TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR
ADVOCACY INDEX™

A CUSTOMER-FOCUSED ANALYSIS OF TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR VISIBILITY ACROSS THE UCAAS INDUSTRY

UCAAS EDITION 2026

CUSTOMER LENS™
Evaluations based on the real-world customer buying experience.

EVIDENCE-BASED INSIGHTS
Independent analysis of 25 leading UCaaS providers using the Customer Lens™.

ACTIONABLE OPPORTUNITIES
Recommendations for suppliers, advisors, and industry leaders to close the Awareness Gap™.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE
Helping organizations make better technology decisions today—and in the future.

> *“The future of technology buying will be defined not just by the innovation we deliver—but by the confidence we create.”*

CCRI
CLOUD CONCEPTS
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH.
OBJECTIVE INSIGHTS.
STRONGER DECISIONS.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH | CUSTOMER AWARENESS | TECHNOLOGY ADVISORS | CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE

THE TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR ADVOCACY INDEX™
UCaaS EDITION 2026

A Customer-Focused Analysis of Technology Advisor Visibility Across the UCaaS Industry

CCRI
CLOUD CONCEPTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

RESEARCH DISCLAIMER

This research is provided for informational purposes only. The findings, analyses, and recommendations contained in this report are based on information available at the time of publication and are subject to change. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, CCRI makes no warranties or representations regarding the completeness or reliability of this information. Readers are encouraged to conduct their own due diligence and consult with professional advisors before making any business decisions.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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FIRST EDITION

This is the first edition of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™. CCRI intends to publish updated editions and additional research publications on an ongoing basis.

ABOUT CLOUD CONCEPTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE (CCRI)

CCRI is an independent research initiative dedicated to advancing customer-focused research that helps organizations make better technology decisions. Through evidence-based analysis, original frameworks, and constructive dialogue, CCRI seeks to strengthen customer confidence across the technology ecosystem.

“BETTER KNOWLEDGE.
BETTER DECISIONS.
BETTER *OUTCOMES.*”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE OPPORTUNITY

> *Technology has never been more innovative. The opportunity before our industry is to ensure technology buying becomes equally innovative.*

Organizations have more technology solutions—and more information—than at any other point in history. Yet the way customers buy technology has remained largely unchanged.

This research reveals a significant opportunity: while suppliers invest heavily in Technology Advisors, customers rarely see them as an option early in their buying journey.

This is the Customer Confidence Opportunity.

WHY WE CONDUCTED THIS RESEARCH

To evaluate how visible Technology Advisors are throughout the customer buying experience of leading UCaaS providers.

- Not a supplier ranking
- Not a program evaluation
- Not a competitive scorecard
- A customer-focused visibility analysis

RESEARCH SCOPE

25 leading UCaaS providers were evaluated using identical, customer-centered criteria.

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE CUSTOMER-FACING RESOURCES

- Websites
- Product Pages
- Navigation Structure
- Calls-to-Action
- Educational Content
- Partner Visibility
- Buying Journeys
- Public Resources

Internal portals, confidential materials, and private resources were excluded to ensure every observation reflects the experience available to prospective customers.

THE CENTRAL FINDING

> *The technology industry has become exceptionally successful at **developing** Technology Advisors. It has been considerably less successful at helping customers **discover** them.*

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

1. **STRONG INVESTMENT**
   Every supplier evaluated actively supports Technology Advisors through established indirect sales ecosystems.
2. **SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT**
   Supplier investment in Technology Advisors is substantial, reflecting decades of commitment to partner development.
3. **AWARENESS GAP**
   Customer-facing education explaining the value of Technology Advisors appears significantly less common than product and service education.
4. **SUPPLIER-DIRECTED JOURNEYS**
   Most customer buying journeys remain primarily supplier-directed, emphasizing demonstrations, pricing, and direct sales engagement.
5. **VISIBILITY VS. COMMITMENT**
   Customer-facing visibility should not be confused with supplier commitment. This Index™ measures visibility—not investment.
6. **ADVISORS CREATE CONFIDENCE**
   Technology Advisors do not create competition. Modern customers already compare suppliers. Technology Advisors help customers interpret complexity.
7. **THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY**
   The largest opportunity is not additional investment in Technology Advisors—it is increased customer awareness of Technology Advisors.

A SHARED OPPORTUNITY

This opportunity belongs to the entire technology ecosystem.

- Suppliers
- Advisors
- TSDs / Master Agents
- MSPs / Integrators
- Associations
- Analysts
- Business Leaders

THE CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE PRINCIPLE™

Customers rarely struggle because they lack information. They struggle because **they lack confidence.**

Information + Guidance = Confidence

LOOKING AHEAD

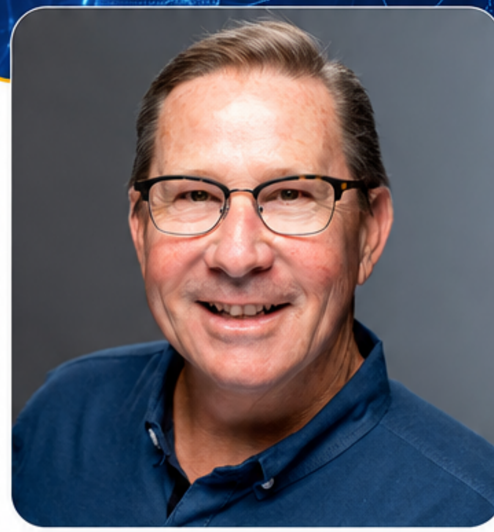
Future editions will assess additional technology disciplines, creating an ongoing benchmark that drives awareness, strengthens customer confidence, and improves technology outcomes for organizations everywhere.

> *TECHNOLOGY ADVISORS DO NOT CREATE COMPETITION. THEY CREATE CONFIDENCE.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SHAWN JONES

Founder & CEO, Cloud Concepts
Founder, Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI)



With more than 35 years of experience in the technology and communications industry, Shawn Jones has dedicated his career to helping organizations make informed technology decisions through trusted guidance, strategic planning, and independent advisory services.

Over the course of his career, Shawn has served the technology community from multiple perspectives—as a technology supplier, channel manager, technology advisor, and entrepreneur. Having spent more than half of his professional career working within the indirect technology channel, he has developed a unique understanding of the relationships that connect suppliers, Technology Advisors, Technology Services Distributors (TSDs), Master Agencies, and business customers.

As the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Cloud Concepts, Shawn has built a boutique Technology Services Distribution organization focused on helping Technology Advisors deliver communications, cloud, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, connectivity, and managed technology solutions. His customer-first philosophy emphasizes objective guidance, long-term relationships, and helping organizations navigate an increasingly complex technology landscape with confidence.

Recognizing the growing importance of independent research within the technology industry, Shawn established the Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) to encourage evidence-based discussion surrounding technology buying, customer decision-making, and the evolving role of Technology Advisors. The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ represents the Institute's inaugural research initiative and reflects Shawn's commitment to advancing thoughtful dialogue through objective observation rather than commercial advocacy.

Throughout his career, Shawn has remained passionate about strengthening the technology channel by fostering collaboration between suppliers, advisors, distributors, and customers. He believes the industry's greatest opportunity lies not only in developing innovative technologies, but also in helping organizations make better-informed decisions about those technologies.

His professional interests include customer buying behavior, technology advisory, cloud communications, artificial intelligence, customer experience, cybersecurity, channel strategy, and the future of technology procurement.

> *Technology should create confidence—not confusion. Helping organizations make better technology decisions is one of the most meaningful ways we can strengthen our industry.*

PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- More than 35 years in the technology and communications industry
- Over half of his career dedicated to the indirect technology channel
- Experience as a technology supplier, channel manager, Technology Advisor, and entrepreneur
- Founder & CEO of Cloud Concepts
- Founder of the Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI)
- Creator of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™
- Advocate for independent research and customer-centered technology buying

CCRI
CLOUD CONCEPTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

About the Cloud Concepts Research Institute

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) is an independent research initiative dedicated to advancing objective, customer-focused research that helps organizations make better technology decisions. Through evidence-based analysis, original research frameworks, and constructive dialogue, CCRI seeks to strengthen customer confidence across the technology ecosystem while encouraging collaboration among suppliers, Technology Advisors, industry organizations, and business leaders.

TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR ADVOCACY INDEX™

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CHAPTER 1
THE FOUNDATION

Helping Organizations Make Better Technology Decisions

> ***"Technology has never been more sophisticated. Helping customers understand it has never been more important."***

Establishing the Foundation

Every meaningful research initiative begins with a clearly defined purpose.

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) was established upon a simple yet enduring belief:

> **Organizations make better technology decisions when they have access to objective information, thoughtful analysis, and independent guidance.**

As technology continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace, business leaders are confronted with increasingly complex decisions involving communications, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, cloud infrastructure, networking, customer experience, and digital transformation.

The challenge facing organizations today is no longer a lack of information.

The challenge is determining which information matters most.

This publication represents the inaugural edition of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™, an independent research initiative designed to explore one important aspect of the modern technology buying experience:

> **How visible are Technology Advisors throughout today's customer buying journey?**

The Mission of the Cloud Concepts Research Institute

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) exists to advance independent research that helps organizations make better technology decisions.

Through objective analysis, evidence-based observations, and customer-focused thought leadership, CCRI encourages meaningful conversations among technology suppliers, Technology Advisors, business leaders, analysts, consultants, and industry organizations.

Rather than evaluating commercial performance or promoting individual products, CCRI publications examine the customer buying experience, identify emerging trends, and explore opportunities that strengthen confidence in technology decision-making.

Our objective is not to advocate for one supplier over another.

It is to advocate for better-informed customers.

Our Commitment to Research Integrity

Credibility begins with consistency.

Every observation contained within this publication is based exclusively on publicly available, customer-facing information available during the research period.

To preserve objectivity, the research intentionally excluded:

- Partner portals
- Confidential supplier information
- Internal sales resources
- Non-public documentation
- Executive interviews
- Proprietary channel materials

Each supplier included in this study was evaluated using identical customer-centered criteria to ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency throughout the research process.

This methodology reflects CCRI's commitment to producing research that is objective, repeatable, and grounded in observable evidence rather than assumptions.

The Purpose of This Publication

The technology industry has spent decades building one of the world's most successful indirect sales ecosystems.

Technology Advisors influence billions of dollars in annual technology spending while helping organizations evaluate increasingly sophisticated communications, cloud, cybersecurity, networking, and digital transformation solutions.

Yet one important question remains largely unexplored:

How visible are Technology Advisors throughout the public customer buying experience?

This publication seeks to answer that question through independent observation rather than opinion.

It does not evaluate product quality.

It does not compare supplier performance.

It does not measure partner profitability.

Instead, it examines how prospective customers experience the technology buying journey and whether they are introduced to one of the industry's most valuable professional resources before making significant technology decisions.

Why This Research Matters

Technology has never advanced more rapidly.

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping business.

Cloud infrastructure continues evolving.

Cybersecurity has become a boardroom priority.

Customer experience has emerged as a strategic differentiator.

At the same time, organizations have access to more information than at any point in history.

Paradoxically, abundant information has created a different challenge.

Confidence.

Customers rarely struggle because information is unavailable.

They struggle because determining which information is most relevant has become increasingly difficult.

Independent guidance helps bridge that gap.

Helping customers understand every available resource—including Technology Advisors—represents an important opportunity to improve confidence throughout the technology buying process.

Our Guiding Principles

Every publication produced by the Cloud Concepts Research Institute is guided by five foundational principles.

Independence

Research should remain objective, evidence-based, and free from commercial influence.

Transparency

Methodologies, evaluation criteria, and observations should be clearly communicated so readers understand how conclusions were reached.

Customer Focus

Every analysis begins with one perspective:

What does the customer experience?

Constructive Dialogue

The purpose of research is to encourage thoughtful discussion—not criticism.

Meaningful industries improve through respectful conversations supported by evidence.

Continuous Improvement

Technology evolves continuously.

Research should evolve alongside it.

