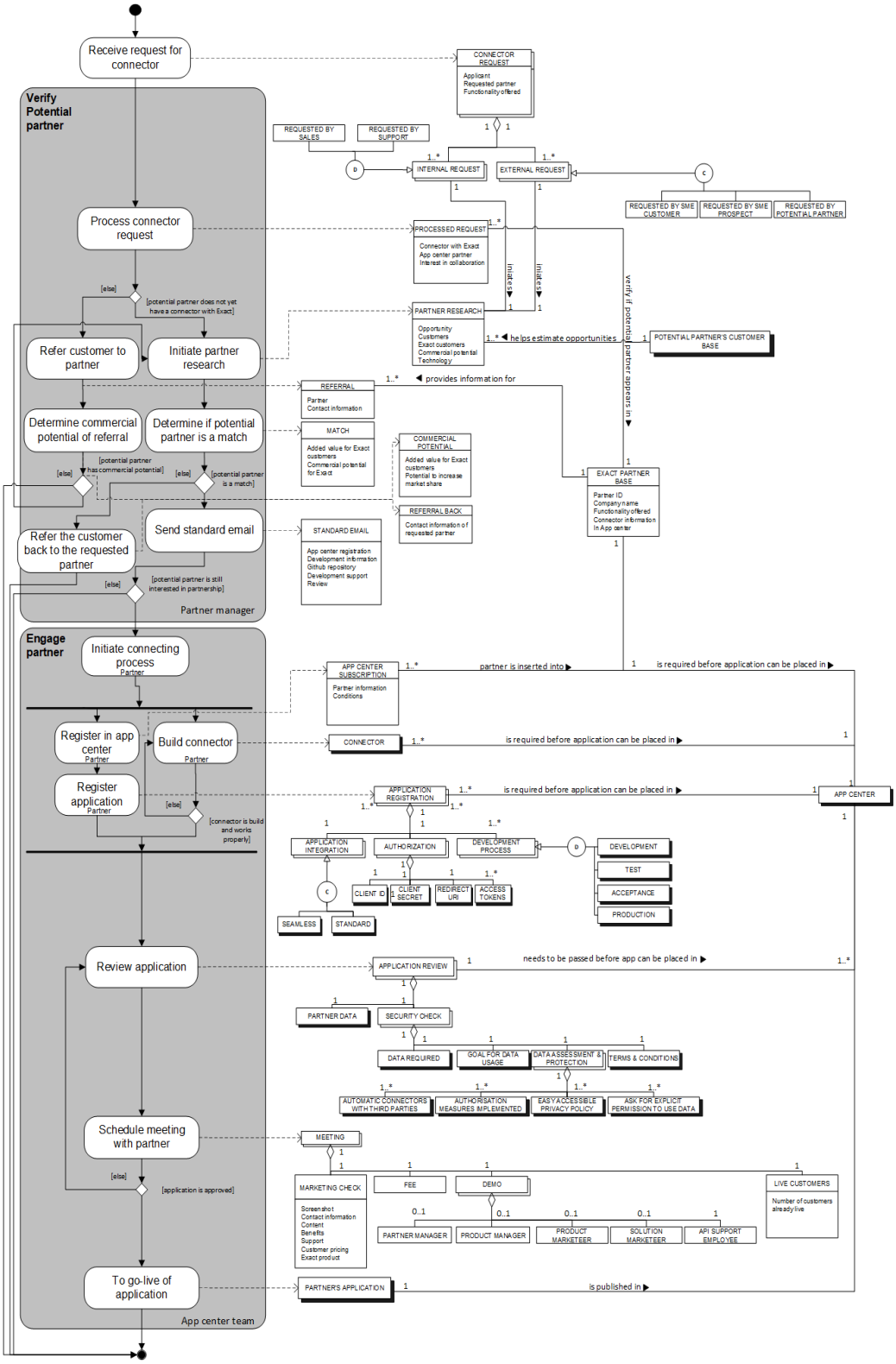
COMPLEMENTARY TO PLATFORM	Describes if the functionality offered by the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product is complementary to the FinTechComp product.
SOLUTION FOR CUSTOMER	Describes if the integration of the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product is actually valuable for FinTechComp customers; does it really add value to the FinTechComp product offering.
CORE CAPABILITY	Describes if the functionality offered by the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product is key to have for FinTechComp customers. Some functionality is nice to have, however, not critical to have.
COMMERCIAL ASPECT	Describes if a PARTNERSHIP with a POTENTIAL PARTNER has commercial value for FinTechComp.
COVERAGE AND LEADING IN THE SPACE	Describes if by adding the functionality offered by the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product increases the market coverage achieved by the FinTechComp and if the POTENTIAL PARTNER is leading in the space, meaning that the POTENTIAL PARTNER offers cutting edge technology.
COMPETITOR	Is a COMPETITOR of a previously identified POTENTIAL PARTNER.
POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST	Contains the POTENTIAL PARTNERs that have been selected for the POTENTIAL PARTNER'S SHORTLIST. During the DISCUSSION, new partner(s) is/are selected from this list.
DISCUSSION	During the COMMERCIAL and TECHNICAL DISCUSSION if a POTENTIAL PARTNER is really an addition to the FinTechComp's product. During the DISCUSSION new POTENTIAL PARTNERs could be identified. If this is the case, the process goes back to the scan market activity with sub-activities validate potential partner and identify competitors.
COMMERCIAL	During this DISCUSSION, the marketplace team validates the commercial value of a potential PARTNERSHIP with the POTENTIAL PARTNER.
TECHNICAL	During this DISCUSSION, the marketplace team validates if the POTENTIAL PARTER's product is technically a fit with FinTechComp's product.

CURRENT CUSTOMERS	Describes the CURRENT CUSTOMERS that currently using the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product.
EARNINGS	The financial gains that can be earned by FinTechComp as part of the PARTNERSHIP with the PARTNER.
INTERNAL DEPARTMENTS	The FinTechComp departments that are involved in the COMMERCIAL DISCUSSION.
R&D	The research & development department of FinTechComp.
SALES	The sales department of FinTechComp.
CUSTOMER SUCCESS	The department that is responsible for the product implementation at the customer. They can be labelled as system integrators.
PLATFORM FIT	Describes if the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product a fit with the FinTechComp product. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
INTEGRATION FIT	Describes if the POTENTIAL PARTNER's product can be properly integrated with the FinTechComp's product. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
TECHNOLOGY	Describes how the TECHNOLOGY offered by the POTENTIAL PARTNER works. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PARTNER	This concept contains information about a new PARTNER of FinTechComp.
PARTNERSHIP LEVEL	Describes the level of the partnership with the PARTNER.
LEVEL 1: MARKETPLACE	The PARTNER'S PRODUCT is listed in the MARKETPLACE. An NDA is signed and the PARTNER shares technical documentation
LEVEL 2: REFERRAL DEAL & UNSUPPORTED CONNECTOR	The customer has a separate contract. FinTechComp receives a kickback fee on introduction: first-year licence revenue. The connector is not supported.

LEVEL 3: FULL SUPPORT & REFERRAL DEAL	One CONTRACT is offered to the customer. FinTechComp charges retail prices to customer, PARTNER charge FinTechComp wholesale prices. The R&D department support the connector.
PUBLIC RELATIONS	Overarching concept containing the commercial side of the PARTNERSHIP.
PRESS RELEASE	Describes a high-level introduction of the new PARTNERSHIP between FinTechComp and a PARTNER.
SLIDE DECK	Provides a business introduction for the new PARTNERSHIP. Part of the SLIDE DECK is to introduce the business value, discuss the various technical aspects, inform how SUPPORT is arranged and provide contractual information.
INTEGRATION	Describes the INTEGRATION between the PARTNER's product and the FinTechComp's product. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SUPPORT	Describes the SUPPORT offered to FinTechComp customers that are using the PARTNER'S PRODUCT and are experiencing issues or have questions about the PARTNER'S PRODUCT. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PRICING SHEET	List of all prices of FinTechComp product offering including PARTNER'S PRODUCT, only if the partner has PARTNERSHIP LEVEL 3.This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PARTNER'S PRODUCT	The product the PARTNER offers to his customers as part of the PARTNERSHIP with FinTechComp. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PARTNERSHIP	Describes the PARTNERSHIP between the PARTNER and FinTechComp.
CONTRACT	This concept contains information about the CONTRACT between the PARTNER and FinTechComp, specifying the details of the PARTNERSHIP. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

PARTNER'S PRODUCT	The product the PARTNER offers to his customers as part of the PARTNERSHIP with FinTechComp. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

B.2 Exact


Receive request for connector
Verify Potential partner
Process connector request
[else]
[potential partner does not yet have a connector with Exact]
Refer customer to partner
Initiate partner research
Determine commercial potential of referral
Determine if potential partner is a match
[potential partner has commercial potential]
[else]
[else]
[potential partner is a match]
Refer the customer back to the requested partner
Send standard email
[else]
[potential partner is still interested in partnership]
Partner manager
Engage partner
Initiate connecting process
Partner
Register in app center
Partner
Build connector
Partner
Register application
Partner
[else]
[connector is build and works properly]
Review application
Schedule meeting with partner
[else]
[application is approved]
To go-live of application
App center team
CONNECTOR REQUEST
Applicant
Requested partner
Functionality offered
REQUESTED BY SALES
REQUESTED BY SUPPORT
INTERNAL REQUEST
EXTERNAL REQUEST
REQUESTED BY SME CUSTOMER
REQUESTED BY SME PROSPECT
REQUESTED BY POTENTIAL PARTNER
PROCESSED REQUEST
Connector with Exact
App center partner
Interest in collaboration
initiates
initiates
verify if potential partner appears in
PARTNER RESEARCH
Opportunity
Customers
Exact customers
Commercial potential
Technology
helps estimate opportunities
POTENTIAL PARTNER'S CUSTOMER BASE
provides information for
REFERRAL
Partner
Contact information
MATCH
Added value for Exact customers
Commercial potential for Exact
COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL
Added value for Exact customers
Potential to increase market share
REFERRAL BACK
Contact information of requested partner
EXACT PARTNER BASE
Partner ID
Company name
Functionality offered
Connector information
In App center
STANDARD EMAIL
App center registration
Development information
Github repository
Development support
Review
APP CENTER SUBSCRIPTION
Partner information
Conditions
partner is inserted into
is required before application can be placed in
CONNECTOR
is required before application can be placed in
APP CENTER
APPLICATION REGISTRATION
is required before application can be placed in
APPLICATION INTEGRATION
AUTHORIZATION
DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
DEVELOPMENT
TEST
ACCEPTANCE
PRODUCTION
CLIENT ID
CLIENT SECRET
REDIRECT URI
ACCESS TOKENS
SEAMLESS
STANDARD
APPLICATION REVIEW
needs to be passed before app can be placed in
PARTNER DATA
SECURITY CHECK
DATA REQUIRED
GOAL FOR DATA USAGE
DATA ASSESSMENT & PROTECTION
TERMS & CONDITIONS
AUTOMATIC CONNECTORS WITH THIRD PARTIES
AUTHORISATION MEASURES IMPLEMENTED
EASY ACCESSIBLE PRIVACY POLICY
ASK FOR EXPLICIT PERMISSION TO USE DATA
MEETING
MARKETING CHECK
Screenshot
Contact information
Content
Benefits
Support
Customer pricing
Exact product
FEE
DEMO
LIVE CUSTOMERS
Number of customers already live
PARTNER MANAGER
PRODUCT MANAGER
PRODUCT MARKETEER
SOLUTION MARKETEER
API SUPPORT EMPLOYEE
PARTNERS APPLICATION
is published in

