TACK

The People-First Advantage

2024 Edition

175 Insights, Lessons, and Reflections on Creating Better Customer Experiences and Driving Growth with People-First GTM

By Mark Kilens, CEO & Co-Founder of TACK

The Power of People-First

Out with the old, in with the new. The world is changing fast—and so is B2B GTM.

Since Nick and I launched TACK in 2023, we've been on a mission to change the way people think about GTM. Gone are the days of transactional, company-first tactics. Today's buyers want a different experience—one rooted in people and human relationships.

I have *a lot* to say on this topic, which is why a year ago I started a daily writing practice.

Sometimes it's an insight from my experience leading marketing teams at companies like HubSpot, Drift, and Airmeet. Sometimes it's a management framework I've developed or picked up over the years. Sometimes it's a reflection on something I've read, a conversation I've had with a partner or customer, or one of the many other ways I get inspiration.

The common thread in everything I've written is the importance of being people-first.

Nick and I are passionate about helping companies and leaders become more people-first. That's why we developed People-first GTM—to give companies a framework to consider people in everything they do, and to help them use those people-first principles to grow.

I believe so strongly in taking a people-first approach that I've committed my career to teaching others how they can do the same. That was a big part of my inspiration in starting a daily writing practice and sharing each post in ClubPF, the members-only community we run as part of TACK. And it's the driving factor behind my decision to package up my reflections and share them with you in this book.

PEOPLE-FIRST GTM MODEL
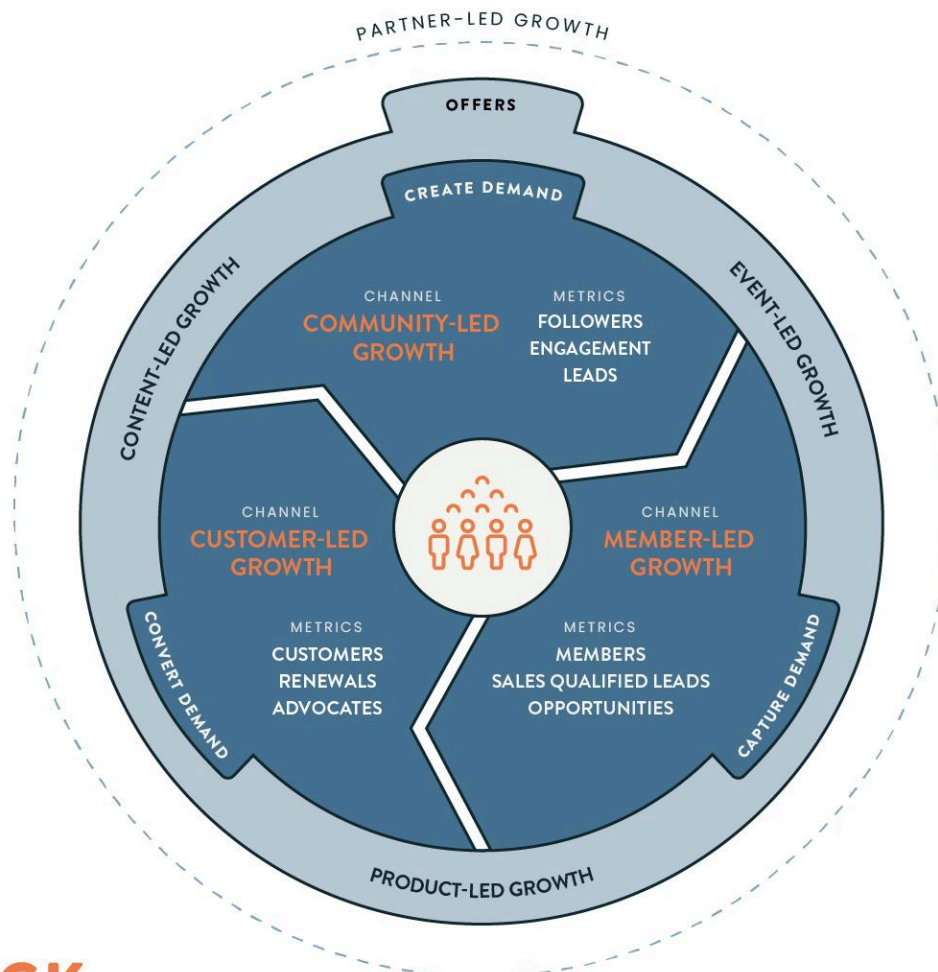
The insights, lessons, and reflections you're about to read run the gamut from the value of partnerships, to the difference between Community-led and Member-led growth, to the mental models I've used throughout my career to educate and inspire others. They're grouped together by theme, but I'm sure you'll find overlap between sections. This is by design, because at the end of the day, everything in People-first GTM connects back to one thing: people.

I hope you get value and inspiration from this. Thanks for reading.

Mark

Chapter 1

The Customer Compass: Engage, Listen, Learn

Creating and building traditional buyer personas is such an old-school way of thinking about audience research, development, and definitions.

To me, it's a company-first approach.

"Let's spend time creating a fictitious representation of our ideal buyer by doing surveys, maybe talking to a few people, and doing some third-party research."

Blah!

I'm not saying personas aren't valuable. They are. What I'm suggesting is that how we build them and the things we're trying to understand about our "ideal buyers" needs to change.

We need to focus more on the emotive attributes, the problems, the places and content they like to engage with, and who they respect and trust.

And we need to talk to more real people and use communities and social networks to truly understand who the ideal buyer really is.

Most buyer persona resources tell you to focus on surface-level, somewhat generic facts.

Instead, go deeper into the mind of the buyer and study them in a way that's truly people-first.

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Social signals are everywhere and getting pulled to the front of all things marketing and selling.

Why? Because content is everywhere, increasing the cost of getting in front of the right people, while also driving up opportunity costs.

This tip is about making sure you're listening for all of your brand's social signals and using them wisely when it comes to customer acquisition and retention.

First, here are a couple types of signals to watch for.

Intentionally choosing to follow a group's decisions because you want to signal your allegiance and worthiness of belonging is called a **reputational cascade**. It's the signal people give when they join your community, buy your product, or do anything else that forms a connection with your brand.

The other side of this is an **informational cascade**. Basically, this is how popular things become more popular and unpopular things stay unpopular.

Now let's talk about how you influence the signals.

1) Champion your customers. Bring to market all the amazing things they're doing and show how it's impacting their business and careers.

2) Find people who are helping similar buyers and customers solve different problems. Host events, create original content, do research together, or build a free tool.

3) Amplify the voices of people who share similar beliefs. Listen, engage, and learn from them.

4) Partner with people who your buyers and customers already trust and respect.

Now the question becomes where and how you can use these signals.

If you're in a larger organization, consider having someone be responsible for organizing the "Voice of the Market." This is similar to how we think of Voice of the Customer (VotC) but it includes everyone who's part of your ICP and market.

The truth is people are becoming more influenced by what other people choose. This is partly thanks to algorithms and partly their own ability to share what's going on in their lives.

It's time to lean in or get left behind.

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Educate, educate, educate. I can't stress this enough.

Buyers and customers want value-add content and experiences more than ever before. They're saying, "Stop wasting my time. This doesn't have to be a five-hour course with a certification."

The key question to ask is how much of your content-led and event-led growth strategy is about educating people versus talking at them. Let me give you an example.

Take a standard webinar. Most aren't structured in a way that will leave someone with a better understanding of X topic. There's a conversation, there may be some ideas and tips, but they don't answer the question of how to practically do something different or new.

Instead, design the webinar with the mindset and intentionality that any person who attends or watches the recording should be able to do X afterward. Don't pontificate about a topic. Make it specific, actionable, and focused on the outcome you're trying to create.

Too much content and too many webinars are surface-level ideas or tips that don't go deep enough to create actual change. They might inspire it, but they don't deliver on the how.

Deliver the how and you'll already be better and differentiated from 80% of your competitors.

Right now, go do an audit of your content and events, and look at how many are truly teaching people versus stating the obvious.

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I can't stress enough how important it is to get close to your customers.

Talk to them every week. Learn from them. Ideally, if you can, become one.

Make yourself a weekly if not daily ritual of listening and talking to your customers.

Your P&L and customers will thank you for it.

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Don't ignore or forget to study **macro trends**.

In my estimation, this is one of the biggest things companies don't spend enough time studying and understanding when it comes to product creation, positioning, and messaging.

You want to take the time to understand the things that are affecting your customers, including how they can help you create a strategic narrative, POV, and story for your brand and product(s). These things are sometimes referred to as "undeniable truths."

Study the macro trends that are putting pressure on or perhaps creating tailwinds for your market and customers. Then, figure out how you can lean into them to update or create your GTM plan and product strategy accordingly.

I would do this every six months given how fast things move in the world now. I would make it a topic in at least one board meeting per year and at least once a quarter at the executive level.

I believe this is a core job of both the CEO and CMO and is something they should dedicate time to doing on an ongoing basis.

You can get the info you need by talking to customers and buyers, reading the news, going into communities, studying new technology, and so on.

It's all about connecting the dots when it comes to headwinds and tailwinds, and staying on top of the big ideas and cultural creations that are fundamentally changing the marketplace and the game you and your customers are playing.

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Is intent data a people-first GTM play? It sure is. Here's how I think about intent data.

First-party data is information you get directly from buyers and customers. It's the stuff you can track on your website, in the events and webinars you host, from your product or service offering, and elsewhere. It's super valuable and sacred.

Second-party data is information you agree to share with other partners and parties. It's things like contacts, deal stage, account data, and contact intel. It's very valuable data that can give you direction on how to influence a relationship or start one.

Third-party data is information you get from sources that measure and track the digital fingerprint and footprints of people. It's things like ad clicks, search intent, reviews, events, and so on.

Intent data is either explicitly (directly) collected or implicitly (indirectly) collected.

When used in the right ways, intent data will help you learn more about the motivations and desires of your buyers, get you closer to them, and help you design experiences and offers that are more personal.

Check out this simple Account Fit vs. Buying Intent Framework:

Account and Buyer Prioritization Framework

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Here's a neat framework to help you get deeper into the minds of buyers.

Functional Attributes				
Job Role	Common Titles	Position on Organizational Chart	Buying Center	Firmographic
Emotive Attributes				
Initiatives	Challenges		Buyer Need	Lexicon
Decision Process Attributes				
Buyer Role		Engagement Level		Decision Drivers

I like it because it provides a lot more substance than your traditional buyer persona template.

It's great for understanding the buyer from person, problem, solution, and value angles.

You could also look at behavioral attributes like what communities they engage in and the types of interactions they prefer. However, those are getting harder to generalize and determine.

It's a great framework to use as part of your product positioning and messaging strategy. It can also inform sales outreach, event invites and themes, and how you build targeted programs for integrated revenue campaigns. Plus it contains a ton of great info for your product team.

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Behaviors matter a lot. But have you ever thought about your **brand's behaviors**?

This tip is all about how to think about using DiSC to create experiences that feel more human.

DiSC is a behavior framework that breaks down like this:

- **Dominance**: These individuals are assertive and direct.
- **influence**: These individuals are outgoing and enthusiastic.
- **Steadiness**: These individuals are patient and dependable.

- **Conscientiousness**: These individuals are analytical and detail-oriented.

Take a moment and think about your brand and which behavior style it falls into.

Now think about your ideal customer profile and who you sell to. Do they match up?

Then take a moment to think about your brand's voice and tone. Does it match its behavior style?

You get the point. Putting a lens on how your brand behaves is a very interesting People-first GTM exercise.

And yes, brands, just like people, can and even *should* change their behaviors for different customers or markets. But there's always one or two behaviors that are most dominant.

The question is, how intentional are you at using behavior design and modeling as part of the customer experience?

Oh and by the way, I'm an iD. Surprised? 😉

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This tip is all about account and buyer fit definitions.

Do you know how your company defines fit? If not, go find out.

Do you know the last time the definitions were looked at and possibly updated? If not, go find out.

Does your team use them on a regular basis for campaign planning, messaging and positioning, content offers, and event design? If not, no better time to start than now.

Why am I asking you these questions?

Because to put people first, you need to know who they are. You need to understand them. You need to develop empathy.

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Let's talk about customer journeys.

It's so easy to only look at data and never see all the incredible insights that data doesn't show if you're not looking at it with the right lens.

My advice: create at least one customer journey per week that shows how marketing *and* sales helped turn a lead into a new customer.

You can also create journeys for how you turned a new customer into a power user or even advocate.

Here's a picture of what one typically looks like.
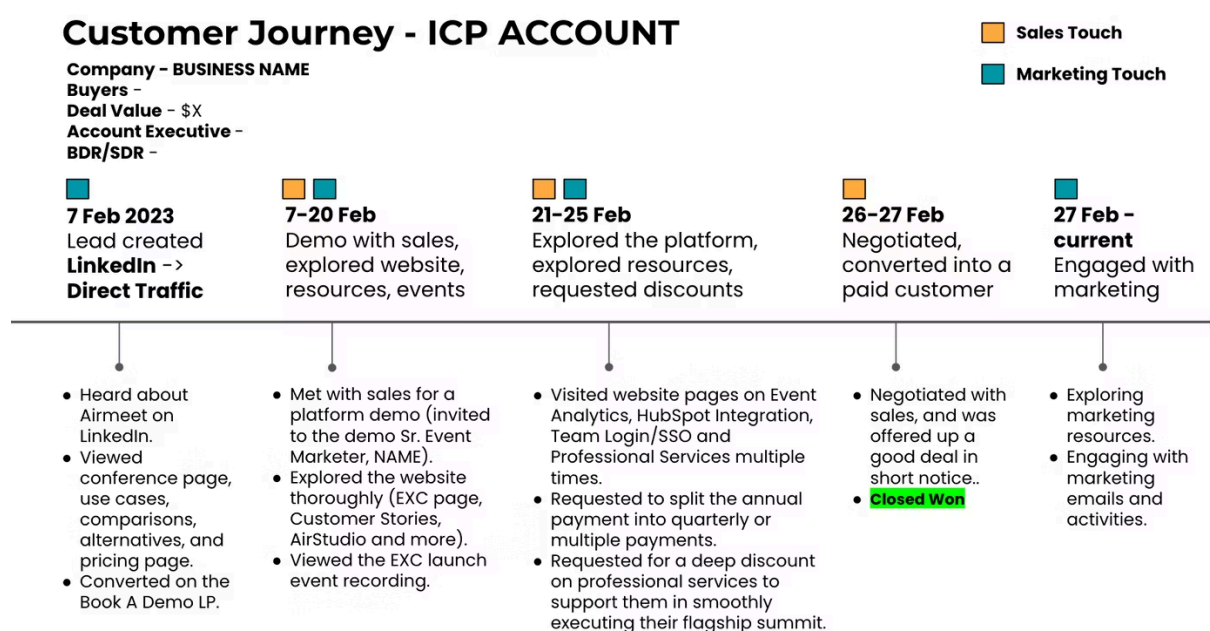
Use the activity history in HubSpot or Salesforce to find the key moments that led to an account becoming a customer.

Here at TACK, I share a new journey every week during my Monday Marketing Minute update, in our executive meetings, and during our board meetings.

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Buyer personas are both critical to any successful people-first GTM strategy.

Here's a simple three-part framework I like to use to understand buyer personas.

1. Buying Center - The function or department expressing the need.
2. Buying Team - Three or more people in the buying center working together on a purchase.
3. Buyer Personas - The different people who are part of the buying team.

We tend to focus so much on the personas themselves, we forget to consider all the intent signals and interest from the overall buying team.

A great exercise is to map out a couple of typical buying teams to better refine your product messaging, content, and events for the different people within those teams.

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There are better, more people-first ways to think about intent signals and how to use them.

The key is to look at intent from the perspective of the customer journey. Don't think about the source or type as much. Frame it like a buyer or customer would.

1. Problem intent
2. Solution intent
3. Product intent
4. Value intent
5. Advocacy intent

When it comes to intent signals, the focus is typically on numbers two or three—because that's where a lot of data and intent providers specialize.

The bigger opportunities to make revenue growth more efficient and improve retention are in numbers one, four, and five.

What types of intent are you trying to better collect and use right now?

Chapter 2

The Partner Advantage: Building Alliances

Don't go it alone.

When I joined HubSpot in 2010, one of the first things I did was start building a squad. I had been a HubSpot customer myself and saw a huge opportunity to help them make their customers more successful using Inbound Marketing. But I knew I couldn't do it alone.

So I sold my vision to lots of people and formed a squad of volunteer HubSpotters who helped me turn it into HubSpot Academy. I'm forever grateful to those people. And the number-one lesson I took from the experience is that trying to do it alone is so much harder. I couldn't have done it without help.

This tip is all about finding your squad. You probably won't have just one squad, either. Different goals require different people. When thinking about who should be part of your squad, consider your strengths and weaknesses, your past experiences, and how much time you have to dedicate to achieving the goal.

Most importantly, think about who you want to learn from and who will help you get closer to your goal.

It doesn't matter the length or complexity of the goal. Every time you find a partner, the percentage of success goes up.

People-first GTM is all about using relationships and partnerships to create aligned outcomes. Stop building products and trying to serve customers alone. Build a squad and achieve greatness together.

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Here are five of my favorite ways to make your GTM more people-first:

1. Entertaining and original content with genuine personality
2. Community engagement led by creators
3. Easy to try and buy with transparent pricing

4. Webinars and online events that are interactive, fast-moving, and fun
5. Membership hub with one-click sign up and exclusive perks

What do they have in common? They all benefit from getting partners (including customers) involved.

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Here's a simple framework for each pillar of People-first GTM, starting with the most important: partner-led growth.

Partner-led Growth

1. Identify - Audience, partners, accounts
2. Collaborate - Create a story, develop a plan, enable teams
3. Execute - Launch, manage, learn

Content-led Growth

1. Create - Assets, stories
2. Amplify - Share the content to the right audience
3. Measure - The impact and the insights

Event-led Growth

1. Discover - The right accounts and people
2. Engage - With the right event and experience
3. Grow - Pipeline, customers, advocates

Product-led Growth

1. Acquire - New user acquisition
2. Adopt - Onboard and get to value fast
3. Retain - Create habits with users that grow overtime

Community-led Growth

1. Find - The places where your buyers and customers are engaging
2. Engage - Participate in conversations
3. Contribute - Create and deliver value

Member-led Growth

1. Acquire - Members in your owned community experience
2. Activate - Get them engaging with content, in conversations, and programs
3. Convert - Into customers or brand/category advocates

Customer-led Growth

1. Onboard - Get new customers seeing fast value and success
2. Partner - Create deeper relationships with customers to deliver more value
3. Delight - Design moments and experiences that over time make customers fall in love with your product and brand

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Influencers and creators are becoming all the rage. But there are right ways and wrong ways to execute an influencer strategy.

Nick Bennett and Bryan Grover have a [fantastic newsletter](#) that breaks this down every couple of weeks. I want to highlight a couple of things they've written about.

First, why Community-led Growth is so successful:

1) People are looking for new connections (and to learn new things).

2) People are always looking for a quick, easy way to understand.

3) People are lazy. LOL, It's true!

But where this strategy can go wrong is if you take a company-first approach.

If you're simply paying other people to promote your brand or product, then it's a transactional relationship that will start to become obvious to your audience and broader community. There's not a real sense of genuineness. And being genuine is core to great partnerships.

Instead, you need to take a people-first approach to influencer marketing. Enter into longer-term partnerships and relationships with influencers and creators. Structure it so you both win and get value.

And only partner if they believe in what you and your brand believes. If the relationship is purely about money and not about joint value creation, the results will be short-lived.

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Something we should be talking about more: **creator-product fit**.

The general idea is that the creator you partner with to increase awareness and trust of your product needs to not only be a believer in your product but also a user.

This is the ideal state and almost always true in B2C creator marketing. If you're recommending a product, you better be a user.

However, in B2B, you can pass the sniff test as long as your beliefs align, even if the creator isn't using the product.

Maybe they believe in your approach, but there just isn't a use case for them to use the tool. Or maybe they share your POV on an important subject or set of undeniable facts.

It could even be that they loved a piece of content you created or an event they attended, and that inspired them to become a promoter of your product.

Just because they're not a user, doesn't mean they can't be an effective partner.

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Here's how I think about using a people-first approach with ABX.

Full-funnel ABX Approach

1:Many Aware Engaged 1:Few MQA 1:1 Opty 1:Many Customer 1:Few Cust MQA Expansion Opty 1:1 Repeat

BRAND → ICP targeted DG umbrella

Sales Partnership - Orchestrated experience modified by behavior

Partnership Support Level Up Experiences Community Advocacy

Advocacy umbrella flows back to DG

→ **An ABX approach focus on the entire customer journey — we meet them where they are and with what they care about.**

Starting from left to right:

1:Many at the top of the funnel: Partner with creators and influencers in your industry to create content. Same goes with some of your employees.

1:Few in the middle of the funnel: Partner with some of the complementary solutions and people in your space to create a joint value prop, and do events and targeted marketing together.

1:1 at the bottom of the funnel: Partner with customers to help you get references and examples in the hands of buyers who are about to turn into customers.

This can of course be applied on the right-hand side of the image, too. That's where Customer-led Growth can really shine.

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Here are some relevant lessons from our experience bringing the TACK Network to life.

Lesson one: Start preparing early and often.

The network was dreamed up back in June 2023, and we started preparing for a launch in late October or early November. We created a doc of key dependent milestones and knew that if we missed even one of those milestones we would have to move the date out. But that forced us to make sure we had enough time to try our best to not miss a key milestone, which helped us say no to other things.

Lesson two: Don't try to do something big alone, ever.

We were purposeful in who we consulted to help us refine our ideas. We created a shortlist of people who could be part of making our vision come to life. And a list of people who would help us share it far and wide when the time was right. People-first all day, every day.

Lesson three: Stick to your North Star, but let the journey take you down the right roads.

We were very confident in what we were trying to build, but we ended up changing the name of it halfway through. We had backup plans for several key components on the project and made sure to never have a single point of failure if we could avoid it. Trust your gut and try not to overthink things. It's better to make a decision than to not make one at all or fast enough.

Remember—it's always better together.

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Trying to decide which People-first GTM Offer to lead with? Here's what I recommend.

First, decide which People-first GTM offer you're best at and which one is a good fit for the audience you're trying to acquire.

For example, if you're selling a new product to salespeople, I would go for a product-led growth offer. They want something that's free, easy to use, and gives them immediate value. They don't have time to read content and go to events. They've got to close business!

Decide on the offer type—either content, events, or free products—that you'll use as the primary thing that activates the desired audiences. Maybe it's a monthly webinar, a recurring in-person event, a seminal research report, episodic show, or a great free tool.

HubSpot did it with a blog. Drift did it with a podcast. These are examples of content-led growth.

GTM Partners has done it with their in-person roadshow. Salesforce did it with their field events. These are examples of event-led growth.

Notion and Box did it with their free products. These are examples of product-led growth.

Find one thing and one offer format that can be the catalyst to create other types of offers. Start simple and align it to WHO you're trying to build a relationship with.

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Do you know your **partner attach rate**? Not your sales attach rate, but how much you're partnering across your content-led, event-led, product-led, community-led, member-led, and customer-led motions.

How often do you partner with another person or organization to bring a new offer, campaign, product, or event to life?

Is it 25%? 50%? North of 75%?

My rule is to have it always be north of 75% for anything and everything.

