

The Champion Matrix

Survival to Thrival, applied to Foldspace. How each champion finds us, what wins the first deal, what makes the account ours, and what turns it into a platform.

THE ARC

- 01 Leads**
Urgent enough to meet tomorrow
- 02 Land**
The demo that makes them your champion
- 03 Marry**
The ELT approves
- 04 Expand**
One vendor for the layer
- 05 2nd app**
Project becomes platform
- 06 Hero story**
Which feeds 01 again

Framework

Tinker & Nahm, Survival to Thrival (Storm Ventures)

Champions

Growth PM · PM · CTO / VP Eng

Date

September 2026

Internal · commercially confidential

Three champions, one land and expand arc

One row per champion, one column per stage. The budget line is in the champion column because the budget decides whether the pain converts.

CHAMPION	LEADS urgent pain	LAND / WIN date wow	MARRY WOW	EXPAND IV	2ND APP	HERO STORY
Growth PM Measured on Activation, retention, expansion Budget Marketing. Displaces the guided-flow and analytics tooling already in the stack.	Activation flat for two quarters. Guided flows do not complete. The adoption tool renewal is coming and its AI module moved nothing.	Their own product, live in a day, no eng time and no code changes. The user asks for the outcome and the multi screen path disappears.	The growth loop is running. The agent surfaces friction and unmet asks, ranked by frequency. She ships against real demand. The CTO joins here for the first time, so their date wow runs inside this call: build vs buy drawn out loud, the determinism boundary, roadmap relief.	Onboarding to the whole adoption surface, then into the existing base for retention and expansion moments.	Conversational Analytics. Every prompt a labeled demand signal. The analytics budget follows the agent.	Mixmax: 4.4x conversion, week one engagement 46% to 79%, time to paid 5 days to 2.6.
PM Measured on Delivering AI in their area, a data driven roadmap, adoption of what they ship Budget The product adoption and experience line, plus the add-AI mandate.	Committed to deliver AI this quarter with no eng capacity. The last release was not adopted. Data says what and where, never why.	Their feature agentified in hours. Ship intents, not screens: the existing backend, no UI rewrite, no sprint spent.	Engagement plus intent insight feeding the roadmap. Build, measure, learn, deploy inside the same quarter. The CTO joins here for the first time, so their date wow runs inside this call: build vs buy drawn out loud, the determinism boundary, roadmap relief.	One feature to the product area to every surface. One interface layer, not an AI experiment per squad.	Conversational Analytics as roadmap input. The dividend, not the entry: the agent lands first.	Optibus: three products modernized in a single sprint, one person on their side.
CTO / VP Eng Measured on Delivering the committed roadmap, build vs buy calls, the AI cost line Budget Engineering, defended as roadmap capacity.	Pain: the roadmap is bigger than the team and features slip, because each one needs a front end first. Fear: nondeterministic behavior in front of their users.	The build vs buy line drawn out loud. They keep the loops and the backend. They buy the interface and the no UI path for features that do not justify a screen.	Consumption data per product and per action, quota control, model high availability, and his team running Agent Builder. Fewer people, more shipped.	One governed layer across products instead of a wrapper per team. Compliance once, one eval surface, one cost line.	Trust Lab (early access). The answer to the fear, not the entry: shared evals, model switching without regression.	Optibus: they had the orchestration loop and bought the interface. One sprint, one engineer.

Leads the pain is urgent enough that the meeting happens tomorrow, not next quarter. · **Land (date wow)** a credible demo fitted exactly to their use case, tied back to the urgent pain. It makes them the champion. · **Marry wow** what gets the ELT to approve: business case, credible vendor, strategic, the right roadmap. · **Expand (IV)** the path to standardizing on one vendor for this layer. · **2nd app** the module that turns a project into a platform. · **Hero story** the named story that feeds the next wave of leads.

CHAMPION

Growth PM

Champion, not the signer

MEASURED ON

Activation, retention, expansion

BUDGET

Marketing. Displaces the guided-flow and analytics tooling already in the stack, rather than opening a new AI line.

CATEGORY WE LAND IN

Product adoption and experience tools. Not an AI platform.

■ Leads (urgent pain)

Activation and trial to paid have been flat for two quarters and the board is asking why. Guided flows barely complete, so users never reach the value that retention and expansion depend on. The adoption tool renewal is coming up and its new AI module did not move a number.

■ Land / Win (date wow)

Their own product, live, in a day, with no eng time and no code changes on their side. The user asks for the outcome and the product does it, so the multi screen path disappears. Legible in the category they already buy: this is what they bought the adoption tool for, actually working.

