



# The Market Engineering Process

Transform your Company into a Market Leader  
Through Market Engineering



# What We Do

Traction Gap Partners is a market engineering firm.

We defined the term “market engineering” in the book by Bruce Cleveland titled “Traversing the Traction Gap” as category design/redesign, thought leadership, storytelling, messaging, and positioning. Through painful experience in various operating and investment roles, we have found that great product engineering is merely table stakes. Great market engineering almost always determines the winners.

Traction Gap Partners is not a consulting group or marketing agency per se. Instead, we act as adjunct executive staff providing strategic advice and guidance using tried, tested, and proven principles associated with the Traction Gap Framework, along with decades of operating and investment experience in startups and market-leading companies such as Apple, C3.ai, Doximity, Marketo, Oracle, and Siebel Systems.



We have worked with teams in businesses of all sizes and phases using myriad business models, across multiple industries to help them successfully transition from ideation to scale.



“ Last year, revenue grew 800%, and we’re now tracking 3,500% YOY growth. The model works!

**Lief Larson**  
Founder and CEO, Salesfolks



“ I’m almost reluctant to recommend Bruce —selfishly hoping to keep his brilliant mind to ourselves. A true game-changer for executives navigating complex challenges.

**Alex McCleod**  
Co-founder & CEO, Parlay Finance

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# 1 The Messaging Matrix

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Our market engineering process begins with a Messaging Matrix – it involves defining or redefining a company’s or product’s category name, category attributes, product capabilities, technology innovation, competitive analysis, pricing model, messaging, and positioning.

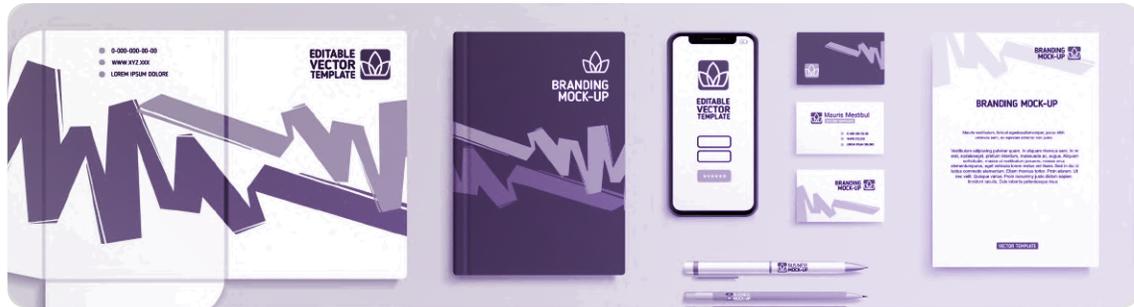
The Messaging Matrix serves as the universal source of truth for every communication channel – internally (e.g., employees and Board members) and externally (e.g., potential investors, prospects, customers, industry analysts, media, PR agency, and employee candidates) via multiple channels (e.g., website, white papers, sales decks, investor decks, podcasts, byline articles, podcasts, et al). As a result, it is imperative this work be done thoughtfully, thoroughly, and with excellence.

We ask the CEO and team in a startup or a product leader and team in an enterprise company to create a draft of their Messaging Matrix: we provide a sample Messaging Matrix that serves as a guide. As the team develops iterative drafts, we provide written feedback suggesting phrasing, terms, and other improvements.

Once we and the team are confident with the draft, we ask them to send a redacted version of the Messaging Matrix – the first paragraph from the Messaging Matrix that includes category name, definition, and attributes – to their network and solicit qualitative feedback before finalizing.

This process typically takes 1-2 months from start to completion. That said, the Messaging Matrix is a fluid document. As competitors emerge, markets change, and new products are introduced we revise the Messaging Matrix so this information can be propagated throughout all the company’s content and communication channels.

