

Partner of the Future

Strategies for partner success:
New end-user trends and how
to address them

February 2025



vodafone
business

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FOREWORD

Now, more than ever, businesses face a complex commercial terrain. Navigating today's partner landscape requires a mix of emerging and mature technologies, yet identifying the correct mix of future-ready solutions can often prove demanding.

That's one of the reasons why we commissioned our Partner of the Future research study, to listen to and understand the challenges facing partners and end users.

Through this research, we've identified the key trends reshaping the market, the future of partner-client relationships, and the steps partners need to take to stay competitive.

Our research shows that partners are already delivering strong results, but the future belongs to the channel partners who can evolve their customer relationships further. It's time to get ahead of the new channel shift.

With more than 30 years of experience, our team at Vodafone are uniquely equipped to support partners during this change. Our converged infrastructure, broad product portfolio, and knowledgeable partner managers offer the expertise that channel partners need to navigate and thrive during the technology transformations ahead.



Kathryn Platt,
Head of Indirect Business,
Vodafone UK



INTRODUCTION

A new channel shift

Channel partners used to be seen solely as technology providers, delivering products and services to meet the IT needs of businesses. Relationships were built on transactions rather than long-term customer goals.

Today, the role of the channel partner goes far beyond that. In many cases, partners occupy an advisory position, operating as an extension of the client's businesses.

Now, technological progression is accelerating and new solutions are rapidly emerging and improving, setting the scene for another revolution in the way partners and customers interact.

Anticipate the changes

To help partners navigate the rapidly shifting market and align their businesses with future customer requirements, Vodafone Business has launched its Partner of the Future research study.

Partner of the Future explores the emerging needs of partners and their end customers. We asked end users and channel partners about the key trends remodelling the market, their current and future needs, and how they expect their businesses to evolve.

By exploring technological and business demands, both now and in the future, we've been able to build a framework for partner growth. This will allow partners to evaluate, adjust and strengthen their position in line with changing markets, to maintain a competitive edge.



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A vision for the future

Innovation drives technological change. It brings ideas to life. And technology can improve business efficiency and employee experience alike.

That's why we invest in the long-term growth of our channel partners.

Knowing what the future may hold allows you to focus on delivering what end users need and growing your organisation with confidence.

Make time to adapt

Evolution is inevitable. In a rapidly shifting marketplace, it's vital that channel partners adapt with intelligence. Solutions that produced powerful results just a few years ago may no longer be relevant.

The future belongs to the channel partners who can anticipate and respond to new customer viewpoints and needs, combining technological advancements with strong, mature and dependable foundations.

Let's take a closer look at the shifting landscape.



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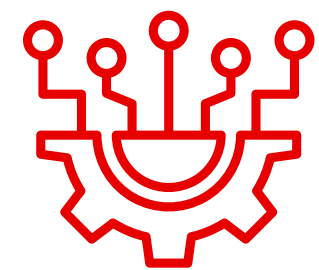
NAVIGATE A CHANGING LANDSCAPE



The needs of end users are changing. That's what our Partner of the Future research shows us. Technology trends are at the forefront of their minds. Over the next 12 months, technology will have a significant influence on their behaviours, far more than people trends, sustainability or cost and economic pressures.

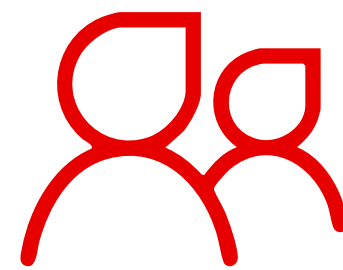
We asked:

“What trends do you expect to have the greatest influence on your company over the coming 12 months?”



