



**The Future of \_\_\_\_\_ is Now:**

**The Ecosystem Economy  
is Changing Everything,  
for Everyone, Starting Today**



There's a seismic shift taking place in the way businesses do business.

The very defined lines that once separated industries are blurring. Brands from different sectors are coming together with a common purpose – to join up the customer experience.

It's called the ecosystem economy, and it's growing rapidly. According to **BCG**, more than half the S&P Global 100 companies already take part in one or more ecosystems, and 90% of multinational companies plan to expand their ecosystem activities.

There are ecosystem opportunities out there for any brand, in any sector, that's willing to look for them. You can insert literally any industry into the blank space in the title of this article – from retail, to transportation, to healthcare – and it would hold true. The ecosystem economy is propelling every sector into a collaborative future. Using the latest technologies, brands are collaborating and reorganizing the way they operate, with a focus on meeting customer needs and delivering integrated journeys across verticals.

Partnerships between some brands are more intuitive than others. Think about an auto brand manufacturing electric cars, an energy company producing sustainable electricity, and a retailer with EV charging points in its parking lots. The symbiotic relationship is clear from a customer journey viewpoint.

Some are less obvious. We recently read about a **pet retailer** that partnered with a home rental platform so travelers can find pet-friendly vacation rentals and have pet products delivered to their destination.

Whatever brands or industries are involved, an effective ecosystem puts the customer at its center, with all brands working together to solve that customer's problem or meet their needs.

**50+**

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# Why should you care about the ecosystem economy?

There are three reasons your brand should already be exploring the ecosystem economy:

## 1 Shifting customer preferences

First, and arguably most importantly, it's what your customers want. People's expectations are shifting towards unified seamless experiences. They don't want to interact individually with multiple brands, in multiple channels, to achieve their end goal. They expect multi-brand connections.

In discussing the complex process behind purchasing a property, for example, Miklós Dietz, Senior Partner at McKinsey and co-author of [The Ecosystem Economy](#) explains,

“ **People don't want a mortgage.**  
**They don't want home insurance.**  
**They don't want a real estate agent.**  
**They want a home.**  
— Miklós Dietz, McKinsey

Dietz believes bringing all the parties involved in the house-buying process together gives customers what they want. He suggests people should be able to find and purchase a property, finance it, insure it, move in, renovate it, and maybe even sell it again in one easy and fully integrated journey.

## 2 The need to drive value from data

The second reason to embrace the ecosystem economy is to maximize value from your first-party data. Most brands are already having board-level discussions about how to drive revenue and growth, while at the same time sitting on a wealth of customer data that would allow them to achieve those very goals.

Collaborating with the right brands and building ecosystems is a way to create value from unique first-party data assets in a secure and privacy-conscious way. We all know first-party data is valuable, but its value can be magnified by combining it with the first-party data of partner brands. It can help you create an entirely new revenue stream and grow the business, resulting in better stock performance and shareholder returns.

3

## Making the most of digital innovation

Rapid technological innovation is one of the driving forces of the ecosystem economy, making it easier to connect customer experiences across multiple brands and industries. The great news is your brand has probably already invested in most of the technologies or services you need.

Whether it's mobile apps, online marketplaces, electric vehicles, or data platforms, there's a good chance you've invested millions, if not billions in innovation and digital technologies. But it will take time to realize a return on these technologies, especially if they only work in isolation. To multiply the value they create they need to work in tandem. A partner ecosystem gives you the opportunity to put those technologies to work, together, today, and realize a return on that investment far more quickly than you might otherwise have expected.

# When will technology enable the ecosystem economy?

Much of the ecosystem economy conversation revolves around mobility. Which is no surprise – it's an exciting time in the business of moving people from one place to another. But there's a notion that making a mobility ecosystem work requires fully autonomous vehicles, fully connected smart city infrastructure, and fully scaled Internet of Things (IoT) technologies. That future is coming, but it's still a long way off.

The truth is you don't need to wait for these, or any other technologies, to scale. By putting the customer at the heart of the ecosystem and using your first-party data, your brand can join the ecosystem economy today with proven technologies.

