

OCTOBER 2026

The 2026 State of B2B GTM Report



Kyle Poyar

GROWTH UNHINGED



Maja Voje



GTM Strategist

What to expect

1. **Executive summary.** Pages 2-7.
2. **GTM motions and priorities.** Pages 8-14.
3. **The channels that are working today.** Pages 15-26.
4. **The channels that are heating up.** Pages 27-31.
5. **The GTM tech stack of the future.** Pages 32-37.
6. **Closing thoughts.** Pages 38-41.



Special thank you to our partners!

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Gold partners	 Exclusive data partner  Exclusive performance partner
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The state of B2B GTM in 2026

In September 2026 we polled 300 software and AI companies to see what's working in B2B GTM. This is our second year running the survey. The 2026 participants include a large sample of AI-native companies and those with deal sizes of \$5-50k per year.

The theme this year: pipeline, pipeline, pipeline. Pipeline is the #1 priority for GTM leaders. Growth marketers are the highest priority GTM hire. Distribution takes center stage.

The human experience has become more important in the AI era. While AI gets the attention, founder-led sales is the most popular GTM motion (even up to \$10M ARR). Network and intros are the most popular and the most effective GTM channel.

Paid ads grow in importance with GTM teams pushing spend to Meta, LinkedIn, and now ChatGPT Ads.

AI search (AEO) is now a core channel. It cracked the 'tried-and-true' quadrant of the GTM scorecard and remained the #1 channel where teams plan to increase GTM investment in 2027.

Signals continue to heat up, too. Companies are turning to a combination of 1st party and 3rd party data, especially product usage and website engagement data.

43% of GTM teams say they're seeing real impact from AI, up sharply from last year (24%). GTM teams became particularly obsessed with Claude Code.

GTM tech keeps changing with a wave of tool consolidation and innovation. 7 of the top 10 'must try' GTM tools weren't on the list last year.

- Kyle & Maja





A note from our presenting partner

2026 is a big year for GTM, and the entire space is changing rapidly. That's why I left Webflow after 13 years to create Ploy, the first AI-native website platform that powers a business's growth engine.

We believe the website remains the most important surface area for a business. Companies need an enterprise-grade platform for AEO, CRO, landing pages, and ABM to move as fast as their ambitions. Ploy understands your business goals, your context, and your design. It works while you sleep.

Customers like Clay use Ploy to build [lead magnets](#), SEO pages, and [content hubs](#). Startups are also using us to power their agentic websites, get found in AI chat, and turn their site into an always-on, self-improving engine that optimizes for their ICP.

I'm happy to connect and show you what Ploy can do for your company at ploy.ai/demo!



Bryant Chou, co-founder of Ploy

Presented by **ploy**

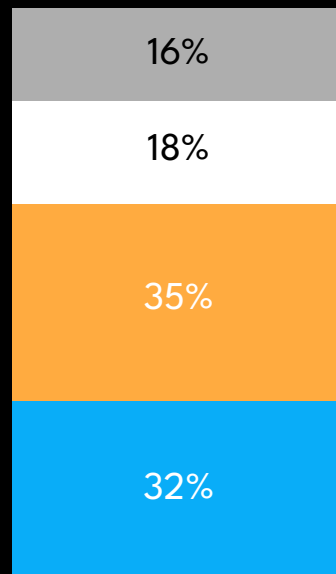


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We polled 300 B2B software and AI companies to see what's working in GTM

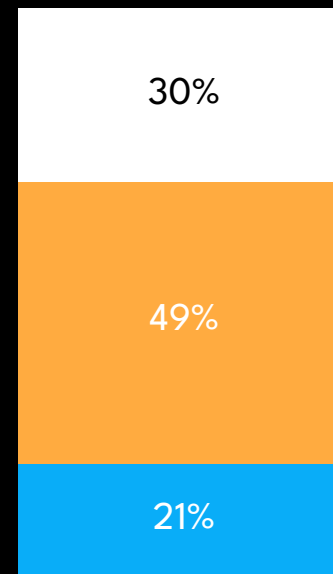
Mix by ARR

- <\$1M ARR
- \$10-50M ARR
- \$1-10M ARR
- >\$50M ARR



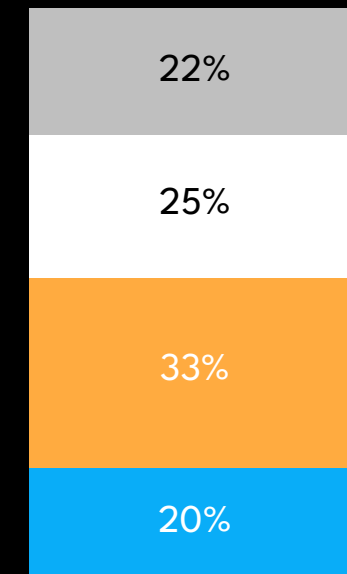
Mix by average ACV*

- <\$5k ACV
- \$5-50k ACV
- >\$50k ACV



Mix by product type

- Mostly SaaS
- AI-native
- Hybrid SaaS and AI
- Other



Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report (N=300), October 2026 *ACV = Annual Contract Volume