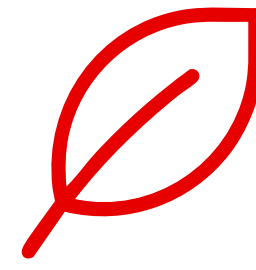
86%

tech trends



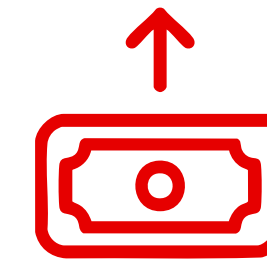
50%

people trends



21%

sustainability
trends



17%

cost pressures



14%

slow economic growth

Technology trends of influence included AI, cyber security, unified communications, cloud, SaaS and automation. People trends included remote working, skill shortages, workplace diversity and headcount reduction.

While cost pressures and slow economic growth are no longer top concerns, they are still having an influence on businesses.



Fine-tuning the tech balance

Companies have a strong interest in emerging technologies. 81% of end users said their focus on emerging technologies has increased in the past six months. 96% told us that emerging technologies will be part of their company's vision of the future. Those are big numbers.



When companies talk about emerging tech, the concepts and products they consider are:

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AI



Augmented and virtual reality



Collaboration tools, such as unified communications



Next-gen connectivity



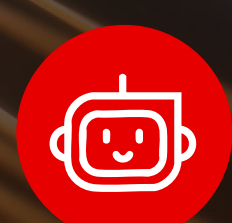
5G



Cloud and edge computing



IoT

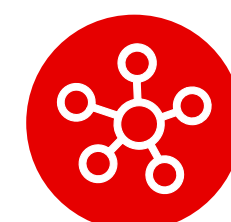


Robotics and automation



SaaS

However, the focus is not just on emerging tech. End users believe that the future is a balancing act between emerging tech and mature tech solutions. These mature solutions include:



Internet connectivity



Broadband



Mobile security

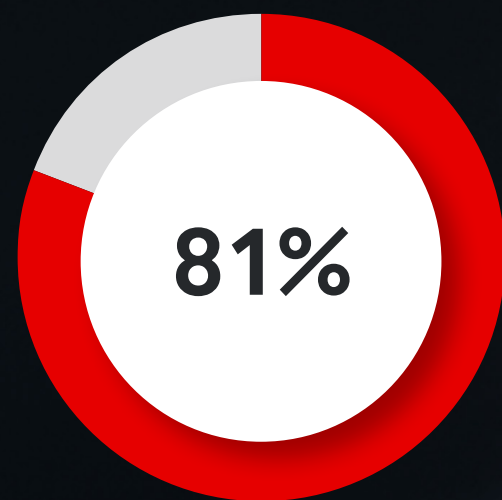


Site-to-site security

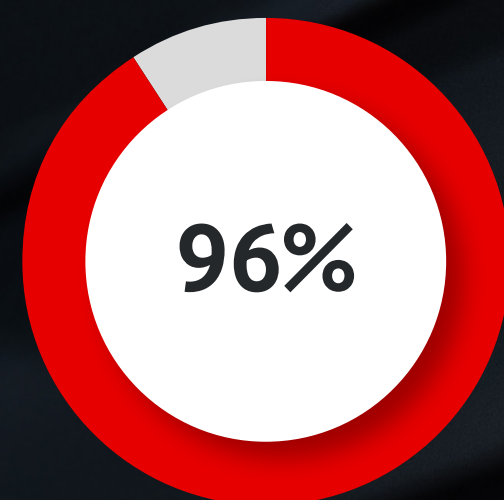


Mobile devices

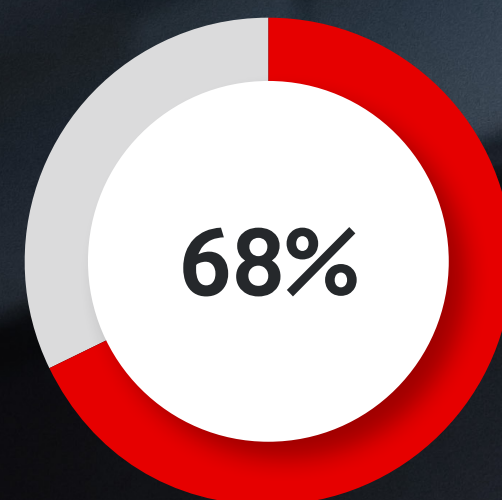




of end users said their focus on emerging technologies has increased



told us emerging technologies are part of their vision of the future



expect mature tech to play a role in their vision of the future

Top 5 tech

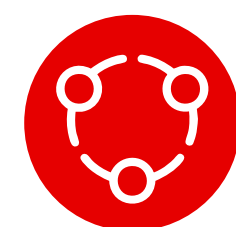
The top five technologies, either mature or emerging, which end users anticipate as playing a part in their vision of the future are:



