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Understanding Event-Led Growth

Transform events from marketing-led campaigns to a holistic, strategic GTM motion.

Introduction: Event-Led Growth

Event-Led Growth (ELG) is one of the core Go-to-Market motions we identified in our report on the 7 Go-to-Market Motions.

For decades, B2B companies have leveraged events to generate high-quality leads, increase pipeline velocity, and increase brand visibility.

However, there's been an important shift in the last few years: some companies have evolved from "doing events" to using events as a strategic GTM motion core to revenue growth and expansion.

The 6 Types of Go-to-Market Motions

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

Source: GTM Partners 7 Types of GTM Motions

What is Event-Led Growth?

Almost every company participates in events in some capacity, whether it's periodic webinars, an annual customer conference, or buying a booth at a trade show.

A true ELG motion is a holistic, strategic GTM motion where organizations create personalized, immersive event experiences to drive ARR, GRR, and NRR.

- **More than a campaign:** Event-Led Growth is more than a campaign, a single event, or a booth at a tradeshow. ELG should be a strategic initiative with a focus on business outcomes. Adopting a strategic mindset towards events is essential, as is defining objectives for each event that align with the overall company growth strategy.
- **Involves the whole GTM team:** While marketing may be the captain of the ship, all go-to-market teams should collaborate to execute the event-led motion, rather than treating events as standalone lead generation efforts.
- **Deep collaboration with sales:** Event-led initiatives integrate sales teams throughout the deal cycle and aim to engage attendees to drive meetings, conversions, and renewals.
- **Outcome-oriented metrics:** Metrics should shift from attendee lists and post-event surveys to measuring brand engagement, calls to action, team communication, and buyer enablement. Good data is a key part of event-leg growth.

ELG Drives Business Outcomes

70%
event attendance rate

Source: GTM Partners' Airmeet ROI Study

4900%
increase in audience size

Source: GTM Partners' Airmeet ROI Study

2000%
quality leads from one source

Source: GTM Partners' Airmeet ROI Study

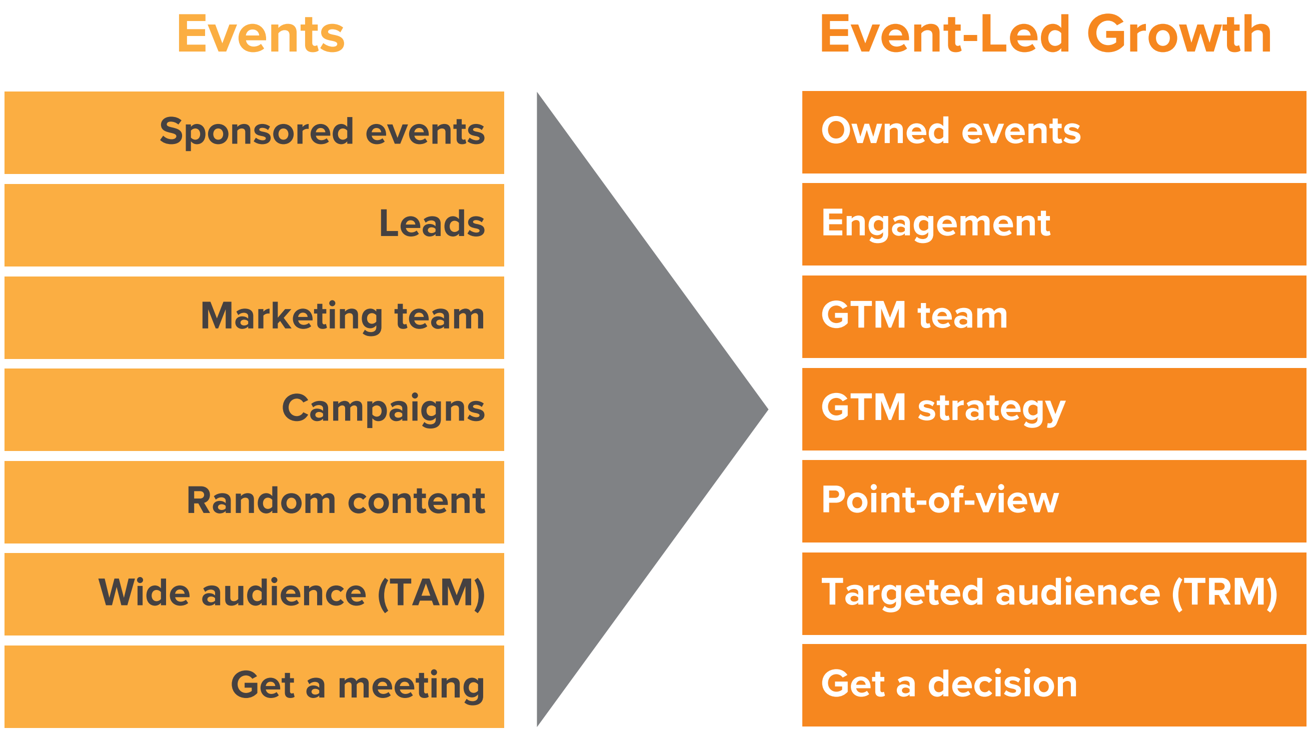
2x
revenue and 3x pipeline and sales velocity