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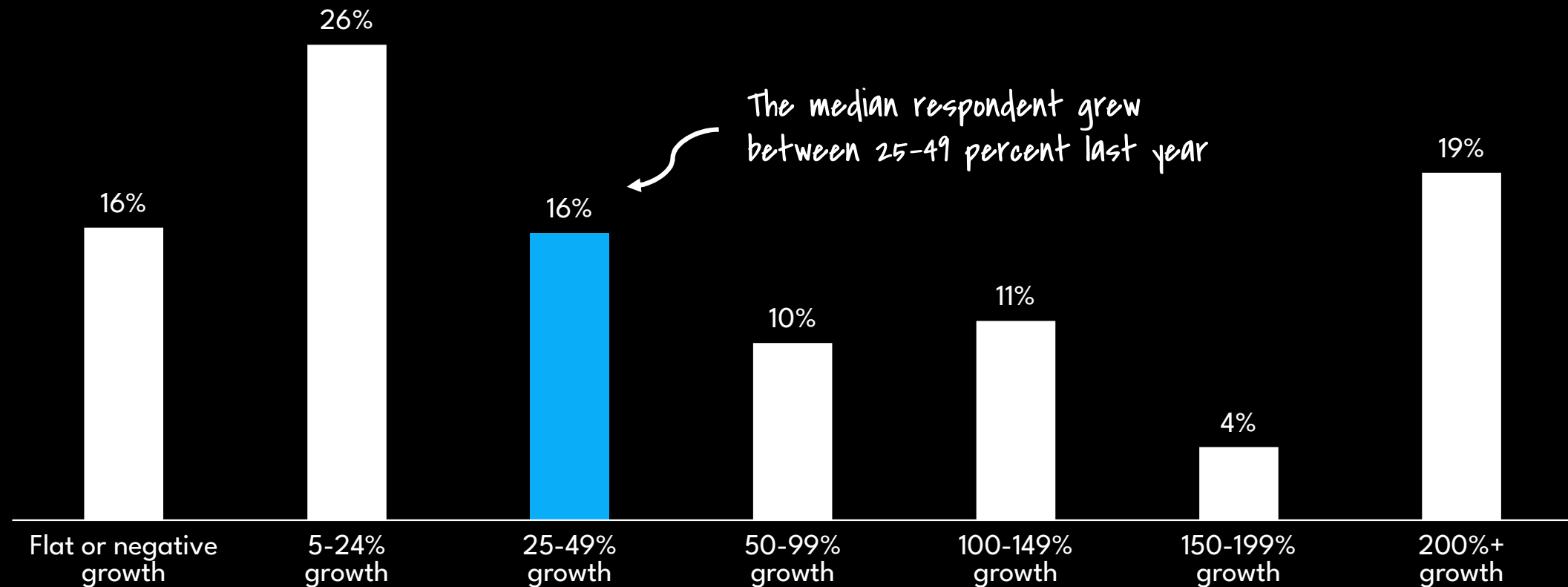


GTM Strategist



The results cover fast and moderate growers

Mix by ARR growth rate



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The focus right now = more pipeline

Biggest GTM challenge for respondents

1

Pipeline

18%

“Turning activity into repeatable, high-intent pipeline. We can generate content, outreach, product launches, and conversations efficiently, especially with AI, but the hard part is identifying the right buyer signals and channels that consistently convert into paying customers.”

2

Scaling repeatably

10%

“Building a repeatable, cost-effective way to acquire paying customers beyond my personal network. The priority is identifying the most responsive customer segment, communicating its value clearly, and converting interest into paid subscriptions with a limited marketing budget.”

3

Positioning

9%

“Repositioning the classical product and the new AI-native product.”

“Competitive differentiation in a crowded market.”

“Breaking through the noise and effectively messaging to the market what we do.”



Growth marketing is the #1 priority GTM hire

#1 priority GTM hire	<\$10M ARR (% of respondents)	>\$10M ARR (% of respondents)
Growth marketing	 22%	 16%
Account exec (AE)	 12%	 14%
BDR/SDR	 12%	 5%
AI-native generalist	 11%	 5%
GTM engineer	 10%	 14%
RevOps	 7%	 7%
Product marketing	 7%	 11%
Brand and content marketing	 5%	 5%
Performance marketing	 4%	 8%
Marketing operations	 3%	 12%
Other*	 7%	 3%

*Other includes forward-deployed engineer (FDE), solutions consulting, and free response answers
Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report, October 2026 (N=300)



The 7 main B2B GTM motions in 2026

GTM motion	What it is	Percentage of respondents*
Founder-led sales	Founder and network-driven selling	 26%
Inbound	Content creation to generate leads	 19%
Outbound	Outreach to prospects via email, social media, phone, etc.	 18%
Partners	Collaborating with compatible companies for mutual marketing and sales benefit	 11%
Account-based (ABX^)	Targeting high-value accounts with personalized marketing and sales campaigns	 10%
Product-led growth	Developing solutions for self-onboarding, early value realization, and viral loops	 9%
Paid digital	Media buying to capture your target audience's attention	 7%

^ABX is short for Account-Based Experience

Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report (N=300), October 2026 *Indicates the primary GTM motion



Make sure to play to your strengths

GTM motion	Key ingredient	How to unlock it
Founder-led sales	🔥 hustle	Founder time and hustle, networking
Inbound	🔥 content	Distinct point of view, great storytelling
Outbound	🔥 message	Clear buying and intent signals
Partners	🔥 relationships	Aligned incentives, integrations
Account-based	🔥 ICP	Target account list, high value offers
Product-led growth	🔥 product	Bottom-up adoption, built-in sharing
Paid digital	🔥 paid ROI	Testing at scale, great ad creative



Founder-led GTM gets to the first \$1M ARR, then inbound and outbound ramp up

GTM motion	Revenue scale				Deal size**		
	<\$1M	\$1-10M	\$10-50M	>\$50M	<\$5k ACV	\$5-50k ACV	>\$50k ACV
Founder-led	44%	26%	10%	2%			
Inbound	11%	28%	16%	24%	17%	31%	24%
Outbound	17%	16%	20%	22%	13%	25%	31%
Partners	11%	11%	12%	11%	15%	12%	18%
ABX	8%	8%	14%	11%	9%	11%	19%
PLG	6%	6%	14%	18%	35%	8%	3%
Paid digital	3%	5%	16%	11%	11%	12%	5%

■ Most popular GTM motion
 ■ Second most popular

*Indicates the primary GTM motion **Excluding founder-led for ease of comparison
 Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report (N=300), October 2026



GTM motions: 2026 versus 2025

GTM motion**	2025 Percentage of respondents*	2026 Percentage of respondents*	Trend
Inbound	23%	26%	Up year-on-year
Outbound	19%	24%	Up year-on-year
Partners	10%	15%	Up year-on-year
Account-based (ABX^)	18%	13%	Down year-on-year
Product-led growth	18%	12%	Down year-on-year
Paid digital	12%	10%	Flat year-on-year

^ABX is short for Account-Based Experience **Excluding founder-led for ease of comparison
Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report (N=300), October 2026 *Indicates the primary GTM motion

