



Successful Go-to-Market: How Talent Shapes the Market

Why HR strategy is essential to your go-to-market approach

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“HR strategy is the underestimated half of every growth strategy — whoever wants to win markets begins with the people who serve them.”

Christian Bicker, Co-Founder & Managing Partner CTG Consulting

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Editorial: The plan is rarely the problem

When I talk with executive teams about growth, there is almost always a plan on the table. A good market segment, a sharpened positioning, the right sales channel, fully costed pricing. Strategy papers of this kind are routine craft today. Consultancies deliver them reliably, and there is no shortage of frameworks.

And yet growth fails to materialize. Not necessarily because the plan was wrong — but because no one was there to carry it.

And this is exactly where the blind spot sits. Go-to-market is discussed as if it were a strategy exercise. In truth it is also a people question: who sells, who positions, who steers the data — and who leads these people through a market that is changing faster than org charts can be redrawn?

In 2026, the B2B purchase decision is made long before the first sales contact ever takes place. AI is reordering roles in sales and marketing. And most organizations adapt their teams more slowly than the market demands.

This is the thesis of this whitepaper: in 2026, GTM success is first and foremost a team question. The strategy is the easier half. The harder — and decisive — half is the people strategy: the right roles, the right competencies, the right leadership. This is where CTG Consulting holds a distinct position, which we sharpen in the chapters that follow.

Christian Bicker, Co-Founder & Managing Partner CTG Consulting

Chapter 1: The customer has decided before you ever meet them

“When 70 percent of the decision has been made before your sales team enters the picture, it is no longer the pitch that decides, but everything that happened before it.” — Christian Bicker

The classic B2B sale begins with a conversation. Or so it was believed. But that notion is long outdated.

Today the purchase begins much earlier: quietly, digitally, and without any direct influence from your sales team. B2B buyers research independently, compare, and form an opinion. By the time they contact sales, many already have a favorite in mind. Recent studies show: buyers complete around 70 percent of their buying process before they ever speak with a vendor. 92 percent start with at least one vendor in mind, and 41 percent with only a single preferred one (Forrester, 2025).

