

# Introduction: It's Time to Reinvent Virtual Events by Making Them Customer-Centric

*There is only one boss. The customer. And they can fire everybody in the company, from the chairman on down, simply by spending their money somewhere else.*

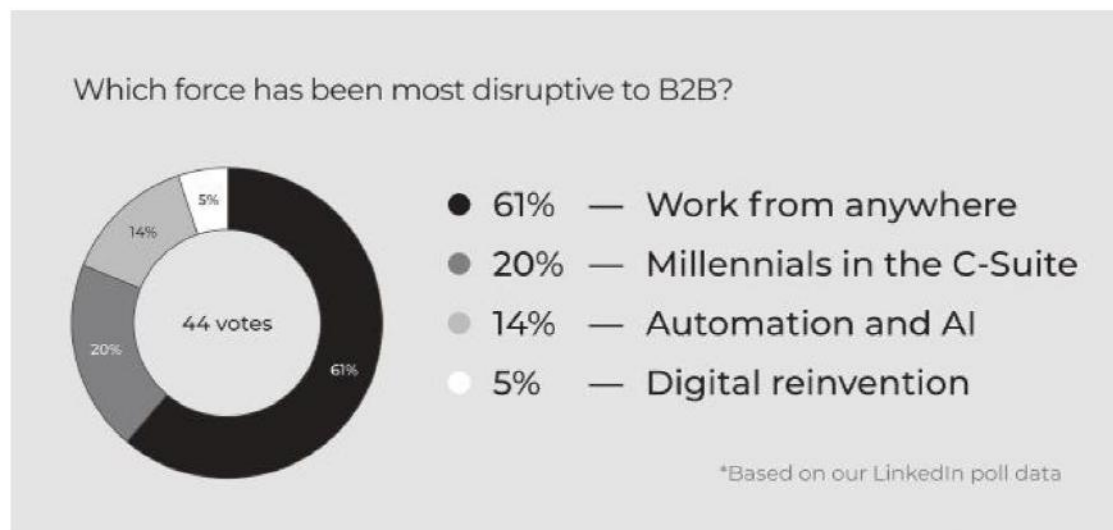
—Sam Walton

*If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.*

—Haruki Murakami



## 2 Introduction



**Y**ou transform a virtual event by putting your audience in the center versus panelists and an audience alone. We are taking virtual events to a new level by featuring customers as contestants in the center of the action and randomly calling on customers from the audience to make them a part of each simulation. Customers judge, drill, role-play, break into teams, and compete against business-to-business (B2B) luminaries.

We proved this model in “Go-to-Market (GTM) Games,” the most disruptive B2B event series ever conceived.

Like a virtual Barkley Marathons, it is innovative, bold, and compelling because marketers and sellers finally collaborate and cross-train to solve real GTM challenges through intense simulations. Our proven model of GTM learning requires teach-backs and drills, which produce 90% knowledge retention compared to static net flicks style lectures.

The GTM Games is a monthly, 9-days-long obstacle course featuring 21 participants. We’ve been honored to showcase the top 100+ voices in B2B, yet we constantly look to expand our roster. Our mission is to laser-focus GTM teams on the customer so that they can expand beyond their silo.

Now is the time to tailor your events to your customers.

Flashback two years: Julia did an event where the whole agenda touted a Reddit-style design in the promo lead-up. Social media maven Brynne Tillman was the featured expert. Users and potential viewers built the event concept collaboratively-crowdsourced, and the questions they asked before defined the event.

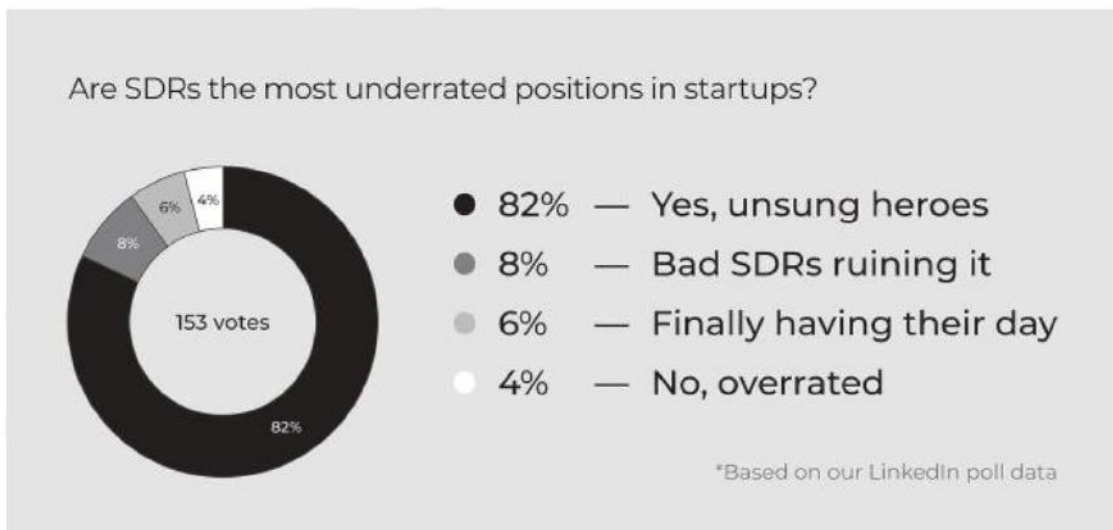
There was a landing page with a Reddit-style up-voting system. You—the audience—build/curate the event’s agenda yourself versus the last hundred years of: “We are a vendor building an event.” Envision potential software users promoting your event for a month leading up to it, uploading questions, and an entire webinar built on relevant themes your users surfaced and ranked. There was no ulterior motive around the topic, just a star speaker and rapt users.

# Curiosity is the Currency of the Modern Event Flywheel

She called it an “Interactive Webinar with a Social Media Expert.” The tagline, “Join us in a special event where you can ask your burning questions on all things LinkedIn for Social Selling.” Results? The event was super-engaged, with hundreds of questions pouring in. It began to make her think about a new event blueprint: You provide the coach’s expertise, and your audience reciprocates with their time and focus. Whichever theme your base gravitates to most becomes the topic, and the thrill of building it this way makes questions fly out of the woodwork.

When we think about throwing 200 events together, one of the most unique experiences was spotlighting CEOs and VPs doing “cold calling.” Our ideal customer profile (ICP) was uncommon for this theme, not just sales development reps (SDRs) but VPs of Sales. No one believed that Julia could make VPs of Sales attend an event about cold calling, much less participate. The crowd was skeptical that senior executives would even make cold calls in the age of email sequences.

Behold the elusive trap for any vendor. Vendors believe their ICP is interested in something obvious they want to sell and forget their audience comprises ordinary humans who buy for reasons only they understand. Her research revealed that nearly all roles in sales right up to the C-Suite are still interested in outbound calling.



Despite this, a large cohort of executives believes it doesn’t work. It is too expensive. Valid phone and email data is costly and has low contact rates. SDRs have insufficient product understanding to resonate with increasingly technical buyers, and inbound marketing leads are junk marketing qualified leads (MQLs).

