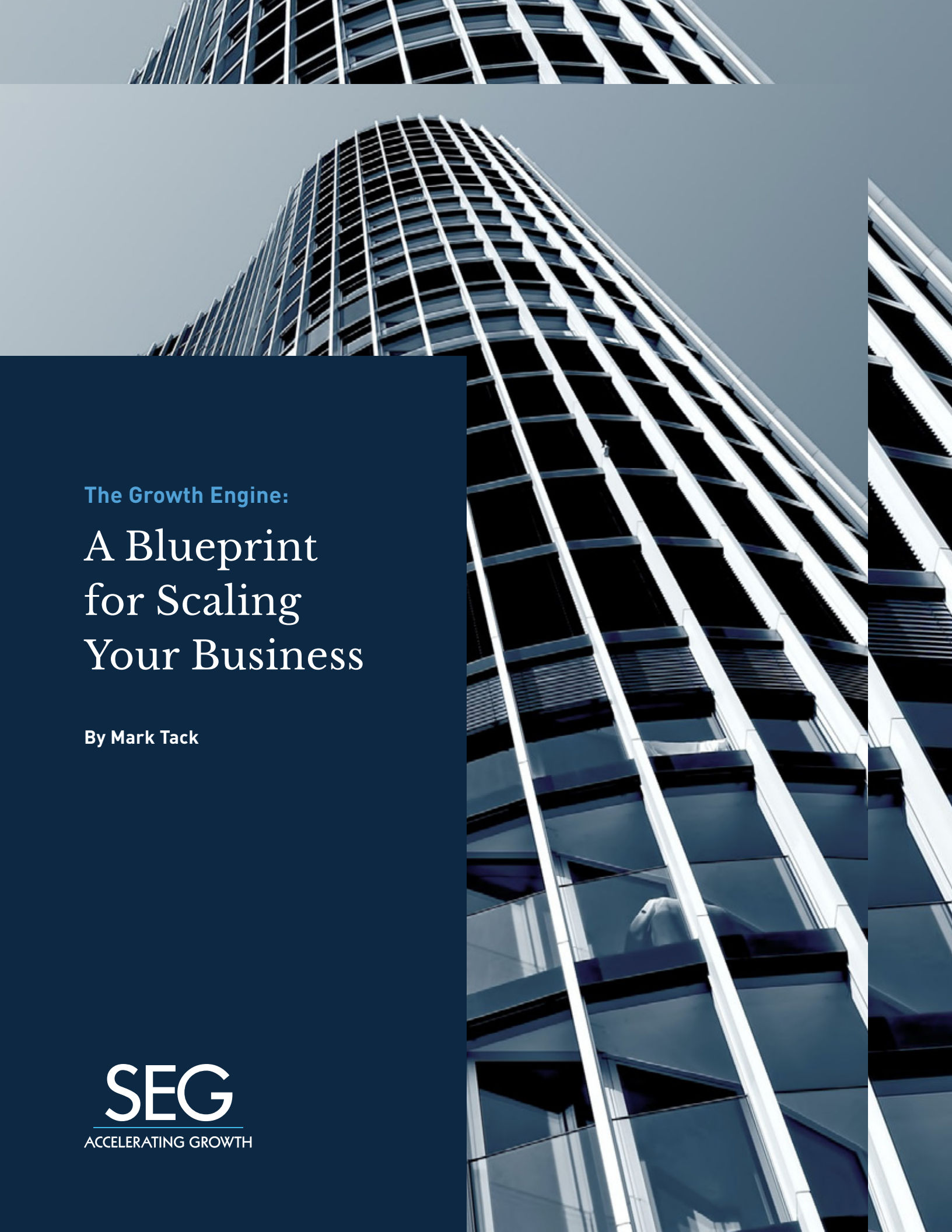




The Growth Engine:

A Blueprint for Scaling Your Business

By Mark Tack

SEG

ACCELERATING GROWTH

Opening & Overview

When I debuted [*The Marketing Engine*](#) back in 2018, two things generally happened. First, people would say, “I love it.” Then they’d ask, “How long does it take to do all of this?”

This is a natural reaction, especially given how much is resting on the shoulders of marketing leaders. Each year, these responsibilities (and pressures) continue to mount.

In my last two project based CMO assignments, I’ve learned a few things applying this engine to growing organizations. I created this ebook as a way to share some of my hits and misses with you, and why I’m expanding and renaming my personal framework for scaling revenue for B2B companies to *The Growth Engine*.