AI



SaaS



Collaboration tools, such as unified communications



IoT



5G



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Build on solid foundations

For businesses aiming to achieve sustainable growth, the right balance of emerging and mature technology solutions is essential. Emerging technologies offer exciting possibilities. When deployed correctly they enable companies to innovate and gain a competitive advantage. They help to streamline processes, personalise customer experiences and make faster, data-driven decisions.

Yet these technologies are often evolving rapidly, costly to implement, and can expose system vulnerabilities if not integrated as part of a wider strategy.

Meanwhile, mature technologies provide the foundations for modern business operations. They deliver reliable, well-tested solutions that enable core functionalities, security and scalability, ensuring businesses continue to operate smoothly. Mature technologies also provide the necessary underpinnings for the successful deployment of emerging technologies.

It's a delicate balance, which requires significant strategic planning.

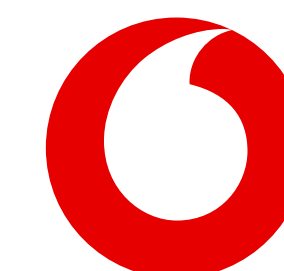


“In an increasingly digital world, businesses need agility, resilience, and the right technology to stay ahead. As Vodafone’s Strategic Partner of the Year for 14 consecutive years, our collaboration has empowered us to scale, innovate, and deliver exceptional value—helping our customers and partners navigate change with confidence and seize new opportunities for growth.”



Martin Flick,
Chief Executive

one.com



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Driven by business needs

When we asked end users why the types of technology they deploy are in high demand, we found it isn't just about the needs of the business.

Although productivity, decision-making and security were all key motivators, there were also some responses with a lack of tangible benefit in the top five. This suggests that many businesses are still getting to grips with the tangible advantages of all types of technology.

We asked:

“Why do you think this type of technology is currently in high demand within your company?”



77%

to increase
productivity



68%

it's the future



67%

businesses are
becoming more digital



65%

to enable quicker
decision making



64%

to become
more secure



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From tech to exec: a new channel partner opportunity

Companies are now placing more emphasis on how tech strategies can enable their wider business goals.

79% of end users said their company is starting to align business and tech strategies more closely



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This presents a valuable opportunity for channel partners. As businesses seek interconnected solutions that integrate technology goals with broader business objectives, they are increasingly looking to partners who understand their unique needs.

This shift will allow forward-thinking channel partners to take on a more strategic and consultative role, providing tailored guidance and shaping real business outcomes. By adopting more of these advisory roles, channel partners can **strengthen client relationships, drive long-term business value, and establish themselves as trusted experts.** This will ultimately lead to less customer churn and more sustainable revenue streams.





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A fresh partner perspective

As end users renew their focus on tech and business strategy alignment, Vodafone is empowering channel partners to succeed. We help you stay ahead of emerging tech trends, while providing the tools, training and insights needed to advise your clients effectively.

With our support, you can deliver transformative benefits to your customers. Together, we allow businesses to evolve strategically, integrating emerging technologies while ensuring a stable and dependable IT environment.



02

ADAPTING TO THE NEW CUSTOMER PRIORITIES



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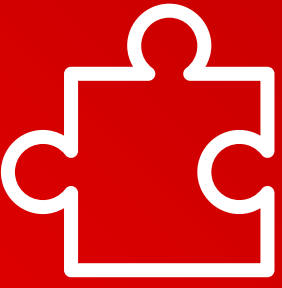


Although our research shows that channel partners broadly understand customer issues, there are still some significant obstacles that need to be addressed.

