Building a Go-to-Market System that Survives the Next Funding Round

Six Go-to-Market Mistakes that Stall Growth
(and the System that Prevents Them)

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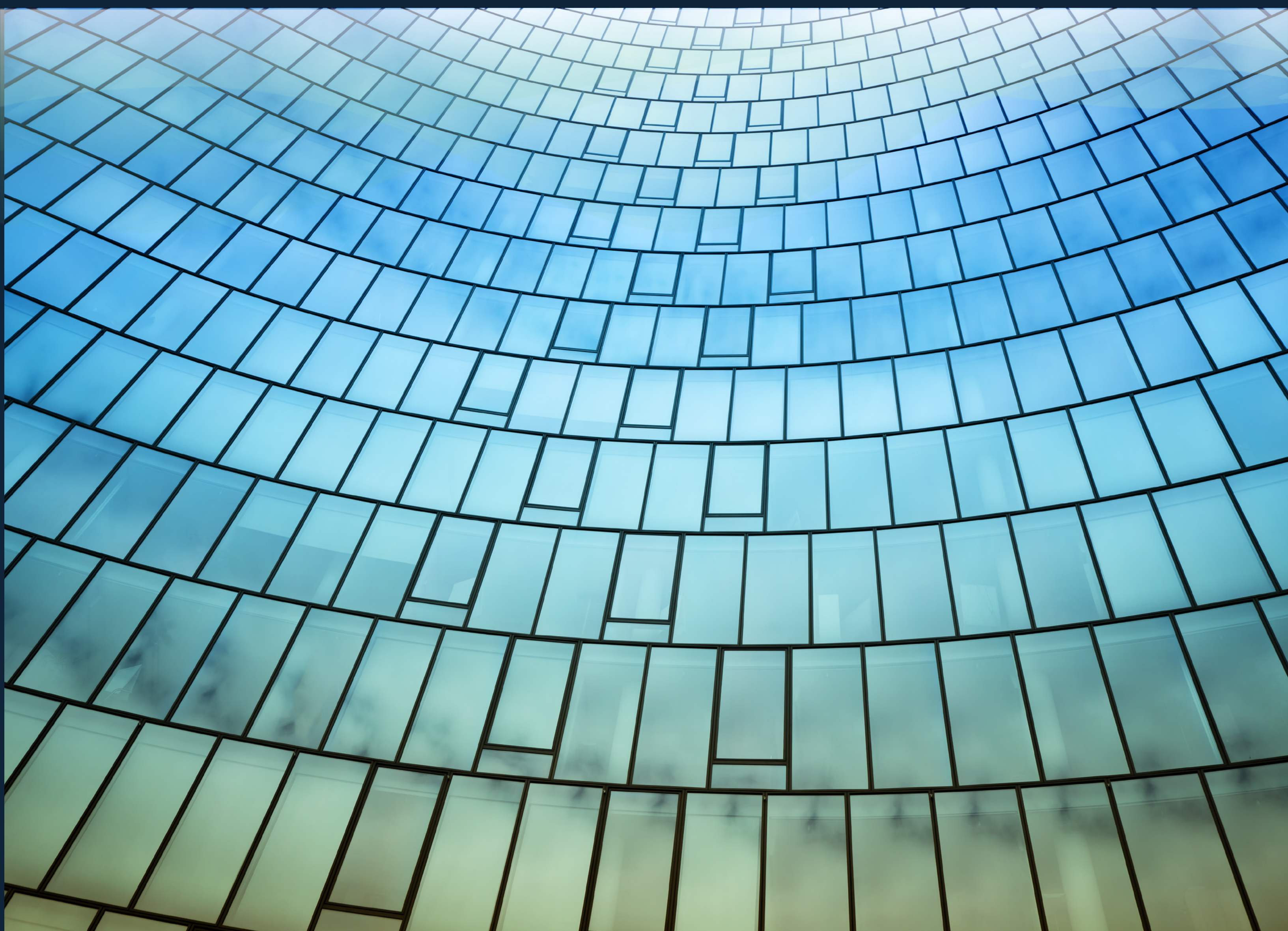

Introduction

This white paper is written for founders, CEOs and C-suite executives at early-stage and growth-stage companies selling into life sciences, healthcare and other regulated markets. It is for the operators navigating a specific and re-curring inflection point: capital has been deployed, growth targets are up, and the marketing model that produced early results is beginning to show its limits.

The insights in this paper are drawn from Rebound's pattern recognition across 500+ go-to-market engagements with companies at similar stages in the same regulated markets, as well as current research on B2B SaaS growth dynamics, startup performance benchmarks, and the competitive realities of AI-driven market compression.

The goal of this paper is to give you a framework for thinking about go-to-market that will keep your marketing architecture from becoming a liability at the very moment your investors are watching most closely.

Executive Summary

The most common go-to-market challenge among early- and growth-stage companies is straightforward: the right capabilities, built at the wrong time, with a structure that cannot evolve as the business changes. Companies focus on the wrong things for the stage they are in, and the gap between effort and outcome widens. That is the pattern Rebound has observed across 500+ engagements, and it is the problem this paper is designed to help you solve.