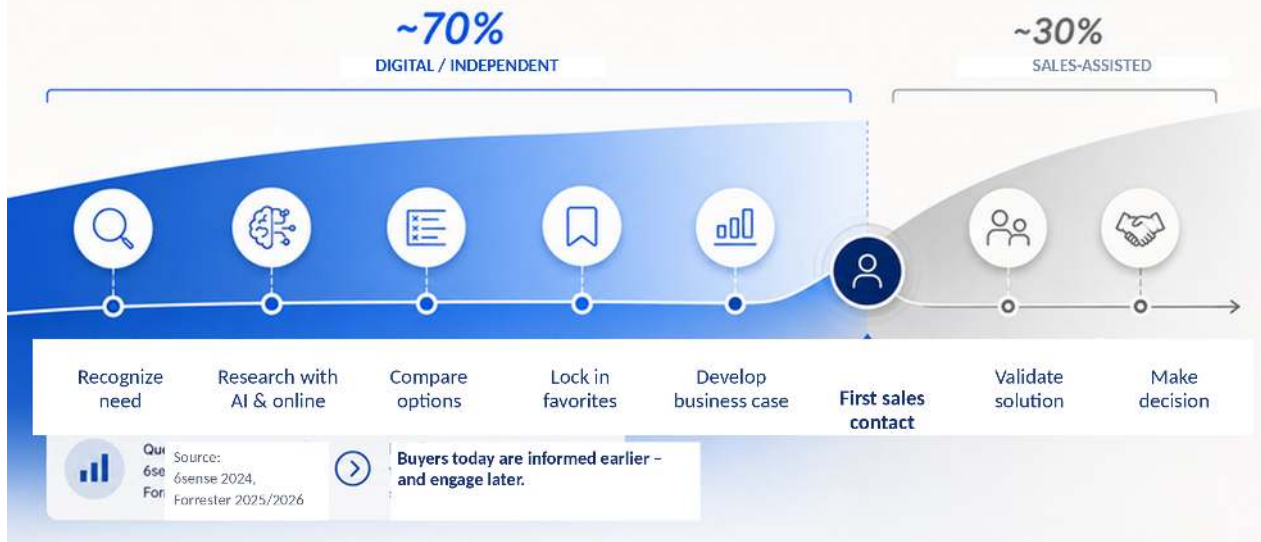
AI is the new first point of contact

The leap of the past two years: generative AI has become the standard research instance. 94 percent of B2B buyers now use it in their buying process — as one of the most important sources of information at every stage (Forrester, The State of Business Buying 2026, around 18,000 respondents). Whoever does not appear in these AI-assisted searches simply does not exist for a growing part of the market.

In parallel, the purchase itself is shifting into the digital realm: more than half of large B2B transactions of one million US dollars or more are handled through digital self-serve channels — website, marketplace, platform (Forrester, B2B Marketing & Sales Predictions 2025).

Buyer Journey

The majority of the buying process happens digitally and independently.



What this means for GTM

The lever shifts from “selling better” to “being relevant earlier”. Visibility, content, digital experiences and a seamless interplay of marketing, sales and data decide the outcome before a conversation even takes place. This is not a tooling question. It is a question of whether your organization has the roles and capabilities to serve this early-starting buying process.

Chapter 2: Five levers of modern GTM strategies

These five levers have long been familiar in most organizations:

- 1 Segment & ICP:** Whom exactly do we want to win? The precise definition of the ideal customer profile and the market segments served.
- 2 Positioning & Messaging:** Why us, why now? The story that resonates in the market.
- 3 Sales model & channels (motion):** How do we sell? Self-serve, inside sales, field sales, partners — and in which combination.
- 4 Pricing & Packaging:** How do we bundle and price the offering?
- 5 RevOps & Data:** How do we steer the interplay of marketing, sales and customer success on a shared data foundation?

The fifth lever in particular has become standard. As early as 2021, Gartner predicted that by 2025, 75 percent of the fastest-growing companies would introduce a RevOps model (Gartner, 2021). Today the function is established in many organizations.

These five levers are the one half of go-to-market — the plannable one. The harder question begins behind them: who sets them in motion? That is exactly where growth is decided. And that is exactly where this whitepaper begins.



Chapter 3: The plan is ready. The team is not.

A plan describes what should happen. It says nothing about whether the organization can do it.

This is where the gap opens. Strategies can be written relatively quickly. Building a GTM team — that is, the right roles, the matching competencies and a leadership that holds it all together — takes months. And as long as that team is not in place, even the best plan remains paper.

Why execution tips over

The modern B2B purchase is decided in committees. A purchase decision involves on average around 13 internal stakeholders and 9 external influencers — and the trend is rising for complex or strategic initiatives (Forrester, The State of Business Buying 2026). Whoever wants to prevail in this web needs a coordinated interplay across marketing, sales, RevOps and customer success. Not a side-by-side of isolated functions.

Three patterns we see again and again in practice:

- 1 Roles do not fit the market.** The sales organization is tailored to yesterday's selling model — field sales, where the market has long expected self-serve and digital advisory.
- 2 Interfaces are understaffed.** RevOps, sales enablement, marketing operations — the functions that steer the interplay in the first place are missing or understaffed.
- 3 Leadership is absent in the transition.** A CRO or CMO position is vacant, a key role left unfilled — and the entire GTM initiative loses momentum precisely when dynamism is required.

The result is always the same: the strategy is ready. The execution stands still.



Chapter 4: AI is rebuilding sales — faster than teams can reorganize

Artificial intelligence is changing sales and marketing not at the edges but at the core. Research, lead qualification, initial customer outreach, reporting, forecasting — activities that defined roles yesterday are increasingly taken over by systems.

