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Making Outbound-Led Growth Work

Outbound isn't dead. It needs to shift from being expensive and tactical to efficient and strategic.

Introduction: Outbound-Led Growth

In the ever-evolving landscape of B2B Go-to-Market (GTM), Outbound-Led Growth has been a constant. Once thought of as a foundational element of any plan to launch a company, product, or segment, lately Outbound has suffered from premature reports of its death.

While it's undeniable that the sales environment has grown more challenging and many Outbound campaigns are less effective than ever, the reality is that Outbound remains a vital component of a comprehensive GTM strategy. The key lies not in abandoning Outbound altogether, but in refining and optimizing it to meet the demands of a more discerning and connected market.

The 6 Go-to-Market Motions

	TYPE	GROWTH LEVER	EXECUTION
	Inbound-Led	Content Marketing driving to conversion channels	Marketing harvests demand via paid, organic, social, and email to qualify and route to Sales
	Outbound-Led	Coordinated and targeted account outreach	Marketing and Sales: Account-based marketing and selling, 1:1 advertising, content hubs, SDRs
	Product-Led	Product-driven adoption, usage & feature discovery	Product facilitates deals, upsells, usage, expansion
	Partner-Led	Unified indirect selling programs	Activation through channel, ecosystem, referral, affiliate, reseller, and nearbound
	Event-Led	**Premium event experiences to drive quality connections**	**Targeted educational roadshow events, in-person, virtual, & hybrid**
	Community-Led	Create a movement or category around a transformative idea	Thought Leadership driven by industry experts, influencers, and happy customers

Source: GTM Partners 6 Types of GTM Motions
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Our research shows that 86% of B2B companies are doing Outbound, and 59% plan to invest more in the coming year. Another 25% plan to maintain their investment.

Outbound isn't dead: it just needs to evolve from being an expensive, scattershot, siloed tactic to an efficient, highly targeted, collaborative strategy.

What Broke Outbound?

- **Fewer people answer the phone** and new-work-from-home norms make people harder to reach.
- **Improved inbox filters** prevent messages from reaching targets.
- **Noisier inboxes** mean when your message is delivered, it's harder to get noticed.
- **Larger buying committees** mean sales teams must engage with multiple stakeholders, making the sales cycle longer and more intricate.
- **Expanded tech stacks enabled bad habits** by encouraging a "scorched earth" approach, where volume is prioritized over quality and relevance.
- **Big tech stacks can also make it harder to sell.** Sellers often need to stitch together a half-dozen tools to be targeted, relevant, and effective.
- **Increased buyer scrutiny** makes it harder to make a compelling case.
- **The way sellers sell didn't keep up with the changing ways buyers buy.** While buyers have evolved to become more self-sufficient and informed, many sales teams continue to rely on outdated Outbound tactics that no longer resonate.

The Real Problem?

These are all real and important challenges. However, the real issue is that GTM teams broke Outbound by sending hundreds of millions of emails that were:

- Irrelevant to the receiver
- Boring
- Self-serving

...But Great Outbound Delivers Great Results!

2x
more Outbound meetings booked
Source: Smartling using Regie.ai

60%
more meetings with 11% fewer sellers
Source: Twilio using Lavender.ai

83%
increase in pipeline velocity
Source: Ingram Micro using Demandbase

66%
increase in qualified opportunities
Source: Lucid using MadKudu

209%
increase in average sales price
Source: Unity using Clari

150%
more closed deals
Source: AK Ops Using ZoomInfo

$7B
increase in pipeline
Source: Demand Inc using Salesloft

100
hours saved per month
Source: Reputation using Regie.ai

What Is Outbound-Led Growth?

Are you proactively reaching out to prospects, partners, customers, and investors, or are you waiting for them to seek you out for information? Any proactive communication is Outbound, including cold calls, emails, LinkedIn outreach, advertising, and even things like events, nurture campaigns, and newsletters.

 "Doing Outbound" often involves untargeted, high-volume tactics like cold calling and mass email blasts, which can be inefficient and yield low engagement.

In contrast, leveraging an Outbound-Led Growth motion involves a more strategic and data-driven approach, focusing on highly targeted and personalized outreach using advanced technologies and insights to identify and engage high-value prospects. The result is a more significant impact on the pipeline than just "doing Outbound" can provide. Outbound-Led Growth should include the entire GTM team (sales, marketing, product, and customer success) as stakeholders or advisors.