Companies that close a funding round and deploy capital into marketing are often working from an architecture that made sense at an earlier stage but will be strained by the demands of their next phase of growth. The result is a go-to-market restart between growth milestones: expensive, time-consuming, and visible to the investors whose confidence they are trying to build.

This paper examines why go-to-market systems break at inflection points, why traditional models consistently fail to prevent it and what a system built to evolve looks like in practice.

Go-to-market is not a function you build once. It is a system that must continuously evolve. The companies that win are the ones that establish traction early, build repeatable systems and stay agile as the market changes around them. That requires a systematic approach to building at the right stage, with the right capabilities, not just doing more of the same things faster.

500+ **Life sciences and B2B tech engagements.**	**9.6** **Average client NPS over 3 years**
45 days **Typical go-to-market activation**	**40%** **Average savings vs. in-house build**

Source: Rebound Marketing client data, 2023-2026

1. The market has changed faster than most go-to-market models

There is a specific kind of pressure building inside growth-stage companies right now that did not exist at this intensity five years ago. It has to do with time.

Historically, a company in a specialized vertical like life sciences technology or healthcare could count on a meaningful window between launch and serious competitive pressure. Building a credible market presence took time, and competitors faced the same constraints. That window is closing.

> **"AI has unlocked faster product development, GTM, and distribution, making speed matter more than ever."**
>
> — Bessemer Venture Partners, State of AI 2025

The acceleration is structural. Artificial intelligence has compressed the time it takes to build software, enter a category and establish initial market presence. Y Combinator's Winter 2025 batch was 80% AI-focused, with over 200 companies. Global venture capital investment in AI reached over $100 billion in 2024, up more than 80% year-over-year, with AI capturing nearly one-third of all global venture funding.[1] Healthcare and life sciences AI is the second-largest vertical in the AI startup ecosystem, attracting nearly half of all vertical AI spend in 2025, approximately $1.5 billion.[2]

From months to weeks: How AI has changed the competitive clock

	Traditional SaaS (2020-2023)	AI-First Product (2024-2026)
Timeline to MVP	6 to 18 months	2 to 12 weeks
Development cost	$30K to $500K depending on complexity and compliance requirements	$500 to $20K for AI-assisted MVP; higher for enterprise-grade features
Team size required	3 to 10 people minimum for most builds	1 to 3 people sufficient for initial build
Time to product-marketfit	Standard trajectory	2.4x faster (Menlo Ventures, 2025)
Technology moat	High: proprietary code and architecture	Low: capabilities replicated quickly with AI tools
GTM urgency	Months to prepare a credible market entry	Weeks to credible market entry: the window is shorter

Sources: Y Combinator W24 batch data via Swfte AI, 2025. Menlo Ventures, State of Generative AI in the Enterprise, 2025. Development cost ranges: Ptolemay, How Much Does It Cost to Build SaaS in 2025; NxCode, How to Build a SaaS App with AI in 2026.[3]

The time between when a competitor enters your market and when it can establish enough credibility to threaten your pipeline has shortened materially. Companies that move slowly on go-to-market are giving up ground they may not recover.

The go-to-market models most companies inherit were built for survival, not speed.

The go-to-market models most growth-stage companies inherit from their early stage were built for survival: founder-led selling, relationship-driven pipeline, credibility built conversation by conversation. That model works. Until the market accelerates around it. The difference between a survival-mode go-to-market and a speed-mode go-to-market is exactly what creates the inflection point this paper is designed to address.

The referral economy has a shelf life

Many of the early and growth-stage companies Rebound works with grew their first several million dollars in revenue almost entirely through reputation and referrals. They built something good, word got around, and people who left one company to join another brought their vendor relationships with them. In life sciences, healthcare, insurance, financial services and other regulated markets, this pattern is especially common. Trust travels with people, and when your buyers move, they often bring you along.

That motion is sustainable, right up until it is not. At some point, the network saturates. The warm introductions slow down. And a new kind of competitive pressure arrives: organizations with formal marketing functions, dedicated demand generation budgets, and technology-enabled outreach that can reach your buyers systematically, at scale, before you do.

A pattern playing out in insurance and across regulated markets.

Consider the independent insurance broker market. There are approximately 36,000 independent brokers in the United States. Many have been in business for decades, built on hard-won client relationships and strong reputations. That model sustained them for years.

Now private equity is consolidating the market. PE-backed broker groups arrive with marketing budgets, digital infrastructure, formal demand generation teams and technology platforms that smaller independents cannot match. The independent broker who relied on referrals for twenty years is suddenly competing against an organization with a CMO, a content team and a paid media budget.

The same dynamic is playing out across life sciences, healthcare, financial services and professional services. The accelerant is not always private equity. Sometimes it is a well-funded competitor, a market entrant backed by AI tools, or simply a buyer base that has moved online and now expects to find you there. The result is the same: Delay is a competitive loss. Waiting for more referrals while your market formalizes is not a strategy.

2. What got you here will not get you there

The pattern repeats itself across almost every growth-stage company in regulated markets. Early customers come through the founder's network. Pipeline is built on relationships, referrals and the personal credibility of the person who built the product. The go-to-market motion is informal and founder-dependent, and for a while, it works remarkably well.

Then it stops working. Not suddenly but progressively. The pipeline that was sufficient at $1M ARR starts to feel thin at $5M. The messaging that resonated with early buyers starts to break down as the company moves upmarket or tries to scale into new segments. The founder who was the best salesperson in the company becomes a bottleneck.

