

European GTM 101

# The honest guide to nailing your strategy

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# The cell chime of doom

Picture it.

You're sat at your desk. Sweat beads running down your neck. Head in hands. A pit in your stomach.

Knowing that when your cell chimes, it's the CEO on the other end. And it's game over.

You just crashed and burned your company's European GTM. And it wasn't a little dip-your-toes-in-to-test-the-water GTM.

It was huge.

The kind of huge that dominates the column inches of Business Insider for 3 weeks straight.

Sounds terrible, right?

Well, the good news is, we're here to tell you how to avoid this nightmare. And instead, sit chamomile tea calm, as your win rate soars and your customers turn into raving fans.

Read on to reveal the GTM secrets of Cognism's Vice President of Global Sales, Mark Bedard, Chief Marketing Officer, Alice De Courcy, and Chief Product Officer, Michelle Bradbury, inspired by real-world European launches.



## CHAPTER 1

# GTM in Europe: Key challenges

Language. Culture. Semantics. Hiring. GDPR compliance. Sales processes. Employment law. The list of hurdles you have to overcome in a European GTM goes on, and on, and on.

But how can you equip yourself to overcome them?

Well, your first step is a mindset change. You can't assume anything. And you can throw any existing recipe for GTM success you have out of the window.

Mark, Alice, and Michelle explain why:

## The legend of the Chevy Nova



Specific to GTM in Europe, the cultural and language differences are tricky pieces to get right. There's a very famous marketing flop from Chevrolet that's relevant here. One of their models, the Chevy Nova, was a huge hit Stateside. So they decided to launch the car to a Spanish-speaking audience.



A more successful piece of marketing from Chevy

But they didn't consider the translation of Nova in Spanish. "No" means no and "Va" means go. So you can see how a vehicle being marketed as the car that doesn't go might struggle to set the market alight.

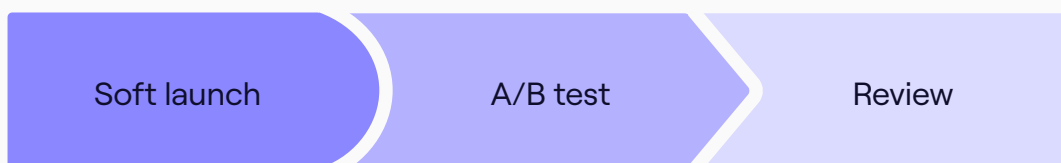
**Note:** Whether the Chevy Nova's name alone tanked its Spanish launch is subject to debate. But it's worth noting here, at the very least, as a hypothetical situation you could encounter if you enter any new territory as a "naive tourist".

Making a mistake on the same scale might seem unlikely, but it shows that you can't take an audience for granted. And just because your GTM strategy worked in one territory doesn't mean it'll work in another.

Plus even literal "understanding" of language isn't enough. You have to account for cultural nuances to understand how a country will perceive and ultimately purchase your product.

For example, UK audiences like a relationship-based sales process that includes greetings and small talk about the weather. On the other side of the coin, US audiences don't want to waste any time before being shown how a product works and the benefits they can realize with it.

This shows the gap US companies have to bridge when they take their product into Europe. And the best way to do that is with a cautious approach.



And only then think about doubling down.

## Why your European GTM will tank without native specialists



One of the main challenges you face in a European GTM is getting your hands on the right information.

To help with this, you should [hire native specialists](#) in the country you're expanding into.



During a recent German GTM at Cognism, we found this process took much longer than it did to find equivalent skill sets in the UK, and, as a result, we had to pay higher salaries to secure the talent. But this is absolutely worth it in the long run.

Because by involving native specialists in early strategic discussions, you'll gain a deeper understanding of the buyers you're targeting.

For example, we learned that the German B2B buyer journey is some years behind the UK buyer journey. So our marketing tactics had to change to reflect this. And with the help of a specialist, we doubled down on events and content syndication to get results - two activities that are low priority in our UK marketing strategy.

Our specialist also helped make the positioning and messaging of our GTM unit more precise, while large projects like website localization ran smoother.