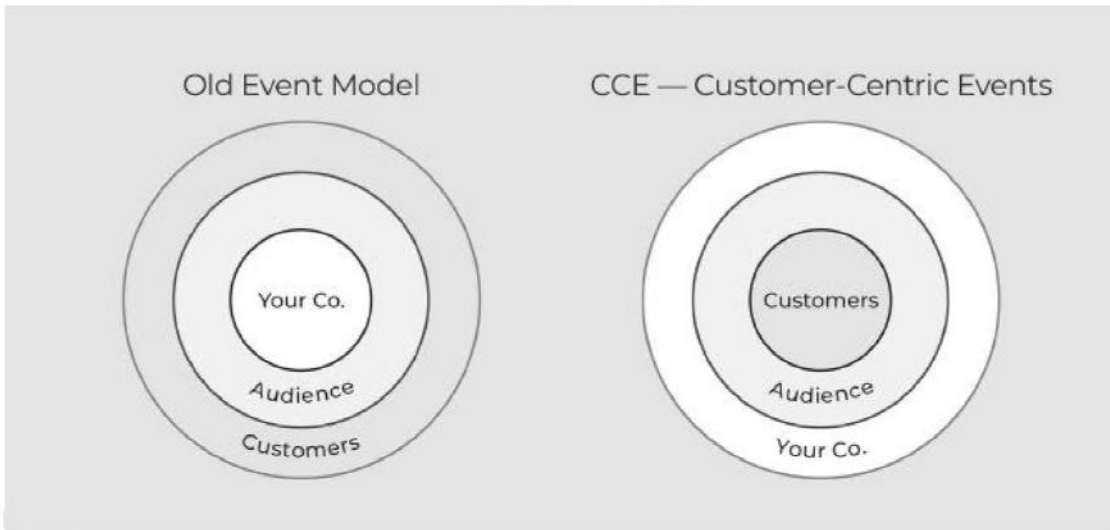
## 4 Introduction

There's a whole debate around whether MQLs should even be a metric and a growing insurgency against the SDR-account executive (AE) industrial complex.

Imagine breakthrough results like 2,000+ registrations and getting your customer acquisition costs (CAC) down to \$2 for VPs of Sales versus \$75+ cost per lead (CPL) best case scenario on the open market right now with ads. Because Aaron Ross cold called against all levels, there was a massive buzz on social media and thousands of likes. It was the talk of the B2B industry while it ran, sucking the oxygen out of the space. You couldn't "not see" this event. Word of mouth was so intense.

As her next endeavor, legend has it that approximately a year ago, Julia Nimchinski approached Justin Michael, "Hey, would you be up to emcee a competition where salespeople did marketing drills and vice versa?" Justin dismissed her immediately, "No thanks, that's the theme I'd least like to do. Can't we just hold another killer cold-call competition? Exactly like we've already been doing?" And thus, GTM Games was born, Julia's brainchild. The thought was Bransonian, "Screw it. Let's do it! No one has done it before!"

And you should follow this philosophy, too, rather than remaining in your silo and silencing the inner voice that scratches away at you to be innovative. Fan that flame and go big with us to reinvent yourself (and your industry) by putting the customer at the dead center of your corporate stage.



Until now, you've likely built your brand reputation on the bedrock of your product or service. But it's time to disrupt that. Like most, you've relied on your unique value proposition and even your brand story (if you're more sophisticated) to stand out in the ever-crowded marketplace. But we're here to tell you that you're getting it all wrong because your customers are your real "platform," literally and figuratively in a Michael Hyatt sense. You just have to unlock this potential energy stored up since your company's inception. For expansion, there's no substitute for the unlimited power and virality of word-of-mouth amplification that comes directly from the people who

value you most. Customers. Execute your growth through the lens of online experiences.

**2020s New Reality:** No in-person sales, no in-person marketing, and little to no attribution with “dark social” communities that are untraceable and growing like gremlins. We simply don’t know where our audience is coming from, and walled gardens prevent us from tracking it or leveraging open application programming interface (API) architecture to integrate with the best measurement platforms. LinkedIn is a prime, front-and-center example of a closed system we all use, but only *they* have access to the complete “customer journey” data.

**Persistent reality:** The No. 1 thing every business needs is more customers. To grow revenue effectively, you must become a master at customer acquisition. Paid advertising is just too expensive now. The barriers to entry are often in the tens of thousands, even millions of dollars. The halcyon days of social media 1.0 or 2.0 are gone. When the medium was young, you could amass 5,000 followers or direct connections seemingly overnight. Throttles and controls regulate the information flow of every legacy social network, so if you move too fast, you’ll fail over, get your profile shut off, or even end up in LinkedIn jail. We’ve built experiments to inform your strategy and tactics in this work. The only viable solution becomes growth hacking.

In-person events may bounce back but will never be as robust as in the prior era. The major social networks have moved to a “pay-for-play” model where reach gets cut to 5% of your followers (if you’re lucky). Forking over serious capital is often a non-option for startups, founders, nonprofits, and individual thought leaders. We resign ourselves to getting 10 “likes” or need to rely on “bot” schemes to boost comment threads and rig the social algorithm to realize ever-diminishing returns. Sad to see so many gifted executives succumbing to this temptation right now, but we don’t blame you. Reach is gone.

Zoom webinars are a powerful means to generate leads organically (even for free), but it’s tricky to do this elegantly, and GTM leaders are time-poor running lean. Setting up a “thought leadership” webinar just won’t cut it now, no matter how visionary the talent roster is and how ingenious you perceive the theme. You need to be creative and innovative, break the mold to pull an audience once, not to mention sustain and grow it over time.

It used to be enough to parade your C-level executives out like show ponies with some industry experts, crib some pseudo-intellectual questions, and follow a linear format. In the glory days of “Peak Webinars,” we all winged it the night before and got away with murder to a packed house.

But now we find our tried and true antics put the audience to sleep. We’ve even worked with partners that couldn’t break out of their silo, no matter how interactive we tried to make it. They insisted on sticking to the script. Hence, they call it “Death by PowerPoint,” a distant cousin condition to “Death by Chocolate,” the latter a desirable life state.

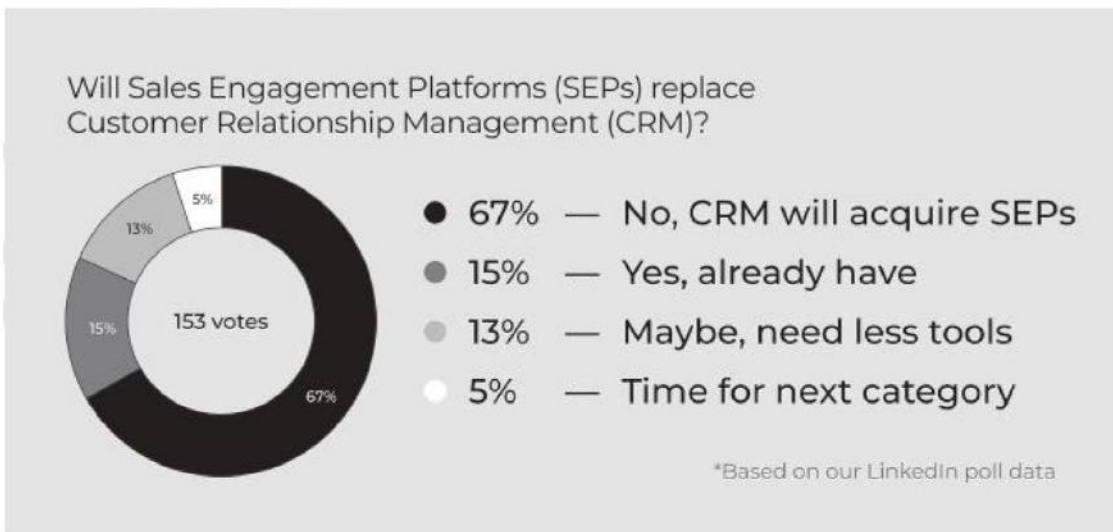
You can overthink this stuff. Viral social media is real, raw, and unscripted. It's possible to maintain professionalism by being spontaneous and off the cuff. Putting intelligent people in the hot seat to answer questions genuinely is how Barbara Walters built her news interview empire.

Your competition is well capitalized, with unicorns raising \$100-million funding rounds. The war for brand supremacy is brutal. They out-staff you, out-spend you, and out-innovate you. How can you compete? Or maybe you're a unicorn who has stagnated and needs to grow faster.

Additionally, you could be facing pressure from new software as a service (SaaS) scale-ups undercutting your pricing or copycatting your features. Then there's the case of the intrapreneur tasked with disrupting a legacy corporation's event marketing plan. Nobody ever got fired for hiring Big Blue. Are you sure you don't need to innovate? Since 2000, over half of the Fortune 500 has gone out of business. Think fast. Think again.

