MAGNUS
CONSULTING

# Value Creation & Go-to-Market Excellence:

## Unlocking Growth in Private Equity

We wrote this report on the belief that we are at a turning point: the next wave of value creation will come not from cost take-out but from commercial excellence.

Marketing and go-to-market are no longer support functions; they are direct levers of EBITDA expansion and valuation multiple uplift. Analysts from Gartner, Forrester, and OpenView all confirm that familiarity and brand trust now dictate the buyer's shortlist with most buyers choosing vendors they already know, leaning on peer networks for validation, and rewarding those who invest early in awareness and positioning. For investors, that makes marketing an under-used growth lever hiding in plain sight: the ability to engineer pipeline quality, accelerate win rates, and increase retention.

This playbook translates those market dynamics into a GTM framework: benchmarks, diagnostics, and a 180-day roadmap designed for operating partners and portfolio leaders. It shows how to seize the upside by embedding marketing as a measurable value driver — driving faster revenue growth, stronger exit stories, and better returns across the hold.

MAGNUS
CONSULTING

Magnus Consulting brings deep expertise and innovative solutions to this transformation. Our approach, encapsulated in the 'Magnify' diagnostic and 'Magnitude' GTM platform, provides PE firms and their portfolio companies with the clarity to identify where to play, who to target, and how to win.

We offer a human-centric, data-informed methodology that translates directly into measurable commercial impact, helping businesses accelerate growth and achieve superior exit multiples.

# Contents









# Better GTM execution leads to better exits.

Whether you're aiming for EBITDA expansion, longer holds, or a strategic sale, the quality of a portfolio company's GTM engine directly impacts outcomes, and often gets overlooked.

The pursuit of growth and that elusive outperformance demands more than traditional financial engineering. While balance sheet optimization and operational efficiencies remain crucial, a new frontier for value creation has emerged: go-to-market (GTM) excellence.

This report reveals why a sophisticated, data-driven approach to marketing and sales is no longer optional, but a strategic imperative for PE firms aiming to maximize returns from their portfolio companies.

As exit markets slow and margins tighten, the focus has shifted towards actively engineering growth and efficiency within portfolio companies. We'll explore how a robust GTM engine directly impacts EBITDA expansion, supports longer hold periods, and drives successful strategic exits.

## Executive summary

**We will discuss:**

- **The Evolving Landscape:** Understanding macro pressures and market shifts that necessitate a modern GTM lens.
- **GTM as a Value Lever:** How marketing and sales have transitioned from perceived cost centers to strategic drivers of enterprise value.
- **Investor-Grade Benchmarks:** Key metrics and RAG (Red-Amber-Green) definitions to rigorously measure GTM performance.
- **Optimizing Operating Models:** Aligning GTM strategies—from Product-Led Growth to Enterprise-Led—with market realities.
- **The 180-Day Roadmap:** A phased approach to accelerating GTM improvements post-investment.
- **Sustainable Governance:** Embedding GTM excellence into ongoing portfolio management for continuous improvement and sustained alpha.

We believe that by actively cultivating GTM as a value lever, PE firms can gain a significant edge, de-risking their investments and unlocking substantial, profitable growth. The insights presented here are designed to empower you to turn GTM into a competitive advantage, ensuring results that investors notice, leaders trust, and teams can sustain.

# Why we need a Modern GTM Lens

For years, private equity firms perfected financial engineering and operational efficiency. The playbook was clear: acquire, optimize costs, improve margins, and exit. This worked well in a favorable market. However, the landscape has shifted. Easy gains from revenue growth and multiple expansion are giving way to a more challenging environment, demanding a fresh perspective on value creation. A modern Go-to-Market (GTM) lens is now essential for private equity firms.

## Macro Pressure on Returns:
## > The Fading of Easy Growth

The days of leaning on top-line growth and ever-rising multiples are over. Bain's 2025 PE report shows just how stark the shift has been: almost all the value once came from growth and multiple expansion, with margins barely moving the needle. But margin gains have rarely matched expectations, and with IT budgets under pressure and valuations still elevated, betting on revenue alone has become a risky play. The easy cost cuts are gone too. To deliver returns now, firms need to look harder at how portfolio companies actually generate and keep revenue, and get much sharper on efficiency.

## Slower Exits, Longer Holds:
## > The Imperative of Operational Value

The exit market has become noticeably sluggish. Global PE exit value in 2024 remained largely flat compared to 2019, despite a significant increase in the number of companies within portfolios[1]. This "persistent sluggishness in exit volume will continue to pressure the industry to generate liquidity creatively," as Bain notes. Approximately 30% of portfolio companies have resorted to partial secondaries, dividend recaps, or NAV loans to return capital, rather than pursuing full exits[1].