Do a quick audit of your GTM activities and note how much you're leaning into partner-led.

My rule at Drift and Airmeet was that my team had to partner with someone on at least 75% of their activities. For some folks on the team, it was 90% or more.

Now, more than ever, don't try and go it alone.

Don't forget—Partner is the first principle of the PEOPLE-first GTM principles.

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I'm a huge believer in the shift from the HOW Economy to the WHO Economy.

The folks at Reveal created this great breakdown of the shift.
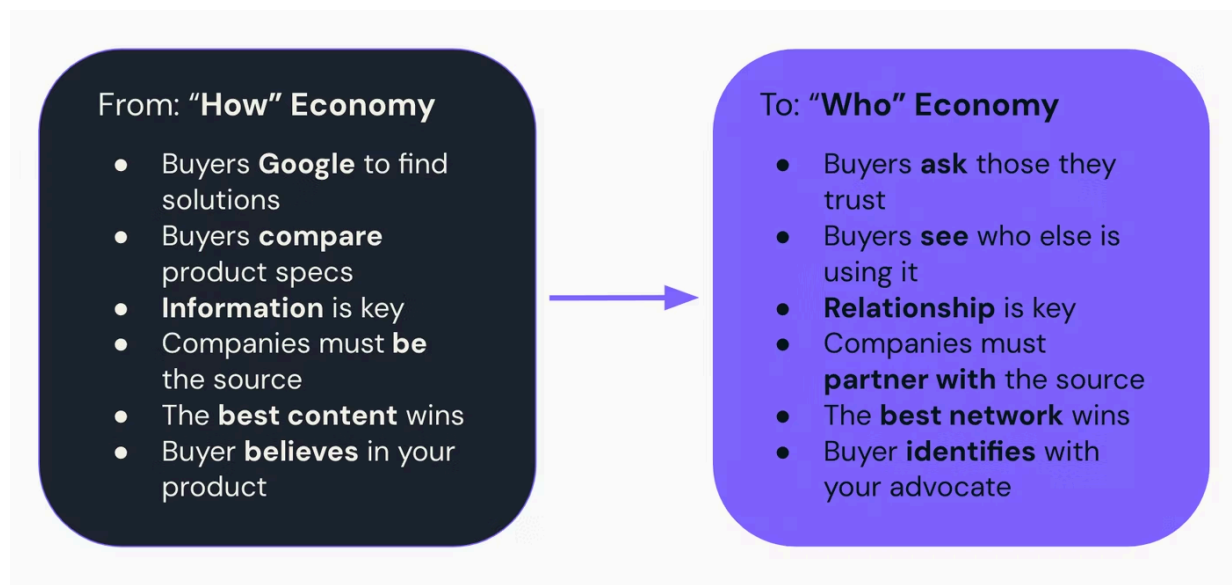
The old winners were companies and Google sharing and pushing information out to people.

Now, people are in near full control of the content creation value chain. They can pull other people into the buying experience and are getting really good at it, doing it much more often and better than brands.

Isaac Morehouse, a ClubPF member, shared this great partnership framework:

- Intel - Get the answers to the test from those who know.
- Intros - Tap into trust that's already been built.
- Influence - Surround key moments in the buyer journey.

Whether it's a sales or marketing activity, a new eBook, an hour spent prospecting into an account, or an event, always consider one or more of the three I's as part of your partnership approach.

For example, if I'm a marketer hosting an event, I might ask my CSM if they'll introduce me to a customer who could speak at the event. Or if I'm trying to figure out how to get a prospect to take a meeting with me, I might see who they're connected with and if any of those people are current customers.

This framework works both internally at a company or externally.

The golden rule in today's B2B GTM landscape is to always ask yourself: "Who can I partner with to make this easier and better?"

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Partner-led is the foundation of the People-first GTM Model. It literally surrounds the channels and offers we use to create, capture, and convert demand into revenue. It's a strategy I've been leaning into since my early days at HubSpot, where I witnessed the power of partnering with marketing agencies.

I think of Partner-led in terms of three distinct outcomes: Reach, Referrals, Revenue.

There are so many ways you can use Partner-led to fuel your People-first GTM motions. Here are seven of my favorites:

1) Webinars: From hosts to speakers to co-marketing.

2) Courses: From teaching a class to creating a whole course together.

3) Co-selling: From breaking into an account to learning about the decision-making process to procurement and approvals.

4) Products: From integrations to creating joint value propositions and bundling solutions together to form a strategic alliance.

5) Social takeovers: From a lightning-strike moment to an important offer or upcoming event to amplifying the story or message for both brands.

6) Private events: From dinners to experiences to executive roundtables.

7) Customer evidence: From examples to stories to proof points to references.

Simply put, your go-to-market is better when you go at it together.

Think of it as go-to-network (hat tip to Mac Reddin over at Commsor for that one).

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Here's a Partner-led thought inspired by the great Yamini Rangan, CEO of HubSpot.

In today's market, everything is getting harder: organic search, email, social, everything.

Yamini recommends focusing on value over volume. I love that approach.

She offers some great tips on how to do it. I'll add one more.

Look into partnering with other companies who are selling into the same accounts as you. Use tools like Reveal or Crossbeam to identify the overlap and build relationships together.

Some folks are calling this a Nearbound strategy. Whatever you choose to call it, do everything you can to harness the partner advantage. We're always better when we're together.

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Partner-led is all about getting to the relationship in different, more natural ways.

In today's GTM landscape, it's no longer about taking a linear approach with X number of emails, a few phone calls, and some sub-par LinkedIn engagement.

People-first GTM is about the dance, not the walk. You're using existing relationships to warm up the relationship you're hoping to develop. You're using helpful content with a known author who forms a connection with you, and who you can engage with and ask questions.

It's about having conversations with people who might be trying to sell to a similar set of accounts or type of buyer and sharing notes.

It's about asking customers for referrals and being part of the community-building process by teaching other customers how to do what they did.

It's the idea of six degrees of separation. That's what People-first GTM is all about.

And now, thanks to technology and social media, the actual proximity of those degrees of separation are extremely short.

It's the perfect time to partner with people to increase your distribution leverage.

Chapter 3

Content as Catalyst: The Engine of Engagement

Content marketing is on the cusp of a radical shift.

AI will disrupt many types of content, with blogs and eBooks likely to go first.

Here's how to prepare for the shift:

1. Create more structured and outcome-based content (e.g. educational content)
2. Create more unique content (e.g. thought leadership POV content)
3. Create a tailored and customized content experience (e.g. premium content membership experience)
4. Create more live content experiences (e.g. in-person and online events)
5. Create more creators in your business (e.g. people who regularly share their POV)
6. Create more video content (e.g. micro video content with minimal editing)
7. Create more original research (e.g. reports and decks about new trends and insights)
8. Create more microsites (e.g. custom web experience with multimedia content and animations)

A great content portfolio is like a great investment portfolio—they're both diverse.

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The concept of "thought leadership" has been around for a long time. Yet there needs to be a change in how companies think about doing it.

First, your thought leadership should come from people within the company, not the brand. The brand is not a thought leader—people are! For some reason, we lost that line of thinking.

Second, have a plan for your thought leadership. Don't just do it for the sake of doing it. Thought leadership works best when you do it with the following People-first GTM motions:

Content-led Growth: The thought leader creates original ideas, content, or research about a topic they have deep experience in. This is the foundation for everything else they do. Some go as far as publishing books or creating a manifesto-style document.

Event-led Growth: They speak at events using the content they created as part of the stories they share. They may host workshops or roundtables, hold fireside chats, or present a keynote centered around their core thought leadership topic.

Community-led Growth: They're active in the places (online and in-person) where conversations are happening about and around their topic of expertise. They're visible and act as a trust-building tool for the brand. They form connections with other thought leaders and create demand for the brand.

Member-led Growth: They offer unique and exclusive content, education, or experiences to people who become members of the brand's owned community. This is a great people-first approach to capturing demand.

Partner-led Growth: Most importantly, they partner with others in their field to evangelize and grow their thought leadership. They do this with content collabs, events, speaking, and more.

Customer-led Growth can also be designed to showcase customers who are doing remarkable things with your product. Build a customer thought leader program that's not just about documenting their success, but that also shows HOW they achieved such success for their career and company.

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Here's one from the Content-led cookbook, with inspiration from Community-led and Event-led.

[Dror Poleg](#) is writing a book.

But he's writing it in a very untraditional way.

Out in the open with lots of community involvement.

Just take a look at his approach. I recently got the following email from him:

"I'm serializing it. Every week, I'll share a new chapter with my premium subscribers. Subscribers will get advance access to the book's insights—and their feedback will help shape the final draft.

In addition, premium subscribers will get the following:

📙 *A copy of the final book. Physical or digital—your pick.*

❤️ *An acknowledgment of your name and support in the book itself.*

🥂 *An exclusive invitation to book launch events in New York, London, and two other cities that will be determined by your votes."*

This is brilliant. He's leaning into Community-led, Content-led, and Event-led growth strategies to maximize the ROI of his new product—in this case a book.

All while trying to get more people to sign up for his premium subscription product.

Brilliant!

Just imagine how you could apply this approach. There are so many possibilities.

This is a great approach to building relationships at scale, not to mention creating in public, which is a core principle of Content-led Growth.

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AI prompts to write a blog article? Or transcripts from live conversations and interviews?

Which is better? And which is more people-first?

I bet you know the answer.

It's not even close for me. Always start with live conversations and transcripts. This is why I'm so bullish on the owned media movement.

The two best ways to fuel your Content-led Growth strategy are with events or video-based podcasts and shows. The third-best way is to create short videos that you post internally or on LinkedIn.

Turn all of that video and audio content into transcripts, and let the writing fun begin.

There are going to be more and more freelance and in-house writers and content marketers who specialize in this exact workflow—taking authentic points of view and perspectives and weaving them into content that gets people to think or act differently. Which is what all good content or media should do.

By the way, if you need a recommendation for one, let me know.

Please, please don't ever use AI to write content. Maybe use it to get ideas or create an outline. But I implore you to never use AI to write one piece of content for your brand. It will never be as good as content that comes from the voice and mind of a real person.

***

My mind was sort of blown the other day. I was on a call with Nick, and the person we were chatting with made such a good point about how to think about blogging and social posting.

Here's what they said.

Hiring someone to do a post on LinkedIn today is the equivalent of paying someone to write a blog article for you five years ago. And it costs about the same: $800 to $1,500 depending on quality and length.

And guess what… a blog article doesn't come with fast and guaranteed distribution like most LinkedIn posts do if they come from right creator.

🤯

The idea now is to have 2-3 creators write 500-word posts and then combine them into an article for your blog. That's the new People-first approach to blogging and social media.

***

This tip is about design partners—and probably not the design partners you're thinking of.

These partners will help you bring a new cornerstone content asset to life. Here's an example.

When I was at Drift developing "The MQL is Dead," I partnered with 20 different internal and external stakeholders to validate the story, positioning, and format of the piece.

First, design partners in the traditional sense are like trusted product testers who help you fill in the missing gaps in your product offering. These early partners will work with your team and give timely and high-quality feedback about the product experience.

This exact approach can be applied to both content and events. Here's what I did at Drift.

We started by doing interviews with each partner asking them the same questions to understand if the story, ideas, strategy and tactics resonated and made sense.

Then we partnered with 5-7 people who we interviewed and included as guest experts in the piece. These folks included some of Drift's customers.

Then we took the cornerstone asset—an ungated eBook—and activated it across an entire integrated revenue campaign, making the big idea and story the theme of the campaign. We hosted webinars and events about the topic, spoke at third-party events about it, and turned it into a ton of micro- and zero-click content.

The short of the story is to spend less time creating lots of content assets to power your Content-led Growth strategy, and instead create one or two cornerstone assets each quarter that you do in partnership with buyers and customers. Then, use them to activate your Event-led and Community-led Growth motions.

Special shoutout to Michael Thomas and Campfire Labs for helping us bring the piece to life.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Authors. They matter—a lot.

Yet few B2B companies lean into the idea of authorship and ownership. I mean, it's called thought leadership for a reason!

For every post you publish on your website or in your owned community, try to have a real author (or authors) behind it, and make sure to get their name out there.

It's probably one of the easiest ways to make your marketing more people-first.

We did this at Drift with the creation of Drift Press and the Drift Podcast Network.

With this approach, the authors become the folks who are actively sharing and talking on social platforms and other social networks. They become the "influencers" for your brand.

So simple, yet so many overlook it.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Here's a tip about how to partner with current and potential customers to create a helpful and interesting piece of content. This play is a combo of Partner-led, Content-led, and Event-led growth.

This content should be about one of your products' core value drivers. It should cover the pain and problem that's preventing someone from getting that desired value, the metrics used to measure if the value is being realized, and how your approach to solving it is different. It should teach people how to get XYZ value and how to think about problems differently. And it should inspire them to take action.

First, identify 10 accounts and buyers that you would love to have as customers.

Then share a personal message (or have someone who might have a closer relationship to the person or account send the message).

The message can be framed in a way that says, "We want to feature you in a new piece of research and content that talks about XYZ problem in your industry."

The ask is a 30-minute interview that will cover 3-5 questions about how they're thinking about this problem, and how they quantify the problem and pain.

You'll probably get three or so people to respond and participate.

Next, do the same thing with five of your current customers. This time, the questions should be about how they solved the problems. Get them to share specific examples and approaches they used to solving the problems.

Now you have two different perspectives about the same topic. Blend them together and create a mini-narrative piece about how to solve the problem by doing X to achieve Y. It should be about 5-7 pages of content with examples and images.

Then do a webinar or short online event ideally featuring one potential customer and one current customer as speakers. Or do a private online event with an interactive experience for each person that's invite-only and have it be a small group discussion about the problem. Or heck, do both.

This piece of content will be great to share with Sales and CS folks who can use it as a way to teach people how to think and solve the same problem. And I bet you'll be able to turn one or two of those accounts into customers.

Finally, plan to refresh this piece every 6-12 months with fresh perspectives and examples.

***

Here's a tip about how to move from doing Content Marketing to Content-led Growth.

Content marketing has been around for more than a century. Its roots go all the way back to 1895 and John Deere doing their first printed magazine.

Inbound marketing exploded onto the scene over the last 15 years and gave content marketing more alignment to business outcomes that weren't just about brand awareness and impressions.

Now, the future is about Content-led Growth (CLG) and how to create, distribute, and measure content across the entire customer journey with goals of generating revenue and retaining customers.

CLG takes everything that's already great about content and incorporates a growth model that gives your content a chance to resonate more and have higher ROI.

It starts by defining who you are creating what content for, the stage of the customer journey it's meant to support, and how the asset relates back to the theme/story your business is telling.

This is followed by a plan for how to use it to create, capture, and/or convert demand into revenue. Each asset is planned with the specific aim of being activated across certain owned and rented channels.

To say it another way, in the days before CLG, content marketing was creating lots of content and hoping some of it would hit. Kind of like the 80/20 rule.

With CLG, you're being more focused and deliberate. It means creating less content, but better content that gets repackaged and repurposed for different channels and audiences. And it means doing it in partnership with other people inside and outside of your company.

A very mature CLG motion will bring all of the content into one experience that's powered by a Member-led Growth strategy. It means giving away all of the content in an experience that's streamlined and more personalized to each person—one form to fill out once instead of dozens.

CLG is measured in three main ways:

1) Engagement: The leading indicators that inform how well the content is resonating and working.

2) Revenue: The lagging indicators that show the indirect or direct influence on creating pipeline and new and expansion revenue.

3) Adoption: The indicators that show content's impact on product usage and retention.

***

Here's one type of cornerstone content that I recommend to any business looking to grow past $5 million in revenue.

A course.

I've done this at two of my last three companies and was about to do it at Airmeet, but I ran out of time.

I can say with absolute certainty that a course will help you create, capture, and convert demand into revenue. It's an excellent tool for all GTM teams to use to educate buyers and customers, create and accelerate pipeline, and help expand accounts.

Why? Because a great course is valuable. Anyone who takes the time to consume some or all of your course is showing strong signals of intent. They will leave with a much better idea of your brand, the problems you help people solve, and your unique approach to solving the problems.

The most important things to remember when designing your first course are 1) do it with others, and 2) make it about your unique POV. Teach people why it matters, how it works, and what it looks like. And have lots of different people be teachers in the course. If it's just you teaching the material, it won't be nearly as engaging or successful. No offense, of course. 🙂

You can take two approaches to designing a course. Start with very little and build it all at once over the course of a couple of months. Or build assets and resources that can be used to fill in the course at a later date.

Whichever approach you choose, you'll be happy to come away with a great piece of cornerstone content you can use to engage new customers and create revenue.

***

Here's a great framework I've used to start and plan an episodic show.

It starts with understanding the following three things:

1. Audience Definition - the people who this show should resonate with
2. Business POV and Philosophy - what you believe in and why
3. GTM Themes - stories and ideas you want to bring into the minds and hearts of the target audience

Once you have these three things articulated, move on to coming up with a show structure uses the following format and aligns to the steps above:

- Show Title
- Show Theme
- Show Description
- Hosts and Guests
- Season One Theme
- Season One Description
- Episodes
- Show Flow

Lastly, create a standard set of checklists for launching the show and producing each episode, as well as a distribution checklist to squeeze all of the juice from the content.

***

Most podcasts are geared at reaching a wider audience and activating the top-of-funnel demand creation process.

But why not build a podcast for your customers?

You need to first have enough customers to warrant this approach, but once you do, this type of podcast can be a tremendous asset to help accelerate new business deals, improve customer adoption, and increase customer lifetime value.

Why? Because most of the guests on the show will be customers! What's better for a buyer and a customer than hearing from the voice of another customer? Not much.

When I was at Drift, we did a podcast called [Conversation Starters](). It was hosted by Sammi, one of Drift's Customer Success Managers. She brought customers and Drift employees onto the show to talk about all the ways they were using Conversational Marketing and Sales to drive pipeline and revenue.

We then repurposed a ton of the podcast content into guides, short clips, and one-pagers for the Sales and Customer Success teams.

PURE GOLD!

***

Content-led Growth is getting harder. But there's one type of content I would definitely be creating a lot more of in the future.

Research-based content.

Why? It's original, AI can't create it, it's factual, and it can be used in dozens of ways across marketing, sales, and customer success.

And the best way to create this content is with someone else (AKA Partner-led).

Work with another brand, an expert, a thought leader, a university, an analyst firm.

This type of content is great for strengthening your POV and building brand awareness and trust.

A great example of this is [GTM Partners](#). Take a look at how they create research-based content with other brands and people.

Finally, here are some great thoughts from the [CEO of Databox](#) about his approach.

***

There's a big difference between a thought leadership category and a product category.

Here's an example.

Thought leadership category: Inbound Marketing

Product Category: Content Management System or Marketing Automation

A big mistake I see is trying to create one category that serves both jobs.

My opinion is that most businesses should spend more time developing and evangelizing a thought leadership category than trying to build a product category. There are some cases where you should do both, and in very rare cases the category can be one and the same.

Think of your thought leadership category as the why and how. The product category is the what.

Why do you exist and how do you help? Followed by what do you offer—AKA what do you sell?

Here are some questions to answer for your thought leadership category or POV:

- What's changed or changing in the world?
- How are your buyers and customers being affected by these changes?
- What problems are they facing in the context of their business related to the macro changes?
- What's a new and better way to adapt to these changes?

Answer these four questions and you'll be well on your way to developing a category that captures and keeps people's attention.

<center>***</center>

One tactical channel more marketers should be paying attention to: YouTube.

Just look at these stats:

- YouTube has more than 2.68 billion active users as of 2023.
- 52% of internet users worldwide access YouTube at least once a month.
- YouTube is the second biggest search engine after Google.

YouTube is a very people-first way to go to market. After all, it's a huge library of videos of people!

A great way to get started with YouTube is to repurpose all of your webinar and event content.

Another great way is to set aside 30 minutes every two weeks with experts in your company and do interview-style expert sessions about topics that are aligned with your buyer personas. Try out formats like "They ask, you answer" (hat tip to Marcus Sheridan for that one).

The key is consistency and publishing X number of videos per month. Also be sure to promote the fact that you have a great YouTube channel across other channels like email and organic social to drive subscribers and engagement.

For more inspiration, this [YouTube SEO pillar page](#) from Semrush is pretty good.

<center>***</center>

Getting people in a business to share content on the right social channels can be a challenge. Here are some tips on how to make it easier and sustain momentum.

1) Create a weekly theme for everyone to get behind. It could be something simple, like a POV from a recent piece of content, a customer story, or a trending topic.

2) Build simple prompts that they can use to get their post started or even just copy and paste from. Pick the one or two days during the week when everyone ideally posts.

3) Explain why you're asking people to do this and how it will help the business grow. Sharing the WHY in an authentic way goes a long way. Trust me. And you need to keep reminding people of the why, too.

4) If you don't want to do it weekly, do it once a month. We call it the Monthly Marketable Moment. It could be sharing a new product feature or launch, a nice piece of content, or some other type of offer. You could even make it a quarterly celebration of your customers. This is something I've done in the past.

5) Share the results of everyone's efforts. Show the numbers. Show how people respond. Recognize your teammates in internal channels. Comment and like their posts. Make it fun and a team sport. And try to give out small monetary awards and prizes to people who are doing an awesome job.

***

The best way to create content is to create it in public places.

Not behind closed doors with a "grand unveiling."

Involve the community. Involve your customers. Involve people with different and opposite points of view.

It will help you build a better promotion and distribution plan.

And you'll build some great relationships doing it.

I like to test new topics or POVs on LinkedIn and get people's reactions. Think of it as your public business journal. LinkedIn Live is another great way to test ideas and refine the story or topic.

Webinars are also a great way to create in public. Think webinar to content asset to micro-content assets. AI tools will make it ridiculously easy to create these assets soon.

Surveys are another great People-first GTM strategy and aren't used nearly enough to create high-quality, original content. And you don't always need a fancy survey tool or massive sample. You can host it on your website, LinkedIn, or with another brand to get enough responses and reactions.

I hope this gives you some ideas on how to build more in public.

Chapter 4

Beyond the Booth: The Event Horizon

"Every battle is won before it is fought." —Sun Tzu

When it comes to in-person or larger scale online events, these words couldn't be more true.

My mental model for events is WHO, WHY, HOW, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN (in that order specifically).

The neat thing is you can use this model to plan single events or use it to craft your six-month event plan and strategy.

And yes, I recommend crafting your event strategy six months out if possible. Three months out is the bare minimum if you don't want it to feel like total chaos.

Everything in GTM starts with WHO, and events are no different. Take a look at your open pipeline entering each new quarter, along with your pipeline targets. Which segments need more new pipeline or pipeline acceleration help? How much expansion pipeline does the plan call for?

Take a look at data from the same quarter last year or even the past six months, and try to get a sense of what worked and what flopped. For some early-stage businesses, this might be tricky. Use your intuition instead, and ask for feedback from Sales.

Then get into the WHY. Why are you doing events next quarter? What's the goal? If more than 50% of your events aren't aligned to some sort of pipeline goal, I would reconsider what you're doing. You have to be honest with yourself. Are you launching a new product? Have a big announcement planned? What's the driving force outside of pipeline that might warrant events?

Finally, start answering HOW you're going to execute the plan. What do your internal resources look like? What else is part of your GTM plan for the quarter? Are events (online, in-person, webinars) a major contributor to growth, or are you using this quarter to test if they could be?

