

IPE Strategic Playbook

Internal Leadership Guide · Next 12-18 Months

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Vision & Market

STRATEGIC NORTH STAR

Knapsack becomes the Intelligent Product Engine enterprises trust to execute product change—safely, governably, and at scale—in the AI era.

Product intent

Executable, not descriptive

Systems

Evolve as one

AI context

Trusted & structured

Delivery

Faster via governance

Market Definition

- Knapsack competes in **Product Intelligence Infrastructure**:
- Product system infrastructure (design + code systems of record)
 - Orchestration (governance + change propagation)
 - Product intelligence (structured knowledge + signals)
 - AI product enablement (safe, contextual execution)

TAM by Capability Layer

L1 Product System Infrastructure	\$5–8B
L2 Product Orchestration	\$12–18B
L3 Product Intelligence	\$30–40B
L4 AI Product Enablement	\$15–25B
Total TAM	\$62–91B
AI-expanded TAM	\$75–110B

The Problem We Solve

Modern enterprises don't fail because they lack tools. They fail because product knowledge is fragmented, implicit, and non-operational:

Design intent lives in files

Engineering reality lives in code

Decisions live in meetings

AI operates without structure

Product System Maturity Model

Five levels define where customers are and where they need to go.

1	UI Artifacts Static mockups, no system connection	
2	Design Library Organized components, limited code integration	
3	Integrated Product System Design-to-code connection, basic governance	SAM
4	Scaled Product System Control plane operating, cross-system governance	SAM
5	IPE-Activated System Control plane operated + governed, full intelligence layer	SAM

Critical Clarification

"Implemented" does not equal "Activated"

Many customers are technically implemented but still operating at **Quadrant G** (strong system, low intelligence) until signals, governance cadence, and MCP execution are in place. This gap is the primary driver of churn.

Readiness Quadrants (IPE-aligned)

PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT (LOW INTEREST)

- A Low context, low AI → long nurture
- B Low context, high AI → educate on structure
- C High context, low interest → exit/monitor
- D High context, latent interest → timing play

ACTIVE PIPELINE (HIGH INTEREST)

- E Interest without structure → docs + heavy services
- F AI ambition without context → docs + light services
- G Strong system, low intelligence → IPE Enablement
- H IPE-ready → IPE Activation

Required Scoring (No Exceptions)

Product System Maturity 1-5	AI & Automation Capability Low/Med/High	Interest State Low/Latent/High
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Account State Flags (Required in CRM)

1. Implemented?	Y/N	Platform technically deployed
2. Trust Status	G/Y/R	Red = data loss / severe performance / support failure
3. Activation Depth	Docs → CP → MCP → AI	How deeply they use the platform
4. MCP/IPE Interest	Y/N	Expressed interest in AI capabilities
5. Strategic Fit	Y/N	True ICP match

Routing Rule (Non-negotiable)

If **Strategic Fit = TRUE** and **Implemented = NO** , the account is **Journey 3 by default** until activation is complete.

This prevents the most common sequencing mistake: selling platform expansion before activation is real.

From Assessment to Journey: A Step-by-Step Process

Follow these five steps to correctly identify which journey an account belongs to and where they should enter.

Step 1	Score the Account Rate the account on all three dimensions: Product System Maturity (1-5), AI & Automation Capability (Low/Med/High), and Interest State (Low/Latent/High)
Step 2	Plot the Quadrant Use the scores to identify the account's current quadrant (A-H). Context depth (Maturity + AI capability) forms one axis; Interest State forms the other.
Step 3	Check Account State Flags Confirm all five CRM flags: Implemented (Y/N), Trust Status (G/Y/R), Activation Depth, MCP/IPE Interest (Y/N), Strategic Fit (Y/N)
Step 4	Apply the Routing Rule If Strategic Fit = YES and Implemented = NO → Journey 3 (no exceptions). This rule overrides quadrant-based assignment.
Step 5	Confirm Journey & Entry Phase Match the journey to the appropriate entry phase based on current maturity level and activation depth.

Journey Selection Decision Tree

Use this logic flow to determine the correct journey assignment.

START: Is Strategic Fit = YES?

YES → Is Implemented = NO?

YES → JOURNEY 3 (Services Transformation)

Account needs activation before any platform expansion. Enter at Phase 1.

NO (Implemented = YES) → Check for Triggers

Is there an active trigger (exec change, reorg, tech consolidation, budget cycle)?

YES → JOURNEY 4 (Timing Play)

NO → Is Maturity Level 4+ with high MCP interest and sudden need?

YES → JOURNEY 2 (Independent Maturation)

NO → Monitor, maintain relationship, watch for triggers

NO (Strategic Fit = NO) → JOURNEY 1 (Progressive Maturation)

Maintain relationship without platform pressure. Do not overinvest.

Quadrant-to-Journey Mapping

Starting quadrant suggests likely journey, but the routing rule and account flags determine final assignment.

