



What actually **stops** AI in go-to-market

3,710 moments from 236 revenue-team calls, March to October 2026.
What gets in the way, what gets fixed, and what teams that reach tier 3 do differently.

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The short version

Between March and October 2026 I recorded 261 calls with revenue teams: clients, prospects, founders and operators in my network, most of them talking openly about where AI was and wasn't working for them. I coded every friction, workaround and win in those calls, which came to 3,710 moments across 107 companies, to see what actually gets in the way. Most of those companies came up in a single call, so wherever I count by company I use the 17 with at least 10 coded moments each, which is where there's enough material to tell whether a problem is really there.

Most of it isn't AI.

69% of the friction involves no AI at all. Missing rules, too few hours, bad data and indifferent buyers (or lack of real PMF) do most of the damage.

A few frictions show up nearly everywhere.

Market/buyer indifference, missing specification and skill gaps each appear at 13 of the 17 companies with the deepest coverage in the data set, and they're also the three most widespread across all 107.

Problems get named far faster than they get fixed.

When a gap came up, 1.5% had already been fixed and 36% were "in progress". That's the status before anyone dedicated had worked on it.

The problem moved inward over the summer.

Bad data went from 42% of calls to 63% while market/buyer indifference fell from 55% to 37%, as teams moved from using AI to building with it.

Maturity changes the problems, not the amount.

AI work produces about twice the wins of non-AI work, but the share of weaknesses barely moves between tier 1 and tier 3.

Where you sit decides what you see.

ICs report missing capability at 3 times the rate leaders do, while leaders talk about capacity and specification.

Where an AI GTM engineer was embedded, teams moved well past autocomplete.

78% of their AI work was team-wide or custom-built (tier 2 or 3) against 52% everywhere else, and custom workflows made up 22% of it, more than 3 times the 7% elsewhere.

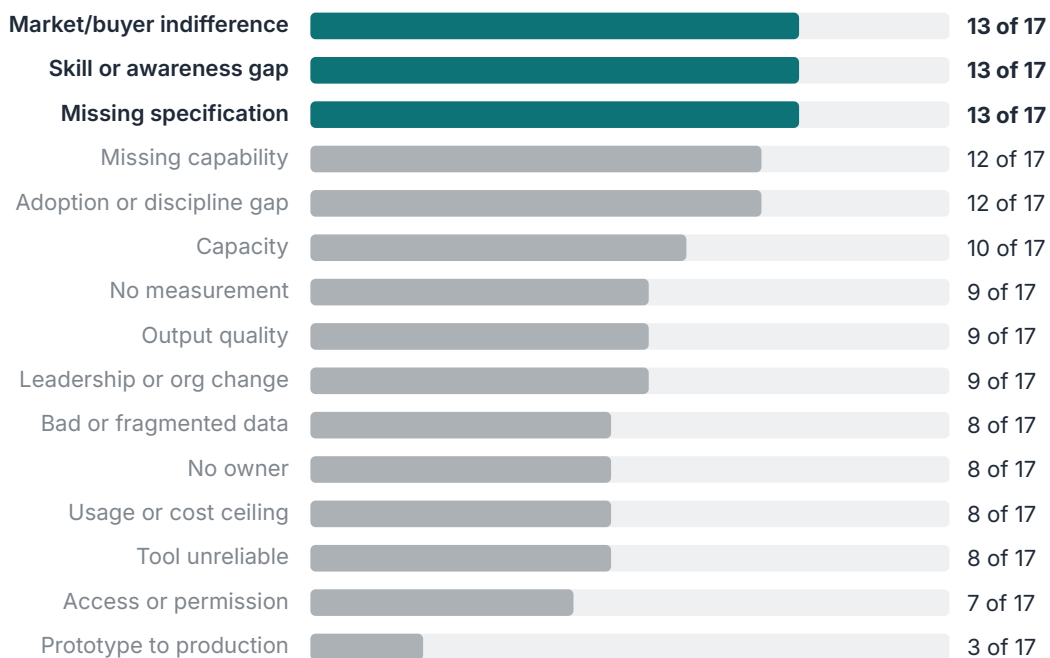
02

A few frictions show up **nearly everywhere**



Market/buyer indifference, missing specification and skill gaps are the closest thing in the data to universal problems.

Three frictions show up at 13 of the 17 best-covered companies



Companies (of 17 with 10+ coded moments) where each friction appears. Grey track = all 17.

I've counted by company rather than by mentions, because one large client talking a lot would otherwise tilt the whole ranking. Every one of the 17 companies has at least one of the top three, and 9 have all three of them.