Depending on those answers, you might need to rethink how your team is structured.

The WHAT, WHERE, and WHEN are of course important, too. I recommend building out an event calendar that you can share with all of your customer-facing GTM teams. But there's no point worrying about those three things until you get the WHO, WHY, and HOW figured out.

The short of it is, start planning now. And use a framework to get everyone on the same page.

***

Here's my crawl, walk, run strategy for Event-led Growth (ELG). It's particularly helpful if you're just getting started with ELG.

CRAWL

- Hosting 1-2 webinars per quarter in partnership with another brand or person
- Reusing the content from each webinar for social posts, outbound emails, and possibly for your blog or other part of your website
- Hosting 1-2 in-person events per year

WALK

- Hosting a monthly webinar that's episodic in nature or about a specific theme that's tied to one of your campaigns or programs
- Reusing the webinar content across multiple other channels and turning it into different formats using AI tools
- Participating in co-marketing webinars with other partners
- Hosting 1-2 in-person events a quarter featuring customers and/or co-hosting them with partners
- Close partnerships with sales when planning your webinars and events

RUN

- Hosting different webinars for different personas and/or different stages of the buying journey
- Having 50% of your content creation and new content ideas come from your webinar program
- Holding several different types of co-marketing webinar experiences throughout the year, with some being invite-only and highly curated virtual experiences
- Hosting an in-person roadshow throughout the year
- Having a more tentpole or flagship-type event that you host with another brand
- Having a complete sales enablement plan for all your webinars and events to maximize demand creation and capture

I know there's a lot of variability based on your business. The most important takeaway is don't try and do everything at once. Focus on your strengths, get good at those things, make sure you can measure the impact of your ELG strategy, and do it in partnership with your sales and customer success teams.

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Did you know you can capture intent before, during, and after a webinar? Yep, you heard that right.

Let's start with how to get intent leading up to the webinar.

First, create a three-step registration process. Ask for someone's email in step one to get them registered.

Then, in step two, ask 3-5 questions that are aligned with your common discovery questions, and make sure they're related to the webinar topic.

In step three, ask a more fun question or something about them personally. Think targeted ABM gifting or direct mail for that last question, knowing not everyone will get to that point.

During the webinar, purposely plan persona and buying intent questions in the beginning and middle of the event. Don't wait until the end. And make sure to include soft CTAs throughout the webinar that point people to resources and other helpful things.

After the webinar, follow up with each attendee or non-attendee based on the things they shared during the webinar registration process and during the webinar. You can do this via 1:1 outreach or automate using emails (make sure they still come from a real person though).

***

Struggling to make 60-minute or even 30-minute webinars interesting and memorable?

Short segments are the key. Here's what I mean by that.

A host makes all the difference, no matter if it's a dinner party, vacation, or industry event/webinar.

But hosting isn't easy, and you might not have a great one at your fingertips. Instead, break up your webinar segments into 3-7 minute blocks with one or two people speaking for that amount of time until the conversation must pivot to someone else speaking about another topic.

It creates a more dynamic, faster-moving experience. It's also easier on the guests because they only have to prepare for that short amount of time.

Stop running the same playbook everyone uses to run a webinar—lots of slides and people going on and on and usually agreeing with each other. Boring!

Be different and be dynamic.

***

Event-led Growth is more than in-person events. It also includes online events and the focus of this tip: webinars.

You need to design each webinar with intentionality.

Answer this question: How will attendees get value and how will the business get value?

Attendees want actionable, fast-moving webinars that they feel a part of.

A business wants the right people to attend, engage, and ideally get buying intent signals so that SDRs, AEs, and CSMs can do warm outbound or outreach.

The other way to be intentional is to align your webinar strategy to your customer journey. Figure out what webinars you can do to create pipeline, accelerate or mature pipeline, get customers to initial value, increase customer adoption and value, and turn them into raving advocates.

Be more intentional and specific, and you'll create webinars everyone loves.

***

Here's a tip about how to leverage executives for events. We're doing this at TACK for some of our customers, and it's working really well.

We call it the **executive invite**.

First, a caveat: I would only do this with a well-defined target account list. This means the accounts have been vetted, verified, and are ideal fits for your solution.

In this People-first GTM play, a person in marketing curates a list of people to invite to something an executive is doing at an event.

It could be a dinner, a presentation, a private experience, or simply a strategic meeting to learn more about XYZ topic. Ideally, the executive is known for their personal brand, thought leadership, or past experience on a topic. This is the hook to get someone to say yes to a meeting.

The invite can come from the executive themself or a person who is acting on behalf of the executive. Or it could be both, where the executive reaches out if there's no initial response. The key is that the executive gets involved in the conversation as soon as there's a bite/reply.

For some of these, the executive could post on LinkedIn about the event to drum up interest. The only downside with this approach is that it's harder to control the quality of the audience.

Once the connection has been made, let the executive build the relationship and warm it up so that an AE can take over. Don't get the AE involved until after the event, and make sure the executive stays on as the "sponsor" of the deal.

As pipeline creation gets more complex, I predict executives will get more involved in the early stages of the sales process. And this is one great way to make that happen.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This year, I've attended lots of in-person and online events. Here's my overall assessment of how to execute both types of event.

In-person events are about sensory activation and connections.

Online events are about discovery at scale and content.

There are still way too many in-person events that are overly content-heavy. I attended one in-person event recently where I only went to one session out of nearly 200.

The best in-person events help bring us closer together. We're already far enough apart when working from home or outside of the office. Let's think of the time we share together as sacred. That means not getting talked at but being part of the conversation.

If you want to load up your audience with great content, do an online event. Sure, the in-person event can still have great content and speakers. But it's got to be way more balanced and bring people together in ways that they can't experience online.

Be more international when it comes to event planning and design. Spend 5-10x the time planning an online event versus its overall length of time. For in-person events, that number could be anywhere from 10x to 100x depending on the size of the event.

***

Events are complex experiences that require planning, execution, and follow-up.

THE 7 PS OF EVENT ENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE	PLACE	PEOPLE	PUBLIC
THE OBJECTIVE	THE VENUE AND ROOM DESIGN	YOUR STAFF	YOUR ATTENDEES
Define a clear objective for the event and for each session.	Choose unusual venues or prioritize room design, furniture, lighting, and sound.	Your staff delivers the experience. Prioritize them.	Connection = Engagement - Prioritize content that connects and horizontal sessions.
⊘ Educate ⊘ Entertain ⊘ Close Business	• Choose unconventional venues • Creative seating • Tech powered venues • Immersive venues • Strong AV design • Large LED screens with strong images • Ambitious Lighting and sound	⊘ Choose venues with high-quality staff ⊘ Rehearse extensively ⊘ Frequent, in-depth training ⊘ Pick volunteers in your community ⊘ Deploy networking ambassadors	**Formats** ⊘ Ask for opinions ⊘ AMAsPanel Battles ⊘ Audience Content ⊘ TV-style Interviews ⊘ Pecha Kucha ⊘ Discussion > lecture ⊘ Workshops ⊘ Gamified Experiences **Networking** ⊘ 1:1 meetings ⊘ Speed Networking ⊘ Use cups or lanyard stickers with key objectives ⊘ Rotate seats at time intervals. ⊘ Split a group into teams. ⊘ Use Braindates Create Challenges

PROMOTION	PERFORMERS	PLATFORMS	
THE MARKETING	SPEAKERS AND TALENT	THE TECHNOLOGY	
Engagement starts before the event	Prioritize audience representation, diversity of opinions, unheard voices, and crowd-pleasing experiences.	Without data, you are just guessing.	
⊘ Host virtual events ⊘ Pre-event community ⊘ Strong content program ⊘ Review content analytics ⊘ Deploy attribution models In-depth, year-round social media	⊘ Curate content ⊘ Develop a narrative ⊘ Offer props to performers ⊘ Mix performers with the audience ⊘ Host them on a podcast ⊘ Get them on virtual events Record speaker videos	⊘ Use live polling ⊘ Smart badges ⊘ AR ⊘ Simple event app ⊘ Matchmaking ⊘ Community ⊘ Group messaging ⊘ In-person analytics ⊘ Hybrid analytics ⊘ Virtual analytics	

The visual above is a great way to make sure you're focused on the things that will drive the right type of event engagement and experience. Still, there are two things missing from this picture.

One is related to the purpose of the event. What's the purpose of an event from the attendee's perspective? How do you design an event experience so attendees are at the center of it? Why would they sign up, show up, engage and recommend the event after it's over? If you can answer these questions, your event is already on a better path than most.

The second thing that's missing is partnerships. Successful events partner with the right vendors, companies, promoters, and speakers to make the best possible event experience. Doing an event alone is hard, expensive, and almost impossible to do. Create a list of all the types of partners you could and should have for your next event. Your time and budget will thank you.

**

Don't underestimate the power of first-party data that can come from online events and webinars.

Create a simple plan to collect and use the first-party data from your online event. I like to think of it as event intent data. Here's an image to give you some ideas about the data you could collect.

Discover event	Registrations and attendees New accounts acquired/captured Social media reach Organic search impressions/reach
Engage Event	Accounts engaged or retained Product/feature adoption post-event Connections created at the event Users onboarded
Grow Event	Pipeline created Referrals acquired Social media mentions Evangelists / advocates in community

Following the Event-led Growth framework of Discover, Engage, and Grow, you can map different outcomes and things to measure based on the type of online event you're hosting.

The key is boiling it down to the one thing you want to learn about the audience during the event. In order words, what's the one question you could ask the audience that would be most helpful in getting more (new or expansion) pipeline?

You could organize an entire event designed to collect the exact buying intent insights you crave from your target accounts (for new revenue) or current accounts (for expansion opportunities). It could be something around the problem you help people solve, the urgency of the problem, what the audience wants to learn more about—pretty much any info that would help someone buy your product.

To go a bit deeper, think about it like this:

For Marketing – Add a poll for top pain points so that marketers can automate follow-up content offers after the event.

For Sales – Set up a high-intent action alert, like requesting a demo, so that sales teams can chat with target accounts live during the event.

For CS – Create session themes that correspond to implementation initiatives so that CSMs can reach out to their accounts and help them implement the features they're most interested in.

***

Event and webinar follow-up is great low-hanging fruit when it comes to generating more meetings and pipeline. Here's how to think about it.

Step one is to segment your follow-up into at least four lists: high-intent attendees, medium-intent attendees, low-intent attendees, and no-shows. Make sure the list segmentation takes into account any named accounts or target account model you have set up.

Before you can do this, you need to first define what is a high- to low-intent attendee. This is something most folks don't do upfront. So think of that as Step 0. 🙂

Step two is to craft a different approach for each list.

For the high-intent attendees, have a personal message come from someone at your business directly. No mass emails. One-to-one emails are key here. Use a lot of personalization and specificity.

For medium-intent attendees at target accounts, follow the same approach. For people who aren't part of a target account, send them a 1:few email, still coming from a real person with real replies.

For low-intent leads, send them a marketing email (still from a real person) and position the content as pure education. Provide one or two primary CTAs in the email. The goal is to nurture the relationship and build trust. Nothing else.

For no-shows, I would invite them to an upcoming event or share a piece of content that's related to the theme or topic of the event.

Of course you could segment this even further by persona, industry, or some other approach that's specific to your GTM strategy.

The point is to make sure follow-up is timely, always comes from a human, is helpful and educational (don't ask for a meeting), and has a clear call-to-action.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Most webinars and online events are a perfect place to run this simple play, which is all about how to do discovery at scale. Here's how it works.

1) Define one or two questions that you want to ask the audience during the webinar or online event that are related to the topic of the event.

2) The questions should be worded in a way that gets at a problem, a timeline, or a level of pain.

3) Use a simple poll feature to ask the questions at the 20% mark and 60% mark of the event.

4) Share each response with a BDR or AE immediately after the webinar, and use the response as a way to personalize the follow-up. Some platforms will automatically send poll responses to the BDR/AE in real time.

5) Don't go right for a meeting unless the attendee raised their hand explicitly at the end of the webinar asking for one (this is another type of question you should be asking).

6) Instead, use this opportunity to educate and share some resources with the potential buyer about the question they answered. Even better is if Marketing has two or three resources ready and aligned to each question for Sales to use as part of the follow-up.

7) Rinse and repeat during all of your online events.

This play is part of a bigger strategy using events to gather intent data (AKA Event Intent). Get signals of buyer and customer intent by being more intentional with how you plan and execute your events.

***

Events and webinars are one of the best ways to generate original content, surface more buying intent signals, and create sales meetings that lead to new pipeline.

I've been using the following framework to achieve more while doing less for a long time now.
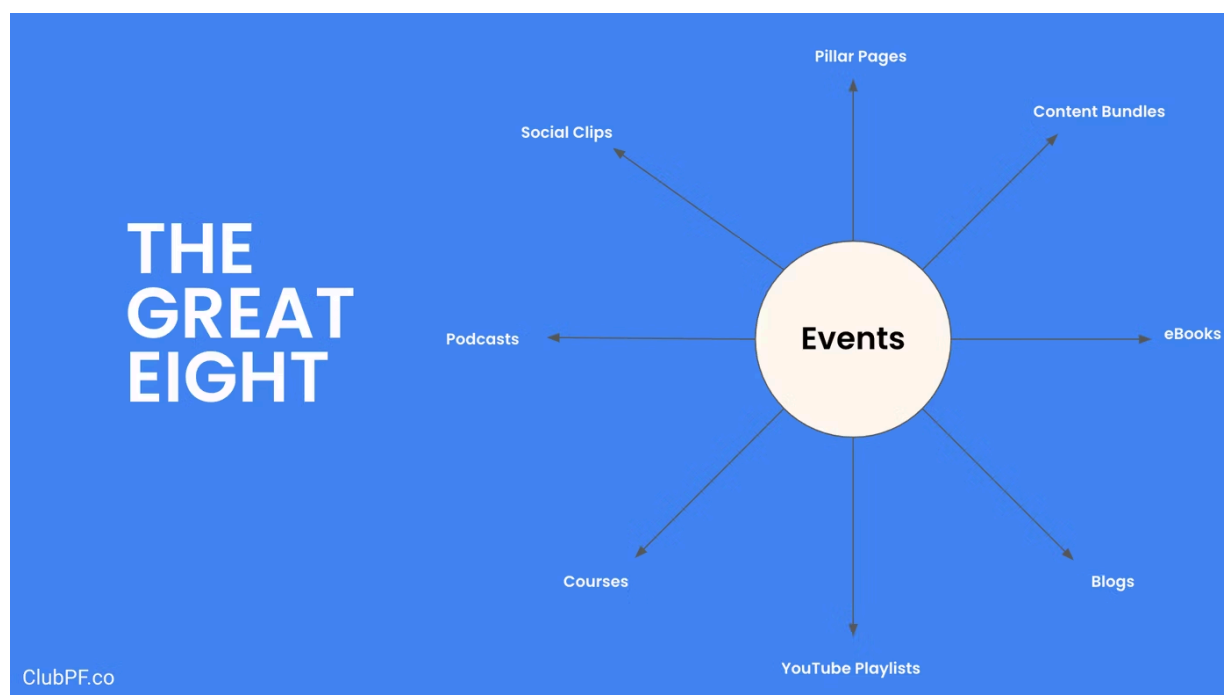
It works because it ensures more purposeful planning and collaboration across marketing and sales teams. And one of the best things about a great Event-led motion is that it helps scale up your Content-led motion with more data, more content, and more ways to engage buyers and customers.

***

Do your webinars inspire or tire? Here's how to make webinars that people look forward to attending.

The first thing to know is that a great webinar is 99% people and 1% everything else.

Tip #1 is to find an energetic, passionate host. They might not be the main presenter, but they're there to keep the conversations flowing and to keep the audience on their feet. Your star host doesn't have to be someone from the marketing team either. You could go as far as to make this person into one of your brand's personalities—someone who exudes your brand's identity.

Top #2 is to use a lot less slides than in the past. Have a maximum of 20 slides for a 60-minute webinar. Better yet, don't be in slide presentation mode the entire time. Use visuals to emphasize points, show frameworks, and share the key takeaways on slides.

Tip #3 is don't let someone talk for more than two to three minutes straight. You want the webinar to feel fast-moving, dynamic, and exciting. Think of it like a TV show. Make sure you do enough prep so that people know how, when, and what to contribute.

Tip #4 is to use more examples in your webinars. Make them specific and tactical. Don't be too high-level. Get into the details so people have real takeaways and feel like they got a strong ROI from attending.

Tip #5 is to make your webinars thematic. They should be part of a broader quarterly campaign. And partner with customers, industry partners, creators, and even potential buyers to join your webinars as guests, presenters, panelists, and so on.

Most importantly, always define WHO the webinar is being built for and WHY. Make sure it's super clear and well-defined. That's how you'll ensure a successful experience.

Chapter 5

Champions of Growth: Customer and Product

Customer marketing is the most underinvested marketing function out there.

It really should be one of the MOST invested functions of marketing. And it's why I'm a huge proponent of elevating Customer-led Growth as a strategic People-first GTM channel.

This tip is about how you can partner with customers to make them the star, and at the same time generate loads of new revenue.

Take what we're doing with a TACK GTM retainer customer, for example. They're a podcast and video marketing platform called Casted.

We helped them introduce a "featured podcast show of the month." It highlights shows produced by Casted customers that we want to recognize, get more people to listen to, and use as tools to teach potential customers how to be amazing at podcasting and expand their business impact.

You could call this "customer example marketing," using an example of what a customer is doing to inspire and educate others on how they can do something similar. After all, who will a person trust more, a business or a customer of the business with a real example to back it up? The customer, of course.

Pattern recognition is a real thing. It's how habits are formed and deeper understanding takes shape.

The ultimate customer example package is: Example + How they did it + Outcomes.

In other words, a simple What + How + Why equation.

<div align="center">***</div>

First impressions matter. Especially after you buy something.

When was the last time you thought about onboarding? If you're in customer success, I hope it was recently. But if you're like many marketers and sellers, you might never think about it. That's a big no-no.

Marketers and sellers should understand what happens as soon as a new customer signs up. In fact, that experience could be a defensible differentiator and something you sell as part of the solution you offer.

But here's the thing. There's a big difference between onboarding a customer and onboarding a user.

A customer is everyone within an account who was part of the purchasing team. How do you onboard the different stakeholders? Do all of them need onboarding? How do you show fast value to the right people?

Too many times, onboarding is generic and not contextual to all the different people who were part of the buying process. Furthermore, onboarding never really ends. As new users or admins are brought into an account, you need to onboard those folks, too.

You should treat onboarding like a product. Obsess over the details, make sure it gets people to value fast, and create different experiences for all the different people who are part of the team within each customer account.

***

BFCM is a banner event each year where B2C companies lean in hard—really hard.

I'm not suggesting B2B companies follow the same tactics and approaches as B2C companies, but what if we did something special for our customers during these two days? What if we gave them something of value that was not expected?

Maybe it's extra credits if you have usage-based pricing or extra seats if you have seat-based pricing.

Or it could be free training or a consultation session.

It could even be free or discounted tickets to an event in their area.

The point is to create a surprise and delight moment. Something that doesn't cheapen the value but creates more value, the way that B2C companies do for their customers.

<center>***</center>

Lots of companies spend the end of every year giving thanks and saying how grateful they are to their customers. But why wait to do things like that once a year? Why not do it on a more regular basis to create feelings of affinity and reciprocity?

I was going through a past ClubPF Masterclass led by Leslie Barrett and got inspiration for some ways we can show our appreciation for customers throughout the year.

My favorite is creating actionable education that customers can put to use quickly. Think guides, example packs, short video lessons. Nothing overly produced or engineered. Value over vanity.

Second is creating moments online or in-person where they can meet other customers and learn from them in small group workshops. Getting customers together is the name of the game. Be the broker.

Third is sending handwritten notes when they hit special milestones throughout the year. Doing things that don't scale will go a long way.

<center>***</center>

Here's a tip about product videos. And no, not your classic tutorial video.

I'm talking about videos that tell the story of your product and new features on a regular basis.

I got a great example of one of these recently from the CEO of The Juice, Jonathan Gandolf.

Here's why I think this is great and why every company should do something similar.

Just imagine, a video every month from the CEO about the latest developments in your product. How unique and real would that be? And imagine if you could actually reply to them and get a response back.

Almost no one does this!

You might be asking yourself, why would a CEO do this? My response would be that this is a core part of their job as CEO—listening to customers and selling the vision and product of their company.

Okay, maybe it's not the CEO who does it. Maybe it's the head of product. The fact is, very few companies do this at all, and if they do, they don't do it in a very people-first and authentic way.

Stop the overly produced video. Or if you have those capabilities, find a way to make it come from the voice and POV of a real person. Wistia does a great job of this.

We started this inside of HubSpot Academy back in 2015, and they still do it every month.

The tip is simple: create more people-first videos for customers, buyers, and community members about how your product is getting better and more different.

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According to G2, the top two things buyers care about are:

1. Ease of implementation
2. ROI within 6 months

This data shows the importance of making the value of your product super clear, being upfront in your messaging and positioning, and making sure you can quickly show outcomes aligned to that value.

For me, it also shows that education, onboarding, and customer enablement are more important than anytime in the last 10 years.

Here's some advice for making implementation easier and ROI show up faster.

Create a simple framework to teach people how to think about the ways they should be using your solution to get to value. I like to have three or four different words, all verbs, that explain the core job your product and the customer needs to do. For HubSpot, those three things are Attract, Engage, and Delight.

After that, align a quantifiable value to each verb. Attract more visitors and leads. Engage more leads into pipeline. Delight customers to improve retention.

This is a great exercise because it can galvanize marketing, sales, and customer success using really simple language to help customers understand the how and why (AKA value) of your solution.

What's most important is to truly teach people the deeper "how to do it" for each job-to-be-done that you come up with to show value quickly and make implementation easier.

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Here's a Customer-led Growth play that we like to run for TACK customers.

The simplest way to think about this one is using lookalike audiences. This means users or customers whose demographics and interests are similar to those of your existing customers.

Take a look at your top 10 customers. And then go look at their primary competitors or businesses in the exact same industry or vertical. The key is proximity, because what this play does is it lets you share the story of a very similar customer with one that you want to become a customer.

Once you identify the accounts, you should first check that all of the accounts are part of your target account list or ABM strategy. If not, add them immediately (this might also be a signal to investigate if your list or strategy needs an update).

Then take a customer story, not naming the actual customer but describing it as a company within X vertical or industry with some firmographic identifying information. Share how much value they got from your solution, show examples, and maybe even do a customer webinar inviting people from similar companies.

You can run a classic surround-sound ABM strategy, or do warm outbound if you see people from those accounts coming to your website. Or simply do a targeted online or in-person event.

This play is great for businesses who don't have a ton of resources to throw at broad one-to-many or even one-to-few ABM targeting activations. Because it makes you really focus on the accounts that have the highest natural fit for your solution.

***

1:Many customer onboarding shouldn't come from the voice of the company. There, I said it.

I've seen more companies start to move in the right direction, and I just stumbled upon one that I really loved.

Before I unpack that, go take a look at your marketing, sales, and customer success emails that are being sent this week, and consider how people-first they are.

Are they coming from the company? Or are they coming from a person who works at the company? You'd be amazed to see what happens if you make all of them come from the latter.