Quadrant	Profile	Likely Journey	Rationale
A	Low context, Low AI interest	J1 Progressive Maturation	Long nurture cycle; not ready for platform investment
B	Low context, High AI interest	J1 → J3	Educate on structure first; may accelerate to J3 if ICP
C	High context, Low interest	J1 or Exit	Monitor only; exit if no path to activation
D	High context, Latent interest	J2 or J4	Trigger-dependent; ready for fast activation when timing aligns
E	Interest without structure	J3 (if ICP)	Heavy services needed; documentation + implementation focus
F	AI ambition without context	J3 (if ICP)	Light services + docs; build foundation before AI enablement
G	Strong system, Low intelligence	J3 (if ICP)	IPE enablement path; control plane → signals → MCP
H	IPE-ready	J2 or J4	Fast activation; expansion-ready

Remember: The routing rule overrides quadrant logic. If Strategic Fit = YES and Implemented = NO, the account is Journey 3 regardless of quadrant.

Worked Examples

Three examples showing how assessment inputs determine journey assignment.

Example 1: PNC

ASSESSMENT SCORES

Product System Maturity: **Level 3**
AI & Automation Capability: **Medium**
Interest State: **High**

ACCOUNT STATE FLAGS

Implemented: **NO**
Trust Status: **Yellow** (frustration)
Strategic Fit: **YES**

Quadrant: E (Interest without structure)

Routing Rule Check: Strategic Fit = YES + Implemented = NO

Result: JOURNEY 3 — Enter at Phase 1 (Stabilize & Complete). Focus on trust repair and basic activation before any platform expansion discussion.

Example 2: Adobe

ASSESSMENT SCORES

Product System Maturity: **Level 4**
AI & Automation Capability: **High**
Interest State: **High** (sudden trigger)

ACCOUNT STATE FLAGS

Implemented: **YES**
Trust Status: **Green**
Strategic Fit: **YES**

Quadrant: H (IPE-ready)

Routing Rule Check: Strategic Fit = YES but Implemented = YES, so rule does not apply

Trigger Check: Enterprise rollout pattern identified (active trigger)

Result: JOURNEY 2 — Mature org with sudden trigger requiring fast activation. Treat as reference implementation. Platform expansion is appropriate.

Example 3: The Home Depot

ASSESSMENT SCORES

Product System Maturity: **Level 4**
AI & Automation Capability: **Medium**
Interest State: **Latent**

ACCOUNT STATE FLAGS

Implemented: **YES** (embedded but underutilized)
Trust Status: **Green**
Strategic Fit: **YES**

Quadrant: D (High context, Latent interest)

Routing Rule Check: Strategic Fit = YES but Implemented = YES, so rule does not apply

Trigger Check: Org consolidation trigger identified

Result: JOURNEY 4 — Timing play. Do not drag into long services. Prepare executive activation package and move quickly when trigger fires. Platform expansion is appropriate once trigger activates.

Portfolio Bet Summary (Leadership View)

Journey 3 holds the majority of ARR and the majority of meaningful churn risk

Services capacity is the growth bottleneck (not top-of-funnel)

J1 Progressive Maturation A → B → F → H ~10% ARR low risk
True non-ICP or low readiness — don't overinvest

Objective: Maintain relationship and credibility while they mature. No platform pressure.

Accounts: Associated Press Bright Horizons MSK Accutech

Service: Product System Readiness Assessment (Validation Workshop, Vision Definition, Stakeholder Interviews)

✗ Expansion blocked: Platform expansion is not the play. If they cannot secure engineering/platform ownership, they cannot operate IPE.

J2 Independent Maturation A → D → H ~5% ARR low risk
Mature orgs; sudden trigger; fast activation required

Objective: Instant IPE activation when timing flips. Avoid re-education.

Accounts: Adobe (reference implementation + enterprise rollout pattern)

Service: IPE Activation Sprint (Advanced Implementation, Security assessment, Architecture validation, Integration setup, Enablement)

✓ Expansion allowed: Immediate platform sale allowed. Sell the control plane and expansion roadmap.

J3**Services Transformation**

PRIMARY FOCUS

E → F/G → H

~60% ARR

high risk

High-value ICP accounts blocked on activation + trust

Objective: Activate IPE in the correct order: stability + trust → governance/control plane → execution enablement → signals → expansion

Accounts: PNC Edward Jones DoubleVerify Qualcomm GSK US HealthEdge Columbia Sportswear
Southern California Edison CVS Health Alaska Airlines Allegion

Service: IPE Context & Control Foundation + Execution Enablement (Validation Workshop, Vision Definition, Workflow Definition, Token Strategy, Component Architecture, Forward-Deployed Engineering)

✗ **Expansion blocked:** Platform expansion only after pilot proof. No expansion until activation complete.