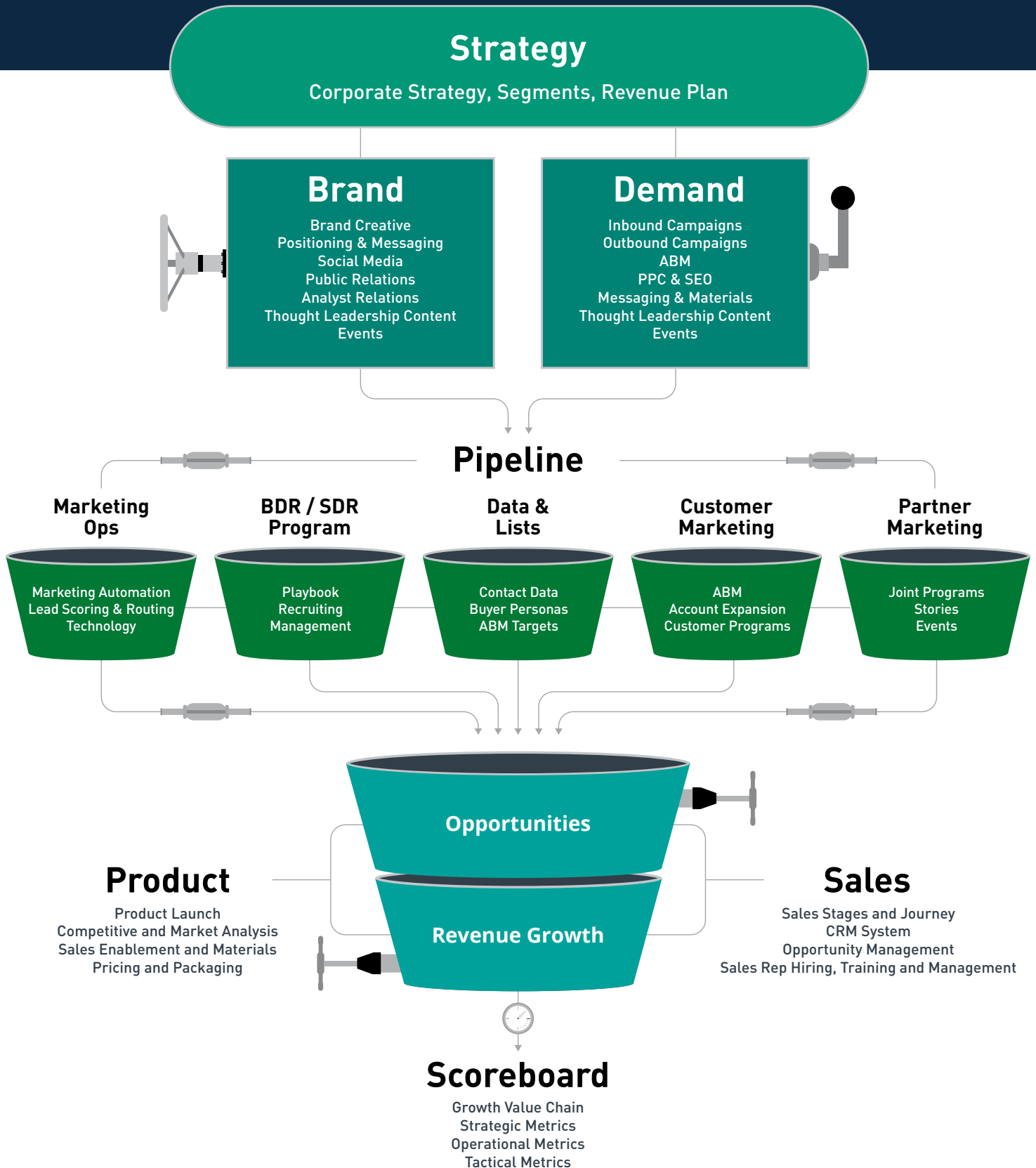
MARK TACK

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Mark Tack is a transformational and entrepreneurial marketing executive and educator skilled at leading organizations through massive change. Over the past 20 years he has led marketing for six private equity / venture backed companies. He partners with CEOs and Boards to navigate transitions and achieve scalable growth. Mark is an expert at building the foundational marketing engine required to establish world-class marketing. He is intensely focused on business outcomes, creating pipeline, and value creation. As a strategist, visionary, entrepreneur, team builder and team leader, Mark re-positions companies, creating new categories, and earns brands the recognition they deserve. Mark is also an adjunct professor at DePaul University who is updating and teaching the course Building Winning Marketing Plans.

Growth Engine

By Mark Tack



3 Key Learnings Since 2018

1. The Term “Marketing” is Too Myopic

Number one, to use the term “marketing” to describe this complex engine is too myopic. Quite frankly, “marketing” is the part of the puzzle that the board and the CEO typically care the least about. The reason being: marketing - in a traditional sense - is too far removed from revenue. That is why the new version of the infographic is called the Growth Engine, not the Marketing Engine.

When you take a broader view of growth in general, you realize and appreciate the vital nature of marketing being in lockstep with sales, product, and the CEO’s vision and business plan for the company. In our industry today, we have new C-suite titles emerging such as Chief Revenue Officers and Chief Growth Officers. These titles signal a key shift, that there’s something more in play when the Growth Engine achieves the desired results (increased revenue).

I am fully on board with this language and philosophical shift. In fact, I wouldn’t be opposed to eliminating the job title Chief Marketing Officer altogether, deploying Chief Growth Officers from this point forward. Who’s with me?

2. The Pipeline was Buried

A CEO who I really admire and recently worked with told me, “Mark, I need you thinking like the chief pipeline officer.”