This means longer hold periods are becoming the norm, and with them, the need to actively drive operational value throughout the investment lifecycle. Simply waiting for a frothy market bounce-back is no longer viable. The focus must shift from a purely transactional mindset to one of deep, sustained operational engagement. This includes optimizing every facet of the business that contributes to long-term, sustainable growth and profitability. At the heart of this is the GTM engine.





## The Value Creation Imperative:
## > GTM as a Strategic Differentiator

The cost of achieving market-beating returns is rising, while management fees are simultaneously under pressure. Leading PE firms recognize that without a "differentiated value proposition" to genuinely improve portfolio performance, securing the next fund will be an uphill battle[1]. This leads to a crucial insight: *if the go-to-market engine is under-optimized, you are unequivocally leaving equity on the table.*

Modern PE value creation plans now emphasize **commercial excellence**, actively accelerating growth efficiently through superior marketing, sales, and pricing strategies. Investors are increasingly urging their portfolio companies to adopt advanced GTM practices, such as data-driven pipeline generation, rigorous conversion rate optimization, and sophisticated upsell/cross-sell programs. These are not just buzzwords; they are tangible mechanisms to boost EBITDA and organic growth, especially in the face of macro headwinds.

### INVESTOR TAKEAWAY

*Macro trends demand a hands-on value creation strategy.* With margin expansion proving difficult and exits frequently delayed, **PE firms must actively engineer growth and efficiency within each portfolio company's go-to-market approach**. A modern GTM lens—one sharply focused on revenue quality, scalable demand, and measurable ROI—is rapidly becoming a *mandate* for achieving top-quartile PE performance. It's about transforming GTM from a perceived cost center into a powerful engine for sustained value creation.

# From 'Cost Centre' to 'Value Lever'. Key GTM Trends in 2024–2025

Marketing in the B2B SaaS world is undergoing a profound transformation. No longer merely a support function or a perceived cost center, it is rapidly evolving into a strategic value driver, directly impacting a company's bottom line and enterprise value. For private equity investors, understanding these shifts is crucial to effectively championing marketing and GTM within their portfolio companies. Several key trends underscore why PE investors should elevate marketing and GTM in their value creation playbooks:

## The Evolving B2B Buying Landscape:
## > Consensus and Trust

Today's B2B purchase decisions are far more complex. They involve larger buying committees and extensive, often self-directed, research. The average enterprise deal can see 10 or more influencers involved, particularly younger Millennial and Gen Z stakeholders, who frequently consult peer reviews and online communities long before engaging with a vendor[2]. Forrester notes that buyers increasingly rely on **external networks and peer recommendations**, with over 50% of buyers under 40 consulting a double-digit number of external sources[2]. This fundamental shift dilutes the traditional power of a lone sales representative and dramatically increases the importance of marketing-led education and trust-building across *all* members of the buying group. Gartner's research further highlights that buyers often delay or even avoid vendor engagement, emphasizing the need for vendors to "leave the ineffective cold call behind" and engage much earlier with valuable content.





## The 'Brand Crisis' in B2B:
## > A Return to Trust

Facing budget cuts, many companies prematurely slashed brand marketing, only to discover that buyers retreated to familiar, trusted brands. The data is compelling: **78% of buyers shortlist products they already know**, and enterprise buyers exhibit even stronger brand bias, with 86% using familiarity to pre-filter options[2]. As TrustRadius reports, when vendors cut brand spend, buyers "double down" on "know-and-try-before-you-buy" behavior, gravitating towards known names and peer proof. For marketers, this signals a critical shift: a renewed focus on **brand awareness, credibility, and community** is no longer a luxury but a fundamental necessity to even enter consideration. Leading firms are now rebalancing their efforts, moving away from solely bottom-of-funnel tactics to **invest in brand trust and transparency** upfront. In practice, this means thought leadership content, robust social proof (reviews, case studies), and a consistent multi-channel presence must accompany targeted sales plays.

# GTM Operating Models: Fit to Context

Not all go-to-market strategies are created equal. The right model depends on product complexity, target customer, deal size, and market conditions. For investors, the real value comes not from dissecting every model, but from ensuring that each portfolio company's GTM motion actually fits its context, and knowing when to change.