Activity table

Activity	Sub-activity	Description
Receive request for connector		Exact receives a request for a connector with Exact Online. This request has either it origin within Exact or external, from an SME customer or SME prospect or potential partner. The information with regards to the connector request is stored in CONNECTOR REQUEST.
Verify potential partner	Process connector request	The CONNECTOR REQUEST is processed.
	Refer customer to partner	The partner manager finds out that the partner has a connector with Exact. For example, the partner has written on his website that he connects with Exact. The partner manager refers the customer to this partner by means of a REFERRAL.
	Initiate partner research	The partner manager does not know the potential partner and sees an opportunity for a partnership based, among other things, upon the POTENTIAL PARTNER'S CUSTOMER BASE. The partner manager initiates research into the potential partner.
	Determine commercial potential of referral	The partner manager determines if the requested partner has COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL for Exact.
	Determine if potential partner is a match.	The partner manager determines if the potential partner is a MATCH with Exact; is the partnership fruitful for both parties.
	Refer the customer back to the requested partner	The potential partner is no MATCH with Exact, the partner manager refers the customer back to the requested partner to arrange the CONNECTOR himself.

	Send standard email	The partner manager sends the potential partner his STANDARD EMAIL. Consists of information such as: how to register in the APP CENTER, development information and development support.
Engage partner	Initiate connecting process	The partner starts connecting with Exact.
	Register in app center	The partner registers himself in the Exact app center. The partner does so by registering for an APP CENTER SUBSCRIPTION.
	Build connector	The partner builds the CONNECTOR with Exact.
	Register application	The partner registers his PARTNER'S APPLICATION in the APP CENTER.
	Review application	The application created by the partner is reviewed by Exact. An important aspect of this activity is the SECURITY CHECK.
	Schedule meeting with partner	The partner manager schedules a MEETING with the partner to discuss the FEE, MARKETING CHECK and the partner gives during this MEETING a DEMO of his PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Another important topic during this MEETING is the number of LIVE CUSTOMERS.
	To go-live of application	The PARTNER'S APPLICATION can be downloaded and used by Exact Online customers.

Concept table

Concept	Description
CONNECTOR REQUEST	The partner manager receives, either internal or external, a request for a CONNECTOR with a partner. This connector can be requested by the sales or support department or a customer, prospect or potential partner.
INTERNAL REQUEST	The request for a CONNECTOR has its origin within Exact.
EXTERNAL REQUEST	The request for a CONNECTOR has its origin outside of Exact.
REQUESTED BY SALES	The sales department requests a CONNECTOR between Exact Online and the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
REQUESTED BY SUPPORT	The support department requests a CONNECTOR between Exact Online and the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
REQUESTED BY SME CUSTOMER	A customer requests a CONNECTOR between a PARTNER'S APPLICATION and Exact Online.
REQUESTED BY SME PROSPECT	A prospect requests to build a CONNECTOR with Exact Online.
REQUESTED BY POTENTIAL PARTNER	A potential partner requests to build a CONNECTOR with Exact Online.
PROCESSED REQUEST	The CONNECTOR REQUEST is processed.
PARTNER RESEARCH	The partner manager conducts research into a potential partner to see if there is an opportunity for Exact, if so, the partner manager contacts the potential partner.
EXACT PARTNER BASE	Contains the partner's that have a connector with Exact. This concept specifies also if the partner has his application in the APP CENTER.
POTENTIAL PARTNER'S CUSTOMER BASE	The customer base of the potential partner to which Exact gains access by initiating a partnership with the potential partner. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

REFERRAL	If the partner already connects with Exact; the partner managers refer the customer who requested the CONNECTOR to this particular partner.
MATCH	A potential partner is a MATCH. Exact sees an opportunity to initiate a partnership with the potential partner.
COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL	A potential partner has COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL for Exact. The partner provides added value to Exact customers. And has the potential to increase Exact's market share.
STANDARD EMAIL	The partner manager sends his standard formulated email to the potential partner. This email contains information such as how to register for the APP CENTER, development information and access to the Github repository.
REFERRAL BACK	Contains the information for the customer to contact the requested partner himself to arrange a CONNECTOR.
APP CENTER SUBSCRIPTION	Contains the required information of the partner to register for the APP CENTER.
CONNECTOR	This concept depicts the integration the partner builds with Exact by means of a CONNECTOR. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
APPLICATION REGISTRATION	The partner registers his PARTNER"S APPLICATION for the integration, authorisation and development with Exact.
APPLICATION INTEGRATION	This concept describes the type of integration the partner has selected for his application with Exact Online, either STANDARD or SEAMLESS.
AUTHORIZATION	Contains the concepts that are required for the authorization of a PARTNER'S APPLICATION as part of the APPLICATION REGISTRATION.
DEVELOPMENT STAGE	This concept describes the DEVELOPMENT STAGE of the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.

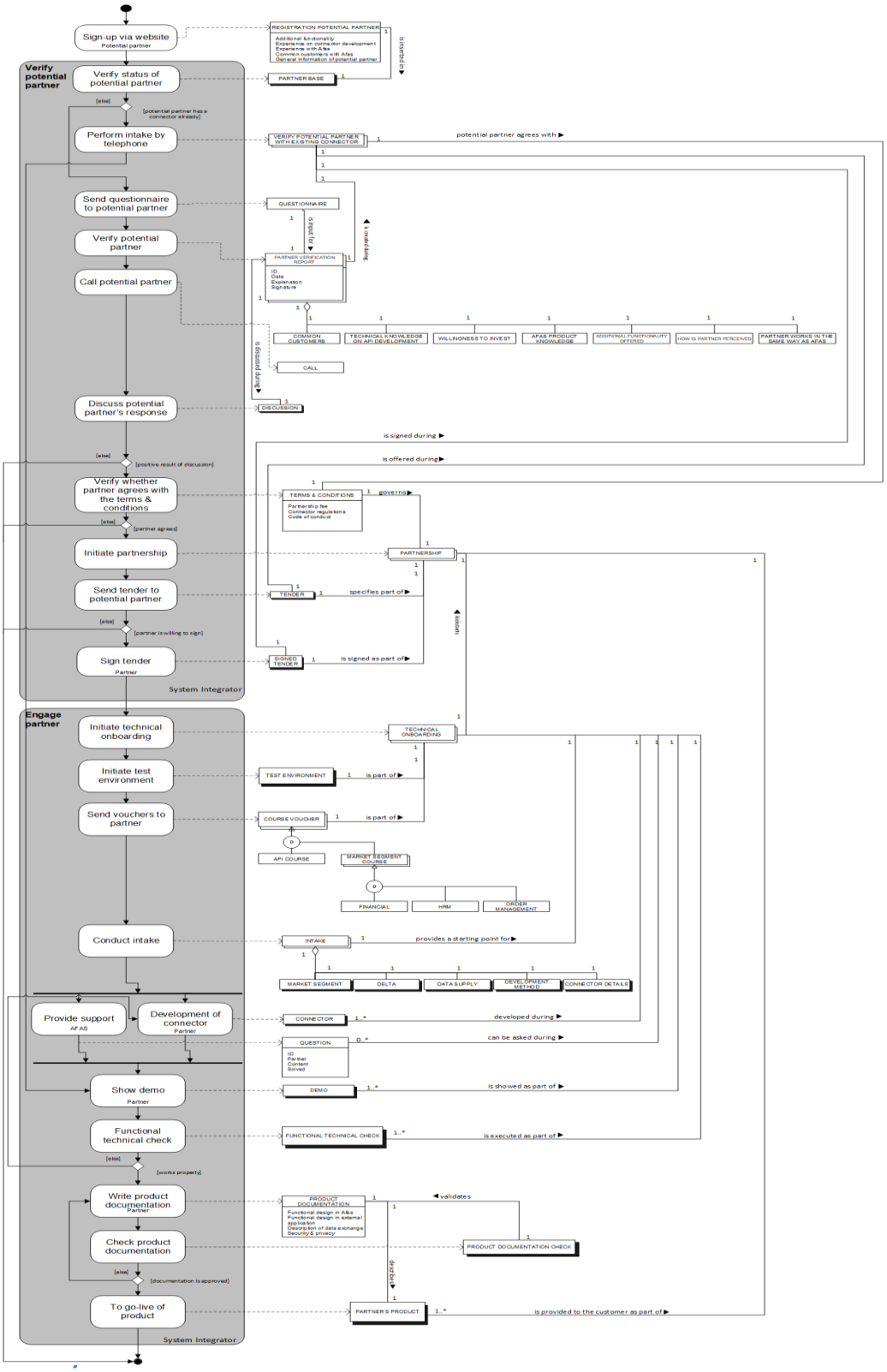
DEVELOPMENT	The PARTNER'S APPLICATION is in the DEVELOPMENT stage of the DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
TEST	The PARTNER'S APPLICATION is in the TEST stage of the DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
ACCEPTANCE	The PARTNER'S APPLICATION is in the ACCEPTANCE stage of the DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PRODUCTION	The PARTNER'S APPLICATION is in the PRODUCTION stage of the DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SEAMLESS	Direct connection with Exact. Is not often used due to the need for mapping on the background. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
STANDARD	When a partner's customer wants to integrate his Exact Online license with the partner's application, the starting point is the partner's website. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
CLIENT ID	This concept contains the API key. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
CLIENT SECRET	This concept contains the API encryption. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
REDIRECT URI	This concept contains the authorisation for the partner access point. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
ACCESS TOKENS	This concept contains access data for the PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