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B2B companies have 5.5 core channels each

Which GTM channels B2B companies adopted in 2026

Universal	Becoming universal	Still experimental	Niche or untapped
1. Network and intros 62% say it's core	4. Cold outreach (email, LinkedIn) 46% say it's core	T8. Newsletters and editorial content 34% say it's core	12. Ecosystem partnerships 27% say it's core
2. SEO 51% say it's core	5. Intimate events 40% say it's core	T8. Large conferences 34% say it's core	13. Cold calling 20% say it's core
3. LinkedIn posting (founders, ee's) 50% say it's core	6. AI search (aka AEO) 39% say it's core	10. Signal-based outbound 33% say it's core	14. PR 15% say it's core
	7. Paid digital ads 38% say it's core	11. Product launch campaigns 31% say it's core	15. B2B creators 12% say it's core
			16. Agentic campaigns 7% say it's core

The average B2B company has 5.5 core GTM channels, up from 5 last year



Which channels were **hot** and **not** in 2026

Which GTM channels B2B companies adopted in 2026 compared to 2025

Universal	Becoming universal	Still experimental	Niche or untapped
1. Network and intros New for the 2026 report	4. Cold outreach (email, LinkedIn) New for the 2026 report	T8. Newsletters and editorial content New for the 2026 report	12. Ecosystem partnerships Flat
2. SEO Down by 2 points	5. Intimate events Down by 3 points	T8. Large conferences Down by 13 points	13. Cold calling New for the 2026 report
3. LinkedIn posting (founders, ee's) New for the 2026 report	6. AI search (aka AEO) Up by 11 points	10. Signal-based outbound Flat	14. PR Up by 1 point
	7. Paid digital ads Down by 5 points	11. Product launch campaigns Up by 6 points	15. B2B creators Down by 1 point
			16. Agentic campaigns Down by 4 points



Here's what didn't work...

Spray and pray outbound email.

ChatGPT ads - terrible costs, no lift over AEO.

Attending too many large events, lot of effort (if speaking) and honestly not great ROI, too crowded.

I created a lead magnet in the form of a calculator that no one used.

Paying a tier 1 influencer \$24k for a 3 month deal.

We didn't do or try enough. It was a bad GTM effort/year for us.

Sales writing emails manually.

Reddit influence.

100% discount campaign on an entry-level product.

Spent \$1M on a launch campaign that had little measurable ROI.

Agentic outbound (AI SDR) sequences. High volume, near-zero reply rate, and it hurt our sending reputation.

Straight cold outbound without filtering for prospects with the problem we can solve.

Invested into OpenAI Ads -- it was awful.

v1 of AI SDR was shocking.

Reddit ads.

AI created content -- does not work.

Trying to go to US without any brand awareness, without any investment in brand, was a horrible GTM decision.

Sending hand written, physical cards to prospects. We sent over 100, and of those, 4 made it to their intended target.

Mass AI-created content across email and InMail (LinkedIn).

Cold email sequence.

Visiting Warsaw.

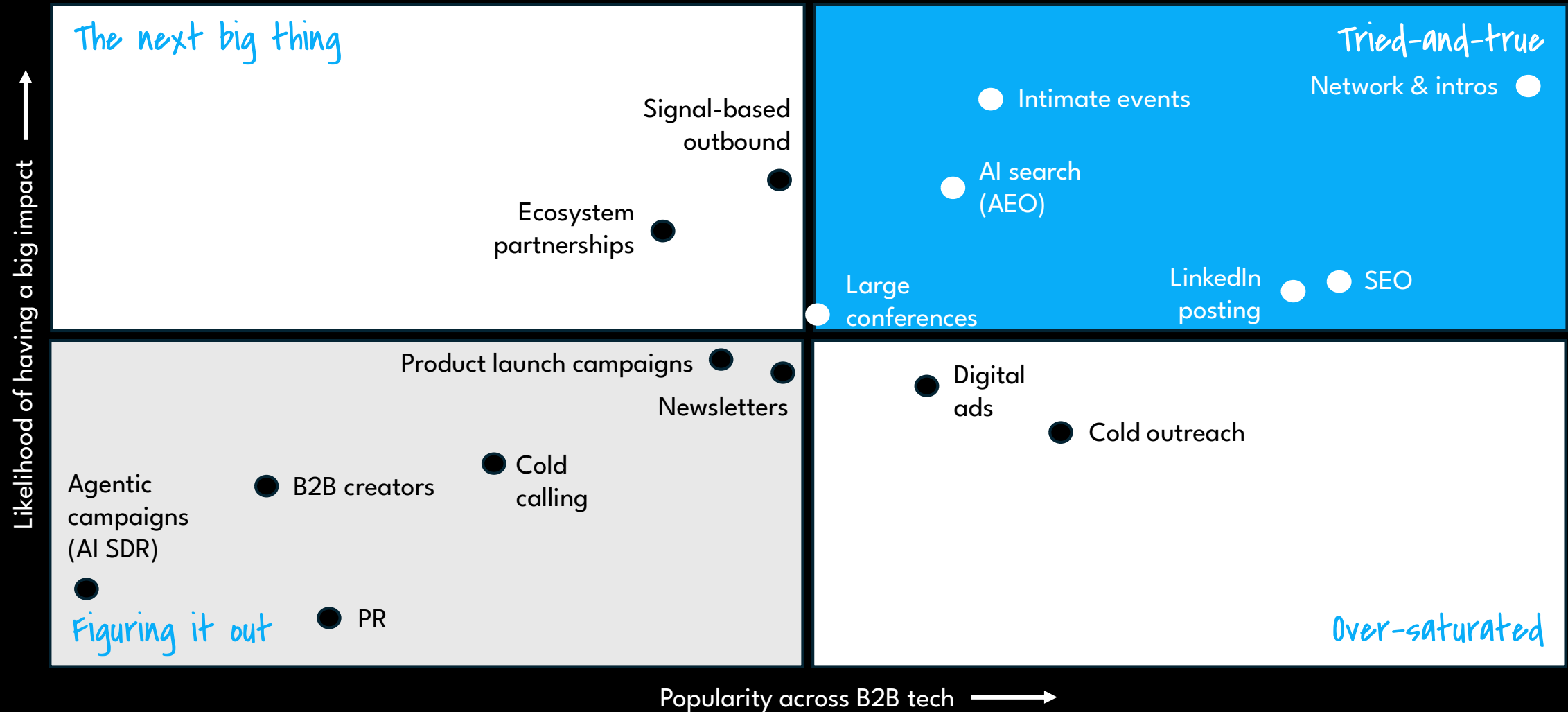
Cold email with superficial personalization.