Is Outbound-Led Growth Right for You?

Is your executive team aligned around clear and concise value props?	Yes / No
Would an SDR or BDR team help you achieve needed scale and velocity?	Yes / No
In order to create demand, do you need to wake up the market?	Yes / No
Are you in a highly competitive market or often the last to enter the deal?	Yes / No
Is your GTM team aligned on a clear and specific ICP?	Yes / No
Are your existing GTM motions failing to take you upmarket if that is a goal?	Yes / No
Are you selling a high-margin product or service that can support a more expensive motion like Outbound?	Yes / No
Does your buyer needs guidance along the purchase journey?	Yes / No
Do you sell to a large and diverse buying committee?	Yes / No

Source: GTM Partners' Making Outbound Work
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How to Fix Outbound

Tactical and Expensive	Strategic and Efficient
Sales-Rep Led	**GTM Team-Led**

Sales-Rep Led	GTM Team-Led
TAM	TRM
Product-Focused	Problem-Focused
Cadence	Context
Volume	Value
Random Outreach	Triggered Follow-Up
Single-Threaded	Multi-Threaded
Activity-Driven	Results-Driven

Source: GTM Partners' Making Outbound Work
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Keeping Outbound Alive

Outbound is worth saving. Keeping it alive will require a fundamental paradigm shift. We need to transform:
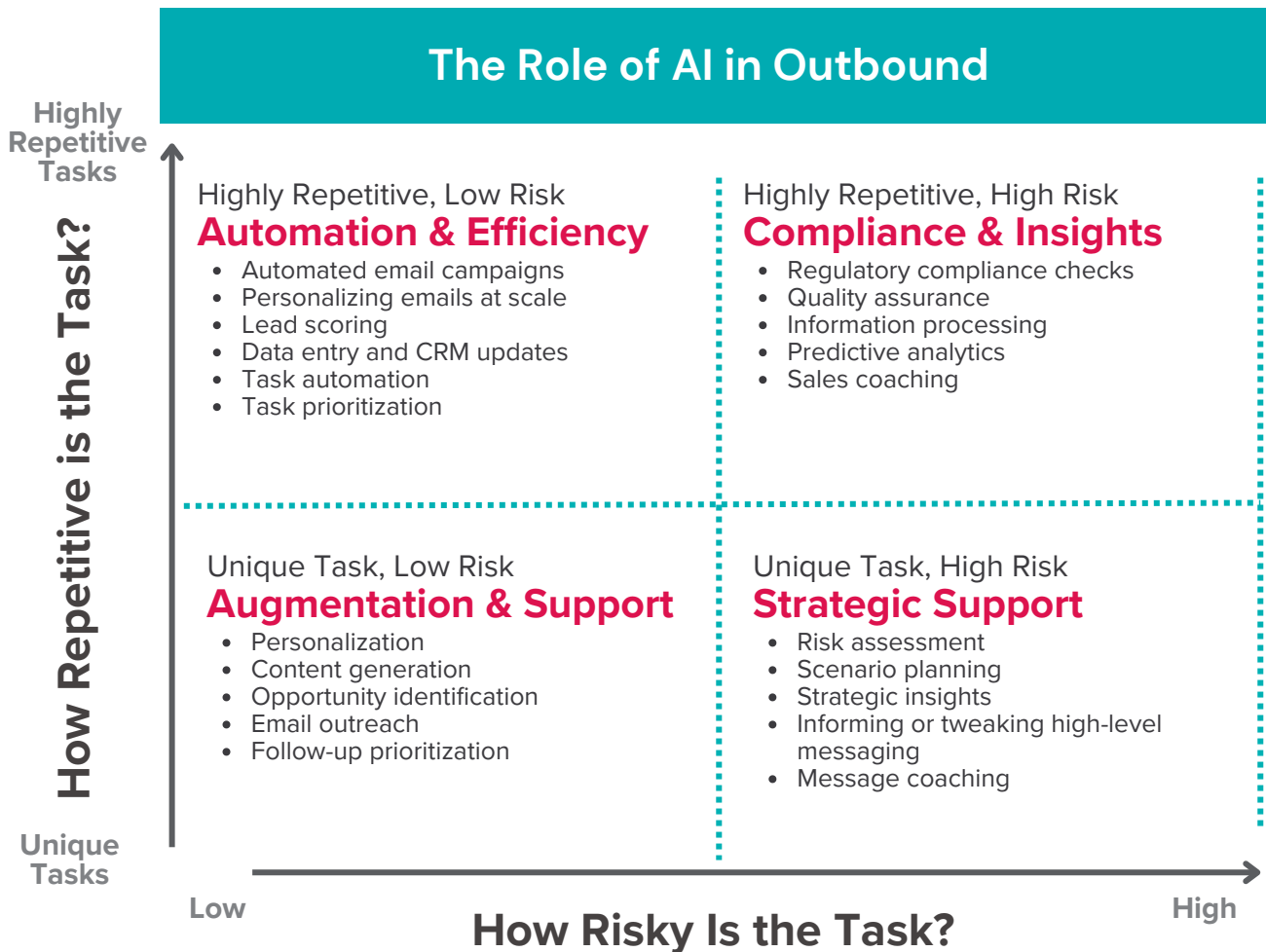
- **From Tactical to Strategic:** Shift from short-term, ad-hoc Outbound tactics to long-term, well-planned strategies that align with overall business goals.
- **From Sales-Led Effort to GTM-Led Effort:** Move Outbound efforts from being solely driven by the sales team to a collaborative GTM strategy that includes marketing, RevOps, customer success, and product teams.
- **From TAM to TRM:** Direct efforts towards best-fit accounts by transitioning from targeting the total addressable market (TAM) to focusing on the total relevant market (TRM).
- **From Product-Focused to Problem-Focused:** Instead of emphasizing product features, center Outbound messages around solving specific problems faced by the prospects.
- **From Cadence to Context:** Prioritize the timing and relevance of communications over the frequency of outreach.
- **From Volume to Value:** Reduce the emphasis on the number of Outbound messages sent and focus instead on the quality and relevance of each interaction.
- **From Random Outreach to Triggered Follow-Up:** Replace unsystematic outreach with follow-ups triggered by specific actions or behaviors of prospects.
- **From Single-Threaded to Multi-Threaded:** Engage with multiple stakeholders within the target organization, creating a more comprehensive and robust outreach strategy.
- **From Activity Driven to Results Driven:** Measure success based on outcomes like lead conversion rates and revenue impact, rather than merely tracking Outbound activities.

