

RESEARCH

REPORT – VOL. 1, 2026

# The State of AI in GTM Report

The definitive report on AI in GTM, built on thousands of buyer conversations and hundreds of live deployments.



## INTRODUCTION

The question facing every GTM leader in 2026 is not whether to bring AI into revenue operations. That debate is over. The real question is harder, and almost nobody is answering it clearly:

# What do you actually run, and in what order?

**88%**

of organizations now use AI in at least one business function

**80%**

of orgs using gen AI report no measurable EBIT impact

**6%**

qualify as AI high performers attributing 5%+ of EBIT to AI

Source: McKinsey, *The State of AI 2025*

## The gap is not adoption. The gap is sequencing.

High-performing AI adopters are 3x more likely to have fundamentally redesigned their growth motions around AI. The rest sprinkled AI across processes that were never designed to absorb it. This guide is the playbook for being in the first group, drawn from thousands of GTM leader conversations and hundreds of 11x deployments.

### What you'll find here

- A diagnostic for choosing your first motions
- A four-stage rollout with realistic timelines
- Metrics to track at each stage
- Real numbers from real deployments
- The objections that come up every time

### What you won't find here

- × A pitch -- we talk about 11x as an example
- × Generic AI evangelism
- × Hype words. Nothing is "game-changing"
- × Vague promises.

## INSIGHT 01

# Your targets rise every year. Your capacity doesn't.

Every GTM leader is navigating the same equation, and it does not balance. The most cited frame in our customer call data:

# 554

companies in our research data cite pipeline generation as their primary struggle

# 386

times the phrase “do more with less” appears in that same dataset

# 2-3x

short on pipeline coverage — the consistent self-reported gap to target

## The numbers behind it.

### The pipeline coverage gap

Teams need 3-4x coverage to hit targets. Current coverage sits closer to 1.5-2x.

### The meeting volume gap

Enterprise teams report 3 meetings per target account per month against a stated need of 10, a 233% increase required.

### The headcount freeze

205 mentions of “we can't scale without adding headcount” co-occur with 165 companies actively looking for a path that doesn't require more SDRs.

The traditional answer to a coverage gap is more SDRs. That answer no longer works, because the budget for more SDRs no longer exists.

## INSIGHT 02

# Why most AI deployments fail

If 88% of enterprises now use AI and only 6% see meaningful EBIT impact, something is breaking between purchase and outcome. Three patterns explain most of the failure.

### Pattern 1: Treating AI like a feature, not an engine

High performers are 3x more likely to have fundamentally redesigned workflows around AI. Low performers add AI features to existing processes and wonder why nothing moves. When your CRO is asked to triple pipeline coverage with the same team, “marginally more efficient” is a rounding error.

### Pattern 2: Buying capabilities, not outcomes

Feature-checklist buying produces a stack that does many things and impacts no metric. The teams winning with AI buy outcomes: pipeline coverage, speed to lead, revenue per employee.

### Pattern 3: Ad hoc adoption

Two-thirds of enterprises are still piloting, not scaling. Pick a workflow, deploy AI, hope it works, figure out the next one later. No sequence, no playbook, no measurement framework. This is the gap this guide closes.

**\$1,200**

spent on sales tools  
per rep per year

Apollo, 2026

**67%**

of purchased features  
go unused

Apollo, 2026

**45%**

less likely to attain quota  
when reps are  
overwhelmed by their stack

Apollo, 2026

The average rep uses 8 tools to close a deal. 42% feel overwhelmed by their stack. Adding a 9th AI tool is not a strategy.

## INSIGHT 03

# What thousands of buyer calls actually show

We pattern-matched conversations with thousands of GTM buyers to understand what they're trying to solve, not what vendors are pitching them. The five buyer headwinds, by volume:

### Adoption hesitancy despite product interest



interested in AI, reluctant to let it talk to prospects

### Build-vs-buy paralysis



evaluating vendors while considering building in-house

### Tool sprawl & integration complexity



biggest pain is cognitive load, not missing capabilities

### Past AI tool failures



cite a previous failed AI deployment as the barrier

### Missing implementation playbook



have a SaaS playbook, but no playbook for AI

*companies per cluster · 11x Data Analysis*

“We have the playbook for general SaaS investment, but we don’t have the playbook for AI implementation.”