The go-to-market motion that worked at $1M, founder-led selling, informal positioning, referral pipeline, becomes a liability at $5M. What worked at $5M becomes a bottleneck at $10M or $20M.

This is a predictable consequence of organizational evolution. The roles, the processes and the marketing motion that created early wins are often the exact things that slow progress at the next stage.

> **"The things that they've built their company on to date are not going to scale. They are not going to evolve. And you also have to intentionally break those things and those habits and processes of the past to make room for that growth moving forward."**
>
> — Dan Goldsmith, Partner, Proofpoint Capital[10]

Consider what that evolution looks like in practice. The person leading marketing at a $5M company is almost never the right profile to be the CMO at $25M. Not because they are not talented but because the job is fundamentally different. A senior marketing leader hired to establish a brand, create initial market visibility and get the founder's story into a repeatable form is doing valuable and necessary work. But as the company hits its next commercial milestones, the needs shift fundamentally. The company needs someone who is growth-oriented and demand-focused: someone who can run pipeline generation programs, manage attribution, and drive measurable revenue contribution from marketing. These are different profiles requiring different skills and different mindsets. And because most CEOs and founders are not marketers, they often do not recognize that the transition has arrived until it has cost them momentum.

The metrics confirm the pattern

The "2025 SaaS Benchmarks Report," drawn from over 800 B2B SaaS companies, finds that the two strongest predictors of long-term, profitable growth are CAC payback period and net revenue retention, neither of which is typically tracked or managed during the founder-led sales phase.[4] Meanwhile, most venture-backed B2B SaaS startups are expected to spend 10% to 25% of ARR on marketing as they scale from seed to Series B, with the appropriate allocation varying significantly by stage.[5]

For companies in regulated markets, the stakes are higher. Buyers in life sciences, healthcare, biopharma, and other compliance-driven industries are sophisticated and risk-averse and operate inside organizations with complex stakeholder dynamics. The credibility signals, the tone and the depth of market understanding required to win these buyers are not things a generalist marketing motion can produce. By the time a generalist agency or a hire without domain fluency understands the environment, momentum has already been lost.

What happens when you skip the foundation and go straight to demand generation.

Companies that invest in paid acquisition, outbound, and demand generation before their ICP is defined, their messaging is validated, and their positioning is clear produce activity that looks busy but does not convert. Demand generation only works when it is built on awareness first. Buyers need repeated exposure to a clear, consistent message before they are ready to engage, making brand awareness the foundation that makes lead generation effective.

The B2B Playbook identifies skipping foundational ICP and messaging work as the number one reason demand generation initiatives fail to produce pipeline. For CEOs and founders, every dollar spent on demand generation before the foundation is in place is a dollar that will likely need to be spent again. The cost is not just the wasted spend. It is the time, the lost pipeline momentum and the skepticism that builds inside the organization when marketing activity fails to produce results.

A shaky foundation does not just slow things down. Downstream efforts built on an unstable base will crack. Build it right before you build on top of it.

Sources: The B2B Playbook, B2B Demand Generation Strategy 2026; CXL, The ICP Gap Costing You Conversions, 2026.[6]

Companies that try to retrofit a go-to-market structure built for an earlier version of the business pay in three currencies: time, deal velocity and momentum. Research is consistent: Early-stage B2B vertical SaaS companies often dedicate 20% to 30% of revenue to marketing, but the effectiveness of that spend is contingent on having the right foundational elements in place.[6] When companies skip foundational work, ICP definition, messaging and positioning, sales and marketing alignment, and move directly to demand generation, they produce activity that looks busy but does not convert.

The answer is not to slow down. It is to build in the right order so every dollar of marketing spend builds on a foundation that can hold it.

What investors are actually watching

At Series A and Series B, investors are not just evaluating revenue growth. They are evaluating the durability of the commercial model. According to Carta's State of Private Markets data, Series A companies are expected to demonstrate traction, scalability and a clear path to growth, not just strong ARR numbers. Series A valuations typically land between $25 million and $50 million, with investors looking for at least $2 to $5 million ARR alongside evidence that the go-to-market model is repeatable, not founder-dependent.[7]

That distinction matters. A founder-dependent go-to-market motion produces revenue. A repeatable go-to-market system produces a fundable business.

3. The four stages of go-to-market maturity

The challenge is consistent across Rebound's 500-plus engagements: companies build go-to-market capabilities in the wrong order, invest in the wrong things at the wrong stage and then spend their next growth phase trying to fix it. The cost is not just financial. It is time, deal velocity and the confidence of the investors and commercial leaders watching from the outside.

The four-stage Marketing Acceleration™ framework exists to solve this problem. It sequences the work in the order that reflects how successful companies build commercial momentum: starting with clarity and codification, moving through initial sales support and market presence, scaling to pipeline generation, and ultimately optimizing for revenue efficiency.

Each stage has a distinct revenue motion, a clear marketing priority and a specific failure mode. The table below is designed to help you see where your company is right now.