In my opinion, marketing should have direct ownership of most of the 1:many and 1:few communications that come from the brand, so it should be easy enough to make this change.

Now, getting back to the example. Nick and I recently signed up for a free Apollo account. And just take a look at this email I got from Josh:

> **Josh at Apollo** <josh@heyapollo.io> Unsubscribe Sat, Aug 26, 8:48 AM (2 days ago) ☆ ↩ ⋮
> to me ▾
>
> Hi Mark,
>
> Josh again with one more email to give you a quick recap of all of the knowledge nuggets I've been sending your way.
>
> - Link your mailbox
> - Download the Chrome Extension
> - Connect your CRM
> - Create your personas
> - Create lists to keep track of prospects
> - Leverage Apollo AI
> - Create sequences
> - Create Plays
>
> That said, if I were to email you about all of the things you can do within Apollo, I'd no doubt be blowing up your inbox!
>
> So instead of doing that, I'm going to leave you with a link to our knowledge base that can answer any and all of your questions moving forward. Check it out here.
>
> You're officially ready for blast off 🧑‍🚀
>
> - Josh

It's one of several emails I've received from Josh about how to get started with Apollo. It's friendly, not intimidating, conversational, and helpful. It's simple and to the point. And best yet, if I reply, I know he will answer me right back!

This is a great example of Product-led Growth done right while understanding the importance of overdelivering for a free customer.

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Here's an interesting question to ask a customer:

"When was the last time you felt loved by [insert company]?"

It was inspired by a ClubPF Masterclass led by Christina Garnett. When I heard her say this, I was floored. It's such a great door-opening question to get a sense of how a customer really feels about a brand.

You could have each of your AMs or CSMs ask this and track it in your CRM. You could do it as a 1:many survey type question. Or even make it part of your customer support process.

As far as how often to ask it, I'm not sure if there's a "right" answer. Is it every month, every quarter, all the time? It's definitely situational and should be benchmarked for your business.

The mere fact a business would ask the question and focus on the general sentiment and feeling of its customers is for sure a more people-first approach to doing business.

Couple this question with your standard NPS question, and you'll be able to get some really valuable customer insights to make your go-to-market built more for people.

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Here are two fairly straightforward ways to activate your Customer-led Growth channel.

1) Use product usage data to determine who your top customers are.

2) Use content engagement data to determine which customers are most engaged with your content and resources.

Once you've determined who is most engaged, reach out to the account owner to validate your data assumption, or if they don't have an account owner, do a simple conversational-style email asking one simple question to gauge if the data is indeed directionally correct.

Then it's about designing a program or offer to encourage customers to partner with you in a way that will benefit them and you.

💡 Marketing *to* Advocates 💡

Goal: Adoption & Retention

Channels: Newsletters, Nurture Streams, Customer Events, Customer Campaigns, Gifting Programs, Slack Community, Customer Awards

💡 Marketing *with* Advocates 💡

Goal: Awareness & Pipeline

Channels: Case Studies, Videos, Quotes, Reference Program (1:1, 1:many), Beta Programs, Referral Program, Speaking Opportunities, G2, TrustRadius Reviews

***

Onboarding is typically a very company-first way to think about what happens after a new customer signs up for your product.

Instead, reframe the positioning as a welcoming experience. Nick and I try our best to welcome every new member in the Club and make it feel like a personal experience, not a transaction.

I happened to use a new product this week and was pleasantly surprised by the email I immediately got after signing up.

Hello, and welcome to Restream!

I'm delighted that you joined our community. Probably, you've asked yourself: **"How to make my business more visible?"** or **"How do I reach more people?"**.

Live streaming is the answer!

When you go live, **social networks spread your broadcast far and wide and help you get seen.** It's a highly effective way to promote your ideas.

To get you started, we created a 7-day live streaming course for beginners and professionals alike.

We'll send you a daily email of curated content on how to become a better streamer. No spam or sales, just verified information.

If you have any questions, just reply to these emails — we're ready to help.

All the best,
Alex, CEO at Restream

Take some time to rethink how you do customer onboarding. Make it more human, and design it so time to value can happen as quickly as possible.

***

Customer education is where I initially built my marketing chops.

At HubSpot, I was hyper-focused on making our customers more successful (see HubSpot Academy).

It was only after a couple years that we realized we could use all of the content, webinars, events, and programming for demand creation and capture, not just conversion. It was a major "a-ha!" moment.

Take a look at what your team is doing to support your customers. And see how many of those components you could reuse to create and capture new customer demand.

I bet you'll be surprised by what you find.

For example, cross-pollinating your two main audiences, buyers and customers, is probably the easiest place to start. At HubSpot, we found that, over time, 70% of a more customer-focused webinar would be potential customers. And they absolutely loved the content and experience because it was educational and valuable, no pitchfest, and customers were there helping us sell during the webinar.

Then we started to share customer-only guides and examples with buyers, and the train officially left the station.

Keep it simple to start, but always look for ways to lean into Customer-led Growth.

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This tip is all about creating customer content that doesn't take more than five minutes to produce.

When I was at Drift, we would have customers come visit the office a lot. And I always had my iPhone and handy DJI Gimbal ready to do a quick video with a customer.

It usually consisted of one or maybe two questions at most. I would ask what they loved about Drift, or I would have them share one of their Conversational Marketing pro tips.

It would immediately get posted on social media, and we would sometimes use the short videos in blogs or even classes or courses inside of Drift Insider.

We also did this during events we hosted or attended to create some "in the moment" customer-led content. Quick customer videos FTW.

You could also do a content creation contest for a month and get videos from the conversations your CSMs or AMs are regularly having with customers. Share a simple set of questions they can ask at the end of a QBR or check-in call. The three people with the most videos get a prize.

Don't overthink customer content creation. Sometimes being more authentic and spontaneous is the best way to go. And it's usually a lot easier for you and the customer. Keep it simple, right?

***

Here's something simple, yet super important: Leading Indicators of Retention (LIR).

LIR is about finding actions and corresponding metrics that customers should take in their initial onboarding and ongoing product interactions to predict the likelihood of renewal.

It's foundational to Customer-led and Product-led Growth. Without it, both are hard to get right and scale.

LIR can be both activity- and value-based metrics. For example, at HubSpot we determined that if someone used 5+ apps in the first 60 days and sustained that usage, their likelihood to renew was 75%.

We then got more scientific and looked at the number of leads a customer was generating on average, and we determined a probabilistic renewal metric based off of that. This is of course the core value HubSpot promises—more leads.

We did the same thing at Drift with the number of playbooks created, conversations started, emails captured, and meetings booked.

And we did the same thing at Airmeet by measuring the number of logins, registrations, integrations, and what we called "good Airmeets."

Why am I sharing this and how is it related to People-first GTM? Because how much value each customer creates is all that matters at the end of the day. Both real and perceived value.

What you should do is align your go-to-market teams around those value vectors. Marketing should be talking about them and educating buyers about how to get value fast. Sales should be selling that value and setting the right expectations around how and when a customer should see value. Customer Success should be helping people get to value fast and expand it over time. Product should be building new features and products that strengthen that value. And Finance should help the GTM leaders design pricing and packaging centered around the value.

It all starts with LIR—or said another way, the leading indicators of value.

Tracking LIR on a monthly cohort basis and measuring both gross and net expansion will be critical part of your success when it comes to Customer-led and Product-led Growth.

***

I'm shocked by how many products I want to check out, but the only way to see the product is to talk to sales. 🤯

There are so many better ways. And they're all great compliments to a Product-led Growth motion.

- Self-guided demos
- Live group demos
- Videos
- Freemium offering
- Trials

My suggestion is to do everything possible to make it easy for people to check out and try your product. Of course, look at the performance of each offer, and make your decision based on data.

But please don't be single-threaded when it comes to showing people your product.

***

Helping your customers get more value and feel appreciated is always a good strategy. Right now, it's probably the best thing you can do to keep your business growing and moving in the right direction.

Customer-led Growth is about partnering with, recognizing, and celebrating your customers

I love this very personal email I got from Drift a while back. It shows they're doing something super fun to recognize their customers.

Hi 👋

May is here and that means Drift's Customer Appreciation Month is in full bloom!

This year we're stepping up our festivities with **The Drifties**. It's our brand-new awards program designed to celebrate our customers, your wins, and your mastery of Drift.

Whether you're a Quota Crusher, an ABM All-Star, or want to nominate your company or colleague, there's a category for everyone. Help us highlight our best and brightest, and **if you're one of the first 10 nominators, you'll receive a $25 Starbucks gift card** as a thank you for kicking off this program with us!

Submit a Driftie nomination today.

The Drifties will be accepting nominations until June 30th. After that, we'll continue the celebration by honoring our winners with a LIVE announcement in July and a surprise gift box.

That's not all we have up our sleeves this month though — keep an eye out for more surprises as we continue to show our appreciation for you.

This email probably didn't require a lot of effort or planning, or even money. But it's the genuine thought that counts.

My golden rule for People-first GTM is to always ask what we're doing to ensure customers are at the center of everything we do.

Chapter 6

Members to Movements: Community and Connection

A few choice thoughts on communities:

1) Every community needs a spark. It could be a newsletter, a belief system, a piece of content, a personality—something that gets it started.

2) The culture of your company and how employees feel about the company plays a huge role in the success and durability of community-building.

3) Every time you add a member to the community, your product gets better. Yes, your owned community is a product. It's why I'm honored when people choose to join ClubPF.

4) There's a big difference between a brand ecosystem and a community ecosystem.

With that in mind, here are a few of my predictions for the future of B2B community-building:

1) More communities will enable a GPT AI-powered assistant to help members find information and connect with one another.

2) "Community ecosystems" as a term will become mainstream, with more businesses investing in community ecosystems in 2024 and beyond.

3) GTM teams will finally stop creating content without a plan to activate it in their Community-led or Member-led Growth strategy.

***

How often do you think about CABs? No, not the yellow type, and not a customer advisory board either.

I'm talking about a community advisory board.

This is something I think almost all companies should create well before a customer advisory board.

I would find 10 to 15 people who are part of your ICP buyer fit. This group does not have not to be customers, and you should not try to sell them anything.

The group should have a very clear mission statement and a rallying cry, and be empowered to help you and your brand shape its community-led growth strategies and execution.

You should design a set of rituals for the group and get everyone into a shared Slack channel.

Feedback and collaboration should come in the shape of events, content, and partnerships. Don't make it about product—that's for the other CAB.

You can pay people to join or offer other benefits. Ideally, it becomes a loyal and active group of brand ambassadors who get your word of mouth flywheel spinning faster.

***

When I was at HubSpot, my team did a weekly meeting called The Weekly Delight.

It happened every Friday and it was the highlight of the week. It was for the entire HubSpot Academy team, and anyone else at HubSpot was invited to attend.

We shared messages that customers, prospects, and fans had either sent us or that we had found over email, LinkedIn, or Twitter during the previous week.

We also shared their feedback—what we could do better and how we could support them more.

The meeting was incredible. People shared wins and learnings. We brainstormed. Most importantly, we felt what customers were feeling. We were able to understand the impact and results they were experiencing.

I highly recommend having a meeting like this and making it a ritual for your owned community. Whether it's weekly or monthly, I promise you it will be an eye-opening and emotional meeting.

Brand it something appropriate. Set a clear agenda and maybe appoint someone different from the community to lead or co-lead it each time you do it. We did that at HubSpot, too. I wasn't always the one to lead the meeting and conversation.

It will create stronger bonds, more reciprocity, and more togetherness.

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Looking to fire up a Member-led Growth strategy?

Here are three mindsets you need to consider when building an owned community.

Mindset one: "Build community" is not a goal.

Delivering value to members is the goal. If members don't see consistent value, the owned community will start to fade.

Mindset two: Community is a product.

You need to search for community-market fit. And make sure the community has real differentiation before you try to scale distribution. Otherwise it won't be worth the time and money.

Mindset three: Audience ≠ Community.

Community-led Growth is about building an audience. Member-led Growth is about growing relationships with people who are members of your brand.

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It's so important to bring together your potential buyers, customers, and community members.

There's something magical that happens when you and others focus your attention *together* on something that's happening live, either online or in-person.

Just think about when you watch sports or go to a concert. The vibe and feeling is infectious. It's why I'm such a proponent of Event-led Growth.

But sometimes the act of bringing people together can be hyper-localized. Instead of small, medium or large gatherings, what if you facilitated interactions between just two people?

Create and initiate space for conversations and connections to happen.

I think more businesses should be doing this, especially when it comes to using Member-led Growth to power that word-of-mouth flywheel.

Why not try to be a broker or introducer between community members?

***

A while back, I hosted a [webinar](#) with Daniel Cmejla from Apollo and Erika Brookes from Higher Logic.

Something that Dan mentioned really stuck with me.

It was this great idea related to Community-led Growth. He suggested that you take inventory of all the places where people are talking about your brand. He called it the "map of community influence."
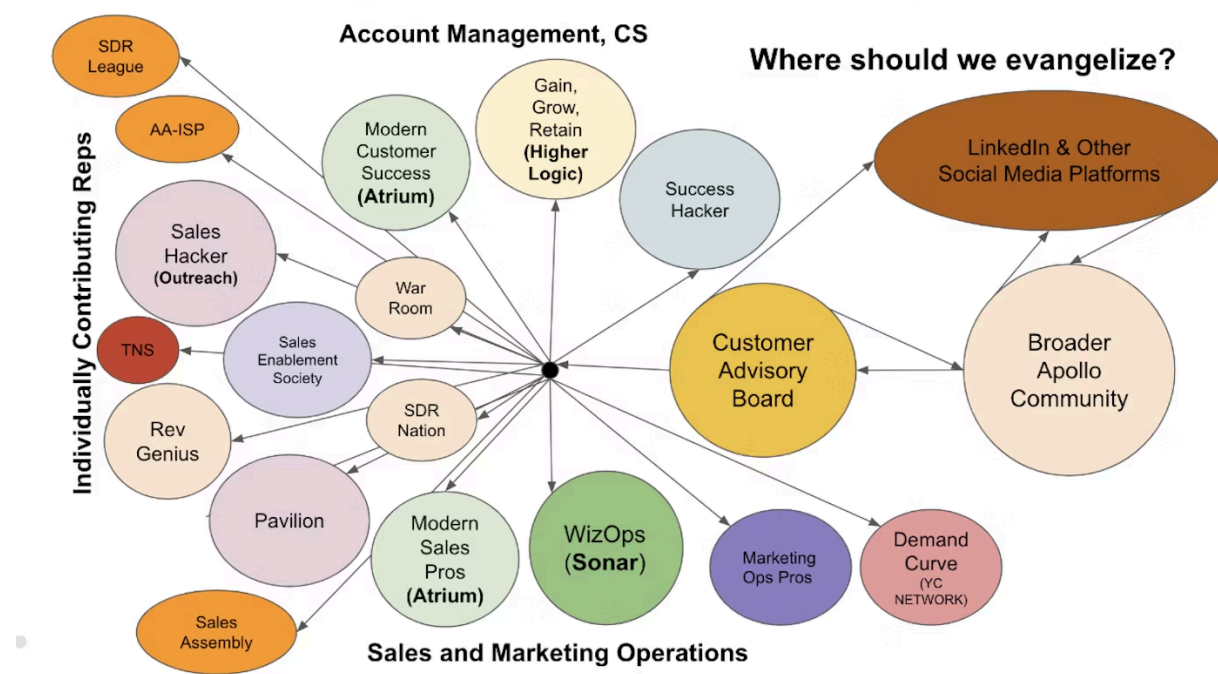
Build your map and then rank each place to help you prioritize the right level of investment and resources for each different node in your brand's community landscape.

I like to think of it as a garden. You have all these different plants, and it's about figuring out which ones need more attention that others to really grow and thrive.

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The disruption of resource centers is coming.

Resource centers have blossomed over the last decade. This is in large part thanks to the inbound and content marketing movements.

But resource centers have become a nuisance for buyers and customers. They're filled with forms and friction. They don't have any type of personalized experiences. It can be hard to find things. And they are disconnected from other parts of the buying journey, especially pre-purchase and post-purchase.

Start thinking about transitioning your resource center to more of a membership experience.

You can still have your content ungated, or even some of it gated on the website. But if you also provide a membership experience with the right benefits and positioning, you're giving people a more streamlined experience with more tangible value. And the most obvious and clear-cut benefit for people who become members is that they can get all of your resources and content in one click.

I predict we'll see a massive transformation of websites over the next 5-10 years, and resource centers will be a big part of that.

***

How do you start a movement? It starts with three core ingredients.

Think of them as the Holy Trinity ingredients of community-building.

1) A belief. The belief is the point of view. The why. It gets people to say, "Hey, that's interesting. I want to check that out more." It can be something simple that manifests into something big.

2) A spark. The spark gets people to pay attention and attracts them to the movement. It could be an event, a podcast, a book, a new tool, a LinkedIn post. It's something that creates a gathering around the belief.

3) A passionate audience. A movement without people is a hallucination. Alright, maybe that's a bit much. But without people who believe, the flame will fade out. The audience needs to keep showing up to get the fire to grow bigger and brighter, and to make sure the flame keeps burning. This is how you'll make the core belief that much stronger.

***

Probably the least-understood part of the People-first GTM Model is Member-led Growth

Member-led is when you work to take all of the awareness, interest, and engagement that's happening as part of your Community-led motion, and turn it into direct relationships with your brand.

How do you do that? By getting people to sign up for an experience that gives them access to all of your content, events, and even free products with one simple login. Seamless magic! 🙂

B2C companies have been doing this for a long time. They try to get you to become a member when you're first looking to purchase something, or even pre-purchase when you're browsing their products or content. That membership is then used for rewards, communication, re-targeting, and so on.

HubSpot and Drift did similar things with the creation of Academy and Insider.

Why is this a better experience for B2B buyers? Because the person can fill out a form once to get access to all of your valuable free offerings and benefits. No more form after form after form.

And you get a direct line of communication to each member and can see what they're checking out.

Best yet, you can use all of the intent signals they're giving you to personalize their experience a bit more.

The goal? To get a member to show a level of intent or an explicit hand-raise where the next logical step is to connect them with someone on your sales team.

***

I was looking through some old books this past weekend and stumbled upon *Guerilla Marketing* by Jay Conrad Levinson. It struck me how similar some of his ideas are to a People-first GTM approach.

Here's the line that really hit home for me:

"Traditional marketers, at the end of the month, count money. Guerrillas count new relationships."

MONEY!

Here are a few other lines that stuck out to me:

"Learn to become dependent on other businesses and they on you."

… This is a great nod to the importance of Partner-led Growth.

"Use marketing to gain consent from prospects and then broaden that consent so that it leads to the sale."

… This is similar to going from Community-led Growth, which is about building an audience that opts into an email database, to Member-led Growth, which is about creating a deeper relationship and understanding with each person.)

"Put an element of amazement in your marketing."

… This one speaks to some of our People-first principles. Surprise and delight has never been a greater asset.

Here are those principles I'm talking about:

- Partner - Be collaborative and supportive.
- Empathy - Be kind and thoughtful.
- Originality - Be your authentic self.
- Presence - Be in the moment
- Learning - Be the student and teacher.
- Experience - Be memorable.

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Here's a simple Community-led and Content-led Growth tip about creating content from comments.

You can do this in public or in private communities. Here are some tips to do it well.

First, craft a post that's accessible so that people feel open to leaving their thoughts. It could be a strong opinion, or it could be more gentle where you talk about how something is evolving.

Make the post concrete and specific. This way, the comments can be used as part of a blog article or in a longer-format piece on the same topic.

Reply to each comment to get further reach for the post. More engagement means more eyeballs.

One thing I think more people should do is create carousels and other visual posts from people's comments. A comment collage if you will.

I also love using content from the comments as ideas for upcoming webinar topics. I've even found guests for webinars from people who are leaving comments.

And don't forget to follow or connect with people who leave comments. It's all about growing that network!
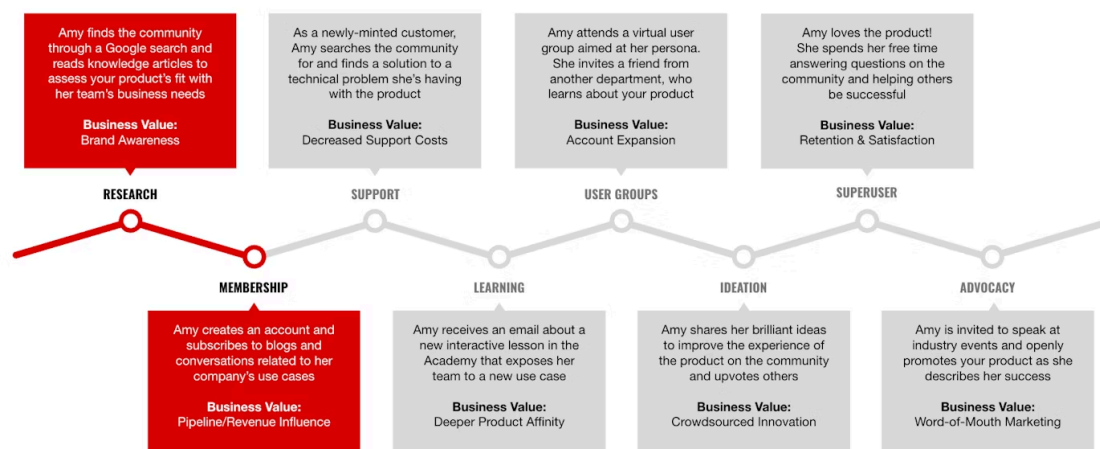
***

I love a great customer journey.

Building customer journeys can help executives and everyone else in the company understand the impact and value of Community-led (rented communities) and Member-led Growth (owned communities).

Take a look at this to see what I'm talking about.

UNLOCK VALUE ACROSS THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

What I would add to this image are actual data points for each step that can be quantified.

I would also create journeys for a zoomed-out view of a particular business segment, buyer persona, or account list.

***

Community-led Growth is all about creating distribution leverage for your business.

Over time, everything will be commoditized. Every product, every service. So you need to find a defensible differentiator when it comes to your go-to-market. Ideally, you'll have a few for your product, too.

One thing that's for sure different is the story you tell and the people who rally around the story.

But that's not enough. You need to create leverage when it comes to reaching people with that story. But trying to reach them all by yourself is hard and usually gets more expensive, not less expensive.

What if you could activate a community of people who believe in that story and do it with them?

Community-led Growth is about finding the people and places that give you an edge when it comes to acquiring new customers. My favorite ways to do that are:

1. Get your fellow teammates involved
2. Build in public
3. Ship before "perfect"
4. Engage with anyone who's sharing
5. Partner with other brands in your industry or category

When you have a community of people to help you tell your story, that's when the real magic happens.

Chapter 7

The Modern Marketer: GTM Reimagined

Here are the two ingredients you need in order to deliver outsized value to your customers.

One gets talked about a lot. The other, not so much.

1. An opinionated and differentiated point of view
2. A methodology or approach to bringing that point of view to life

Linear, HubSpot, and Drift are three great examples of this in action.

And not to mention TACK. 🙂

So how do you create a methodology or framework to actually teach people what you believe in, how it works, and why it works?

You start by looking at the information gap that exists in someone's mind today about the topic. Find things that are similar and adjacent to your point of view. And start writing out possible ways to describe what people need to do using different verbs.