J4**Timing Play**

D → H

~25% ARR

medium risk

Mature systems; latent interest; needs trigger + crisp activation

Objective: Executive activation package when opportunity appears. Do not drag into long services.

Accounts: The Home Depot CSX GSK Global Crown Equipment Shutterfly BILL

Service: IPE Executive Activation (Executive alignment, Targeted implementation, MCP roadmap, Expansion plan)

✓ **Expansion allowed:** J4 should not be dragged into long services until a trigger exists.

Engagement Phases (Journey 3 Model)

PNC Partnership Example

This engagement structure has been **tailored for PNC** to illustrate how the IPE maturity model and assessment framework adapt to specific customer contexts. The phases, workstreams, and exit criteria shown here demonstrate the flexibility of our approach—each enterprise partnership is customized based on their current state, strategic priorities, and activation goals.

1 Stabilize & Complete Level 3 → Operational MCP locked

Goal: Make the platform reliably usable for real teams, without heroics.

WORKSTREAMS

- Workspace Go-Live
- Entitlement setup + Site Switcher roles
- Repo / Figma access dependencies
- Proxy traffic testing + prod push
- Deployment checklists + CRs

EXIT CRITERIA

- ✓ Teams can publish + update without Knapsack intervention
- ✓ Workspace 2 live or date-certain
- ✓ Entitlements + access no longer blocking work

DELIVERABLES

- Workspace Go-Live Checklists
- RACI for Workspace 2+
- Deployment Definition of Done

2 Control Plane & Governance Level 3 → Level 4 MCP locked

Goal: Turn "systems" into a system of record with decision authority.

WORKSTREAMS

- Token Strategy POV (multi-brand)
- Ledger + LPB governance representation
- System-of-Systems architecture
- Governance model definition
- System Charter (North Star)
- PI prioritization rubric

EXIT CRITERIA

- ✓ Token strategy approved and enforced
- ✓ Governance model active beyond Ledger
- ✓ Clear rules for cross-system interaction

DELIVERABLES

- Control Plane Definition
- Token ownership + decision rights
- Cross-system governance operating model

3 Execution Enablement Level 4 Operational MCP prep begins

Goal: Prove that governed intent can safely become production change.

WORKSTREAMS	EXIT CRITERIA	DELIVERABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated token strategy epics• Component modularization• Angular 18 + 20 planning• Testing architecture• Code Connect mapping• Migration + tech docs epics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ One meaningful change ships end-to-end via Knapsack✓ Upgrade path validated without regressions✓ Teams trust the system to enforce standards	<div>Governed pipelines</div> <div>Safe propagation</div> <div>Predictable upgrades</div> <div>Quality gates</div>

4 Signals & Intelligence Level 4 → Level 5 MCP pilot ready

Goal: Introduce intelligence only after trust exists.

WORKSTREAMS	EXIT CRITERIA	DELIVERABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maturity & AI Readiness Assessment• Signal capture + dashboards• Change readiness surveys• MCP onboarding (scoped)• FDE assignment confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Signals prove faster, safer change✓ MCP adds value without introducing risk✓ Execs can articulate ROI + next bets	<div>Signal dashboards</div> <div>MCP pilot (1-2 use cases)</div> <div>ROI framework</div>

Where to Place Bets

J3	Portfolio's growth and retention engine
J4	Fastest expansion engine when triggers appear
J1	Must be protected from premature platform selling
J2	Rare but high-impact; treat as lighthouse wins

✗ What to STOP Doing

- ✗ Treating MCP Support as a substitute for activation
- ✗ Treating "implemented" as "successful"
- ✗ Running long implementations without ownership, milestones, or FDE
- ✗ Over-serving non-ICP accounts

✓ What to START Doing

- ✓ Gate all work by maturity phase
- ✓ Require Account State Flags in CRM
- ✓ Apply the routing rule without exception
- ✓ Invest services capacity in Journey 3
- ✓ Treat J4 triggers as expansion opps

Operating Cadence (Quarterly)

Pipeline + ARR reviewed by:

Journey + Activation Depth

(not just pipeline stage)

Journey 3 accounts reviewed by:

- Time to implementation completion
- Trust status
- Time to first production value
- Signal instrumentation adoption

Activation Metrics

- Implemented rate (Y/N) by ICP segment
- Trust status distribution (G/Y/R)
- Activation depth distribution
- Time-to-first-production value

Product Intelligence

- % decisions via MCP workflows
- Time: intent → governed execution
- AI output acceptance rate
- Signal reuse across teams

Business Metrics

- ARR concentration by journey
- ARR at risk by journey
- J3 conversion velocity (E/F/G → H)
- Services → platform conversion
- Expansion ARR via L3/L4

Final Word

Knapsack's opportunity is not to be the best design system platform. It is to become the **governed engine enterprises trust to execute product change in the AI era**.

The biggest wins are not "more pipeline." They are **better sequencing, stronger activation, and durable trust** — especially in Journey 3.