Source: Splash customer case study

$13M
in influenced pipeline

Source: GTM Partners' Goldcast ROI Study

Do You Have an Event-Led Growth Strategy?



Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth
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Frequency Breeds Learning

Similar to other go-to-market motions like Inbound and Outbound, teams can only excel at Event-led growth by continuously iterating and evolving their approach. To plan an event strategy effectively, you need to incorporate enough experimentation to document insights and improve the events as you learn.

To facilitate and optimize an event-led approach, consistency and frequency are essential. It becomes difficult to truly embrace event-led growth without establishing a regular cadence of events and maintaining consistent execution. Gather data, learn from each event, and apply those lessons to refine and enhance future events.

For example, Splash works with a global financial services brand that used to hold a few massive, centralized events each year. By leveraging technology, the company has transformed its event-led motion to include 1300 smaller, de-centralized local events for around 10 people each year. The company reports that events are now its best performing marketing channel.

Types of Events

Webinars Short, virtual events using minimal technology, including educational webinars, product demos and roadmaps, fireside chats, customer trainings	• Inexpensive • Easy to plan • Easy to access from anywhere • Replay capabilities
Virtual Experiences Online events occurring in a virtual environment, aiming to replicate elements of a physical event like presentations, panels, networking opportunities, booths, and interactive activities	• Many ways to engage buyers in interactive experiences • Leverage intent signals to book more meetings • Strong customization capabilities • Cost efficient compared to an in-person event • Ability to segment event by ABM experiences • Alerts for reps who have engaged prospects • In-event CTAs (meetings, content, next steps) • Networking opportunities • Brand exposure and sponsorship opportunities • Robust data and analytics • Global accessibility
In-Person Events Face-to-face events, including trade shows, road shows, regional summits, customer conferences, VIP experiences, and more.	• Unparalleled relationship building • Immersive experiences • Varied networking opportunities • Unplanned but beneficial encounters
Hybrid Events Designed to cater to both physical and virtual participants, including educational events, user conferences, and tradeshows.	• Best of both worlds: combines the advantages of in-person events (face-to-face interactions and immersive experiences), with the accessibility and global reach of virtual events

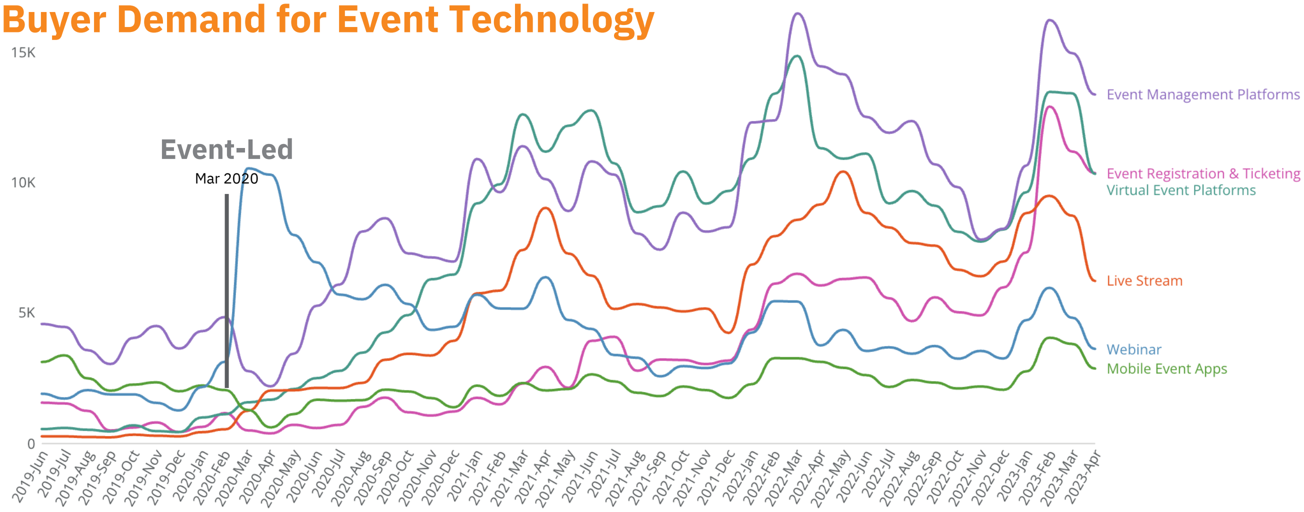
Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth

How Did We Get Here?

Event-Led Growth (ELG) as a strategic GTM motion was supercharged during the pandemic. The lockdowns forced marketing, sales, and customer success teams to consider virtual events that were more intentional, strategic, and immersive than just a few annual webinars.

The following chart shows how the demand for various types of event technology accelerated as companies went from doing "Events" to having an "Event-led Growth" Motion.

Buyer Demand for Event Technology



Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth
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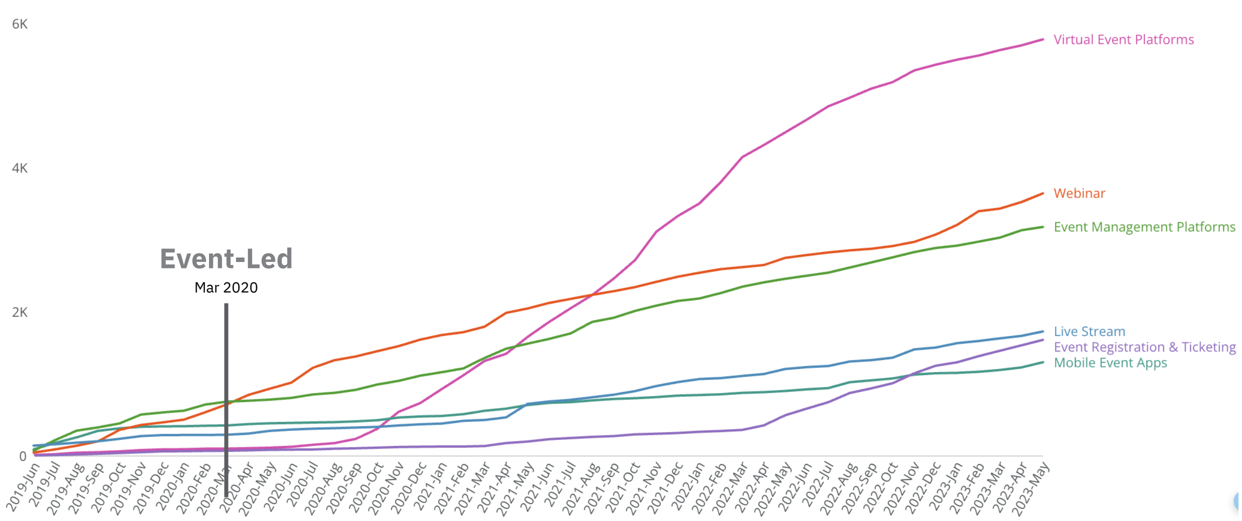
Buyer intent traffic for event software by category. Source: G2

The following chart shows the cumulative trend of adoption of event technology over time (using G2 reviews as a proxy for adoption).