**Note:** Hiring translators who aren't specialists in your niche won't work. Cognism tried this during a German launch but our conversion rate plummeted due to a lack of marketing overlay and buyer understanding.

[Understanding GDPR](#) and how it applies to the country you're expanding into is another key challenge, given the hefty penalties you can incur by failing to comply. Interpretations of GDPR vary in different EU countries, while non-EU countries in Europe may work with equivalent legislation, emphasizing the need for local expertise.

Finally, being aware of [different employment laws](#) will help you structure your GTM team appropriately. For example, working students in Germany take up part-time roles alongside their degree, while UK students take up summer internships to gain relevant experience.

The intricacies involved in each of the points above highlights why you can't transplant a successful GTM strategy from one territory to another.

Different markets have different needs, levels of understanding, and laws. So make sure you soft launch and A/B test, even when you're confident about your GTM approach.

## Using product discovery to make the right calls

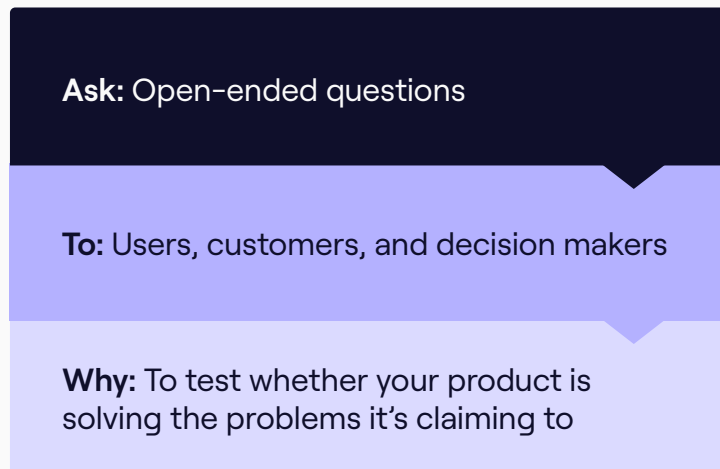


An important thing to remember about European launches is that the continent is extremely diverse, as are its requirements.

And as useful as some assumptions are, it's impossible to take any for granted. For example, depending on the business segment you're in, you'll find people in Germany and the Nordics who are fine with English as the core language of your product and site.

Some German SaaS companies are successfully doing this, taking advantage of the perks that come with appearing to be a UK or US company. In other Central and Southern European countries, however, this approach isn't viable.

To uncover these nuances, you have to challenge every assumption you make. In product marketing, we have a process for this called "Discovery" which looks a little something like this:



That's important to consider from a product perspective because the competitive landscape includes different players in different countries. As a result, you may be able to cater to specific problems in a country and position yourself uniquely in that market.



## CHAPTER 2

# Nailing your product for the European market

After looking at the challenges facing companies entering the European market, we can understand why you might have the jitters.

But you can't be too paranoid about getting everything right from the get-go.

Just like in any GTM, feedback and iteration are key to you achieving PMF. Not over-engineering.

Michelle explains:

## If your product is perfect, you're launching too late



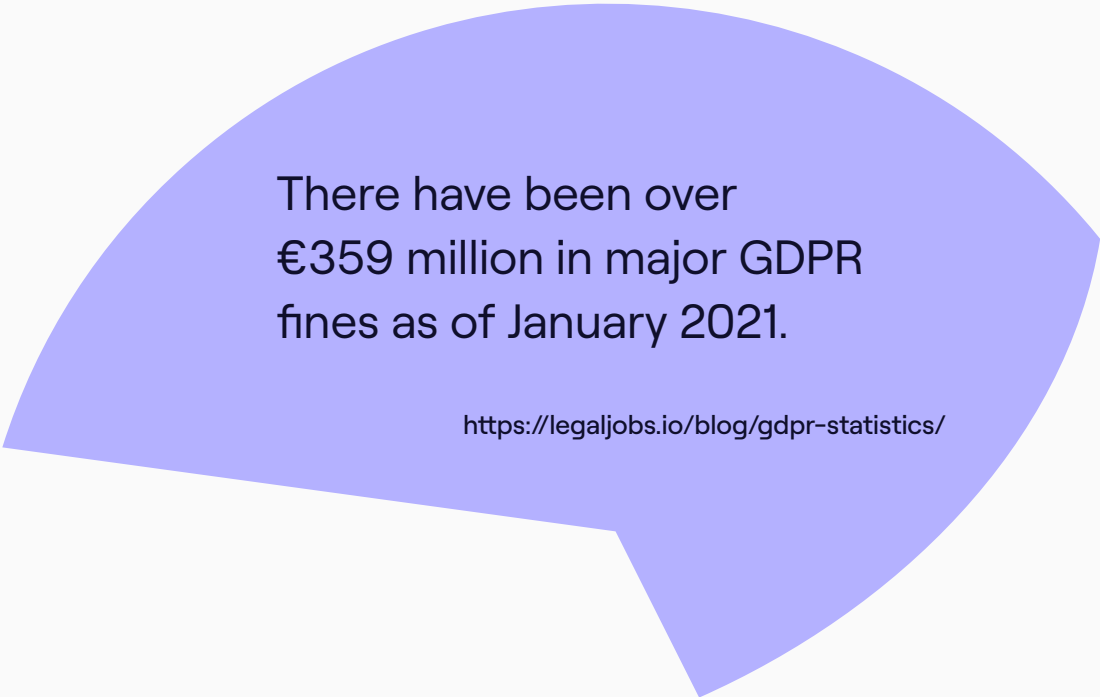
You don't want to wait for your product to be perfect before launching. And if it is perfect, you're launching too late.

You want to iterate and learn from it before you drum up lots of investment, and that's even truer in the context of a new, untested market. Once you have feedback, you can decrease uncertainty by reviewing how the market reacts and create solutions.

**Disclaimer:** Launching in a new market will be more difficult than you imagined.

It's also important to invest in PMF research and align on some pre-agreed metrics. For example, to align sales and product, you'll be looking at conversions as they'd be the clearest way to simplify the PMF assumption.

So say your current market win rate is 25% but your German win rate is 5%. That'd give you a good indication that you're some way off PMF and your GTM needs more work. Asking why and addressing those issues would be your natural next step.



There have been over  
€359 million in major GDPR  
fines as of January 2021.

<https://legaljobs.io/blog/gdpr-statistics/>

Compliance and regulation is another key product consideration when launching in the EU and Europe. Because while you have a level of consistency across the continent due to GDPR, there are cultural differences in interpretation.

With different approaches, rules, and registries, you have to localize your GTM by tapping into the right databases and connecting with the right elements and components.

But arguably the most important compliance consideration is [where your data is hosted](#). If you're operating in Germany, for example, you'll need to guarantee that your customers' data never leaves the country. Whereas in other domains, US data hosting is allowed.

## CHAPTER 3

# 4 traps to avoid when configuring your European GTM sales function

Bad stuff happens.

In fact, it's happened to Cognism in both domestic and European GTMs. That's just the nature of the beast.

But there's some bad stuff you can recover from. And some you really can't.

Here, Mark explores the biggest traps B2Bs fall into and how you can avoid them:

## Trap #1: Siloing product



Arguably **the** biggest error you can make in your European GTM is to allow product to operate in a silo.

And if that does happen, your reps will be shoving square pegs into round holes on demos, and your solution will never achieve its purpose.

To stop this, you need product to:

1. Action first-hand customer feedback at regular intervals.
2. Iterate on your solution so you can better meet the needs of users.



## Trap #2: Making assumptions about the buyer journey

In the US, everyone in B2B SaaS is pushing for an Amazon-style buyer journey, which looks something like this:



But this is light-years ahead of even the most advanced buyer journey in Europe. Take the UK, for example, which has a ton of operational similarities to the US. Their buyer journey looks like this:



The reason for this is British buyers prefer consultation-based purchases. As part of that, they like extended greetings and small talk.

So running a more streamlined process won't work here. Not because it's wrong, but because they're not ready.

In other European countries, you'll encounter similar buyer journey nuances that you have to cater to in your GTM if you want to be successful.

## Trap #3: Telling different stories

AEs are critical to your GTM because they're on the front line.

They're the ones preaching it. They're the ones globalizing it. They're the ones making it a reality in the customer's mind.