This doesn't have to be complicated, and you won't get it right on the first try. The key is to build the approach with other people. Validate as you build it in public or semi-public.

Use the "why, how, what" framework to help.

- Why would or should I do this?
- How do I do it?
- What does good look like?

Don't make the mistake of assuming that your product is "good enough." It's not. Especially in tech.

You need to find ways to add more value to your customers and build trust in a way that's more tangible pre-sale. Having a methodology or approach like this is a great starting point.

***

Everyone knows what social proof is and why it's important.

But everyone, including me, probably isn't not using it enough.

I think of social proof in two ways. One is, of course, about your product.

The other, though, is about all the other valuable things you offer to people. Your content, events, membership, and overall brand.

There's power in highlighting people's love and affinity for both. Yet, most of the time we focus on just the pure product social proof.

You can find and collect social proof in a lot of places: review sites, case studies, customer call recordings, your product, social media, NPS surveys, events, or even a podcast with your customers.

These same places can be great sources to find both product and brand social proof.

Go take an hour to audit your website, emails, and even your social media calendar. How much product and brand social proof can you find?

Start with your landing pages, your important emails or nurture sequences, and for sure your homepage. Make sure there's clear and relevant social proof in all of those places.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Here's a tip on using screenshots as social proof.

I'm sure you've seen what I'm about to describe.

You're looking at a web page, ad, or email, when you see a screenshot of a LinkedIn comment, or a review from a review site, or some other artifact pulled directly from the voice of a real customer.

Too many of us use the glossy, highly produced type testimonial. But I think the more raw, authentic version like the one described above should be used more often.

It has the power to create a more emotional connection with the reader.

And heck, it's easier to produce! It's literally a screenshot.

I'm calling this the "word of mouth screenshot play."

***

The exclusive offer play. Here's how it works.

Take a webinar, piece of content, or even a free tool, and make it accessible only to people who did "X" or have "Y."

Lean into the principles of scarcity and reciprocity.

The key is how you set the expectation and position the exclusivity of the offer.

One way is to partner with someone your audience really trusts and respects (another principle of influence) to communicate the offer and create FOMO.

Another is to make it about what the person will miss out on if they don't take advantage of it versus what they stand to gain. Make them want to avoid that pain.

Or you could make it time-bound, only available for "X" days. Or limit registration, offer early access, or something to that effect.

Make it exclusive and position it well.

But the key is to make it GENUINE. Don't make the offer feel like there's not enough tangible benefit to warrant it being exclusive. Make sure the offer has real value in it, or else you'll let people down.

I always say it's better to underpromise and overdeliver.

***

Don't wait any longer to set up self-reported attribution.

I was working with a TACK customer the other day, and we looked at software-first attribution for LinkedIn ads. It didn't look great. Fewer than 10 attributable conversions in the quarter.

Then we looked at self-reported attribution for the same time period. It was north of 70. Crazy!

Sure, some of those could have come from organic posts and not the pure awareness and demand ads we were running. But the delta between what the software said and what the people said was astonishing.

A really straightforward thing you should do literally right now is add an open text field to your demo form or the form on your bottom-of-funnel offer that asks: "How did you hear about us?"

It'll take you two minutes. You'll be glad you did.

***

In my view, these are three most important D's of GTM:

1. Distribution: Audience-building and brand moat
2. Differentiation: Positioning and messaging
3. Defensibility: Product strategy and network effects

These three things should be constantly top of mind for executives. The CEO should be obsessed with all three all the time.

If you're looking for somewhere to start, pick one of the D's and do an analysis. Write down a couple of questions and ask people in GTM roles for their opinion.

A few example questions you might ask:

- How strong is your distribution leverage?
- How differentiated is your story?
- What is your current defensibility and is it real?

Figure out your D's and you'll be on your way to GTM success.

***

Targeted programs are an important part of what we call Integrated Revenue Campaigns.

A targeted program is defined by a specific audience that is a subset of the overall audience for the campaign. For example, if a campaign is going after all ICP accounts, you might create a program specifically for the economic buyers in those accounts.

A program could be targeted at a set of buyers, a set of accounts, or both.

Step one is to identify the program's audience.

Step two is to prioritize how marketing and sales will target the audience.

Step three is to engage the program's audience using content, events, and free product offerings across the right marketing and sales channels.

TARGETED PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Targeted marketing and sales activities to a well defined and specific audience within our ICP.

Goals: Increase awareness, engagement and conversion of ICP accounts.

1. **Identify** - ZoomInfo for account enrichment and selection

2. **Prioritize** - 6Sense identifies accounts that are in and out of market

3. **Engage** - Drift, website, and offers are ways to engage buyers and customers

Targeted programs are a great way to align efforts between marketing and sales or marketing and customer success teams.

And each program can be designed to come from the voice of a person instead of the brand. For example, instead of talking about a webinar where people will learn XYZ, position the webinar as an inclusive conversation with your CEO where attendees will get access to XYZ information and ideas.

The key to a good targeted program is clearly defining the audience and measuring the inputs and outputs of its execution. Set up a dashboard that shows how much engagement is happening at the audience level, how much engagement is converting into sales conversations, and how many sales conversations are turning into pipeline and revenue.

I recommend having someone on the marketing team be the DRI of each program, and creating a bi-weekly program insight report that shows the learnings from what worked and what didn't. This will help you readjust the program's budget and efficiency metrics.

Lastly, create some customer journey examples showing people who went through the program and who ended up becoming opportunities and customers.

***

One of the best things you can do to make your GTM more people-first is focusing on the right people.

Here's one of my favorite frameworks to help you prioritize the right accounts and people.

Account and Buyer Prioritization Framework
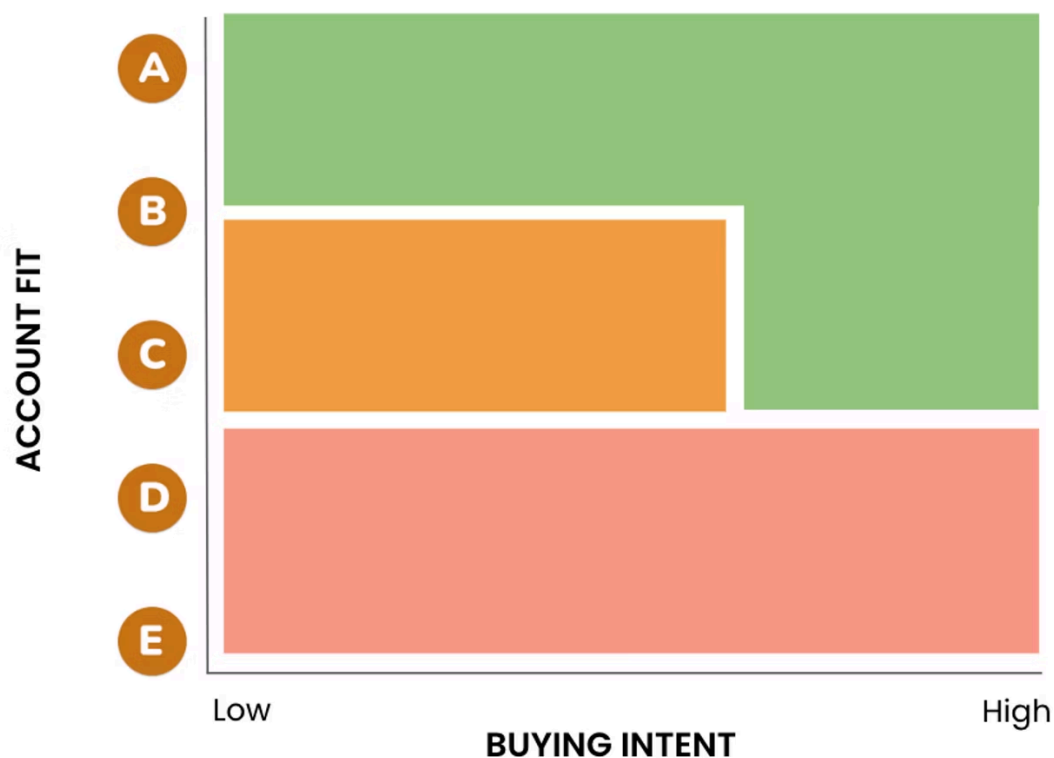
TACK

The most important part of this is making sure marketing, sales, and customer success are all in agreement. If one team isn't, your vectors aren't aligned, and it will create GTM strain and inefficiency.

Don't leave it to chance. Document the final decisions and enable everyone across each team so they understand who you're collectively going after, why, and what role they'll play (AKA the how).

Spend 80% of your time and money on the green, 20% on the yellow, and 0% on the red.

You can then start to build a broad campaign theme that's applicable to one or more of the broader audiences (accounts and buyers).

Then, within that campaign theme, you can build targeted audience-specific activation programs using a combination of the right offers (content, events, free products) and channels.

<div align="center">***</div>

Offers. They're so important to your marketing and sales machine.

But the definition of a "good" offer has evolved a lot over the past few years. That's because buyer expectations and preferences have also evolved.

People are less likely to fill out forms. They're more skeptical of brand offers. And they're tired of all the bait and switch.

So what are some great people-first offers?

Offers that GIVE a lot of value. Offers that are TRANSPARENT and HELPFUL.

Offers that don't ask for a lot of IRRELEVANT information from you.

Offers that are ORIGINAL and UNIQUE.

Here's an example.

I'm seeing many companies starting to ungate the demo. Instead of making buyers talk to someone in sales to get a product demo, businesses are providing a transparent and frictionless way to see the product and learn more about it. And the best are then offering up a free consult or education call with a real product expert to learn how it could help them specifically.

They're also doing smart things with tracking, seeing who comes to the page using reverse IP technology and using live chat and assisted chatbots to provide a people-first experience.

Gone are the days of eBooks and infographics as gated offers. It's time to level up our offer game.

***

Case studies are nice, but know what's even better? Customer examples!

Customer examples are the real customer proof. They aren't just nicely crafted stories with great numbers. Sure, those things are good, but they can come off as inauthentic.

Customer examples are what customers are doing, creating, and achieving with your product every day.

Customer examples are tools for teaching and building trust. And they're great at doing it.

I highly recommend building a library of customer examples. It doesn't even need to be only examples of your customers. The library could include examples of people in your industry or category who are doing great things as well. Think Community-led Growth meets Content-led Growth.

We did this at HubSpot, Drift, and Airmeet, and we always received fantastic feedback from buyers and customers, as well as our sales, customer success, and support teams. Because these teams now had resources that people loved and got value from. It helped them build trust faster.

Here are a few examples (meta, I know) from my time at [Airmeet](#) and [Drift](#).

***

Why should you create a GTM manifesto for your internal teams? And how do you do it?

I believe the most important thing you can do to create a people-first experience is to get teams aligned as much as possible. It won't ever be perfect, but you need alignment in a few different ways.

Philosophical alignment: Why you believe what you believe.

Methodology and strategy alignment: The overall GTM approach.

People alignment: Who does what and when.

Process alignment: What should happen and how should it happen.

I recommend creating a handbook or manifesto. Call it the "GTM Bible." Keep it regularly updated and use it to train every new person who joins a GTM team.

The manifesto should contain the following:

Definitions. Probably the most important thing to do initially. This includes the definitions of roles, acronyms, marketing and sales funnel, data, you name it. If it exists, write it down and define it.

Workflows. This is the visualization of how data, people, and processes should ideally work.

Systems: This is what systems are being used, where, why, and how.

Dashboards and data: This is the shared dashboards you should be looking at and the sources of data.

If you want to create a more people-first experience, step one is to get your GTM teams working better together. How you're organized and how well you're organized will play a huge role in what customers experience and remember.

<div align="center">***</div>

Here's a very tactical GTM pro tip about lead nurturing.

The old way of automated lead nurture doesn't work well anymore. In fact, it's probably damaging the reputation of your brand.

I like to think of the old way as brand spam via email. You know when you're getting "nurtured." It's cold, inauthentic, and usually filled with friction.

The new way of lead nurturing is to have the automated sequence come from a real human, with a real reply-to address, with copy that's conversational, fun, and authentic.

The key is to make it all about giving, not asking, and removing any friction that stands in the way of value. Share ungated content, helpful customer examples (not just boring case studies), resources, and ideas that are literally in the email (AKA people don't have to click and convert somewhere else). Encourage replies, and design the emails to be formatted in plain, conversational text format.

Send one or maybe two emails per month, no more than that. Think of your nurture strategy as a way to build community with your audience. Don't think of it as some channel to purely capture demand.

Give to get. That's people-first all day.

<div align="center">***</div>

Here's a play I used for years at HubSpot to increase customer value, retention, and product adoption.

It's all about monthly learning themes.

Every month, we would pick a theme to cover. It could be email marketing, conversion paths, homepage design, or anything else our customers were trying to get better at and that HubSpot could help with.

We would do three or four live group workshops on the theme each month. They would follow a similar "why, how, what" structure—why this matters, how to be better at it, and what HubSpot tool you need to use with the how to achieve the why.

We would turn that content into a consumable guide after the fact, plus additional micro-content to use externally and as enablement resources for CSMs, AEs, and customers.

We measured engagement, pre- and post-session adoption, customer retention, and qualitative feedback from external and internal stakeholders. Eventually, we started to see pipeline come from the sessions and began purposefully designing a demand capture CTA in and after the sessions.

If monthly is too much, start doing it once a quarter. I promise you, your customers will love it.

<div align="center">***</div>

Stop using the dreaded no-reply when it comes to email marketing. Please, just stop it!

It shocks me how many companies are still sending emails—sometimes very personalized and specific emails—with no way to reply. It's not people-first, and it creates more friction for buyers and customers.

Just take a look at this example.

The solution is to create a new email domain—something like hey.companyname.com—and send every email from a person, with replies going to an inbox where real people can respond.

If you're sending a ton of email, there are tools like Drift, 6sense, and others that can help manage replies using AI and route true human replies to a person.

Remember, email is a very important channel that's super crowded. Don't make it even harder on yourself and your audience by using a company-first approach to email.

***

Here's how I believe you should truly align your marketing and sales teams.

Align using CAC.

What's CAC? Customer Acquisition Cost: the total marketing and sales expenses in a given time period.

I think if marketing and sales leaders started by looking at their strategy and the investments required to execute the strategy *together*, there would be much more natural alignment.

For example, the sales leader might say to marketing, "Use this headcount for more programmatic marketing right now. We don't need it because our current AEs aren't fully productive."

Or marketing might say, "Hey, we don't need this marketing software anymore. Let's use it for a new sales enablement tool to improve rep productivity."

So how do you do this? Get marketing and sales to share ONE budget. And track it together. Yeah, I know, that might be hard. But if it's a mandate from the CEO, then it's not an option. Then they must work together with finance to create a strategy and an investment plan that's in the best interest of the business to acquire new customers.

The lesson: make sales and marketing share one budget, not two separate ones. And own CAC together.

I can say from experience this will fix most of the major alignment issues businesses experience today.

Chapter 8

Selling Smarter: The Future of Sales

How can we be better at people-first selling?

The answer is to think more like a teacher AND a student, and less like a salesperson.

I was studying some good, bad, and ugly sales prospecting emails and sequences the other day, and it shocked me how few were teaching people something.

Sure, there was some personalization, but nearly all of them were too much "us" and not enough "you."

This tip is about auditing your sales and even marketing sequences to determine how much you're teaching versus pushing something on to a person.

Teach = pull. Sell = push.

Are you including at least one or two resources in the email? How much "zero click" content and education is happening in each email? Are you using a "P.S." to provide value at the end?

A people-first sales email happens in five acts.

1. A compelling, short and to-the-point subject line
2. A first paragraph that's personalized using an insight discovered through good research.
3. A second paragraph that's pure education.
4. A third paragraph that's a personalized suggestion or CTA.
5. A solid and relatable P.S.

***

People-first selling is so important. And it starts with creating a movement.

A movement needs three things to, well, become a movement.

Step one is when people engage with it and like the story/idea.

Step two is when they start writing about it and using it in their own words.

Step three is when they start advocating on its behalf.

I think you need three things to make that happen:

1. Value
2. Personal Motivations
3. Connection

Always lead with value. Try to connect that value to what they're personally motivated by. And form a personal connection either between you and them or them and someone else .

Guess what? Those are simply good sales techniques. And when you're trying to grow a movement or category, it's mostly a sales game after all.

Here's an [article](#) that does a wonderful job of unpacking how to create a people-first sales approach. I love this quote in particular:

"Looking back, I closed with them because I committed the time to get to know them. I was there on the ground with them."

***

The future is clips. Audio clips, video clips, text carousels (alright, not exactly a clip, but they still count in my book).

My point is, clips are a fantastic people-first asset to use across your go-to-market teams and People-first GTM Channels.

They humanize the brand by putting the voice and visuals of real people at the center of the experience.

They're super reusable, and now, with AI clipping tools, they're fairly straightforward to create.

A clip can also be a short video from your CEO, your technical product experts, or your customers. We did this all the time at Drift, and they worked so well. I couldn't even count how many people told me they watched one of my LinkedIn videos and then downloaded a piece of content or got a demo.

Rusty Williams is a ClubPF member who's building a pretty cool technology that helps you create clips and other community-driven video. It's called [AnswerStage](#).

My recommendation is to create a library of clips and short videos that are tagged and organized so they're easily searchable and findable. Give this library to your SDR/BDRs and anyone else in Sales and Customer Success.

Instead of going for that perfect video that takes weeks or months to create, why not create dozens of short, believable, and friendly clips that will collectively get more watches than one "perfect" video?

***

Follow your champions.

This concept is super straightforward and easy to do, yet so many of us fail to do it. Myself included!

The idea is when a champion or power user leaves their current company and lands at a new one, reach out thoughtfully to see if there might be a fit for your solution at their new company.

Marketing should have a simple playbook set up to send them a congratulatory gift and make it an extra special moment for them.

There are even tools that help automate and track this.

It's probably the lowest-hanging fruit out there when it comes to new pipeline creation.

***

The walking deck. One of my favorite things to build.

A walking deck can be many different things. It could be an elevator pitch, a proposal, a strategy.

I build one or two walking decks throughout the year, so that when the time comes for a board meeting or annual planning, I have a decent head start.

And not only that, the people I need on my side, or the people I need to influence when the time comes, will have already seen and helped me craft the walking deck.

For me, a walking deck is a great sales tool, a way to spread ideas, and a surefire way to get people involved in building something.

I strongly suggest building one for your personal and/or professional life. Nick and I have one for TACK, and we also have a public version of a [People-first GTM walking deck](#).

Another example of a public version of a walking deck would be [HubSpit's Culture Code deck](#).

***

When I hop on a sales call, my big question is always: "How much will this person teach me?"

As an executive, I don't want to be talked at. I want a value-additive experience that doesn't waste my time.

The first thing most sales calls do wrong is they don't teach the potential customer about their company's POV and beliefs. This is a mistake because that's one of the only truly differentiated things you can share—and if the buyer likes it and aligns with it, then your sales process just got easier.

We did this all the time at HubSpot and Drift. We didn't do a great job at Airmeet, and the results showed.

This tip is simple: Teach a new buyer what makes you different and how they could apply that in the context of their business. Do it early in the sales process—during the discovery call, after the discovery call, or during the second call—but no later than that.

I know this is easier said than done. You need a story that is rooted in undeniable trends and things that are relevant to the buyer. It's what makes great product marketing after all.

And then you need to teach people how you'll solve their problem without just spewing product features. And you should do it in the context of who they are and what you know about their business and pain.

Spend the time doing this and getting it right, and your sales calls will be a lot more fruitful.

***

The discovery call. Everyone's favorite call, right? 🙂

Most discovery calls are designed with a company-first mindset. We need this information to help you, so we're going to pepper you with questions and add little value to your experience. Gross!

I've never officially been a quota-carrying salesperson, but I was a CSM for two and a half years at HubSpot, where I had a retention and adoption quota. I had to get really good at getting into the minds of every one of my customers.

So here's my recipe for how to make discovery a more people-first experience.

1) Set the right expectations for the call and ask upfront: "What are you looking to get out of the next X minutes?" Don't make it just a discovery call. Make sure you add something else to the agenda upfront.

2) Come up with 3-5 questions you ask every potential new customer. Don't deviate from the initial starting list. Why? Because this will allow you to find answer patterns faster.

3) Design each question with a set of helpful tips and resources that you can share with the buyer during the call or afterward as part of your follow-up. Marketing and/or sales enablement should be able to provide some great support here.

4) For every question you ask, once the buyer answers, try to give at least one helpful tip or anecdote to go along with it as part of the natural back and forth. Don't just go from question to question.

5) Don't force discovery into a time box. Don't rush it. The goal is to leave the buyer feeling better about their situation than they did before the call started. Don't try to check all the boxes on the discovery checklist.

6) Pivot when needed. If they want to see something, show it to them. Don't be an artificial gatekeeper. Building trust during those first one or two calls is paramount.

7) Be excited and passionate. If you're excited, it's more likely the buyer will be excited, too.

8) Teach them more than you ask. Be patient with your responses, but when you do respond, give first and ask second. And don't force a question that doesn't feel natural to ask.

9) Please do your research. Don't go in cold. Spend at least the length of the call, if not double that, doing research about the people on the call, the business, and the business's customers. Pay special attention to the things they've looked at on your website.

***

Want to know a great people-first channel that's probably underused?

Your Sales and Customer Success teams!

We marketers always seem to miss the fact that our best channel to build trust and get in front of the right people is right in front of our eyes. It's our fellow teammates.

So how can we make sure we're using this (free!) channel to our advantage?

1) Share a weekly update with the two or three offers that people can share with their buyers and customers. Give them context about the ideal audience for the offer, what the offer is, and why someone might care. Include some suggested copy with a nice hook for email or social.

2) Plan a targeted event or webinar with some folks. Get them to be involved in the process and shape the final product, and I guarantee they will promote it a lot more. Pull people with you, don't push your marketing on them.

3) Do one or two enablement sessions every quarter for the team. Facilitate a session about how different people are seeing success by using marketing content and offers. Let the salespeople sell the other salespeople on why they should be using more of what marketing produces.

4) Get friendly with some of the folks across the two teams who care more about marketing. Partner with them to get new ideas, try new people-first activations on social and email, and help you spread how marketing helps them make more money.

5) Build customer journeys that show how well a sales or CS person partnered with marketing to create new revenue or expand an account. Showing actual examples is always a winning formula.

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Lead notification alerts are a great way to create a more people-first experience.

Sure, they're fairly common. Yet they're often not maintained property from a system standpoint.

I suggest checking your lead notification process once a month to make sure nothing is falling through the cracks. Teams change and offers get added and deleted, so an audit is always a good idea.

One type of notification that probably doesn't get enough attention is lead re-engagement notifications.

When a person who's already in your database comes back and is engaging with your high-intent pages or offers, you should be notifying the owner of that account or an SDR about that activity so they can follow up in real-time (or at the very latest the next day) with a personalized, conversational message.

We track the following types of engagement and have seen some great sales meetings and expansion opportunities because we proactively engage people and try to add value to their interaction. We're not trying to sell them anything.

- Pricing page visits
- Free product signups
- Engagement with events and webinars
- Content downloads
- On-demand demo replays

Just to drive that point home: give first and don't expect anything in return initially. Use this as a people-first sales interaction that leaves a favorable impression with the buyer or customer.

Also, you should look at how well you're training SDRs/BDRs and AEs to use the notifications, how well they're crafting responses, and any good and bad examples you can share on a regular basis.