Cold email.





What did work: The 2026 GTM scorecard





Most popular GTM channels by deal size

<\$5k ACV

#1 – Paid ads 42% say it's in their top 3
#2T – AI search 35% say it's in their top 3
#2T – Network and intros 35% say it's in their top 3
#4 - SEO 34% say it's in their top 3



SEO was #1 last year. Now it's behind AI search.

\$5-50k ACV

#1 – Network and intros 39% say it's in their top 3
#2T – Cold outreach 33% say it's in their top 3
#2T – LinkedIn posting 33% say it's in their top 3
#4 – Signal-based outbound 26% say it's in their top 3



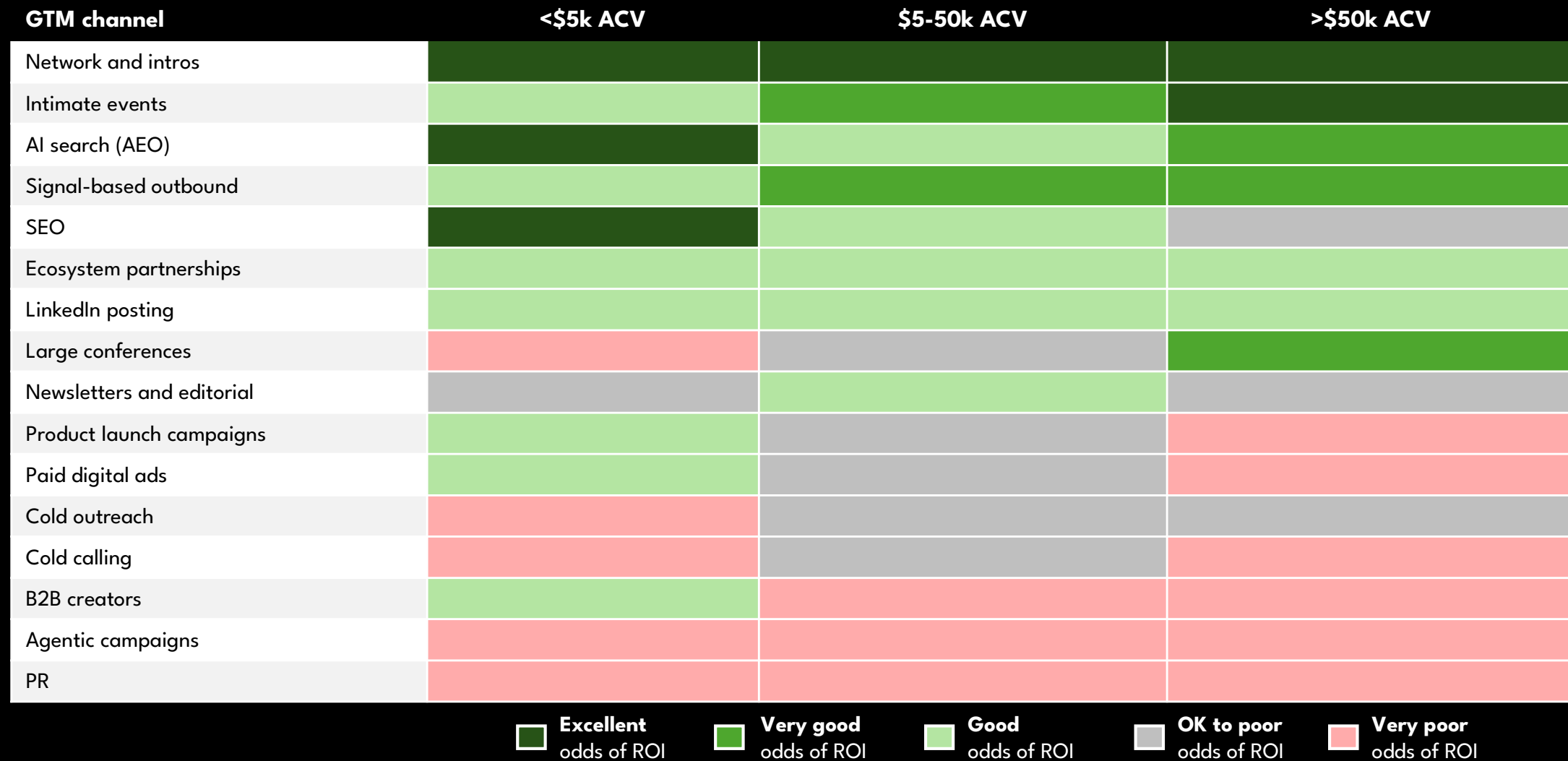
LinkedIn posting is now a real GTM channel

>\$50k ACV

#1 – Network and intros 51% say it's in their top 3
#2 - Intimate events 42% say it's in their top 3
#3 – Large conferences 29% say it's in their top 3
#4 – Signal-based outbound 29% say it's in their top 3



The channel ROI heatmap (deal size)