APP CENTER	The Exact Online app Center provides the Exact Online customer with an overview of all applications that can be linked to Exact Online. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
APPLICATION REVIEW	Before the PARTNER'S APPLICATION is published in the APP CENTER, the application is reviewed by the App center team.
PARTNER DATA	Contains data about the PARTNER. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SECURITY CHECK	Exact verifies if the PARTNER'S APPLICATION adheres to the security standards set by Exact.
DATA REQUIRED	This concept describes which data the partner requires in order to smoothly run his application. The concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
GOAL FOR DATA USAGE	This concept describes the partner's goal of using certain data. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
DATA ASSESSMENT & PROTECTION	This concept contains the elements that are used by Exact to assess the data protection offered by the partner to his customers.
TERMS & CONDITIONS	Contains the conditions for the APP CENTER. The partner has to accept these in order to be allowed to publish his application in the APP CENTER. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
AUTOMATIC CONNECTORS WITH THIRD PARTIES	Describes the data flow, who can use the customer data collected by a PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
AUTHORIZATION MEASURES IMPLEMENTED	This concept depicts if the partner has the correct AUTHORIZATION MEASURES IMPLEMENTED in order to guarantee his customer safe and secure usage of his application. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

EASY ACCESSIBLE PRIVACY POLICY	The privacy policy of the partner is easily accessible for the customer. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
ASK FOR EXPLICIT PERMISSION TO USE DATA	The partner asks his customer for explicit permission to use their data. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
MEETING	After the partner has a working CONNECTOR, the partner manager schedules a MEETING with the partner to conduct a MARKETING CHECK, discuss the FEE and to enable the partner to show a DEMO of his application. Another important topic during this MEETING is the number of LIVE CUSTOMERS.
MARKETING CHECK	Check of partner content: pricing, benefits, content, support, link towards Exact solutions.
FEE	The fee the partner has to pay in order to have his application in the APP CENTER. This to cover the API costs Exact has to make in order to provide an API to partners.
DEMO	The partner shows a DEMO of his application to one or more Exact employees.
LIVE CUSTOMERS	Describes the number of customers that are already using the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
PRODUCT MANAGER	The employee who is responsible for the development of the Exact product offering.
PARTNER MANAGER	The employee who is responsible for the commercial side of the partner in the APP CENTER.
PRODUCT MARKETEER	The employee who is specialised in marketing.
SOLUTION MARKETEER	The employee who guides the go to market process. Guides the market introduction of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.
API SUPPORT EMPLOYEE	An employee that offers API support to partners to help them develop their CONNECTOR with Exact Online.

PARTNER'S APPLICATION	The application the partner offers to his/her customers. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

B.3 AFAS


Sign-up via website
Potential partner
REGISTRATION POTENTIAL PARTNER
Additional functionality
Experience on connector development
Experience with Afas
Common customers with Afas
General information of potential partner
is inserted in
Verify potential partner
Verify status of potential partner
PARTNER BASE
[else]
[potential partner has a connector already]
Perform intake by telephone
VERIFY POTENTIAL PARTNER WITH EXISTING CONNECTOR
potential partner agrees with
Send questionnaire to potential partner
QUESTIONNAIRE
is filled in
is saved during
Verify potential partner
PARTNER VERIFICATION REPORT
ID
Date
Explanation
Signature
Call potential partner
COMMON CUSTOMERS
TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE ON API DEVELOPMENT
WILLINGNESS TO INVEST
AFAS PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE
ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONALITY OFFERED
HOW IS PARTNER PERCEIVED
PARTNER WORKS IN THE SAME WAY AS AFAS
CALL
is discussed during
Discuss potential partner's response
DISCUSSION
[else]
[positive result of discussion]
is signed during
is offered during
Verify whether partner agrees with the terms & conditions
TERMS & CONDITIONS
Partnership fee
Connector regulations
Code of conduct
governs
[else]
[partner agrees]
Initiate partnership
PARTNERSHIP
Send tender to potential partner
TENDER
specifies part of
[else]
[partner is willing to sign]
Sign tender
Partner
SIGNED TENDER
is signed as part of
System Integrator
Engage partner
Initiate technical onboarding
TECHNICAL ONBOARDING
Initiate test environment
TEST ENVIRONMENT
is part of
Send vouchers to partner
COURSE VOUCHER
API COURSE
MARKET SEGMENT COURSE
FINANCIAL
HRM
ORDER MANAGEMENT
Conduct intake
INTAKE
provides a starting point for
MARKET SEGMENT
DELTA
DATA SUPPLY
DEVELOPMENT METHOD
CONNECTOR DETAILS
Provide support
AFAS
Development of connector
Partner
CONNECTOR
developed during
QUESTION
ID
Partner
Content
Solved
can be asked during
Show demo
Partner
DEMO
is showed as part of
Functional technical check
FUNCTIONAL TECHNICAL CHECK
is executed as part of
[else]
[works properly]
Write product documentation
Partner
PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION
Functional design in Afas
Functional design in external application
Description of data exchange
Security & privacy
validates
Check product documentation
PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION CHECK
[else]
[documentation is approved]
To go-live of product
PARTNER'S PRODUCT
is provided to the customer as part of
System Integrator

Activity table

Activity	Sub-activity	Description
Sign-up via website		The potential partner signs-up for a PARTNERSHIP with AFAS via the AFAS website, this information is stored in REGISTRATION POTENTIAL PARTNER and inserted in the PARTNER BASE.
Verify potential partner	Verify status of potential partner	The System Integrator verifies if the potential partner already has a CONNECTOR with AFAS.
	Perform intake by telephone	In the case that a potential partner has already a CONNECTOR with AFAS, the System Integrator performs the INTAKE POTENTIAL PARTNER WITH EXISTING CONNECTOR by telephone.
	Send questionnaire to potential partner	The potential partner receives a QUESTIONNAIRE which he has to fill in.
	Verify potential partner	During this activity, the answers given in the QUESTIONNAIRE are verified.
	Call potential partner	The System Integrator calls the potential partner to discuss with him the QUESTIONNAIRE he filled in.
	Discuss potential partner's response	Discuss exceptions to determine if a particular potential partner can be accepted to the AFAS ecosystem.
	Verify whether partner agrees with the terms & conditions	The System Integrator verifies if the partner agrees with the TERMS & CONDITIONS set by AFAS. This is a prerequisite for initiating the PARTNERSHIP with AFAS.
	Initiate partnership	The collaboration with the partner, embodied in the PARTNERSHIP, is initiated.

	Send tender to partner	The partner receives a TENDER, containing the conditions of the PARTNERSHIP with AFAS.
	Sign tender	The partner signs the TENDER, resulting in a SIGNED TENDER. Subsequently, the TECHNICAL ONBOARDING can be initiated.
Engage partner	Initiate technical onboarding	The TECHNICAL ONBOARDING of the partner is initiated.
	Initiate test environment	There is automatically a TEST ENVIRONMENT created which the partner can use to test his functionality and the integration with AFAS.
	Send vouchers to partner	AFAS sends COURSE VOUCHERs to partners, which they can use to follow various courses such as the API COURSE.
	Conduct intake	The System Integrator conducts an INTAKE to acquire more knowledge on how the partner will integrate his product with AFAS.
	Provide support	AFAS answers QUESTIONs that are asked by the partner with regards to the development of a CONNECTOR.
	Development of connector	The partner builds the CONNECTOR that connects his product with AFAS.
	Show demo	The partner shows a DEMO to the System Integrator(s), showing how his product's functionality and integration with AFAS.
	Functional technical check	The System Integrator executes a FUNCTIONAL TECHNICAL CHECK to verify if the functionality provided by the partner works properly.
	Write product documentation	The partner writes the PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION.

	Check product documentation	The PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION is checked by the System Integrator(s) to see if all elements are present.
	To go-live of product	The PARTNER'S PRODUCT can be used by AFAS customers.

Concept table

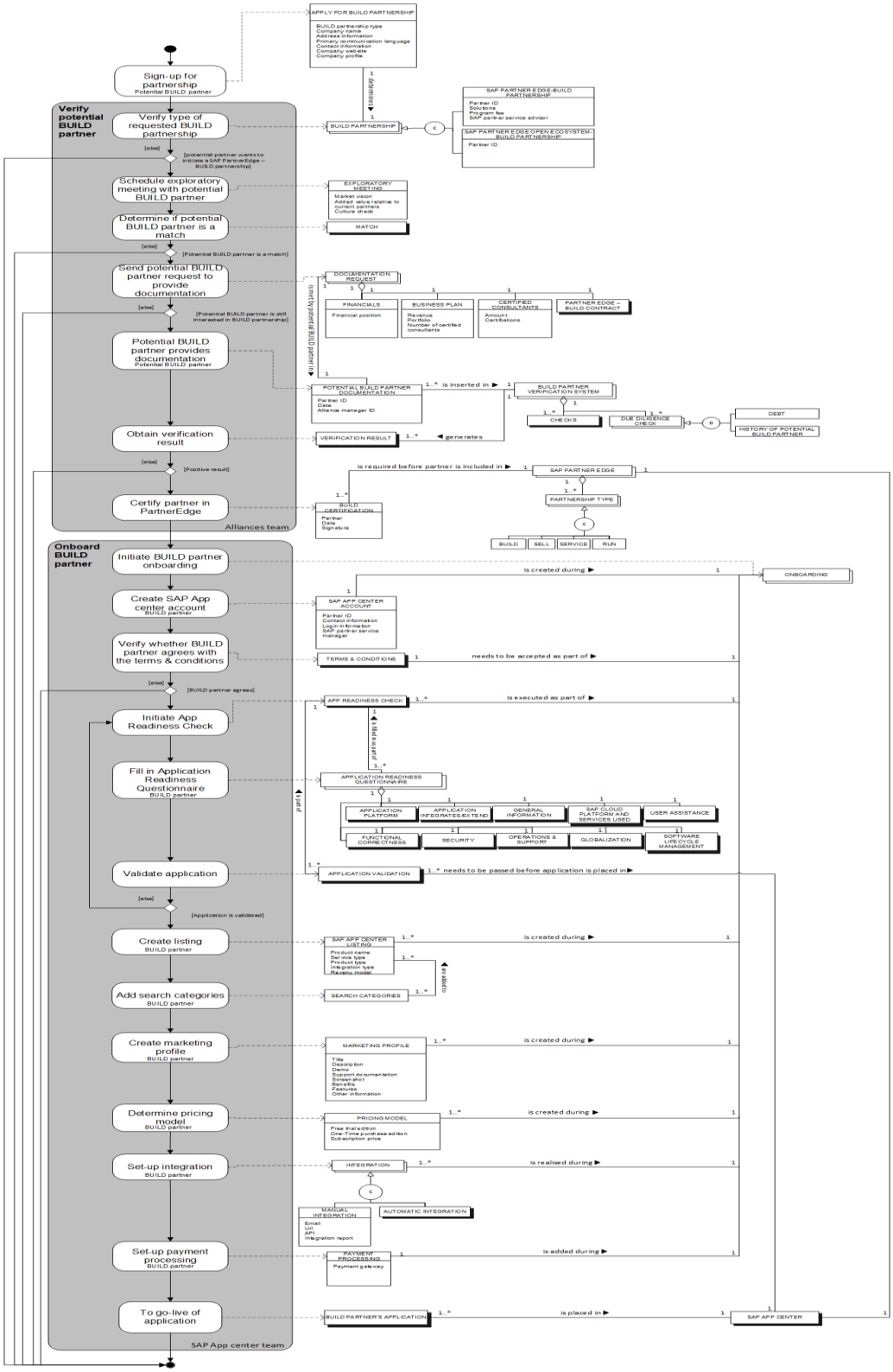
Concept	**Description**
REGISTRATION POTENTIAL PARTNER	When the partner signs up via the AFAS website, he has to fill in certain information such as what his additional functionality is compared to AFAS or his experience with AFAS. This information is then inserted into the PARTNER BASE.
PARTNER BASE	Information about a potential partner is stored in this concept. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
VERIFY POTENTIAL PARTNER WITH EXISTING CONNECTOR	Contains the concepts that are of importance for AFAS when the System Integrator conducts the intake of a new partner that already has an existing CONNECTOR in place. Part of this intake is to create a PARTNER VERIFICATION REPORT.
QUESTIONNAIRE	Contains the questions that are given to the potential partner to answer in order for the System Integrator to determine if the potential partner would be a valuable addition to the AFAS ecosystem.
PARTNER VERIFICATION REPORT	Contains the five minimum hard requirements together with two additional requirements to be allowed to join the AFAS ecosystem and initiate a PARTNERSHIP with AFAS.
COMMON CUSTOMERS	The customers that the partner has in common with AFAS.
TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE ON API DEVELOPMENT	The knowledge the partner possesses with regards to api development.
AFAS PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE	The knowledge the partner possesses with regards to the products that are offered by AFAS.