Some companies thrive with a **product-led growth motion**, others with **enterprise sales**, and many end up somewhere in between with a **hybrid model**. The labels matter less than the alignment: does the org design, talent mix, and KPI focus match the chosen strategy? And is there a clear plan for when the current model no longer scales?

Product-Led Growth (PLG) has been a significant trend, particularly for SaaS companies targeting SMBs or developers, often characterized by freemium models and viral user acquisition through product usage. However, **2025 predictions signal a pullback in pure PLG emphasis** in enterprise settings. Forrester projects that fewer than 20% of enterprises will focus on pure PLG strategies in 2025[2].

Key PLG elements like smooth **self-service onboarding**, in-app upsell triggers, and **product usage analytics** remain invaluable. However, investors should be cautious about overhyping PLG without a clear understanding of the product's natural velocity and should ensure it's appropriately paired with enterprise go-to-market strategies where applicable. In essence, **PLG is a powerful tool in the toolkit**, effective in the right context (high-volume, low-friction products), but it is not a panacea for every B2B business, especially as easy growth decelerates.

The investor takeaway is simple: a misaligned GTM drains capital and slows growth, while the right one can lower CAC, improve retention, and unlock new markets. The job is not to pick the "best" model, but to make sure the model and the business reality stay in sync.

# First 180 Days Post-Investment—GTM Value-Creation Roadmap

The initial months following an acquisition represent a critical window to ignite Go-to-Market (GTM) improvements within a portfolio company.

A structured 180-day plan is not just a guideline; it's a strategic imperative to capture quick wins, build early momentum, and lay the groundwork for long-term, sustainable growth.






## Day 0–30:
## Rapid GTM Audit & Alignment

In the crucial first few weeks, a deep yet swift assessment of the portfolio company's current marketing and sales setup is paramount. This is where using a **CMO Assessment and Team scorecard** can offer benefits. thorugh a quick yet rigorous evaluation of pipeline health, brand positioning, team skills, tech stack, and key metrics.

The primary objective is to identify *high-impact gaps* that, once addressed, can unlock significant value. For instance, you might discover that a company has a decent volume of leads but suffers from poor lead qualification and follow-up—a process fix. Or perhaps a strong product is hampered by weak messaging in the market. This audit establishes the baseline RAG (Red-Amber-Green) status for all critical GTM areas, providing a clear starting point for intervention. Data from CRM reports, web analytics, and win/loss analyses, combined with interviews with key team members, will inform this initial diagnosis.

Simultaneously, it's vital to align on the **Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) and segmentation**. Many companies lack clarity on their best-fit customers or spread their efforts too broadly. Bringing sales, marketing, and product teams together to define or refine target segments is crucial. What do the most profitable customers look like? Are there specific verticals or geographies where win rates are higher? For example, a portfolio company might discover they're scattering efforts across five industries, but 80% of their growth stems from just two. Sharpening the ICP focus can immediately improve efficiency by redirecting marketing spend to where it yields the highest returns. Mapping **buyer personas and the buying committee** for the refined ICP will inform everything from content strategy to sales approach.

Finally, identify and execute **quick wins** low-hanging fruit that can demonstrate impact within 30–60 days. If the website has obvious conversion issues (e.g., unclear calls-to-action or slow page speed), fix them. If lead response times are sluggish, implement a process for sales to follow up on all inbound leads within 24 hours; this alone can substantially boost conversion. If the existing customer base is under-leveraged, initiate a simple email campaign or referral offer to drive expansion revenue directly impacting NRR. The goal is to demonstrate early momentum, showing the organization that GTM improvements can quickly translate into pipeline or ARR.

## Day 30–90:
## Strategize & Pilot Key Initiatives

With initial audit data in hand, the next phase involves outlining a robust 12–18 month GTM strategy that directly supports the investment thesis. This includes defining positioning (e.g., repositioning upmarket, launching new bundles, emphasizing a specific value proposition), setting clear revenue goals, and allocating budget across marketing and sales. The strategy must answer: "*How will we generate the pipeline to hit year-one and year-two plans?*" and "*what changes are needed to enable that?*" For instance, if the thesis calls for North American expansion, the strategy might involve hiring sales reps in the U.S., increasing content marketing for that region, and executing account-based outreach to a list of target accounts. It's crucial to **link strategy to numbers**, setting targets for lead volumes, conversion rates, and CAC that, when achieved, lead directly to the revenue goal through predictable pipeline modeling.