Buyers don’t need another vendor telling them AI is the future. They need an operator’s view on what to run first, second, and how to know it’s working.

INSIGHT 04

# Choose motions, not tasks

Most discussions of AI for GTM start with “what tasks can be automated?” That’s the wrong starting point. The right one is:

“Which motions, if AI ran them, would make the biggest direct impact on revenue?”

No one ever booked a call with us saying “I want to send emails with AI.” They booked saying “we need to grow pipeline,” or “our SDR team is at capacity and we can’t hire.” Anchor every selection decision against revenue outcomes. Everything else is secondary.

## WHERE HUMANS DRIVE, AI ASSISTS

Marginally more efficient. Useful, not transformative.

- Campaign ideation and planning
- Testing and optimization
- Sales coaching and role-play
- Live call recommendations
- Forecasting and deal scoring
- Reporting and ad-hoc queries

## WHERE HUMANS DRIVE, AI ASSISTS

Scales without headcount. This is where revenue compounds.

- Multichannel outbound
- List building and enrichment
- Inbound voice + chat qualification
- Nurture, reactivation, closed-lost
- Expansion and PLG conversion
- Signal detection and retargeting

The second column is the one that changes the math. One operator can produce the output of forty there, because the work scales without proportional human input. Start there.



## INSIGHT 05

# Every play belongs to one of four motions

01

## ACQUIRE

Net-new pipeline. Outbound across email, professional networks, and phone, including list building, research, personalization, sequencing, reply handling, meeting booking.

02

## CONVERT

The demand you've already paid for. Sub-60-second inbound response across chat and voice. Qualification, routing, booking.

03

## EXPAND

Your existing base. Signal-driven upsell outreach and early churn detection across accounts no human team could cover.

04

## REVIVE

The pipeline hiding in your CRM. Stalled deals, closed-lost reopening, cold lead re-engagement.

### CONCLUSION

**Lead with the motion that matches their sharpest pain. Prove it. Then expand.**

## STAGE 1 – ACQUIRE

# Multichannel cold outbound

## Why this is first

### It's the loudest pain

Pipeline coverage makes every other tension quantifiable. 554 companies in our research cite pipeline generation as their primary struggle. Solving it first buys political capital for everything that follows.

### It's the easiest motion to put AI behind well

Most teams already have a working or semi-working outbound process including messaging that converts, or a defined ICP. The platform scales what already works. It doesn't invent a motion from scratch.

### It produces results in weeks

First campaigns ship in about 2 weeks. Meaningful pipeline contribution lands in months 2-3. This is the fastest path to ROI defensibility in front of a CFO.

## WHAT THE ACQUIRE MOTION COVERS

- List building and enrichment across your ICP
- Personalized messaging at scale – email, professional networks, voice where appropriate
- Multichannel sequencing with reply handling and follow-up
- Meeting scheduling and CRM updates
- Continuous testing of messaging, channels, and segments

Common stage-1 mistakes: skipping ICP refinement (AI scales whatever you point it at), letting it run unsupervised, and measuring activity instead of outcomes. Emails sent is a vanity metric, pipeline coverage is the real one.

## STAGE 1 – ACQUIRE

# Acquire, in production

Here are some real outcomes from 11x customers. This is the typical range for teams that start with Acquire, name one owner, and hold a weekly review.