The Role of AI in Fixing Outbound

Outbound prospecting is one of the most promising applications for Generative AI (GenAI) because it revolutionizes Outbound sales efforts not only for businesses but also for buyers. Buyers receive more personalized and relevant communication tailored to their needs and preferences. Businesses can streamline operations by reducing the amount of tech, people, and time traditionally required to run a successful Outbound motion.

When properly applied, GenAI can do all this while also achieving tangible returns on investment in terms of increased meetings and pipeline growth. In fact, research from Salesforce indicates that 82% of sales professionals use GenAI for basic content creation, 74% applying it to analyze market data and 71% to automate personalized sales communications.

The trick is knowing how to use AI to empower teams to do their best work, so we don't end up back where we started - with hundreds of millions of unwanted messages clogging inboxes.

The Role of AI in Outbound

Highly Repetitive Tasks

How Repetitive is the Task?

Highly Repetitive, Low Risk
Automation & Efficiency
- Automated email campaigns
- Personalizing emails at scale
- Lead scoring
- Data entry and CRM updates
- Task automation
- Task prioritization

Highly Repetitive, High Risk
Compliance & Insights
- Regulatory compliance checks
- Quality assurance
- Information processing
- Predictive analytics
- Sales coaching

Unique Task, Low Risk
Augmentation & Support
- Personalization
- Content generation
- Opportunity identification
- Email outreach
- Follow-up prioritization

Unique Task, High Risk
Strategic Support
- Risk assessment
- Scenario planning
- Strategic insights
- Informing or tweaking high-level messaging
- Message coaching

