Building a Scalable GTM Strategy & Mastering Founder-Led Sales
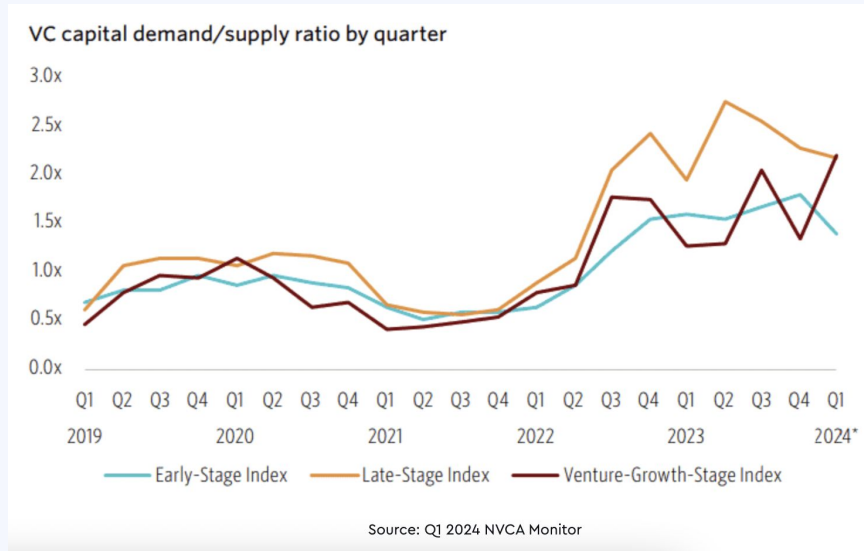
Alper Yurder, 2025

FORTE
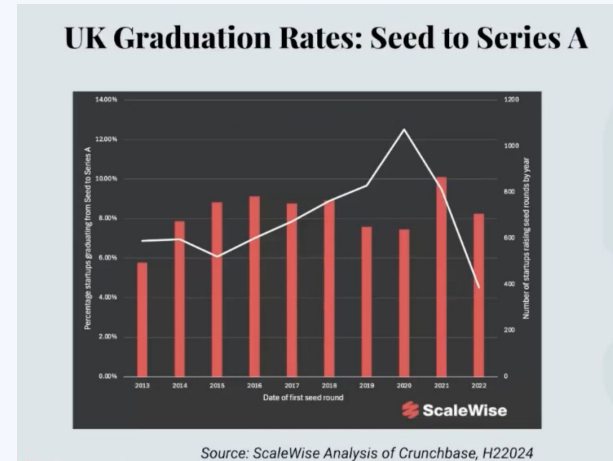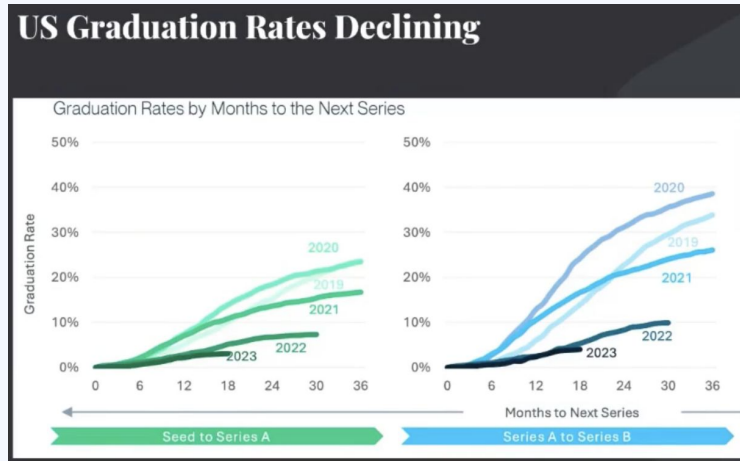SALES · MARKETING · GROWTH

The B2B Startup Landscape Today
Money is scarce, competition much tougher

According to an outlook published by Wellington Management, distributions from VC funds dropped a staggering 84% from 2021 to 2023, further growing dry powder inventory and extending the allocation drought. Competition for fundraising will continue to be a trending theme among emerging companies in 2024.