Over the last 20 years, empirically, most deals in sales and marketing came from in-person rendezvous, which drove 90% of revenue. Remember the glory days in enterprise sales, getting on flights, and holding Michelin 3-star sushi dinners in San Francisco, New York City, and Chicago (cue the glass-bottom boat in a lightning storm). Could you build rapport in person to grease the wheels of doing big enterprise deals? Sure, there's a far greater propensity to get a deal done. But this era could be facing extinction as you read this.

Since Covid erupted, B2B teams must generate new business remotely, which has caused a Cambrian explosion of dialer and email sequencer tech. Hence, these products finally crossed the chasm, for example, Sales Engagement Platforms and Revenue Intelligence. Remember when they launched in 2011 and no one was ready? When we all pushed Sales Engagement and (then) Conversational Intelligence so hard? Leading analyst firms finally professed that companies are adopting "Sales Engagement," or they will start considering this tech closer to 2025.



At the onset of the pandemic, ad unit CPMs (cost per mille or thousand impressions) went crazy. The cost to get a quality target prospect in B2B to download one white paper exceeds \$175. On Planet Unobtanium for many entrepreneurs, founders, small and midsize businesses (SMBs), and startups. We don't blame you.

Human civilization began by pressing the flesh. Offline events became a cash cow and a crutch to get big deals done but are less relevant today. Meeting up at some exotic location, ski resort, or junket in Las Vegas, the martinis flowed, and booths went for upward of \$25,000 per sponsor.

Now we can't even shake hands, maybe fist or elbow bump at the threat of a resurgent pandemic. Even though social media releases dopamine hits, there's nothing like eye-to-eye contact or shaking hands to get a deal inked because it immediately fosters trust in a way even the best Zooms cannot. Although human-to-human (H2H) is coming back, the era of cramming into a packed plane, jetting off to San Francisco, Atlanta, or Manhattan, and squeezing into a conference center to sit like sardines in folding chairs looks antiquated, even unsafe. It all comes down to sweeping changes in how business people want to interact with each other. People became lazy, thinking, "why should I fly if I can zoom?" The cost per in-person event effort has shot up markedly.



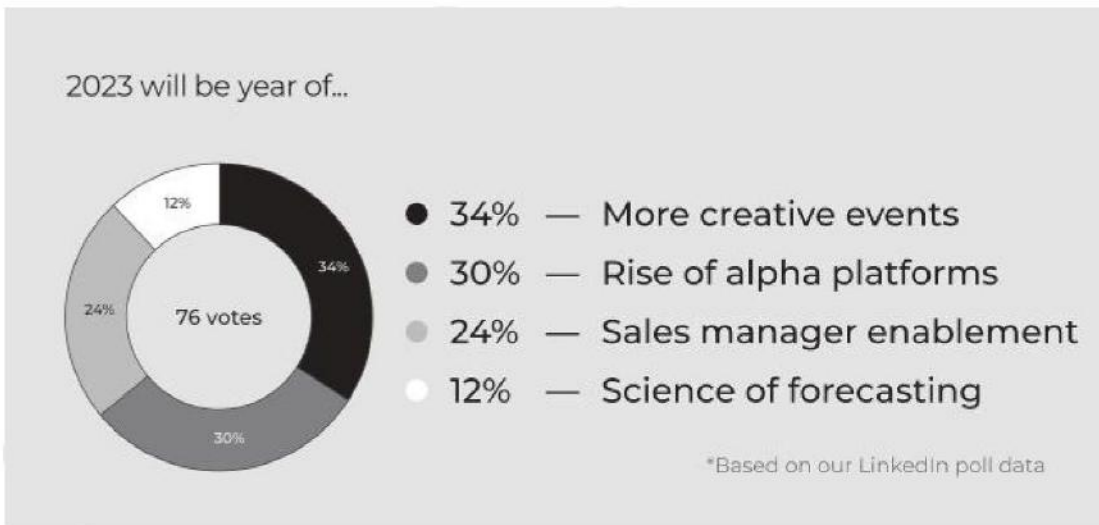
Mary Shea, Outreach's VP Global Innovation Evangelist, researched seller interaction preferences in 2022 and found that buyers now prefer virtual meetings over in-person ones. Salespeople would rather send emails and social touches rather than get on the phone, and buyers prefer it too.

Whether we know it or not, we live and work in a new era of GTM simulations because the physical world is slipping away into an intangible "hybrid model." Soon we'll meet with virtual reality (VR) goggles on in VR situations as the avatars of our choosing, so we *must* be ready.

Evidence? At the *Connect Conference* in 2021, Mark Zuckerberg (Meta) predicted that the Metaverse “will be mainstream in 5–10 years.” Venture capitalists (VCs) invested \$10 billion in virtual world startups in 2021, according to Crunchbase. Apple’s Tim Cook has hinted at an augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) headset.

*As promised, this book provides innovative ways to generate explosive revenue growth with virtual events.*

We will help you transform static, boring ghost webinars into packed, interactive, must-see simulations. Like most founders, entrepreneurs, startup marketing teams, and small businesses, you’re looking at a rising wall of water on costs and razor-thin margins. Although there are 10,000+ vendors to enhance how we market and sell, the technology becomes more expensive to integrate daily. Even basic customer relationship management (CRM) can cost thousands per month once you get all the plug-ins and enable its automated features. We wrote this book for you—the innovators and early adopters—as you look into growth hacking and new ways to get your name and brand out there. As *reach* dries up, competition for eyeballs skyrockets.



Zoom. Fatigue. Flat. Lifeless. Dull.

What’s become of virtual events in 2022? A graveyard of sameness. When will we innovate the flat webinar format? There are exceptions to every rule. Enter Mary Shea, Ph.D., and predictions for 2022, of which a top trend she’s tracking is *Virtual Event Innovation*.



“To maximize the impact of one of their largest budget line items, marketers in 2022 will need to experiment with more engaging, immersive, virtual formats and to differentiate with smaller, highly curated in-person events.

To keep event participants engaged in 2022:

- Forgo the large in-person annual industry conference.
- Deliver smaller, tailored, and exclusive in-person events.
- Leave the traditional static webinar behind.”

Please check out GTMmag.com’s “The Big Question” for more predictions like this—**GTM trends for 2022.**

Essentially, we will *reinvent virtual events together in this book*. Now a quick pep talk: Remember, you have everything it takes to innovate. We use the term *heuristics* for sales and marketing, which means “mental shortcuts” taken from computer programming, often attributed to David Hoffeld’s *The Science of Selling*, who’s been a coach on GTM Games.

It’s easy to recognize the lion’s share of Zoom webinars are “one-note.” Think about it. The expected format is a “safe” theme, perennial panelists, an unassuming moderator reading off a script, and some Q&A at the end. It’s a linear progression of events with near-zero interactivity. Participants tune in to check out, multi-tasking the whole time. Admit it! The last dozen webinars you were on, weren’t you phoning it in from the background while you crushed your inbox so you could “humblebrag” that “yeah, I was there.” We’re all guilty of this. Imagine how your prospective customers must feel? What a snooze!

Unforeseen global circumstances raised the bar on in-person. People will only travel to Burning Man, Dreamforce, TED, Davos, and other buzzy, high-production-value events. Why make big-ticket investments in travel, crisscross rugged terrain, and endure brutal connecting flights and travel delays? Trains, planes, and automobiles are a far cry from John Candy, but well worth it because of outrageous value delivered in person in a way only events of this caliber can. We all know the legacy “in-person” ROI: Deals get done when you meet at a conference, raise a glass of chianti, break bread, eat a “Great Outdoors” steak dinner, all-you-can-eat Brazilian, and shake hands.