Customer Adoption for Event Technology



Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth
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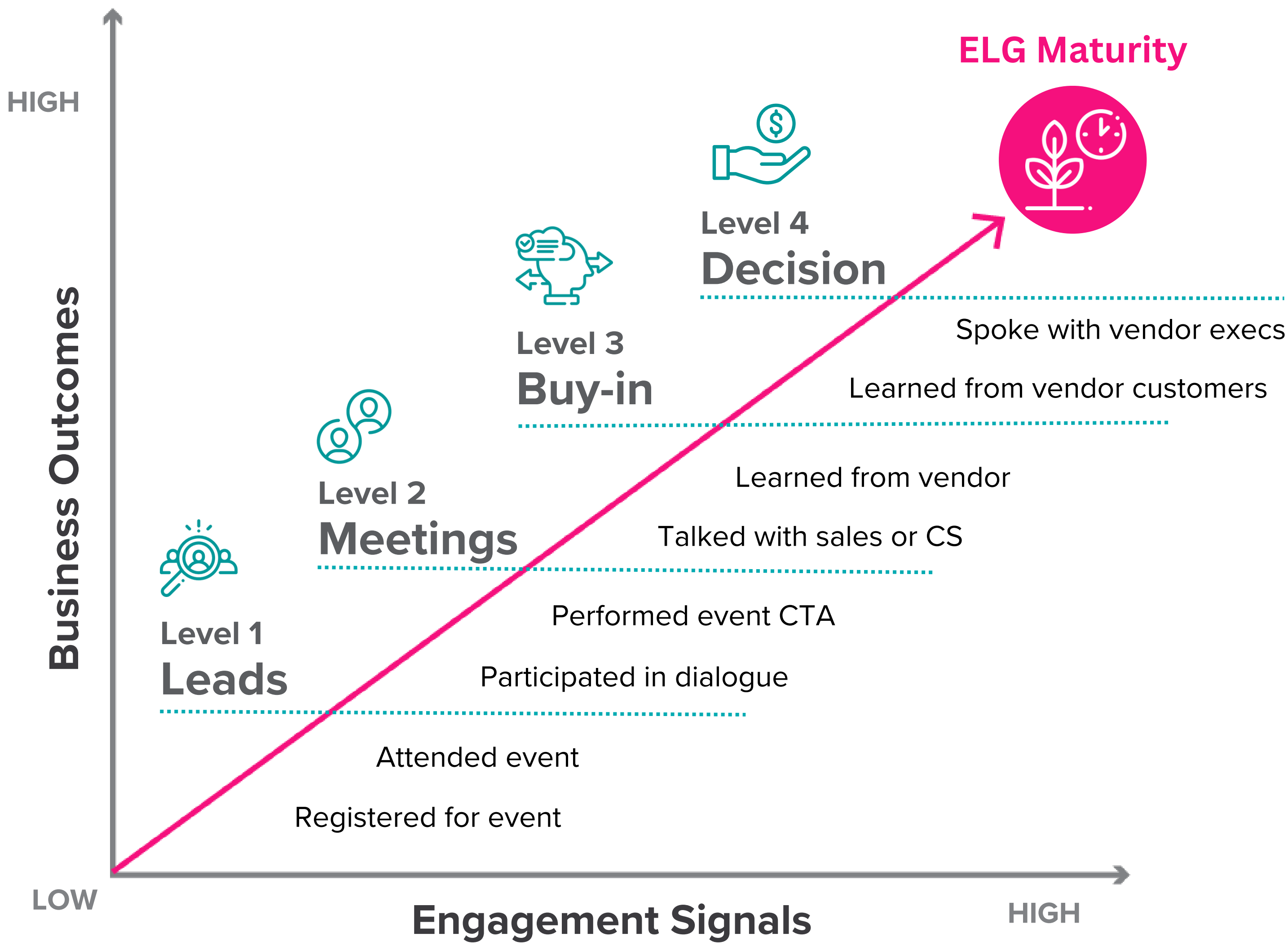
Buyer intent traffic for event software by category. Source: G2

The Event-Led Growth Maturity Model



Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth
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As with any other GTM motion, ELG requires increasing maturity over time.

A company that is early in its evolution and finding Problem-Market Fit may be at Level 1, meaning they're really after leads.

As a company moves into Product-Market FIt, GTM teams should be thinking about using events to get meetings and buy-in for their movement.

At Platform-Market fit, companies should be looking at events to drive purchase decisions.

The 4 Levels of Event Maturity

Level 1 Goal: Leads

Level 1 is where most companies are today. It's not a bad level, it just means events are seen as a marketing campaign to reach lead generation goals.

Content tends to be tactical with the goal of driving registration. Leads are dropped into nurture programs and may someday qualify for sales outreach.