Finally, make sure to track activity levels. Use data and set up a dashboard to see if people are actually using the notifications.

<div align="center">***</div>

Have you ever heard of TIPSS?

- Tempt - the hook
- Influence - the people
- Persuade - the belief
- Stories - the how
- Sell - the close

This is a great framework for executing a People-first sales motion.

<div align="center">***</div>

The "Why Care" framework is one of my favorite people-first frameworks.

It comes in three parts:

1. Why change
2. Why now
3. Why X

X could be a product, a category, or an offer.

This framework is super extensible. It can be used to craft sales presentations, eBooks, webinars, website pages, email copy, pretty much anything. It can be short and to the point (literally in a headline) or it could be unpacked over the course of 10 or more minutes.

Here's an example:

1. Why change: People are receiving more email and your message isn't getting through
2. Why now: Your outbound sales efforts are seeing diminishing returns and the cost to acquire a customer is going up
3. Why this cool new outbound solution: We use AI to help you craft better email subject lines and emails that are hyper-personalized

A pro tip is to use data to put an exclamation point on "Why change" or "Why now." And to lean hard into your defensible differentiators when it comes to "Why X."

***

Curiosity creates collaboration. Discovery unlocks possible solutions and ways to form a partnership. When done right, it creates empathy.

Here are three of my favorite question-starters when I want to learn more about a potential buyer or customer:

1. Tell me about…
2. Explain to me…
3. Describe to me…

A simple acronym to remember: TED.

These are great to use when interviewing a customer or subject matter expert for a piece of content.

They're great to use when hosting a panel or a fireside chat.

They're great to use for deeper sales discovery or understanding a customer support issue.

And they're great to use during customer advisory meetups or product feedback sessions.

The key is to not bias an answer at all.

Ask the question and then listen intently.

Chapter 9

The Brand Blueprint: Strategic Foundations

Find your North Star. I can't stress the importance of that.

In a world where everything is getting automated and AI will be infused into all aspects of work and life, having something to align a team, brand, and community around will be more and more important.

At TACK, our North Star is People-first GTM.

I strongly recommend writing a vision and mission statement for your North Star.

A vision statement doesn't change often and should convey the "why" behind your company. A mission statement can change more often and conveys the "how."

Both are very important to create and follow if you truly want to lean into People-first GTM.

Here are TACK'S two statements:

Vision: Grow businesses by growing meaningful relationships.

Mission: To make every experience and interaction with a business more human.

Said another way, TACK's purpose is to help businesses grow through meaningful relationships, and we will do that together by making every experience and interaction with a business more human.

We developed the People-first GTM Model as our core teaching and educational tool to help people understand how to actually do it.

We also have the People-first GTM Map and Compass to guide people when building their business strategy and growing their business in this new, people-first way.

But all of that was inspired by our North Star belief that people-first is a better way to do business than company-first.

It can take a while to find your North Star, but don't get frustrated. It took us six months of testing to get to our "a-ha!" moment. Once you find it, and that North Star becomes part of the DNA and red thread of the business and brand, the magic starts to take shape.

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Enablement is one of the most important things any business over 10 employees should do, and yet it often gets overlooked.

Why? Because the line to ROI is squishy.

But here's the thing—we spend a lot of money on software, and I would argue the line to ROI for software is also squishy. So then why don't we spend more on enabling employees and customers?

I don't know that answer, but here's a tip to get better at it.

Once you start hiring more than one person per quarter and you're acquiring more than one customer per month, it's time to hire an education and enablement manager.

This person will be responsible for onboarding all new employees for their first 2-4 days, as well as onboarding all customers using 1:few and 1:many approaches.

They won't do job-specific training or enablement for employees. And they won't do any full-scale 1:1 customer onboarding. A CSM or someone similar will be responsible for that.

What this new hire will do is create content and education that both employees and customers can use to better understand why something matters, how to do it, and what good looks like.

By doing small group sessions and some 1:1 enablement initially, this person will serve as a direct line from new customers and employees back to the product team and marketing and sales teams.

Over time, the ROI will start to become very obvious. Not to mention this will be something probably none of your competitors are doing.

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One super important thing I learned while I was at HubSpot was the importance of having an operating system to create a high-performing business.

JD Sherman, the COO of HubSpot for many years, led the creation of the HubSpot OS. It was a pivotal moment that brought structure and rituals, and produced tremendous outcomes for the company.

Nick and I are working on a new People-first Operating System that will be a blueprint for executing a People-first GTM for your business.

It's still a work in progress, but here it is broken down into 12 parts:

1. Team & People
    a. Belief system
    b. Story and point of view
2. Operating Rituals
    a. Goals, processes, communication channels
    b. Product roadmap
3. ICP and Persona Definitions
    a. Account and buyer fit
4. Positioning and Messaging
    a. Value-based and differentiated
5. Account Targeting and Prioritization
    a. Account and buyer intent
6. Voice of Customer Activation
7. Integrated Marketing Campaigns
8. Website to Pipeline Conversion
9. Content and Event Strategy
10. Sales and Customer Success Enablement
11. Customer Onboarding
12. Leading Indicators of Retention & Value

There are still details missing, and the goal is to produce a class on each part of the process and eventually have a full blown course with a certification.

I'm also thinking about how to group the different components into different categories to make it a bit easier to digest.

The point is—don't wait to build your operating system for your company or team.

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Transparency. We need more of it. I believe it's foundational to a People-first GTM Model. The more transparency, the more trust.

This goes for everything from your pricing, to renewal terms, to what to expect at an event, to free products, to the mission and vision of your company.

The more you share, the more people will care.

Now is a good time to ask yourself and the rest of your GTM teammates, are we being transparent enough?

I get it. It's not easy. It starts with your mindset, and it's rooted in the culture and beliefs of leaders at your company, which are shaped by past experiences, successes, and failures.

The tip is to ask your customers and see how they feel about your business's level of transparency. Do they feel like they're connected to the business? Do they understand how to get help, who to talk to, what's coming out soon? How much do they feel like they're on your team?

I'm a huge believer in building a customer center of excellence that can lead a business to find the answers to these important questions. Your growth and sustainability depend on it.

Build the future with them, not just for them.

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There are three main ways to create a spark for a movement, community, or brand. By creating a spark, you can rally people around a mission, idea, belief, or something else.

1) Content

Create a piece of content that attracts people and teaches them a different or new way.

Here are some examples:

- Bitcoin Whitepaper
- Inbound Marketing Methodology
- People-first GTM Model
- Seeking Wisdom Podcast

2) Event

Host an event that brings people together to learn and experience something new and different.

Here are some examples:

- Dreamforce
- MozCon
- Marketing Artificial Intelligence Conference (MAICON)

3) Free Product

Build a free product that helps people solve a problem and gets them to believe in and experience a different approach.

Here are a few examples:

- Dropbox
- HubSpot
- Canva
- Asana

What was your company's spark? Or are you trying to create one now?

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Tone always matters, just like taste when it comes to food.

It's so important to consider how your company conveys who they are through the tone in your copy, messaging, videos, and so on.

Yeah, I know, it's a fluffy thing that is nearly impossible to measure.

But it's such an important thing when it comes to getting people's attention, earning their trust, and becoming memorable.

Here are some of the ways I think about it.

The best case is to have an archetype created for the brand. That archetype would serve as a guide to the company's voice and tone. If this isn't doable right away, don't worry. It's not a requirement.

Instead, start by thinking through the words people might use to describe how the brand sounds by asking people that same question.

And then think through the pillars of what your brand stands for, AKA its values.

Lastly, how will your tone manifest throughout the company?

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How well do you know your TAM, SAM, and SOM? And does it matter?

The short answer is, yes. And here's how to think about each.

TAM stands for Total Addressable Market. It's how you define the total size of the potential market.

SAM stands for Serviceable Addressable Market. It's how you define the market today given your product's features and capabilities.

SOM stands for Serviceable Obtainable Market. It's how you define the size of the market you could capture today given your current resources.

Some say this is a useless or unnecessary exercise. I disagree because it forces you to think holistically and specifically about your ICP and go-to-market strategy and investments. It forces you to think about your competition, your buyers, and how you want to build and grow your business.

Here are some questions to ask for each market stage.

TAM

- Where's the whitespace in the TAM?
- How does the TAM evolve as our company and product roadmap changes?
- What might be limiting our TAM today?

SAM

- How mature is the market?
- How well will they understand our value prop and thesis?
- What geographies are we playing in now and which could we unlock?

SOM

- What portion of the SAM are we committed to going after this year?
- Which accounts fit into our SOM definition?
- What's the potential revenue value of the SOM?

● What demand strategies do we need to use to unlock the SOM?

Doing this every 6-12 months is a valuable and necessary exercise. Do it with your executive team and board if you have one. Or do it on your own or with your small team. Nick and I did it together as we made preparations for 2024.

This exercise will help your growth rate, it will help you to keep innovating, and it will help you to not get sucked into the status quo of what you're doing. Don't make the wrong assumption that what you are doing now will keep working for many years to come. Because it won't.

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Have you heard of the Double Funnel?

I first heard of it when I joined Drift. It had recently come out, and it was one of the major things we implemented that helped scale our GTM strategy.
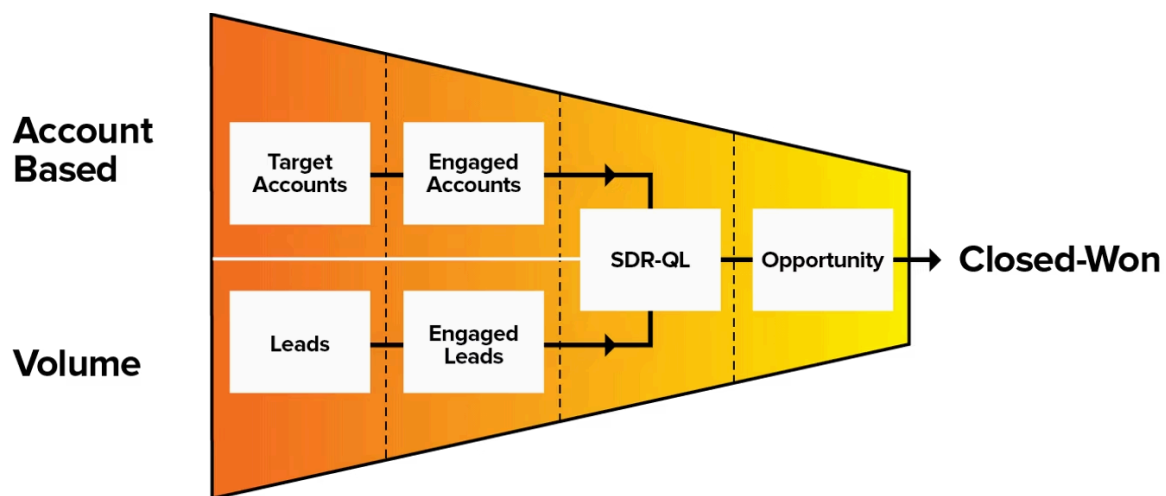
Source: TOPO

I think every business, no matter how small or big, should adopt a model like this. You're always going to have some set of people who learn about your brand and become subscribers or leads who aren't good customer fits. And you should always identify who are the ideal customers and spend the majority of your money and time building an audience to surround them.

So here are some tips:

1) Create a shortlist of parameters that classify someone into the target funnel. It could be something like revenue and company HQ location. It could be # of employees and XYZ verticals. It could also include self-reported data to qualify a business into that funnel.

2) Make sure all of your positioning (brand, solution, and product) and your strategic POV and story resonates with your target funnel buyers and customers.

3) Spend at least 80% of your time and money going after the target funnel.

4) Identify people and businesses you could partner with to surround your target funnel.

5) Spend the majority of the time enabling Sales to understand and sell to the target funnel. Make sure their account lists are exactly aligned with that funnel

6) Most importantly, set up clear reporting and goals for both. Study the retention rates of both funnels to determine if you have them right, and identify any tweaks you might want to make to how each is defined or how the customer journey is designed for both.

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You need to be experimenting with AI at the very minimum.

When I was at Airmeet, I made it a mandate that at least half the team start using different AI tools so that together we would learn how it could make our jobs and output more effective. I appointed one person to help lead all of the different things we were trying.

I think it's absolutely imperative that you do the same thing. No matter if you're a team of one or part of a larger team, you should allocate a couple hours each week to learning and trying different AI tools.

I came across one such tool recently that shows how to use ChatGPT Custom Instructions to give you more personalized answers.

To me, this is a great example of a people-first AI use case.

"Using Custom Instructions properly can completely transform your experience with ChatGPT. Custom Instructions will help you turn ChatGPT into a personalized, always-on, super-smart coach and tutor that knows who you are, your strengths and weaknesses, and the people in your life, so it can help you make better decisions and achieve your goals. You won't have to explain anything twice because it will already know enough context about you to help—and it will do so in ways that surprise and delight you."

Think of this as training an AI so it behaves like someone who knows you, who you can bounce ideas off of, who can edit your work, who you can have creative discussions with, and so on.

Of course there will be built-in biases, similar to humans, but I think the good outweighs the bad in this case. I believe AI is going to radically change how we learn and develop our understanding of things. It will adapt to how we like to learn, how we are as humans, and how we can keep our attention on the thing we're trying to learn.

This is a decent example of how learning can be more personalized to who you are or make it less personal to discover your blindspots and biases.

So play with AI. Use it to do what feels most natural to you, and spend 30-60 minutes a week learning about new AI use cases.

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Here are two questions every person and company should be asking and answering each month.

1) Who is part of our/your network and who isn't that should be?

Answers could be grouped by customers, investors, creators, followers, advocates, friends, etc.

My prediction is we're going to see a new piece of software that helps us manage our entire network. Not just prospects and customers, not just our friends or family. But everyone.

2) What do we/you own and what could we/you own?

Answers could be grouped by products, categories, content, channels, intellectual property, businesses, communities, etc.

My prediction is we're going to see a refocus on building owned assets versus building things for or on rented land.

Networks and ownership will become incredibly important in a world that's going to be more automated, intelligent, and a race to the bottom. When they go low, you go high.

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Here's a tip that's inspired by recipes—but probably not the recipes you're thinking about.

Instead, I'm referring to briefs.

Briefs are such an important part of marketing. They're a way to take ideas, organize them, build a plan, and get everyone rowing from the same boat.

The key to a good brief is detail. And every brief should start with the who and why.

Thinking about starting a new business? Write a brief.

Thinking about launching a membership community? Write a brief.

Thinking about hosting a podcast? Write a brief.

You get the idea.

Briefs act as a forcing function to slow down and plan. Some can be a few paragraphs. Others might be dozens of pages.

Storytelling and messaging are also a big part of most briefs. They give different people across GTM teams the ability to craft their own copy while keeping it consistent with the overall tone and direction outlined in the brief.

Briefs are usually dissected and put into a project management tool like Asana or ClickUp.

There are creative briefs, campaign briefs, product briefs, offer briefs, and more.

Are you using briefs in your marketing?

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The power of a brand is undeniable. And when it comes to People-first GTM, your brand is arguably one of the most important things to focus on.

Because let's be real, do you really want an AI model or algorithm creating and designing your brand? Sure, they might be able to help in small ways. But a brand is personal. A brand needs to make people feel something. A brand is there to form connections and be the gateway to something bigger.

I believe that building a brand starts with writing down what you believe in and why you believe those things. In other words, your point of view. From there you can weave in what is sometimes referred to as your "strategic narrative," AKA your story.

Here's TACK's brand story.

Pressure on any business today is immense. It can come from different places and directions with a variety of intensity. The businesses who thrive in today's climate are agile and know when, what, and who to partner with to create new opportunities and revenue. Starting and scaling a business never happens in a straight line. You need to pivot, adjust, and adapt as the climate changes.

Your first tack is one that requires a shift in your mindset, operating philosophy, and overall approach. It starts by transitioning from a company-first operating model to a people-first model. There's pressure coming from competitors, investors, employees, customers, and the market. And this wind can change fast, really fast. We help businesses get through any storm, sea or wind.

We help businesses who are struggling to stand out in a crowded market, who need help telling their story, who need expertise on how to create a scalable go-to-market strategy, and who need better ways to create repeatable pipeline and revenue.

My tip for you is to double down on your brand. Never leave anything to chance. Be intentional, build and validate in public, and stay true to the story.

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BTS - Behind the Scenes.

This is such a great, people-first way to make your brand and culture feel more real, human, and authentic.

I'm surprised I don't see more BTS. I'm guilty of not leaning into this approach enough, especially since the pandemic happened. I think remote work has had an impact. But it can't be an excuse.

Here are some of my favorite ways to show your audience some fun BTS content.

- Video outtakes
- Employees in the wild (e.g. authentic photos and videos of people living their best life)
- Customer visits (e.g. quick videos with customers)
- Day in the life content
- Team meeting fun and shenanigans
- Content with executives and founders
- Videos showing "how the sausage is made"

What other kinds of BTS content have you seen that you can take inspiration from?

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This tip is all about the value of specificity.

Being specific leads to more clarity. More clarity leads to better understanding. Better understanding leads to action and commitment.

Here are some ways you can amp up your specificity.

- Website copy
- Headlines
- Subject lines
- Webinar abstracts
- Event session descriptions
- Social posts
- Value propositions
- Internal briefs
- Campaign narratives

If you're trying to be more specific, ChatGPT and other AI writing tools can get you decently far. From there, the focus should be on adding the details, emotion, and feelings to that AI-generated copy. It should always be about getting specific. You need to put a human in that AI copy.

Being specific also helps you be more different. And being different is one of the best ways to create a long-term, sustainable advantage.

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Brand archetypes. Think of it as a way to humanize the brand at scale. It's the WHO of a brand.

Elements include the brand's promise, its voice and tone, its vibe, its essence, and the pillars of the brand.

The brand archetype will guide how you think about the brand's look and feel. It will inform how you scale the brand as the company grows. And it will guide every new GTM team member so they know what type of feeling and experience you're collectively trying to create.

At Drift, the brand archetype was the Maverick Creator. At Airmeet, we were the Creative Hero.

Both examples are taking two archetypes and combining them together.

Here's a [great resource](#) to get you inspired and help you come up with your brand's archetype. It even has a free brand personality tool.

The key to building a brand archetype is to make it a true collaboration across most of the GTM leadership team. Get reactions and feedback from other teams as it gets more built out. This way, many people will feel included and have a sense of attachment to the final archetype. Basically, they will care more.

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Always be capturing.

This approach will give you places to turn to when you need an idea. That goes especially for your Content-led, Event-led, and Product-led offers.

Capture ideas and inspiration from your community, your members, and your customers. Create your very own people-first swipe file.

My recommendation is to create your own process to capture ideas, action items, follow-ups, you name it.

The act of capturing is only half the battle. The other half is designing a system to help you action what you capture.

Focus on doing both, and it will:

1. Make your ability to focus easier
2. Take pressure off having to remember everything
3. Help you prioritize things better
4. Prevents things from slipping through the cracks
5. Most of all, it will help you stay more organized and feel in control

When in doubt, write it down.

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Being original is one of the principles of People-first GTM. We define it as "Be your authentic self."

I get it. Being original isn't easy. It takes guts, courage, and authenticity. And for lots of B2B brands, being original is really hard.

It's a feeling of realness and vibrancy that can only be experienced if you understand the brand's why and who. Think of it as the brand's ethos.

There are three steps that you can take to be more original and more people-first. They really shouldn't be skipped and should be done with intention, involvement from others, and time.

Step one is to define the vision and mission.

Step two is to define a set of principles that guide the company.

Step three is to define the WHO of your brand. Think of it as the brand persona or archetype.

This process takes time and doesn't happen overnight. First, see if there's anything already in place in your organization for one, two, or three.

Ask your marketing leader, your CEO, or your fellow teammates.

Once you've done steps one, two, and three, step four is actually writing and telling the story.

The story is what enables the belief and community to start forming around the brand.

Chapter 10

Signal in the Noise: Positioning and Messaging

Positioning is everything. Here's how I like to think about creating positioning that people will understand.

1. BRAND - The narrative and POV that you believe
2. SOLUTION - The problems and how you solve the problems
3. PRODUCT - The things you offer that will solve the problems and are aligned to what you believe

My most important piece of advice is to find the red thread.

What's the thing that unites each level of positioning?

One way to find the red thread is to think about value creation at the highest possible level. How would you measure the value in one word and how do people get that value in a few words?

For HubSpot, it's revenue by growing better using inbound.

Positioning is storytelling at scale. It helps the brand and its community, customers, and partners take words and use those words to create more value, and to create something meaningful.

Great positioning will increase engagement, conversion, revenue, retention, and advocacy.

Oh, and positioning isn't just for the things that create revenue and profits. It should be applied to your content, events, and other big offers that help bring in those dollar bills.

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Messaging and positioning is a constant battle. The wind changes one day and you think you need to update everything.

My take on how to be more agile is to think like a scientist. Run experiments across email, social, paid ads, and your website to test either wholesale changes or incremental changes.

I've set it up so that a product marketer is working with someone in demand-gen and usually someone on the creative team to create short sprint cycles of iterative testing.

We're looking at leading indicators of conversion rate and opportunity creation data to judge if something new might be resonating better. Step one is to define a hypothesis of what you think might happen so you can accurately measure against your hunch.
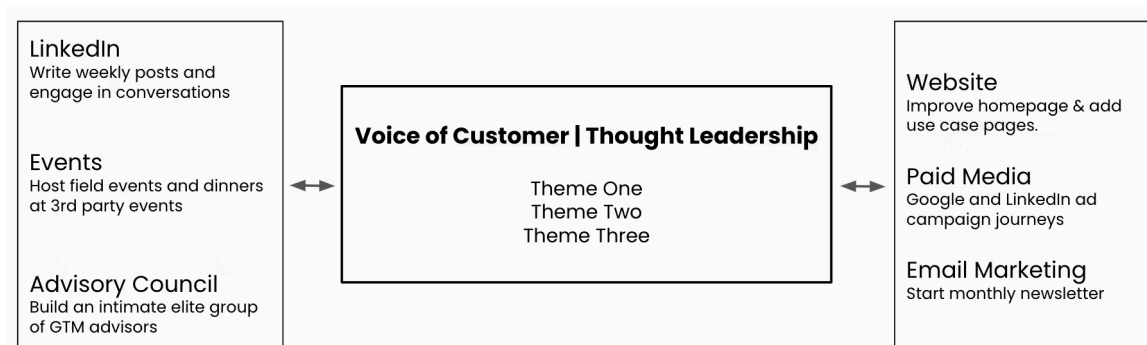
I've also tested new messaging and positioning by partnering with Sales. Create a new first meeting deck story and partner with two to three of the best or newest salespeople and run it through a couple of dozen prospects.

The key thing you're looking for is whether they agree with your new POV and articulation of the problems and possible way(s) to solve them. How strongly do they agree? How much does it resonate? Because that's the first most important anchor to set in a sales process.

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Pick your themes carefully. And use them appropriately. Here's what I would suggest.

Use the voice of customer data coming from product marketing and other teams, along with your thought leadership themes, to activate different parts of your GTM and vice versa.