■ Marry wow

The growth loop is running. The agent surfaces where users get stuck and what they asked for and could not get, ranked by how often it happens, so she is shipping against real demand instead of guessing. She removes those friction points, the next cohort converts better, and the loop tightens every cycle: intent in, experience out, revenue accelerating. The numbers move in her environment, not in our case study. **And the CTO is on this call for the first time.** Champion Marry and CTO Land are the same meeting, so the CTO's date wow has to land inside it: the build vs buy line drawn out loud (they keep the loops, the models and the backend; they buy the interface and the no UI path), the determinism boundary, and the roadmap relief. Deliver the champion's loop and the CTO's date wow in the same hour, or the approval stalls.

■ Expand (1v)

One flow to the whole adoption surface, then out of onboarding into the existing base for retention and expansion moments. One layer does what the guided-flow tool and the homegrown assistant were doing separately.

■ 2nd app

Conversational Analytics (GA). Same champion, the adjacent budget line: every prompt is a labeled demand signal, including the ones the product could not answer. That is the analytics spend coming across too.

■ Hero story

"The adoption stack, replaced." Mixmax retires its guided onboarding for an agent: conversion 4.4x, week one engagement 46% to 79%, time to paid 5 days to 2.6. Logo and numbers both cleared, so this runs named.

CHAMPION

PM

Champion, and usually the expansion champion rather than the first check

MEASURED ON

Delivering AI in their area, a data driven roadmap, adoption of what they ship

BUDGET

The same product adoption and experience line, plus whatever the add-AI mandate carries.

CATEGORY WE LAND IN

Product adoption and experience tools, with the intent data as the reason it beats the incumbent.

■ Leads (urgent pain)

Committed to delivering AI in their area this quarter with no eng capacity to build it. The last thing they shipped was not adopted. Behavioral data tells them what and where, never why, and roughly half of product teams have no time for real discovery (Atlassian, State of Product 2026).

■ Land / Win (date wow)

Their feature agentified in hours. Ship intents, not screens: the existing backend, no UI rewrite. It delivers the AI item on their roadmap without spending the sprint they do not have.

■ Marry wow

The analytics change how the roadmap gets built. Engagement with the agent shows what is actually being used, not just what shipped. Intent analytics shows what users are trying to do in their own words, split across action requests, information requests, reported issues and feature requests, so the roadmap is driven by real intent instead of inference from clicks. And the cycle gets short: build, measure, learn, deploy, fast enough that the team ships against what it learned inside the same quarter. **And the CTO is on this call for the first time.** Champion Marry and CTO Land are the same meeting, so the CTO's date wow has to land inside it: the build vs buy line drawn out loud (they keep the loops, the models and the backend; they buy the interface and the no UI path), the determinism boundary, and the roadmap relief. Deliver the champion's loop and the CTO's date wow in the same hour, or the approval stalls.

■ Expand (1v)

One feature to the product area to every surface. One interface layer instead of an AI experiment per squad, and the adoption tool's job quietly moves to the agent.

■ 2nd app

Conversational Analytics as the roadmap input. It is the dividend, not the entry: it reads the Product Agent's conversations, so the agent lands first. Frame as sharpens the roadmap, never writes it.

■ Hero story

Optibus: modernization delivered across three products in a single sprint with one person on their side. The Eitan Yanovsky quote is already public.

CHAMPION

CTO / VP Eng

Exec sponsor and usually the economic buyer

MEASURED ON

Delivering the committed roadmap, build vs buy calls, the AI cost line

BUDGET

Engineering, defended as roadmap capacity rather than as an AI experiment.

CATEGORY WE LAND IN

A bought interface layer, explicitly outside what they build.

■ Leads (pain and fear)

Pain: the roadmap is bigger than the team and committed features slip, because every one of them needs a front end before it ships. **Fear:** nondeterministic behavior in front of their users. An agent that does the wrong thing in a real account is their name on the incident, and that fear kills more deals here than price does.

■ Land / Win (date wow)

The build vs buy line drawn out loud. They keep the loops, the models, the domain logic and the backend. They buy the onboarding and adoption interface that answers user questions in context and acts as the no UI path for features that do not justify a screen. Roadmap items ship without a front end.

■ Marry wow

Cost and reliability he controls, with the data to act on. Token and action consumption visible per product and per action, so optimizing is a data decision rather than a guess, and model routing plus real time context takes 20 to 35% off the token line. Quota controls give graceful cost safety instead of a surprise invoice. Model high availability, so a provider incident is not an outage in his product. His team runs the Agent Builder itself to manage instructions and the coding work, which is fewer people shipping more. And the boundary holds: every action through his APIs and permissions, deterministic backend as the system of record, system prompt never exposed. SOC 2 Type II, ISO 27001, GDPR, EU and US residency.

■ Expand (1v)

One governed interface layer across products instead of a wrapper per team. Compliance certified once, one eval surface, and the inference cost line consolidated behind one gateway.

■ 2nd app

Trust Lab (early access, message forward looking). It is the answer to the fear, not the entry: shared evals and model switching without regression. Then Conversational Analytics across products.