The effect is measurable. Companies that invest in AI see a revenue increase of 3 to 15 percent in sales and a rise in sales ROI of 10 to 20 percent (McKinsey, Unlocking profitable B2B growth through gen AI, 2025). 78 percent of organizations now use AI in at least one business function — up from 72 percent in early 2024 and 55 percent a year earlier (McKinsey, State of AI, 2025). And the edge lies with the people who master it: 75 percent of B2B sellers who exceeded their target used AI (LinkedIn/Ipsos, Deep Sales, 2024).

Faster than any workforce planning

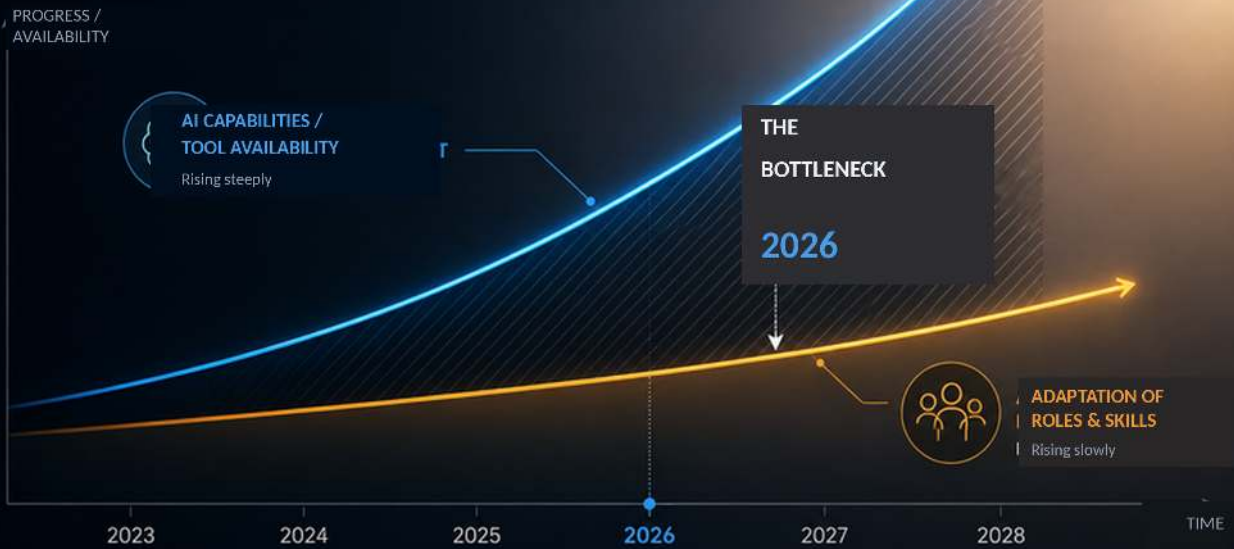
Technology spreads faster than organizations adapt their roles, competencies and leadership models. A gap opens up: powerful tools on one side, and a team built for the old division of labor on the other.

What is concretely shifting:

- 1 From routine to judgment:** When AI takes over research and standard outreach, what it cannot do gains value: relationship building, complex negotiation, strategic judgment.
- 2 From the lone fighter to the orchestrated team:** Sales becomes the steering of an interplay of human and system.
- 3 New key roles:** RevOps, sales enablement and data-driven marketing functions move from support into the center.

Tools are quickly procured. The real work begins with the people who operate them with confidence, and with the leadership that steers the transformation. That is where the bottleneck lies.

The gap is widening. The 2026 bottleneck.



Chapter 5: Licenses can be bought. Competence cannot.

“Software is bought in weeks. Competence and leadership grow over quarters — whoever confuses the two finances expensive licenses without impact.”

Christian Bicker, Co-Founder & Managing Partner CTG Consulting

Many organizations' reflex to the GTM shift is to buy technology. A new CRM suite, an AI assistant for sales, a marketing automation stack. The investment is visible, the decision quickly made.

Impact rarely follows on its own. What is decisive is whether the people master the tools and whether the leadership carries the change.

The skills that count in the new GTM

AI and data competence: The ability to work productively with AI tools, to assess their results critically and to decide on the basis of data. What is meant is application confidence in day-to-day work, not a data science degree.