Unique Tasks

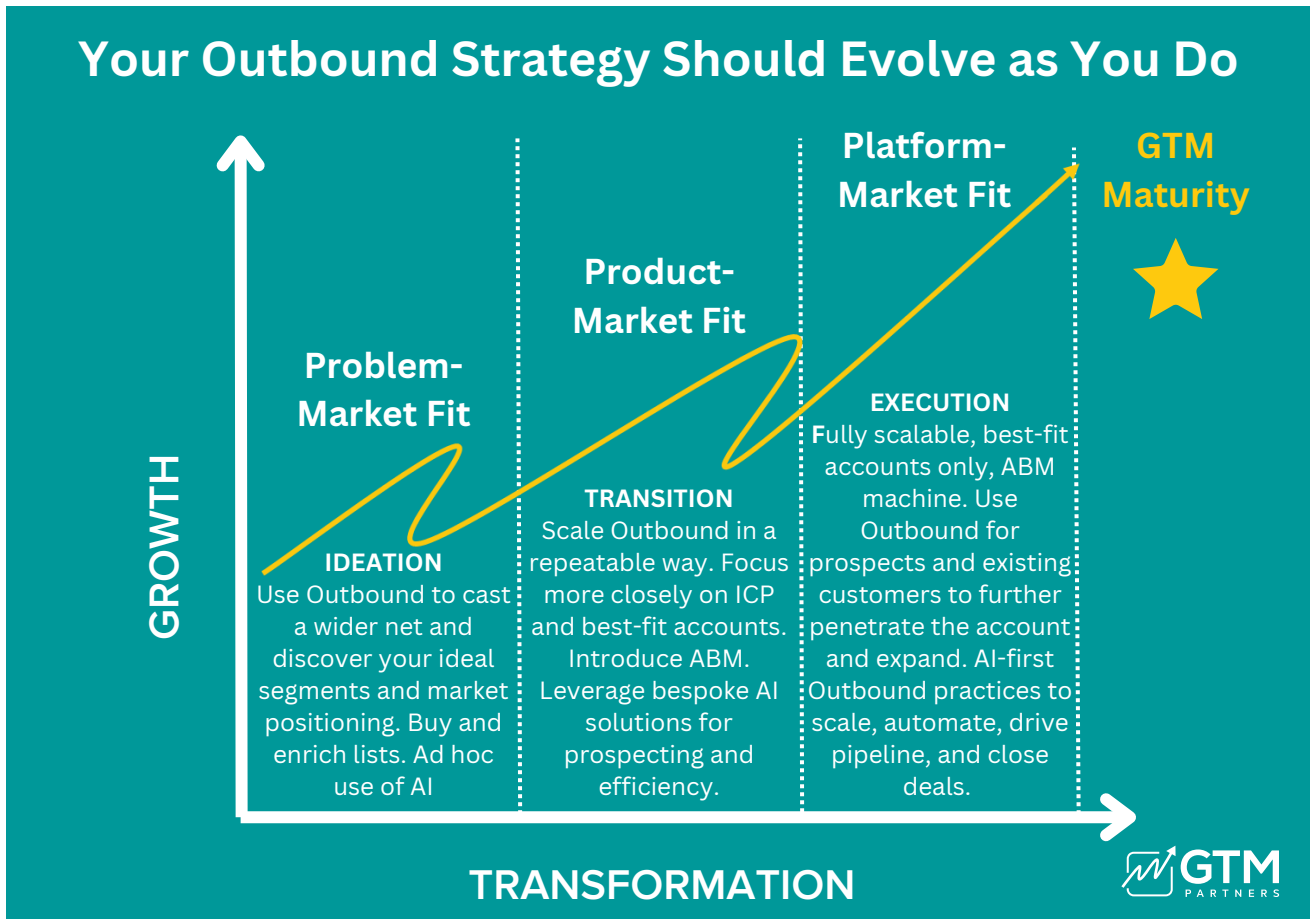**Low** — **How Risky Is the Task?** — **High**

Source: GTM Partners' Making Outbound Work
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How Outbound Evolves as Companies Scale

If you've decided based on the assessment tool that Outbound-Led Growth is a good fit for your company, customers, product, and strategy, there is another important consideration: where are you in your evolution?

- **At Problem-Market Fit**, you're focused on solving a specific problem your company was built to solve but may not be sure yet what "ideal" accounts look like. You can use Outbound to cast a wider net and to discover or verify ideal markets and positioning.
- **At Product-Market Fit**, you should have more aligned marketing and sales teams, repeatable Outbound processes, and be proactive about ABM and pursuing best-fit accounts.
- **At Platform-Market Fit**, you have multiple products and services in the market, you're focused on expanding growth, and you have centralized Outbound processes in place. Keep in mind that at this stage, you may have products or lines of business still at the Problem-Market fit or Product-Market fit stages, and treat them accordingly.