At the time, I misinterpreted that guidance, not realizing that the CEO wasn’t asking me to be the VP of Sales or the CRO; he was asking me to have visibility over the size, the scale, and the quality of what is actually in the pipeline, not necessarily responsible for managing deals and opportunities through the pipeline. So, it was a bit of a semantics reality. I realized after that experience, the critical nature of putting pipeline development at the heart of the growth engine.

The Growth Engine’s number one purpose is to create pipeline opportunities for the sales organization. Leads, leads, leads (creating demand, generating qualified leads, moving through pipeline). That is the most basic drum that we beat in B2B. But what I’ve come to realize is that in order to truly generate pipeline at scale, you have to make it laser focused. Your pipeline is not just an output, not just a mere part of other areas of the overall growth engine, you must call it out. It’s that important. And it’s that difficult.

3. The Scoreboard was Missing

Since my first marketing leadership job, the importance of measurement, metrics, accountability has been ingrained in my brain. As you know, these terms have been around since the beginning of B2B marketing. And of course, as leaders, we instinctively know how important it is to measure the impact of marketing. But what I started to realize as I've had many opportunities to go inside of organizations to implement or improve upon their growth engines is this: it takes time. The process of building a growth engine is a marathon, not a sprint, which is not what we want to hear with the pressures of economic and financial expectations for revenue growth right now.

There is often an inherent disconnect between the amount of time it takes to build the growth engine and the immediate expectations for impact to the business. And I'll tell you what: I did a poor job of creating that visible scoreboard that tracked all aspects of the growth engine, not just from a demand perspective, but also from a brand perspective. From what I've seen, most leaders in charge of an organization's growth engine lack a visible, credible scoreboard.

Where is the software where you can actually see your growth? We use software for everything else; namely execution and automation centric processes. But there really isn't software out there that helps growth leaders and CEOs establish strategies and view progress via a scoreboard. We plan to solve that. More to come on our software concepts under development as we speak (reach out if you'd like to learn more).

What I've learned, and what I want to coach all growth leaders to do moving forward is to start with the Growth Engine Scoreboard. Make sure that it's a foundation, or your starting line (for that marathon you're running). On day one, start here, start early in gaining buy-in and input from peers and key stakeholders.

Scoreboard



Scoreboard

Growth Value Chain
Strategic Metrics
Operational Metrics
Tactical Metrics

Now let's begin the walkthrough of the Growth Engine from that starting point, the foundation, the starting line, if you will. The Scoreboard creates visibility around performance and progress. If you look up at the scoreboard, you can see, "We're in the fifth inning and we're up by two runs." That's an important snapshot. Another important snapshot creates visibility into the stages of your journey. Growth leaders need to be thinking about progress. "What stage are we at in building strategies, infrastructure, and our team? Where are we strong or weak? If we have an influx of capital, where are we going to strategically spend?"

When we talk about the scoreboard, there are a lot of different models. Tim Kopp, the former CMO of ExactTarget put together a really nice [CMO scoreboard template and article](#). Forrester and Gartner have written some great reports about the marketing dashboard as well. Another incredibly valuable source of ideas and inspiration for quantifying the value of growth and marketing is Steve Diorio's [Marketing Value Chain Model](#).SM I highly recommend you take a look at Steve's model. I'm a big believer and I know other CMOs, CEOs, and growth leaders who believe it's rock solid, too.

While there are certain commonalities across these various models, it's important to customize the scoreboard for each company. Some CEOs are super analytical and want to get in the weeds analyzing granular data. Other CEOs are incredibly visionary and want to remain at 30,000 feet. You need to be able to see the growth value chain as an overall model for measuring the end-to-end growth engine.

Scoreboard highlights

There are different ways to frame it, but start thinking about your metrics and KPIs in terms of strategic, operational and tactical. Far too often, marketing teams and CEOs only focus on the tactical metrics (aka “vanity” metrics). Here are a few ideas shared in this Gartner report, [“Tech CEOs: Set Demand Generation Goals Based on Business Objectives.”](#)

- Create strategic objectives (e.g., lifetime value of customers. It could be marketing’s contribution to revenue, etc.)
- Create operational metrics (e.g., acquiring new contacts, or traditional MQL, SAL, SQL lead stages, number of new opportunities created, etc.)
- Create tactical metrics (e.g., website visits, downloads of content, etc.)

Ultimately, the Scoreboard provides the CEO and the board with visible updates on your progress in transforming a traditional marketing organization into a world class Growth Engine that hits revenue targets.



Strategy

Strategy

Corporate Strategy, Segments, Revenue Plan

Next is strategy. Not including this in the August 2018 Marketing Engine was another pretty big miss on my part. It is absolutely necessary at the C-suite and board level that you have a solid corporate strategy before you start to build your growth engine. Who is your target market and why? What is your revenue plan... meaning what do you need to see from each market segment in order to achieve your topline growth goals? Ideally, we're not just throwing spaghetti against the wall and seeing what sticks. Let's create some clarity about what we want—who we want to grow up to become.