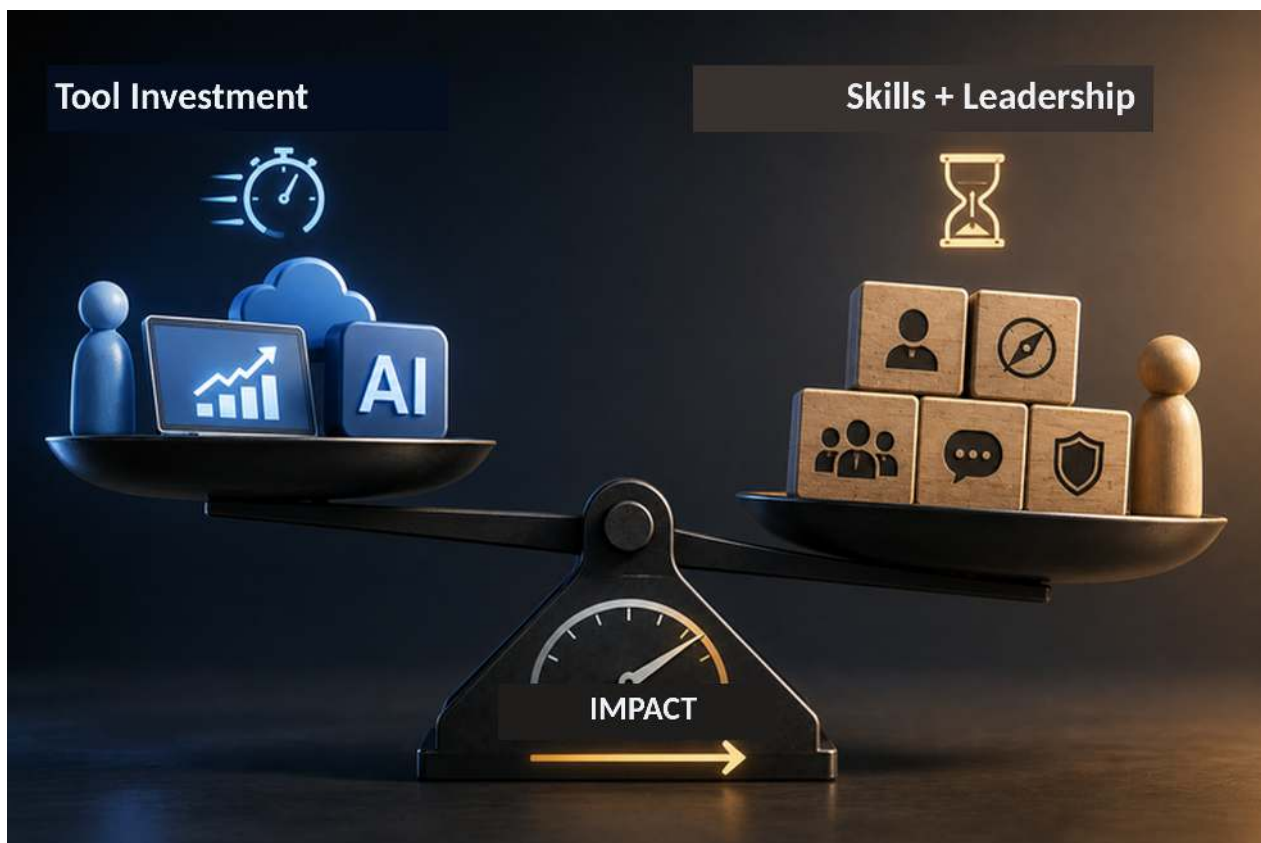
Hybrid sales competence: Selling when the customer has already walked 70 percent of the way alone: advisory, cross-channel, on a par with thoroughly informed buyers.

Work across silo boundaries: Marketing, sales, RevOps and customer success pull together, based on a shared data logic.