Each edition of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ builds upon previous observations, expanding understanding while refining future methodologies.

Building a Foundation for Future Research

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ is intended to become an annual benchmark examining customer awareness throughout the technology marketplace.

Future editions will expand beyond Unified Communications (UCaaS) into additional technology disciplines, including:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Cloud Infrastructure
- Contact Center
- Managed Services
- Connectivity
- Data Center
- Networking
- Digital Transformation

Each edition will apply the same customer-centered methodology while continuing to ask one fundamental question:

How visible are Technology Advisors throughout the customer buying experience?

Chapter Summary

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute was founded upon a simple conviction:

Better technology decisions begin with better understanding.

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ represents the first step in a broader research initiative dedicated to strengthening customer confidence through independent observation, objective analysis, and constructive dialogue.

The chapters that follow build upon this foundation, exploring how customers experience today's technology buying journey, introducing original CCRI research frameworks, presenting evidence gathered from twenty-five leading UCaaS providers, and identifying opportunities that may shape the future of customer-centered technology buying.

Executive Callout

> ***"Technology has never been more sophisticated. Helping customers understand it has never been more important."***

CHAPTER 2

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Why This Research Exists

> ***“Every significant advancement begins with someone asking a question that others have overlooked.”***

For more than three decades, I have had the privilege of working alongside some of the most talented professionals in the technology industry. During that time, I have witnessed remarkable transformation—not only in the technologies we deploy, but in the way organizations evaluate, purchase, and depend upon those technologies.

I have watched the industry evolve from traditional telephone systems and dedicated circuits to cloud communications, software-defined networking, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, customer experience platforms, and digital transformation initiatives that would have seemed unimaginable only a few years ago.

Alongside that technological evolution, I have also watched another profession quietly transform.

The Technology Advisor.

While titles may vary from one organization to another, the purpose of the profession has remained remarkably consistent.

Technology Advisors help organizations make better technology decisions.

They begin by asking thoughtful questions before recommending solutions. They compare competing platforms, explain complex technologies in practical terms, help negotiate contracts, coordinate implementations, and often remain trusted advocates long after agreements have been signed.

Every day, thousands of Technology Advisors quietly improve technology outcomes for businesses around the world.

Ironically, many of the organizations that would benefit most from their expertise remain unaware that the profession exists.

That realization became the inspiration for this publication.

A Simple Question

Several years ago, I began noticing a recurring theme.

Whether attending supplier conferences, partner summits, advisory council meetings, Lunch & Learn events, or executive briefings, one message appeared with remarkable consistency.

Technology Advisors matter.

Supplier executives celebrated partner achievements.

Channel leaders discussed the strategic importance of the indirect channel.

Marketing organizations introduced new partner initiatives.

Engineering teams expanded technical enablement programs.

Executive leadership repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to Technology Advisors.

The message was unmistakable.

The indirect channel had become one of the technology industry's greatest success stories.

Then another question emerged.

A question that seemed surprisingly simple.

If Technology Advisors are this important...

Why don't more customers know they exist?

The more I considered that question, the more curious I became.

Looking Through a Different Lens

Like many people within our industry, my initial assumption was that the answer would be obvious.

Surely supplier websites explained the value Technology Advisors bring to the customer buying process.

Surely prospective customers were encouraged to consider independent guidance before making complex technology decisions.

After all, suppliers invest extraordinary resources supporting the Technology Advisor community.

Partner organizations.

Professional certifications.

Engineering support.

Marketing Development Funds.

National conferences.

Executive advisory councils.

Regional partner events.

Technical education.

Sales enablement.

The investments are significant and deserve recognition.

It seemed reasonable to assume that customer-facing messaging reflected the same commitment demonstrated throughout the partner ecosystem.

Rather than relying on assumptions, however, we decided to investigate.

What We Discovered

The purpose of this research was never to prove a predetermined conclusion.

Its purpose was to answer a question.

To accomplish that objective, we intentionally excluded partner portals, confidential supplier resources, internal sales documentation, and private enablement materials.

Instead, we followed the same path that a prospective customer would naturally follow.

We searched.

We clicked.

We read.

We explored.

We evaluated supplier websites through the eyes of a business leader researching communications technology for the first time.

What we discovered surprised us.

Not because suppliers lacked commitment to Technology Advisors.

The evidence consistently demonstrated exactly the opposite.

The supplier community has invested decades building one of the strongest indirect sales ecosystems in modern business.

Our observations revealed something far more subtle.

Technology Advisors appeared highly visible within the partner ecosystem.

They appeared considerably less visible throughout the customer buying journey.

That single observation ultimately became the foundation of this report.

This Is Not a Critique

Before you continue reading, I want to be perfectly clear about something.

This publication was never intended to criticize suppliers, challenge existing channel strategies, or diminish the extraordinary investments the technology industry has made in the Technology Advisor community.

In fact, one of the strongest conclusions reached during this research is precisely the opposite.

The technology industry has built one of the most sophisticated and successful indirect sales ecosystems in modern business.

That achievement deserves recognition.

For decades, suppliers have invested heavily in partner recruitment, education, engineering support, certifications, marketing programs, executive councils, and community development. Those investments have helped create an industry of highly skilled professionals who improve technology outcomes for organizations of every size.

Without that commitment, the Technology Advisor profession would not have evolved into the trusted resource it has become today.

This publication simply asks whether another opportunity exists.

An opportunity to help prospective customers understand that Technology Advisors are available to assist them before they begin one of the most significant technology purchasing decisions their organization may ever make.

That distinction is important.

This report is not about replacing existing strategies.

It is about expanding them.

It is not about changing the relationship between suppliers and Technology Advisors.

It is about strengthening the relationship between customers and informed decision-making.

Why This Matters

Technology buying has changed dramatically.

Only a generation ago, organizations relied heavily on suppliers and local providers to introduce new technologies.

Today, information is available everywhere.

Business leaders can research supplier websites, consult analyst reports, compare online reviews, watch product demonstrations, participate in user communities, and even ask artificial intelligence platforms to summarize complex technologies in seconds.

Access to information is no longer the challenge.

Confidence is.

Modern organizations are overwhelmed by choices.

Multiple suppliers.

Multiple deployment models.

Multiple contract structures.

Multiple implementation approaches.

Every option appears compelling.

Every platform claims leadership.

Every solution promises innovation.

Yet very few organizations possess the time or expertise to evaluate every alternative thoroughly.

As technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, the value of objective guidance continues to grow.

Technology Advisors do not replace supplier expertise.

They complement it.

They help organizations ask better questions.

They explain trade-offs that may not be immediately obvious.

They provide independent perspectives based upon experience across multiple technologies and multiple suppliers.

Most importantly, they help transform information into confidence.

Confidence leads to stronger decisions.

And stronger decisions benefit everyone involved in the technology ecosystem.

A Different Perspective

Throughout this publication, readers will notice something intentional.

We spend very little time discussing the long-standing debate between direct sales and indirect sales.

That conversation has existed for decades.

It will undoubtedly continue for decades to come.

Instead, this research focuses on something different.

Customer confidence.

The central premise of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ is remarkably simple.

Organizations deserve to understand every resource available to them before making complex technology decisions.

Sometimes that resource will be internal expertise.

Sometimes it will be a supplier representative.

Sometimes it will be an outside consultant.

Sometimes it will be a Technology Advisor.

Our position is not that every customer should work with a Technology Advisor.

Our position is that every customer should know the option exists.

Awareness creates choice.

Choice creates confidence.

Confidence creates better decisions.

That principle serves as the philosophical foundation for every observation presented throughout this publication.

An Industry Built on Relationships

One of the characteristics that has always distinguished the technology industry is its willingness to collaborate.

Competitors often become partners.

Suppliers frequently work alongside distributors, consultants, systems integrators, managed service providers, and Technology Advisors to deliver successful outcomes for customers.

This collaborative spirit has fueled decades of innovation.

It has accelerated technology adoption.

It has expanded opportunities for organizations of every size.

Perhaps most importantly, it has demonstrated that exceptional customer outcomes rarely result from one organization working alone.

They result from ecosystems of expertise.

Technology Advisors represent an important part of that ecosystem.

Recognizing their contribution is not about assigning greater importance to one participant over another.

It is about acknowledging that customers benefit most when they understand the full range of resources available to them.

An Invitation

As you continue through the pages that follow, I invite you to approach this publication with curiosity.

You may find yourself agreeing with many of our observations.

You may challenge some of our conclusions.

You may discover opportunities we overlooked.

And you may reach entirely different conclusions of your own.

That is not only acceptable—it is precisely what independent research should encourage.

Healthy discussion strengthens industries.

Progress rarely begins with unanimous agreement.

Instead, it begins when thoughtful people are willing to examine familiar challenges from a new perspective.

That is the spirit in which this publication was written.

Our objective is not to provide every answer.

Our objective is to ask meaningful questions.

Questions that encourage better conversations.

Questions that inspire new thinking.

Questions that ultimately help organizations make more informed technology decisions.

If this publication contributes to that dialogue—even in a small way—then it will have accomplished its purpose.

Looking Forward

This publication represents the inaugural edition of the **Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™**.

It is not intended to be the final word on the subject.

Rather, it is the beginning of an ongoing conversation.

Technology will continue to evolve.

Artificial intelligence will reshape the customer buying experience.

Cybersecurity challenges will become increasingly complex.

Cloud platforms will mature.

Communications technologies will continue to transform how organizations operate.

The role of Technology Advisors will evolve alongside those changes.

Future editions of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ will expand beyond Unified Communications into additional technology disciplines, including:

- Cybersecurity
- Contact Center (CCaaS)
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cloud Infrastructure
- Connectivity
- Managed Services
- Digital Transformation
- Customer Buying Behavior
- Technology Procurement

Each future publication will continue exploring one fundamental question:

How visible are Technology Advisors throughout the customer buying experience?

Although the technologies may change, that central question will remain.

A Vision Beyond This Publication

Our hope extends beyond producing another industry report.

We hope the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ becomes a respected benchmark for thoughtful discussion.

A resource that encourages collaboration rather than division.

A publication that helps suppliers, Technology Advisors, analysts, distributors, consultants, and business leaders better understand the customer perspective.

Most importantly, we hope it encourages organizations to approach technology decisions with greater confidence.

Because confidence changes outcomes.

Confident organizations ask better questions.

Better questions lead to better evaluations.

Better evaluations produce better technology decisions.

And better technology decisions create stronger businesses.

That belief is at the heart of everything the Cloud Concepts Research Institute seeks to accomplish.

A Personal Reflection

After more than thirty years in this industry, I remain optimistic about its future.

I have seen extraordinary innovation.

I have watched competitors become partners.

I have witnessed technologies that once seemed impossible become commonplace.

Throughout those years, one truth has remained remarkably consistent.

The greatest value in our industry has never been the technology itself.

It has always been the people who help others understand it.

Technology will continue to change.

Products will evolve.

Platforms will improve.

Artificial intelligence will redefine many aspects of how organizations evaluate solutions.

Yet the need for trusted guidance will remain.

Perhaps it will become even more important.

That is why I believe the Technology Advisor profession has an extraordinary future.

Not because Technology Advisors sell technology.

Because they help organizations make confident decisions.

That distinction is what inspired this publication.

And it is what continues to inspire the work of the Cloud Concepts Research Institute.

Closing Thoughts

If this publication encourages suppliers to consider new ways of introducing Technology Advisors to prospective customers…

If it encourages Technology Advisors to think differently about their own visibility…

If it encourages business leaders to seek trusted guidance before making significant technology investments…

Then this inaugural edition will have served its purpose.

The strongest industries are built on informed customers, collaborative partnerships, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes.

Those principles guided every page of this publication.

It is our sincere hope that they continue guiding the conversations that follow.

Shawn Jones
Founder & CEO
Cloud Concepts

Founder
Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI)

***"Better technology decisions begin with better questions.
Better questions begin with greater awareness."***

CCRI Insight

One of the most significant observations made during this research was not the strength of supplier partner programs—it was the opportunity to extend that same commitment to customer awareness.