## \$4M+

**pipeline generated**

Leica Biosystems, part of Danaher Group - 9.7% reply rate, ~2x the B2B average, plus \$118K annual cost savings

## 40 SDRs

**of output, one operator**

cofenster - outbound went from experiment to reliable pipeline engine

## 5x ROI

**in 90 days**

Questex - \$1M+ pipeline; 2,000 hours of manual work automated per month, equal to 11 SDRs

## 50%

**of SDR time recovered from research and sequencing**

BuildWitt - 40% of booked meetings sourced; 120+ opportunities influenced in 3 months

## 225% lift

**email response rates**

Checkr - 7000+ calls automated to inbound customers; 7x ROI from pipeline generate by 11x

## 5x

**qualified meetings**

MMB Networks - Higher quality outreach at scale; 2.5x industry average reply rate

## STAGE 1 — ACQUIRE

# What good looks like at month 3

**3-5x**

increase in outbound volume vs. pre-deployment baseline

**4-5**

meetings per month from cold outbound early — 10+ at scale

**30-50%**

meeting-to-opportunity conversion on booked meetings

**50-70%**

below your prior fully-loaded SDR cost per qualified opp

## Reply rates: where deployments land

### B2B industry average



3-5% — Belkins 2024 Cold Email Benchmark

### High-performing 11x deployments



### Leica Biosystems on 11x



9.7% achieved — ~2x industry average

If reply rates aren't at or above your historical SDR-driven rate by month 2, fix targeting and messaging before you scale volume.

## STAGE 2 – CONVERT

# The inbound you're already losing

Once Acquire is producing pipeline, the next biggest lever is almost always the demand you already paid for. The data on what slow response costs is severe:

# 42 hrs

average B2B lead response time (HBR, 2,241 companies, 100,000+ leads)

# 100x

more likely to make contact when responding within 5 minutes vs. 30 (MIT Lead Response Study)

## The numbers behind it.

# 391%

conversion lift from responding within 1 minute (Velocify)

# 78%

of customers buy from the first business to respond

# 1 in 100

B2B companies responds to inbound in under 5 minutes

# 80%

of lead quality is lost in the first 5 minutes (HBR)

Most enterprise GTM teams are sitting on a revenue leak measured in millions. Every form fill that waits hours for a callback is a competitor's meeting.

285 companies want AI capabilities but hesitate to let AI talk to prospects live. Build trust on async channels first, then turn on voice. The technology is ready before most orgs are.

## STAGE 2 – CONVERT

# What the Convert motion actually does

**01**

### Sub-60-second response

To every form fill, demo request, or chat message, on the channel it arrived on

**02**

### Qualification

against your ICP and BANT criteria, in a real conversation, not a static form

**03**

### Meeting booking

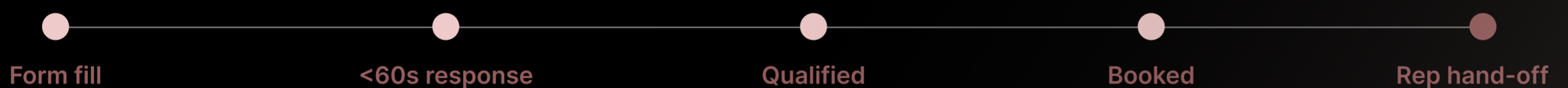
on the right rep's calendar based on territory, product, or vertical

**04**

### Context-rich hand-off

full transcript, qualification notes, and talking points-- the rep never walks in cold

Not just a chatbot. If it can't get through, it follows up across phone, SMS, WhatsApp, and email until the meeting is booked, and transfers to a human rep in real time.



## What good looks like at month 6

- Median inbound response time under 60 seconds
- Qualification rate at or above your prior human-handled benchmark
- 40-45% of inbound leads converted within 24 hours
- 50% meeting-to-opportunity conversion
- SDR time reallocated from triage to selling

## STAGE 2 – CONVERT

# Use cases

From 11x customer data, ranked by common use cases. Cold lead re-engagement comes first; inbound qualification runs shortly after.

### Cold lead re-engagement



### SMB / velocity sales



### Enterprise targeting



### Event follow-up



### Inbound qualification



The plays with the best economics are the ones pointed at leads you already own. They cost nothing to acquire and have already raised their hand once.

## STAGE 3 — REVIVE + EXPAND

# The pipeline buried in your CRM

Leads who never took a meeting. Deals stalled at proposal. Closed-lost from before your pricing changed. Customers showing expansion signals nobody acts on. These cost you nothing to acquire and the economics beat any other source of pipeline.