Your Outbound Strategy Should Evolve as You Do

Platform-Market Fit

GTM Maturity

Product-Market Fit

Problem-Market Fit

GROWTH

EXECUTION
Fully scalable, best-fit accounts only, ABM machine. Use Outbound for prospects and existing customers to further penetrate the account and expand. AI-first Outbound practices to scale, automate, drive pipeline, and close deals.

TRANSITION
Scale Outbound in a repeatable way. Focus more closely on ICP and best-fit accounts. Introduce ABM. Leverage bespoke AI solutions for prospecting and efficiency.

IDEATION
Use Outbound to cast a wider net and discover your ideal segments and market positioning. Buy and enrich lists. Ad hoc use of AI

TRANSFORMATION

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Source: GTM Partners' Making Outbound Work
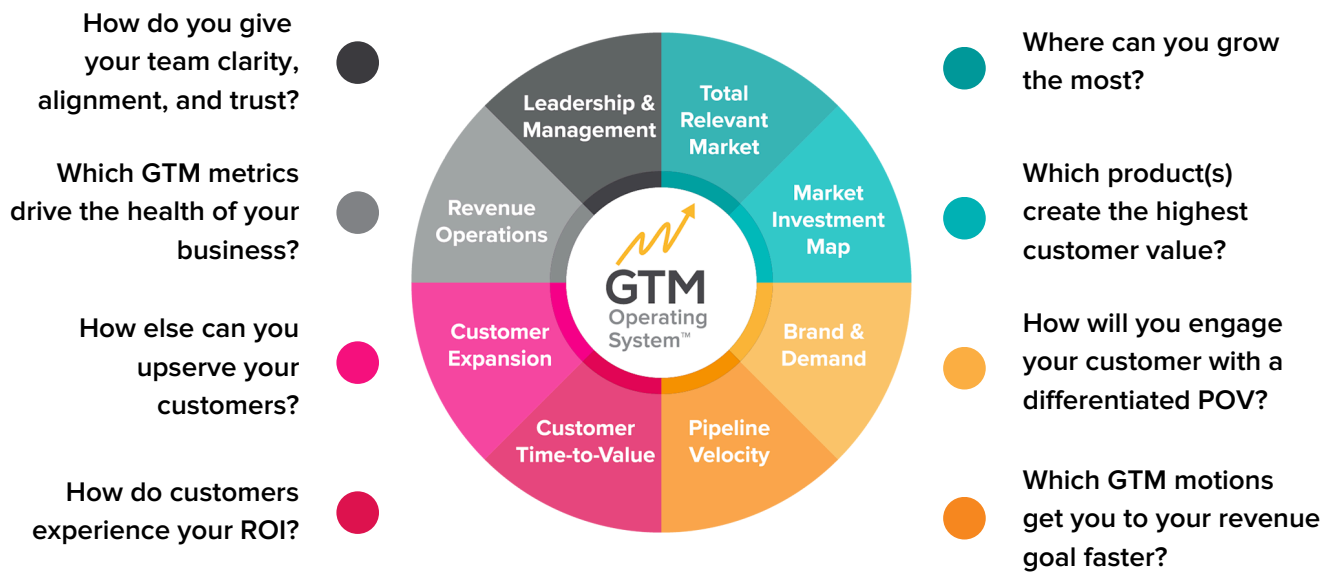© GTM Partners, gtmpartners.com

Using the GTM Operating System to Align, Execute, and Scale Outbound-Led Growth

If you've decided Outbound-Led Growth is the right approach, the Go-to-Market Operating System (GTM O.S.) can provide guidance on the elements of your strategy.

The GTM O.S. is an 8-pillar framework that we have developed to provide organizations with a blueprint to provide clarity and alignment in their strategic planning and execution process.

The GTM Operating System
Connect cross-functional strategy to execution

How do you give your team clarity, alignment, and trust?

Which GTM metrics drive the health of your business?

How else can you upserve your customers?

How do customers experience your ROI?

Where can you grow the most?

Which product(s) create the highest customer value?

How will you engage your customer with a differentiated POV?

Which GTM motions get you to your revenue goal faster?

Circle segments: Leadership & Management, Total Relevant Market, Market Investment Map, Brand & Demand, Pipeline Velocity, Customer Time-to-Value, Customer Expansion, Revenue Operations — GTM Operating System™

The GTM O.S. guides strategy at the highest levels of business. However, any GTM motion or project can be viewed through the lens of the O.S. in order to ensure a project is strategic and not just tactical.

Elements of a Successful Outbound Program, Through the Lens of the O.S.