This publication does not question the industry's investment in Technology Advisors.

It asks whether customers should benefit more directly from that investment through greater awareness of the profession itself.

> **"Organizations cannot intentionally seek the guidance of a Technology Advisor until they first know the profession exists."**

Coming Next

Chapter 3

Executive Summary

A high-level overview of the research findings, key observations, and the central question that inspired the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™

TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR ADVOCACY INDEX™

CHAPTER 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Customer Confidence Opportunity

> ***"Technology has never been more innovative. The opportunity before our industry is to ensure technology buying becomes equally innovative."***

Executive Overview

The technology industry has experienced extraordinary transformation over the past two decades.

Cloud computing has redefined enterprise infrastructure.

Artificial intelligence is reshaping customer engagement.

Unified Communications has transformed collaboration.

Cybersecurity has become a board-level priority.

Cloud platforms have accelerated innovation at an unprecedented pace.

Organizations today have access to more technology solutions than at any other point in history.

Yet despite this remarkable evolution, one aspect of the industry has remained surprisingly familiar.

The way customers buy technology.

Many organizations continue to evaluate increasingly sophisticated solutions through buying processes originally designed for a far less complex technology landscape.

They visit supplier websites.

They request demonstrations.

They speak with sales representatives.

They compare proposals.

They negotiate contracts.

They coordinate implementations.

Throughout this journey, they are presented with enormous amounts of product information.

What they are often not presented with is another option.

The opportunity to work with an independent Technology Advisor.

That observation became the catalyst for the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™.

Why This Research Was Conducted

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) established the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ to answer one straightforward yet important question:

How visible are Technology Advisors throughout today's customer buying experience?

This publication is not a study of partner programs.

It is not a comparison of suppliers.

It is not a product evaluation.

It is not a ranking of technology vendors.

Instead, it is an independent examination of publicly available, customer-facing information designed to better understand one fundamental issue:

If Technology Advisors are considered one of the industry's most valuable strategic assets, are prospective customers being educated about the value they provide?

That question serves as the foundation for every observation presented throughout this publication.

Research Scope

The inaugural edition of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ evaluated twenty-five leading Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) providers.

Each supplier was reviewed using identical customer-focused evaluation criteria.

Rather than analyzing confidential partner organizations or internal sales resources, the research intentionally followed the same journey available to every prospective customer.

Our evaluation included:

- Supplier websites
- Product pages
- Website navigation
- Calls-to-action
- Partner resources
- Customer education
- Buying journeys

- Publicly available information

Every conclusion contained within this publication is based exclusively upon that publicly accessible customer experience.

What We Expected

Before beginning this research, we entered the project with several assumptions.

We expected every supplier to demonstrate a meaningful commitment to the indirect channel.

We expected mature partner organizations supported by robust enablement programs.

We expected significant investments in Technology Advisors.

Most importantly, we expected supplier websites to clearly explain why organizations might benefit from working with a Technology Advisor.

It was this final assumption that ultimately proved to be the most revealing.

What the Evidence Revealed

Although every supplier demonstrated strong support for Technology Advisors within the partner ecosystem, our research identified several broader themes.

Observation One

Every supplier evaluated actively supports the indirect channel.

Technology Advisors continue to represent an essential component of the UCaaS marketplace.

This finding reinforces the industry's long-standing commitment to partner-driven growth.

Observation Two

Many suppliers publicly recognize and celebrate their partner communities.

Authorized partner directories, partner locator tools, and references to the channel are common throughout the industry.

These investments demonstrate a strong commitment to the Technology Advisor community.

Observation Three

Customer-facing education explaining why organizations should consider working with a Technology Advisor appears considerably less common than customer-facing education describing products and services.

Customers frequently discover that partners exist.

They are introduced far less often to the value those partners provide.

Observation Four

Customer buying journeys remain predominantly supplier-directed.

Common calls-to-action include:

- Request a Demo
- Contact Sales
- Talk to an Expert
- Request Pricing
- Start a Free Trial

Educational pathways introducing Technology Advisors as an available buying resource appear considerably less prominent.

Observation Five

The greatest opportunity identified by this research is not additional investment in Technology Advisors.

The opportunity lies in increasing **customer awareness** of Technology Advisors before critical purchasing decisions begin.

The Central Finding

Perhaps the most important conclusion contained within this publication can be summarized in one sentence:

The technology industry has become exceptionally effective at building Technology Advisors. It has been considerably less successful at helping customers discover them.

This observation should not be interpreted as criticism.

Rather, it represents an opportunity.

One that benefits suppliers, Technology Advisors, and—most importantly—customers.

A Different Way to Think About the Channel

Historically, conversations surrounding the indirect channel have focused on:

- Recruitment
- Enablement
- Certification
- Productivity
- Revenue contribution
- Partner engagement

Those investments have produced remarkable success.

This publication suggests the industry's next opportunity may involve something different.

Customer awareness.

Instead of asking:

"How do we build stronger Technology Advisors?"

Perhaps the next question should be:

"How do we help more organizations discover the extraordinary Technology Advisors already serving our industry?"

That subtle shift in perspective has the potential to reshape the customer buying experience.

Why This Matters

Technology buying continues to increase in complexity.

Organizations evaluating modern communications solutions must now consider:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Compliance
- Mobility
- Customer Experience
- Business Continuity
- Cloud Infrastructure
- Workflow Automation
- Application Integration
- Global Connectivity
- Vendor Ecosystems
- Pricing Models

- Contract Structures
- Implementation Risk

No single supplier can eliminate that complexity.

Technology Advisors help organizations navigate it.

Their value extends beyond product expertise.

They create confidence.

That distinction lies at the heart of this publication.

The Customer Confidence Principle™

Throughout this research, one concept emerged repeatedly.

Customers rarely struggle because information is unavailable.

They struggle because confidence is.

Supplier websites provide extraordinary amounts of product information.

Technology Advisors help transform that information into informed decisions.

Confidence is not created through additional product features.

Confidence is created through understanding.

Understanding is created through thoughtful guidance.

That principle became one of the defining concepts of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™.

A Shared Opportunity

This publication does not assign responsibility to any single segment of the technology industry.

Instead, it identifies a shared opportunity.

An opportunity that belongs to:

- Suppliers
- Technology Advisors
- Technology Services Distributors
- Master Agencies
- Managed Service Providers

- Systems Integrators
- Consultants
- Analyst Firms
- Industry Associations
- Business Leaders

Each has the ability to contribute toward improving customer awareness and strengthening customer confidence.

Looking Ahead

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ represents the beginning of a broader CCRI research initiative.

Future editions will evaluate additional technology categories using the same customer-centered methodology, including:

- Cybersecurity
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cloud Infrastructure
- Contact Center
- Managed Services
- Connectivity
- Network Services
- Customer Experience

Each annual edition will continue asking one central question:

How effectively does the technology industry educate prospective customers about the value of working with a Technology Advisor?

By applying a consistent research methodology across multiple technology disciplines, CCRI hopes to establish a trusted annual benchmark for measuring customer awareness throughout the technology buying journey.

Executive Summary

This publication is not about direct sales versus indirect sales.

It is not about supplier competition.

It is not about determining winners and losers.

It is about customers.

Helping organizations understand every resource available to them before making complex technology decisions.

Technology Advisors represent one of those resources.

Our research suggests there is a meaningful opportunity to make that resource more visible throughout the customer buying experience.

If the conversations inspired by this publication contribute to greater customer confidence, stronger buying decisions, and improved technology outcomes, then the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ will have fulfilled its purpose.

Executive Callout

Technology Advisors do not create competition.

They create confidence.

Chapter Transition

The chapters that follow explore the customer buying journey in greater detail, introduce the original research frameworks developed by the Cloud Concepts Research Institute, present observations from twenty-five leading UCaaS suppliers, and outline a vision for how the technology industry can further strengthen customer confidence through greater awareness of Technology Advisors.

The question that inspired this publication now becomes the framework that guides the remainder of this research.

How visible are Technology Advisors throughout today's customer buying experience?

CHAPTER 4

WHO IS A TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR?

Understanding One of the Technology Industry's Most Valuable Resources

> ***"Titles may differ. Business models may differ. Companies may differ. The mission remains remarkably consistent—helping organizations make better technology decisions."***

An Industry Without a Common Definition

One of the first observations made during this research was surprisingly straightforward.

The technology industry has never fully agreed on what to call the professionals who help organizations evaluate, procure, implement, and manage technology solutions.

Depending on the supplier, distributor, geography, technology category, or business model, these professionals may be known by many different titles, including:

- Technology Advisor
- Technology Consultant
- Telecommunications Agent
- Cloud Consultant
- Managed Service Provider (MSP)
- Systems Integrator (SI)
- Technology Broker
- Value-Added Reseller (VAR)
- Solution Provider
- Channel Partner
- Strategic Advisor
- Communications Consultant
- Sales Partner
- Trusted Advisor
- Indirect Partner

Each title reflects a unique business model, specialization, or commercial relationship.

Yet beneath those differences lies a remarkably consistent purpose.

Helping organizations make informed technology decisions.

For the purposes of this publication, these professionals are collectively referred to as **Technology Advisors**.

Why We Chose the Term "Technology Advisor"

Words matter.

Especially in research.

Throughout this publication, we intentionally use the term **Technology Advisor** because it emphasizes the value delivered to customers rather than the commercial relationship between suppliers and partners.

Terms such as *agent*, *broker*, *reseller*, or *partner* often describe **how** an organization operates.

Technology Advisor describes why the profession exists.

It places the customer—not the transaction—at the center of the relationship.

That distinction is fundamental to this research.

This publication is not about sales channels.

It is about customer confidence.

What Is a Technology Advisor?

A Technology Advisor is an independent professional or organization that assists businesses in evaluating, procuring, implementing, and supporting technology solutions.

Rather than representing a single supplier, many Technology Advisors evaluate solutions across multiple providers, allowing them to recommend technologies based upon a customer's:

- Business objectives
- Operational requirements
- Existing technology environment
- Budget
- Long-term strategy
- Growth plans

Their responsibility extends far beyond recommending products.

Technology Advisors help organizations:

- Understand available options.
- Simplify complexity.
- Evaluate tradeoffs.
- Identify potential risks.
- Increase confidence throughout the buying process.

Ultimately, their role is not simply to help organizations purchase technology.

Their role is to help organizations make better technology decisions.

The Technology Advisor Ecosystem™

Technology Advisors represent one of the industry's most diverse professional communities.

Some primarily serve local businesses.

Others advise multinational enterprises.

Some specialize in Unified Communications.

Others focus on cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence, networking, managed services, digital transformation, or contact center technologies.

Business models vary.

Technical expertise varies.

Market focus varies.

Yet the underlying mission remains remarkably consistent.

Helping organizations make better technology decisions.

For purposes of this publication, the Technology Advisor Ecosystem™ includes professionals operating under titles such as:

- Technology Advisor
- Technology Consultant
- Telecommunications Agent
- Cloud Consultant
- Communications Consultant
- Managed Service Provider (MSP)
- Systems Integrator (SI)
- Value-Added Reseller (VAR)
- Technology Broker
- Solution Provider
- Strategic Technology Consultant
- Independent IT Consultant
- Digital Transformation Consultant
- Cloud Services Consultant
- Technology Procurement Consultant

Although these organizations differ significantly in size and specialization, they share one defining characteristic.

They exist to help customers successfully navigate increasingly complex technology decisions.

What Technology Advisors Actually Do

Technology Advisors deliver considerably more value than product recommendations alone.

While responsibilities vary from one organization to another, many Technology Advisors support customers throughout the entire technology lifecycle.

Typical responsibilities include:

- Understanding business objectives before recommending technology.
- Evaluating multiple suppliers.
- Comparing competing solutions.
- Translating technical differences into business outcomes.
- Identifying implementation risks.
- Reviewing commercial proposals.
- Assisting with contract negotiations.
- Coordinating supplier engagement.
- Supporting implementation planning.
- Providing ongoing strategic guidance after deployment.