Across all 107 companies, one-call conversations included, the same three still come out on top:

- market/buyer indifference at 39 companies,

- skill gaps at 33, and
- missing specification at 30.

Market/buyer indifference covers prospects who don't care enough to act, can't tell you apart from the next vendor, or don't know they have the problem yet. Half of it turns up in outreach and in moving live deals forward.

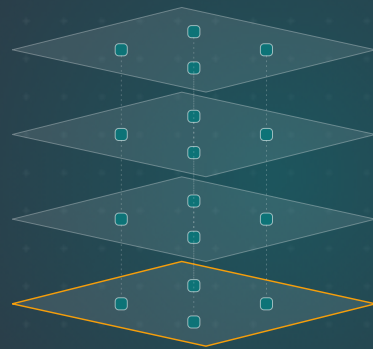


Usually they don't even know they have that pain before you're talking to them, because everyone does it the same way and uses the same companies.

Prototype to production is the only rare one, at 3 companies, and that's probably because few teams had got far enough with their builds to hit it. It doubled over the period, so I'd expect it to keep climbing.

03

Most GTM problems are **not AI related**



2,549 of the 3,710 moments involve no AI at all. Having run revenue teams as a CRO three times, I'd recognise most of that list from long before AI turned up.

The frictions split fairly cleanly in two. The figure in brackets is the share of that friction's moments where AI was involved:

- **AI-native**, where most moments involve AI: output quality (81%), prototype to production (81%), unreliable tools (54%), access and permissions (51%) and usage caps (49%).
- **Human**, where AI barely features: market/buyer indifference (3%), no measurement (10%), missing specification (12%) and leadership change (12%).

Buying more AI helps with the first list and does very little for the second, and the second list is the bigger one.

When AI is involved, the top problem is the output itself. 16% of the 1,161 AI-related moments are about output that's wrong, generic or off-voice, followed by missing capability at 13%. Usage caps get a lot of airtime but account for 6%.

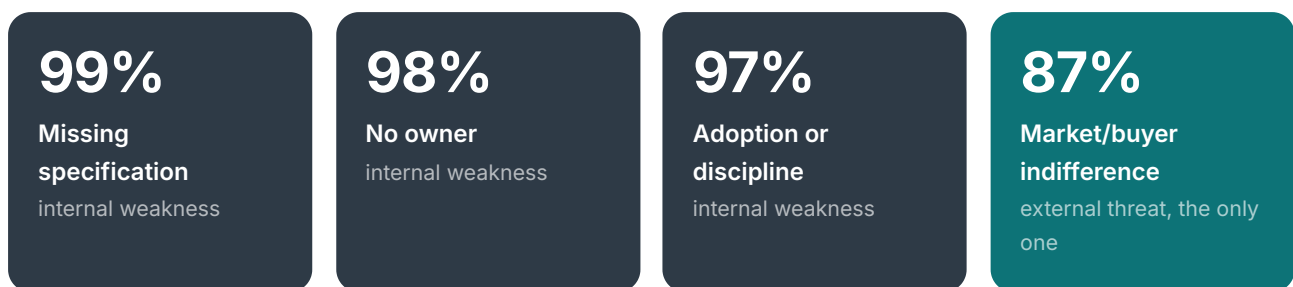
// The outbound retro skill gets the numbers wrong quite a lot. I was trying to work out where it gets its data from and tell it where its source of truth should be, but I keep running out of tokens.

// Everybody is testing, but everyone is testing different things. There's no baseline.

04

Gap or opening

Every moment was also classed as a strength, weakness, opportunity or threat for the company in the call, and that split says most of this is self-inflicted.



The one I'd pick out is usage caps. The token ceiling feels like the provider's problem, yet 75% of usage-cap moments are internal gaps (the wrong plan, no thought about which model does which job, one tool being asked to do everything) and only 7% are a limit the company can't move.

// From the moment I logged on I had no credits left. Every time I close and reopen it I can ask it something, and then I'm out of tokens again.

// It completely consumed our credits, something like 50,000 per month, within two days.

The untaken upside sits mostly with skill gaps, where 11% of moments are an opportunity nobody's acted on, then usage caps at 10% and missing capability at 9%.

05

Where the work breaks

Pairing what people were trying to do with what stopped them, the most widespread failure is strategy without specification: 85 moments across 20 companies, where the plan gets set and the rules that would make it runnable never get written.