WILLINGNESS TO INVEST	Describes if the partner is willing to invest in his product and in the PARTNERSHIP with AFAS.
ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONALITY OFFERED	Describes what the additional functionality is that the partner offers compared to AFAS.
CALL	The System Integrator calls the potential partner to discuss with him the QUESTIONNAIRE he filled in. This can be via telephone or digital communication methods.
DISCUSSION	During the DISCUSSION exceptions are discussed, the System Integrators determine if such a particular potential partner can be accepted to the AFAS ecosystem. An important aspect is the importance of the potential partner for AFAS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
TERMS & CONDITIONS	Contains the conditions for the PARTNERSHIP with AFAS. The partner has to accept these in order to be able to initiate a PARTNERSHIP with AFAS.
PARTNERSHIP	Describes the PARTNERSHIP between the partner and AFAS.
TENDER	This concept describes the formal offer to conclude a PARTNERSHIP that the System Integrator offers to a partner.
SIGNED TENDER	The partner has signed the TENDER offered to him. The TECHNICAL ONBOARDING can be initiated.
TECHNICAL ONBOARDING	Contains the concepts that are of importance when the partner initiates the TECHNICAL ONBOARDING of his product.
TEST ENVIRONMENT	This concept describes the TEST ENVIRONMENT that is initiated for the partner in which he can test his product. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
COURSE VOUCHER	A partner can exchange a COURSE VOUCHERs to follow various courses offered by AFAS such as the API COURSE or MARKET SEGMENT COURSE.

API COURSE	During this course, the partner gains more knowledge on how to work with the AFAS API and how to build a CONNECTOR.
MARKET SEGMENT COURSE	During this course, the partner gains more knowledge on the particular market segment in which he will be operating with his product.
FINANCIAL	Accounting module in AFAS.
HRM	Employee administration and salary module in AFAS.
ORDER MANAGEMENT	Purchase and sale of products & services module in AFAS.
INTAKE	Contains the functional technical concepts that are of importance to AFAS when the System Integrator conducts the intake of a new partner.
MARKET SEGMENT	Contains the MARKET SEGMENT in which the partner is operational. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
DELTA	Describes how the partner effectively retrieves the data his PARTNER'S PRODUCT requires to function properly. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
DATA SUPPLY	This concept describes how the partner processes data he collected from AFAS, for example, storage and security. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
DEVELOPMENT METHOD	This concept describes the development method, for example, agile development with Sprints. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
CONNECTOR DETAILS	Contains CONNECTOR details, for example: how does the partner handle errors. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
CONNECTOR	This concept depicts the integration the partner builds with AFAS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

QUESTION	The partner can ask QUESTIONs regarding the CONNECTOR development. These QUESTIONs are partner and problem specific and are answered by the System Integrator.
DEMO	The partner provides a DEMO of his product to AFAS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
FUNCTIONAL TECHNICAL CHECK	The System Integrator verifies if the product works functional technical. This check is executed as part of the TECHNICAL ONBOARDING of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION	Describes the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.
PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION CHECK	Check if the product documentation is provided by the partner and if all relevant parts are present. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PARTNER'S PRODUCT	The product the partner offers to his customers as part of the PARTNERSHIP with AFAS. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

B.4 SAP


Sign-up for partnership
Potential BUILD partner
Verify potential BUILD partner
Verify type of requested BUILD partnership
[else]
[potential partner wants to initiate a SAP PartnerEdge – BUILD partnership]
Schedule exploratory meeting with potential BUILD partner
Determine if potential BUILD partner is a match
[else]
[Potential BUILD partner is a match]
Send potential BUILD partner request to provide documentation
[else]
[Potential BUILD partner is still interested in BUILD partnership]
Potential BUILD partner provides documentation
Potential BUILD partner
Obtain verification result
[else]
[Positive result]
Certify partner in PartnerEdge
Alliances team
Onboard BUILD partner
Initiate BUILD partner onboarding
Create SAP App center account
BUILD partner
Verify whether BUILD partner agrees with the terms & conditions
[else]
[BUILD partner agrees]
Initiate App Readiness Check
Fill in Application Readiness Questionnaire
BUILD partner
Validate application
[else]
[Application is validated]
Create listing
BUILD partner
Add search categories
BUILD partner
Create marketing profile
BUILD partner
Determine pricing model
BUILD partner
Set-up integration
BUILD partner
Set-up payment processing
BUILD partner
To go-live of application
SAP App center team
APPLY FOR BUILD PARTNERSHIP
BUILD partnership type
Company name
Address information
Primary communication language
Contact information
Company website
Company profile
BUILD PARTNERSHIP
SAP PARTNER EDGE-BUILD PARTNERSHIP
Partner ID
Solutions
Program fee
SAP partner service advisor
SAP PARTNER EDGE OPEN ECOSYSTEM-BUILD PARTNERSHIP
Partner ID
EXPLORATORY MEETING
Market vision
Added value relative to current partners
Culture check
MATCH
DOCUMENTATION REQUEST
FINANCIALS
Financial position
BUSINESS PLAN
Revenue
Portfolio
Number of certified consultants
CERTIFIED CONSULTANTS
Amount
Certifications
PARTNER EDGE – BUILD CONTRACT
POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER DOCUMENTATION
Partner ID
Date
Alliance manager ID
BUILD PARTNER VERIFICATION SYSTEM
CHECKS
DUE DILIGENCE CHECK
DEBT
HISTORY OF POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER
VERIFICATION RESULT
BUILD CERTIFICATION
Partner
Date
Signature
SAP PARTNER EDGE
PARTNERSHIP TYPE
BUILD
SELL
SERVICE
RUN
ONBOARDING
SAP APP CENTER ACCOUNT
Partner ID
Contact information
Role in relation
SAP partner service manager
TERMS & CONDITIONS
APP READINESS CHECK
APPLICATION READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE
APPLICATION PLATFORM
APPLICATION INTEGRATES/EXTEND
GENERAL INFORMATION
SAP CLOUD PLATFORM AND SERVICES USED
USER ASSISTANCE
FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS
SECURITY
OPERATIONS & SUPPORT
GLOBALIZATION
SOFTWARE LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT
APPLICATION VALIDATION
SAP APP CENTER LISTING
Product name
Service type
Product type
Integration type
Revenu model
SEARCH CATEGORIES
MARKETING PROFILE
Title
Description
Demo
Support documentation
Screenshot
Benefits
Features
Other information
PRICING MODEL
Free trial edition
One-Time purchase edition
Subscription price
INTEGRATION
MANUAL INTEGRATION
Email
Url
API
Integration report
AUTOMATIC INTEGRATION
PAYMENT PROCESSING
Payment gateway
BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION
SAP APP CENTER
is created during
is executed as part of
needs to be accepted as part of
needs to be passed before application is placed in
is realised during
is added during
is placed in
is required before partner is included in
is inserted in
generates
is part of
consists of
1..*

Activity table

Activity	Sub-activity	Description
Sign-up for partnership		The potential BUILD partner signs-up for a BUILD partnership with SAP.
Verify potential BUILD partner	Verify type of requested BUILD partnership	It is verified whether the potential BUILD partner signed up for the SAP PARTNER EDGE-BUILD PARTNERSHIP or the SAP PARTNER EDGE OPEN ECOSYSTEM-BUILD PARTNERSHIP.
	Schedule exploratory meeting with potential BUILD partner	The Alliances team schedules an exploratory meeting with a potential BUILD partner.
	Determine if potential BUILD partner is a match	The Alliances team determines if a potential BUILD partner is a match for SAP and should, therefore, be certified in PartnerEdge.
	Send potential BUILD partner request to provide documentation	The Alliances team requests the potential BUILD partner to provide documentation, his FINANCIALS, BUSINESS PLAN, CERTIFIED CONSULTANTS and PARTNER EDGE-BUILD CONTRACT.
	Potential BUILD partner provides documentation	The potential BUILD partner fulfils the DOCUMENTATION REQUEST and provides to the Alliances team the requested documentation.
	Obtain verification result	After the POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER DOCUMENTATION is inserted into the BUILD PARTNER VERIFICATION SYSTEM, the Alliances team obtains the verification result this is either positive, meaning the potential BUILD partner is going to be certified in PartnerEdge by means of a BUILD CERTIFICATION. When negative, the verify potential BUILD partner activity is terminated.