For many customers, the relationship extends well beyond procurement.

It evolves into a long-term advisory partnership built upon trust, experience, and measurable business value.

Beyond Products

Historically, Technology Advisors were often associated with telecommunications procurement.

Today's profession has evolved considerably.

Modern Technology Advisors routinely assist organizations with:

- Unified Communications (UCaaS)
- Contact Center (CCaaS)
- Cybersecurity
- Connectivity
- Cloud Infrastructure
- Artificial Intelligence
- Network Services
- Business Continuity
- Data Center Solutions
- Managed Services
- Mobility
- Collaboration Platforms
- Digital Transformation

As technologies continue to converge, so does the role of the Technology Advisor.

Increasingly, organizations seek guidance that extends beyond individual products toward broader business outcomes.

What Technology Advisors Are Not

Understanding the profession also requires addressing several common misconceptions.

Technology Advisors are not:

- Referral sources.
- Order takers.
- Quote generators.
- Product fulfillment organizations.
- Replacements for supplier sales teams.

Supplier representatives possess deep expertise regarding their own products and services.

Technology Advisors contribute a different perspective.

They compare alternatives across multiple providers.

They ask business-focused questions.

They evaluate technology through the lens of customer objectives.

Their role complements supplier expertise rather than competing with it.

Customers benefit from both perspectives.

Independence Creates Perspective

One of the defining characteristics of many Technology Advisors is independence.

Because they frequently evaluate solutions from multiple providers, Technology Advisors often approach technology decisions from a broader perspective than any single supplier can reasonably provide.

Independence should not be confused with neutrality.

Technology Advisors naturally develop preferences based upon customer success, implementation experience, technical capabilities, and long-term outcomes.

However, their ability to compare competing solutions often provides customers with valuable context throughout the buying process.

That broader perspective contributes directly to customer confidence.

The Evolution of the Profession

The Technology Advisor profession has matured significantly over the past three decades.

What began primarily as telecommunications sourcing has evolved into comprehensive business technology advisory.

Today's advisors routinely assist executive leadership with strategic planning rather than isolated purchasing decisions.

Increasingly, organizations rely upon Technology Advisors to help answer questions such as:

- How should Artificial Intelligence fit into our business strategy?
- Should we migrate communications platforms?
- Which cybersecurity investments create the greatest long-term value?
- How should collaboration, networking, and customer experience be integrated?
- How do we balance innovation with operational risk?

These questions require business insight as much as technical expertise.

The profession has evolved to meet that challenge.

Why This Profession Matters

Every mature industry eventually develops independent advisory professions.

Financial Advisors.

Commercial Real Estate Brokers.

Insurance Brokers.

Architects.

Certified Public Accountants.

Healthcare Specialists.

Legal Counsel.

These professions exist because significant decisions benefit from informed guidance.

Technology has reached that same point.

As complexity increases, organizations increasingly benefit from professionals who translate technical possibilities into practical business decisions.

Technology Advisors have become one of those professions.

Their greatest value is not simply understanding technology.

Their greatest value is helping organizations make confident decisions about technology.

Technology Advisors by Another Name

Although terminology varies throughout the world, the underlying role remains remarkably consistent.

Regardless of title, the mission remains the same:

Helping organizations confidently evaluate technology options and select solutions that align with their business objectives.

Common Title	Typical Focus
Technology Advisor	Broad multi-technology advisory
Technology Consultant	Business and technology strategy
Managed Service Provider (MSP)	Ongoing IT operations and support
Systems Integrator (SI)	Complex solution design and implementation
Value-Added Reseller (VAR)	Product procurement and integration
Telecommunications Agent	Communications and connectivity sourcing
Cloud Consultant	Cloud strategy and migration
Technology Broker	Multi-provider procurement and negotiation
Communications Consultant	UCaaS, CCaaS, collaboration, and connectivity
Digital Transformation Consultant	Business modernization initiatives

The Customer Perspective

Throughout this publication, we intentionally examine Technology Advisors through the eyes of the customer.

Customers are generally less concerned with industry terminology than they are with practical outcomes.

Their questions are remarkably straightforward.

- Who can help us?
- Who understands our business?
- Who can explain our options?
- Who can help us avoid costly mistakes?
- Who will remain engaged after the contract is signed?

Technology Advisors answer those questions.

Whether customers recognize the title itself is less important than understanding the value the profession provides.

Chapter Summary

Technology Advisors represent one of the technology industry's most valuable—and often least understood—professional communities.

Their titles vary.

Their organizations vary.

Their business models vary.

Their mission does not.

They exist to help organizations make better technology decisions.

Throughout the remainder of this publication, the term **Technology Advisor** should be understood as an inclusive description of the diverse professionals who dedicate their expertise to improving customer outcomes through informed, objective, and strategic technology guidance.

Executive Callout

Customers don't need to understand every technology.

They deserve to know someone exists who does.

CHAPTER 5

THE AWARENESS GAP™

The Missing Link Between Technology Advisors and the Customers They Serve

"The technology industry has become exceptionally successful at developing Technology Advisors. The next opportunity may be helping customers discover them."

An Unexpected Discovery

Every meaningful research initiative eventually reaches a moment when the evidence begins to challenge the researcher's original assumptions.

For the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™, that moment arrived surprisingly early.

Before evaluating the first supplier, we assumed customer-facing websites would naturally reflect the technology industry's longstanding commitment to Technology Advisors.

The assumption seemed reasonable.

If suppliers consistently described Technology Advisors as strategic partners, trusted resources, and essential contributors to customer success, then prospective customers would likely encounter similar messaging throughout their own buying journey.

Instead, we observed something different.

Technology Advisors were highly visible inside the channel.

They were considerably less visible outside the channel.

That observation became one of the defining discoveries of this research and inspired the framework we now call The Awareness Gap™.

Defining The Awareness Gap™

The Awareness Gap™ represents the difference between two very different realities.

The first exists within the technology industry.

Technology Advisors are respected professionals.

They receive technical training, engineering support, certifications, executive sponsorship, partner marketing, conference opportunities, advisory councils, and significant long-term investment.

Within the industry, their value is widely understood.

The second reality exists outside the industry.

Many business leaders have never encountered the term Technology Advisor.

Many are unaware the profession exists.

Many begin evaluating complex technology investments without ever realizing that independent guidance is available.

These two realities exist simultaneously.

The distance between them is what this publication defines as The Awareness Gap™.

Inside the Industry

Within supplier organizations, Technology Advisors occupy an important strategic position.

Entire departments exist to support their success.

Examples include:

- Partner Account Managers
- Channel Chiefs
- Sales Engineers
- Partner Marketing Organizations
- Technical Enablement Teams
- Certification Programs
- Marketing Development Funds (MDF)
- Partner Advisory Councils
- Regional Events
- National Conferences
- Executive Briefings

These investments represent decades of commitment.

Collectively, they have helped build one of the most sophisticated indirect sales ecosystems in modern business.

The industry should take pride in that achievement.

Outside the Industry

Now consider the experience from the perspective of a business leader.

Their communications platform is approaching end-of-life.

Cybersecurity insurance requirements have changed.

Artificial Intelligence is beginning to reshape their industry.

They begin researching potential solutions.

They visit supplier websites.

Read analyst reports.

Watch demonstrations.

Schedule meetings.

Compare products.

Evaluate pricing.

Throughout this journey they encounter:

- Product capabilities
- Artificial Intelligence features
- Customer success stories
- Technical specifications
- Implementation methodologies
- Support organizations

What they may never encounter is one simple message:

> ***"Complex technology decisions often benefit from the guidance of an independent Technology Advisor."***

That absence should not be viewed as evidence of neglect.

It represents an opportunity.

Building Capability vs. Building Awareness

One of the most important distinctions introduced throughout this publication is the difference between capability and awareness.

Although these concepts are frequently discussed together, they represent two very different objectives.

Capability answers the question:

Can Technology Advisors effectively serve customers?

The industry has answered this question with extraordinary success.

Awareness asks a different question:

Do customers know Technology Advisors exist?

This question has received considerably less attention.

Both objectives matter.

Neither replaces the other.

Together, they create a stronger customer experience.

Why Awareness Matters

Awareness always precedes engagement.

Customers cannot intentionally seek a resource they do not know exists.

This principle extends far beyond technology.

Consumers seek Financial Advisors because they understand the profession.

Businesses engage Commercial Real Estate Brokers because they recognize the value those professionals provide.

Patients request second opinions because healthcare organizations have educated them that such an option exists.

Technology Advisors deserve that same opportunity.

Not because customers must work with them.

Because customers deserve to know they can.

The Three Levels of Channel Investment™

Throughout this research, supplier investments consistently aligned with three distinct categories.

These observations inspired one of CCRI's original research frameworks:

The Three Levels of Channel Investment™

Level One

Build the Technology Advisor

The first level focuses on developing knowledgeable professionals.

Examples include:

- Technical Certifications
- Sales Training
- Engineering Support
- Product Education
- Partner Portals
- Supplier Resources

Primary Outcome

More capable Technology Advisors.

Level Two

Enable the Technology Advisor

The second level helps Technology Advisors better serve customers.

Examples include:

- Marketing Development Funds (MDF)
- Partner Conferences
- Executive Briefings
- Sales Engineering
- Co-Selling
- Regional Events
- Partner Advisory Councils

Primary Outcome

Greater partner effectiveness.

Level Three

Empower the Customer

The third level focuses directly on customer awareness.

Examples may include:

- Educational content explaining Technology Advisors
- "Find a Technology Advisor" resources
- Advisor-assisted buying guides
- Customer success stories
- Educational videos
- Technology buying frameworks

Primary Outcome

Greater customer confidence.

A Remarkable Observation

As the research progressed, one finding became increasingly apparent.

The technology industry has invested extraordinary resources into Levels One and Two.

The greatest opportunity identified by this publication lies within Level Three.

Helping customers understand:

- Why Technology Advisors exist.
- When independent guidance can be valuable.
- How Technology Advisors contribute throughout the buying journey.

This represents an evolution—not a replacement—of existing channel strategies.

Awareness Creates Confidence

History demonstrates that every mature industry eventually invests in public education.

Healthcare organizations educate patients before treatment.

Financial institutions educate investors before investing.

Insurance providers educate consumers before purchasing coverage.

Technology has invested extensively in educating customers about products.

Perhaps the next evolution involves educating customers about guidance.

Technology Advisors transform information into understanding.

Understanding creates confidence.

Confidence leads to stronger decisions.

Why This Benefits Everyone

Increasing customer awareness is not solely a Technology Advisor initiative.

Everyone benefits.

Customers benefit because they make more informed decisions.

Suppliers benefit because informed customers often become stronger long-term customers.

Technology Advisors benefit because customers intentionally seek their expertise rather than discovering them by chance.

The technology industry benefits because:

Confidence strengthens trust.

Trust strengthens relationships.

Relationships strengthen markets.

Viewed through that lens, The Awareness Gap™ represents far more than a marketing opportunity.

It represents an opportunity to improve the customer experience.

A Thought Experiment

Imagine two organizations beginning the same technology evaluation.

Organization A researches supplier websites independently.

Organization B follows the same process while also understanding the value of working with an independent Technology Advisor.

Both organizations remain free to make their own decisions.

Neither approach guarantees a better outcome.

However, Organization B possesses one additional resource.

- Additional perspective.
- Additional questions.
- Additional guidance.
- Additional confidence.

Those advantages may prove invaluable throughout the buying journey.

The Opportunity Before Us

Closing The Awareness Gap™ does not require suppliers to fundamentally change their go-to-market strategy.

It does not require replacing direct sales organizations.

It does not require reducing investments in Technology Advisors.

It simply requires expanding customer education.

Helping organizations understand that independent guidance represents one of several valuable resources available throughout complex technology evaluations.

That relatively small change has the potential to produce meaningful long-term benefits across the entire technology ecosystem.

Chapter Summary

The Awareness Gap™ represents one of the defining observations presented throughout this publication.

It does not suggest suppliers undervalue Technology Advisors.