Stage	Revenue Motion	Marketing Priority	Common Mistakes
01 Market Definition	Founder-led, relationship-driven	ICP definition, messaging and positioning, MVP website, pitch narrative, visual identity. Plus: digital presence optimized for AI-driven search (SEO/AEO/GEO), LinkedIn company page growth, and thought leadership foundation.	Launching demand generation before messaging is clear and validated with real buyers. Building digital presence without AI search optimization, becoming invisible in buyer searches. Skipping sales and marketing alignment, leaving each person in the company telling a different story.
02 Initial Go-to-Market	First sales motion, early repeatability	Sales enablement, content that answers buyer objections, initial outbound, light campaign testing, LinkedIn activation.	Scaling before the sales motion is repeatable: Wins driven by the founder are not yet a system. Failing to codify messaging into sales tools, so new reps tell a different story. Neglecting sales and marketing alignment at the exact stage the first sales team is being built.
03 Pipeline Scaling	Team selling, targets, expansion	ABM, paid media, events, PR, full-funnel content, demand generation, marketing ops and attribution. All strategy and execution under one integrated team accountable to pipeline.	Spending on brand awareness while pipeline metrics disappoint: the board sees activity, not results. Using fragmented vendors with no unified pipeline accountability, creating disconnection and management burden. Skipping attribution infrastructure, making it impossible to defend marketing spend in budget conversations.
04 Revenue Efficiency	Mature engine, pressure on CAC and ROI	Channel optimization, conversion rate analysis, lifecycle marketing, analytics and forecasting.	Cutting marketing spend when growth slows instead of diagnosing where in the funnel the problem lives. Reducing investment in channels with long payback cycles (SEO, content) that compound over time. Treating retention and expansion as a customer success problem rather than a marketing and revenue problem.

The framework is not a rigid sequence. Some companies enter Rebound's orbit mid-journey, having already completed Market Definition work and needing to accelerate into Pipeline Scaling. Others come in at seed stage with nothing formalized and need to start from the beginning. The value of the framework is that it provides a diagnostic for identifying where a company is, what it needs and what the right next step is, before that becomes obvious from a missed target or a failed raise.

Stage 01: Market Definition, Clarify and Codify

The most costly sequencing error at this stage is not only investing in paid acquisition before messaging is clear. It is starting any demand motion before the message is clear and before digital presence has been established. A growth-oriented company may want to jump straight into LinkedIn advertising, paid search or public relations. All of these require a real investment.

But if the ICP is not sharply defined, if messaging does not reflect a clear competitive differentiation and if the digital properties buyers will check do not communicate that differentiation immediately, any money invested in a demand motion will be wasted. You are casting a wide net and hoping, which is not a strategy for winning sophisticated life sciences buyers. Build the foundation first: ICP, personas, messaging and positioning, and a digital presence that reflects all of it. Then generate demand.

What this stage actually requires: a rigorous ICP definition, a messaging and positioning framework that has been pressure-tested with real buyers, and a narrative and pitch that the founder, the sales team and the marketing team can all tell consistently.

Critically, this stage also requires building a digital presence that reflects the clarity you have established. Your website needs to be sharp, professional and built around your ICP-specific messaging. And in 2026, that means going beyond traditional SEO. AI-driven search, sometimes called AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) or GEO (Generative Engine Optimization), is rapidly changing how your buyers find vendors.[8] Companies that do not optimize for the way AI tools surface recommendations will become invisible to buyers who use those tools to shortlist vendors before ever visiting a website.

What "strong digital presence" actually means at Stage 01.

A strong digital presence gives prospective buyers confidence that they have found the right company. Every digital touchpoint should clearly communicate who you help, the problems you solve, and why your approach is different.

The foundation is a website that accurately reflects the business and speaks directly to your ideal customer profiles (ICPs) and target personas. Your messaging should clearly explain what problem you solve, who you solve it for, and what differentiates your business from the alternatives.

A strong digital presence also makes your business easy to find. In 2026, that means optimizing for traditional search engines as well as AI-powered search experiences through SEO, Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), and Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), so buyers can discover your business wherever they begin their research.

A LinkedIn company profile with a growing follower base and regular thought leadership that establishes the company as a credible voice in its category. This is not cosmetic. Sophisticated buyers, journalists starting a PR story, potential employees and prospective partners will all look here before they look anywhere else.

These three elements are non-negotiables at Stage 01. They are the foundation on which every downstream marketing investment either lands and converts or disappears without a trace.

Your company's LinkedIn presence needs to be aligned to your ICP and target personas, and you need to actively grow your follower count. A company page with 200 followers signals something to a sophisticated buyer. A company page with 5,000 followers signals something very different. That follower base is also the foundation for the thought leadership content that will support your pipeline at Stage 02 and beyond. If you do not build it at Stage 01, you will feel the gap later.

Stage 02: Initial Go-to-Market, Support Selling, Build Presence

The mistake at this stage is trying to scale before the sales motion is repeatable. Early pipeline wins create the temptation to scale what is working. But if wins are still driven by the founder's presence or by individual relationships rather than a repeatable process, scaling them will amplify the inconsistency, not eliminate it.

What this stage requires goes beyond sales enablement. Yes, the team needs the tools to tell the story without the founder in the room. Content must anticipate and answer the objections buyers raise in real conversations. Outbound and LinkedIn need to be activated. Light campaign testing needs to identify which channels and messages generate signal. But building market presence is equally important at this stage, and it is often underweighted.