LinkedIn Write weekly posts and engage in conversations	**Voice of Customer | Thought Leadership**	Website Improve homepage & add use case pages.
Events Host field events and dinners at 3rd party events	Theme One Theme Two Theme Three	Paid Media Google and LinkedIn ad campaign journeys
Advisory Council Build an intimate elite group of GTM advisors		Email Marketing Start monthly newsletter

The themes can be the foundation for your integrated revenue campaigns, if you're at the level of GTM execution.

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Ideology: a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.

Nailing your ideological belief system is probably one of the most important, if not the most important thing you can do to establish and grow as the world shifts from being primarily driven by human intelligence to a blend of human and artificial intelligence.

If you want to command a premium price, create an enduring brand, and get people to loyally follow you, you're going to need something that they can BELIEVE in.

Some call this a strategic narrative. Sure, that's a piece of it. But it's not just a narrative. It needs to be a well-crafted system of stories, principles, ideas, examples, and places that bring people together.

Pick a side, take a stand, show come conviction. Take a moment and think about some national or local businesses and brands that you love. Why do you love them? I bet it's not just the product.

Patagonia is one of my favorites. They sell highly commoditized products. Why do people buy their products, and for a lot more money? Because the product has MEANING. It's aligned to Patagonia's belief system.

Here's another example from my local butcher. They believe in selling super local, pasture-raised animals. Their business name is the Modern Butcher, and they do classes and have a ton of education available about where the food comes from and how to prepare it. Their belief system is based around sustainable and local food.

Every business can and should have an ideological belief system. Step one is first believing that you need one. Step two is writing down your strongest feelings and thoughts about the solution you sell. Step three is to get others involved in crafting the initial story and belief system with you.

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People are missing a big piece of what makes positioning great.

Here's the secret: delineating between company and person-focused positioning.

Most positioning is company-focused. This means the positioning is designed for a buyer at a company that's looking to solve a problem and see value.

On the flipside, consider person-focused positioning, which is about how to position something directly for the benefit of a person and their personal growth and benefit.

I truly think marketing teams need to be better at doing both, especially as owned media, education, and owned communities become so much more important to creating and capturing demand.

All of those things can and should be thought of as products and positioned accordingly. But not for the company, rather for the person.

I believe this is the difference between average marketing and great marketing.

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Everything we do is based on emotions. Just check this out:

> All buying decisions stem from the interplay of the following six emotions:
>
> **1. Greed.** "If I make a decision now, I will be rewarded."
>
> **2. Fear.** "If I don't make a decision now, I'm toast."
>
> **3. Altruism**. "If I make a decision now, I will help others."
>
> **4. Envy.** "If I don't make a decision now, my competition will win."
>
> **5. Pride.** "If I make a decision now, I will look smart."
>
> **6. Shame.** "If I don't make a decision now, I will look stupid."
>
> Every successful sales approach either creates or augments one or more of these emotional states. When enough of these emotions are present inside the buyer's emotional state, a buying decision becomes inevitable.

This list is great to reference when writing copy, thinking about positioning, or crafting a story.

I will say that value does matter. If you can use the emotions and craft a compelling, value-based business case, then you probably have a home run.

Lastly, you need to use these in honest and truthful ways. Don't be evil, and don't try to manipulate people with their emotions for your good and not theirs. Mutual benefit only.

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Details matter. Especially when it comes to writing copy. You want people to feel and remember something when reading your writing.

A hook isn't enough, especially if it fails to deliver after you read the first line. It's an overpromise and underdeliver scenario.

I was enjoying one of my favorite beers this weekend, Juice Machine from Treehouse Brewing. And I was inspired to write this tip by what I read on the back of the can.
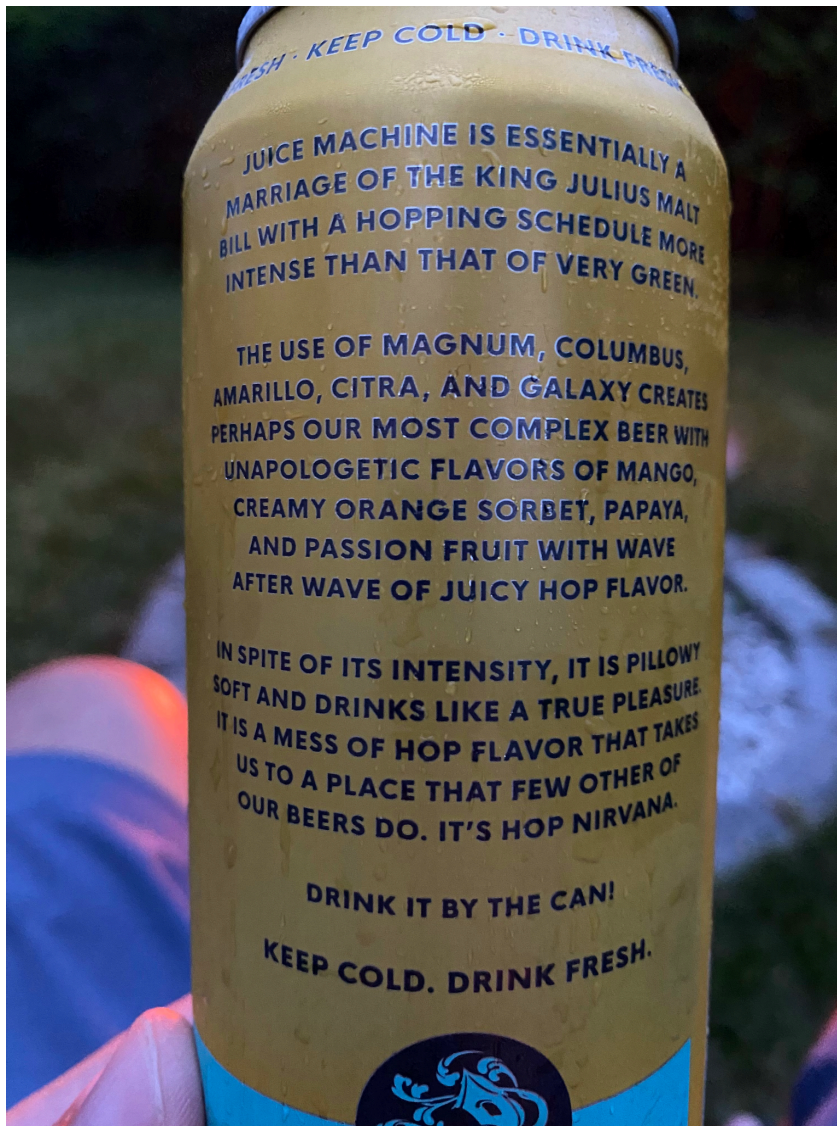
The more you can write for a person and use VIVID language to describe a place, a person, a product, and so on, the more resonance and connection you'll create.

Just look at this example. Words that stand out to me include marriage, unapologetic, wave after wave, juicy hop, and hop nirvana. It's almost like you can taste and feel the beer in your mouth. Delicious!

Can someone feel the pain or lost opportunity? Can someone feel what it's like to partner with your brand? Can someone connect with your purpose?

We tend to throw numbers in a lot of our copy. That's fine and good, but numbers aren't going to create emotional connection. Just imagine having a bunch of numbers in that Treehouse example. I think it would water down the impact.

People-first GTM is half a new way to think about your channels and offers, and half about creating true connection with other people. You've got to write for a person and not some other master.

And by the way, the beer lives up to the copy. 🙂

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Here's a tip right from the team at Minot Light Consulting. They're part of the TACK Crew, and they have a great [weekly email](). One of those emails was so good that I had to re-share it.

It's all about how a customer views your solution and partnership. And you can directly influence this perception by how you position, package, and deliver what you sell.

Here's how they broke it down.

*Do they view you as a **Vendor**?*

If so, your access to your customers is limited. You provide them a product or service and you need to deliver the goods. If they have a problem, they'll tell you or find something else that works. They would rather eat a cup of salt than hop on the phone quarterly for a Business Review.

*Do they view you as a **Preferred Vendor**?*

Your product is still king for them and needs to deliver but you get slightly more access because you might be a little bit higher on their internal supplier food chain. Maybe they would accept learning more about your product roadmap once in a while.

*Do they view you as a **Partner**?*

You help them meet business goals and have a good amount of access to their team. It's more than just your product, they look to you to help provide services and advice to help them meet their critical business objectives. I try to avoid all caps, but...I WANT YOU TO BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF. Really, everyone thinks they live here but they don't.

*Do they view you as a **Strategic Partner**?*

Ah yes, the Holy Grail for some. You and your customer have mutual goals and are lock step in driving towards objectives that help both your organizations. Your CEOs and other execs are besties and they not only want to meet with you, they are flying out to meet with you (or vice versa) in person.

Does every company need to achieve strategic partner status? No. But for lots of companies (especially small ones) being a trusted partner that provides strategic value can be a big differentiator. It's something we're leaning hard into for TACK GTM, the On Demand GTM Service side of TACK.

My advice: ask yourself how well you position your overall value, and what might need to change to make it clear to your customers that you're not a vendor, but something more.

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Here's a great simple mental model, VPV, that gets buyers to pay attention and act.

1) Vision: The place I want to be or the status I'm seeking

2) Problem: The things standing in the way

3) Value: The realization of getting to my desired state and status

No matter what it is—a LinkedIn post, a pitch deck, a presentation—this mental model holds up.

I like to think of it as a "positioning at scale" model that allows you to lean into emotion, facts, and desires to motivate people to take the next step.

Example:

Vision: B2B GTM is broken. There's a better way that puts people at the center of every interaction and experience.

Problem: CAC is going up and up and buyers are more annoyed.

Value: Spend less on acquiring customers and get better customers at the same time.

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I've been doing some work on email sequences lately for different TACK customers. And there are three things that I find missing in almost all the sequences I look at.

1) Education 2) Examples 3) Proof

Here are some really simple ways to make email sequences more people-first and less company-first.

1) Most of the emails I read don't teach me anything. They're too much about XYZ company or product. In other words, they're company-first. Instead, write emails with a sentence or two giving a very specific tip or piece of advice. Teach me, don't tell me.

2) Show me or link to an example that I can see and learn from. Examples are one of the most powerful ways to help people connect the dots of what you're saying to the real world. Use more examples in your emails and you'll see more replies and people wanting to learn more.

3) Finally, give me proof of how well the example worked. What was the tangible business impact of a customer doing X to achieve Y? Lots of sequences have this but fail to deliver on the first two.

Three strikes and, in this case, your sequences will be a big winner. 🙂

<center>***</center>

You need to articulate who you are and why you exist. Abundance means focus will rule even more.

And what you sell and who you decide to market to are going to become even more important.

Easy to say, hard to do. Trust me, I know from firsthand experience.

To help, here are seven ways to apply rigorous focus that starts with developing your positioning and messaging.

1) Audience insights. Who cares most about the problem(s) your solution solves and what value might they seek?

2) Macro undeniable trends. What things are impacting your audience and how does your product help?

3) Differentiated attributes. What are the capabilities and things that are uniquely you?

4) Benefits and value. What are the quantifiable and feel-good ways that people benefit from your product?

5) Thought leadership category. What's the unique narrative and education you bring to the audience to form a connection and belief?

6) Market and product category. Where does your solution fit in the mind of the buyer?

7) Competitive alternatives. What would people do if your solution didn't exist?

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First impressions matter a lot. So it shocks me that we don't spend more time crafting people-first headlines.

Headlines are the first impression. They either pull you in or push you away.

We definitely have over-indexed on company-first or algorithm-first headlines for far too long.

We need to get back to writing headlines for people. This includes email subject lines, headlines on your website, headlines for blog articles, event and webinar titles, and so on.

Here are some of my favorite people-first headline writing tips.

1) Use an AI assistant tool like ChatGPT to brainstorm some different variations of a headline. Getting anywhere from five to 20 ideas is a great starting point.

2) Get out your handy thesaurus and start playing with variations of different words in the headline options.

3) Be specific. Use exact numbers, clear descriptions, and adjectives and verbs that go deeper on what you're trying to say.

4) Take a few of the headlines and put them into Google, see what comes back, and do some research.

5) Narrow the list down to two or three and share the shortlist with others on your marketing or sales teams to get their reactions.

6) If it makes sense, go public with your headlines in the form of a LinkedIn poll. Or do a post with one of them as the hook and gauge the reaction. Either method could give you some inspiration.

Most importantly, don't wait until the last minute to do this exercise. Great people-first headlines should not be treated as an afterthought. I like to sit on them for a couple of days to let them marinate in my head.

Happy headline writing!

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Here's my [Positioning Framework for Personas and Competition](#).

It's an asset that's critically important to resonating with and winning the right customers.

The Product Marketing Leader or the Head of Marketing should be the ultimate DRI of it.

It's something that marketing, sales, customer success, and product teams should all use. And it should be built with them, not for them.

Positioning should never be done alone.

Chapter 11

Leading with Heart: Cultivating Identity

Here's one of my favorite topics: the power of self-actualization.

It's defined as the realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potentialities, especially considered as a drive or need present in everyone. It's to become even more of who one already is, and to become everything that one is capable of becoming.

It's about achieving your full potential. It's also about helping your customers solve their most fundamental problem and reach their full potential with your product, brand, and community.

I saw this firsthand at HubSpot. HubSpot Academy was built to help people not just use the software better, but to create change and impact in their lives using both Inbound and HubSpot. It was about equipping them with tools and knowledge, and giving them the confidence and support to create better versions of themselves.

People-first GTM is about helping people achieve their full potential. It's not about a transaction, but about the ways we can work and learn together to make meaningful, lasting change.

The greatest brands and communities aren't just helping to solve problems. They're fundamentally changing the trajectories of people's lives.

Think about your own personal journey to self-actualization. How could you take the thing you're building or growing and use the power of People-first GTM to make a lasting dent on someone else's life?

It's our mission at ClubPF to do just that. To bring people together to help us all learn the most relevant, in-demand GTM skills so we can create meaningful change in our lives and the lives of other people.

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It shocks me how few teams have a ritual of weekly goal pacing.

Pacing is tracking your goals every week to learn, find insights, and, of course, celebrate. .

I strongly suggest you start doing this to track your quarterly goals and the leading indicators for those quarterly goals. Keep in mind, not everything you track each week has to have an explicit goal.

It makes executive meetings and board prep so much easier. You'll be faster at uncovering trends and insights. And it helps empower and hold people accountable. Everyone has clear visibility into what outcomes they're trying to drive for the business, as well as the actual results.

Here's a Pacing Table Template to help you get started.

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This one's all about the importance of doing debriefs and how to run an effective one.

You probably don't need to do a debrief for everything. That would be too much and take too much time.

Here are things I recommend you always have a debrief for:

1. Product launches
2. Bigger events (in-person or online)
3. Integrated revenue campaigns (every quarter)
4. New core website pages (homepage, pricing page, product pages)

I've found that having everyone do the debrief documentation before the meeting works much better. It lets each person read a summary of what everyone else shared before getting together as a group to ask questions and clarify things.

In the meeting, everyone must have an equal opportunity to talk and share. The loudest or most involved people cannot and should not dominate the debrief. This means someone needs to lead the debrief meeting, keep it on track, and involve everyone.

A good debrief is about the positives and negatives. It's not just about the final thing produced and outcomes. It's also about the process of getting there.

Debriefs should help avoid future mistakes, build team unity and trust, and recognize people. But most importantly, they should help create checklists and processes to make doing the thing easier and better in the future.

Every debrief should finish with a list of action items that are implemented in a timely manner.

Don't skip the debrief. Make it a ritual that's fun, informative, and something people look forward to doing.

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This tip is about building a growth plan for yourself or one of your team members.

My favorite part of the growth plan: the quarterly reflection exercise.

1. What was draining, what was energizing, what were some large lessons learned, and some big accomplishments?
2. What would you start, stop, and continue doing next month or quarter?

Some folks do this once a month. Others do it every quarter.

The point is to get into a routine of asking yourself and your team, if you have one, the questions above on a regular basis.

Dig around to see what are the driving forces and the things that are influencing responses and lessons learned through self-discovery.

History is a great predictor of the future. It's really important to take a regular temperature of your growth before burnout or stagnation can occur.

This could be applied to any part of your go-to-market strategy, too. The power of reflecting and doing debriefs can't be underlined enough. It's how your relationship with yourself grows, and how your relationships and partnerships with others get stronger.

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Customer and employee milestones matter a lot. And I see too many brands failing to recognize these important milestones.

Step one is to identify which milestones you want to recognize and how you want to celebrate them. Similar to running an ABM program, you can take a 1:many, 1:few, or 1:1 approach.

For example, any time a new customer signs up, you could send them a personal email from the CEO or another executive with or without a small gesture.

Or when a customer completes onboarding or reaches a big milestone in their first six months, you could send them something personal from the CSM/AM of that account.

You might think of these as surprise-and-delight moments, but I think those are different and aren't recurring.

What I'm describing are rituals that become part of the customer experience and employee experience. They're ongoing and help strengthen the customer and employee culture.

I also highly encourage you to think about this for your employees. It could be at the company level or the team level. Don't underestimate how powerful recognition and gratitude can be on someone's performance and commitment.

Ask yourself: what am I doing to recognize key milestones?

***

Culture matters a lot. Especially when it comes to People-first GTM.

Culture is the sum of all the people, beliefs, feelings, processes, successes, failures, and connections in your company. It's the things you do and don't tolerate.

People-first GTM success is heavily dependent on your company's culture.

How well you treat and take care of your people will determine how well they treat and take care of buyers and customers.

Employees are the bedrock of Community-led Growth. Once you have a couple of people, the company's culture starts to take shape, both publicly and privately.

Take Nick and I as an example. We're two people who started a business named TACK, and we're already seeing how our company's "micro-culture" is rubbing off on our customers in ClubPF and in the broader community.

It comes from what Nick and I believe, how we treat each other and other people, the things we tolerate and don't tolerate, how we act, what we say, etc.

We're the role models for the People-first GTM movement, including its vibe and culture. But now we have more than 130 other people who are also influencing the culture. Which is wonderful!

I'll isolate this tip down to one thing when it comes to culture.

Take a close look at the things you, your team leader, or your company's CEO do and don't tolerate.

That introspection will unveil some of the driving forces that are shaping the internal company culture and the culture of your brand and its customers.

Don't take culture lightly. It's the largest input that determines the reputation of your brand and business.

P.S. Do check out HubSpot's Culture Code if you haven't seen it before.

***

One of the most important things you can do to build trust is to be a teacher and a student.

You can't expect people to change or buy into something and have it stick if there isn't a process defined to help them remember, understand, and eventually master the new way. That's why sales processes and methodologies exist!

It's so important to use education as a way to empower your team. Growth plans are an extremely valuable tool if you're a manager or leader. Both for yourself and for each person on your team. You can't leave growth and learning to chance.

As an example, if you truly want to go all-in on People-first GTM, you need to first evolve how you think about GTM and the culture of your team—or better yet, the culture of the business.

Start by educating people about why you need to change. Use the People-first GTM Principles to discuss possible ways of how and why change is necessary and important.

Next, make it part of everyone's career growth plan in some way. The key is to relate what they want to learn about and get better at to what the business and team needs. I call it creating the "golden triangle."

***

In marketing, we tend to think that only "creatives" are creative. After all, they're the ones editing videos, writing headlines, and designing websites. But it's long past time to widen our definition of creativity.

Standard definitions and measurements of intelligence (like IQs and SATs) are also becoming obsolete. That's because human intelligence isn't just about what you know or how good your reasoning skills are.

Human intelligence and creativity are so much more than their old-school definitions. Every sales professional has been a life coach once or twice. Every marketer has been an entertainer.

Other forms of intelligence—especially creative intelligence—are growing in importance as manual work goes down and the need for empathy and understanding spike up.

A Practical Definition of Creative Intelligence

Creative intelligence is the sum of five unique types of intelligence (emotional, intellectual, cultural, social, and power), and it offers a deeper and more accurate understanding of human intelligence.

1) Emotional quotient – Having emotional intelligence allows you to cater content and conversations to your audience, and to focus on their needs—not yours. It allows you to move slowly and gently with some leads, and to match the hyped-up, raring-for-results energy of others.

2) Intelligence quotient – Intellectual intelligence matters. But it's important to remember that there are different types of intelligence. Some people are very analytical, others are more organized, while others can recall complex information and answer questions quickly.

3) Cultural quotient – Cultural intelligence refers to our ability to recognize and appropriately respond to cultural diversity. It has these [different dimensions](#): metacognitive (our awareness of the effects of cultural differences), cognitive (our ability to make plans and solve potential problems), motivational (our willingness and curiosity), and behavioral (how we act upon these realizations).

"One of the most frequent mistakes of our thinking and acting is non-recognition of diversity, assuming a tendency to judge behaviors and situations through our own perspective, considering it to be universally shared." – [Caterina Gozzoli and Diletta Gazzaroli](#), Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

4) Social quotient – Think of someone who you would call a "people person," someone who has excellent social skills. This person has a high social intelligence. They can pick up on social cues and adapt to them instantly. Social intelligence is more than that though—it's about [deeply knowing](#) both yourself and others.

5) Power quotient – Your power quotient is your amount of power intelligence. What on earth is power intelligence? It's your ability to ethically use all of your available power—your position and experience—to lead and persuade others. Today, we're rightfully seeing a call for leaders to use

their power intelligence fairly, and for everyone (even those who aren't leaders or executives) to examine how their various types of privilege have contributed to their power quotient. When used right, power intelligence can uplift others.

Here's the deal: You have creative intelligence. So does your team. It's time to start owning it, using it, and growing it.

Your unique level of creative intelligence is important and can help your organization with these challenges and more:

- Empathizing and connecting with customers better than competitors
- Offering solutions to marginalized groups on their terms and in their spaces, while greatly improving representation
- Better engaging, valuing, and retaining employees
- Coming up with new solutions to customer problems

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One of the most important attributes to look for when hiring is passion. I've hired hundreds of people over the last 15 years, and I can say with certainty that passion is the leading indicator to long-term success.

You can't build and execute a People-first GTM without the right people. The key there is "right."

Hiring starts with understanding the job that you need someone to do. That means creating a hiring profile for the job, designing a hiring process that removes as much bias as possible, and executing an interview process that's fair, consistent, and enjoyable.

Oh, and making sure enough of the "right" people learn about the job opportunity in the first place.

So easy, right? 🙂

I've always used an "always hiring" mentality. I'm constantly looking to build relationships with people that I think could make for a strong hire in the short-term or long-term.

Don't wait to start hiring until you need to hire someone.

Build a bench of people you meet. Use a spreadsheet or a free CRM to track it. But most importantly, try to understand what each person you talk to is passionate about.

Ask questions related to what they're learning about, what they love to do in their free time, what their favorite job was, etc. This will help you develop an understanding of their genuine passion.

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Don't forget to celebrate small and big customer milestones.

One-year anniversary. Going live. Hitting an outcome-based ROI metric. Reaching a usage milestone.

Or even a simple surprise-and-delight thing.

Never underestimate the power of a small gesture and reciprocity.

It's a great lubricant for a word-of-mouth flywheel.

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Don't overlook internal marketing.

People-first GTM starts with clear and consistent communication. That includes external communication, of course. But too many people make the mistake of forgetting internal communication.

We need to get our internal teams believing, bought in, and aligned. Lots of people jump to the alignment piece. But alignment doesn't happen without belief and buy-in.

Here are some things you can do to jumpstart and grow your internal marketing muscle.

1) Send a weekly communication to the entire company about what's going on in marketing or go-to-market overall. I call mine the "Monday Marketing Minute."