98% of channel partners said they are currently facing some sales and marketing challenges

What's more, over a quarter (28%) say they are challenged by finding the best solution for their customers.

And it doesn't end there. Other sales and marketing challenges include:



Channel partners highlighted the need to have a deeper understanding of their customers' requirements, with 67% saying they find understanding current and/or future needs a challenge.

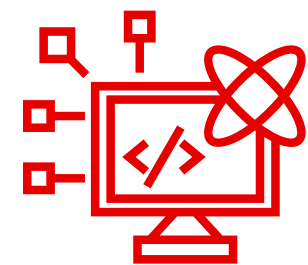


Training and education rise up the agenda

Above all, end users told us that they currently value partners who can provide training in emerging tech.

We asked:

“Thinking about your company’s **current** needs, what IT support does it value the most?”



44%

training in emerging tech



38%

helpdesk / 24-7 support desk



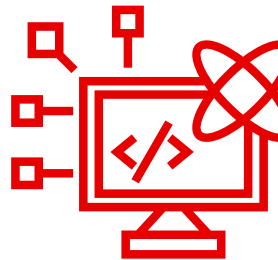
34%

education in the best tech for their business

While helpdesk is currently sitting in second position, it’s all about to change...

We asked:

“Thinking about your company’s **future** needs, what IT support will it value the most?”



40%

training in emerging tech



32%

education in the best tech for their business



29%

helpdesk / 24-7 support desk

In the future, end users believe that training and education in tech will be more important than helpdesk.



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The demand disconnect

But there's a distinct separation between the types of support that end users value, and what channel partners think they want.

We asked channel partners:

“Thinking about your customers’ current needs, what IT support do they value the most?”



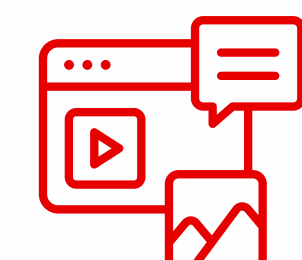
67%

helpdesk / 24-7
support desk



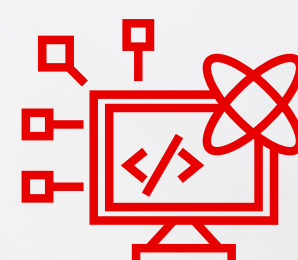
46%

education in the best
tech for their business



35%

providing specialist
content



33%

training in
emerging tech



While channel partners may be generally aligned with end users, the research shows that they place much more emphasis on the value of helpdesk. Channel partners also underestimate how important training in emerging tech is for end users, ranking it in fourth position.

This presents an opportunity for channel partners to emphasise their focus on tech training, guidance and education, gaining an advantage over the competition.



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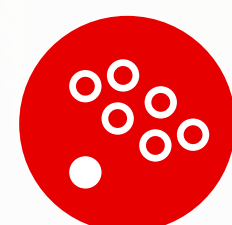


AI at Vodafone

We're using AI to power applications that help us operate our networks smartly or optimise them across markets. For example, AI helps us:

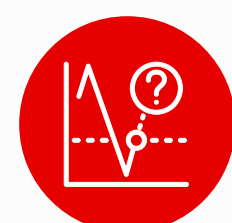


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Spot anomalies in our radio networks, or detect radio interference and determine where it is coming from.

2



Predict future problems with equipment, enabling us to **act faster and carry out preventative maintenance.**

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Predict changes in network traffic, allowing us to ensure we meet demand and continue providing a great user experience for our customers.



Vodafone Business Unified Communications as a Service

Thanks to cloud capability and unified communications as a service (UCaaS), businesses don't have to worry about switching between different apps to accomplish their goals. UCaaS brings all your customers' preferred communication apps into a single intuitive experience built with mobile in mind.

No more switching between tools that don't talk to each other, and yet delivering increased reliability when working remotely or on the move.



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Intuitive features and **real-time analytics** make your customers' communications easy to use and manage.



Seamlessly switch between mobile and desktop, for a consistent experience on any device, anywhere.