**Data clean rooms** are at the heart of enabling an ecosystem strategy. They've been around for years and offer a secure way to share your data with other brands – allowing them to ask questions of it without drilling down to personally identifiable information (PII). They make it easy to overlap and join data sets without copying or moving them – assuming of course you have the right **identity solution** to connect disparate data and create a single view without attaching sensitive data.

Once brands have combined data in a clean room, they can use advanced technologies such as **artificial intelligence** and **predictive analytics** to drive the seamless, multi-brand experiences their customers expect.

Sticking with the mobility theme, this means airlines, rideshare services, car rental companies, accommodation providers, and entertainment venues could be combining their data in a clean room right now, to drive a connected ecosystem.



# But aren't travel companies already partnering?

It's true travel companies have been working together for years. You may have booked a rental car through your airline's website, for instance, or booked both the flight and accommodation for your vacation through an online travel agency (OTA).

But if this is the case, you also know these experiences can be disjointed and frustrating. You may have arrived at your destination airport to find the office for the rental car company closed before your flight even landed, despite the vehicle being booked through the airline. Or you may have got to the hotel check-in desk and discovered a single room has been allocated, rather than the family suite you booked. Resolving these issues has often required multiple calls to disconnected customer support desks where you've had to repeat your story over and over.

Travel companies and OTAs have been the pioneers of the ecosystem economy. But they've so far lacked the infrastructure to securely share data across the entire ecosystem. Now brands can take control, connect with all ecosystem partners at a deeper level, share data in real-time, and create truly exceptional customer experiences.

So, what might this look like in practice?



## A seamless and stress-free family vacation

The Cooper family takes a trip to Seattle. A concert is the main purpose, but they're combining their city break with an adventure in the great outdoors. They book, pay for, and manage the entire trip through a single app.

At their local airport, they leave their EV in its reserved space, checking in through the app. The car won't be charged up right away – only when the departure of their return flight is confirmed. Heading to the bag drop, they receive a notification from an airport restaurant – the one nearest their gate. It has menu suggestions based not just on the family's preferences but also real-time data about the time available before boarding. As the family waits at the gate after eating, they're invited to customize their in-flight entertainment experience, with media recommendations for each member.

Arriving at the hotel after a trouble-free rideshare, the family uses a digital key to access their suite. Their TV screen links seamlessly with the app and offers personalized choices for things to do in the city. In a few clicks, they've lined up trips to the science center and the aquarium – something for everyone. The day of the concert arrives, and they enjoy the VIP package they pre-ordered through the app. There's early entry to the venue, and catering in the pre-show lounge where a limited-edition gift is ready and waiting for them.

The morning after the concert, a rental truck is dropped off at the hotel (it can be returned to the airport) and the family sets off for the North Cascades National Park. After a few days of hiking, biking, and wildlife-watching the trip is nearly over. But with everyone's photos and videos automatically compiled into a treasured keepsake, the family memories will last forever.





# Join the ecosystem economy today

There's no need to wait for futuristic connectivity and autonomy. The seamless experience described above is entirely possible with the technologies already available today. Technologies that your brand has quite possibly already invested in.

As the lines between industries blur, brands that enter the ecosystem economy now will gain a massive advantage over their competitors. To seize the opportunity in front of you, and make sure you're one of those first-mover brands, the first step is to assess your first-party data to explore what your ideal partner ecosystem might look like.

Talk to us today to find out how Acxiom's Data Portrait Analysis can help you identify your perfect brand partners, and take your first step towards the ecosystem economy.

[Get in touch](#)

# About Acxiom

Acxiom® is the global leader in customer intelligence and stands at the forefront of AI-enabled, data-driven marketing. As part of the Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. (IPG), we specialize in high-performance solutions that boost customer acquisition and retention while fueling growth for the world's biggest brands and agencies. We transform omnichannel marketing strategies and execution using our AI-powered data and identity foundation, cloud-based data management, and martech and analytics services. For over 55 years, our teams across the US, UK, Germany, China, Poland, and Mexico have helped businesses optimize their marketing and advertising investments while prioritizing customer privacy.

**Discover more at [acxiom.com](https://www.acxiom.com), where marketing is made better.**

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about how Acxiom can work for you, contact us at [info@acxiom.com](mailto:info@acxiom.com)

[acxiom.com](https://www.acxiom.com) • [info@acxiom.com](mailto:info@acxiom.com)

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