The evidence consistently demonstrates the opposite.

Instead, it suggests customer awareness has not evolved at the same pace as partner investment.

As technology continues becoming more sophisticated, helping customers understand every resource available to them may become one of the industry's greatest opportunities.

Closing The Awareness Gap™ is not about strengthening the channel.

It is about strengthening customer confidence.

And stronger customer confidence benefits everyone.

Executive Callout

> ***"Customers cannot intentionally seek the guidance of a Technology Advisor until they first know one exists."***

CHAPTER 6

THE CUSTOMER BUYING JOURNEY

Where Customer Confidence Is Won—or Lost

> ***"Customers rarely make poor technology decisions because they lack information. They make poor decisions because they lack context."***

A Journey Every Business Understands

Imagine you are the owner of a growing business.

Your communications platform is approaching end-of-life.

Your employees are working remotely.

Customer expectations continue to rise.

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly becoming part of every technology conversation.

You know change is inevitable.

The question is no longer if you need to modernize.

The question is where do you begin?

Like millions of business leaders every year, you open your laptop.

You search.

You compare.

You read.

You learn.

Without realizing it, you begin one of the most important purchasing journeys your organization will undertake.

That journey became the foundation of this research.

Rather than asking what suppliers intended customers to experience, we asked a much simpler—and arguably more important—question.

What does the customer actually experience?

Every Buying Journey Begins the Same Way

Technology buying has changed dramatically over the past decade.

Not because suppliers have fundamentally changed.

Because customers have.

Today's buyers are well informed before speaking with anyone.

Long before requesting a demonstration, they often:

- Search online.
- Read industry publications.
- Watch product videos.
- Compare review websites.
- Ask peers for recommendations.
- Consult Artificial Intelligence.
- Visit supplier websites.
- Download white papers.
- Review analyst reports.

By the time many customers schedule their first meeting with a supplier, they have already formed preliminary opinions.

The first sales conversation is no longer the beginning of the buying journey.

It is often the continuation of research that began weeks—or even months—earlier.

Information Has Become Unlimited

Never before have customers had access to so much information.

Supplier websites routinely provide:

- Feature comparisons
- Product demonstrations
- Case studies
- Implementation guides
- Security documentation
- Artificial Intelligence demonstrations
- Pricing information
- Customer testimonials
- Knowledge centers
- Analyst reports

Modern buyers no longer struggle to find information.

Ironically, they struggle to determine which information matters most.

Information has become unlimited.

Context remains limited.

Information Does Not Equal Understanding

One of the central observations of this publication is that information and understanding are not synonymous.

A supplier website may explain every product feature in extraordinary detail.

It may not explain which solution best aligns with a customer's unique business objectives.

Information answers questions about products.

Understanding answers questions about decisions.

Technology Advisors help bridge that distinction.

Their value is not replacing information.

Their value is helping customers interpret information in the context of their own business.

That difference transforms information into confidence.

The Modern Buying Journey

Throughout this research, supplier buying experiences demonstrated remarkable consistency.

Although branding and messaging varied considerably, the customer journey generally followed a familiar pattern.

Today's Traditional Buying Journey

Search Online

↓

Visit Supplier Website

↓

Learn About Products

↓

Request a Demonstration
↓
Contact Sales
↓
Evaluate Proposal
↓
Purchase

This process is logical.

Efficient.

Well understood.

Yet one potential step appeared far less frequently.

An Expanded Customer Journey

Search Online
↓
Visit Supplier Website
↓
Learn About Technology Advisors
↓
Understand Available Buying Options
↓
Evaluate Solutions
↓
Purchase With Confidence

Notice that this additional step does not replace the traditional buying journey. It enhances it.

The Customer Lens™

One of CCRI's original research frameworks is the Customer Lens™.

Every supplier experience can be viewed through two different perspectives.

The first belongs to the supplier.

The second belongs to the customer.

Suppliers naturally focus on communicating product value.

Customers seek confidence in making the right decision.

Those objectives are closely related.

They are not identical.

Throughout this publication, the Customer Lens™ asks one consistent question:

> **What is the customer experiencing?**

Not:

What did the supplier intend?

Not:

What exists behind the partner portal?

Not:

How mature is the partner program?

Only one question matters.

> **What does the customer actually see?**

The Missing Conversation

As supplier websites were evaluated, one recurring pattern became increasingly apparent.

Customers were consistently encouraged to:

- Schedule a demonstration.
- Contact Sales.
- Speak with an expert.
- Request pricing.
- Start a free trial.

Each of these calls-to-action is entirely appropriate.

Yet another conversation appeared far less frequently.

Why might an organization benefit from working with a Technology Advisor?

This observation is significant because it is not about products.

It is about education.

Comparison Already Exists

One of the most common objections to increasing Technology Advisor awareness is understandable.

Would encouraging customers to work with Technology Advisors simply introduce additional competition?

The evidence suggests otherwise.

Modern customers already compare solutions.

They already:

- Visit multiple supplier websites.
- Consult Artificial Intelligence.
- Read analyst reports.
- Review comparison sites.
- Seek peer recommendations.

Technology Advisors did not create comparison.

Modern buying behavior created comparison.

Technology Advisors simply help organizations navigate it more effectively.

The Confidence Economy™

As products become increasingly similar, customer confidence becomes increasingly valuable.

Organizations rarely make purchasing decisions based solely upon features.

They evaluate:

- Reliability
- Security
- Scalability
- Business Continuity
- Vendor Stability
- Implementation Success
- Long-Term Support
- Strategic Alignment

Technology Advisors contribute to each of these considerations by helping organizations evaluate technology through the lens of business outcomes rather than technical specifications alone.

CCRI defines this shift as the Confidence Economy™.

Organizations increasingly compete not only through innovation.

They compete by creating confidence.

Decision Support Versus Product Support

Technology suppliers excel at explaining what their products do.

Technology Advisors help organizations determine which products they actually need.

These represent two very different forms of expertise.

Supplier expertise focuses on solutions.

Technology Advisor expertise focuses on decisions.

Neither replaces the other.

Together they create a stronger customer experience.

Customer Confidence Is the Destination

Throughout this publication, one central idea consistently emerges.

The objective is not additional information.

The objective is customer confidence.

Organizations that understand their options typically make stronger long-term decisions.

They:

- Implement technology more successfully.
- Establish realistic expectations.
- Experience fewer surprises.
- Build stronger supplier relationships.
- Gain greater confidence throughout the technology lifecycle.

Confidence does not eliminate complexity.

It enables organizations to navigate complexity more effectively.

The Opportunity

This publication does not recommend replacing supplier-led buying journeys.

Nor does it suggest every organization requires a Technology Advisor.

Instead, it identifies a remarkably straightforward opportunity.

Help customers understand that independent guidance exists.

Allow them to decide whether that guidance benefits their organization.

Awareness creates choice.

Choice creates confidence.

Confidence strengthens outcomes.

Chapter Summary

Technology buying has evolved from a product selection process into a business decision process.

Customers possess more information than at any other point in history.

Yet information alone rarely creates confidence.

Technology Advisors contribute something different.

They provide:

- Perspective.
- Context.
- Guidance.
- Understanding.

The customer buying journey represents one of the technology industry's greatest opportunities.

Not because it needs to be replaced.

Because it can be expanded.

Helping organizations understand every resource available to them—including Technology Advisors—has the potential to strengthen one of the most important moments in every technology investment.

The decision itself.

Executive Callout

Products answer technical questions.
Technology Advisors help customers answer business questions.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT THE EVIDENCE REVEALED

A Customer-Centered Analysis of Twenty-Five UCaaS Providers

"The purpose of research is not to validate assumptions. It is to challenge them."

From Assumption to Observation

Every meaningful research initiative begins with expectations.

Some are confirmed.

Others evolve.

Still others are completely overturned.

Before evaluating the first UCaaS provider, the Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) established a straightforward objective:

Evaluate the customer buying experience exactly as a prospective customer would.

To maintain research integrity, we intentionally excluded:

- Partner portals
- Internal documentation
- Supplier interviews
- Confidential channel resources
- Non-public partner information
- Assumptions based on industry relationships

Only publicly available, customer-facing information was evaluated.

The resulting experience closely mirrored the journey thousands of organizations undertake each year while researching communications technology.

As the research progressed, individual observations began revealing broader industry patterns.

Those patterns ultimately became the foundation of the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™.

Research Scope

The inaugural Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ evaluated twenty-five leading UCaaS providers representing a broad cross-section of today's communications marketplace.

Every organization was reviewed using identical customer-centered evaluation criteria.

Rather than measuring product quality, financial performance, or partner profitability, the research focused exclusively on the visibility of Technology Advisors throughout the public customer buying journey.

Each supplier was evaluated for publicly available evidence related to:

- Participation in the indirect sales channel
- Visibility of Technology Advisors
- Customer-facing partner resources
- Educational content explaining the value of Technology Advisors
- Primary customer calls-to-action
- Overall customer buying experience

Throughout the study, one principle remained constant.

Consistency—not comparison.

Finding One

The Indirect Channel Is Stronger Than Ever

The first finding deserves recognition.

Every UCaaS supplier included within this research actively participates in the indirect sales channel.

Some maintain extensive global partner organizations.

Others support Technology Advisors through master agencies, technology services distributors, engineering organizations, certification programs, partner marketing initiatives, advisory councils, and executive sponsorship.

This finding confirms what many industry professionals have long understood.

Technology Advisors are not a secondary route to market.

They are a strategic component of modern technology sales.

The indirect channel has matured into one of the industry's greatest strengths.

This publication fully acknowledges that achievement.

Executive Finding #1

25 of 25 suppliers evaluated actively support Technology Advisors.

Industry Interpretation

Support for the indirect channel is no longer the exception.

It has become the industry standard.

Finding Two

Technology Advisors Are Well Supported Inside the Industry

Throughout the research, evidence of supplier investment appeared consistently.

Examples included:

- Partner Conferences
- Sales Enablement
- Engineering Resources
- Marketing Development Funds (MDF)
- Technical Certifications
- Partner Account Managers
- Executive Briefings
- Training Academies
- Advisory Councils
- Partner Communities

Collectively, these investments demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to Technology Advisors.

They represent decades of strategic investment by supplier channel organizations.

This publication recognizes those efforts as one of the technology industry's greatest accomplishments.

Executive Finding #2

Supplier investment in Technology Advisors is substantial and well established.

Industry Interpretation

The industry's commitment to developing Technology Advisors is both visible and significant.

Finding Three

Customer Awareness Does Not Always Reflect Partner Investment

This observation became the defining insight of the research.

While supplier investment in Technology Advisors appeared consistently throughout partner ecosystems, customer-facing education regarding Technology Advisors appeared considerably less common.

Many suppliers provide:

- Partner resources
- Partner locator tools
- Authorized partner directories

These are valuable customer resources.

However, relatively few organizations clearly explain why customers might benefit from working with a Technology Advisor before beginning a technology evaluation.

This distinction is important.

Customers may discover that partners exist.

They may never understand the value those partners provide.

That represents an issue of awareness—not accessibility.

Executive Finding #3

Customer awareness appears to lag behind partner investment.

Industry Interpretation

The opportunity is not building stronger Technology Advisors.

The opportunity is helping customers better understand them.

Finding Four

The Customer Journey Remains Predominantly Supplier-Led

Across nearly every supplier evaluated, customer buying journeys followed a remarkably consistent structure.

Visitors were encouraged to:

- Request a Demonstration
- Contact Sales
- Speak with a Specialist
- Request Pricing
- Schedule a Consultation
- Start a Free Trial

These are logical, customer-focused calls-to-action.

They facilitate efficient engagement between suppliers and prospective customers.

However, one call-to-action appeared only occasionally:

Learn how a Technology Advisor can help evaluate your options.

Its limited visibility became one of the study's most consistent observations.

Executive Finding #4

Most supplier websites prioritize direct engagement with supplier representatives.

Industry Interpretation

Customer education regarding Technology Advisors generally appears secondary to product engagement.