But now your audience has too many options. Couldn’t you just watch that keynote online or read a recap? Sure. Attend a local charity masquerade versus head off to Venice? Catch a concert live-streamed? Classic events are here to stay, long live events. *Viva la!*

Business people won’t want to return solely to in-person events anytime soon. We’ve become accustomed to virtual Zoom calls, whether convenient or just Pavlovian. Inflationary gas prices and multi-hour commutes aren’t helping us either. Even as Elon Musk bangs the drum for the 40-hour in-office

work week, all the research points to hybrid work as here to stay. We predict reducing work to four days will become a new standard.

It's the same for mixed-format events. We have entered the age of "hybrid."

Since the pandemic hit, the fashionable solution to event marketing was to slap together a bunch of uninspired webinars and blast out generic emails and ads to promote them. We are not judging you. Maybe you cracked the code and are doing event promotions better than the crowd. But inboxes clutter fast with identical templates, and creativity runs thin. The more spam a decision-maker receives, the quicker they hire an executive assistant to run interference on their inbox, even inside their LinkedIn.

Companies have started to throw virtual and hybrid confabs (in-person + online) as a cost-cutting measure. Still, they are an elevated art form that can be complex, sophisticated, and highly produced to attract attention you can't get anywhere else. But it's up to you. We will show you how to take them to the next level of innovation.

The average CEO receives dozens of "new normal" invites weekly and hits delete. Trust me; they don't need an Amazon gift card or steak dinner with your reps. They want to spend more time with their family and climb Mount Kilimanjaro. That's why a big part of our Event Reinvention™ (ER) formula is to create enduring themes that are so transfixing and memorable that even the subject line converts and pulls the right audiences toward you. You can't help yourself but click on it! We will show you how to unleash event ideas that attract your optimal ideal customer profile (ICP) and are viral by mere design.

You are the heroes of the global village. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 95% of the world's GDP and 60–70% of employment. 400 million small businesses are operating in hybrid remote working environments worldwide. Our book can light a spark to galvanize the global economy to recover faster via innovation. It all starts with you, so keep an open mind.

This book is also for the corporate warrior intrapreneurs looking to effect change from within by revolutionizing their GTM strategy by breathing life into a run-of-the-mill webinar plan. Maybe you're part of a marketing team and feel invisible; this book will help you find your voice and flex your power.

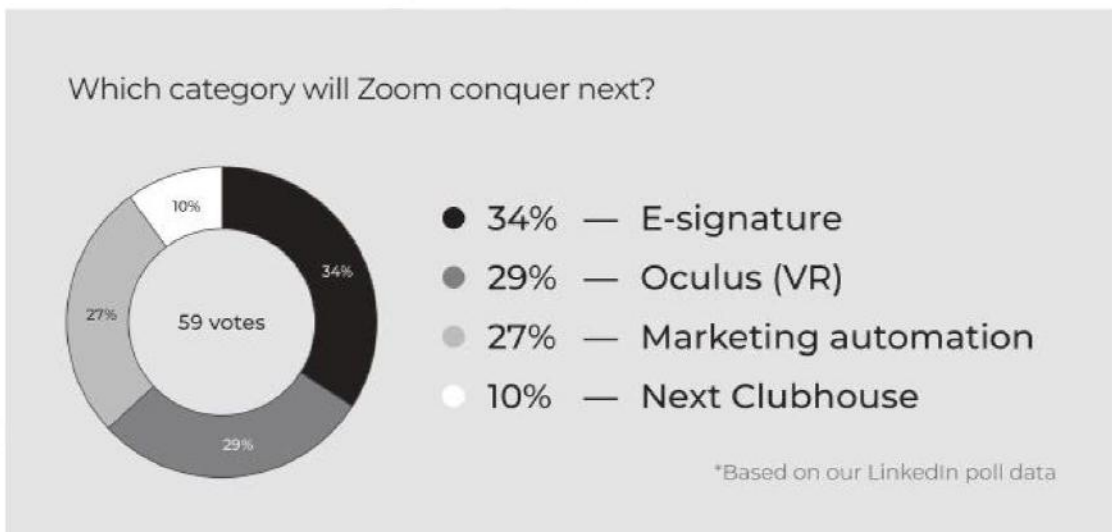
If we did it bootstrapped and on a budget, so can you. This book will be your companion guide as you build out your "event" GTM and look to drive revenue more effectively and efficiently derived from existing webinars. It will be the key to sustainable revenue growth fueled by events as a cornerstone of your marketing mix to propel you with confidence through any recession or economic downturn.

Zoom sees a staggering 300 million meetings per day. Per day! GTMers, as we call them, need to generate excitement through online events and often

have no idea how to be creative in this new medium. Or how to be commercially successful in converting viewers into customers by nailing their strategic selling motions after the fact. Just to “hold webinars” is too obvious and will perform averagely.

Sophisticated marketers—you are accustomed to generating leads digitally but don’t dismiss this writing. We have new info for you that we guarantee you haven’t seen based on our snap polls peppered throughout this work. If you’re holding virtual events today, you compete in crimson oceans of static clones. You can’t stand out no matter which topic or theme you assiduously choose. Sound familiar? The problem is the old-fashioned “event” model itself. If we had a nickel for every marketing team in each category that coughs up a brilliant idea for a webinar, but we can see it’s the identical “heuristic” to all their peers, we’d be bitcoin billionaires.

While there are new platforms like mmhmm (mmhmm.app), from the creator of Evernote, that allows you to shrink your head into a corner, use virtual whiteboards, or broadcast video behind you like a CNN anchor, new technology is not the focus of this book. Since Zoom came out, its robust roadmap now includes a whiteboard at this writing. Indeed, it will absorb many more features from competitive startups as the incumbent, like conversational intelligence for recording analysis (just added). If it were all about making it look snazzy, why do you occasionally see an under-produced “Indie” event online pull over 1,000 attendees?

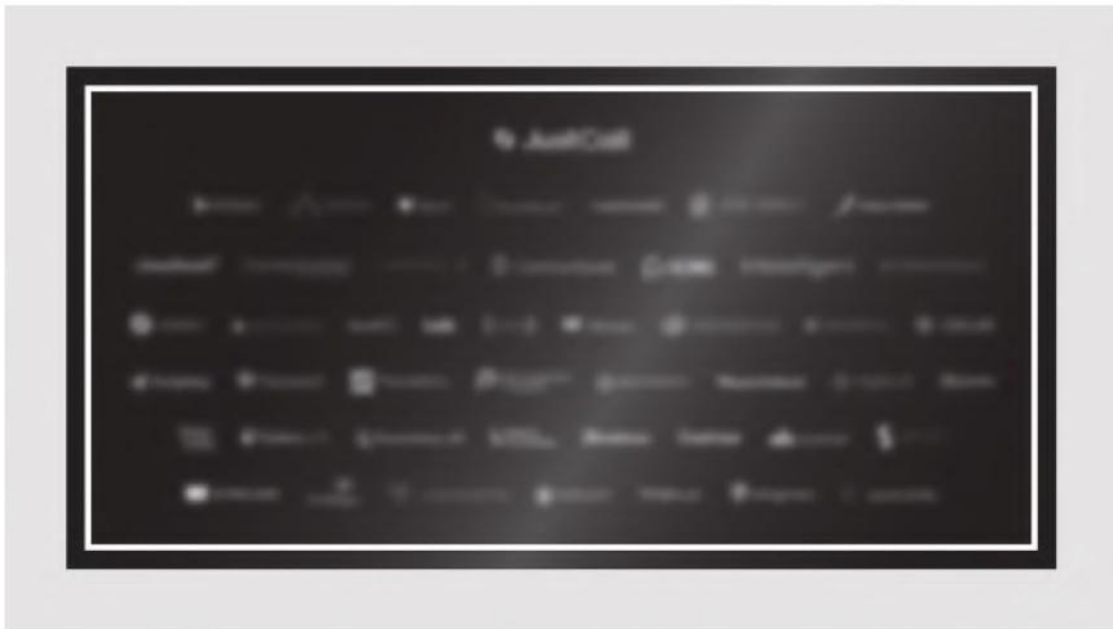


We encourage you to think out-of-the-box with content models and programming formats that supersede the need for visual gimmicks. If you can afford event technology, become proficient with all possible vendors. We are big fans of Prezi Video for face filters, fun captions, special effects, and live video shares behind the presenter. Try out Hopin, which just bought Streamyard (many integrations), and Restream, a strong Zoom alternative that broadcasts live to 30+ platforms. They are fantastic additions with bells

and whistles like landing pages for registrations, badging, selling tickets, and accommodating 50,000+ attendees.