So if your AEs aren't driving the same narrative from the off, you're going to get misalignment.

That's going to make it harder for you to achieve PMF and call your GTM a success.

## Trap #4: Using the wrong metrics

When tracking the performance of your AEs and AMs, there's only one thing you should be doing:

And that's tying them to revenue. You need to understand:

- The pipeline they generate
- How pipeline is progressing in the chosen territory
- How pipeline is progressing holistically as well as how it's progressing for your specific product

You can do this by having a firm grasp on:

- When an opportunity was created
- When a conversation started
- How a customer walked through the buying cycle

It's also helpful to know how fast you're selling the product, how much you can sell the product for, and how many logos are leveraging the product.

All of this will allow you to pressure test your product's packaging and pricing, and understand the adoption per region.

## Trap #5: Overcomplicating your solution

Trust us on this one:

Separating your products out too granularly is a serious pain. It's what Cognism did for some time and it meant we pushed customers down avenues they didn't like.

Needless to say, we encountered customer success and adoption challenges in the back half, all while confusing our AEs with different packaging and pricing for what was essentially access to the same platform.

In July 2021, we went through a massive simplification of all our offerings. The aim was to make them easier to understand and to allow our customers to leverage them however they liked.

But starting out like this is what I advise you to do.



## CHAPTER 4

# How to build an inbound model for your European GTM

Marketing's main role in GTM is understanding the customer, translating that understanding into assets, and distributing those assets effectively.

To do that, marketing is product focused in the early stages of GTM, before using paid activity to build awareness and drive demand in its chosen market.

But measuring the success of that is easier said than done, especially without a proven model to follow. Luckily, Alice has one for you:

## Creating (and hitting) marketing targets



At the beginning of your GTM strategy, aiming for a 50/50 split between Inbound and outbound will allow you to:

- Land on achievable benchmarks
- Measure the two against each other from an efficiency/success perspective.

So where do you start when building the inbound model? By building an estimated cost-per-lead (CPL).

At Cognism, we bake in \$30 as our worst-case scenario for content

leads. Meanwhile it's \$250 for direct inbound demo requests from paid advertising.

Next, you need to overlay some predicted conversions from stage to stage across the funnel. They will be different for content and paid direct demo requests. So split these funnels out.

You'll also be able to work out how much budget you'll need to hit the same number of opportunities as outbound.

In this plan you want to get these opportunities from a combination of content and paid ads. The idea behind that being you want to diversify and test different tactics as part of your GTM.

In the table below, you can see how you could work this out and create targets for marketing.

CONTENT PAID / per month	
Spend	\$3000
Leads	100
MBs	8
SQOs	6
CW	1.5

Lead:MB	8%
MB:MA	75%
SQO:CW	25%
CPL	\$30
Spend	\$3000

PAID DIRECT DEMO / GA per month	
Spend	\$2500
Leads	10
MBs	5.3
SQOs	4
CW	1

Lead:MB	53%
MB:MA	75%
SQO:CW	25%
CPL	\$250
Spend	\$2500

## Setting the foundations

To reach your customers, you need to set some critical foundations in place. These include:

- **Marketing strategy**

When making your GTM strategy plan, you need to allow for room to test, try and optimize. This will be your mantra.

Start with an offer. Then look to adapt that offer to the channels that you believe are most likely to convert your customers.

You'll need different offers for TOFU, MOFU, and BOFU. You'll also need to present the offer differently on every channel.

As BOFU campaigns are full of quick wins and key learnings, they're always a good place to start.

Try looking at retargeting audiences on channels such as LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook and building campaigns on Google and Bing that target high intent keywords.

From here, you can start your TOFU and MOFU strategies knowing that you have the lowest hanging fruit ticked off.

- **Content plan**

The first thing to remember when creating a content plan to promote your product or service is to [do your keyword research first](#).

Although free tools are available, paid platforms like [Ahrefs](#) and [SEMrush](#) are far more robust.

They allow you to review the keywords your competitors already rank for and identify niches you can dominate.

You can also track the rank of your target keywords in your dashboard and report your progress to the wider team.