	Certify partner in PartnerEdge	The BUILD partner is certified in PartnerEdge by means of a BUILD CERTIFICATION. This is a prerequisite for placing an application in the SAP APP CENTER.
Onboard BUILD partner	Initiate BUILD partner onboarding	The onboarding of the BUILD partner is initiated.
	Create SAP App center account	The BUILD partner creates a SAP APP CENTER ACCOUNT.
	Verify whether BUILD partner agrees with the terms & conditions	The SAP App center team verifies whether the BUILD partner agrees with the TERMS & CONDITIONS set for the SAP APP CENTER.
	Initiate App Readiness Check	The validation process of the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION is initiated.
	Fill in Application Readiness Questionnaire	The BUILD partner fills in information about his application.
	Validate application	The BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION is validated by the SAP App center team.
	Create listing	The BUILD partner creates a listing in the SAP APP CENTER. This listing contains information about his application.
	Add search categories	The BUILD partner adds SEARCH CATEGORIES to his SAP APP CENTER LISTING.
	Create marketing profile	The BUILD partner creates a MARKETING PROFILE for his product.
	Determine pricing model	The BUILD partner determines his PRICING MODEL.
	Set-up integration	The BUILD partner integrates his BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION with SAP.

	Set-up payment processing	The BUILD partner sets-up PAYMENT PROCESSING, adding a payment gateway so that customers are able to pay the BUILD partner for the usage of his BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
	To go-live of application	The BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION can be used by SAP customers.

Concept table

Concept	**Description**
APPLY FOR BUILD PARTNERSHIP	This concept contains information about the potential BUILD partner. Some attributes of this concept are: BUILD partnership type, company information, company profile.
BUILD PARTNERSHIP	Depicts the two BUILD partnerships that are offered by SAP: SAP PARTNER EDGE-BUILD PARTNERSHIP and SAP PARTNER EDGE OPEN ECOSYSTEM- BUILD PARTNERSHIP.
SAP PARTNER EDGE-BUILD PARTNERSHIP	This partnership contains everything a potential BUILD partner requires to plan, develop, and take his BUILD solutions to market (place in the SAP APP CENTER). The potential BUILD partner is required to pay a yearly fee.
SAP PARTNER EDGE OPEN ECOSYSTEM-BUILD PARTNERSHIP	In case the potential BUILD partner is not ready yet for the comprehensive BUILD partnership, he can start exploring SAP technologies in the open ecosystem for free. This option covers the initial stages but does not offer personal support nor any go-to-market benefits. It's simple and easy to upgrade to the full benefits offered by SAP PartnerEdge.
EXPLORATORY MEETING	During this meeting, the Alliances team explores if the potential BUILD partner is a match with SAP; what is the BUILD partner's vision on the market, how does he add value relative to current partners and is the culture a fit with SAP.
MATCH	A potential BUILD partner is a MATCH. SAP sees an opportunity to initiate a partnership with the potential BUILD partner. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

DOCUMENTATION REQUEST	The documentation that is requested by the Alliances team.
FINANCIALS	This concept describes the current financial position of the BUILD partner.
BUSINESS PLAN	This concept describes the BUSINESS PLAN of the potential BUILD partner. It contains information about the revenue, portfolio and the number of certified consultants of the potential BUILD partner.
CERTIFIED CONSULTANTS	This concept describes the number and certifications of the CERTIFIED CONSULTANTS the potential BUILD partner has at its disposal.
SAP PARTNER EDGE - BUILD CONTRACT	Contains the relevant information that is needed to place in a contract for a partnership between the BUILD partner and SAP. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER DOCUMENTATION	Contains the requested documentation by the Alliances team, provided by the potential BUILD partner.
BUILD PARTNER VERIFICATION SYSTEM	This system executes various CHECKS to verify a potential BUILD partner.
CHECKS	Various CHECKS are executed in order to verify a potential BUILD partner. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
DUE DILIGENCE CHECK	This concept contains information about the potential BUILD partner's DEBT and the HISTORY OF THE POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER.
DEBT	This concept contains information about the DEBT of the potential BUILD partner.
HISTORY OF POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER	This concept contains information about the HISTORY OF THE POTENTIAL BUILD PARTNER.

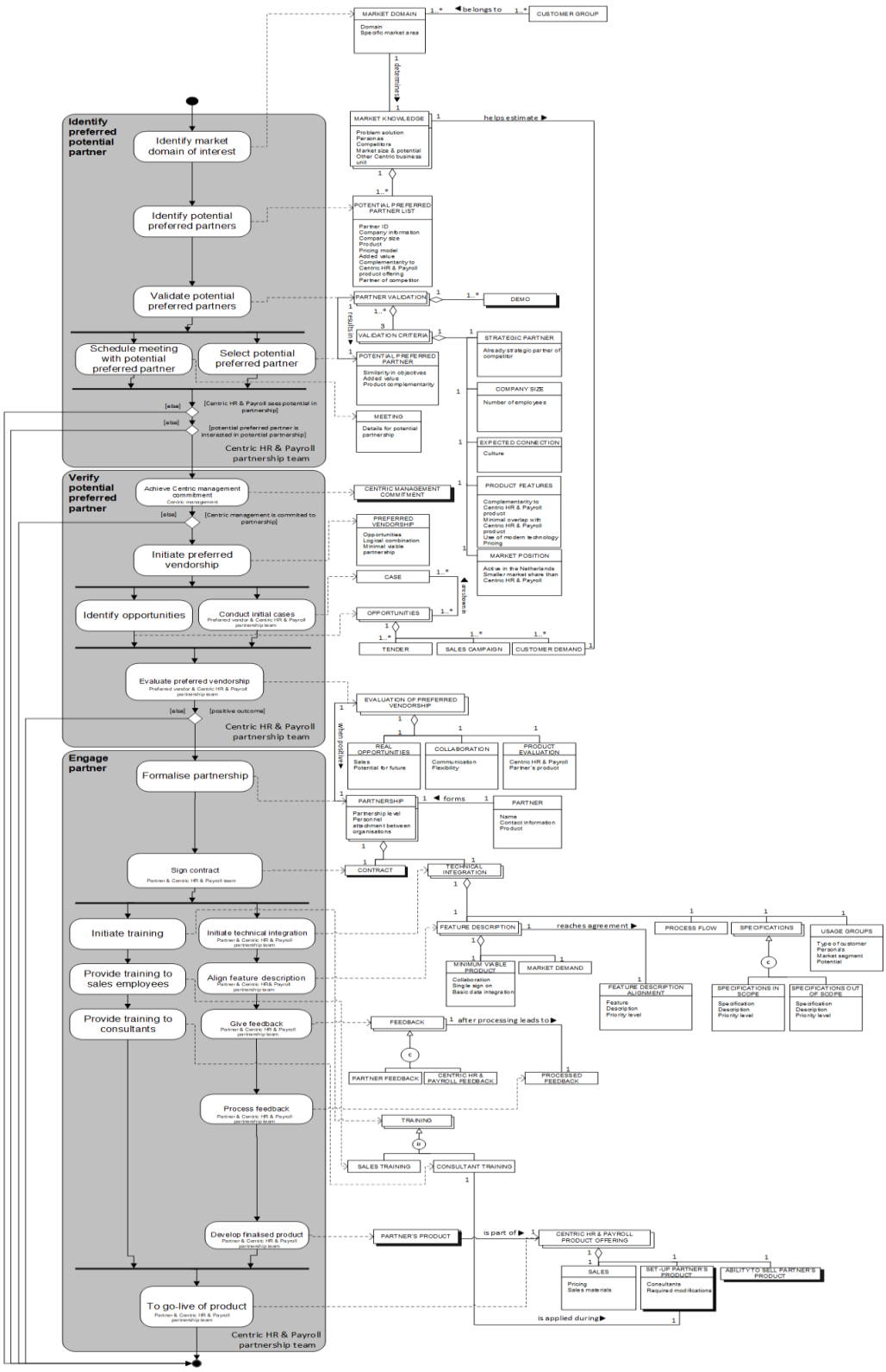
VERIFICATION RESULT	The result generated from the BUILD PARTNER VERIFICATION SYSTEM. This can either be positive, if all CHECKS come back positive, the partner is eligible to be certified in SAP PARTNER EDGE. If the result is negative, the partner selection process is terminated. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
BUILD CERTIFICATION	This concept describes the certificate the BUILD partner receives, he is now certified in SAP PARTNER EDG for a SAP PARTNER EDGE- BUILD PARTNERSHIP.
SAP PARTNER EDGE	SAP created a uniform framework for its global partner network. Through SAP PARTNER EDGE, partners can access fast-growing markets where they can offer requested software solutions.
PARTNERSHIP TYPE	Describes the four different PARTNERSHIP TYPEs with SAP that are possible.
BUILD	This partnership is for partners such as OEMs, independent software vendors (ISVs), and application developers that build solutions on top of, or integrate with, SAP technology and platforms.
SELL	This partnership is typically for resellers and value-added resellers (VARs) that resell, implement, and support customers in the cloud and on-premise.
SERVICE	This partnership is for SAP service partners; consultants or systems integrators (SIs) that provide strategic business consulting, system design, solution integration, and project implementation of SAP solutions.
RUN	This partnership is for outsourcing or hosting partners; offering SAP solutions to customers through a private or public cloud.
ONBOARDING	The BUILD partner is onboard in the SAP ecosystem.
SAP APP CENTER ACCOUNT	This concept contains information about the SAP APP CENTER ACCOUNT of the BUILD partner. Information such as partner ID, contact information and login information.
TERMS & CONDITIONS	Contains the conditions for the BUILD partnership with SAP. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

APP READINESS CHECK	This concept describes the standard procedure from SAP to confirm compliance of a packaged platform application with the standard criteria made available by SAP to the BUILD partner in the Application Readiness Check Guide, required for go - to market services offered by SAP under the applicable agreement between SAP and the BUILD partner. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
APPLICATION READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE	This concept contains the elements that are part of the questionnaire that is filled in by the BUILD partner to gather more information on the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
APPLICATION PLATFORM	Describes the APPLICATION PLATFORM which is used for the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
APPLICATION INTEGRATES/EXTEND	Describes what SAP functionality the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION integrate/extend. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
GENERAL INFORMATION	This concept contains GENERAL INFORMATION about the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SAP CLOUD PLATFORM AND SERVICES USED	Describes what SAP CLOUD PLATFORM AND SERVICES USED by the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
USER ASSISTANCE	Describes how the BUILD partner provides assistance to his users/customers. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS	Describes if the input creates the correct output, in other words: does the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION works properly. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SECURITY	Describes the SECURITY aspects relating to the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

OPERATIONS & SUPPORT	Describes the OPERATIONS & SUPPORT aspects relating to the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
GLOBALIZATION	Describes the GLOBALIZATION aspects relating to the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SOFTWARE LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT	Describes the software lifecycle of the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
APPLICATION VALIDATION	This concept contains the relevant elements with regards to the APPLICATION VALIDATION. The BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION needs to pass the APPLICATION VALIDATION before the application can be placed in the SAP APP CENTER. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SAP APP CENTER LISTING	This concept describes the listing the BUILD partner creates in the SAP APP CENTER. This listing contains information such as product name, service type and product type.
SEARCH CATEGORIES	This concept describes the categories of SAP products the BUILD partner works with, for example, SAP SuccessFactors or SAP Analytics.
MARKETING PROFILE	This concept contains marketing information for the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Information such as a description, support documentation, screenshot(s) and features.
PRICING MODEL	This concept contains pricing information for the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Information such as free trial edition and subscription price.
INTEGRATION	Describes how the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION is integrated with SAP; either manually or automatically.
MANUAL INTEGRATION	The BUILD partner manually integrates his application with SAP.