Choose a **scalable licence** and feature plan where your customers only pay for what they need.



Continuously **share and enhance visibility** across operations, with a wide range of end points connecting to network infrastructures **with IoT integration**.



Easily adapt our solutions to your customers' infrastructures as well as **over 150 third-party integrations and future tech**.



Enjoy **faster data transmission, low latency and enhanced network capacity**, making every communication more efficient **with 5G**.





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03

**FLEXIBILITY AND
SPECIALISATION
ARE KEY**





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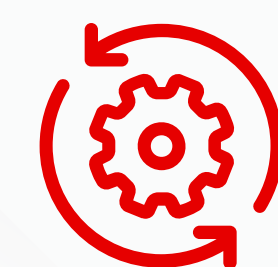
5

Get ahead of customer needs

For channel partners, staying competitive increasingly means offering value beyond tech delivery and deployment. As end users demand more specialised and complex technologies, channel partners already know they need to pivot to meet the needs of their customers. They need to be seen as experts in their fields. Building proficiencies and focusing on specialisation are key priorities.

**84%**

of channel partners see specialisation as essential for staying competitive

**70%**

expect to have to remodel what they are traditionally known for

**72%**

know their sales and marketing teams need to be more closely aligned



100% of channel partners said they needed help from vendors to drive specialised sales and marketing

Specific support requested by channel partners included:

- Training
- Content
- Product marketing
- Loyalty programmes
- Customer stories

...and when it comes to end users, **74% prefer to work with vendors that specialise in their particular industry.**

By specialising in key verticals or sectors, channel partners can offer significant additional value. It allows you to tailor your solutions, diving deep into unique requirements, managing regulatory constraints, and addressing sector-specific challenges.

Moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to technology deployment, you'll bring expertise that delivers relevant, optimised and future-proofed outcomes for each client's unique environment.



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The switch is already happening

Our research shows that a number of channel partners are already adjusting their business position in response to the market shift.

 **39%** are already focusing on sector-specific solutions

 **35%** are focusing on specific verticals

Yet  **67%** admit struggling to understand their customers' current and/or future needs

If your business isn't specialising, then it's time you thought about it.



“By choosing specific verticals, we’ve been able to specialise, differentiate and stand out in the market. Focusing our expertise on the delivery of tangible additional value is driving stronger relationships and bringing sustainable growth to our customers and our business.”



Lee Everett,
Group Chief Executive Officer

 **radius**



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Here for you

Vodafone Business is here to strengthen relationships across the ecosystem. We have decades of experience across a wide diversity of industries, from regulatory pressures and market preferences, to common technical hurdles.

We guide our partners, helping you to develop tailored offerings that meet and match end-user demands. Our extensive knowledge allows you to provide industry-specific strategic insights, ensuring you anticipate the future and deliver solutions that improve productivity and support long-term growth.



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**IT'S TIME
TO EVOLVE**



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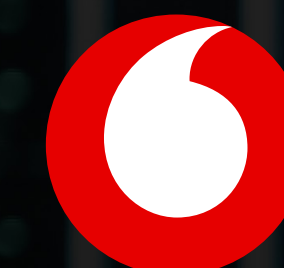
Keeping pace with tomorrow can be a challenge. But with our specialist support, resources and impartial guidance, you can deliver the right outcomes for your customers' evolving needs.

Make the move

To identify your key niche markets, start by analysing your strengths, past successes and the unique needs of different industries. Exploring the trends and growth areas within a range of sectors reveals the opportunities where your solutions meet demand.

Conduct market research and gather feedback from your existing clients. And remember, once you identify your key verticals, developing sector expertise becomes essential. Industry-specific training and certifications, partnering with Vodafone Business, securing the right sales and marketing collateral, and actively participating in relevant industry events are all options for you to pursue.

However, clear and effective communication of your value proposition is paramount to your success. Dialogue with your target audiences strengthens your reputation, fosters client trust and drives sustainable growth. Ensure this is an integral part of your positioning strategy.