VC capital demand/supply ratio by quarter

Early-Stage Index — Late-Stage Index — Venture-Growth-Stage Index

Source: Q1 2024 NVCA Monitor

The B2B Startup Landscape Today
Slowing graduation levels from Pre-seed to Series-A

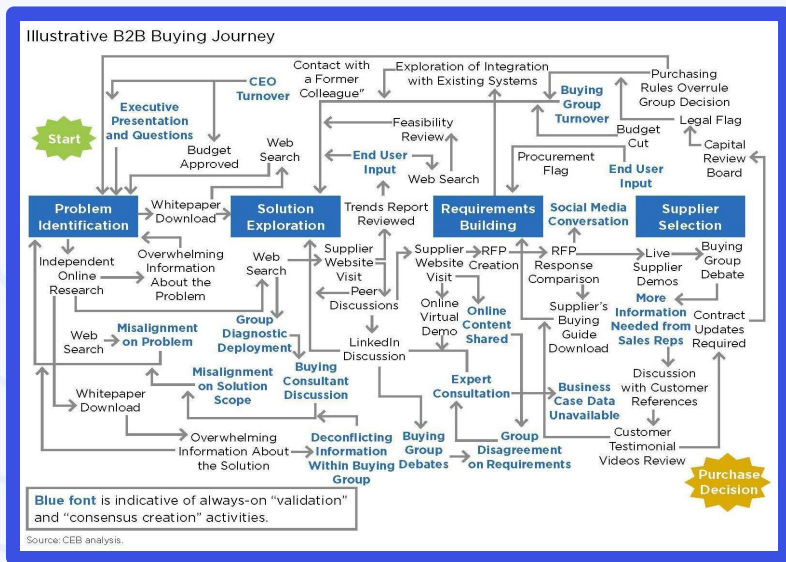**Market dynamics:** Reduced VC funding, slowing graduation levels from pre-seed to Series-A

💡 **Startups that nail their GTM and sales early are 3x more likely to attract funding and scale.**

The B2B Startup Landscape Today

Add to that: buyers overwhelmed, and less eager to try new products than ever

77% of buyers thought their last purchase was **too complex or difficult.**

Illustrative B2B Buying Journey

More choice, more scrutiny, longer sales cycles, less enthusiasm to try new products

Have your sales cycles gotten longer in 2024?

You can see how people vote. **Learn more**

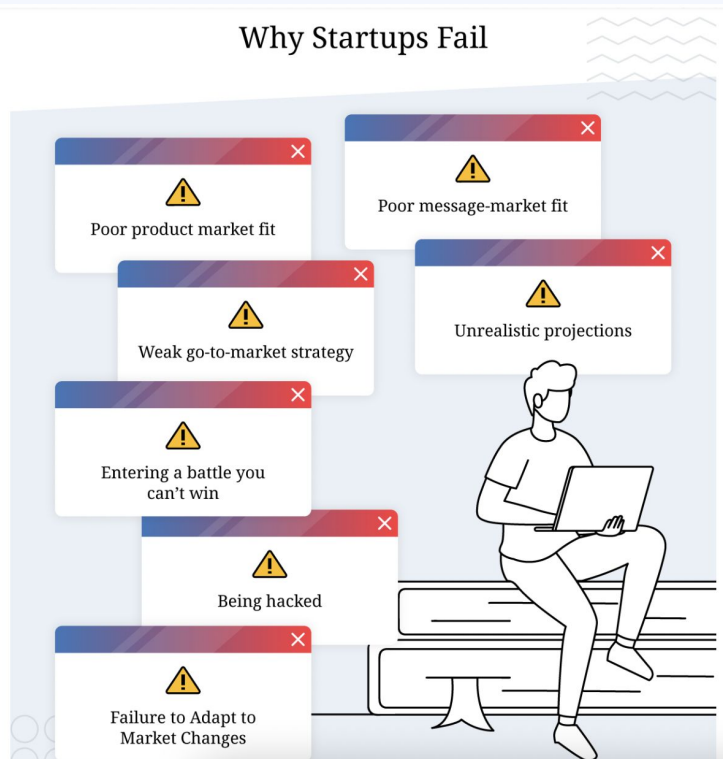|	
Yes, much longer	58%
About same ✓	35%
Shorter than last year	7%

Why do startups fail?

Why Startups Fail

- Poor product market fit
- Poor message-market fit
- Weak go-to-market strategy
- Unrealistic projections
- Entering a battle you can't win
- Being hacked
- Failure to Adapt to Market Changes

A staggering 98% of startups fail, often due to these eight common, research-backed mistakes:

1. **Lack of Product-Market Fit (42%)**: Startups fail to address a significant problem or create a solution that resonates with their audience. Regular market research, customer feedback, and pivots are essential.