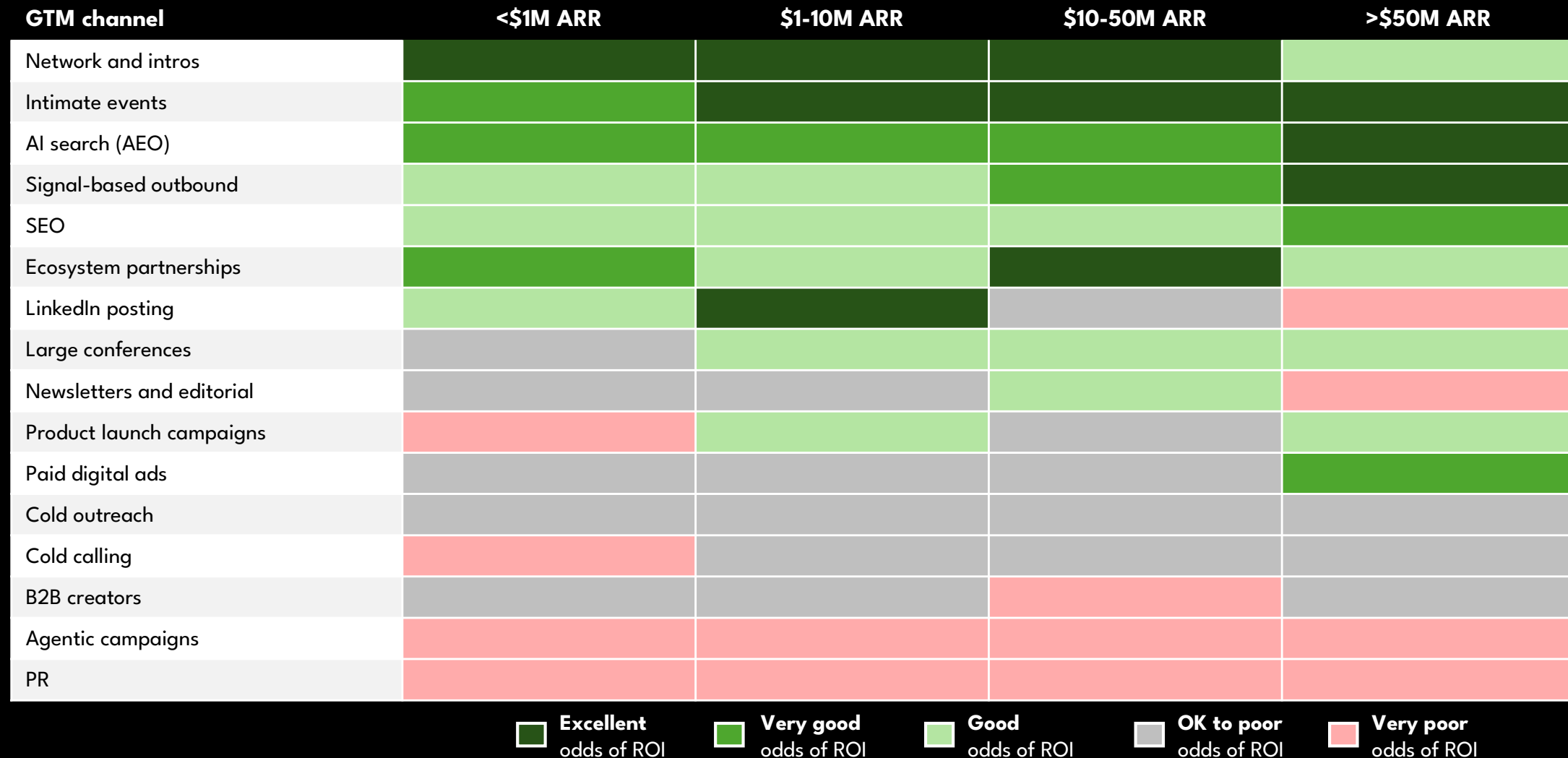
Most popular GTM channels by scale

<\$1M ARR	\$1-10M ARR	\$10-50M ARR	>\$50M ARR
#1 – Network and intros 54% say it's in their top 3	#1 – Network and intros 46% say it's in their top 3	#1 – Intimate events 38% say it's in their top 3	#1 – Paid ads 43% say it's in their top 3
#2 – Cold outreach 41% say it's in their top 3	#2 – LinkedIn posting 31% say it's in their top 3	#2 – Large conferences 37% say it's in their top 3	#2 – Signal-based 33% say it's in their top 3
#3 – LinkedIn posting 40% say it's in their top 3	#3 – Cold outreach 24% say it's in their top 3	#3 – Network and intros 29% say it's in their top 3	#3T – SEO 30% say it's in their top 3
#4 – Signal-based 20% say it's in their top 3	#4 – Intimate events 22% say it's in their top 3	#4 – AI search 25% say it's in their top 3	#3T – Intimate events 30% say it's in their top 3