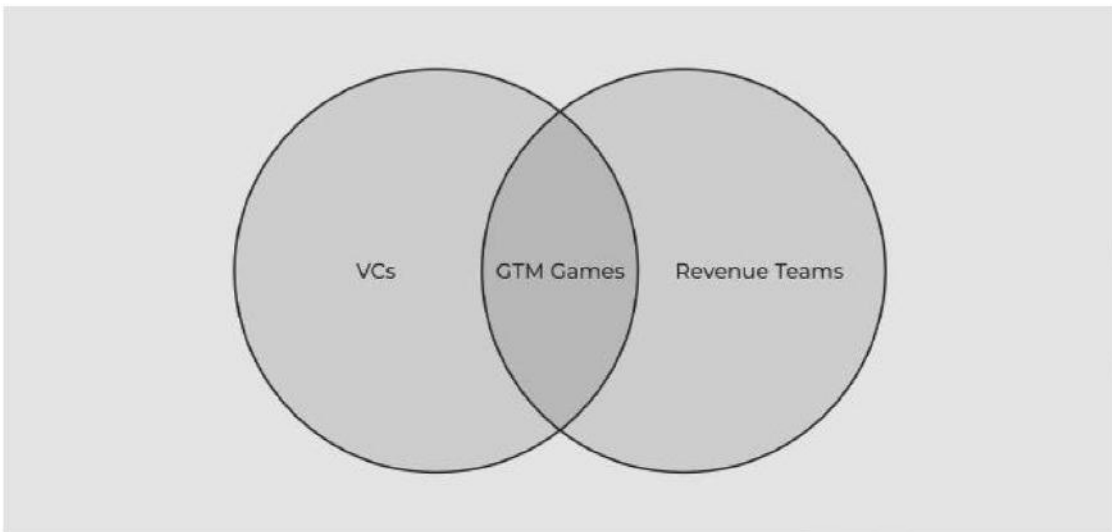
We wish we could tell you packing virtual events was as easy as amping up the production value over the top of a Zoom. We all crave a “magic bullet” to nail a virtual event from a tech perspective, but like any software, slickly produced marketing events often struggle to get even 15 viewers. We recently attended a “LinkedIn Live” event with under five guests.

Here’s how we tackled an age-old problem of entertaining and educating business people online since the dawn of the consumer internet in the mid-90s. As the pandemic hit, we launched one of the most successful B2B virtual events ever in under a year, entitled “GTM Games,” generating 50,000+ signups, featuring 120+ elite thought leaders and 70+ top sponsors upending the stale B2B events industry. We achieved unprecedented attendance and sponsorship from inception. Even the first event began at a scale of many established communities 5–10 years in the making.



As the business world bounced back into hybrid mode post-pandemic and even into a recession, we kept fueling demand for our virtual event concept proving this wasn’t just a flash in the pan. One Diamond Sponsor put up a monthly “Super Rep” award that drove even more excitement and engagement. Of course, we chase “knowledge” as the prize along with delivering some bubbly and the top 10 GTM books.

You can follow our blueprint affordably to achieve any scale you desire. We did this using essential tools, collaboration, and teamwork. We prioritized design thinking and hybrid imagination, but above all, customer-centricity. We are strong proponents of finding contractors on Upwork, Fiverr, and arbitrating competent globally distributed teams.



Interacting with the VC community in putting GTM Games together was gratifying as luminary venture capitalists coached our final GTM “Endgame” rounds each month to crown the victor. One of the secrets to building a riveting event is eliminating hierarchies. Influential executives and VCs are generally humble, sharing valuable thought leadership freely, mentoring the next generation of entrepreneurs and giving back, hence the success of seed incubators like 500 Startups and Y Combinator.

In a former life, Julia created a dynamic event featuring a next-level “sales method hunt” and differentiated content from impossible-to-reach B2B luminaries with this give-to-get strategy. She first researched every contributor heavily and then provided a unique platform to enable them to grow their audience organically. She built a cold-calling competition with thousands of VPs of Sales at a \$2 CAC unheard of in B2B.

What makes our current event so unique and successful? GTM cross-training, a new event category under the umbrella of “e-sports,” Julia invented, featuring salespeople doing marketing drills and marketing leaders doing sales drills. Mary Shea, VP Global Innovation Evangelist, Outreach, former Principal Analyst at Forrester, reacted to the effect, “I can’t believe no one’s done it before.”

And it started a movement.

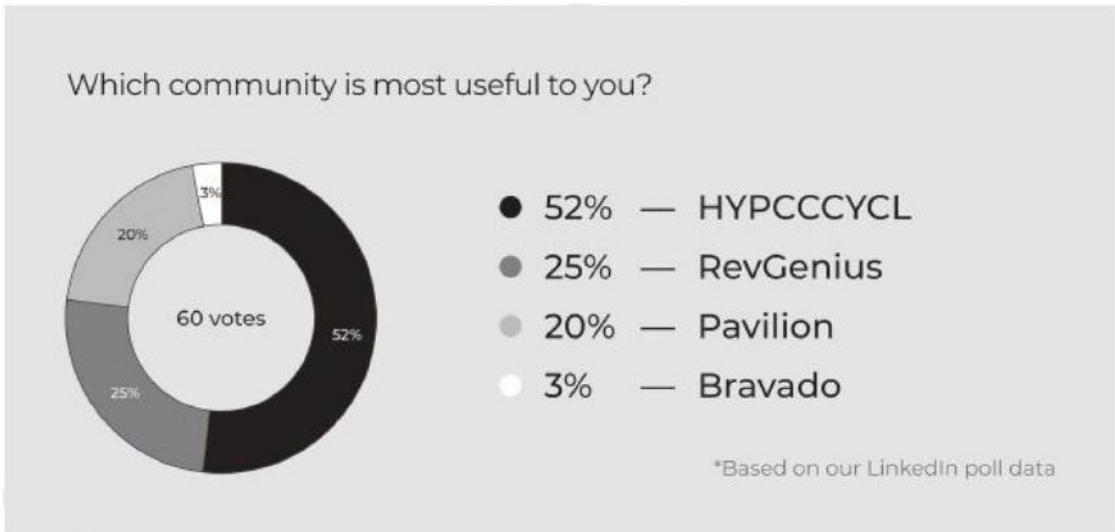
Emulation is the highest form of flattery. Nearly every new website in SaaS talks about GTM Leadership; the acronym “GTM” was scarce before our launch. Almost every new campaign is black and white or closely themed to mimic our graphics and UI. We even have carbon copies springing up from rival communities to appointment setting shops to marketing and sales SaaS software mainstays. Bring it on! It’s all reminiscent of a Van Halen solo. You instantly recognize the original is Eddie tapping away on the fretboard with two hands in a style he invented and popularized. All the rest is just karaoke.

# Siloed skills are killing your pipeline

New normal requires new skills. Now's your chance to crack the funnel with the top practitioners in the world.

[ACCESS RECORDINGS →](#)

By this writing, we have minted thousands of brand ambassadors that badge their profiles as members of HYPCCCYCL to unlock the archive of past Zoom recordings. They amplify the “HYPCCCYCL #1 GTM Community” message within dedicated dark social communities that have tens of thousands of members in them and growing. We’ve created a robust niched group of obsessed GTM innovators unlike anything seen since Clubhouse or “LinkedIn Groups” that got deprecated.