2. **Running Out of Cash (29%)**: Insufficient funds lead to failure. Startups should manage cash flow, start small, validate demand, and scale gradually.

3. **No Clear Business Model (17%)**: Without a defined model, startups can't generate revenue or sustain growth. Understanding the target market, pricing, and KPIs is critical.

4. **Neglecting Marketing and Sales (14%)**: Focus solely on the product, ignoring customer acquisition. Effective marketing strategies are vital to reach the audience and drive sales.

Most Early Stage Founders Face Challenges with GTM & Sales

- Misaligned product-market fit and messaging-market fit.
- Over-reliance on hope-based strategies ("Build it, and they will come").
- Lack of a repeatable, scalable sales process.

Does this sound familiar?

The antidote:

Robust GTM, Master Founder-led sales, Crack Inbound to Scale

GTM roadmap

Clarity of focus, refining product & acquisition

Founder-led sales

Crack how to sell before you pour resources into it

Demand Generation

Build inbound demand before outbound

A robust GTM strategy & roadmap:

-clarity over execution
-ensures more term sheets
-keeps you on track

You need to crack founder-led sales before hiring

-noone can sell before you can
-helps you build the right product
-keeps you from wasting resources

At the early stage, you need to build authority, become familiar & trustable

-build your first 100 TRUE FANS
-become the obvious choice
-then turn inbound to outbound

Focus

1. Robust GTM Roadmap

A clear GTM strategy & roadmap
Keeps you on track, gets you to revenue faster, brings term sheets to the table!

What you need to achieve:

- Develop a G2M roadmap and implementation plan for the next 30-60-90-180 days.
- Align on G2M essentials:
  - Generating demand effectively.
  - Converting demand into revenue.
  - Balancing focus on a niche vs. the bigger picture.

Why does it matter?

- Ensures alignment and consistency among co-founders.
- Creates a short-to-long-term vision for execution.
- Demonstrates a solid plan to investors, aiding fundraising.
- Tests sales assumptions and refine your plan to reach *[Insert Whatever Your Milestone]*.

No one can sell your product better than you!

Some don't like selling, some wanna outsource, truth is you have the basics, you just need some support!

What you need to achieve?

- Get to your first 20 customers!
- Validate: Is this a vitamin vs. a pain-killer?
- Go narrow go deep cause the narrower the river, the faster the flow!
- At the same time balance quick wins. vs. long-term goals (big bets)
- Align product agenda with sales and marketing effort - as well as co-founders' vision of all this!
- Grow beyond $10K MRR to show signs of sustainable traction
- First commercial hires, functioning sales & marketing team of 5-10 with repeatable processes

What are the key challenges?

- Does my messaging resonate?
- Do I bring people in through the door?
  - Through which channels? How costly?
- Am I able to convert those conversations?
- Have I hit PMF, how do I know?
- Can't do all by myself need to hire
  - When do I hire? Too soon, too late?
- Why am I not able to close more?
- Why am I losing winnable deals?
  - which sales missteps or lack of a process?
- Creating a pipeline that sustains a small team, at the same time not burn through cash too fast!

3.Sustainable Demand generation

Scale beyond $100K towards $3M!
You need to build authority, become the obvious choice, build an army of TRUE FANS, then you can test more channels!

Challenges:

- Scaling beyond your network is tough.
- Outbound channels are saturated, and inbound credibility is a must.
- Sales cycles stretch past 6 months without pre-call education.
- Building an inbound engine is resource-heavy, with costly scalable channels and tough guerilla marketing.
- **Lack of expertise and experience means making errors, losing time, friction in team!**

What does it mean for you?

- Build authority through thought leadership and community engagement.
- "Look" smart, provide value for free
- Amplify a clear message, build social proof, and create trust and FOMO.
- Push TOFU leads to BOFU.
- Cultivate true fans.
- Build an army of TRUE FANS
- Test scalable and non-scalable growth channels at the same time. Test-iterate-improve!
- Prepare the way for scalability and hiring/ onboarding

Proven methodology, flexible approach
What you'll need to nail as an early stage founder

STEP-1: Foundations & Strategy to reach Message-mkt fit

1. Understanding the Market and Customer (ICP- persona)
2. Crafting Your Value Proposition
3. Designing Your Sales Process (plg vs. slg, sales-assisted)
4. Setting Up Tools and Infrastructure