↑
Paid ads moved from #3 to #1
among large companies this year

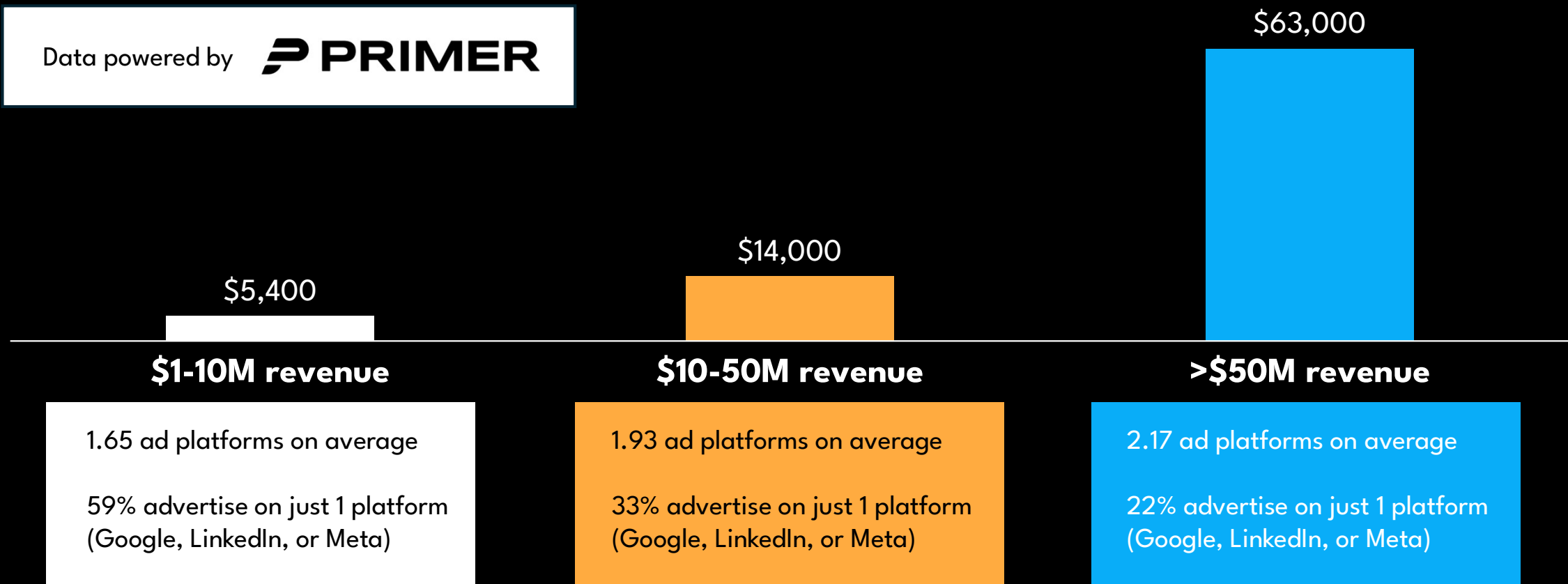


Channel ROI heatmap (scale)



Paid ads: Live data from Primer shows paid ad spend grows significantly at \$50M ARR

Median monthly paid spend by company size



Source: The State of B2B Paid Advertising Report from Primer; N=379 B2B advertisers

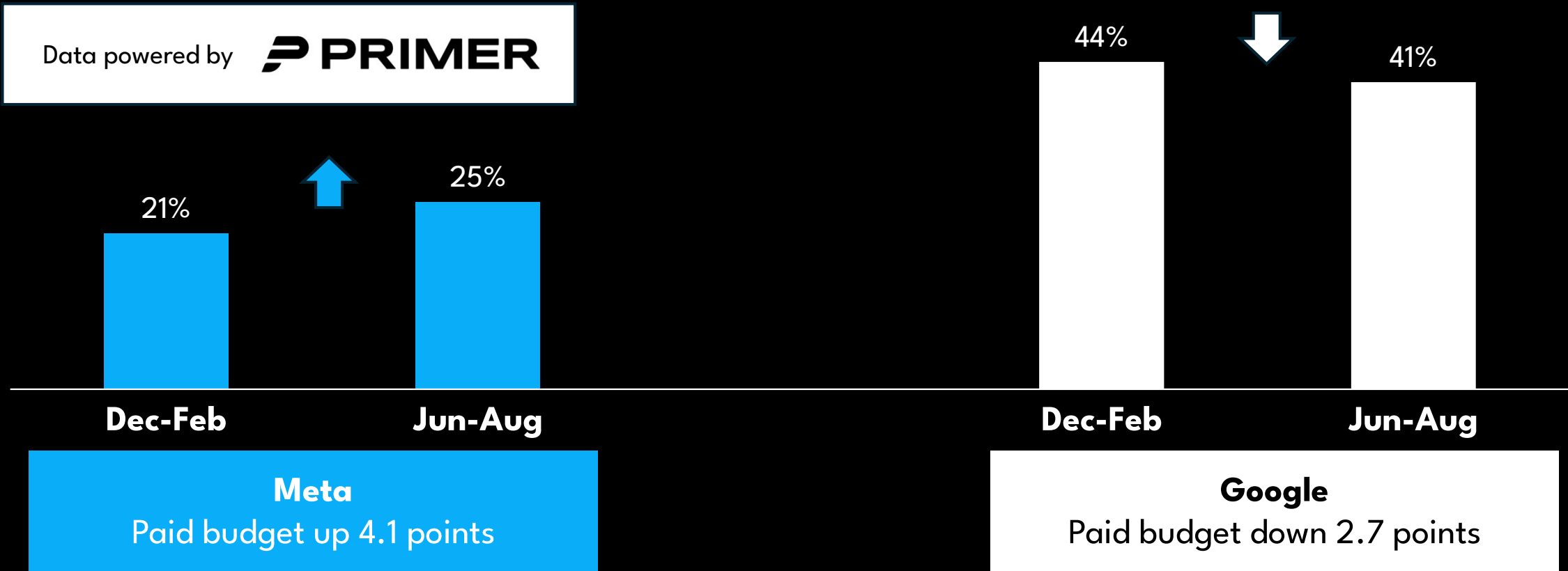
Paid ads: Where B2B teams are advertising

Paid ad channel	% currently using (among those running paid campaigns)	% plan to try in 2027 (among those running paid campaigns)
Google Ads	88%	36%
LinkedIn Ads	45%	41%
Meta Ads	44%	29%
YouTube Ads	6%	23%
Reddit Ads	5%	18%
ChatGPT Ads	3%	39%
TikTok Ads	3%	3%
TV (or CTV) Ads	2%	12%

↑
Major interest in ChatGPT ads heading into 2027

Paid ads: Meta is gaining B2B ad budget while Google is decreasing share

Share of paid budget among B2B advertisers, Meta versus Google



Source: The State of B2B Paid Advertising Report from Primer; N=379 B2B advertisers

