

Fictional exchange. Companies, people, operational inputs, interviews and reviews are invented. Updated 18 September 2026. Listed attachments are rendered pages in this PDF, not native downloadable files.

Expert Assignment: should we replace demos with a self-serve trial?

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TO IQ256 | iq256.com/contact
DATE 11 September 2025, 08:17 CEST

Hello IQ256,

VendorLattice becomes persuasive when a prospect loads its own supplier data. Most prospects never reach that point. Product wants an open 14-day self-serve trial. Sales wants five more people. Both proposals are expensive and credible.

Our open beta attracted 376 sign-ups, but only seven target accounts reached a live risk map. Fourteen of 24 selected guided proofs signed, but the process used too much senior time and selection bias may explain the result.

Please choose one path we can start within 30 days and judge using a defined observation window. We value human perspectives on enterprise activation, procurement buying, and repeatable services economics. Include dissent, investment limits, and measurable gates.
Regards, Laura

ATTACHMENTS (3)

 MK_Board_Growth_Decision.pdf MarbleKestrel Systems B.V. Decision 23 September 2025	01
 MK_Funnel_and_Trial_Evidence.xlsx Target-profile opportunities 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025	02
 MK_Buyer_Interviews_and_Team_Positions.docx Twelve post-demo interviews and current operating views	03

Board growth decision

MarbleKestrel Systems B.V. | Decision 23 September 2025

Fictional inputs. Benchmarks, interviews and voices are invented.

<div>EUR 6.72M</div> <div>ARR</div> <div>19% forecast growth</div>	<div>104</div> <div>Customers</div> <div>Average ARR EUR 64.6k</div>	<div>86</div> <div>Employees</div> <div>Utrecht, Netherlands</div>
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VendorLattice combines supplier master data, spend, compliance documents, incident history, and operational dependencies into one prioritized risk view. It becomes persuasive only when a prospect sees its own supplier risk map. Gross margin is 78%. The core target is a European manufacturer with 250-2,000 employees; a typical new annual contract is EUR 42k-EUR 96k.

Three routes

Route	Commitment	Central assumption
Open self-serve	EUR 410k over six months and four product staff	Users can activate alone
Scale current demo	Four sellers + one solutions engineer; EUR 640k annual cost	Pipeline needs more follow-up
Another route	Must be bounded, measurable, and executable	A missing transition may be tested directly

Management planning estimates

Route	90-day allocated	90-day cash	12-month total
Open self-serve	EUR 150k	EUR 55k	EUR 590k
More sales	EUR 0	EUR 195k	EUR 640k

Minimum useful customer data

- Supplier legal name and internal identifier.
- Country, category, and annual spend band.
- Supplied sites or product lines.
- Criticality rating and known incident or compliance status.

Decision criteria

Criterion	Weight	Question
Evidence speed	25%	Can we see early evidence in 30 days and decide within 135 days?
Customer value	25%	Will a prospect get a decision-relevant result?
Repeatable economics	20%	Can human effort stay bounded?
Product focus	15%	Does the test reveal what to automate?
Trust	15%	Can sensitive supplier data be handled safely?

Non-negotiable constraints

- Produce first measurable evidence within 30 days.
- Commit no more than EUR 190k of incremental cash and allocated capacity during the 135-day program.
- Divert no more than four product staff, for no more than six weeks before review.
- Do not allow unrestricted uploads from unidentified users.
- Do not delay contracted security or customer work.
- Use one shared definition of activation across Sales and Product.

BOARD SUCCESS

Show that target accounts reach useful customer-specific value faster, with a credible paid path and no material confidentiality failure. Every measured account receives the same 90-day observation window.

MK_Board_Growth_Decision.pdf

Assignment scope

This fictional assignment is complete when the agreed review and documents are delivered and checked. Its business recommendations and future execution are separate from that completion.

Agreement	Boundary in this example
Delegated work	Diagnose the supplied growth funnel, compare three routes, integrate relevant perspectives, and design one bounded guided-trial experiment.
Requested output	A recommendation, three simulated capability perspectives, a launch plan and a canonical 135-day dashboard. No customer trial was run.
Completion checks	Reconcile the EUR 184k budget and 120-hour pool; keep equal 90-day account windows, assigned denominators, control logic and stop rules consistent.
Authority retained by customer	Laura retains the experiment decision, hiring, spending, prospect contact and data-access approvals. This assignment prepares the decision and plan; it does not launch the trial.
Remaining checks	Verify real funnel exports, cohort eligibility, data permissions and staff capacity; approve external contributor packets before sharing; measure the trial if commissioned.
Fee and timing	Illustrative scope; price and delivery agreed in the quote. Current service guide: iq256.com/what-we-do . This collection is a sample, not a package entitlement.
Business budget	The EUR 184k program ceiling, EUR 190k maximum and proposed trial charge concern the fictional customer, not the IQ256 fee.