If Outbound-Led Growth is an efficient, GTM-led strategy rather than an expensive sales-led tactic, we need to understand the elements of a successful Outbound program.

Sales, marketing, and RevOps should be heavily involved, while product and customer success should be stakeholders to ensure alignment.

"Use Outbound to build $50M in pipeline" is not a strategy, it's a goal. Ensure each of the following areas has been addressed when building a strategy.

	PILLAR	ROLE OF OUTBOUND–LED GROWTH
1	Total Relevant Market	Target Outbound efforts at best-fit accounts. Make sure you have high-quality contact information and relevant intent data to target in-market prospects.
2	Market Investment Map	Outbound is not a one-size fits-all approach. Decide which market segments, products, and audiences you'll target with Outbound. This is where you build the nuts and bolts of your strategy.
3	Brand & Demand	Ensure clear, consistent messaging. Write prompts that sales can use to create highly personalized, on-brand communication. Focus on customer-first, value-based messaging that demonstrates an understanding of customer problems.
4	Pipeline Velocity	Develop a multi-touch (email, social, calls, events) and multi-offer (demos, content offers, audits, education, etc.) approach.
5	Customer Time-to-Value	Use Outbound for improving adoption, usage, and advocacy. Plant seeds for what kind of ROI they should be seeing. Ensure customers know about features and how to use them.
6	Customer Expansion	Leverage Outbound to drive expansion in existing accounts by educating them about new solutions, markets, features, and benefits.
7	Revenue Operations	Measure and incentivize the Outbound team (top to bottom) based on success metrics; track a broad variety of metrics for diagnostic reasons. Be quick to adjust or celebrate success widely.
8	Leadership & Management	Highest-level strategy, alignment, and socializing Outbound plans and goals with all relevant teams: SDRs/BDRs, AEs, sales leadership, RevOps, marketing, customer success, and product.

Source: GTM Partners' Making Outbound Work
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Identifying Your Ideal Approach to Outbound

Once we understand the scale of our Outbound-Led Growth (are we at Problem-Market fit, Product-Market fit, or Platform-Market fit) and have used the GTM O.S. to create a cross-functional strategy, it's time to think about how to structure your program.

It can be useful to think in terms of one-to-one outreach, one-to-few outreach, and one-to-many outreach, depending on program goals.

Three Approaches to Outbound

Approach	Volume	Value	Velocity	Program Goal	Program Metrics
1-to-1	Low	$$$	Slow	Cherry-pick high-value targets with longer sales cycles. Surround them with the resources they need to see you as the optimal partner.	Measure incremental engagement metrics. Revenue will be "lumpy" and not a reliable indicator of progress.
1-to-Few	Med	$$	Mod	Choose a larger set of mid-to-high-level targets. Leverage scale when possible, but still have resources to personalize significantly if the signal exists to validate the additional investment.	Engagement, revenue, and velocity should be a focus. Taking targets from cold to sold will be different than warm to sold.
1-to-Many	High	$	Fast	Have 2000+ targets in mind, with a goal of closing several deals quickly. Consider 1:many an enhanced inbound execution with layers of highly scripted Outbound.	Revenue and velocity should be measured, with a focus on segmentation for diagnosing potential improvements.

Source: GTM Partners' 3V's of ABM
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Measuring Outbound Success

In order to modernize Outbound-Led Growth and ensure it's working as a strategic initiative, it's crucial to move from tracking activity metrics to tracking outcomes and revenue. However, at the program level, there are a wide variety of metrics that can be diagnostic.

Demand Gen Metrics
- Accounts/individuals contacted
- Response rate
- Qualification rate (ICP fit)

Sales Efficiency Metrics
- Sales cycle length for Outbound-generated leads (as compared to other sources)
- # of activities needed to close
- Conversion rate
- CPL/CAC

Outreach Effectiveness Metrics
- Outreach engagement rate (email opens, call connections, LinkedIn connection accepted)
- Overall account engagement (how else are Outbound targets interacting with your brand? e.g. website visits, content consumption, event attendance, etc.)
- Response rate
- Conversion rate (to meeting, event attendance, demo, free trial)

Revenue Metrics
- Conversion to opportunity rate
- Opportunity close rate
- Average Outbound deal size
- Customer lifetime value from Outbound-sourced deals

Team Metrics
- Activity (used to diagnose why someone may not be hitting revenue metrics)
- Quota attainment
- Pipeline production
- Overhead cost (don't assign cost of entire sales team to Outbound)

Risk Metrics
- CAC/LTV
- Churn

Conclusion: An Imperative to Revive Outbound

In conclusion, Outbound marketing is far from dead; rather, it is the outdated methods that have become obsolete. To thrive in today's B2B sales landscape, Outbound needs to be modernized. This means shifting from a tactical, expensive, and sales-led approach to one that is strategic, efficient, and driven by a comprehensive GTM strategy.