Finding Five

Visibility Is Not the Same as Commitment

Perhaps the most important distinction contained within this publication is one of interpretation.

Low customer-facing visibility should never be interpreted as low supplier commitment.

These represent entirely different measurements.

A supplier may operate one of the industry's strongest partner organizations while placing relatively little emphasis on Technology Advisors throughout its public buying journey.

Conversely, another supplier may provide highly visible partner resources while maintaining a comparatively smaller indirect organization.

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ does not measure channel commitment.

It measures customer visibility.

Understanding this distinction is essential when interpreting every observation contained within this publication.

Executive Finding #5

Customer-facing visibility and supplier commitment should never be considered equivalent.

Industry Interpretation

Visibility measures communication.

Commitment measures investment.

This publication evaluates only the former.

Finding Six

Customers Already Compare Multiple Suppliers

One common concern raised throughout the industry is understandable.

Would encouraging customers to work with Technology Advisors simply introduce additional competition?

The evidence suggests otherwise.

Modern buyers already compare providers.

They consult:

- Review websites
- Industry analysts
- Artificial Intelligence
- Professional networks
- Peer recommendations
- Supplier websites

Technology Advisors did not create comparison.

Modern buying behavior created comparison.

Technology Advisors simply help customers interpret it.

This distinction fundamentally changes the conversation.

The role of the Technology Advisor is not to expand customer choice.

Today's technology marketplace has already accomplished that.

The role of the Technology Advisor is to improve customer understanding.

Executive Finding #6

Technology Advisors create clarity—not competition.

Industry Interpretation

Independent guidance has the potential to improve decision quality without fundamentally changing customer buying behavior.

Finding Seven

The Greatest Opportunity Is Customer Education

After evaluating all twenty-five suppliers, one conclusion emerged above all others.

The technology industry has become exceptionally effective at investing in Technology Advisors.

The next opportunity lies in investing in customer awareness.

Helping organizations understand:

- Who Technology Advisors are.
- What they do.
- When they provide value.
- How independent guidance complements supplier expertise.
- Why businesses may benefit from understanding this option before making significant technology investments.

This represents an evolution—not a replacement—of existing strategies.

It expands customer education while preserving the strengths of today's successful partner ecosystem.

Executive Finding #7

Customer education represents the next frontier of Technology Advisor advocacy.

Executive Dashboard

The Seven Principal Findings

Finding	Observation
1	Every supplier reviewed actively supports Technology Advisors.
2	Supplier investment in partner ecosystems is substantial.
3	Customer awareness appears lower than partner investment.

Finding	Observation
4	Buying journeys remain primarily supplier-directed.
5	Customer visibility and supplier commitment measure different things.
6	Technology Advisors help customers navigate existing competition rather than create new competition.
7	The industry's greatest opportunity is increasing customer awareness of Technology Advisors.

The Emerging Pattern

Viewed individually, each finding provides useful insight.

Viewed collectively, they reveal a much larger story.

The technology industry has built an extraordinary partner ecosystem.

Technology Advisors have never been better trained.

Supplier investment has never been stronger.

Customer buying behavior has never been more complex.

Yet customer awareness has not evolved at the same pace as partner investment.

This observation is not intended to diminish the industry's accomplishments.

It highlights its next opportunity.

Helping customers understand one of the most valuable resources already available to them.

The Defining Question

Throughout this research, one question repeatedly surfaced.

Not because it was frequently asked.

Because the evidence naturally led to it.

If Technology Advisors truly represent one of the industry's greatest strategic assets...

...should prospective customers hear more about them before making one of the most important technology decisions their organization will face?

This publication does not attempt to answer that question on behalf of the industry.

It simply presents the evidence and invites the conversation.

Chapter Summary

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ was never intended to identify winners and losers.

Its purpose is considerably more constructive.

To understand how customers experience the technology buying journey.

To identify opportunities for greater customer awareness.

To encourage thoughtful dialogue among suppliers, Technology Advisors, industry organizations, analysts, and business leaders.

The evidence suggests the technology industry has already achieved remarkable success in building one of the world's strongest indirect sales ecosystems.

The next opportunity may simply be helping customers discover it.

Executive Callout

"The strongest conclusion of this research is not that Technology Advisors need more support. It is that customers may benefit from greater awareness of the support that already exists."

CHAPTER 8

THE INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITY

The Next Evolution of the Technology Advisor Ecosystem

> ***"Great industries never stop improving. They build upon their greatest strengths."***

Looking Beyond the Research

Every meaningful research project eventually reaches an important milestone.

The data has been collected.

The observations have been documented.

The findings have been summarized.

The natural question then becomes:

> **"What do we do with what we've learned?"**

For the Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI), that question represents the true purpose of this publication.

Research should not merely describe the present.

It should help shape the future.

Throughout the preceding chapters, we intentionally focused on objective observations rather than recommendations.

This chapter shifts that perspective.

Not to criticize.

Not to prescribe.

But to explore what the next evolution of the technology buying experience could become.

A Remarkable Success Story

Before discussing future opportunities, it is important to acknowledge something extraordinary.

The indirect technology channel represents one of the most successful business ecosystems ever developed within the technology industry.

Over the past three decades, suppliers have invested billions of dollars building partner organizations.

Technology Advisors have evolved from telecommunications specialists into trusted business consultants.

Master Agencies and Technology Services Distributors have expanded advisory capabilities across virtually every technology category.

Customers today have access to expertise that simply did not exist a generation ago.

This publication celebrates that achievement.

It is the foundation upon which every future opportunity rests.

From Channel Strategy to Customer Strategy

Historically, supplier investment has focused on strengthening the channel itself.

Organizations have invested heavily in:

- Recruiting Technology Advisors
- Training Technology Advisors
- Supporting Technology Advisors
- Recognizing Technology Advisors
- Rewarding Technology Advisors

These investments have produced exceptional results.

This publication suggests that the next stage of industry evolution may involve expanding the focus beyond the channel.

Not replacing channel strategy.

Expanding it into customer strategy.

Helping organizations understand the resources available before making complex technology decisions.

In that future, the Technology Advisor becomes more than part of the supplier ecosystem.

The Technology Advisor becomes part of the customer experience.

The Evolution of Customer Expectations

Business leaders have changed dramatically.

Twenty years ago, customers relied primarily upon suppliers for information.

Today, information is available almost instantly.

Organizations routinely consult:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Industry analysts
- Online reviews
- Professional communities
- Peer recommendations
- Supplier websites
- Technology comparison platforms

The challenge is no longer obtaining information.

The challenge is determining which information deserves confidence.

As information becomes increasingly abundant, trusted guidance becomes increasingly valuable.

This represents one of the defining realities of modern technology buying.

The Confidence Economy™

Throughout this publication we introduced the concept of the Confidence Economy™.

Its premise is straightforward.

Technology products continue becoming more sophisticated.

Information continues becoming more accessible.

Customer confidence becomes increasingly valuable.

Organizations no longer purchase technology based solely upon specifications.

They purchase confidence that their decision aligns with business objectives.

Technology Advisors contribute to that confidence by helping organizations interpret information rather than simply consume it.

Confidence has become a competitive advantage.

Not only for Technology Advisors.

For suppliers as well.

A New Way to Measure Leadership

Technology leadership has traditionally been measured through:

- Innovation
- Product Development
- Market Share
- Revenue Growth
- Customer Acquisition

These measurements remain important.

However, this research suggests another dimension deserves consideration.

Customer education.

Organizations that help customers better understand complex technology decisions may strengthen trust, improve long-term relationships, and create more confident buyers.

That form of leadership extends beyond products.

It reflects a broader commitment to customer success.

Why This Opportunity Benefits Suppliers

An important question naturally follows.

Why would suppliers encourage customers to engage professionals who may introduce competing solutions?

The answer lies within modern buying behavior.

Customers already compare providers.

Artificial Intelligence compares products.

Analyst firms publish competitive evaluations.

Review platforms summarize customer experiences.

Peer recommendations influence purchasing decisions.

Competition already exists.

Technology Advisors do not create competition.

They help customers navigate it.

Organizations that purchase with greater confidence frequently experience:

- More realistic expectations

- Better implementations
- Higher technology adoption
- Longer customer relationships
- Greater satisfaction
- Stronger customer advocacy

Those outcomes benefit suppliers just as much as customers.

Why This Opportunity Benefits Technology Advisors

Technology Advisors also benefit from increased customer awareness.

Historically, many advisors have relied upon:

- Networking
- Referrals
- Industry conferences
- Supplier relationships
- Existing customer bases

Greater public awareness creates an additional avenue for growth.

Customers who understand the profession begin intentionally seeking independent guidance.

Rather than discovering Technology Advisors through chance encounters, organizations begin viewing them as a recognized professional resource.

Much like:

- Financial Advisors
- Commercial Real Estate Brokers
- Insurance Advisors
- Certified Public Accountants

Awareness elevates the profession.

Not through marketing.

Through education.

Why This Opportunity Benefits Customers

Ultimately, every opportunity identified within this publication points toward one beneficiary.

The customer.

Organizations deserve access to every reasonable resource before making significant technology investments.

Some organizations will continue purchasing directly from suppliers.

Others will rely upon internal IT leadership.

Many will engage outside consultants.

Some will choose Technology Advisors.

This publication advocates only one principle.

Customers deserve awareness.

The decision remains entirely theirs.

Awareness expands choice.

Choice strengthens confidence.

Confidence improves long-term outcomes.

A Shared Responsibility

One of the defining conclusions of this research is that customer awareness cannot be created by any single organization.

It represents a shared responsibility across the technology ecosystem.

Contributors include:

- Suppliers
- Technology Advisors
- Master Agencies
- Technology Services Distributors
- Managed Service Providers
- Systems Integrators
- Industry Associations
- Analyst Firms
- Business Publications
- Conference Organizers
- Educational Institutions

Each plays an important role in shaping how organizations understand technology buying.

Customer awareness belongs to everyone.

The Opportunity Is Evolution

History demonstrates that successful industries continually refine the customer experience.

Healthcare expanded patient education.

Financial services expanded investor education.

Insurance expanded consumer awareness.

Commercial real estate expanded buyer representation.

Technology has reached a similar moment.

The next evolution may not involve building better products.

The industry already excels at that.

The next evolution may involve building better-informed customers.

Helping organizations understand every resource available before making complex technology decisions.

Beyond the Sale

Perhaps the most important realization emerging from this research is that Technology Advisors contribute value well beyond the transaction itself.

They frequently remain engaged during implementation.

They coordinate suppliers.

They provide ongoing strategic planning.

They assist with future technology initiatives.

Increasingly, their role resembles that of a long-term business advisor rather than a transactional sales intermediary.

This evolution benefits everyone involved.

Suppliers gain better-prepared customers.

Customers gain trusted guidance.

Technology Advisors build stronger long-term relationships.

Success becomes collaborative.

The Customer-First Principle™

Throughout every chapter of this publication, one principle has quietly guided our observations.

> **Customers should understand every reasonable option available before making important technology decisions.**

Not because one buying path is inherently superior.

But because informed choice represents exceptional customer experience.

The Customer-First Principle™ can be summarized simply:

> **Technology buying should maximize customer understanding before asking customers to make commitments.**

That philosophy favors neither suppliers nor Technology Advisors.

It favors customers.

Looking Ahead

The technology industry stands at an extraordinary point in its history.

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping customer engagement.

Communications platforms continue converging.

Cybersecurity has become foundational.

Cloud infrastructure continues evolving.

Business leaders face more technology decisions than ever before.

At the same time, customers have access to unprecedented information.

The opportunity before the industry is no longer simply delivering better technology.

It is helping customers make better technology decisions.

Technology Advisors have an important role to play in that future.

Helping customers discover that role represents one of the most significant opportunities identified throughout this research.

Chapter Summary

The findings presented throughout this publication should not be interpreted as a call for dramatic change.

Rather, they represent an invitation to thoughtful evolution.

Continue investing in Technology Advisors.

Continue strengthening partner ecosystems.

Continue innovating.

Continue supporting customers.