Where human input is agreed, IQ256 selects, briefs, coordinates and pays contributors. IQ256 integrates the agreed work and performs baseline completion checks. Extra verification answers a specified additional concern. External information packets require explicit customer approval; no approval is needed for every internal step within the agreed mandate.

If scope, price, deadline, sharing or customer effort changes materially, agree the next course before exceeding the mandate. A recommendation may name one option while the customer retains the decision; permission to act or commit money is agreed separately.

Discuss a defined assignment

<https://iq256.com/contact>

Start with a short, non-confidential description. Initial human reply normally within 2-48 hours, distinct from the agreed delivery deadline.

Funnel and trial evidence

Target-profile opportunities | 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025

Fictional inputs. Benchmarks, interviews and voices are invented.

Current funnel

Event	Accounts	Prior conversion	Median days
Qualified opportunity	312	100%	0
Generic demo completed	254	81%	8
Data and security workshop	159	63%	29
Usable customer data	98	62%	51
Customer-specific risk map	76	78%	63
New customer won	52	68%	104

Recorded losses after demo

Primary reason	Accounts	Note
Could not secure data owner or permission	18	Finance, security, or master-data support absent
Demo felt generic	14	Features understood; own result unclear
Priority faded	11	Competing work won
Price or budget	8	Explicit final objection
Chose another vendor	6	Two cited faster proof with own data

OBSERVED BOTTLENECK

The largest two losses occur after a prospect already accepts a demo.
Demo completion is not activation.

Open-trial beta

Event	All sign-ups	Target-profile
Account created	376	83
Invited a colleague	91	31
Uploaded any file	24	18
Completed field mapping	11	10
Reached live risk map	7	7
Accepted sales conversation	6	4
Signed during observation	0	0

Ad hoc guided proofs

<div>24</div> <div>Started</div> <div>Selected accounts</div>	<div>21</div> <div>Activated</div> <div>Median 5 business days</div>	<div>14</div> <div>Signed</div> <div>Median ARR EUR 71k</div>
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Median staff effort was 11.4 hours and the highest was 27 hours. Guided accounts were hand-picked, usually had executive sponsors, and received senior support. The results are promising, but do not prove guidance caused the difference.

Buyer interviews and team positions

Twelve post-demo interviews and current operating views

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Fictional buyer voices

Simulated voice: Chief Procurement Officer: The demo was clear. I could not ask Finance for the supplier export without explaining what would happen to it and who would see the result.

Simulated voice: Risk Director: Your sample company had obvious risks. I needed to know whether the system would find something our category managers had missed.

Simulated voice: Head of Master Data: One legal entity appears under six names. I stopped when the import asked me to make decisions I was not authorized to make.

Simulated voice: CFO: I did not need another tour. I needed one answer: which single-source suppliers could stop our highest-margin product line?

Recurring themes

Theme	Interviews
Needed permission or another data owner	9 of 12
Wanted a result using own supplier information	8 of 12
Supplier definitions were inconsistent	7 of 12
Generic demo was easy to understand	10 of 12
Navigation was the main obstacle	2 of 12
Price was the main obstacle	2 of 12

FULL ACTIVATION

Import at least 100 supplier records, map all eight fields, generate a risk map, save one investigation, and invite one colleague.

Leadership positions

- Simulated voice: Product: Improve import and onboarding so the product can teach every future customer.
- Simulated voice: Sales: We already know how to sell. Five experienced hires are less risky than a hybrid motion nobody owns.
- Simulated voice: Solutions: Guided proofs convert, but without fixed scope they become donated consulting.
- Simulated voice: Security: Controlled workspaces are supportable. Open uploads from unqualified users create avoidable risk.
- Simulated voice: Finance: Fund one bounded experiment, not two large commitments while growth slows.

Available 135-day capacity

Capability	Maximum allocation	Constraint
Engineering	2 engineers for 6 weeks	No security-work delay
Design	1 designer for 3 weeks	Reuse current system
Solutions	120 hours	Per-trial cap required
Security	30 hours	Standard review only
Revenue operations	0.5 FTE for 135 days	One shared funnel
Sellers	Existing team	No hires before gate