That means: a content strategy that begins positioning the company as a thought leader in its category; regular LinkedIn activity, both organic thought leadership and targeted paid amplification, to build the audience that will support pipeline in Stage 03; and blogging on topics and themes that reflect the company's core value so the digital presence begins accumulating authority and credibility over time. All of this needs to move in the same direction and reinforce the same message. When it does, it builds momentum. When it doesn't, it produces a lot of activity that looks like marketing but does not compound into traction.

The goal is to build the infrastructure for a sales motion that does not depend on any single person and to generate the first signals about what is working before committing significant budget to scaling it.

Stage 03: Pipeline Scaling, Generate Pipeline at Scale

The mistake at this stage is spending heavily on brand awareness while pipeline metrics disappoint. For founders and commercial leaders who are not marketers, this pattern is worth naming directly: it looks like a company that is very active on LinkedIn, sponsors industry conferences, has a polished website and produces content consistently. The board sees all that activity. What they do not see is a pipeline that shows marketing is generating deals. The problem is not the brand investment. The problem is the absence of demand generation running alongside it. Brand and demand must be built in parallel, with the same level of accountability.

What this stage requires: account-based marketing for high-priority target accounts, a digital strategy and paid media investment in channels where the ICP is reachable and the message has been validated, event and PR strategy, and the marketing operations infrastructure to track attribution and connect marketing activity to pipeline.

This is also the stage where digital performance, including SEM, paid LinkedIn, SEO, AEO and GEO, becomes a primary driver of pipeline contribution. These channels require specialized expertise that is often difficult to hire for and expensive to retain internally. The default response is to bring in multiple vendors: one agency for paid search, another for SEO, a third for content. That approach creates its own set of problems, which section 4 addresses directly. The more effective model is a single integrated team, aligned to your commercial strategy and accountable to pipeline, that owns the full picture across all these channels simultaneously.

Stage 04: Revenue Efficiency, Improve Efficiency and Predictability

The mistake at this stage is cutting spend when growth slows instead of diagnosing what is broken. Companies facing margin pressure or growth headwinds often reduce marketing investment, a reaction that Harvard Business Review research has consistently shown to be counterproductive. Companies that maintain or increase marketing spend during downturns grow 17% faster in the recovery period.[9]

What this stage requires: channel optimization based on performance data, conversion rate analysis across the funnel, lifecycle marketing to reduce churn and increase expansion revenue, and the analytics and forecasting infrastructure to tie marketing investment to revenue outcomes with enough precision to support confident resource allocation decisions.

4. Why traditional models break at each stage

Understanding the four stages of go-to-market maturity is necessary but not sufficient. The harder question is why companies consistently apply the same marketing model regardless of the stage they are in, the commercial goals they are pursuing, the ICP they are targeting or the deal velocity that defines their sales cycle. No two companies build their go-to-market the same way. Treating a dynamic problem as if it has a standard solution is what stalls growth.

That rebuild can be triggered by many things, not just a funding event. It often begins when companies hit a revenue milestone and discover the systems that produced $5 million in ARR cannot produce $15 million. Growth into a new geography can expose messaging that does not resonate with a different market. A shift from selling to early adopters to targeting large enterprise accounts with a land-and-expand motion often requires an entirely different go-to-market approach. Existing client relationships can also create expansion opportunities across multiple therapy areas or brand teams, revealing the absence of a structured process to capture that growth. Each of these inflection points is a go-to-market rebuild in disguise. The companies that avoid them are the ones that built the right structure in the first place.

The answer is structural. The three most common approaches companies take to solving the marketing problem are each optimized for the wrong problem.

The hiring trap

The real cost of a senior marketing hire.

- $300,000 to $500,000: minimum annual cost before adding the execution team they need
- 6 to 9 months: time before a senior hire is operating at full capacity
- 15 to 20 distinct skills: what modern marketing requires at any given time
- 1 profile: what a single hire gives you

A senior marketing hire at Series A may not be the right profile at Series B. The team that generates early traction is often not the team that scales. And in a market where AI has compressed competitor ramp time, six to nine months of delay is not a planning risk. It is a competitive one.

The hiring trap is compounded in regulated markets. A VP of marketing with deep life sciences or healthcare experience commands a premium. Finding one who also brings strong demand generation capabilities, digital performance depth and the management skills to build and lead an execution team is extraordinarily difficult. The search alone can take three to six months before a single interview begins.

> **"Once you hire them, we're paying those folks on day one. And it usually takes 6 to 9 months before that role is producing at the level you need."**
>
> — Veronica Cram, Fractional CFO, Founder, Insight Strategic Solutions[11]

The typical next move after making a senior marketing hire is to augment that person with a collection of contractors and agencies to cover the gaps. One vendor handles paid search. Another handles content. A third manages SEO. This creates its own compounding set of problems:

- Disconnection between channels, with no one accountable for the full picture
- Important insights falling through the gaps between vendors who do not communicate with each other
- Misalignment across teams, where the content agency is writing to a different audience than the paid media team is targeting
- A management burden that lands on the VP of marketing, the CEO, or the chief commercial officer, on top of everything else they are already carrying

The fractional executive problem

Fractional CMOs are often positioned as the answer to the hiring trap: senior expertise without the full-time cost. In theory, the model makes sense. In practice, it frequently fails for a predictable reason: fractional executives develop strategy without the execution team to deliver it.