Think about your market from a PE/VC investor perspective. How well do you understand the total addressable market (TAM), serviceable available market (SAM), and serviceable obtainable market (SOM)? How is the market maturing and your overall business model along with it? It's shocking how many companies do not have the basic fundamentals of a business plan and revenue plan that I learned 20 years ago at the University of Iowa in the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (Iowa JPEC). I do think that growth leaders should be involved in evaluating and shaping the company strategy. Although the accountability for a company's overall strategy lies on the shoulders of the CEO, this is an area where growth leaders can step up and help make it as solid as possible.



Brand



Steve Jobs. Here's a CEO who understood the value of brand. Check out one of the [best videos](#) out there on brand featuring Jobs.

In contrast to Jobs and Apple, here's what can happen when a company has not invested in its brand: A prospective buyer hears your company name, and they haven't heard of you. Heard, but haven't heard great things. Completely forgot about you. These are all really damaging perspectives that happen in absence of great brand marketing.

When investing in your brand, what are the key pillars that need to be in place?

Brand Creative

Your existing and prospective customers should be more enticed to work with you and understand your essence when they interact with your brand. Brand is all about how your company looks and what you represent and stand for. It is critical to have meaning and a purpose for your brand, and to put forth a brand look and feel that is very polished and professional ... a look that people are proud of.

Positioning and Messaging

This is your company's story. This is how your existing or prospective customers understand the value you add to their business, or lives; the problems that you can solve for them, and the new opportunities that you can create for them. These are the written statements that help someone understand the value-add in a split second.

Social Media

LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook. These are obviously the platforms where you can build a community and your company's point of view can be shared. Having a strong social media presence is obviously an important part of your ability to build a strong brand.

Public Relations

In my experience, PR is one of the most strategic ways to improve your positioning as a company. There's no better way to get on the map than to have an article in a very credible publication to amplify your story. As you land great articles in external outlets and use social media to amplify that message, you extend your brand's reach.

Analyst Relations

According to Gartner, 50% of the B2B buying time is spent with independent third parties, like analyst firms Gartner and Forrester. Connect with key analysts who cover your area and make sure that they understand your brand and positioning as clearly as possible. Make your presence known in the Gartner Magic Quadrants reports or the Forrester Wave reports, or on sites like G2 and Capterra (which capture feedback and provide report and guidance on making B2B buying decisions). If you're strong, you win and grow. If you're lacking or weak, you will lose deals. It's really that simple.