Around the 60-day mark, initiate a focused **Account-Based Marketing (ABM) pilot** (or Account-Based Experience, ABX). Select a small set of high-value target accounts (e.g., 10–20) and develop highly-personalized campaigns for them, including tailored content, LinkedIn ads targeting the buying team, and direct executive outreach. The pilot's purpose is to test the company's ability to execute highly targeted GTM and coordinate marketing and sales efforts. Even if the pilot doesn't close deals by day 180, the learnings on what content and tactics resonate will be invaluable for a broader ABM rollout. Magnus's **Magnitude platform** can significantly accelerate this, providing the tools for content creation, campaign planning, and ABM at scale.

This period is also critical for strengthening **Sales-Marketing Operations**. This could involve implementing a unified CRM, integrating marketing automation, defining clear Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for lead handling, and establishing a *joint pipeline council*—a weekly meeting where marketing and sales leaders review pipeline numbers together, fostering shared accountability. Cleaning up data and ensuring a single source of truth for pipeline numbers is paramount. If the company lacks a dedicated marketing operations role, consider bringing one in (even on a fractional basis) to set up dashboards and processes. By Day 90, aim to have a draft **GTM dashboard** (leads, opportunities, conversion rates, CAC) that is regularly reviewed by management. This increased visibility often uncovers issues (e.g., "*Our win rate on demo requests is only 10%—why so low?*"), prompting targeted interventions.





## Day 90–180:
## Double Down and Optimize

By 90 days in, early results should begin to emerge—perhaps a spike in inbound leads from a new campaign or higher sales rep productivity due to better lead qualification. The focus now shifts to **scaling what's working** and reallocating resources to tactics showing promise. If a webinar series delivered good MQLs at a reasonable cost, fund more. If an ABM pilot in one vertical is yielding meetings, expand it to another segment. This agile reallocation of budget is a key advantage for PE-backed companies, allowing for mid-course optimization rather than being tied to rigid annual plans. Conversely, identify and trim efforts that are not delivering a strong ROI.

Around months 4–5, talent or skill gaps will become apparent. This is the ideal time to **address these gaps with key hires or training**. If the audit revealed a lack of digital demand-gen expertise, or if the sales team struggles with a new vertical, recruit talent or engage experts. This could mean hiring a **Fractional CMO or growth advisor** to mentor the existing team, or bringing in additional SDRs if lead flow is up but follow-up capacity is limited. Magnus' **M:Talent model** provides on-demand marketing leadership or specialists who can parachute in to execute specific projects, ensuring no delays in critical GTM initiatives. This resource can bridge gaps and accelerate execution, as every month of an unfilled gap represents potentially lost revenue.

Finally, with a clearer understanding of what resonates with customers, **refine messaging and expand brand efforts**. This could involve updating website messaging, sales decks, and elevator pitches to align with the refined ICP. If the value creation plan includes repositioning the company (e.g., from a point solution to a platform), ensure this transition is largely complete by 180 days so the market perceives the "new story." This is also an opportune time to kick off brand-building initiatives, such as thought leadership content or enhanced PR efforts, which are longer-term plays but can yield significant organic traffic and media mentions by the one-year mark.

### INVESTOR TAKEAWAY

***Act fast, but with focus.***

The first 180 days of ownership are your prime opportunity to **build GTM momentum**: diagnose issues, secure quick wins, and launch the strategic initiatives that will drive long-term growth. A clear 180-day GTM roadmap—audit → plan → pilot → scale—ensures that within two quarters, the company is already seeing improved pipeline and revenue traction. Crucially, it also builds credibility: management and the board will begin to see marketing as a powerful value lever when they witness tangible results early on. While speed is important (to capture low-hanging fruit), laying the foundation (processes, talent, strategy) for sustainable improvement is equally vital. In summary, a disciplined post-close GTM plan transforms ambitious investment thesis goals into actionable projects and measurable outcomes, significantly de-risking your path to value creation.

# Governance and Continuous Improvement

To sustain GTM excellence, investors must embed marketing and sales into the governance cycle of portfolio companies. This means establishing regular review cadences, aligning incentives, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

## > Regular Reviews

GTM performance should be tracked with the same rigor as financials. Monthly or quarterly reviews should cover pipeline coverage, conversion rates, CAC, retention, and win rates. Dashboards and commentary help boards spot risks early, and management should be held accountable for corrective actions when metrics slip. Having the CMO or CRO present directly reinforces ownership.

## > Aligned Incentives

Management incentives should include GTM metrics, not only revenue or EBITDA. Linking bonuses or equity to measures such as CAC payback, NRR, and pipeline coverage ties leadership rewards directly to value creation. Portfolio-level operating partners can also be measured on improvements across holdings, further embedding GTM discipline.