What they were trying to do	What stopped them	Moments	Companies
Plan strategy and territory	Missing specification	85	20
Run outreach	Market/buyer indifference	56	16
Progress and close deals	Market/buyer indifference	57	15
Roll out tools	Skill or awareness gap	44	12
Roll out tools	Adoption or discipline gap	53	11
Plan strategy and territory	Leadership or org change	53	11
Report and forecast	No measurement	66	8
Maintain the CRM	Bad or fragmented data	85	5

Sorted by how many companies each pairing shows up at. CRM upkeep against bad data is the deepest single pit at 85 moments, but it's concentrated in 5 companies, so it's a common client problem across multiple stakeholders, rather than a market-wide one.



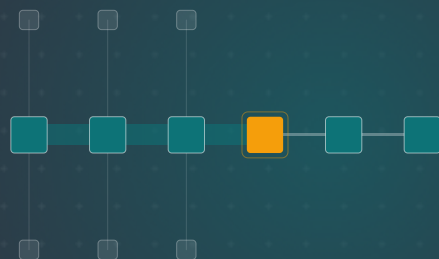
Every month there are 10 new custom fields, but fast forward six months and only one of them is being used. We've got all that tech debt.



There are old sequences, workflows and automations built by a previous growth team, where no one in the business still works, and no one knows how to untangle them.

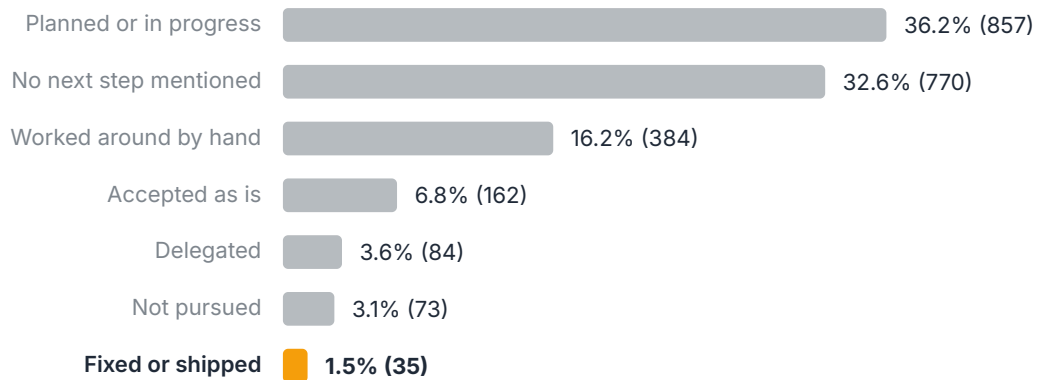
06

**Named fast, fixed
slowly**



Of 2,365 internal weaknesses with a recorded response, 35 had been fixed at the point they came up. 857 were planned or in progress and 384 were being worked around by hand.

1.5% of internal gaps were already fixed when they came up



Status of 2,365 internal weaknesses at the moment each was raised, before a dedicated AI GTM engineer had worked on it.

That's a snapshot of each problem at the moment it was raised, before a dedicated AI GTM engineer had worked on it, and problems come up on calls precisely because they're still unfixed. So read it as how far teams get on their own rather than as a final score.

The second-biggest bar is the one to sit with. "No next step mentioned" means the problem was named and then the conversation moved on, with no plan, workaround or owner attached to it. Some of those will have been picked up later, but a third of problems leaving the call with nothing attached goes a long way to explaining why missing specification sat at the same level all year.

The split by friction is where it gets useful:

Friction	Worked around	In progress	No next step	Fixed	Gaps
Output quality	33%	26%	27%	2%	129
Missing capability	31%	31%	26%	1%	206
Usage or cost ceiling	31%	36%	17%	4%	72
Prototype to production	6%	65%	23%	0%	31
Missing specification	8%	38%	44%	1%	347
Skill or awareness gap	5%	37%	44%	1%	187

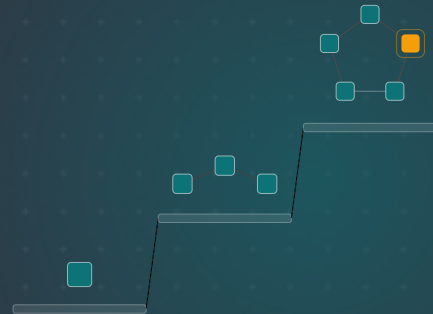
AI problems get worked around, with about a third of output-quality and missing-capability gaps already carrying a manual workaround. Missing playbooks and skill gaps don't get workarounds, and in 44% of cases nobody said anything about what would happen next.

Prototype to production is the starkest row, with 65% in progress and none fixed.

// It takes no time at all to get to a large chunk of the work and then it takes a long time to turn it into something you can put into production.