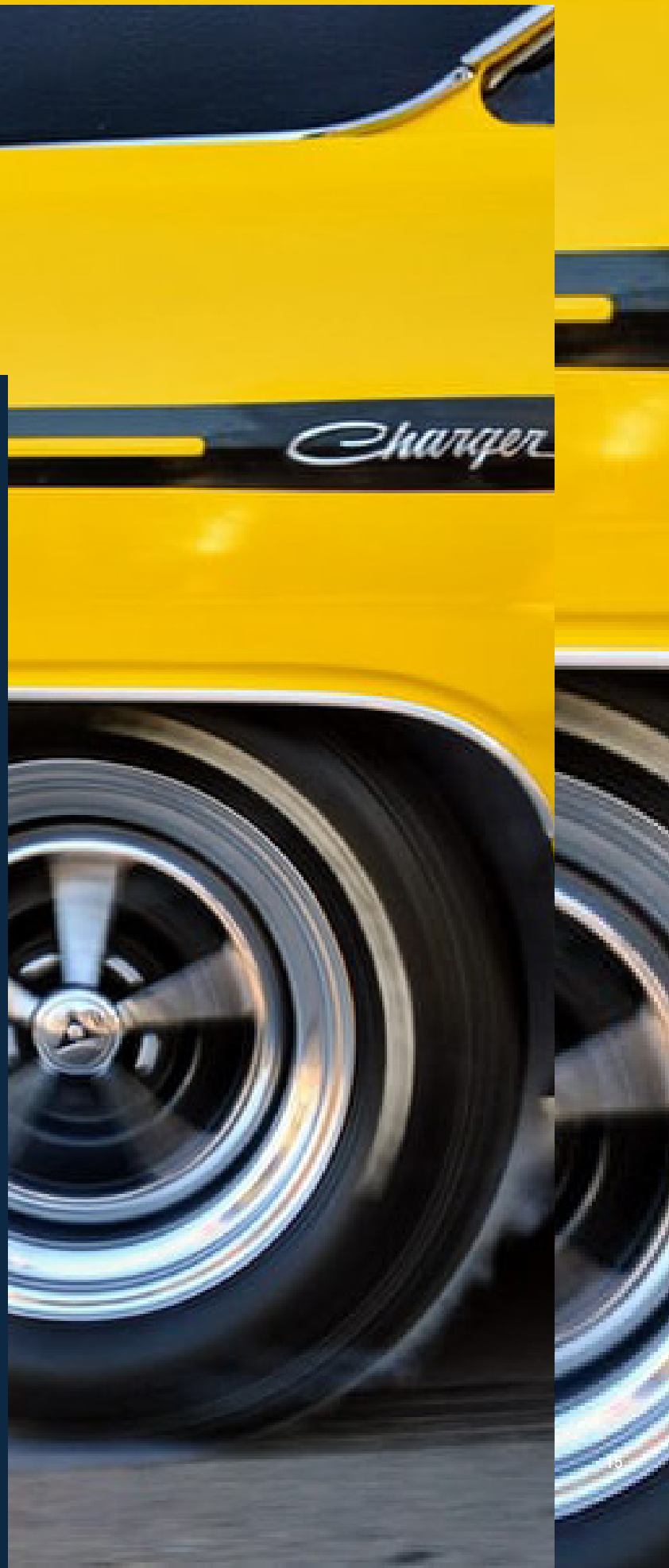
Thought Leadership

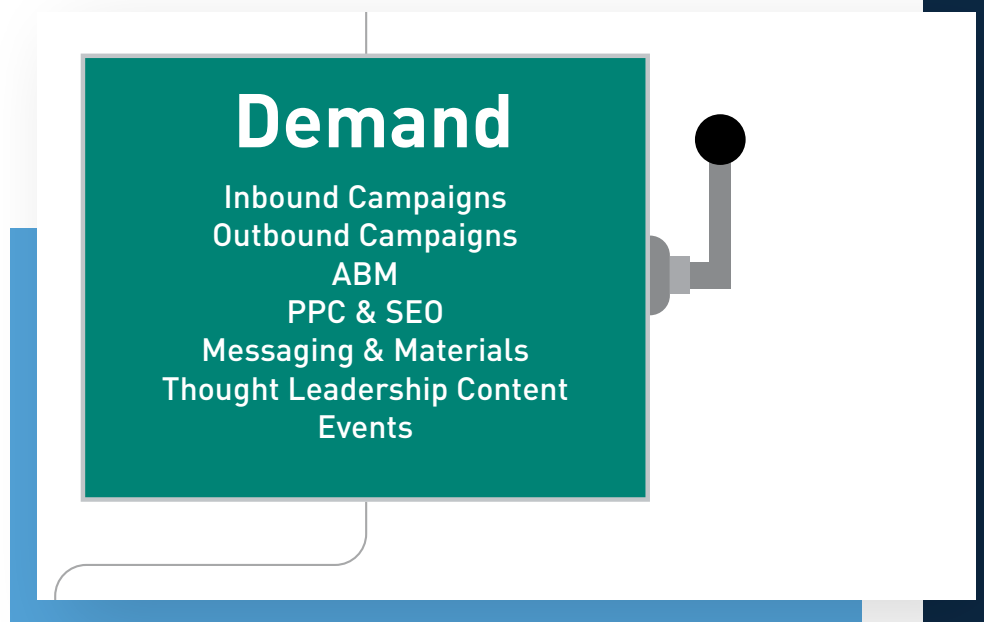
Thought leadership content: it's vital. Producing eBooks, webinars, blogs, byline articles, video content, infographics, and customer testimonial videos. This is the fuel to the overall growth engine. If you had little pieces of coal that you threw into your growth engine, that would be your thought leadership content. There are different levels of thought leadership content. I think you need a balance of strategic, higher-level positioning thought leadership combined with more specific practitioner-level thought leadership around solving specific problems that tie into actual product and service lines. Balance both.

Events

The pandemic has obviously impacted a lot of different areas of the business world. I think that for the time being, obviously, people will come together in a virtual environment, but events are events. The process of building an audience, putting together an agenda, producing great content and fostering community is absolutely as important now as it was two years ago. From a brand perspective, what I think about your events, or your presence, is what I think about your brand. Don't stop showing up, virtual or not.

Demand





At the core, what you're trying to do here is stimulate interest, attract new hand raisers to your company. Generating demand has some very important elements to it. So, let me break those down.

Inbound & Outbound Campaigns

I think of inbound demand campaigns as net fishing when you cast a wide net, anchoring your thought leadership assets at the core of the campaign. This might be an eBook, a webinar, or both. And you are going to leverage a variety of tactics and techniques to generate demand. It's content syndication, advertising, email, social, Google PPC. Deploy a variety of mechanisms to get your message out there.

Outbound campaigns are like spear fishing. You have a specific target list, a specific buyer persona, and you are going to go after those people from a growth perspective. Again, create content to fuel those campaigns.

Account-based Marketing (ABM)

ABM, account-based marketing, has been around since the beginning of B2B marketing. This is simply looking to generate new interest from a specific list of companies. Call it targeted marketing, call it personalized marketing, call it targeted and personalized marketing, it all in my mind adds up to ABM and it's important. It's a critical part of generating demand.

PPC & SEO (Performance-based Marketing)

When someone is using a search engine like Google to find a new partner or solution to solve a problem that you can solve, it's just so obvious that you need to be there. Your competitors are there. (This is a battlefield that B2B growth leaders have been fighting for a long time. It's vitally important.) If you're not there, then your competitors will have a lot of fun generating new revenue from people who are searching for what you do.

Messaging and Materials

Generating demand is a long process. Look for the research on the average number of attempts that it takes to reach a B2B buyer, usually falls between 8-11. This means the amount of content that is required to actually operate a typical cadence today is significant.