## > Continuous Improvement

Marketing and sales should operate with a test-and-learn mindset. Quarterly experiments, tracked through a GTM backlog, ensure new ideas are tested, scaled if successful, and not lost in execution. Over time, this compounds into measurable efficiency gains.

## > Board-Level Integration

Finally, GTM must be consistently on the board agenda. Whether through a dedicated Operating Partner or deal partner, boards should ask about spend levels, lead trends, and CAC efficiency in every meeting. This elevates marketing and sales to core value drivers, encouraging management to proactively bring growth initiatives forward.

**INVESTOR TAKEAWAY**

Treat GTM like any other operational discipline: reviewed regularly, tied to incentives, and continuously improved. This ensures portfolio companies build scalable demand engines, deliver efficient growth, and create stronger exit outcomes.



# Your Next Steps to GTM Excellence

Applying a modern Go-to-Market (GTM) lens can unlock substantial, often untapped, value within your portfolio companies. In an environment of margin pressure and demanding LPs, actively cultivating GTM as a value lever is no longer optional; it's a fiduciary responsibility.

The insights and strategies outlined in this ebook, powered by Magnus Consulting's expertise and innovative tools, are designed to empower you to transform your GTM functions into powerful engines of growth.

Remember, **marketing and sales excellence drive resilient, profitable growth** the kind that commands premium multiples. As Bain's research and multiple industry reports affirm, those PE firms that embrace a modern GTM approach will have the edge in creating alpha. It's time to move marketing from the periphery to the center of your value creation plans.

The best investment you can make post-acquisition may well be in a sophisticated, metrics-driven go-to-market strategy the returns on this investment will be seen in accelerated growth, improved margins, and ultimately, a superior exit.

Let's execute on it.

# Citations and Appendices

## GLOSSARY OF KEY GTM TERMS:

- **CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost) Payback:** The number of months it takes to recover the cost of acquiring a new customer.
- **NRR (Net Revenue Retention):** The rate at which revenue from existing customers is retained and grown, accounting for upsells, cross-sells, and churn.
- **LTV (Lifetime Value):** The present value of net profit generated from a customer over their entire relationship with the company.
- **PLG (Product-Led Growth):** A growth model where the product itself drives customer acquisition, conversion, and expansion, often through freemium or self-service models.
- **ABM/ABX (Account-Based Marketing/Experience):** A highly targeted marketing approach that treats individual high-value accounts as "markets of one," coordinating personalized outreach across multiple channels.
- **ICP (Ideal Customer Profile):** A detailed description of the type of company that is the best fit as a customer, based on factors like industry, size, and pain points.
- **PQL (Product-Qualified Lead):** A potential customer who has demonstrated significant engagement or qualifying behavior within a product (e.g., reaching a usage threshold in a free trial), indicating readiness for sales outreach.
- **SQL (Sales Qualified Lead):** A lead that has been vetted by marketing and/or sales and is deemed ready for direct sales follow-up, often meeting specific criteria or scoring thresholds.
- **SLA (Service Level Agreement):** In the sales/marketing context, an agreement defining how leads will be handled, specifying responsibilities and timelines for both marketing (e.g., lead quality/quantity) and sales (e.g., response time).
- **Magic Number:** A SaaS metric used to evaluate sales efficiency, calculated as (Quarterly New ARR * 4) / Sales & Marketing spend of the prior quarter. A number >1 indicates high efficiency.
- **Churn:** The percentage of customers or revenue lost within a specific period. "Gross churn" excludes expansions, while "Net churn" accounts for them (thus, it is the inverse of NRR).

## CITATIONS


1. Bain & Company. (2025). Global Private Equity Report 2025. (Specific page numbers or sections would be added if available in the original source).
2. Manning Global. (2025). B2B Marketing and Sales Predictions 2025: Navigating a Transformative Year. Available at: https://blog.manningglobal.com/b2b-marketing-and-sales-2025/

MAGNUS
CONSULTING

# WHEN PRIORITIES SHIFT, MOMENTUM MATTERS.

Magnus Consulting is a B2B growth consultancy supporting ambitious businesses align marketing and sales on where to focus and how to win – embedding the strategy, behaviours, and systems for teams to succeed.

Find out more: **https://magnusconsulting.co.uk**
or contact us: **hello@magnusconsulting.co.uk**

Certified B Corporation

FT FINANCIAL TIMES statista UK'S LEADING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS 2025

MAGNUS CONSULTING