Leadership is the multiplier

Competencies do not arise in the seminar room alone, but where leadership sets the frame. GTM leaders must model the change, anchor learning time and steer teams through a phase in which roles shift beneath them. Continuous learning is no optional extra here: it is the precondition for investments in technology to deliver a return at all (cf. LinkedIn, Workplace Learning Report 2025).

Whoever buys technology and forgets the people behind it ends up paying for licenses that hardly anyone knows how to use.



Chapter 6: Build, Buy, Borrow: building the GTM capability

“The question is not whether you build, buy or borrow competence — but which path fits which gap.”

Christian Bicker, Co-Founder & Managing Partner CTG Consulting

Whoever takes the people side of GTM seriously faces a design question with three answers. None is right on its own — the art lies in the combination.

Path	When the path fits	What to watch for
Build — develop internally	When market knowledge and customer proximity are in-house and competencies can be built up deliberately	Needs lead time, learning structure and leadership; pays into retention and institutional knowledge
Buy — hire deliberately	When a competence is missing quickly and lastingly — e.g. a new RevOps or AI sales role	Market-dependent and expensive; a bad hire quickly costs six to twelve months' salary
Borrow — bring in temporarily	When a key role is vacant or a transformation needs steering (interim, executive search)	Bridges critical phases without losing momentum; secures leadership in the transition

Build, Buy, Borrow is a leadership matter

Build, buy or borrow is not a question for the HR department in the narrow sense — it is a question of growth steering. Which roles are so central that they must grow internally? Which gap is so urgent that it must be closed externally at once? And where does an interim solution bridge the time until the permanent appointment is in place?

This architecture — roles, competencies, staffing paths over time — is the people infrastructure behind every growth strategy. Designing it is strategic work. And it is the field in which CTG Consulting works.



Chapter 7: The CTG approach: people infrastructure for GTM

CTG Consulting is an HR-oriented strategy and implementation consultancy. We advise on the people side of go-to-market — talent, skill, role and org strategy for growth teams — and deliver it operationally. Market, pricing, channel or product strategy are not our field. This clarity is intentional: we occupy the half of GTM that is most often underestimated and least often served well.

Five building blocks with which we build the people infrastructure for GTM:

- 1 HR strategy consulting:** Role and competence architecture, workforce planning for sales and marketing — the translation of the growth strategy into a viable org structure.
- 2 Specialized recruiting:** Filling sales, marketing, RevOps and customer success roles through the specialized CTG boutiques — tailored to the GTM context.
- 3 Executive Search:** Key roles such as CRO, CMO, VP Sales/Marketing and Head of RevOps — the positions on which GTM initiatives stand or fall.
- 4 Interim Management:** Experienced leadership on a temporary basis for bridging phases — so that transformation and growth do not wait until the permanent appointment is in place.
- 5 CTG Academy:** QCG-fundable training programs for the new GTM: AI in sales, account-based marketing, RevOps fundamentals, leadership in the GTM shift.

The right team for the right strategy

A growth strategy is only as good as the team that carries it. We make sure that team is in place — with the right architecture, the right people and the leadership that holds both together. This whitepaper is part of a series in which CTG Consulting addresses key future topics for the German Mittelstand — including Skills & Reskilling, Agentic AI, Supply Chain Sovereignty and Corporate Resilience.

The market does not wait for your org chart

Go-to-market is talked about as if it were a question of strategy. But that is the comfortable half. The uncomfortable one: markets are decided by the people who carry the plan. And those cannot be procured overnight.

While some are still optimizing their operating model, others have long been building a team that executes it. The difference shows up two quarters later in the pipeline.

The question, then, is whether the people are ready to translate it into growth. We help you assemble that team — before the market makes the decision for you.

Your next steps with CTG Consulting:

- GTM People Check: Which roles, skills and leadership positions carry your growth strategy — and which are missing?
- Build-Buy-Borrow plan: Tailored to your most urgent gaps
- CTG Academy: QCG-fundable qualification for the new GTM

Start with a free 30-minute initial consultation

We show you where the people side of your go-to-market strategy stands today and where the greatest lever lies.



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