The gap between strategy and execution is where most outsourced marketing relationships underperform. A fractional CMO who produces a positioning framework and a 90-day marketing plan has created value only if someone executes that plan. Without an integrated execution team, the gap between thinking and doing becomes a persistent management burden on the founder — exactly the problem the fractional model was supposed to solve.

There is an additional nuance that most CEOs do not realize until it is too late. A fractional CMO hired in the early stages is typically a brand marketer. That is the right profile when market visibility and establishing the brand are the priority. But as the company grows and hits certain milestones, the needs shift. The company now needs someone who is growth-oriented and demand-focused, someone who can run pipeline generation programs, manage attribution and drive revenue contribution from marketing.

These are fundamentally different profiles. And most CEOs, who are not marketers, do not know what to look for when evaluating a fractional CMO or when the moment has come to switch profiles. The result is often a mismatch between the CMO in seat and the stage the business is actually in, a mismatch that costs momentum before it is even recognized.

The agency problem

Traditional agency relationships present a different set of structural limitations. An important nuance is emerging: a growing number of agencies are now positioning themselves as outsourced marketing partners, often by retrofitting their existing model with outsourced marketing language. The distinction matters. A model built by bolting an outsourced framework onto a traditional agency structure produces the same siloed, activity-focused outcomes with a different name on the contract.

Rebound was built as an outsourced marketing partner from the ground up, not retrofitted. Marketing Acceleration™, the playbooks, the sprint-based execution model, the accountability structure — all of it was designed for early- and growth-stage companies in regulated markets. Clients describe working with Rebound not as managing an agency but as having a marketing function embedded inside their business. That is intentional.

Agencies are built to deliver work, not to own outcomes. The account manager who manages the relationship is typically not the specialist executing the campaigns. The creative team building content often has no context for how it connects to pipeline. The paid media team managing budget has no visibility into whether the leads they are generating convert.

For companies in regulated markets, the agency problem is compounded by domain fluency. Marketing into pharma, biotech, healthcare and other compliance-driven environments requires an understanding of buyer sophistication, compliance considerations, tone and credibility signals that most generalist agencies do not possess. The engagement starts with an education process that costs time, creates risk and produces work that has to be reworked before it can go to market.

One integrated outsourced marketing team has replaced an average of four fragmented contractors and agencies for Rebound clients, reducing management burden, improving output quality, and saving approximately 40% versus building an equivalent in-house capability. And because Rebound operates as an integrated team from day one, the speed advantage compounds. Clients are not waiting six months for a hire to ramp. They are not managing four vendor relationships simultaneously. They are in market in weeks, not quarters.

Not just less expensive. Faster.

The 40% cost savings compared to building in-house is significant. What is often underestimated is the speed advantage. Rebound's integrated model accelerates the process by weeks and in many cases by months. A fully operational marketing team is onboarded in as few as 14 days. Go-to-market activation typically occurs within 45 days. In a market where competitive windows are measured in weeks, that acceleration is not a convenience. It is a strategic advantage.

The backbone of that speed is disciplined project management. Rebound is built on the belief that strong PM discipline is not a back-office function. It is what keeps programs moving fast, accountable and on budget. Every engagement runs on structured sprints, clear ownership and real-time visibility into progress. That is what allows us to deliver six to eight meaningful deliverables per month from the first phase of engagement.

5. What a go-to-market system that evolves actually looks like

The preceding sections have identified the challenge: companies apply marketing models that do not account for where the business is, what its commercial goals are, who its buyers are or what the sales motion looks like. The solution is not a better agency or a different hire. It is a different operating model for go-to-market.

> **"You have to lead with the systems and processes that you're looking to create that are right-sized for your business, and then bring the teams or the workers, whether internally, externally, or AI-enabled, to that work."**
>
> — Dan Goldsmith, Partner, Proofpoint Capital[10]

The integrated strategy-execution model

Most marketing breaks down not in the planning but in the space between planning and delivery. Strategy is developed by one team. Execution is handed off to another. Channels operate in silos. The result is inconsistency, slow decisions and results that never quite match the ambition of the plan.

An integrated model eliminates that gap. At Rebound, strategy, execution and optimization are delivered by a single team working together toward shared commercial outcomes. The brand and product marketers who develop the positioning framework are the same people who create the sales enablement tools and the content. A dedicated digital performance specialist manages paid campaigns, working with the full team so campaign strategy reflects the positioning and speaks to the validated ICP. A marketing operations lead tracks attribution and reports on pipeline contribution, with visibility into what every other team member is doing. What makes this work is not that one person does everything. It is that the people who do different things know each other's work, communicate in real time and never have to receive a creative brief from someone who was not in the strategy conversation. The result is seamless execution: a marketing system where the strategy that gets planned is the strategy that gets delivered, and where every piece of execution builds on what every other piece is producing.

This integration is about efficiency and accountability. When strategy and execution sit under one engagement model, there is no ambiguity about who owns the outcome. Not the activity. The outcome.

The fractional executive problem

Marketing requires different capabilities at different stages, and which capabilities matter most depends on where the business is, what its commercial goals are and what the competitive environment requires. This is not a fixed sequence where brand comes before demand generation which comes before marketing operations. Every company's situation is different.