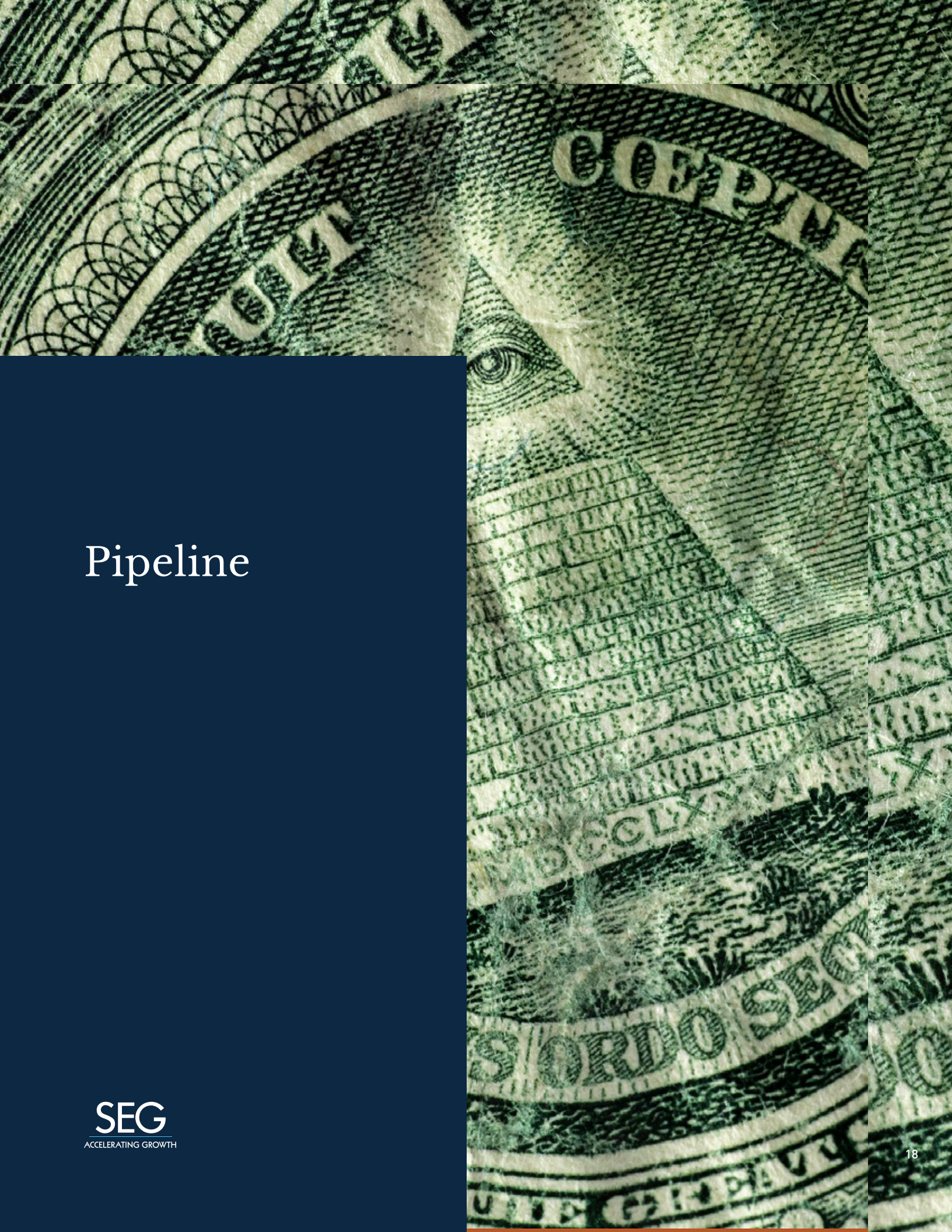
When I say messaging, I'm talking about the people who are out there generating demand. What is your growth team saying? What's your marketing team saying? When there is an interaction, what is being said? That's vitally important.