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Take full advantage

The world is changing fast, but Vodafone Business moves faster. We're a world leader, with vast expertise and the resources to provide a range of communication services including voice, messaging and data, across mobile and fixed networks.

Take full advantage of our expertise and resources.

Connecting businesses, with confidence

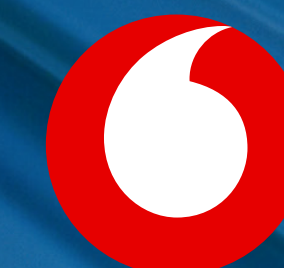
- Dedicated Internet Access
- Wholesale Broadband (wDSL)
- Dedicated Ethernet
- Switch Ethernet VPN
- Switched Ethernet Wireline
- In-Building coverage
- SIP
- VoIP

Empowering people, to better serve their customers

- Business tariffs
- International
- MBB
- Roaming
- One Net Business
- VBUC

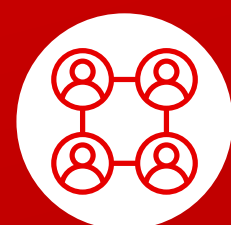
Innovating services, to reimagine the way businesses work

- IoT
- Global SIM
- UK SIM



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Our partners choose us because:



Vodafone Business has **dedicated teams** to enable partners to **respond more quickly when any issues arise**



Vodafone Business uses **language partners can understand**



Vodafone Business has the **expertise to help partners grow** their organisations and help manage their customers



Vodafone Business gives partners **access to multiple products, which takes away having to manage multiple suppliers**

Enhanced Service

With our commitment to collaborative support, every Vodafone Business partner stands to benefit from enhanced service, value and experience. We are focused on delivering greater capabilities and commercial flexibility.

Bespoke Solutions

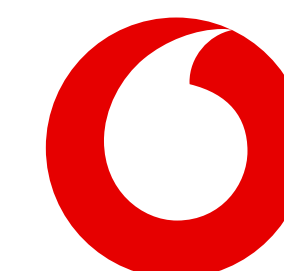
Every partner is unique, so off-the-shelf solutions rarely meet their needs. That's why we've empowered our Business Partner Managers with greater flexibility to create bespoke solutions that better reflect the reality of our partners' businesses.

Easy partnerships

We offer agreements that provide greater commercial clarity and pricing predictability, and our market-leading technologies, supported by a tailored suite of training and marketing materials, give our partners full support.

Global backing

We regularly review our tariffs, to ensure we offer market-leading rates to our partners. Plus, the backing of our global brand underpins everything we offer for every one of our partners.





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PARTNER WITH VODAFONE





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Where Vodafone can take you

As end users increasingly align their tech with their business strategies, the role of channel partners continues to evolve. Transactional relationships and traditional sales have given way to strategic, advisory roles, and a focus on long-term customer goals.

By specialising in niche markets, channel partners can address the unique needs of their customers, offering tailored solutions that go beyond the one-size-fits-all approach. And that's exactly what many end users are now looking for.

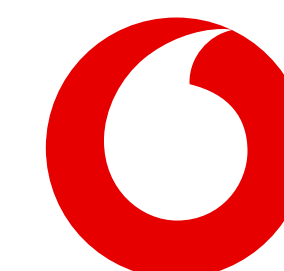
By employing the right balance of emerging and mature technologies, your business has the opportunity to drive meaningful growth for customers, solidifying your position as a trusted partner in an ever-evolving world.

Channel partners can future-proof their businesses by educating and enabling their customers and combining new and mature technologies to address core needs. And that's where Vodafone can take you.

How we can help you get ahead

Visit our Vodafone Partner of the Future webpage to make the most of the key trends reshaping the market.

Find out more





Online interviews were conducted with:

- 57 channel partners: resellers involved in the decision-making process of the products/services their company offers customers, and working in companies with between 5 and 250 employees
- 250 end users: IT/telco decision-makers at companies with between 5 and 250 employees

Two surveys were created, featuring core questions asked to both audiences, along with several questions customised specifically for each audience. The fieldwork took place from 4th to 30th September 2024.

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