Level 2 Goal: Meetings

Aligned sales and marketing teams do ELG to drive SAL’s, meetings, and opened opportunities.

This is bread-and-butter for an inbound or outbound motion for a considered purchase.

However, teams typically think of these as a top of funnel strategy. Level 2 requires joint collaboration from the marketing & sales teams. (Webinars, Tradeshow)

Level 3 Goal: Buy in

Companies that want to create demand, build a movement, or position their brand as thought leaders in a specific category must evolve towards using ELG to gain buy in.

Content should be unique thought leadership that closely aligns with the brand's point of view and differentiation. Its purpose is to transform the buyers' thinking, introduce a new problem-solving approach, and position the brand as the ideal solution.

Level 3 requires joint collaboration from sales, marketing, customer success, and product teams to create educationally rich and engaging event experiences, with the goals of opportunity creation, pipeline velocity, product adoption, or Gross Revenue Retention (GRR).

Level 4 Goal: Decision

To effectively use events to drive decisions, companies should create highly targeted, unique, in-person flagship events or small gatherings.

To succeed at Level 4, companies need to make a long-term commitment, brand their own events, and maintain a regular cadence, ranging from monthly to yearly.

These events can be either destination-based or organized as city-by-city roadshows. They should be thematic and episodic. When executed well, they have the power to compel revenue.

Level 4 requires joint collaboration from revenue teams, executives, and customer advocates. KPIs include close-won business, win-rate, and NRR.

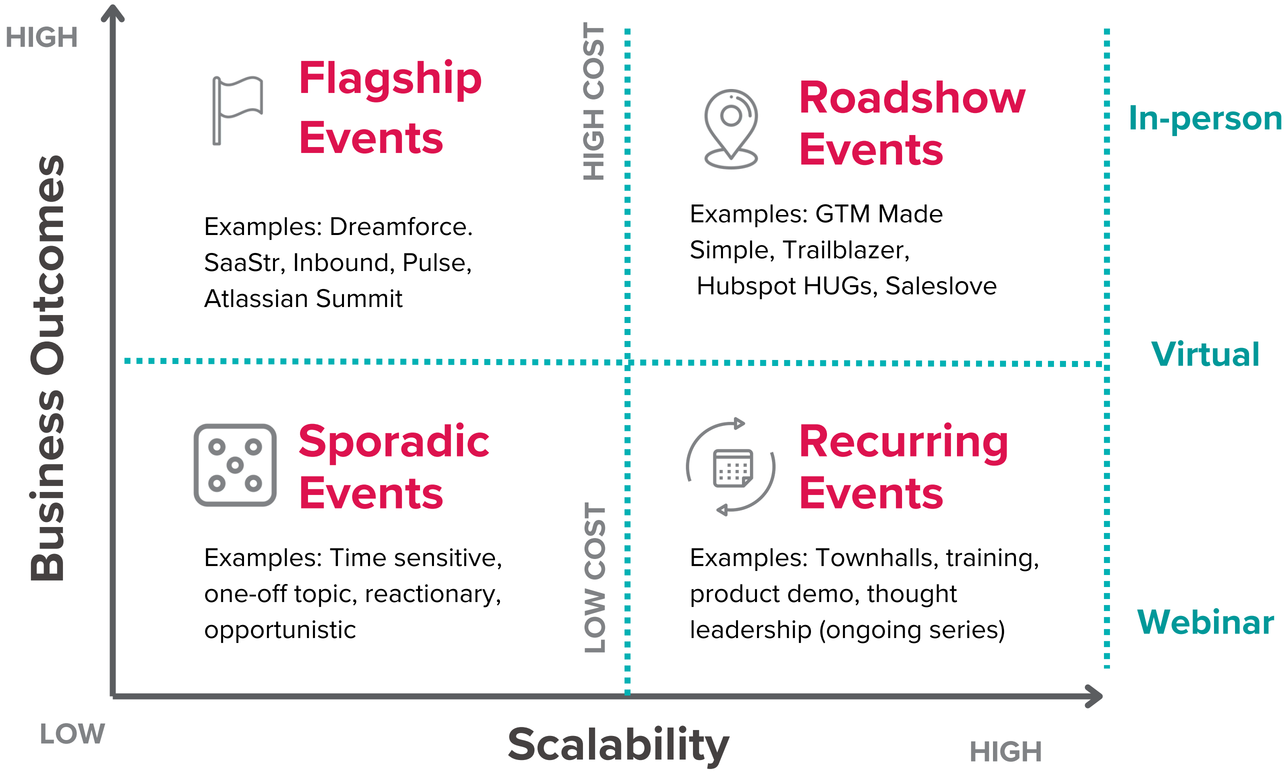
Note: The advancements in event technology and remote-first mindsets make it possible to do virtually what was once only possible with in-person experiences.