Why it works: The best way to learn something is to walk a mile in another’s shoes. Those who can’t do, teach or so the adage goes. You can’t learn how to heliski from a guidebook. Can you imagine, “Heliskiing for Dummies?” The minute you drop out of that helicopter, you’ll snowball down the mountain and right into the ICU. We’ve proven that the best way to break down the walls and break you out of your silo is to cross-train interdisciplinary, multi-functional skills. How will sales ever understand and collaborate with marketing caught up in a turf war until they gain respect for how hard it is to do the

job daily and vice versa? In our event, professionals traded roles and lives like never before in interactive drills versus languishing on static webinar panels.



The NTL (National Training Laboratories Institute) Learning Pyramid speaks to achieving 90% retention when participants coach and teach each other in a real-world scenario versus the prevailing static passive webinar model where you just watch and take notes. (Note: In the pyramid, practicing fosters 75% retention.) Few take notes on a webinar. Attendees usually multi-task their inbox, sip tea or coffee, and chat while watching out of the corner of their eye because webinars are generally “boring.” Just analyze your own behavior during most virtual meetups and think, what would draw me to be interested in this panel?

In contrast, at any moment in GTM Games, an audience member could be dropped into the drills spontaneously, which our audience loves, keeping the viewer constantly on their toes, at the edge of their seat. Sometimes it’s a surprise cameo by someone everyone knows on the call.

Let’s say there’s a drill on cold calling. In our “GTM Slack,” we’d call out for participants randomly and “promote to panelist” anyone who raised their hand with a good reason to do the drill and willing to be coached as a guinea pig. Sponsors pitch coaches, which is unprecedented and rule-breaking. VCs make surprise appearances to judge the event, setting the stage with real-world GTM scenarios depending on their investment thesis: Angel-Seed, early-stage, PLG, Founders, or Series B-D.

We experimented with hybrid event structures that are entirely novel to the industry. Imagine a half-dozen panelists live drilling negotiations in 3-minute bursts with a top coach, then pairing up to drill cold-call openers, email tear downs, and various elements of website analysis like “submitting a lead.” We found many of these simulations happen in the real world. Just rarely do we get to see them as laypeople? A great example is that magic moment when a manager does a dry run of a board presentation with their direct report.

When SDR leaders train their teams with role-plays, skills rapidly improve and are cemented. Kevin Dorsey is a master of coaching and skill-building philosophy and is a massive proponent of drilling. All elite athletes and coaches know “we play like we practice,” as the saying goes. But strangely, in sales and marketing, there is almost nowhere to go to practice right now. So we ironically practice on the customer—sales malpractice. Stay tuned because Julia is incubating a product in stealth that will solve this big time.

Over this year, we’ve received hundreds of messages asking us for a blueprint of our event model. Major companies have reached out to us looking to run bespoke GTM events internally on their product’s unique premise or consult them on an Event Reinvention™ (ER™). In this playbook, we share an exclusive blueprint that includes the open-sourced secrets, strategies, and tactics so your success can echo ours. We even believe some of you will be able to do it better than us, so we are here to consult you every step of the way. *(To learn more about our GTM agency, contact us on LinkedIn.)*

This revolutionary book is not just a modern event manual sanctioned by some corporations to sell you the latest SaaS software. (Not that there’s anything wrong with that.) We intend to help you become wildly successful with your virtual events as we did at any production value and scale you desire, whether it’s five people in a mastermind to your next annual conference, sales kickoff, or industry offsite.

*Event Reinvention™ (ER™) Customer-Centric Checklist: Ideation, creation, production, execution, and amplification are all problematic aspects to nail.*

Ask yourself: Is your idea compelling enough to “pull” a high-quality audience? Are you creating something genuinely innovative that’s never been done before? Is the production quality strong? (Good mics, design style, Zoom backgrounds, themes, etc.) How will you execute this in real-time with all the moving parts like coordinating calendars and onboarding in time? What’s the pregame and postgame setup? *(See the complete checklist in Appendix II.)*

How can we get all the participants to amplify? Have you made the customer’s use case the heart and soul of the production? You want your audience to come away raving about customer insights rather than what your executives said. We’ve seen CXOs get on webinars and simply parrot the exact approved product marketing copy on their website. It is off-putting for viewers if they can find the same content on YouTube or your product page. It’s almost disappointing, like when you see a stand-up comic, and they make the same jokes or spoil the movie by putting every good scene in the theatrical trailer.

In these pages, we will reveal our secret sauce to generating one of the most commercially successful online events in the history of B2B. We garnered critical support from leading analysts and partnered with billion-dollar unicorns as our sponsors (e.g., Outreach, ZoomInfo, Gong, Drift, 6sense, etc.). We featured



bestselling authors with millions in book sales and behemoth audiences. Examples include Oren Klaff of *Pitch Anything*, Latané Conant of *No Forms. No Spam. No Cold Calls*, Aaron Ross of *Predictable Revenue*, Sangram Vajre of *ABM is B2B*, and *MOVE*, Anita Nielsen of *Beat the Bots*, and Mike Bosworth of *Solution Selling*.

We are reinventing virtual events by putting customers at the center. When you surprise and delight customers, the knock-on effects are explosive registrations, attendance, and revenue.

Nearly every competitor is using the opposite approach consumed by their product slant. Our new category, Customer-Centric Events™ (CCEs™), forms the breakthrough foundation of this book. After Oren Klaff's session, an audience participant exclaimed, "It was so unexpected. I was on the edge of my seat, wondering what would happen next!"

In the old model, sponsors dominated the stage until the bitter end, when there was a controlled audience Q&A. In contrast, our audience can coach sponsors and cross-pollinate their signature skills. Every position in our game democratizes. It keeps the audience on their toes and shows human ability transcends title and tenure. Our advice is to boldly make your customers the center of your events versus the ubiquitous panelists + audience setup. That's why our events are radically different.

A company's sellers and marketers are nearly always misaligned, delineating our ICP at HYPCCCYCL. Instead of holding a sponsored event where whoever puts up the most money talks, we bring VPs of sales and marketing to coach each other and even CEOs to compete. The audience is excited to be there because they eagerly anticipate we might pull them into the action and up on a panel at any time.

Being a sponsor means you'll be coaching someone on a signature drill, like how to optimize an essential workflow in your user interface/user experience (UI/UX). Involving the viewer is exceedingly rare in webinars. Think about it, when was the last time you got to appear *live* in any business webinar you've ever attended?

In this book, we will show you how to:

- Understand customer-centric event models that flip the traditional focus and hierarchy of classic events to create a network effect of customer-led growth.
- Produce a virtual event that goes viral for next to no money or how to produce one shrewdly (and affordably) with an outsourced team.
- Build hybrid gamification into static events that breathes new life into them so your brand stands out.
- Give your network something to talk about so attendees can't wait to come back.
- Create a bespoke event brand that will suck the oxygen out of your industry.

## 18 Introduction

- Amplify your message through raving fans and brand ambassadors.
- Have a total blast doing this so it's fun, active, intriguing, and a smash hit for your community.
- Make an impact by innovating to the level that your event is PR-worthy, newsworthy, and worth it for high-level executives to invest in your ideas.
- Recession-proof your GTM strategy with customer-centric events as the new foundation

Let's get into it.