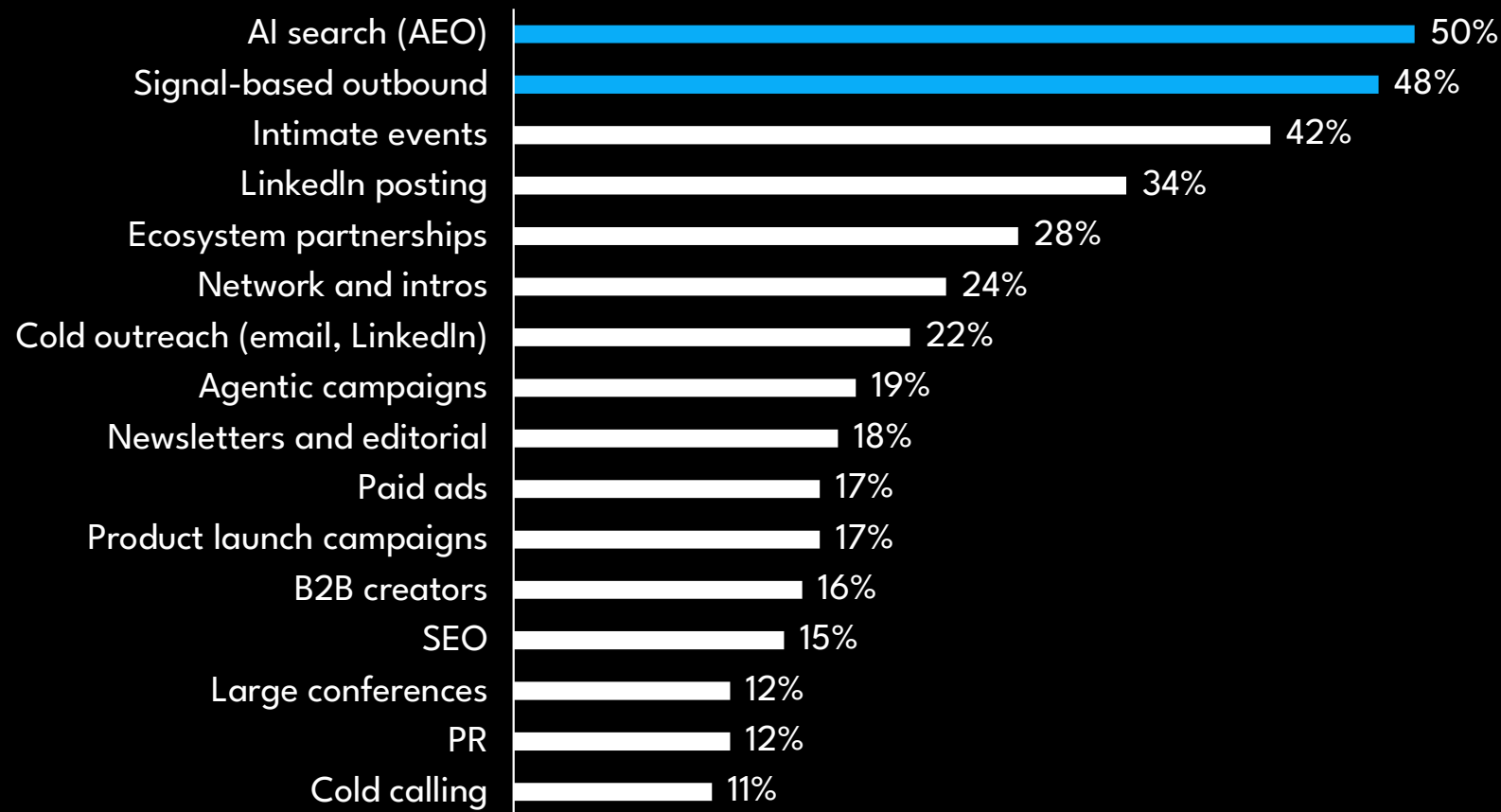
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In 2027 teams are betting on AEO and signals

Where respondents plan to increase GTM investments the most



- The top two channels where companies plan to increase investment are AI search (AEO) and signal-based outbound.
- While large conferences seem to be working, very few plan to extend into more of them.
- Intimate events saw the biggest increase compared to last year's report.



2027 channel bets by company scale

GTM channel	<\$1M ARR	\$1-10M ARR	\$10-50M ARR	>\$50M ARR
AI search (AEO)	42%	51%	54%	59%
Signal-based outbound	40%	48%	58%	50%
Intimate events	31%	45%	54%	46%
LinkedIn posting	49%	33%	27%	11%
Ecosystem partnerships	32%	22%	35%	28%
Network and intros	24%	30%	15%	17%
Cold outreach	31%	25%	13%	7%
Agentic campaigns	21%	16%	17%	26%
Newsletters and editorial	27%	17%	12%	9%
Paid digital ads	11%	21%	10%	28%
Product launch campaigns	13%	22%	15%	17%
B2B creators	16%	15%	13%	20%
SEO	11%	14%	17%	17%
Large conferences	16%	10%	13%	11%
PR	8%	14%	19%	9%
Cold calling	11%	11%	8%	9%

■ Top 3 channel bets by ARR scale

Signals: Which get acted on by GTM teams

% of companies that act on each signal	<\$5k ACV	\$5-50k ACV	>\$50k ACV
Product usage	56%	41%	27%
Content engagement	53%	54%	49%
Website visits	36%	47%	38%
Social activity	29%	31%	29%
Technographic changes	13%	15%	13%
3 rd party intent data	13%	20%	24%
Fundraising or company events	13%	19%	18%
Leadership changes	13%	23%	33%
Hiring activity	11%	31%	24%
Champion movements	11%	31%	35%
None of the above	16%	9%	4%



30-39% adoption



40-49% adoption



50%+ adoption



Signals: Job post data shows that AI-native companies are aggressively staffing GTM teams

GTM signals for AI-native B2B companies compared to other B2B

Data powered by 

		AI-native B2B	Other B2B
GTM job posts	GTM job posts per 100 employees, last 12 mo (median)	14.3	5.9
	GTM job posts per 100 employees, companies with 50 to 199 people	8.2	3.0
GTM headcount	SDRs per 100 AEs	39	23
	RevOps per 100 sellers	11.8	5.4
	GTM engineers per 1,000 GTM people	12.8	0.3
	GTM titles that include "Founding"	4.1%	0.02%
Priorities	GTM project text that names agents	33%	8%

AI-natives ahead AI-natives 10x ahead

Insights from the job post data

At 50-199 people, AI-native orgs post about **2.7x the GTM jobs per employee** of other B2B companies that size.

They staff **more SDRs per AE** and about **twice the RevOps per seller**. The fastest growers post 2x the GTM engineer roles of the slowest.

New GTM roles are emerging for AI-natives

AI-native orgs with 50-199 people grew their headcount by 45% over the past 12 months compared to just 3.7% headcount growth for traditional B2B companies.

The roles they're hiring look different, too.