What is consistent is the principle: the marketing function needs to lean into different disciplines as the business evolves. An early-stage company entering a new market needs brand establishment, messaging clarity and credibility-building before it can effectively run demand generation. A Series B company with strong brand awareness and a working sales motion needs pipeline scaling and attribution infrastructure. A post-Series B organization with mature demand generation needs revenue efficiency and marketing operations to protect and improve marketing ROI.

Rebound's adaptive team model is built around this reality. Rather than staffing a fixed team regardless of the company's stage, Rebound brings the right mix of brand CMO leadership, growth-oriented CMO leadership and execution capabilities at the right time, adjusting as business priorities shift. The result is a marketing function that does not need to be rebuilt every time the company moves to the next stage. It evolves alongside the business.

One integrated team. One accountable outcome.

Rebound's model spans more than 20 marketing roles across brand, product, content, digital and operations. A fully operational marketing team is onboarded in as few as 14 days. Rather than managing four separate agency relationships with disconnected deliverables, clients work with a single integrated team aligned to their commercial strategy and accountable to pipeline. One strategist. One execution pod. One outcome.

The Marketing Acceleration Maturity Assessment and personalized Strategic Roadmap

One of the most consistent findings from Rebound's 500-plus engagements is that the entry point matters more than the destination. The right engagement model, and the right sequence of work, is determined by where the company is, which depends on a specific set of variables:

- Company size and headcount
- Revenue stage and growth trajectory
- Number of existing clients and the health of those relationships
- Whether a formal sales team is in place or sales is still founder-led
- The current state of marketing capabilities, tools and any existing agency relationships

Every Rebound engagement begins with a Marketing Acceleration Maturity Assessment — a structured process for diagnosing where the company is before committing to a roadmap for where it needs to go. Here is how that process works in practice:

01	**Understand where you are now**	A senior fractional CMO engages with your leadership team to understand your current stage, business goals and commercial strategy.
02	**Pressure-test with you**	We challenge the assumptions behind your current go-to-market approach, including which customers you are actually winning and why.
03	**Map the full picture**	We document your ICP, target personas, buying cycle complexity and the current state of your go-to-market motion.
04	**Assess existing resources**	We evaluate existing marketing capabilities, tech stack, current agency or contractor relationships, and how sales and marketing are currently aligned to drive go-to-market impact.
05	**Deliver your custom roadmap**	We assess the maturity of your marketing organization and produce a personalized roadmap for what marketing needs to become to successfully support the business, in the right sequence.

The output is a personalized Strategic Roadmap: a plan built for the client's specific stage, market, product and competitive environment. It tells the client exactly what will be done, in what order, and why, before the first sprint begins. It sequences the four stages of Marketing Acceleration™ in the order that matches where the business is and what it needs next, not in the order that is easiest to sell.

That roadmap is also a commitment mechanism. It aligns the founder, the board and the marketing team around a shared definition of success and a shared understanding of how the work will be sequenced. In environments where deal cycles can be long (12 - 18 months), relationships are complex and credibility takes time to build, that kind of structural clarity is not just useful. It is competitive advantage.

Domain fluency as a non-negotiable starting point

Marketing into life sciences, healthcare, biopharma and regulated markets requires a level of market understanding that most marketing partners simply do not have at the start of an engagement. Buyers in these markets are sophisticated, risk-averse and operating inside organizations with complex stakeholder dynamics and real compliance considerations. The credibility signals that matter, the tone that earns trust and the understanding of the buyer's world that makes a conversation possible are not things that can be learned on the job.

Domain fluency is not a differentiator in this context. Here is what that means: it is not the thing that makes Rebound better than the competition. It is the minimum requirement for being in the room at all. A partner without it will spend the first weeks of an engagement getting educated on the basics of the market, which costs time, creates execution risk and produces work that has to be reworked before it can go to market.

Rebound was built in these markets. The team brings direct experience in life sciences, healthcare and regulated B2B commercial environments, which means engagements start with market fluency already in place. There is no onboarding tax. Clients do not pay for the learning curve. They pay for execution that is right the first time.

That fluency extends to international market entry. For companies expanding into Europe, Rebound brings working knowledge of GDPR requirements and the compliance expectations that govern how regulated-market companies can market, communicate and generate demand across EU markets. For international companies entering the US, Rebound brings the commercial and cultural fluency that makes the difference between a market entry that gains traction and one that stalls waiting for a partner to get up to speed.

14 days **To fully operational marketing team**	**45 days** **To structured GTM activation**
6 to 8 **Deliverables per month, first phase**	**30 to 90** **Days to early pipeline signals in market**

Source: Rebound Marketing engagement data, 2023-2026.

6. What to build, and when

The practical question most founders and CEOs arrive at after reading a framework like this is: given where we are right now, what should we actually be doing?

The answer depends on stage, and stage is defined by more than a funding round. The right starting point is shaped by company size, employee count, the size of the marketing and sales organizations, revenue stage, number of clients, the existing sales motion, sales and marketing alignment and what the commercial strategy calls for over the next 12 to 18 months. What follows is a diagnostic guide.