### ■ Partnerships

If you're entering a new market and have limited brand recognition of your own, you need to do some piggybacking.

And identifying companies with a similar ICP will help you do that. Particularly if they have a ton more brand recognition than you.

Teaming up with them on co-marketing initiatives will get you in front of the right people, generating awareness and demand for your product or service.

Some of the best co-marketing initiatives include:

- Joint webinars
- Joint virtual events
- Joint white papers/eBooks
- Guest blogging
- Content sharing (newsletters/social channels)





## CHAPTER 5

# Achieving alignment between sales, marketing and product

So your sales, marketing, and product stakeholders are all ready to go. Now it's time to bring everyone together.

Here's the advice Mark, Alice, and Michelle have on alignment and how it helps keep your European GTM on track:

## Don't have too many cooks in the kitchen

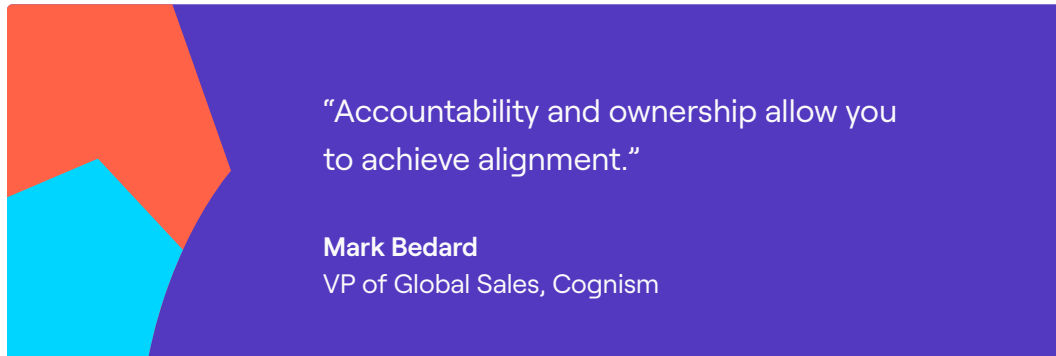


Having too broad of a team is a huge issue for any GTM launch. Instead, you need a few cooks in the kitchen who know everything inside out.

Get a sales head to own the product in totality, comp them based on the product and do the same with marketing. If you're going to start bifurcating and having different product launches, tie it back to their compensation and the KPIs you want to hold them accountable to.

Also, you've got to make sure you dedicate product resource for the launch and beyond, because they're not "one and done" events. And the second you ship out the product and customers start using it, changes need to be made.

But at the end of the day:



“Accountability and ownership allow you to achieve alignment.”

**Mark Bedard**  
VP of Global Sales, Cognism

Solid GTM boils down to crystal clear expectations that you’re holding people to. And then having clear metrics that back those.

## Create a central repository for key findings



As sales, marketing, and product run their own experiments and glean their own insights, you need a central repository where all stakeholders can align on them.

Without this, you could either duplicate work or drift apart. But with it, you can fast forward your GTM efforts.

For example, if marketing wants to own part of the positioning because of some customer feedback they received, it would be good practice to communicate with product so they can reflect that.



## Have a pod mentality



Alignment happens when you get sales, marketing, and product in a pod and hold all stakeholders accountable to pre-agreed KPIs.

At the start of your GTM, the pod should come together to:

- Define your ICP
- Align over messaging and positioning
- Disseminate your findings across each department

After this, the pod should reconvene in weekly catch-ups which include:

- Data deep dives
- Sales team struggles
- Key product pushbacks



“In this pod mentality, where all stakeholders are aligned on revenue and everyone is desperate to hit numbers, you’ll iterate on your original GTM plan and evolve your product.”

**Alice de Courcy**  
CMO, Cognism



**CONCLUSION**

Launching your  
European GTM

Now you're prepped for your European GTM, you need a toolkit to make it a reality. With Cognism, you can:

- Arm your sales and marketing teams with the latest, greatest, and fully GDPR-compliant B2B data
- Help your GTM team meet performance targets with validated mobile numbers and email addresses
- Refresh and enrich your database using our pioneering sales intelligence technology

And much more!

Find out how Cognism can help you today.

[Book a demo](#)