For every 1,000 GTM job posts, AI-native orgs are looking for 75 forward-deployed engineers (vs. 3 for other B2B companies), 15 AI deployment strategists (vs. 1), 13 GTM engineers (vs. 1), and 19 founding GTM hires (vs. 1).

Source: Sumble analysis of public B2B job posts and tracked headcount, pulled Oct 12, 2026. AI-native B2B vs other B2B companies that posted GTM jobs. Growth = median 12-mo tracked headcount change, 50-199 employees; quartiles within each group. Correlation, not causation; 5,990 AI-native B2B companies. 86% have under 50 people and 70% were founded in 2023 or later. Median headcount grew +25% in 12 months, vs +2.5% at other B2B companies hiring in GTM.

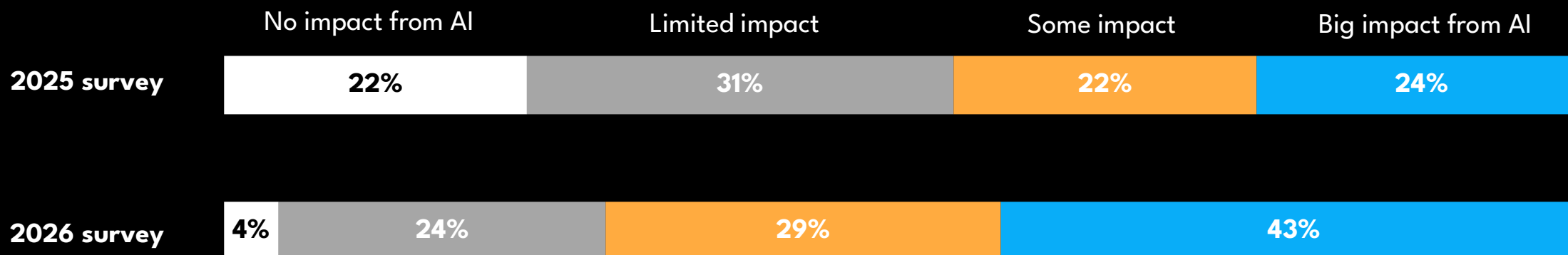
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AI is now a core part of B2B GTM

Level of impact from AI adoption



“Mining data for contextual targeting is amazing.”

“We’ve built agents internally that manage most of the execution and do the work that would probably take at least 5-10 people to do.”

“Exceptional for research and meeting prep, but not yet for cold outbound or nurture.”

“AI has removed a lot of the admin work.”

“AI has allowed us to iterate faster. We can build A/B tested assets and landing pages and iterate on what works faster than before.”

“AI is used for everything right now. But there’s no AI that actually generates SQLs consistently.”





The most impactful GTM tools of 2026

Claude (#1)						
Clay (#2)			HubSpot (#3)		ChatGPT (#4)	
Salesforce		Apollo		LinkedIn	Gong	Codex
Lovable	n8n	ZoomInfo	Attio	Lemlist	HeyReach	Cursor
Granola	Glean	PostHog	Figma	Nooks	Gemini	LeanData

Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report, October 2026 (N=300) *Open-ended responses





Impactful GTM tools: 2026 vs. 2025

Most impactful GTM tools in 2025

1	ChatGPT
2	HubSpot
3	Clay
4	Claude
5	LinkedIn
6	Apollo
7	Gong
8	Notion
9	6sense
10	n8n

Most impactful GTM tools in 2026

1	Claude
2	Clay
3	HubSpot
4	ChatGPT
5	Salesforce (New)
6	Apollo
7	LinkedIn
8	Gong
9	Codex (New)
10	Lovable (New)

Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report, October 2026 (N=300) *Open-ended responses



The ‘must try’ GTM tools of 2026

Claude (#1)						
Clay (#2)				Grok Bot (#3)		
Profound		Apollo		Monaco		Lovable
Common Room						
Ploy	Cursor	Nooks	AirOps	Artisan	Codex	Sumble
n8n	Attio	Firecrawl	Astra	Swan	Whispr	Jev

Source: 2026 State of B2B GTM Report, October 2026 (N=300) *Open-ended responses





Must try GTM tools: 2026 vs. 2025

Must try GTM tools in 2025

- 1 Clay
- 2 Lovable
- 3 n8n
- 4 Instantly
- 5 ChatGPT
- 6 Sora
- 7 Replit
- 8 Apollo
- 9 HeyReach
- 10 Keyplay

Must try GTM tools in 2026

- 1 Claude (**New**)
- 2 Clay
- 3 Grok Bot (**New**)
- 4 Profound (**New**)
- 5 Apollo
- 6 Monaco (**New**)
- 7 Lovable
- 8 Common Room (**New**)
- 9 Ploy (**New**)
- 10 Cursor (**New**)



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The GTM barbell: relationships & automation

There are two ways to win right now: being exceptional at relationships and being exceptional at AI. Both ends of the barbell are working. But beware of the space in between.

In a perfect world, AI helps GTM teams get better at what AI can't replace:

- Signals can tell us who's most likely to buy.
- Highly targeted ads warm prospects up.
- AI agents accelerate account research.
- Networking and introductions help us earn the initial meeting.
- Intimate in-person dinners build trust and seal the deal.

Looking ahead, we believe 2027 will be a wakeup call for GTM budgets. AI adoption accelerated quickly. Now the bill is coming due. What trade-offs are you willing to make?

One more prediction: the next battleground will be positioning and messaging. These softer elements of GTM have been ignored or underappreciated. The result is that every company sounds the same, and customers are tuning out. Being great at AI won't matter if the pitch falls on deaf ears.

Here's to another great year in GTM!

- Kyle & Maja





Go deeper into GTM with these resources

- Subscribe to the [Growth Unhinged](#) newsletter
- Subscribe to the [GTM Strategist](#) newsletter
- Follow [Kyle](#) and [Maja](#) on LinkedIn for near-daily GTM news and advice
- How the GTM playbook has changed in 2026 (by Kyle Poyar)
- The GTM Repository: Build Your Claude Code GTM Brain (by Maja Voje)

Questions?

Contact Kyle (kyle@growthunhinged.com) or Maja to learn more.



Kyle Poyar

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GTM Strategist