If you are a startup through Series A: Start with the foundation

If your pipeline still runs through the founder, if different people in your company describe what you do differently or if you have run demand generation and seen limited results, the work is foundational. Before investing in paid acquisition, ABM or content at scale, get these in place:

- A rigorous ICP definition that has been tested against actual win/loss data
- A deep understanding of your target personas: their pain points, what they are trying to solve, and how your product addresses those specific problems
- A messaging and positioning framework that gives every customer-facing person a consistent story
- A minimum viable website that creates credibility with your buyers in the first ten seconds, optimized for AI-driven search (SEO, AEO, and GEO)
- A sales playbook that allows your team to replicate the founder's best conversations
- A LinkedIn company presence with a follower growth strategy, aligned to your ICP
- A full-funnel content strategy that begins positioning you as a thought leader in your market
- Industry event presence, selected based on where your ICP is, not on brand familiarity
- An earned media and PR foundation, built on a strong and accurate digital presence as the prerequisite

The cost of skipping this work is not paid immediately. It is paid at your next funding round, when investors ask to see pipeline data that demonstrates the go-to-market model works without the founder in every deal.

If you are Series A to Series B: Build the system

If the foundation is in place but pipeline is still inconsistent, the work is systematic. This is the stage where the sales motion needs to become repeatable without depending on individual relationships. Priorities:

- Sales enablement that gives the team tools to win without the founder present
- Initial outbound and LinkedIn presence that builds pipeline from new channels
- Light channel testing to identify where your buyers are and what messages convert
- Marketing operations infrastructure to track attribution before you scale spend alone cannot produce.

The temptation at this stage is to scale what is working. The discipline is to ensure it is working, meaning it converts consistently and not just occasionally, before committing significant budget.

If you are post-Series A and growing: Scale and optimize

If you have a repeatable sales motion and need to scale pipeline, the work is about reach, efficiency and accountability. This is where digital performance channels, including SEM, paid LinkedIn, SEO, AEO, and GEO, become primary drivers of pipeline contribution, and where marketing operations and attribution infrastructure become critical to defending marketing budget in C-suite conversations:

- ABM for high-priority target accounts with defined pipeline targets
- Paid media in channels where the ICP is reachable and message has been validated
- Marketing operations and attribution infrastructure tied to revenue outcomes
- Channel optimization based on CAC payback and pipeline contribution by source

The sequencing principle.

The single most important principle behind a go-to-market system that works is having a systematic approach to building a successful marketing organization, calibrated to where the business is, what its commercial goals are and what the competitive environment requires. Every company Rebound has worked with that pushed ahead before the foundations for their current stage were in place paid a price: wasted spend, unclear attribution and a commercial restart that cost more time and momentum than the speed they were trying to create.

The framework is grounded in 500-plus engagements. The application is specific to each company. Both things are true at the same time.

Conclusion: What to build, and when

The companies that build durable commercial momentum in life sciences, healthcare and regulated markets share a common characteristic. They treat marketing not as a function to be staffed but as a system to be built deliberately, adapted to the stage the business is in and evolved as the business grows.

That distinction matters more now than at any previous point in the history of these markets. The competitive environment has changed. AI has compressed the time it takes for a new entrant to establish credibility and threaten your pipeline. Investors are more sophisticated about the difference between a founder-dependent sales motion and a repeatable go-to-market system. And the cost of building the wrong structure at the wrong stage - in time, momentum, and investor confidence - has never been higher.

The four-stage Marketing Acceleration™ framework is designed to solve this problem by providing a systematic approach to building commercial momentum, one grounded in the patterns of how successful companies actually grow. The framework does not prescribe a rigid sequence. It gives leaders a diagnostic for identifying where the business is, what it needs now and how to build a foundation that holds at every subsequent stage of growth.

There is no universal answer to where a specific company should start. The right entry point, the right capabilities and the right emphasis depend on where the company is, what the market requires and what is already in place. What is universal is the principle: take a systematic approach to building your marketing organization, calibrate it to where the business is and what the market requires, stay adaptive as both change and do not let the marketing system lag behind the business it is supposed to serve.

> **"Clarity before commitment."**
>
> — Veronica Cram, fractional CFO, Founder, Insight Strategic Solutions[11]

That is the real lesson of Marketing Acceleration™. Do not start with the next hire. Start with the next system your business needs.

The companies that win establish traction early, build repeatable systems and stay agile as the market changes around them.

About Rebound Marketing

Rebound is the outsourced marketing partner for early-stage and growth-stage companies selling into life sciences, healthcare and regulated markets. Through Marketing Acceleration™, Rebound's proven outsourced marketing framework, we combine strategy, execution and an adaptive team model to build traction fast and evolve go-to-market as the business grows.

We operate as a complete marketing function from day one, without the cost, delay or rigidity of building internally. Every engagement begins with a Marketing Acceleration Maturity Assessment and a personalized Strategic Roadmap calibrated to the client's stage, market, product and competitive environment, grounded in patterns from 500-plus similar engagements.

Rebound is a three-time Inc. 5000 honoree and a certified women-owned business.

To start a conversation about where your company is on the go-to-market roadmap and what the right next step looks like, visit **ReboundB2B.com** or reach out directly to **Meridith Rohrbaugh**, Founder and CEO, at **MRohrbaugh@ReboundB2B.com**.

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