2) Hold a monthly all-hands with a section about the company's mission and values. Share real examples of customers and employees who are living the mission and values. Don't just talk about them. *Show* how the business is impacting people and customers.

3) Have a customer/brand love channel in Slack where any employee can drop examples of people sharing how much they love the product, the brand, or a person at the company. Ratchet up the love transparency.

4) Recognize employees who go above and beyond fulfilling the mission and vision of the company. Do this every quarter. Give them tangible and thoughtful awards like dinner with the founder or executives, and offer incentives to create more behavior like it.

5) Create a show-and-tell ritual that happens on a set date and time each week or month that gets the whole company to see and feel how the "sausage is being made" across departments. We did this at Drift every week and it was one of my favorite meetings.

The key is to be intentional and thoughtful when it comes to internal marketing.

And in my opinion, Marketing should try to lead the way.

***

When Nick and I started TACK, one of the first things we did was start brainstorming a list of principles we could use to evangelize the People-first GTM Model.

Here they are in case you've forgotten them:

- Partnerships
- Empathy
- Originality
- Principles
- Learning
- Experience

And yep, they spell PEOPLE.

My advice is to define a set of principles that all of your GTM teams can share—or better yet, define one for your whole company to follow and believe in.

At HubSpot, we had HEART. At Drift, we had our Leadership Principles. At both companies, they played a huge role in shaping and evolving the culture.

The most important thing to remember is that your principles have to be from the people for the people. They can't come from some top-down leadership decision.

***

I've long believed in a serve-people-first mentality. It's partially the idea behind People-first GTM.

Serving people first is about putting the interests of others before your own.

For a company and its people, that means your culture and belief system. It's what you do and don't tolerate and recognize.

If you want to become more of a servant leader, two books that helped me were Simon Sinek's *Start with Why* and *Leaders Eat Last*.

Read them and see if they change your thinking about leadership. I bet they'll inspire you to become more of a servant leader and have a people-first mindset.

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Lots of people ask, "How do you get a team to work better together and be more customer-focused?"

My answer always starts with rituals.

Rituals are things that are ingrained into the culture of a team and company. I learned a lot about them during my early days at HubSpot, and I saw firsthand the amazing power of rituals at Drift.

Rituals create habits, and habits create a sustained culture of high performance, accountability, and excellence. I highly recommend you think about your own rituals, your team's rituals, and your company's rituals.

Here are the rituals I designed in my last role as CMO:

- Team Meeting [weekly]
- One-on-Ones [weekly]
- Monday Marketing Minute [weekly]
- Pipeline Review Meeting [weekly]
- Monthly Priorities [monthly]
- Integrated Campaigns [quarterly]
- Career Growth Plans [quarterly]
- V2MOM [quarterly]
- Marketing Team Awards [quarterly]
- Performance Reviews [Semi-annual]

Figure out your rituals and I guarantee your team will work better together.

***

AI is all the rage now. So how do you get your GTM teams excited about it and using the right tools?

I recommend creating an "AI Center of Excellence" (CoE) but with a better, more fun name that's a reflection of your brand.

This CoE is not run by executives. Instead, it should be a cross-functional group of individual contributors and managers with a couple of executive stakeholders as sponsors of the group. Make sure you're giving feedback and providing support on a recurring basis.

The group should follow Jeff Bezos' two-pizza rule—no more than five or six people to start. Its charter and mission should be simple: try different AI tools to help you do your job more effectively and efficiently.

Give the group a simple budget and create a monthly meeting to review what they're learning, how AI is helping them do their jobs, and any other progress to report on.

Get the group to also share a monthly update with the whole company. This will naturally attract more people who want to join in. The snowball starts rolling and growing.

The way to sell AI is bottom-up, not top-down. If you activate a passionate small team of people across marketing, sales, and customer success, you'll be amazed by what they discover and contribute.

And yes, AI will soon fade into the background and be something that's integrated into most if not all of the software and hardware we use in the future.

But for right now, it's best to be proactive and seek out ways to learn about the technology and how it can make a difference for your business and your customers' experience.

***

One of the many reasons I love ClubPF is that we share a common belief. We believe that there's a different and better way to go to market that puts people at the center of every

experience. People are what create the magic, have the biggest impact, and are the needle-movers.

But there's one thing we don't talk about enough. And it's something that has to be in place for an organization to behave and operate in a truly people-first way, both externally and internally.

That thing is called leadership.

Leadership makes or breaks companies. Leadership is also a very deciding input to the overall culture of the organization. And culture and people go hand-in-hand.

Leaders need to be able to get people to follow them, trust them, and care for them. Otherwise they won't be effective leaders. Replace people with customers in that first sentence and isn't that what all GTM teams are trying to do to better serve their customers?

I've long admired Fred Wilson from AVC. He recently wrote a post about leading from the heart. For me, it embodied what a true people-first approach looks like.

He suggested that "more transparency, more vulnerability, and more honesty is the winning formula."

I think that's true for all facets of People-first GTM. It's not something you only have to do internally. It's something you must do externally as well. You need your brand to show itself off in the most authentic and trustworthy way possible.

Try to be more transparent, vulnerable, and honest with your team, your customers, and your community.

This is also why I love raw video so much as a way to communicate—in emails, on social, on your website, etc. It shows who you are and exposes some of the nuances of what makes each of us unique and valuable. It shows that we're people after all!

Start a simple ritual of doing one or two raw, unedited videos a week. I'll do it with you because I need to get back into my video-making habits. If not video, snap some pictures.

Show who you are and be a better leader for it.

Chapter 12

Tools of the Trade: Resources and Frameworks

I'm really proud of the [People-first GTM Model Workbook](#).

It was inspired by a lot of different people who contributed their thoughts and asked questions about how to get started and how to apply People-first GTM to their business.

One of my favorite things in the workbook is the simple "how to get started" list.

1. Develop your story and point of view. What do you believe in and why?
2. Use it to help determine a relevant audience that would be interested.
3. Define a set of principles to strengthen the POV and belief.
4. Build an asset (content, event, or free product) that is a catalyst for distribution and audience building.
5. Find a partner(s) to bring the asset to life and gain a distribution edge.
6. Create a way for people to subscribe and follow. Build an email list.
7. Amplify the asset by turning it into lots of micro- and short-form content.

Enjoy!

***

I love using a **Mastery Model** to acquire and retain customers.

I built this model while I was at HubSpot. The goal of the model is to help a person become self-sufficient at a new skill or job. Here's how it breaks down.

The Mastery Model consists of three phases:

1. Learn
2. Understand
3. Master

The phases of mastery are used to:

- Identify gaps in knowledge
- Recognize where a person is in their pursuit and achievement of mastery
- Ensure a person doesn't get too far ahead of themselves
- Drive momentum in the pursuit of mastery
- Create an objective versus subjective point of view for coaching and guidance
- Identify people who can teach others

During the phases of mastery:

- The learner is learning _____ (topic, task, skill, etc.)
- The learner is understanding what they've learned and getting results
- The learner is mastering the application of what they've learned to optimize and maximize their results

There are two main perspectives from which you can use the Mastery Model:

- The person doing the learning [think a potential customer]
- The person doing the teaching [think a salesperson]

Knowing which role you play and when in the pursuit of mastery will make your responsibility more clear and mutually beneficial.

So when should you use a model like this? Any time you're trying to change minds or behaviors, especially when you're trying to get that behavior to stick.

I love the model because it's naturally such a people-first way to think about marketing, sales, and customer success. This is all related to enablement, both for customers and employees. The better your organization can get at teaching and learning, the more success will follow.

And ironically, enablement is typically not well-funded and is usually not the first thing a business invests a lot of money in. But it's one of the most important ways to scale and create repeatable results.

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Here's a neat framework that's usually used for strategic acquisition-type decisions, but I think it can be applied to a lot of the things that are part of the People-first GTM Model.

Buy, Build, Partner

It's a great mental model to help you think through annual planning decisions and discussions. Or really any decision for that matter.

Let's apply this to audience-building.

You can buy an audience through paid ads. You can build an audience through owned media. Or you could partner to build an audience through networks.

Which one is right? Well, maybe all three. The key is to use a real example and context from where you are today, where you want to get to, and in what timeframe.

Now let's apply this to webinars.

You can buy a webinar. You can build your own webinar. Or you can partner with people to host a webinar together.

You probably already know which one I think is best. 🙂

The point is to think about your options. Don't let the status quo pull you into, well, the status quo.

One more—let's apply this to content.

You can buy some content from a freelancer. You can build some content with you and your team. Or you can partner with others to create content.

Interesting when you start framing things like this, isn't it?

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I've been studying RPA on and off for the last few years.

RPA stands for **Robotic Process Automation**.

I'm pretty sure it's going to infiltrate B2B go-to-market in a big way in the coming 1-3 years.

Here's how it's defined: RPA uses software bots to automate repetitive tasks, freeing up human time for more complex work, thereby boosting business efficiency.

So let's bring this thinking into the context of B2B GTM.

What if we created Content Process Automation? A method that blends people, bots, and AI agents to make better content.

Or how about Pipeline Process Automation? A method that uses AI to research and prioritize accounts, and then help marketers guide people to the point where they become sales pipeline for AEs.

You could even apply this to events. Event Process Automation. A method that uses bots and agents to get people signed up and attending an invite with personal interactions.

By the way, I just made up all of those terms and definitions. 🙂

Study an existing process within your GTM and see how AI tech could help the process become more efficient and redistribute the work people were formerly doing to something else.

***

Here's a really simple way to validate assumptions, get closer to your customers, and do it quickly.

GTM Sprints.

Here's how they're structured:

1. Objective: What's the goal of the sprint?
2. KPIs: What will you measure if the goal is or is not achieved?
3. Activities. What core things need to happen to test if the objective is valid?
4. Learnings: What things did the sprint teach you?

GTM Sprints are one-week cycles that should help you validate ideas and assumptions using real customer or buyer feedback and data.

Here's an example. We have some new messaging we want to test for a new product. The objective is to validate if the messaging will help us book meetings.

KPIs are clicks, replies, and meetings booked.

The activities are going to be performed by both SDRs and AMs managing customer accounts. They will send emails and call customers using three different sets of messaging about the new product.

We have five days to learn.

GTM Sprints are a great way to execute with immense focus and clarity to determine what things should and should not be scaled or further invested in.

***

I love **mental models**, so here are some of my favorites.

People, Purpose, Principles, Plans

Theme, pillar topic, subtopics, micro-topics

Discovery questions: Tell me about, Explain to me, Describe to me (TED)

Inspirational, conceptual, strategic, tactical content

If this, then that

Audience: who | Intent: why | Message: how

Tell, show, tell loop (demo to win)

Pause, process, plan, proceed

Good story, good product, good team = big money

Learn, understand, master

Why change, why now, why this

Perceived Capability vs Perceived Value

"Least bad" or "Most good" decision-making

STAR method = situation, task, action, result

Hook, Pain, Solution, Outcome, Proof

***

Here's the **Conversational Framework** we developed while I was at Drift.

It's three parts: 1) Engage 2) Understand 3) Recommend

You can use it in all sorts of ways to create a more people-first experience. It's a simple way to infuse a bit more personalization into the customer experience.

I'm talking things like your website, sales process, customer onboarding, and even support calls.

Here's one example of how to use the framework to create a more people-first website experience.

1) Proactively ENGAGE website visitors, drive webinar registrations, encourage content downloads, and engage sales prospects with personalized, proactive messaging. This experience can be a "fast lane" to a phone conversation or an online meeting with quick and easy scheduling, a direct line to live chat with a sales rep, or a bot-facilitated conversation.

2) Quickly UNDERSTAND buyer needs through one-to-one conversations to determine buyer intent and qualification. This can be facilitated by AI-based chatbots and/or human salespeople in a live chat interaction.

3) Appropriately RECOMMEND actions and next steps to buyers and customers through one-to-one conversations at all stages of your marketing and sales funnel and, most importantly, the buyer's journey.

It's similar to LAER—Listen, Acknowledge, Explore, Respond—which is an objection handling framework.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Designing your very own People-first GTM strategy?

Then you need to check out the People-first GTM Strategy Map.

Think of it as all of the core pieces that you ideally create and document over time to grow your business using the People-first GTM model and strategies.

Use the Map as a guide to documenting what you know about your go-to-market today, where there are gaps, and how to make it more people-first.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Here's a great article that describes a few types of what I would call very "people-first business models."

It's called ["Do You Know What Type of Business You Actually Run?"](#)

I hope it inspires some thoughts or helps validate the path you're taking or about to embark on.

<center>***</center>

One of my all-time favorite books about marketing and sales is called *Influence*.

I joke that you're not a real marketer or seller until you've read it.

It's a book about human psychology. When used for good reasons and purposes, it's very aligned to our People-first GTM beliefs and principles.

Robert Cialdini, the author of the book, breaks down the six principles of influence:

1. Reciprocation - You, then me, then you, then me
2. Scarcity - The rule of the rate
3. Authority - Showing, knowing
4. Consistency - The starting point
5. Liking - Making friends to influence people
6. Consensus - People proof, people power

I keep these top of mind any time I'm working on positioning, copy, graphics, a script for a video, webinar and event execution, or pretty much anything that involves sales or marketing.

I love them because they're so core to how people think, act, believe, and remember things. It's how we're all wired biologically.

If you haven't read the book, please go read it. You won't be disappointed.

<center>***</center>

I read a fascinating [LinkedIn post](#) that shows how much People-first GTM is being used by companies in the [Forbes Cloud 100](#) list.

Just take a look at some of these stats:

Member-led Growth is a real thing: 60% have some sort of owned community for customers, users, or a community of practice. That's 2.3 times more than the comparison group.

Product-led Growth creates a big advantage: 72% have a clear free plan or free trial.

Partner-led Growth matters a lot: 74% have a Partners page, 1.7 times more than the comparison group.

The list is a great source of inspiration, with examples of how to think about one or more of the seven different growth strategies in the People-first GTM Model.

Is there a company that stands out to you when it comes to executing People-first GTM?

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Here's the most recent version of the People-first GTM Model. It's the basis of everything we talk about with People-First GTM.

PEOPLE-FIRST GTM MODEL
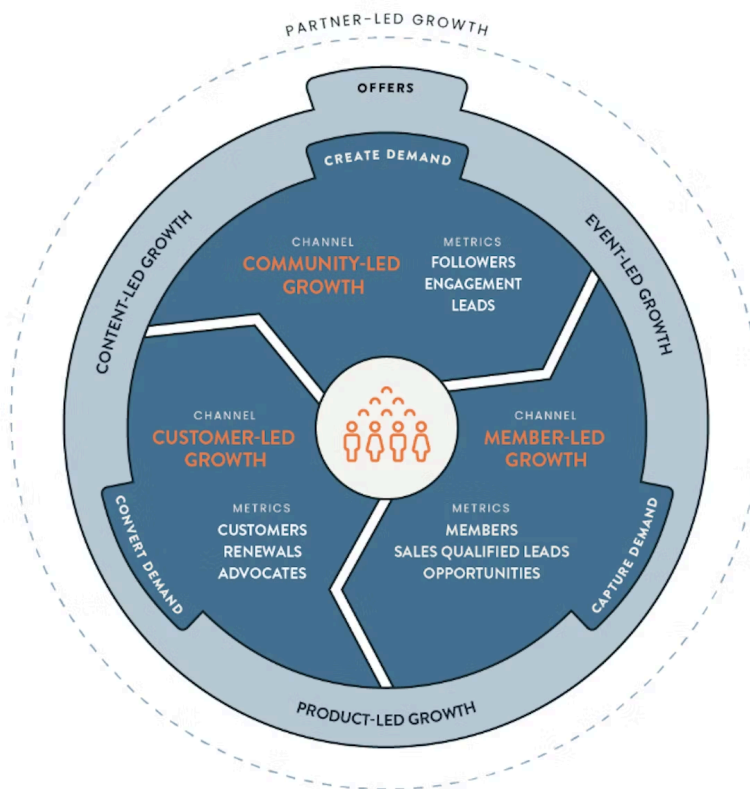
Study it, share it with teammates, print it out and put it beside your desk. And make sure you refer back to it a lot. 🙂

***

Here's a crawl, walk, run approach to using the three different People-first GTM Offers.

There's a definite intersection between these and the channels. We intentionally designed it that way.

The offers are what you use in the three channels to build trust, get attention, and create, capture, and convert demand.

People-first GTM Offers	Content-led Growth	Event-led Growth	Product-led Growth
Stage One	Creating content that's aligned to one or more personas. Starting to create cornerstone assets that bring your brand story and point view and solution to life. Using original content to create and capture demand that's both information and educational.	Hosting webinars a couple times a quarter. Creating engaging moments and experiences during each webinar. Reusing the webinar content. Partnering with other people or brands on a few in-person events each year. Possibly hosting a small in-person event.	Providing people a way to experience the product without having to talk to sales. Using an on-demand demo to walk people through the free product. Creating free education about how the product works and why it's better.
Stage Two	Partnering with other brands and people to create content. Infusing 50%+ of your content with customer quotes, perspectives, and stories. Designing a content reuse strategy that extends the reach of each piece of content by atomizing it for different channels and audiences. Hosting an original series or show.	Building a six month webinar and event plan that is designed for different persians at differents stages of the customer journeys. Integrating webinars and events into your content-led, community-led, and customer-led growth channels. Creating personalized experiences at scale before, during, and after some of your events.	Giving people access to a free trial of your product either before or after talking to sales. Enabling them with a free tool that is related to the value of your product. Something that helps them understand the way your product works and how it's different or better. Activating the community-led growth channel with the free tool..
Stage Three	Using content engagement signals to and building an intent model for the accounts and people who are consuming the content. Moved all the content into a membership community that's part of a member-led growth channel strategy. 90%+ of your content is done in partnership with someone else.	Using engagement signals to build an event intent model the accounts and people who are consuming the content. Moved all the events and webinars into a membership community that's part of a member-led growth channel strategy. Quarterly planning sessions with your sales team to design the events strategy for pipeline creation and acceleration.	Creating a self-serve free product experience where people can try a portion of the product own their. Possibly having a touchless purchase experience to go with it. Creating a model for sales and customer success to engage with the right product qualified leads at the right time. The free product experience is integrated into your member-led growth channel.

Which stage do you think your organization is at with Content-led, Event-led, and Product-led Growth?

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Here's a simple three-part maturity model that unpacks how to get started and master each People-first GTM Channel.

People-first GTM Channels   **TACK**

	Community-led Growth	**Member-led Growth**	**Customer-led Growth**
Stage One	Listening and engaging in places where your buyers and customers are participating. Adding unique perspectives and value to the conversation and starting to form relationships. Doing it from the voice of people not a brand. Outcomes: Followers & Engagement	Creating the first iteration of a brand's owned membership community. Creating a list of benefits to drive sign ups. Starting to attract new members by offering a free membership account. Building a recurring event into the membership experience. Outcomes: Members & Sales Qualified Leads	Identifying the most engaged customers and partnered with them to share their stories, examples, and successes. Creating content and education to help other customers use more of the product. Outcomes: Customers & Adoption
Stage Two	Partnering with people and brands in places and communities to increase engagement. Intentionally sharing valuable things to people to turn attention into interest. Sharing offers, ideas, and education that build trust and create more engagement. Outcomes: Engagement & Leads	Moving all resources into the owned membership experience and added more benefits to why someone should sign up. Starting to use first-party data and engagement signals to prioritize how to personalize a member's experience Outcomes: Members & Opportunities	Establishing programs like a customer advisory board and voice of customer program to partner with customers to drive product innovation and activate audiences. Designing marketing campaigns and offers that feature customers. Outcomes: Retention & Advocates
Stage Three	Establishing a set of rituals and habits to continually engage in the right places with the right offers. Partnering with many different brands and people to accelerate relationship building. Designing a model that measures and predicts engagement and leads. Outcomes: Leads & Meetings	Membership experience and community is being integrated into all go-to-market team motions. And is integrated into the product-led growth experience if one exists. Creating a growth model for member acquisition and activation. Outcomes: Opportunities & Customers	Building tiered customer programs and experiences for different segments of customers across each go-to-market team. Hosting a flagship summit event for customers and potential customers to attend. Building a model that predicts likelihood of renewal and referrals. Outcomes: Advocates & Referrals

The outcomes will give you a sense of what's possible at each stage of these three channels.

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There's a really simple way to make your content and events more valuable.

Think like a teacher.

Start with building a backwards plan for each piece of content or event. A backwards plan is a way to make what you're teaching or communicating more outcome-focused, tangible, and actionable.

Typical backwards planning looks like:

Step 1: Identify what students (your buyer and customer personas) should know and be able to do by the end of the learning cycle.

Step 2: Create an assessment to measure that learning. You could do this yourself or use engagement and revenue data to determine the impact.

Step 3: Plan a sequence of lessons (chapters in a book, sessions in an event, topics during a webinar) that will prepare students to successfully complete the assessment.

Each plan has statements like this: "A person will be able to..." You could replace "person" with the persona you're targeting with the piece of content or event.

A standard backwards planning statement might look like this: "A demand-gen marketer will be able to design a lead scoring model for their marketing and sales funnel."

Bloom's Taxonomy is a great resource to help you write strong backward planning statements.

Imagine how much more powerful and helpful your offers could be if you spent an hour or two thinking about the outcomes first and building them for the right people.

People-first GTM isn't rocket science. It's just slowing down a bit and starting with a person's POV first.

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Finally, here are my six stars to a strong People-first GTM approach.

⭐ Communicate how you're different and what you believe across your website and campaigns. Different is always better.

⭐⭐ Make it super easy for people to understand the product experience and what it can do. Freemium all day, every day.

⭐⭐⭐ Have simple and clear pricing. Enough said.

⭐⭐⭐⭐ Enable people with convenient ways to get a demo. One-on-one, group, or video-only.

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ Have great education that teaches people how to use your product, including recurring use cases.

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ Create a membership experience that's powered by content, perks, and special access to events and people.

About the Author

Mark Kilens

Mark Kilens is CEO and Co-founder of TACK, a media and go-to-market firm helping businesses create, capture, and convert demand into revenue. Helping B2B organizations transform how they grow using its proprietary People-first GTM model and approach. TACK modernizes how businesses go-to-market to match the way people buy today.

TACK'S mission is to make every experience and interaction with a business more human. Companies like Commsor, Swoogo, ZoomInfo, Casted, and UserGems partner with TACK to unite their go-to-market teams to grow more efficiently and effectively.

Mark previously was CMO of Airmeet, a leading virtual and hybrid event platform. He oversaw the global marketing team responsible for brand, demand, lifecycle, and product marketing.

Before that, he was VP of Content and Community at Drift, where he led the brand, content, creative, and events teams. He oversaw Drift's community, Drift Insider, which has 65,000+ members, and Drift's FLASH, RevGrowth, and HYPERGROWTH events.

Prior to joining Drift, he served as VP of Marketing and founder of HubSpot Academy. As a former customer, Mark joined HubSpot in 2010 and spent two years working with thousands of HubSpot customers to scale their inbound strategy.

From there, he went on to build HubSpot Academy from the ground up, educating and certifying millions of people, and helping grow HubSpot to more than $600 million in revenue.

When he's not helping customers at TACK, Mark enjoys plenty of steak and lobster, a round of golf or two, and loves being on snow or in the ocean.

Learn more at TACKGTM.com