Event Maturity Matrix

Level	Goal	Metrics	Event Type	Teams
1	Leads	Registration and attendees lists	Webinars, Tradeshow booth	Marketing
2	Meetings	SAL's, meetings booked, opportunities created	Webinars, Tradeshow booth	Marketing, Sales
3	Buy In	Movement followers, audience, opportunities, pipeline velocity, product adoption, GRR	Virtual, in-person (branded)	Sales, Marketing, Customer Success, Product
4	Decision	Close-won business, win-rate, NRR	In-person, virtual (branded)	Sales, Marketing, CS, Product, Exec Team, Customer Advocates

Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth

Which ELG Programs Are Right for You?



Source: GTM Partners' Understanding Event-Led Growth
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In any of the four quadrants, you can evolve through the four levels of ELG Maturity to align your team to the desired business outcomes.

The Go-to-Market Operating System

We often hear business leaders speak of the desired outcomes as though they are the plan: "We need 3X pipeline," "Increase NRR by 3 points," "30% increase in revenue," etc. However, without a systematic way of confirming that you have the correct processes and investment to achieve the goal, you might struggle to see risks that could prevent you from reaching it. How do you bridge the gap between your strategic planning process and your execution?

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

How The GTM Operating System Works

The GTM Operating System is made up of many interconnected parts that will allow your Go-to-Market team to stay aligned on a common goal, both as a GTM team and within specific disciplines such as Sales, Marketing, and Customer Success. It also allows the owner of GTM within your organization to validate your strategy and understand the capacity of the GTM team.

The GTM Operating System provides blueprints for how to run a successful plan to manage the execution of a successful GTM Motion(s) across the entire company. Each pillar builds on the next, allowing you to connect the dots between teams with significantly different roles. These 8 pillars are critical to ensuring that GTM is a company-wide holistic initiative and not just a marketing and sales initiative.

For example, without having the correct positioning and branding support, Sales will struggle to make their numbers, or if your customers can't see value in your solution, having your revenue depend on expansion will become a challenge for your Account teams.

Event-Led Growth is one of the 7 Types of GTM Motions, which are part of Pillar 3: Brand and Demand.

About GTM Partners

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

We do this by offering:

1. **Data and benchmarks** collected from data providers, including G2 and Bombora, as well as our community of the world's fastest-growing companies.
2. **Research, best practices, and design frameworks** to provide guidance on the best-in-class approaches to strategizing, executing, and tooling your Go-to-Market approach.
3. **Personalized advice and support** from experienced leaders and practitioners that help you address business challenges in a manner that is authentic and specific to you. Our consulting work focuses on areas such as Go-to-Market strategy, creating a Point of View, and Go-to-Market project execution strategy across the 8 pillars of GTM.
4. **Events and networking with industry leaders** looking to define the category of Go-to-Market and revolutionize the way we create value for our organizations.

About the analysts

Bryan Brown, Chief Analyst

Bryan is a SaaS pioneer and thought leader in the marketing and sales tech industry. He has both created and brought to market innovative software products and ideas while helping thousands of companies in their effort to grow revenue more efficiently. Bryan is a co-founder with multiple exits (Vtrenz), has led strategy teams in Fortune 100 Companies (IBM), and has helped multiple organizations scale their products & Go-to-Market approaches from point solutions to platforms via organic product development and through mergers & acquisitions (Silverpop, Terminus). His work over the years has been instrumental in forming new categories and securing top placements for his companies in both the Forrester WAVE and Gartner Magic Quadrant reports.

Lindsay Cordell, Senior Go-To-Market Analyst

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

Sangram Vajre, Co-founder and CEO

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

To find out how GTM Partners can help you with efficient growth and revenue, contact us at analyst@gtmpartners.com or visit our website at https://gtmpartners.com