Thought Leadership

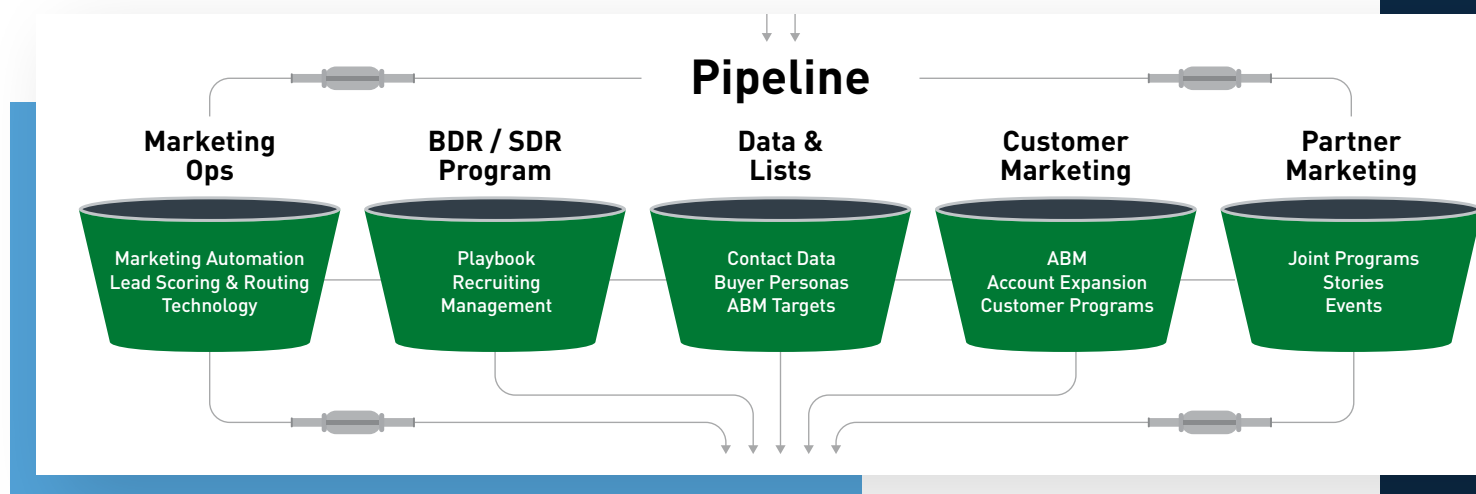
Thought leadership content again is repeated here in the demand area. Again, this is eBooks, webinars, blogs, byline articles, all of that wonderful educational content is used to generate demand. It's used to attract hand raisers. It's used to draw people into your universe, and yes, it is going to get you brand awareness and help elevate your brand and the market. But it's also going to generate demand. I love the idea that thought leadership content is an area where you can catch two fish with the same hook, because if you invest in really strong content programs, you are going to be accomplishing multiple things at the same time. And that's not true for all aspects of the growth engine.

Events

I have events here under demand, again. When you're at an event, or you're doing a webinar, or you're having a virtual event, one of the main reasons why you're doing that is to generate leads and to generate demand. Keeping that channel top of mind to do that is obviously critical. And again, the whole event space is obviously changing with the way our world has gone completely remote and virtual, but the ability to leverage virtual events to generate demand is still as great now as it was, as it ever has been.

A close-up, artistic photograph of several US dollar bills. The bills are layered and slightly crumpled, showing intricate patterns and textures. Visible text includes "FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE", "ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS", and "SERIAL". The lighting creates strong highlights and shadows, emphasizing the paper's texture.

Pipeline



Over the last few years, I've really come to learn the difference between generating demand and generating pipeline. Pipeline is a specific opportunity where an existing or prospective buyer signals that they have a need and have buying intent for what your company offers. That is fundamentally different than someone who raises their hand and says, "I like the free content you're producing. I want some."

The inability for many traditional marketing organizations to understand this difference is a big limiting factor. See, generating demand and scaling demand (going from hundreds to thousands to tens of thousands of new leads) does not necessarily equate to better pipeline that results in revenue. As you know, the number one metric, financial metric, for every company is revenue growth. The pipeline follows demand.

Since pipeline is such a fundamental and critical part of the overall growth engine, how do you scale pipeline? How do you convert on that demand? That's what this next section is all about.

Marketing Operations (Ops)

Marketing Operations (Ops) is the foundation for generating pipeline. Quite frankly, it's just not smart to set up your pipeline engine apart from great technology. Marketing Automation (MA) technology such as Marketo, Pardot, or HubSpot should be used to automate your engine. If you're doing a good job with brand and demand and you've got solid content, then you should be generating a ton of inbound leads. And so, the ability to score those—to qualify and to find the really meaningful, significant opportunities or new leads in an automatic way—is critical. Where you route that demand is a vital part of converting on that demand.

BDR / SDR Program

Over the last eight years, pretty much every B2B organization on the planet has experimented with or made attempts at replicating what Aaron Ross built at Salesforce as outlined in his book [Predictable Revenue](#). Some people have succeeded, some have failed. But one thing is clear: companies need a team of people who are really, really good at prospecting, at getting a foot in the door. These teams are known as business development reps (BDRs), or sales development reps (SDRs). These teams boil down to this: human beings contacting other human beings to have meaningful conversations. Imagine that. Old-school sales, but applied in a completely new and different world.

Due to the COVID pandemic, if your enterprise sales organization can't leave their house, can't take clients out to lunch or the golf course, how are you going to build relationships? One of the number one things that winning companies have in common is this: a very strong BDR or SDR program that can successfully generate new relationships and meetings – remotely, virtually.

I was talking to a Chief Growth Officer the other day and he said, "Building a BDR program is a lot like remodeling your kitchen." You watch the show on TV and it makes it look all easy. You go to Home Depot and you buy all of the supplies and parts and equipment you need, and that may seem somewhat easy. But when you get down to it, and you actually start remodeling your kitchen, you very quickly realize that it's a lot harder than you think. Having rock-solid playbooks for this team, where you have a strong strategy, a plan, the right content and messaging and training is important. Recruiting the right kind of talent and empowering them to succeed is a key part of all this process.

[Sales Empowerment Group](#) has pioneered an incredibly unique model for catching two fish with the same hook: 1) building a future generation of sales talent (the BDR Farm System model), 2) generating new pipeline opportunities right now (meetings set with ABM target accounts).