### Stalled deal reactivation

Triggers when a deal sits 30+ days without activity. Personalized to the deal context and original objection and picks up where the rep left off.

**15-25%**  
of stalled deals reopen

### Closed-lost reopening

Lost on pricing and pricing changed? Missing feature now shipped? New exec on their side? All triggers.

**5-10%**  
of prior-12-month closed-lost reopens

### Customer expansion

Usage thresholds, seat utilization, feature adoption, renewal windows. Outreach fires at the signal, not the quarterly QBR.

**20-40%**  
expansion revenue lift alongside CSMs

### PLG conversion

Free users showing buying signals like multiple seats, integrations, or daily usage, routed to a rep or converted in-product.

**30-60%**  
lift in free-to-paid conversion

Why stage 3, not stage 1? These campaigns work best when Acquire and Convert are already producing qualified, context-rich data. Same engine, more motions. Your CFO will love it.

## STAGE 4 – SIGNAL-DRIVEN PLAYS

# Earn your way to these

### Web visitor de-anonymization

Know which companies are on your site and reach out on the content they touched. The window is short, interest fades within hours.

### Buying signal detection

Funding rounds, exec hires, stack changes, RFPs. Each signal maps to a campaign that fires the moment it lands.

### Competitive displacement

Accounts on competitor products, hit at renewal windows, leadership changes, and public complaints.

### Event marketing & follow-up

Fill registrations, follow up with context, recover no-shows. Engage 10x the attendees meaningfully.

### Partner motion automation

Partner-flagged accounts route through the same engine. Post-event sequences run automatically.

# 580%

response-rate increase on intent-based campaigns

# 91%

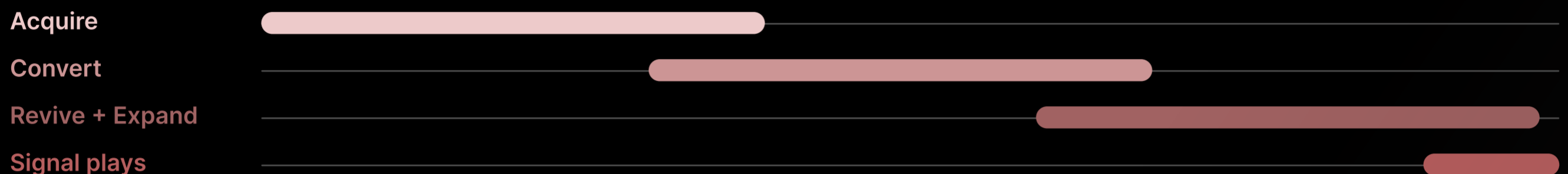
open rates on signal-triggered outreach

**Note:** This is where AI does things no human team could do at all, not just things humans could do slower.

## ROLLOUT

# The 12-month rollout

Realistic for an enterprise with security reviews, stakeholder alignment, and a CFO who wants ROI before each phase. A 5-person startup can run it in 6.



### Months 1-3

#### Acquire — pilot and proof

First campaigns live in  $\leq 2$  weeks. First booked meeting in  $\leq 4$ . Reply rate matches or beats your SDR baseline by month 2. 10+ meetings/month by month 3. CFO-defensible ROI at the quarter.

### Months 4-6

#### Scale Acquire, launch Convert

Volume 2-3x from baseline across new segments. Inbound response under 60 seconds vs. the 42-hour B2B average. Outbound contributing 25-40% of pipeline.

### Months 7-9

#### Revive + Expand

Stalled-deal and closed-lost campaigns live. Reactivation contributing 10-20% of pipeline. Expansion revenue up 20-40% vs. CSM-only baseline.

### Months 10-12

#### Signal-driven motion

Visitor retargeting, signal detection, displacement, event automation. Signal-triggered response rates 5-10x cold baseline. Revenue per employee meaningfully up.

Compressed 6-9 month version exists but only with executive air cover, a working outbound motion, a dedicated owner, and pre-cleared security review. Missing any of the four? Run the standard timeline.