Then ask one additional question:

> **How can we help more organizations discover one of the industry's most valuable resources before they begin their technology buying journey?**

That question does not diminish the accomplishments of the indirect channel.

It builds upon them.

In doing so, it points toward a future where customer awareness becomes just as important as customer acquisition.

Executive Callout

> ***"The greatest opportunity before our industry is not helping more Technology Advisors find customers. It is helping more customers discover Technology Advisors."***

CHAPTER 9

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Reimagining the Technology Buying Experience

"The future belongs to organizations that help customers make confident decisions—not simply informed ones."

Beyond the Findings

Throughout this publication, we have intentionally resisted the temptation to tell the technology industry what it should do.

That was never the purpose of this research.

Instead, we asked thoughtful questions.

We observed.

We documented.

We identified patterns.

Now we arrive at the most practical chapter of this report.

If the previous chapters explained what we observed, this chapter explores what may now be possible.

Not five years from now.

Not after the next technology revolution.

Today.

Because the opportunity before the industry is remarkably achievable.

It does not require new technology.

It requires a new perspective.

Building Upon Success

The ideas presented throughout this chapter should never be interpreted as replacements for today's successful channel strategies.

Nothing contained within this publication suggests reducing investment in:

- Technology Advisors
- Partner Enablement
- Sales Engineering
- Marketing Development Funds (MDF)
- Conferences
- Executive Briefings
- Technical Certifications
- Partner Communities

Those investments have created one of the most successful indirect technology ecosystems in modern business.

The opportunity now is to expand those investments into customer awareness.

The foundation has already been built.

The next step is simply helping customers discover it.

Blueprint One

Teach Before You Sell

Supplier websites have become extraordinary educational platforms.

Customers can already learn about:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Compliance
- Reliability
- Scalability
- Integrations
- Implementation
- Customer Experience
- Industry Solutions
- Product Features
- Pricing Models

The next opportunity is equally straightforward.

Teach customers how to buy technology—not simply what technology to buy.

Imagine educational resources titled:

Five Questions Every Organization Should Ask Before Selecting a Communications Platform

or

How Independent Technology Advisors Help Organizations Navigate Complex Technology Decisions

Neither resource promotes a particular product.

Neither criticizes competitors.

Both improve customer understanding.

Education creates confidence.

Blueprint Two

Introduce the Technology Advisor Earlier

Throughout this research, Technology Advisors frequently appeared late in the buying process—if they appeared at all.

Imagine instead that customer education began much earlier.

A simple message might read:

Many organizations evaluate technology with the assistance of an independent Technology Advisor. Learn how Technology Advisors help businesses compare solutions, reduce risk, and make more informed technology decisions.

Notice what is absent.

No sales language.

No obligation.

No pressure.

Only awareness.

Sometimes the most meaningful improvements begin with a single sentence.

Blueprint Three

Redefine the Customer Journey

Traditional technology buying has generally followed a familiar sequence.

Research.

Product Evaluation.

Sales Engagement.

Proposal.

Negotiation.

Purchase.

Implementation.

This publication suggests introducing one additional step.

Customer Understanding.

Imagine a future buying journey like this:

Business Need

↓

Understand Your Options

↓

Learn About Technology Advisors

↓

Evaluate Solutions

↓

Select the Best Fit

↓

Implement With Confidence

↓

Long-Term Success

The Technology Advisor does not replace the supplier.

The Technology Advisor strengthens the customer's ability to evaluate every available option.

Blueprint Four

Measure Customer Confidence

The technology industry measures nearly everything.

Revenue.

Conversion Rates.

Pipeline Growth.

Customer Satisfaction.

Net Promoter Scores.

Implementation Timelines.

Renewal Rates.

Partner Productivity.

Perhaps one additional measurement deserves consideration.

Customer Confidence.

Organizations might begin asking:

- Did customers understand their options?
- Did they understand the role Technology Advisors could play?
- Did they feel confident making their decision?
- Would they make the same decision again?

Confidence can be measured.

And what gets measured often improves.

Blueprint Five

Tell Better Customer Stories

Technology marketing frequently celebrates successful implementations.

Those stories are valuable.

This publication suggests another opportunity.

Celebrate successful decision-making.

Imagine reading a customer story like this:

Before selecting a communications platform, ABC Manufacturing worked with a Technology Advisor to evaluate six potential solutions. Together they identified the platform that best aligned with the company's growth strategy, implementation timeline, and long-term business objectives.

Notice the emphasis.

The story is not about selling.

It is about making thoughtful, informed decisions.

Stories like these educate future buyers while reinforcing customer confidence.

Blueprint Six

Make Technology Advisors Discoverable

Supplier websites commonly include links such as:

- Request a Demo
- Contact Sales
- Find a Partner
- Support
- Documentation

Perhaps another destination deserves consideration.

Find a Technology Advisor.

Not simply a searchable directory.

An educational destination.

A place where customers can understand:

- Who Technology Advisors are.
- What they do.
- When they create value.
- How they complement supplier expertise.

The objective is not referral.

The objective is understanding.

Blueprint Seven

Create a Customer-First Buying Experience

Throughout this publication we introduced several original CCRI frameworks.

- The Awareness Gap™
- The Customer Lens™
- The Confidence Economy™
- Advisor-Led Buying™

Each ultimately supports one overarching philosophy.

The Customer-First Principle™.

Organizations should understand every reasonable option before making complex technology decisions.

Whether customers ultimately purchase directly from suppliers or engage Technology Advisors remains entirely their decision.

Exceptional customer experiences maximize understanding before commitments are made.

A Blueprint for Technology Advisors

Technology Advisors also have an opportunity to evolve.

Historically, many advisors introduced themselves through:

- Supplier portfolios
- Carrier relationships
- Pricing
- Access to providers

Modern customers increasingly seek something different.

They seek:

- Understanding.
- Business outcomes.
- Strategic planning.
- Risk reduction.
- Confidence.

Perhaps the opening conversation should no longer begin with:

Which supplier would you like to evaluate?

Perhaps it begins with:

Tell me about your business.

That subtle shift transforms the relationship.

The Technology Advisor becomes a business advisor first.

A technology advisor second.

A Blueprint for Suppliers

Supplier organizations already excel at innovation.

The next competitive advantage may not come from additional features.

It may come from customer experience.

Organizations that help customers understand technology—not merely purchase it—will likely strengthen long-term trust.

Customer trust remains one of the most valuable assets any supplier can earn.

Technology Advisors contribute directly to that trust.

Not because they replace supplier expertise.

Because they reinforce customer confidence.

A Blueprint for Industry Organizations

Master Agencies.

Technology Services Distributors.

Industry Associations.

Analyst Firms.

Conference Organizers.

Business Publications.

Educational Institutions.

Each has an opportunity to strengthen public awareness of Technology Advisors.

Potential initiatives include:

- Independent Research
- Educational Campaigns
- Thought Leadership

- Customer Buying Guides
- Executive Roundtables
- Industry Standards

Collectively, these efforts can significantly improve customer understanding throughout the technology marketplace.

The Leadership Opportunity

Every generation of business leaders inherits an opportunity to improve the customer experience.

Previous generations built extraordinary products.

Expanded cloud infrastructure.

Revolutionized communications.

Accelerated Artificial Intelligence.

The next generation may become known for something different.

Helping customers make better technology decisions.

That legacy extends beyond products.

It defines industries.

Imagine the Future

Imagine a business owner beginning a technology evaluation five years from now.

Rather than immediately comparing products, they first encounter educational resources explaining:

- How to evaluate technology.
- Questions every customer should ask suppliers.
- The value of implementation planning.
- The importance of long-term strategy.
- The role of Technology Advisors.

By the time they request a demonstration, they understand not only the technologies under consideration—but also the process of making a thoughtful, informed decision.

That customer begins the buying journey with confidence.

That confidence benefits everyone involved.

Chapter Summary

Throughout this publication we have consistently returned to one central idea.

Technology Advisors are not the destination.

Better customer decisions are.

The recommendations contained within this chapter are intentionally evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

Continue supporting Technology Advisors.

Continue investing in innovation.

Continue strengthening customer relationships.

Then take one additional step.

Help customers understand the extraordinary resources already available to them.

Awareness.

Understanding.

Confidence.

Those three principles may ultimately become the foundation of the next generation of technology buying.

Executive Callout

> ***"Technology leadership is no longer defined solely by building remarkable products. It is increasingly defined by helping customers make remarkable decisions."***

CHAPTER 10
AN INVITATION

A Call to the Technology Industry

> ***"The purpose of independent research is not to declare who is right. It is to encourage better questions that lead to better outcomes."***

This Report Was Never About Twenty-Five Companies

When the Cloud Concepts Research Institute (CCRI) began this research, the objective appeared straightforward.

Evaluate twenty-five UCaaS providers.

Observe the customer experience.

Document the findings.

Publish the results.

That was the original plan.

Yet, as often happens in meaningful research, the evidence led somewhere unexpected.

This publication became less about suppliers.

Less about websites.

Less about partner programs.

Instead, it became a study of something much larger.

Customer confidence.

As the research evolved, one realization became increasingly clear.

Technology buying is no longer constrained by access to information.

It is constrained by confidence in how that information is interpreted.

That realization fundamentally shaped the direction of this report.

What We Learned

Throughout this publication, we intentionally avoided sensational conclusions.

The evidence simply did not support them.

We did not discover an industry that undervalues Technology Advisors.

Quite the opposite.

We found an industry that has invested decades building one of the world's most sophisticated indirect sales ecosystems.

Technology Advisors are:

- Respected
- Supported
- Educated
- Enabled
- Recognized

Those accomplishments deserve acknowledgement.

Our research identified a different opportunity.

Helping customers discover the value of those same Technology Advisors before making complex technology decisions.

That distinction defines this publication.

The Conversation We Hope to Inspire

Research has value only if it inspires meaningful discussion.

Our hope is that this publication becomes the beginning of a larger conversation.

A conversation among:

- Suppliers
- Technology Advisors
- Technology Services Distributors
- Master Agencies
- Managed Service Providers
- Systems Integrators
- Business Leaders
- Customers

Not about direct versus indirect sales.

Not about channel conflict.

Not about commercial models.

Rather, about one central question:

How can we help organizations make better technology decisions?

A Shared Responsibility

One of the strongest conclusions emerging from this research is that no single organization owns this opportunity.

Suppliers cannot create customer awareness alone.

Technology Advisors cannot create it alone.

Industry associations cannot create it alone.

Neither can analysts.

Nor consultants.

Nor distributors.

Customer awareness is a shared responsibility.

Every participant within the technology ecosystem contributes to the customer experience.

Each has an opportunity to strengthen it.

Viewed through that lens, the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ becomes more than research.

It becomes an invitation.

The Future Will Reward Confidence

Technology will continue evolving.

Artificial Intelligence will become increasingly sophisticated.

Cloud platforms will continue converging.

Cybersecurity challenges will become more complex.

Communications will become more intelligent.

Customer expectations will continue rising.

One thing, however, is unlikely to change.

Organizations will continue seeking confidence before making important decisions.

Technology Advisors have quietly built careers helping businesses navigate uncertainty.

That role may become even more valuable during the coming decade.

Not because technology is becoming more difficult.

Because business decisions are becoming more consequential.

Leadership Beyond Products

Historically, technology leadership has been measured through innovation.

Who built:

- The fastest platform.
- The most reliable network.
- The most advanced Artificial Intelligence.
- The strongest cybersecurity solution.

These achievements remain critically important.

This publication suggests another form of leadership deserves equal recognition.

Helping customers understand how to make better technology decisions.

Organizations that embrace customer education may ultimately distinguish themselves not only by the products they build—

—but by the confidence they create.

Confidence represents a competitive advantage that cannot easily be replicated.

Technology Advisors and the Next Decade

The profession itself continues to evolve.

Technology Advisors are no longer viewed simply as telecommunications specialists.