The key to successful Outbound marketing lies in breaking down silos and fostering collaboration across teams. When sales, marketing, and customer success work together with a unified understanding of Outbound strategy and goals, the results can be significantly enhanced. This integrated approach ensures that every team contributes to the creation and execution of a cohesive and impactful Outbound strategy.

Moreover, our technology stacks need to evolve to support this modern approach. The average enterprise GTM tech stack comprises over 23 tools, each with the potential to drive substantial value. However, their true power is realized when they are seamlessly integrated, enabling data sharing and coordination across platforms. By making our tech stacks better together, we can ensure that our Outbound efforts are not only more efficient but also more effective.

In summary, modernizing Outbound marketing requires a holistic transformation. It involves adopting a strategic mindset, leveraging technology to drive efficiency, and fostering cross-functional collaboration. Outbound cannot be done effectively in a sales-only silo.

Outbound is not dead; it's evolving, and its future is bright when embraced with the right strategy and tools. We must ensure that Outbound marketing continues to play a vital role in driving growth and achieving business objectives.

About GTM Partners

GTM Partners, a data-driven Go-to-Market Analyst firm, helps organizations achieve efficient growth by transforming their GTM strategy. We work with high-growth companies to help them unify their GTM teams and to provide them with lasting strategies and frameworks. GTM Partners, with a mission to make Go-to-Market simple, aims to be the voice of the industry for all things GTM.

We do this by offering:

1. Data and benchmarks collected from data providers, including G2 and Bombora, as well as our community of the world's fastest-growing companies.

2. Research, best practices and design frameworks to provide guidance on the best-in-class approaches to strategizing, executing and tooling your Go-to-Market approach.

3. Personalized advice and support from experienced leaders and practitioners that help you address business challenges in a manner that is authentic and specific to you. Our consulting work focuses on areas such as Go-to-Market strategy, creating a Point of View and Go-to-Market project execution strategy across the 8 pillars of GTM.

4. Events and networking with industry leaders looking to define the category of Go-to-Market and revolutionize the way we create value for our organizations.

The Analysts

Bryan Brown
Cofounder, Chief Analyst

Bryan is a SaaS pioneer and thought leader in the marketing and sales tech industry. He has both created and brought to market innovative software products and ideas while helping thousands of companies in their effort to grow revenue more efficiently. Bryan is a co-founder with multiple exits (Vtrenz), has led strategy teams in Fortune 100 Companies (IBM) and has helped multiple organizations scale their products and Go-to-Market approaches from point solutions to platforms (Silverpop, Terminus).

Lindsay Cordell
Senior GTM Analyst

Lindsay is a practitioner turned analyst who studies best practices and trends in Go-to-Market and develops actionable models and blueprints for our clients. She has held both practitioner and leadership roles in almost every aspect of Go-to-Market, including Product, Marketing, Sales, RevOps, and Enablement in Fortune 500 companies including AT&T, Hearst and Cox. She most recently ran the GTM Center of Excellence for the Account-Based Marketing Platform Solution Terminus.

Sarah Allen-Short
GTM Analyst

Sarah brings more than 20 years of experience of B2B marketing and sales leadership to her role as a GTM analyst. She's worked in technology, nonprofit, government, and higher education, with a specialty in B2B SaaS. She excels at taking the skills and experience she developed working with Fortune 500's and billion-dollar companies and helping startups and scaleups apply those lessons in practical, agile ways. Sarah specializes in combining strategic and tactical approaches for maximum impact.

Sangram Vajre
Cofounder, Industry Analyst

Sangram is a three-time best-selling author and co-founder of several organizations, including Terminus, The Peak Community and most recently, GTM Partners. Sangram has been at the forefront of B2B marketing trends, the Flip-my-Funnel movement, and defining the Account-Based Marketing category ushering in a new generation of marketers. He has previously held CMO roles at Pardot, a Salesforce company and Terminus.