Make B2B Execution Work

Idea In Short

Treat B2B go-to-market execution as a connected operating system, not a list of sales or marketing initiatives. Organizations should first establish a shared revenue outcome, then align metrics, buyer insight, content, channels, tools and account coverage around that outcome. The practical starting point is to map the current buying journey with evidence from customers and prospects, identify where handoffs and experience break down and assign accountable owners to repair them. Sales training matters, but it will not compensate for conflicting incentives, outdated personas, single-threaded account coverage, or tools that create more internal friction. Companies that improve these elements together give buyers a more coherent experience and give commercial teams a clearer way to create, convert and expand demand

B2B leaders often answer a go-to-market [GTM] survey by selecting almost every improvement area. They are training sales teams, introducing metrics, refreshing personas, adding tools, improving coordination and trying to personalize outreach. The impulse is understandable. The commercial environment has become harder, buying groups have grown more complex and customers expect more continuity across digital and human channels.

The problem is not the length of the list. It is the way the list is managed. If each item becomes a separate initiative owned by a separate function, the organization can spend heavily and still create a fragmented customer experience. Sales gets new playbooks, marketing gets new campaigns, operations gets a new dashboard and customers continue to navigate inconsistent messages and unclear handoffs. GTM execution improves when the nine actions reinforce one another around the actual path buyers take to a decision.

Start with buyer progress

The operating question is not, "What should sales do better?" It is, "What must the customer and buying group accomplish to make a confident decision?" Traditional funnels can

obscure this distinction because they describe supplier activity more readily than buyer work. Modern B2B journeys are rarely linear. Buyers revisit earlier questions, add stakeholders, test alternatives and seek reassurance after the formal purchase decision.

McKinsey's work on the B2B customer decision journey makes this point directly:

> companies need to understand the moments when they can influence decision makers, rather than merely identify the decision makers themselves1. That shift should shape every GTM intervention. Training, metrics, content and tools become useful only when they help buyers complete a real buying task.

This gives leaders a practical starting point. Select a few priority segments and examine recent wins, losses, stalled deals, renewals and expansions. Identify who participated, what information each role needed, where confidence rose or fell and which internal handoffs changed the experience. The outcome should not be a decorative journey map. It should be an evidence-based view of the frictions that block revenue.

Train for commercial judgment

Training sales teams remains essential, but the content needs to move beyond product knowledge and generic objection handling. Sellers need to understand account context, recognize the distinct needs inside a buying group, frame value in a way that supports internal consensus and coordinate with marketing, product, service and subject matter experts.

Gartner's B2B buying-journey guidance calls for seller enablement that helps salespeople tailor engagement to the customer's buying approach and supports buying groups as they complete their critical decision tasks2. This is a better standard than measuring whether representatives completed a training module. The test is whether they can use the training during discovery, opportunity strategy and stakeholder engagement.

Commercial training should therefore use live account situations. A seller can practice mapping stakeholders, identifying gaps in buying-group coverage, selecting relevant proof

points and deciding when to bring in an expert. Managers should reinforce the learning in deal reviews. If training lives only in a learning platform, it will not change field behavior.

Use metrics that connect

New metrics can sharpen execution or create another reporting burden. The difference depends on whether they show how activity contributes to buyer progress and commercial outcomes. Measures that track only volume, such as calls, emails, or meetings, are easy to collect but often weak guides to quality.

A stronger set of metrics connects the functions. Marketing and sales can share measures for target-account engagement, buying-group coverage, opportunity progression, conversion, velocity, retention and expansion. Revenue operations can monitor handoff quality, response times, data completeness and forecast reliability. Leaders can then see where the commercial system is breaking rather than asking each function to defend its own activity.

Shared metrics also change behavior. If marketing is rewarded only for lead volume and sales is rewarded only for immediate bookings, both teams will optimize locally. If both teams are accountable for target-account progression and revenue quality, collaboration has a clearer commercial purpose. That is why cross-functional alignment needs measurement architecture, not only goodwill.

Coordinate around accounts

Improving coordination among sales, marketing, customer success, product and other relevant teams is usually the highest-leverage move on the survey list. Customers do not experience internal organization charts. They experience a sequence of interactions and each interaction either confirms or weakens the company's credibility.

The most effective coordination mechanisms are concrete. They include account plans with named owners, shared opportunity reviews, service-level agreements for handoffs, cross-functional deal teams for complex opportunities and regular feedback from delivery or customer success into demand creation. McKinsey describes high-performing B2B organizations using cross-functional "win rooms" to shape and refine solutions around customer needs3.

Coordination fails when it becomes a meeting culture rather than a decision system. Every cross-functional forum should answer a specific question:

> Which accounts matter? What has the buyer done? What evidence is missing? Who owns the next action? What trade-off needs a decision?

Clear answers reduce internal activity that creates no customer value.

Personalize without fragmenting

Customizing approaches and content for customers and prospects is now a baseline expectation, but personalization is often misunderstood as adding a company name to an email or creating a different slide deck for each stakeholder. That produces surface variation without commercial relevance.

Real B2B personalization begins with the buyer's context. It considers the account's strategic priorities, operating conditions, maturity, current alternatives, role-specific concerns and stage in the decision journey. A finance leader may need a defensible economic case, an operational leader may need implementation assurance and a user sponsor may need evidence that the solution will improve daily work. The content should help the group converge, not merely flatter individuals.