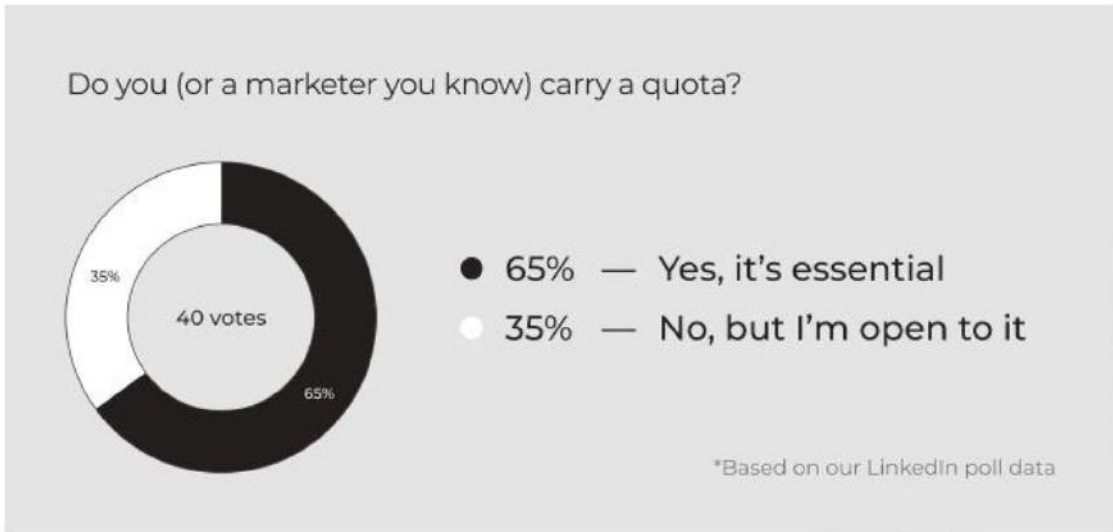
# CHAPTER 1

## How to Measure Event Effectiveness: Pipeline Generated versus Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs)

*Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so.*

—Galileo Galilei

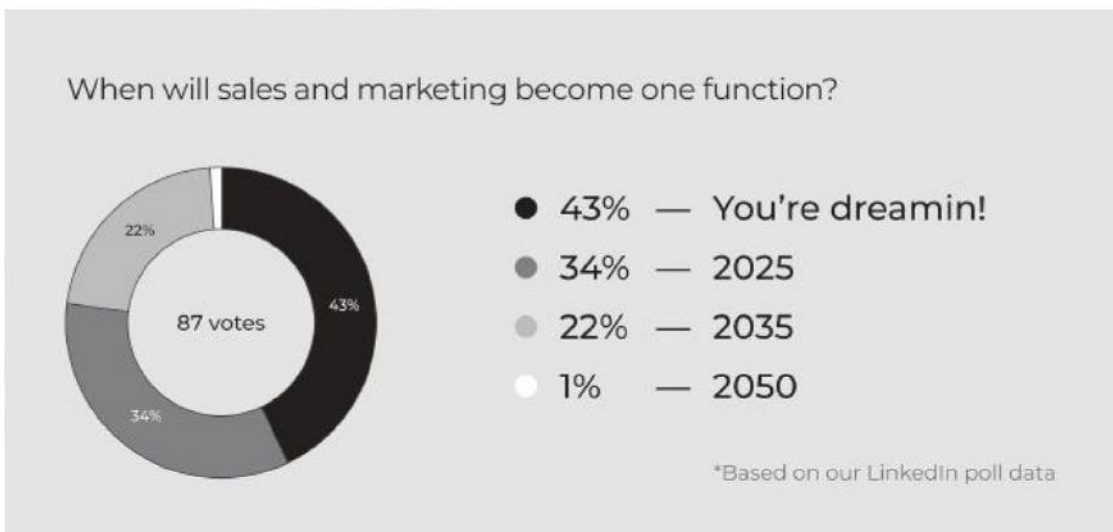
If you silo every role in a go-to-market (GTM) team and ask “what’s the problem in GTM?” 99% of every position will blame marketing. Why? Marketing is not generating revenue, or most marketing activities are not quantifiable. That is why chief marketing officers (CMOs) are white-knuckled to take on a revenue number.



We have this ephemeral “brand awareness” metric that no one knows how to measure other than inferring that an increase in traffic or brand mentions must be positive. We are flustered hiring pricey CMOs who burn millions simply trying to justify their return on investment (ROI). Then they turn and blame the VP of Sales.

Your VP of Sales is quick to make excuses that the nine-month sales cycle impedes hitting the ever-more egregious targets the board sets. At month 10, they catch you holding the bag, but you’ve already paid out all that cheddar.

Marketing can do nothing, and there’s very little chance you could return the ROI on this hire, even within a year when brand awareness takes many consecutive years to build. You can blow through whole funding rounds trying to nail GTM hiring, and that’s before you even run your first Super Bowl ad.



That one time sales and marketing tried to “work together.” 😊

Exhibit A: Interchangeable slogans confuse customers so severely that they buy from your competitor, thinking it’s you.

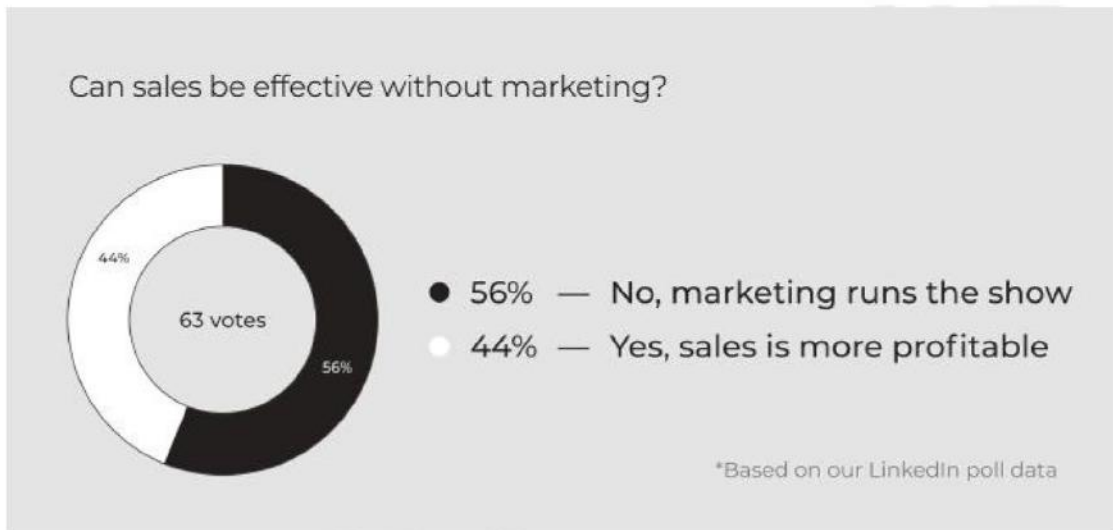
Exhibit B: You just signed up for a software as a service (SaaS) and get aggressively retargeted everywhere you go.

Exhibit C: The company’s chief revenue officer (CRO) is taking the main stage at Dreamforce to discuss “the future of customer-centric sales,” while his sales development reps (SDR) team is stalking you with email tactics from the 1990s—even during the event!

Exhibit D: You receive *engineering* hoodie swag when you work in marketing.

Exhibit E: That \$14-million Super Bowl ad with the dancing quick response (QR) code impresses you, but you’d never invest a red cent into crypto.

Let’s face it, sales and marketing need to become one function. And before going that far, at the very least, they need to at least talk and collaborate.



“REV” tech is merging into alpha platforms in the throes of consolidation. The industry is finally shifting to a unified GTM platform approach. Sales and marketing teams come together under the revenue operations (RevOps) umbrella as one function, further blurring the lines. There’s a clear and present danger to assigning quotas now—not even a “nice to have” dalliance or futuristic innovation. Management demands that marketers carry a quota as a strategic imperative and generate actual revenue to insulate against stock market vacillation.