■ Hero story

Optibus: they had the orchestration loop and bought the interface. Three products, one sprint, one engineer on their side.

The two cross-cutting proofs

Land and Marry each depend on something that is not specific to one champion. These are the two.

LAND · WHY THEY WANT TO BE YOUR CHAMPION

The date wow is a credible demo fitted exactly to their use case and tied straight back to the urgent pain they just described. That earns the person. But they are also putting their name on us inside their own company, so they have to believe the company behind the product will still be here in two years. The demo is necessary and it is not sufficient.

Founder pedigree. Two prior exits: Insightera to Marketo / Adobe, Gainsight PX to Vista Equity Partners.

Category authorship. Co-author of *Mastering Product-Led Growth* with Wes Bush. The champion has probably read it.

Customers they recognize. Mixmax and Optibus, both cleared to name.

Gap: the funding line. No round is documented in the GTM repo or the founder bio. Get the exact fact before any deck or call script claims one.

MARRY · WHAT THE ELT APPROVES

The champion does not sign. The approval is an executive decision made against four tests, in this order.

01 A business case that holds. The numbers came out of their own environment during the pilot, not out of our case study.

02 A credible vendor. SOC 2 Type II, ISO 27001, GDPR, EU and US residency, named references, and an action boundary their security team can inspect.

03 Strategic, not a point tool. They are approving the interface layer between their users and their product, not a feature that shows up as a line item next renewal.

04 A roadmap they want to be on. Trust Lab, Agent Builder, and the analytics dividend, so the buy compounds instead of plateauing.

The CTO is new to the room. Champion Marry and CTO Land are the same meeting. Whoever runs it owes the CTO their own date wow on the spot: build vs buy drawn out loud, the determinism boundary, and the roadmap relief. Otherwise the loop the champion loves reads to engineering as an unreviewed dependency.

THE LOAD-BEARING PARAGRAPH

The CTO build vs buy line

If they cannot repeat this back, we are in a build-it-ourselves conversation we do not win.

THEY BUILD AND KEEP	THEY BUY FROM US
The agentic loops, models, and prompts behind their own domain logic. Layer 1 is theirs.	The interface layer between the user and the product. Layer 2.
The backend, the APIs, permissions, business logic, and the system of record.	The onboarding and adoption agent that gets users to the outcome, and answers their questions in context instead of sending them to docs or support.
Their differentiated AI features, the ones customers pay them for.	The no UI path for features that do not justify a screen, so the roadmap ships without the front end work.
Their data, and whatever intelligence they build on top of it.	The conversation record that becomes intent data, which is what makes the second module obvious.

ANSWERING THE FEAR, NOT JUST THE PAIN

Boundary. The agent acts only through their APIs and their permission model. It cannot reach past what the signed in user could already do.

Scope. Actions are declared and versioned, not improvised at runtime.

Record. The deterministic backend stays the system of record, so an agent mistake is a reversible action, not a corrupted state.

Cost safety. Consumption is visible per product and per action, quotas degrade gracefully, and routing keeps a provider incident from becoming an outage.

Evidence. Trust Lab for evals and model switching. Early access, so it is a roadmap answer, not a closing argument yet.

GAPS TO CLOSE

- No published time-to-first-agent metric, so the CTO date wow is still a qualitative claim.
- PM quantified proof is thin. The row leans on Optibus plus the capability story.
- Trust Lab is early access, so it expands an account, it does not close one.
- IV is read here as one vendor, the account consolidating onto a single interface layer. Confirm.

READING THE ROWS AGAINST EACH OTHER

Columns are not independent across rows. A champion-led deal reaches ELT approval with the CTO meeting us for the first time. The CTO row's Land beat runs inside the Growth PM and PM Marry beat: one meeting, two jobs. Build the agenda that way.

Every marry wow is a loop, not a milestone. Growth PM: intent in, experience out, revenue accelerating. PM: build, measure, learn, deploy. CTO: consumption data in, cost and reliability decisions out. The account becomes ours because the loop keeps running, which is also why the second module sells itself.

Growth PM and PM share a budget and a category. Both are bought as product adoption and experience tooling, funded out of lines that already exist. That is the fastest budget in the account because nobody has to create it. The CTO is a different budget and a different argument entirely.

Champion is not buyer. Growth PM and PM carry us; VP Product / CPO, marketing, or the CTO signs. Line the economic buyer up before the pilot ends or it dies at renewal.

The PM is the second module, not the first check. Conversational Analytics needs the Product Agent deployed, so the PM is who makes the expansion inevitable rather than who opens the account.

Language does not cross rows. Funnel language to a PM reads as wrong audience. Architecture language to a Growth PM reads as a project she cannot fund.

The loop closes on hero story. Mixmax carries the Growth PM row, Optibus carries the PM and CTO rows, and both logos are cleared, so both run named. Every other account stays anonymized until cleared.