- **More replies**
- **Before website update**
- **Before outreach**

STEP-2: Building & Testing Pipeline for Demand Generation

5. Lead Generation Tactics
6. Outreach Sequences
7. Improving conversion
8. Testing & recording test results

- **More meetings**
- **More winnable deals**
- **Qualified leads**

STEP 3: Closing Deals: Sales-mkt fit

9. **Building Authority, Trust & Social proof (inbound foundations)**
10. Sales pitch & collaterals
11. Discovery-demo upskilling
12. Closing and Onboarding (CS handover or self-onboarding)

- **Trust, authority**
- **Inbound deals**
- **Improved closing**

STEP 4: Optimizing and Scaling: Sales Playbook (--> hiring)

13. CRM essentials
14. Scaling demand generation
15. Establishing Partnerships
16. Sales playbook & onboarding

- **Repeatable process**
- **Increase volume**
- **Hiring**

Bi-weekly sprints: testing - iterating - improving conversion

Proven methodology, flexible approach
One size fits no one - working with Forte

Once we identify your need, we will decide on our ways of working and its cost to your business.

Strategist & Coach

After initial sales audit, align on goals and objectives.
Work 3-4 hours per week together to achieve goals based on your stage.
Usually a 12-16 - week programme before reaching next stage

Hands on Implementation

More hands on than coach.
Document, iterate and improve processes.
Manage or co-manage sales and marketing resources
1-2 days a week

Fractional CRO

Typically 3-6 months engagement. Prepare foundations before the arrival of your sales leader - head of or CRO.
2-3 days a week.

How to go from 0 to $3M ARR
Practical strategies, framework and templates for Sales & Marketing

FORTE

From Early traction to Repeatable Revenue: A Tactical Guide for Scaling Early-Stage Startups

Your Product is Great, But Is the World Listening?

As a fellow SaaS founder, I know the struggle of building a product that you believe is simply great and everyone needs it to then realizing the **hard part is getting others to believe in it**.

The real challenge is creating **demand**—making people feel like they **need it urgently**.

This playbook is a step-by-step guide that takes you from zero to three million in 20 steps:

- by building **real traction**, scaling **credibility**, and **scaling your product**.

Your Handbook for Scaling Your Product & Creating Demand

Hey, I'm **Alper** — GTM Partner for founders scaling from traction to repeatable revenue, exited SaaS Co-founder & CRO.

No-fluff GTM Execution towards $3M and beyond

Step 1: Validate the Problem and Find Message-Market Fit

Get Real Feedback from Prospects

Before building your product, you need to ensure the problem exists and that prospects see it as **urgent**. You need to confirm that the problem you're solving is **real** and **urgent**. The key here is getting **feedback from your first users** on how they perceive the product and its value.

💪 **Let's make it happen:**

- **Talk to 10–20 prospects** who fit your target ICP and ask them how they're solving the problem today.
- Visit **industry events**, post on **LinkedIn** for feedback, and **use real customer feedback** to adjust your messaging. Your goal is to get reactions.
- Focus on the **language your prospects use**
  - Analyze their language and integrate their terms into your messaging (avoid your own jargon!). It matters more how they describe it than the other way around.
  - **Example:** For Flowla, we realized early that our messaging around reducing complexity didn't resonate until we positioned it as **"one single link to close more deals"** because people couldn't visualize the product in their heads without a concept of what the actual product is.

Different founders - Different needs
Does any of that resonate?

1

From 0 to 1

- Need to build traction
- Need to raise funding
- What's a GTM strategy, how can I create one?
- So many priorities, where do I focus?
- Aligning timelines of product-sales-marketing
- Division of labor btw. co-founders

"Raising pre-seed, going beyond first traction"

2

Learning to sell before I hire

- We have a working product
- We raised some money and building MRR
- BUT
- Why are my reply rates so low?
- Why am I ghosted after a demo?
- Why does it take so long to close a deal?
- How can I generate more demand?
- Why am I losing to competition?

"Maybe 10K MRR, raised $1-2M, cracking founder-led sales"

3

Scaling Sales from Seed 2 Series-A

- We got so far but revenue stalled or we're growing but not in a sustainable way
- How do I build a Founder Brand to help our growth?
- Need to improve onboarding, activation, customer support
- Is my playbook right? Why are people not implementing it?
- Hiring/ Firing problems

"I thought we figured all this before, but some things keep coming back"