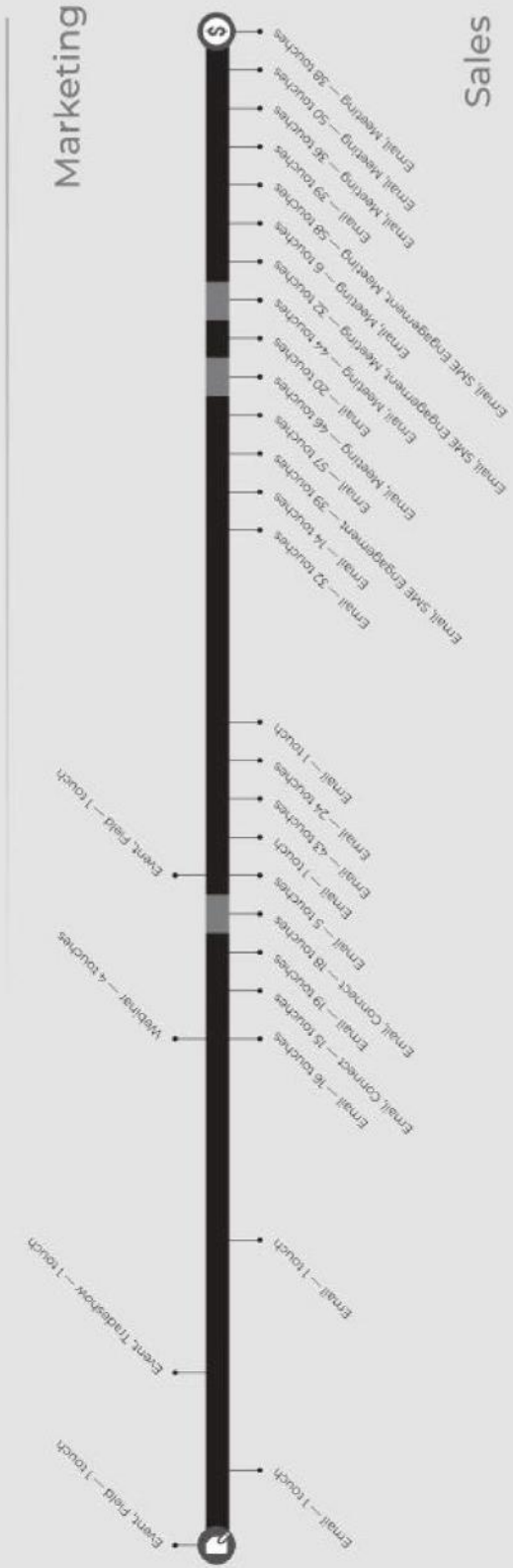
We had Seth Marrs from Forrester on the program building a whole drill around getting rid of the MQL model and centralizing the entire organization on pipeline-generated or qualified opportunities.

That’s why all webinar effectiveness is traditionally measured wrong because it still hasn’t caught up to the new North Star metric: revenue. If you think about your events in terms of pipeline generated and meetings set, you first want to get rid of the crude sign-up form forcing prospects to begrudgingly fill out their email, company name, title, and so on.

In HYPCCYCL, we use a LinkedIn authentication plug-in to access the content and any event on our platform. We primarily do this to observe real people engaging with our events. We wanted to know this answer, “When they peruse, what pages on our website are they viewing, specifically?” That kind of data helps us generate more insights about our customers than a simple Excel dumpster file.

# Buyer's Journey—Touch Timeline

Sales touches — **645**  
 Marketing touches — **7**  
 Total days — **182**



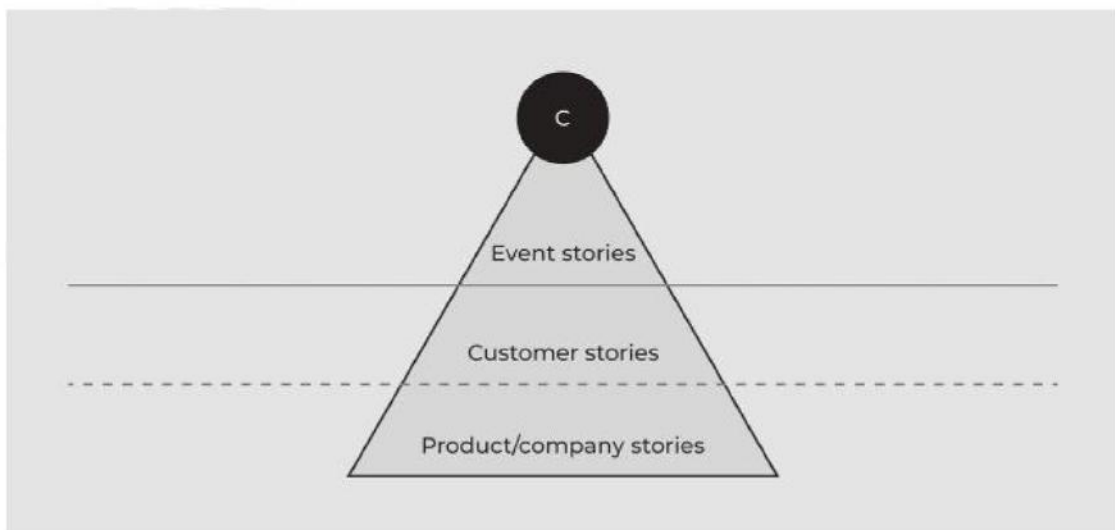
Rather than measure the MQLs from your events, tie them into retention, renewals, and expansion. Use a tool like LeanData to create an attribution “subway map” of all the customer interaction touch points from first contact to close so you can understand where your interactive events fall in the attribution waterfall. Events can influence big deals even if they don’t directly source them.

Our sponsors and partners drove new business during our events and even on the simulated demos. Our contestants pitched real CMOs and got meetings the following week. It was surreal watching these real-time transactions happen. We heard reports of test drives and opportunities generated, even closed-won deals, just from signing up for our lowest tier brand sponsorship, not to mention enriched leads with the higher packages.

The “GTM Games” became a phenomenal exposure point for up-and-coming SaaS vendors in the marketing and sales technology spheres. In our community, we never placed an embargo on pitching. We implored our sponsors to add value if they were to sell in the community. Give out enablement content, a free trial, an e-book, or anything that is reciprocal—“give to get.” Many communities eschew this practice, but our GTM Slack has a “GTM Stack” channel where tool fanatics unite to AB test all the latest REV tech and share war stories. “Buyers buy,” we like to say in Yogi Berra parlance.

Measuring effectiveness can come in brand voice lift if you have a social listening platform. Slintel (now 6sense) saw a 30% jump in brand search impressions.

We think the best measure of success is the awareness when you follow up and they remember a particularly spicy moment. We remember how intensely Oren Klaff coached—viewers were raving for weeks about it—or the time Scott Leese gave a seller tough love on his negotiation drill punching a hole in his business model. He took the feedback like a champion. Your memorable event itself becomes the story. So then the new customer-centric event model can flip every paradigm like this:



*Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.*

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Your best and most obvious metric for event success is *booked meetings during or after* the events. Other key performance indicators (KPIs) might include “quality conversations” or account executive (AE)-accepted “opportunities.” The major problem with event marketing transitioning to sales is a wonky handoff after the event. Marketing held the event, and now it’s the job of sales to close attendees. Sellers and marketers need to cross-train with Customer Success. Reframe this intention to “educating potential buyers.” We are helping sellers to be customer-centric and improve their ability to listen and be genuinely curious. For marketers, as per Geoffrey Moore, it’s all about owning the market, but in the sense that you’re “owning the relationship,” the prospect/customer feels that you care, and they’re not a marketing “lead” or number for you.

Suppose marketers hand all their leads to sales departments and dump them automatically. If marketing departments would instead call their audience and analyze their pipeline, it would reveal a great degree of insight. As Sean Sheppard instructs, have a conversation with “Ms. Right” to understand who is “Ms. Right Now.” When that happens (natural qualification), it’s the moment to involve the sales team.

Marketing has to create this smooth transition to give sellers not simply interested people but fully qualified. You have to be willing to say no and walk away versus process every lead who fogs a mirror. If your event was purely educational and they’re still wishy-washy about pulling the trigger in the next couple of months, it’s okay to leave them alone. Don’t hammer and subject them to your carnivorous sales department. Let them come to an epiphany on their own and find the road not taken on their journey back to your door. Then you’ll make a customer for life.