Data & Lists

Some of you may laugh or snicker when you see data and lists at the center of the pipeline. And I've got to tell you, if you're underestimating the importance of the quality of your data, you may just get played. I have seen it, and I now believe that having a quality database of either existing people who say, "Yes, I'm interested in learning more about your business," or a database of companies and individuals that fit your criteria, then scaling will be possible for you. Without solid data, scaling will be nearly impossible. As you pursue credible companies with third party data, make sure that you're following GDPR, CCPA, and other guidelines and compliance standards.

Customer Marketing

I'll never forget a board meeting for one of the companies I've worked for in which one of the board members stopped the board meeting and said, "Couldn't we become a billion-dollar company if we did nothing other than market to our existing customer base?" The whole executive team stopped. We looked at each other and nodded, and said, "Yes, we could."

It's amazing to me how much potential there is to expand the relationship with existing customers, driving revenue and growth from there. It seems like such a no brainer to stop and ask, "What about the customers we've got? Are we taking care of them? Are we educating them? Are we keeping them up-to-date on what we're doing? Are we good partners? Or are we just being a transactional provider, solving immediate needs?" Most B2B companies have a portfolio of solutions to place before people who are already in your door.

Partner Marketing

Another great way to generate pipeline is through partners such as alliance, partner, or channel teams. I've found that this is a big opportunity that many companies don't embrace. It's similar to customer marketing, and it's hard to rally around that for some reason. But as you embrace joint marketing programs, you can merge value props together in a synergistic way. Maybe you show up at events together, maybe you invite each other to your events. The possibilities are endless.

Lower Funnel



Now we're getting into the lower funnel. No CEO or growth leader has ever said, "Our pipeline's good, let's hold off." Ninety-nine percent of the time more is better. So now that we've created the opportunities, there are a few important connection points.

Product (Or, Product Marketing)

The growth or the marketing team typically manages or owns product marketing. What we're talking about here, as part of the growth engine, is not the building of the products, it's the commercialization of products. It's the go-to-market side of the product coin.

Product Launch

This is where it's really important that your growth engine has the right process and talent to lead a new product or service introduction cycle. Your launch is very important.

Competitive and Market Analysis

The competitive and market analysis is another really important output and source of value that product marketing brings to the table.

Sales Enablement & Materials

Generating sales enablement materials such as sales tools, collateral, sales decks, proposals, ROI calculators, case studies, and anything else that the sales team needs to move deals through the sales funnel is a key deliverable for product marketing.

Pricing & Packaging

"How does the competition do it? And how do our customers or prospects want to buy from us? What is their price point?" These are all really important questions to answer. Here, collaboration with product management is fundamental. Product marketing and product management are only as strong as the weakest link. In an ideal world, a CEO would love to have a strong product management organization and a strong product marketing organization. That is the Holy Grail.

Sales

In some organizations, a Chief Revenue Officer has come in, and sales and marketing have merged. I think there's a lot of value in that model. So whether your CEO and your board have kept sales and marketing as separate functions or you've been reorganized into the CRO model, no matter what, these functions need to happen to drive revenue.

Sales Stages & Journey

We're all familiar with the customer journey. In the last half of the decade B2C conversations have kept the personalization of the customer journey and the omnichannel journey at the forefront, and it's equally as important in the B2B world that we take that same approach.

CRM System

The CRM system is really the technology bedrock for the entire growth engine. CRMs actually help you successfully manage your opportunities. In my opinion, you can only grow as fast and as far as the capabilities of your CRM system.

Opportunity Management

Sales leadership needs to display rigor in the opportunities in their pipeline, keeping things moving. The questions to ask are, "How do we overcome stalled sales cycles? How do we overcome complex sales cycles? How do we manage a lightning speed, unheard-of opportunity that comes along?" These are all important aspects of opportunity management.

Sales Rep Hiring, Training & Management

In most companies the amount of time it takes for a new sales rep to be productive and to actually run and manage a sales process takes way too long. Finding better ways to do that is key. But man, sales is tough. You're getting hung up on. You're getting delays. You're not hearing what you want to hear most of the time in sales. And so, having the management and the leadership to guide the teams who are responsible for generating revenue for your company, is a big responsibility, and one that's clearly vital to the overall growth engine.

Building World Class Growth Engines

Quite honestly, it's been therapeutic for me to go through this process of clarifying my thinking, my wins and losses. Every time you take on a new assignment, there's always a lot of value that comes from new experiences whether they're Grand Slams, doubles off the wall, or swings and misses. Every experience is valuable.

I thank you for reading this and for giving me the opportunity to share what I've learned about the new and expanded Growth Engine. I'm really excited to see what the next chapter brings as we all journey toward building stronger growth engines that help companies scale revenue.

Sales Empowerment Group provides revenue acceleration services that help companies exceed their numbers through a unique BDR incubation program. We work with private equity firms, fast growing startups, mid-size companies to Fortune 500. Our proven methodology, technology, and systematic approach allow us to determine the key areas for immediate revenue growth. We have the expertise, the talent (over 100 team members) and execution models to accelerate revenue for our clients. Visit our case study library to learn how we've generated new pipeline opportunities for these 18 companies: www.salesempowermentgroup.com/case-studies

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