McKinsey's research on B2B growth argues that tailored outreach should become the default and that sales professionals need to orchestrate journeys across channels according to buyer intelligence4. The implication is important:

> personalization is a coordination discipline

It requires shared data, reusable content components and agreement about which signals justify a different treatment.

Rebuild journeys with evidence

Buyer journey maps and personas should not be annual branding exercises. They are commercial hypotheses that need to be updated against evidence. Customer interviews, win-loss analysis, behavioral data, call notes, website paths, support tickets and account-team observation can all show where the map no longer fits reality.

Forrester positions persona-based buyer journey maps as a foundational GTM component because they inform downstream marketing and sales enablement5. The value comes from connecting the map to choices. Which content is missing? Which channel is weak? Which handoff causes delay? Which buying task has no clear owner on the supplier side?

Updating buyer personas follows the same logic. Personas should capture decision roles, concerns, evidence needs, influence patterns and behavior, not only job titles and demographic labels. Gartner notes that buyer personas help organizations tailor segmentation, demand generation and account growth to meaningful enterprise buyer patterns6. A persona is useful when it changes what the team does next.

Create channel continuity

Improving consistency across channels is one of the most visible yet neglected parts of GTM execution. Buyers may encounter a thought-leadership article, a paid social message, a webinar, a seller, a product specialist, a proposal and a customer-success conversation before they decide. When these touchpoints contradict each other, the supplier looks disorganized or opportunistic.

Channel consistency does not require identical messages. Different channels should serve different buying tasks. It requires a common value narrative, common customer facts, compatible proof points and clear handoffs. The buyer should not have to repeat information, re-explain priorities, or discover that the sales promise differs from the delivery reality.

Organizations should audit priority journeys from the customer's point of view. Review the messages, calls to action, response times, data capture and human handoffs across channels. Then identify the moments where a buyer loses confidence. This audit should involve sales and service teams, because they see the consequences of inconsistency after

campaigns have ended.

Cover the buying group

Encouraging sales team members to engage multiple members of the buying group is a necessary response to complex B2B decisions. Reliance on one enthusiastic champion creates fragility. Champions can lose influence, leave the company, misunderstand the internal process, or fail to persuade peers who hold different concerns.

Multi-threading does not mean indiscriminate outreach to everyone with a senior title. It means mapping relevant roles, understanding their contribution to the decision and giving each person useful evidence. The aim is group consensus. Gartner's buyer-journey guidance explicitly frames seller enablement around helping buying groups complete their buying tasks, not simply persuading an individual contact7.

Account teams should make group coverage visible. In deal reviews, leaders can ask which roles have been engaged, what each role needs, who might oppose the proposal and whether the champion has enough material to build internal alignment. This improves opportunity strategy and reduces late-stage surprises.

Adopt tools with intent

New tools can support internal coordination, but technology should follow operating design. A customer relationship management [C.R.M.] platform, account-intelligence system, content workspace, conversation-intelligence tool, or workflow layer cannot repair unclear ownership or conflicting incentives. It can only make those problems more visible.

Tool adoption should therefore begin with a narrow use case. For example, a team may need a shared view of account signals, a standardized handoff from marketing to sales, or a way to track buying-group coverage. Define the workflow, data standards, owner and success measure before selecting or configuring the technology. Then train people in the work the tool supports, not just the features it offers.

The most effective commercial stacks make coordination easier without adding duplicate administrative work. If sellers spend more time entering data than learning from it, adoption will fail. If marketing cannot use account feedback to improve content and journeys, the

platform will become another repository rather than a GTM capability.

Build one system

The survey items are best understood as components of one system. Sales training improves when it reflects current buyer journeys. Metrics become useful when they reward shared account progress. Personalization works when personas and signals are current. Tools create value when workflows and ownership are clear. Multi-threading succeeds when account teams coordinate around a shared view of the buying group.

A sensible implementation sequence is to begin with priority segments and buyer evidence, establish shared commercial outcomes, redesign the critical handoffs and then align training, content, metrics and tools. This avoids the usual trap of launching every initiative at once and proving none of them in practice.

1. Map current buyer journeys using evidence from accounts, wins, losses and service interactions
2. Define shared outcomes and cross-functional measures before adding new dashboards
3. Repair the handoffs that create the most customer friction
4. Train teams on live opportunities and buying-group dynamics
5. Introduce technology only after the workflow and ownership model are clear

The goal is not to check all nine boxes. It is to make the boxes work together. That is how B2B organizations move from commercial activity to reliable go-to-market execution.

- 1The B2B Customer Decision Journey
- 2The B2B Buying Journey
- 3Future Of B2B Sales: The Big Reframe
- 4The New B2B Growth Equation
- 5Creating Journey Maps To Enable Buying Decisions
- 6How To Create A Buyer Persona For B2B Marketing
- 7The B2B Buying Journey

Summary

B2B go-to-market improvement succeeds when leadership moves past isolated interventions. A better sales enablement program will underperform if marketing uses different buyer signals. New metrics will confuse people if they reward local activity rather than shared customer outcomes. Personalization will disappoint if it rests on stale personas or fragmented data. The nine moves in this article should therefore be managed as one commercial system, with a common buyer view, joint accountability and recurring learning loops. That approach improves execution because it reduces internal noise and makes it easier for buying groups to progress. It also makes growth more durable because every customer interaction becomes a source of insight that improves the next one