Today's advisors routinely assist organizations with:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity

- Cloud Infrastructure
- Customer Experience
- Business Continuity
- Digital Transformation
- Networking
- Managed Services
- Compliance
- Data Strategy

Tomorrow's Technology Advisor will likely be remembered not for introducing products—

—but for helping organizations align technology investments with long-term business strategy.

The profession is evolving from solution expertise toward business advisory.

That evolution represents one of the most significant opportunities identified throughout this publication.

Our Hope

We recognize that readers may interpret these observations differently.

Some may agree with every conclusion.

Others may challenge our methodology.

Still others may identify opportunities beyond those presented here.

We welcome those conversations.

Independent research should encourage thoughtful dialogue.

Not universal agreement.

Progress has always been driven by respectful discussion.

This publication simply seeks to contribute to that ongoing conversation.

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™

The inaugural UCaaS Edition represents only the beginning.

Future editions will expand into additional technology categories, including:

- Cybersecurity
- Contact Center
- Connectivity

- Cloud Infrastructure
- Artificial Intelligence
- Managed Services
- Data Center
- Networking
- Digital Transformation

Each edition will continue asking one consistent question:

How visible are Technology Advisors throughout the customer buying experience?

Over time, these annual studies will allow the industry to:

- Observe trends.
- Measure progress.
- Identify emerging opportunities.
- Improve customer awareness.

Our hope is that the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ becomes an annual benchmark that helps the technology industry evolve through evidence rather than assumption.

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute was established upon a simple belief:

Independent research has the power to improve industries.

Our commitment is to continue publishing objective, customer-focused research exploring the intersection of technology, customer decision-making, and independent advisory.

We will continue:

- Asking difficult questions.
- Challenging assumptions.
- Measuring customer experiences.

Most importantly, we will continue advocating for one enduring principle:

Helping organizations make better technology decisions.

A Challenge to the Industry

As you conclude this publication, we invite you to reflect upon one final question.

Not as a supplier.

Not as a Technology Advisor.

Not as an analyst.

Not as a distributor.

Simply as someone committed to improving the technology buying experience.

> **If Technology Advisors truly represent one of our industry's greatest strengths...**
>
> **What more can we collectively do to ensure the organizations that need them know they exist?**

The answer belongs to all of us.

And perhaps...

The future of customer confidence depends upon it.

Final Reflection

Technology has never been more powerful.

Customers have never had access to more information.

Organizations have never faced more complex technology decisions.

Yet despite unprecedented innovation, one truth remains remarkably consistent.

People do not simply purchase technology.

They invest in outcomes.

They invest in trust.

They invest in confidence.

Technology Advisors have spent decades helping organizations make those investments wisely.

Perhaps the next chapter of our industry is not about introducing new technology.

Perhaps it is about introducing more organizations to the professionals who help them understand it.

If this publication contributes—even in a small way—to advancing that conversation, then the work of the Cloud Concepts Research Institute has already begun fulfilling its mission.

A Final Word

To every supplier executive.
To every Technology Advisor.
To every customer.
To every partner organization.
To every innovator.
To every business leader.
Thank you for contributing to an industry that never stops improving.
The future of technology will be built through remarkable innovation.
The future of technology buying will be built through remarkable understanding.
We look forward to continuing that journey together.

Executive Closing Quote

"Helping organizations make better technology decisions is not the responsibility of one company. It is the shared opportunity of an entire industry."

CHAPTER 11

THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY BUYING

The Next Decade of Customer Confidence

> ***"Every generation inherits the responsibility to leave its industry better than it found it."***

Looking Beyond Today's Marketplace

Throughout this publication, we have examined the technology buying experience as it exists today.

We evaluated supplier websites.

Observed customer journeys.

Studied Technology Advisor visibility.

Identified opportunities.

Yet every meaningful research publication eventually reaches an important question.

What happens next?

The technology industry has never remained static.

It continually reinvents itself.

Cloud computing replaced on-premises infrastructure.

Software transformed hardware.

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping customer engagement.

Automation continues redefining business operations.

Communications platforms have evolved into intelligent collaboration ecosystems.

The next transformation may not involve technology itself.

It may involve how organizations choose technology.

That evolution has already begun.

The Customer of 2030

Imagine a business owner beginning a technology evaluation five years from now.

Rather than relying exclusively on a traditional search engine, they begin by asking an Artificial Intelligence platform.

Within seconds they receive:

- Supplier comparisons
- Feature summaries
- Pricing estimates
- Industry reviews
- Implementation considerations
- Contract guidance
- Competitive alternatives

Research that once required weeks can now be completed in minutes.

Artificial Intelligence has dramatically accelerated access to information.

It has not eliminated the need for judgment.

That distinction will become increasingly important.

Artificial Intelligence Will Transform Research

It Will Not Replace Wisdom

Artificial Intelligence represents one of the most significant technological advancements in modern business.

It accelerates research.

Summarizes information.

Identifies patterns.

Explains technical concepts.

Generates comparisons.

Improves productivity.

These capabilities are remarkable.

Yet Artificial Intelligence still depends upon one critical ingredient.

Context.

Business objectives.

Organizational culture.

Operational priorities.

Implementation readiness.

Executive vision.

Those factors remain uniquely human.

Technology Advisors help organizations bridge that gap.

They transform technical possibilities into business strategy.

Artificial Intelligence accelerates information.

Technology Advisors accelerate understanding.

Together, they represent an extraordinarily powerful combination.

From Product Experts to Strategic Advisors

The Technology Advisor profession is entering an entirely new chapter.

Historically, customers often sought assistance selecting products.

Tomorrow, organizations will increasingly seek assistance making strategic business decisions.

Questions such as:

- Should Artificial Intelligence replace existing workflows?
- How should cybersecurity investments be prioritized?
- Which technologies create the greatest competitive advantage?
- How should communications integrate with customer experience?
- How can technology investments support long-term business strategy?

These questions extend far beyond product selection.

They require business advisory.

Technology Advisors are uniquely positioned to help organizations answer them.

The Rise of Customer Confidence as a Competitive Advantage

Every technological revolution creates new forms of competition.

Initially, organizations compete through innovation.

Later they compete through execution.

Eventually they compete through customer experience.

CCRI believes the next stage of industry evolution will involve something different.

Customer confidence.

Suppliers that help organizations feel confident before purchasing may ultimately build stronger relationships after purchasing.

Confidence cannot be manufactured.

It must be earned.

Through:

- Transparency
- Education
- Expertise
- Trust

Technology Advisors contribute directly to each of these.

The Evolution of the Supplier

Supplier organizations will continue innovating.

Artificial Intelligence.

Automation.

Analytics.

Customer Experience.

Security.

Reliability.

These innovations remain essential.

However, supplier leadership may increasingly be measured by something broader than product innovation.

Helping customers make informed decisions.

Organizations that educate customers before selling to them will likely strengthen long-term trust.

Trust remains remarkably difficult to imitate.

The Evolution of the Technology Advisor

Technology Advisors themselves will continue evolving.

Tomorrow's advisors will spend:

Less time comparing product features.

More time interpreting business strategy.

Less time discussing technical specifications.

More time discussing business outcomes.

Less time explaining technology.

More time explaining organizational impact.

The Technology Advisor of the future becomes an executive resource.

Not because technology becomes more complicated.

Because business decisions become increasingly interconnected.

The Evolution of the Customer

Customers continue evolving as well.

Modern business leaders increasingly expect:

- Transparency
- Education
- Flexibility
- Choice
- Objectivity
- Partnership

Organizations increasingly prefer collaborative buying experiences over transactional sales experiences.

This shift aligns naturally with the strengths of Technology Advisors.

They provide:

- Guidance
- Perspective
- Strategic Planning
- Long-Term Relationships
- Customer Advocacy

These characteristics become increasingly valuable as technology decisions become more sophisticated.

A New Definition of Success

Historically, technology success has often been measured through:

- Revenue
- Market Share
- Growth
- Product Innovation
- Partner Recruitment
- Customer Acquisition

These measurements remain essential.

Yet another definition of success is quietly emerging.

Helping customers make better decisions.

Organizations that consistently accomplish this objective may ultimately enjoy:

- Higher customer satisfaction
- Greater customer loyalty
- Longer customer relationships
- Improved implementation outcomes
- Stronger customer advocacy
- Enhanced industry reputation

Customer confidence becomes measurable business value.

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ Beyond UCaaS

The inaugural UCaaS Edition represents only the first chapter.

Future editions will examine additional technology disciplines, including:

- Cybersecurity
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cloud Infrastructure
- Contact Center
- Managed Services

- Network Services
- Data Center
- Connectivity
- Mobility
- Customer Experience
- Digital Transformation

Each study will apply:

- The same research methodology
- The same Customer Lens™
- The same commitment to objective, independent research

Over time, CCRI intends to build one of the technology industry's most comprehensive libraries of customer-centered buying research.

The Vision of CCRI

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute was founded upon one simple belief.

Industries improve when independent research encourages thoughtful discussion.

Our vision extends far beyond annual reports.

We envision:

- Executive Research Publications
- Industry Benchmarking
- Original Research Frameworks
- Conference Presentations
- Academic Collaboration
- Executive Roundtables
- Customer Buying Research
- Technology Advisor Research
- Annual Industry Studies

Everything we publish remains grounded in one mission.

Helping organizations make better technology decisions.

The Legacy We Hope to Leave

Every industry eventually reaches moments that redefine how business is conducted.

Sometimes those moments are driven by technology.

Sometimes by regulation.

Sometimes by innovation.

Occasionally they begin with a different way of thinking.

The Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ was never intended to become simply another industry report.

It was created to begin a conversation.

A conversation about:

- Customer Awareness
- Customer Confidence
- Technology Guidance
- Independent Research
- Better Decision-Making

If future editions inspire suppliers to think differently about customer education…

If Technology Advisors continue strengthening their focus on business outcomes…

If customers begin asking better questions before making important technology investments…

Then this publication will have accomplished something meaningful.

Our Commitment

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute commits to continuing this work.

We will continue:

- Asking meaningful questions.
- Challenging assumptions.
- Publishing objective research.
- Refining our methodologies.
- Listening to the industry.

Most importantly, we will continue placing customers at the center of every conversation.

Because technology exists to serve organizations.

And research exists to help organizations make better decisions.

Closing Reflection

When this publication began, we asked a relatively simple question.

Are Technology Advisors visible throughout the customer buying experience?

The answer led us somewhere much larger.

It led us to:

Customer confidence.

Education.

Awareness.

Strategic decision-making.

The realization that technology buying is evolving from a transaction into a strategic business process.

That evolution benefits everyone.

Suppliers.

Technology Advisors.

Industry organizations.

Most importantly—

Customers.

The future of our industry will certainly be shaped by remarkable technology.

We believe it will also be shaped by remarkable guidance.

And if that future includes more organizations making confident, informed, strategic technology decisions—

Then the Technology Advisor Advocacy Index™ will have fulfilled the vision upon which it was founded.

CCRI Closing Statement

Cloud Concepts Research Institute

Helping Organizations Make Better Technology Decisions

Through independent research.

Through objective observation.

Through constructive dialogue.

Through customer-focused thought leadership.

Because better technology decisions create stronger organizations.

And stronger organizations create a stronger future.

Final Reflection

"The greatest legacy any industry can leave is not the technology it created… it is the confidence it gave its customers to embrace it."

Acknowledgments

The Cloud Concepts Research Institute extends its sincere appreciation to the thousands of professionals who have dedicated their careers to advancing the technology industry.

To the suppliers who continue pushing the boundaries of innovation.

To the Technology Advisors who serve their clients with integrity, expertise, and professionalism.

To the Technology Services Distributors and Master Agencies that have helped build one of the world's most respected partner ecosystems.

To the Managed Service Providers, Systems Integrators, consultants, analysts, educators, and business leaders whose knowledge advances our industry every day.

And finally, to the customers whose trust inspires the technology industry to continually improve.

This publication is dedicated to all of you.

May it encourage thoughtful conversation, inspire meaningful innovation, and contribute—however modestly—to a future where every organization has the confidence to make informed technology decisions.