AUTOMATIC INTEGRATION	The BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION is automatically integrated with SAP. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PAYMENT PROCESSING	This concept contains the payment method which the BUILD partner's customer can use to pay for the BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION; for example, PayPal.
BUILD PARTNER'S APPLICATION	The application the BUILD partner offers to his/her customers. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
SAP APP CENTER	The SAP APP CENTER provides SAP customers with an overview of all applications that can be linked to SAP. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

B.5 Centric


Identify preferred potential partner
Identify market domain of interest
Identify potential preferred partners
Validate potential preferred partners
Schedule meeting with potential preferred partner
Select potential preferred partner
[else]
[Centric HR & Payroll sees potential in partnership]
[else]
[potential preferred partner is interested in potential partnership]
Centric HR & Payroll partnership team
Verify potential preferred partner
Achieve Centric management commitment
[else]
[Centric management is commited to partnership]
Initiate preferred vendorship
Identify opportunities
Conduct initial cases
Evaluate preferred vendorship
[else]
[positive outcome]
Centric HR & Payroll partnership team
Engage partner
Formalise partnership
Sign contract
Initiate training
Initiate technical integration
Provide training to sales employees
Align feature description
Provide training to consultants
Give feedback
Process feedback
Develop finalised product
To go-live of product
Centric HR & Payroll partnership team
MARKET DOMAIN
Domain
Specific market area
belongs to
CUSTOMER GROUP
determines
MARKET KNOWLEDGE
Problem solution
Personas
Competitors
Market size & potential
Other Centric business unit
helps estimate
POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST
Partner ID
Company information
Company size
Product
Pricing model
Added value
Complementarity to Centric HR & Payroll product offering
Partner of competitor
PARTNER VALIDATION
DEMO
results in
VALIDATION CRITERIA
STRATEGIC PARTNER
Already strategic partner of competitor
POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER
Similarity in objectives
Added value
Product complementarity
COMPANY SIZE
Number of employees
MEETING
Details for potential partnership
EXPECTED CONNECTION
Culture
CENTRIC MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT
PRODUCT FEATURES
Complementarity to Centric HR & Payroll product
Minimal overlap with Centric HR & Payroll product
Use of modern technology
Pricing
PREFERRED VENDORSHIP
Opportunities
Logical combination
Minimal viable partnership
MARKET POSITION
Active in the Netherlands
Smaller market share than Centric HR & Payroll
CASE
results in
OPPORTUNITIES
TENDER
SALES CAMPAIGN
CUSTOMER DEMAND
EVALUATION OF PREFERRED VENDORSHIP
when positive
REAL OPPORTUNITIES
Sales
Potential for future
COLLABORATION
Communication
Flexibility
PRODUCT EVALUATION
Centric HR & Payroll
Partner's product
PARTNERSHIP
Partnership level
Personnel attachment between organisations
forms
PARTNER
Name
Contact information
Product
CONTRACT
TECHNICAL INTEGRATION
FEATURE DESCRIPTION
reaches agreement
PROCESS FLOW
SPECIFICATIONS
USAGE GROUPS
Type of customer
Persona's
Market segment
Potential
MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT
Collaboration
Single sign on
Basic data integration
MARKET DEMAND
FEATURE DESCRIPTION ALIGNMENT
Feature
Description
Priority level
SPECIFICATIONS IN SCOPE
Specification
Description
Priority level
SPECIFICATIONS OUT OF SCOPE
Specification
Description
Priority level
FEEDBACK
after processing leads to
PARTNER FEEDBACK
CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL FEEDBACK
PROCESSED FEEDBACK
TRAINING
SALES TRAINING
CONSULTANT TRAINING
PARTNER'S PRODUCT
is part of
CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING
SALES
Pricing
Sales materials
SET-UP PARTNER'S PRODUCT
Consultants
Required modifications
ABILITY TO SELL PARTNER'S PRODUCT
is applied during

Activity table

Activity	Sub-activity	Description
Identify preferred potential partner	Identify market domain of interest	The Centric HR & Payroll partnership team identifies the MARKET DOMAIN of interest, the MARKET DOMAIN in which the partnership team wants to initiate a new PARTNERSHIP.
	Identify potential preferred partners	The Centric HR & Payroll partnership team identifies, based on their MARKET KNOWLEDGE, potential preferred partners. These are added to the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST.
	Validate potential preferred partner	The POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNERs are validated, using VALIDATION CRITERIA. Part of this PARTNER VALIDATION is also for the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER to show a DEMO of his product to Centric HR & Payroll. Centric HR & Payroll shows the POTENTIAL PARTNER a DEMO of their product as well.
	Select potential preferred partner	Out of the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST, one POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER is selected.
	Schedule meeting with potential preferred partner	Initiate the first steps for the PREFERRED PARTNERSHIP.
Verify potential preferred partner	Achieve Centric management commitment	In order to launch a PARTNERSHIP, CENTRIC MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT is required.
	Initiate preferred vendorship	When the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER is interested in a PARTNERSHIP with Centric HR & Payroll, the PREFERRED PARTNERSHIP is first initiated.

	Identify opportunities	The OPPORTUNITIES that arise due to a PREFERRED VENDORSHIP with a PARTNER. This includes TENDER, SALES CAMPAIGN and CUSTOMER DEMAND.
	Conduct initial cases	Initial CASEs are conducted based on a PREFERRED VENDORSHIP to validate if the intentions for the PARTNERSHIP work in practice.
	Evaluate preferred vendorship	The PREFERRED VENDORSHIP is evaluated
Engage partner	Formalise partnership	The PARTNERSHIP between Centric HR & Payroll and the PARTNER is formalised.
	Sign contract	The CONTRACT, specifying the PARTNERSHIP is signed by both the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll.
	Initiate training	The TRAINING of Centric HR & Payroll employees is initiated. This includes SALES TRAINING and CONSULTANT TRAINING.
	Initiate technical integration	The PARTNER'S PRODUCT is technically integrated with the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
	Provide training to sales employees	The Centric HR & Payroll sales employees are receiving training in order to be able to sell the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.
	Align feature description	Agreement on the FEATURE DESCRIPTION is obtained between Centric HR & Payroll and the PARTNER.
	Provide training to consultants	The Centric HR & Payroll consultants are receiving training in order to be able to implement the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.

	Give feedback	Both parties give their FEEDBACK on the PREFERRED VENDORSHIP. This includes FEEDBACK on the product as well as FEEDBACK on the collaboration process.
	Process feedback	The FEEDBACK given is processed to see which FEEDBACK is included in the development process, resulting in PROCESSED FEEDBACK. The FEEDBACK on the collaboration process is taken into consideration as well.
	Develop finalised product	The finalised version of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT, which is part of the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING, is developed.
	To go-live of product	The PARTNER'S PRODUCT is now officially part of the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING and can be sold to customers.

Concept table

Concept	**Description**
MARKET DOMAIN	Describes a specific market area.
CUSTOMER GROUP	Describes a group of customers that belong to a certain MARKET DOMAIN.
MARKET KNOWLEDGE	Contains MARKET KNOWLEDGE Centric HR & Payroll possesses. Knowledge such as personas, competitors and market size & potential.
POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST	Contains the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNERs that are considered by Centric HR & Payroll.
PARTNER VALIDATION	The POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNERs that are included in the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER LIST are validated to see if they are a match with Centric HR & Payroll.

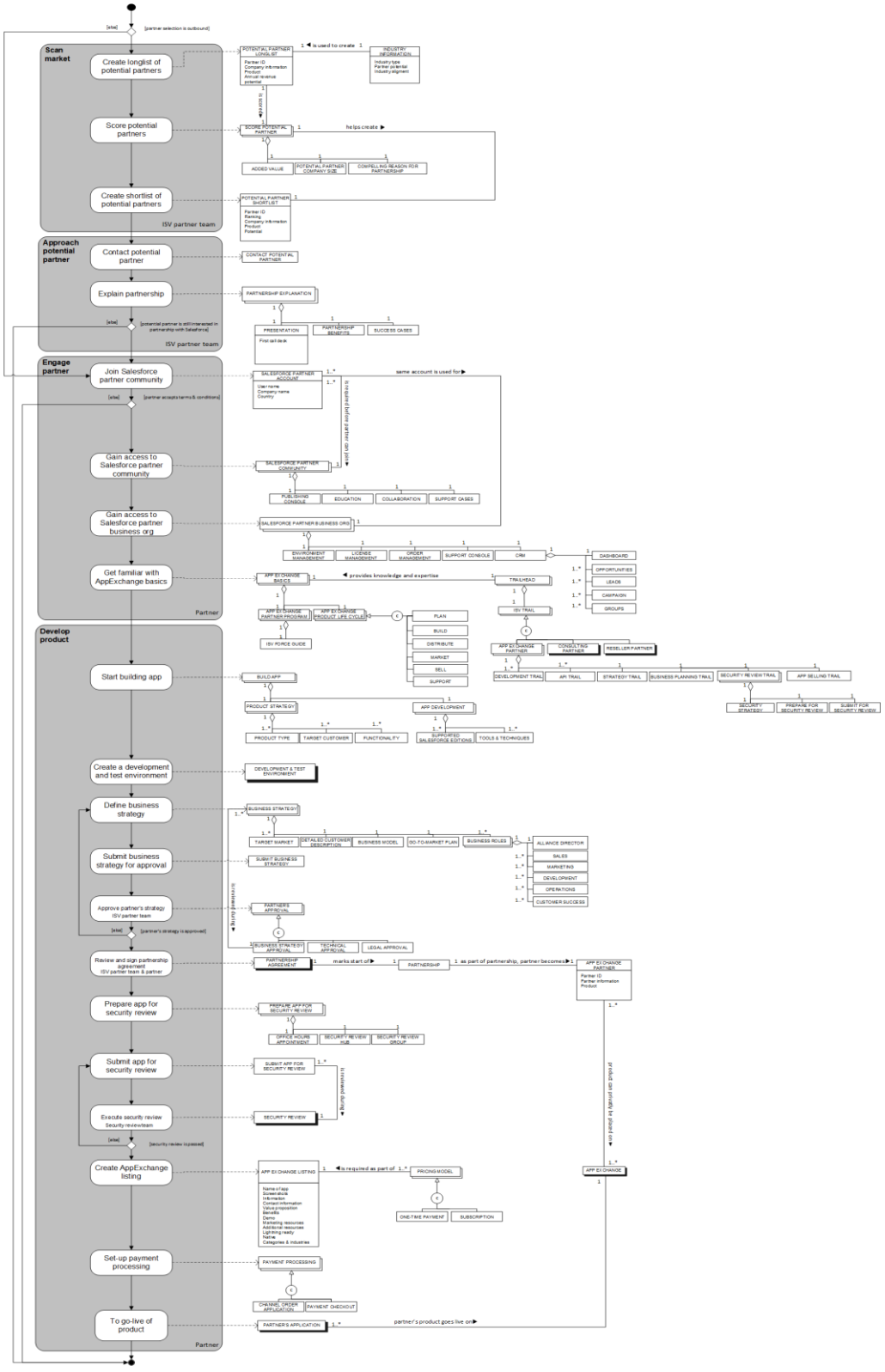
DEMO	The POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER shows a DEMO to the Centric HR & Payroll partnership team to convince Centric HR & Payroll of his added value to the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING. On the other hand, Centric HR & Payroll gives a DEMO of their own product to the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
VALIDATION CRITERIA	Contains the criteria used to validate a POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER.
STRATEGIC PARTNER	This criterion verifies if a POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER is already a strategic partner of a competitor.
COMPANY SIZE	Describes the size of the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER in terms of his employees.
EXPECTED CONNECTION	Does the Centric HR & Payroll expect a connection with a POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER? This depends on the culture fit.
PRODUCT FEATURES	Describes the complementarity to CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING. This includes minimal overlap with the Centric HR & Payroll product. Modern technology must be used in the product and the pricing should be in line with the pricing of the Centric HR & Payroll product.
MARKET POSITION	Describes the MARKET POSITION of the POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER. This includes if he is active in the Netherlands and if he has a smaller market share than Centric HR & Payroll.
POTENTIAL PREFERRED PARTNER	This concept contains information about a POTENTIAL PREFERED PARTNER.
MEETING	During the MEETING, the details for the potential PARTNERSHIP are discussed and further elaborated on.
CENTRIC MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT	In order to make the PARTNERSHIP successful, the Centric HR & Payroll partnership team needs to acquire full commitment from the Centric management. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