## 2 Market Engineering Deliverables



The Messaging Matrix serves as the foundation of the market engineering process. We use it to help teams create – or revise – the following:

- Website
- White Paper – Business and Technical
- Sales Deck
- Investor Deck
- Conference Deck
- PR Strategy
- SEO Strategy
- LinkedIn ICP Campaign
- Strategic Partner Plan
- Account-based Marketing Plan
- Customer Quote Strategy
- Social Media Strategy
- Demand Engineering

Our team works with clients to develop each of these deliverables, and more. We work alongside the team and review drafts of storyboards, plans, etc. and provide in-depth commentary and project support. This approach enables the team to learn while doing.

We maintain a network of talented graphics artists, videographers, presentation and web designers who are world-class at their craft and provide their services at a reasonable rate. We bring them in as needed or we work with our clients' own experts in these areas to ensure content is presented professionally in form and function.

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## 3 The Category Launch

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Once the client has developed sufficient market engineering content it is prepared to execute a “Category Launch” at a major industry event. If you launch a product within category launch, it’s always in relationship to the category.

A category launch is designed for specific audiences and to make a specific point. They are intended for specific audiences and should be market changing.

We work closely with our clients to design a powerful initial category launch and subsequent category launches that reinforce the first through a combination of PR and event strategies.

## 4 Achieving Thought Leadership



Industry research consistently shows that 80% or more of all VC-backed startups and up to 60% of all new products from mature companies fail outright or fail to meet investor minimum expectations. The primary reason for failure cited by research firms such as CB Insights and Pitchbook is “no market need”.

Our research has discovered another significant reason for these failure rates: the team’s inability to establish a new or revised category and generate recognized thought leadership within the category. This is why we work closely with our clients to establish their category through industry conferences, bylined articles, podcasts, newsletters, blog posts, white papers and other short and long-form content.

Weekly, we help our clients track and measure their thought leadership position using SEO analysis that includes reviewing key metrics such as the volume of category name searches, company name searches, overall website ranking, bounce rates and time on site, industry analyst and competitive positioning.

Only when the quantitative and qualitative data convince us that our clients are achieving a thought leadership position do we then help them to design and execute cost-effective demand engineering strategy and programs.

History is filled with the woe of 1,000s of startups and product teams that invested in demand engineering before establishing a category and thought leadership position in it. Until demonstrative thought leadership has been achieved in a category, we do not recommend investing significant amounts of capital in expensive and largely ineffective demand engineering programs.

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## 2 Year Process

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Often, the first year of an engagement with our clients is limited to category creation and thought leadership activities. By the second year of an engagement, once we are convinced our client's category has been established and they are recognized as a thought leader, we shift our focus to demand engineering helping our clients with lead generation programs such as Account-based Marketing, outbound email, social media campaigns, LinkedIn campaigns, and more.

By the end of year two, our objective is for our clients to be sufficiently prepared to move forward and scale their companies and/or products. They should be well-versed in the strategy and tactics of market engineering and prepared to succeed going forward.

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## Getting Started

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We require the CEO of a startup or the head of a product initiative in larger, mature companies read "[Traversing the Traction Gap](#)" prior to engaging Traction Gap Partners and generally agree with its principles. It is also beneficial if other team members read the book so that we do not have to invest significant time teaching the basic concepts of market engineering to them.

The CEO or product leader in a mature company must be willing to be the Chief Category Designer and manage the market engineering process with Traction Gap Partners. We will work simultaneously with other team members, but we have found that if the CEO or product leader does not lead the process it always leads to suboptimal outcomes.

If you and your team are prepared to dramatically transform your company into a market and thought leader, contact us at <http://tractiongappartners.com>.

"Traction Gap" and "Traction Gap Framework" are registered trademarks of Bruce Cleveland.

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## Fees

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Our fees are designed to align with the stage and objectives of our clients.

- Early to Mid-Stage Startups. Cash fee and equity grant.
- Late-Stage Startups and Mature Companies. Cash fee arrangement.
- Termination. Clients can terminate any time for any reason upon 30-day written request.

Complete details available upon request.