## CHECKLIST

# Seven decisions to make before you start

**01**

### Define your top three growth outcomes

Outcomes, not pain points. "Grow ARR \$40M→\$60M with current headcount."

**02**

### Pick your first motion by outcome match

Usually Acquire. Sometimes Convert. Pick one, and resist picking 5.

**03**

### Name a single owner

Not a committee. The #1 predictor of success in 11x deployments.

**04**

### Hold a weekly review cadence

Teams that "let it run" quietly stop seeing results in month 4.

**05**

### Design the human-AI hand-off

Transcript, qualification notes, talking points. Never let the rep walk in cold.

**06**

### Decide what you're NOT automating

Referral intros, top-50 strategic accounts, regulated contexts, crisis comms.

**07**

### Set the measurement framework

Pipeline coverage, speed to lead, cost per qualified opp, not emails sent.

If you can't show movement on at least three outcome metrics by month 6, diagnose and don't keep pushing. Skip these and the deployment stalls.



INSIGHT 16

## Objections

**“We’ve been burned by AI tools before.”**

Pipeline coverage makes every other tension quantifiable. 554 companies in our research cite pipeline generation as their primary struggle. Solving it first buys political capital for everything following.

**“What happens to our team?”**

The honest framing: the platform eliminates the volume layer, the manual research, list building, and follow-up reps complain about most. Humans move to strategic accounts, complex deals, judgment calls. Most customers redeploy reps; not replace them.

**“Our motion is too complex to automate.”**

Test it: trace your top 10 customer paths from first contact to close. If 80%+ follow a similar structure, the volume layer is automatable. If not, Convert and Revive still apply. Almost no motion is too complex for AI to support somewhere.

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## Objections (cont.)

**“We should build this in-house.”**

Companies are stuck in build-vs-buy. Building takes 12-24 months, four missed quarters of pipeline, then becomes a permanent engineering investment. Unless AI is your core differentiator, buy.

**“We can’t afford it right now.”**

A mid-market SDR is fully loaded at \$90-130K/year. A typical deployment costs a fraction and produces 3-10x the output. Ex. Questex documented 11 SDRs of capacity from one. The real question: can you afford to hire the 3-5 SDRs you’d need instead?

**“Compliance will never approve this.”**

Bring three things: SOC 2 Type II + ISO 27001 certs, specific use-case scoping with defined data flows, and disclosure/opt-out protocols. Most compliance objections aren’t about AI, they’re about specificity in use cases.

**“We don’t have PMF yet.”**

Then AI can’t help you. If your messaging doesn’t convert when humans deliver it, automating it just delivers broken messaging at higher volume. Nail the motion first, then scale what works.

## CONCLUSION

# How to actually start

This report is long. The starting point is short.

### This week

Write down your top three revenue outcomes. Map each to the four motions — which motion hits outcome #1 most directly? Name a single owner. Block 90 minutes for vendor diligence.

### Next 30 days

Talk to 3 vendors. Demand proof of outcomes from your industry, deployed in the last 12 months. Bring compliance and security in early. Define your measurement framework before you sign.

### Months 1-3

Launch your first motion. Hold the weekly review and adjust, don't drift. Report ROI to your CFO at month 3.

### Months 4-12

Follow the sequence: Acquire → Convert → Revive + Expand → signal-driven. Compound the wins month over month, not in one big bet.

**The teams that win with AI compound. The difference is not the technology. It's the sequencing, the discipline, the ownership, and the willingness to redesign growth motions around AI.**

CONCLUSION

# The equation has changed.

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The defining tension of GTM in 2026 is not whether AI works. **It does.** The tension is whether your team will be one of the 6% that captures real impact, or one of the 80% that adopts AI and sees no measurable result.

11x is the AI growth platform that drives your revenue, running your acquire, convert, expand, and revive motions end to end, on every channel your buyers are on, so your team can focus on the work only humans can do.

The grunt work isn't coming back, which is why we're building the team that runs without it.

See what that looks like at [11x](#) →

If you want a partner who's run this playbook across hundreds of GTM teams, you know where to find us.