PREFERRED VENDORSHIP	This vendorship is firstly initiated before the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll can initiate their PARTNERSHIP. In order to do so, the PREFERRED VENDORSHIP must first be evaluated.
CASE	Centric HR & Payroll collaborates with the PARTNER to show customers a CASE in which the benefits and value of their CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING are demonstrated.
OPPORTUNITIES	Contains the OPPORTUNITIES for both Centric HR & Payroll and the PARTNER.
TENDER	Centric HR & Payroll and the PARTNER work together when they make a bit for a TENDER.
SALES CAMPAIGN	A SALES CAMPAIGN is launched to create publicity for the PARTNERSHIP between the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll.
CUSTOMER DEMAND	Describes the customer requests for the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
EVALUATION OF PREFERRED VENDORSHIP	This concept contains the elements that are used to evaluate the PREFERRED VENDORSHIP.
REAL OPPORTUNITIES	Describes if REAL OPPORTUNITIES arise due to the new potential PARTNERSHIP between the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll.
COLLABORATION	Describes the COLLABORATION between the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll.
PRODUCT EVALUATION	The PARTNER'S PRODUCT and that of Centric HR & Payroll are evaluated.
PARTNERSHIP	Contains relevant information with regards to the PARTNERSHIP between Centric HR & Payroll and the PARTNER.
PARTNER	Contains information about the PARTNER, such as contact information and product information.

CONTRACT	Contains details of the PARTNERSHIP between the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
TECHNICAL INTEGRATION	This concept contains the concepts that are relevant for the TECHNICAL INTEGRATION of the PARTNER'S PRODUCT in the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
FEATURE DESCRIPTION	Contains the relevant concepts with regards to the FEATURE DESCRIPTION of the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
PROCESS FLOW	Describes the user journey, when do you go from one product to the other within the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
SPECIFICATIONS	Describes the SPECIFICATIONS for the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
USAGE GROUPS	Describes what type of user groups make use of the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT	Contains the elements that are required to offer customers a MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT.
MARKET DEMAND	Describes the demand from the market for the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING.
SPECIFICATION IN SCOPE	Describes the specifications for the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING that need to be realised.
SPECIFICATION OUT OF SCOPE	Describes the specifications for the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING that are not realised.
FEATURE DESCRIPTION ALIGNMENT	The features to be realised are aligned between the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll.
FEEDBACK	Contains the two relevant concepts regarding FEEDBACK; PARTNER FEEDBACK and CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL FEEDBACK.
PARTNER FEEDBACK	Contains FEEDBACK on the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING and the PARTNERSHIP in general.

CENTRIC HR& PAYROLL FEEDBACK	Contains FEEDBACK on the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING and the PARTNERSHIP in general.
PROCESSED FEEDBACK	The FEEDBACK that was given by both the PARTNER and Centric HR & Payroll is processed and included in the development of the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING. The FEEDBACK with regards to the PARTNERSHIP in general is also taken into account for further collaboration.
TRAINING	Contains the two relevant concepts regarding TRAINING; SALES TRAINING and CONSULTANT TRAINING.
SALES TRAINING	The Centric HR & Payroll sales employees receive training in order to be able to sell the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.
CONSULTANT TRAINING	The Centric HR & Payroll consultants receive training in order to be able to implement the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.
PARTNER'S PRODUCT	The product the PARTNER offers in the CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING as part of the PARTNERSHIP with Centric HR & Payroll. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
CENTRIC HR & PAYROLL PRODUCT OFFERING	The products that are offered to Centric HR & Payroll customers. This offering consists of both the PARTNER'S PRODUCT as well as the Centric HR & Payroll product.
SALES	Contains the relevant sales information such as sales materials and pricing information.
SET-UP PARTNER'S PRODUCT	Contains the relevant information for Centric HR & Payroll consultants to set-up and implement the PARTNER'S PRODUCT. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
ABILITY TO SELL PARTNER'S PRODUCT	Centric HR & Payroll is able to sell the PARTNER'S PRODUCT.

B.6 Salesforce



Activity table

Activity	Sub-activity	Description
Scan market	Create longlist of potential partners	The ISV partner team creates a longlist containing potential partners for a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce. This longlist is based upon INDUSTRY INFORMATION.
	Score potential partners	The potential partners on the POTENTIAL PARTNER LONGLIST are scored, how do they match with Salesforce? To do so various criteria are used such as ADDED VALUE and POTENTIAL PARTNER COMPANY SIZE.
	Create shortlist of potential partners	The POTENTIAL PARTNER LONGLIST is converted to a POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST, based on the score of the potential partners.
Approach potential partner	Contact potential partner	A potential partner is approached by the ISV partner team if he/she is interested in a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce.
	Explain partnership	The ISV partner team explains how a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce is formalized, they also explain the partner the benefits of a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce.
Engage partner	Join Salesforce partner community	The potential partner is interested in a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce and wants to become a Salesforce partner. In order to become one, he/she joins the SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY.
	Gain access to Salesforce partner community	After registering for a SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY ACCOUNT, the partner gains access to the SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY.

	Gain access to Salesforce partner business org	The partner signs up and gains access to SALESFORCE PARTNER BUSINESS ORG. For this, he/she uses also his/her SALESFORCE PARTNER ACCOUNT.
	Get familiar with AppExchange basics	The partner gets familiar with the APP EXCHANGE. To do so, he/she follows the APP EXCHANGE PARTNER PROGRAM. An important information source is the ISV FORCE GUIDE.
Develop product	Start building app	The partner starts building his/her app. Besides APP DEVELOPMENT, he/she has to define his/her PRODUCT STRATEGY.
	Create a development and test environment	The partner creates and sets up the environment that allows the partner to develop and test his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
	Define business strategy	The partner defines his/her BUSINESS STRATEGY.
	Submit for business strategy approval	The partner submits his/her BUSINESS STRATEGY for approval.
	Approve partner's strategy	The ISV partner team approves the partner's strategy.
	Review and sign partnership agreement	Both the partner and the ISV partner team sign the PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT, which marks the start of the PARTNERSHIP between the partner and Salesforce.
	Prepare app for security review	The partner prepares his/her app for the SECURITY REVIEW. To help the partner, the partner can make an OFFICE HOURS APPOINTMENT, find information on the SECURITY REVIEW HUB or ask his/her fellow partners in the SECURITY REVIEW GROUP. The partner can also follow the SECURITY REVIEW TRAIL. Finally, the ISV FORCE GUIDE helps the partner as well to pass the SECURITY REVIEW.

	Execute security review	The Security review team executes the SECURITY REVIEW.
	Create AppExchange listing	The partner creates his/her APP EXCHANGE LISTING. This listing provides APP EXCHANGE visitors with more information about the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
	Set-up payment processing	The partner signs-up for PAYMENT CHECKOUT. This enables his/her customers to pay for the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
	To go-live of product	The PARTNER'S APPLICATION is placed on the APP EXCHANGE and can be used by Salesforce customers.

Concept table

Concept	**Description**
POTENTIAL PARTNER LONGLIST	This list contains potential partners that are considered by Salesforce for a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce.
INDUSTRY INFORMATION	Contains information with regards to different industries. Information such as industry type, the various partners active in a particular industry and their potential and how the particular industry is aligned.
SCORE POTENTIAL PARTNER	The potential partners are given a score. This score is based on the ADDED VALUE of the potential partner, the POTENTIAL PARTNER COMPANY SIZE and if the potential partner has a COMPELLING REASON FOR PARTNERSHIP
ADDED VALUE	The potential partner provides ADDED VALUE for Salesforce. This can be in providing missing functionality, supporting Salesforce in entering new markets/verticals or increasing Salesforce revenue.
POTENTIAL PARTNER COMPANY SIZE	The size of the potential partner's company.
COMPELLING REASON FOR PARTNERSHIP	Describes the partner's reason for wanting to initiate a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce.

POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST	The POTENTIAL PARTNER LONGLIST is converted to POTENTIAL PARTNER SHORTLIST based upon the score the various potential partners received during the score potential partners sub-activity.
CONTACT POTENTIAL PARTNER	The ISV partner team reaches out to a potential partner to gauge the potential partner's interest in a PARTNERSHIP. To do so, various channels are used.
PARTNERSHIP EXPLANATION	The ISV partner team explains the potential partner what a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce entails. The PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS are also explained.
PRESENTATION	The ISV partner teams gives a PRESENTATION to a particular partner to explain the partner more about a potential PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce and what such a PARTNERSHIP entails.
PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS	Describes the benefits for a partner when he/she initiates a PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce as well as why Salesforce sees a fit between Salesforce and that particular partner.
SUCCESS CASES	Successful collaborations between partners and Salesforce are presented to the potential partner.
SALESFORCE PARTNER ACCOUNT	This account is used by the partner to login in the SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY and SALESFORCE PARTNER BUSINESS ORG.
SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY	Innovate with the latest technology, partners can grow their business and can connect with the partner community.
PUBLISHING CONSOLE	Allows the partner to sell apps, components or consulting services on the APP EXCHANGE.
EDUCATION	The partner can educate himself/herself on relevant topics with regards to Salesforce products and the APP EXCHANGE and SALESFORCE PARTNER COMMUNITY.
COLLABORATION	Partners can collaborate with each other and learn from each other.

SUPPORT CASES	In case the self-service resources do not resolve the issue of a partner, the partner can create a support case on the partner community for the Salesforce partner community team.
SALESFORCE PARTNER BUSINESS ORG	Own Salesforce environment for the partner to develop his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT	The partner can manage his/her Salesforce environment.
LICENSE MANAGEMENT	The partner can manages the licenses he/she has given out to customers.
ORDER MANAGEMENT	The partner can manages the orders for his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
SUPPORT CONSOLE	The partner can request support when he/she requires this.
CRM	Customer relationship management for the partner.
DASHBOARD	The overview page within the SALESFORCE PARTNER BUSINESS ORG.
OPPORTUNITIES	Describes OPPORTUNITIES the partner should act upon.
LEADS	Describes LEADS the partner should act upon.
CAMPAIGN	The partner can launch a CAMPAIGN to gain more market visibility and traction.
GROUPS	The partner can join various GROUPS to exchange ideas, help and learn from other partners.
APP EXCHANGE BASICS	Contains the basic elements the partner should learn when it comes to the APP EXCHANGE.
TRAILHEAD	E-learning platform for partners. It also helps to get the general public acquainted with Salesforce.
APP EXCHANGE PARTNER PROGRAM	Contains information with regards on how to to become an APP EXCHANGE PARTNER.

APP EXCHANGE PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE	The APP EXCHANGE PRODUCT LIFECYCLE is the partner's roadmap for everything from ensuring that the partner is building the right product to supporting that product after it's launched. The stages of the APP EXCHANGE PRODUCT LIFECYCLE are PLAN (1), BUILD (2), DISTRIBUTE (3), MARKET (4), SELL (5), and SUPPORT (6).
PLAN	During this stage, the partner plans his PARTNER'S APPLICATION development process.
BUILD	During this stage, the partner builds his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
DISTRIBUTE	During this stage, the partner makes his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION ready to release to customers.
MARKET	During this stage, the partner generates customer interest in his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
SELL	During this stage, the partner starts selling his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION to customers; converting LEADS to paying customers.
SUPPORT	During this stage, the partner sets up support to help customers with issues and questions about the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
ISV FORCE GUIDE	Provides partners with tutorials to help him/her build and sell applications on the APP EXCHANGE. Together with TRAILHEAD, the main source of information for the APP EXCHANGE PARTNER. The guide guides the partner, for example, to prepare for and during the SECURITY REVIEW but also with regards to the TOOLS & TECHNIQUES used.
ISV TRAIL	The TRAILHEAD trail for ISV partners.
APP EXCHANGE PARTNER	Contains the various trails that APP EXCHANGE PARTNERS can follow that help them with becoming successful on the APP EXCHANGE.
CONSULTING PARTNER	The partner offers consulting services. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.

RESELLER PARTNER	The partner is a reseller. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
DEVELOPMENT TRAIL	This trail helps the partner with all aspects regarding the development of his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
API TRAIL	This trail helps the partner with all aspects regarding API development and integration.
STRATEGY TRAIL	This trail helps the partner with all aspects regarding his/her PRODUCT STRATEGY.
BUSINESS PLANNING TRAIL	This trail helps the partner with all aspects regarding his/her BUSINESS STRATEGY.
SECURITY REVIEW TRAIL	This trail helps the partner with defining his SECURITY STRATEGY, preparing for the SECURITY REVIEW and how to SUBMIT APP FOR SECURITY REVIEW.
APP SELLING TRAIL	This trail helps the partner with all aspects regarding selling their PARTNER'S APPLICATION. This includes the APP EXCHANGE LISTING.
SECURITY STRATEGY	The partner identifies who within his/her team is responsible for security. He/she also lists the resources that will help him/her to learn to develop secure software. Thirdly, the partner describes when he/she considers security in developing his/her product.
PREPARE FOR SECURITY REVIEW	Helps the partner to PREPARE APP FOR SECURITY REVIEW.
SUBMIT FOR SECURITY REVIEW	Guides the partner during the process of submitting his/her application for the SECURITY REVIEW.
BUILD APP	Contains the two concepts relevant to the partner when he/she starts building his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
PRODUCT STRATEGY	Contains the elements relevant to the partner with regards to his/her PRODUCT STRATEGY.
APP DEVELOPMENT	Contains the concepts relevant to the partner with regards to the development of his/her application.

PRODUCT TYPE	Describes the type of application the partner develops. This can either be an ISVforce app or OEM Embedded app.
TARGET CUSTOMER	Describes the customers the partner targets to sell his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
FUNCTIONALITY	Describes the FUNCTIONALITY the partner will offer to his/her customers.
SUPPORTED SALESFORCE EDITIONS	Describes which Salesforce editions are supported by the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
TOOLS & TECHNIQUES	Describes the TOOLS & TECHNIQUES used by the partner to develop his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Information with regards to this concept can be found in the ISV FORCE GUIDE.
DEVELOPMENT & TEST ENVIRONMENT	The environment that allows the partner to develop and test his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
BUSINESS STRATEGY	Contains the concepts relevant with regards to the creation of the BUSINESS STRATEGY used by the partner.
TARGET MARKET	Describes in which market the partner wants to sell his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
DETAILED CUSTOMER DESCRIPTION	This concept contains a detailed description of customers that might be interesting in buying and using the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
BUSINESS MODEL	Describes the BUSINESS MODEL applied by the partner to sell his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
GO-TO-MARKET PLAN	The GO-TO-MARKET PLAN helps partners with everything from ensuring that the partner is building the right product for the right customer to supporting that product after it's launched.
BUSINESS ROLES	Contains the roles that are part of the team that supports the partner's business.
ALLIANCE DIRECTOR	The employee responsible to manage the relationship between the partner and Salesforce and other partners.

SALES	The employee(s) responsible for selling the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
MARKETING	The employee(s) responsible for the MARKETING of the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
DEVELOPMENT	The employee(s) responsible for the DEVELOPMENT of the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
OPERATIONS	The employee(s) responsible for managing orders, provisioning, pricing, and licensing.
CUSTOMER SUCCESS	The employee(s) responsible for ensuring that customers use and adopt the PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Customer satisfaction is an important KPI.
SUBMIT BUSINESS STRATEGY	The BUSINESS STRATEGY is submitted for review.
PARTNER'S APPROVAL	The partner is approved in order to become an APP EXCHANGE PARTNER.
BUSINESS STRATEGY APPROVAL	The ISV partner team reviews the BUSINESS STRATEGY. This results in either an approval or rejection; the partner has to adjust his/her BUSINESS STRATEGY.
TECHNICAL APPROVAL	During this approval process, the PARTNER'S APPLICATION is technically validated (this does not include the SECURITY REVIEW). Important during this process is how does the PARTNER'S APPLICATION technically operates.
LEGAL APPROVAL	The Salesforce legal department approves a PARTNERSHIP between the APP EXCHANGE PARTNER and Salesforce. The PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT can now be signed.
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT	The agreement between Salesforce and the APP EXCHANGE PARTNER is signed. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
PARTNERSHIP	This concept contains the details of the collaboration between Salesforce and a particular partner.
APP EXCHANGE PARTNER	The partner is active on and sells his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION on the APP EXCHANGE.

APP EXCHANGE	The APP EXCHANGE is an online marketplace for Salesforce apps, components, and consulting services.
PREPARE APP FOR SECURITY REVIEW	The partner prepares his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION for the SECURITY REVIEW.
OFFICE HOURS APPOINTMENT	The partner can schedule a call during office hours with Salesforce employees to ask questions with regards to the SECURITY REVIEW.
SECURITY REVIEW HUB	Provides the partner with more information with regards to the SECURITY REVIEW. Information such as FAQ and a submission walkthrough video.
SECURITY REVIEW GROUP	Within this group, the partner can keep up to date on alerts, participate in discussions with fellow partners and ask questions with regards to the SECURITY REVIEW.
SUBMIT APP FOR SECURITY REVIEW	The partner submits his/her PARTNER'S APPLICATION for the SECURITY REVIEW.
SECURITY REVIEW	The Security review team executes the SECURITY REVIEW to verify if the PARTNER'S APPLICATION meets the security standards and requirements set by Salesforce. In case that the PARTNER'S APPLICATION does not pass the SECURITY REVIEW for a few times, the Security review team helps the partner to make sure his PARTNER'S APPLICATION passes the SECURITY REVIEW next time. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.
APP EXCHANGE LISTING	Describes the PARTNER'S APPLICATION on the APP EXCHANGE. Contains information such the name of the app, screenshots, contact information, the value proposition, a demo, marketing resources etc.
PRICING MODEL	Contains the two PRICING MODELs available to partners to bill their customers.
ONE-TIME PAYMENT	The customer pays once for the PARTNER'S APPLICATION at time of purchase.
SUBSCRIPTION	The customer pays for the PARTNER'S APPLICATION on a recurring basis, either monthly or annually.

PAYMENT CHECKOUT	This enables his/her customers to pay for the PARTNER'S APPLICATION. Helps the partner manage his/her payments.
CHANNEL ORDER APPLICATION	The Channel Order Application is a tool that enables a partner to create, submit, and track orders with Salesforce. All partners are required to submit an order as a result of a sale of the PARTNER'S APPLICATION.
PAYMENT CHECKOUT	The partner can manage online payments the easy way with AppExchange Checkout. Checkout lets customers buy the PARTNER'S APPLICATION directly from APP EXCHANGE with a credit card or bank transfer.
PARTNER'S APPLICATION	The application the partner offers to his/her customers as part of the PARTNERSHIP with Salesforce. This concept is modelled as a closed concept since the sub-concepts are not relevant in this context.