07

Climbing the ladder



I use a simple three-tier model for AI maturity in revenue teams. Tier 1 is AI as autocomplete (drafting, summarising, individual time saved), tier 2 is AI scaling the team through shared tools and repeatable workflows, and tier 3 is custom workflows built around a company's own process, with guardrails and human checks defined.

Across the whole data set, tier 1 fell from 24% of moments in March to 3% in September, while tier 3 rose from 1% to 12% and peaked at 20% in August.

Almost all of that climb happened at the 3 companies with an embedded AI GTM engineer, covered below.

Everywhere else, AI work stayed mostly at tier 1: it was 45% of their AI-related moments in spring and 61% in summer, and tier 3 never got above 8% (those are mostly different companies in each half, so treat it as a read on the wider market rather than the same teams standing still).

Tier	Top problems	Top wins	Strengths	Weaknesses
No AI	Capacity, missing specification	Outreach, lead routing	15%	67%
1. Autocomplete	Output quality 21%, skill gaps 17%	Writing, account research	29%	60%
2. Scaling the team	Missing capability 14%, output quality 12%, data 11%	Tool roll-out, research, routing	30%	55%
3. Custom workflows	Output quality 18%, missing capability 13%, data 10%	Research, routing, outreach	32%	56%

Every moment was also tagged as a strength (something working) or a weakness (something broken), which is what the last two columns show. Two things come out of that.

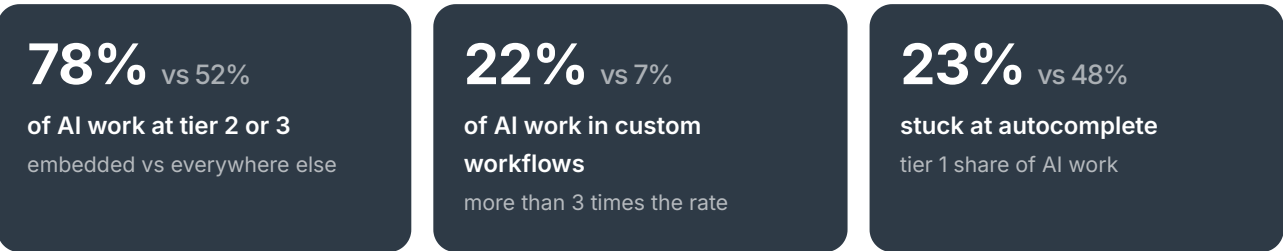
- **AI work goes better than non-AI work.** When AI is involved, about 30% of what people describe is working, against 15% when it isn't, so conversations about AI are twice as likely to be about a win.
- **Climbing doesn't make the problems go away.** 60% of tier 1 moments are weaknesses and 56% of tier 3 moments still are. The problems change (output and skills early on, then missing capability and data) but there are roughly as many of them, so expect a fresh set at every step up.

What a tier 3 win sounds like, from a founder who built one:

// When we get a positive disposition, it automatically creates a transcript from the dialer, writes that into a follow-up email, puts it in my outbox so I can review and check it, and then creates a deal for me in [the CRM].

Where an AI GTM engineer was embedded

Three of the companies in the data had a dedicated AI GTM engineer working inside the revenue team, and that's where the climb was concentrated.



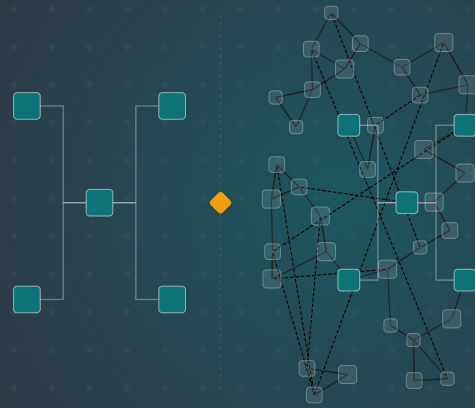
Company	Window	Tier 2 and 3, first month	Tier 2 and 3, last month	Tier 3, first month to peak
Company A	Mar to Sep	15%	40%	0% to 23%
Company B	May to Sep	18%	26% (58% in Aug)	0% to 18%

Company C had too few calls after April to show a trend. Across all 3, 78% of the AI work discussed was tier 2 or 3, against 52% at the other 104 companies. Custom workflows alone were 22% of it, against 7% elsewhere, while autocomplete-level use was 23% against 48%.

- **Company A:** production apps for events, signals and warm-path introductions, plus tech-stack enablement and CRM syncs.
- **Company B:** a new inbound qualification and routing system, fully live.
- **Company C:** 5 AI skills built, several of them used daily.

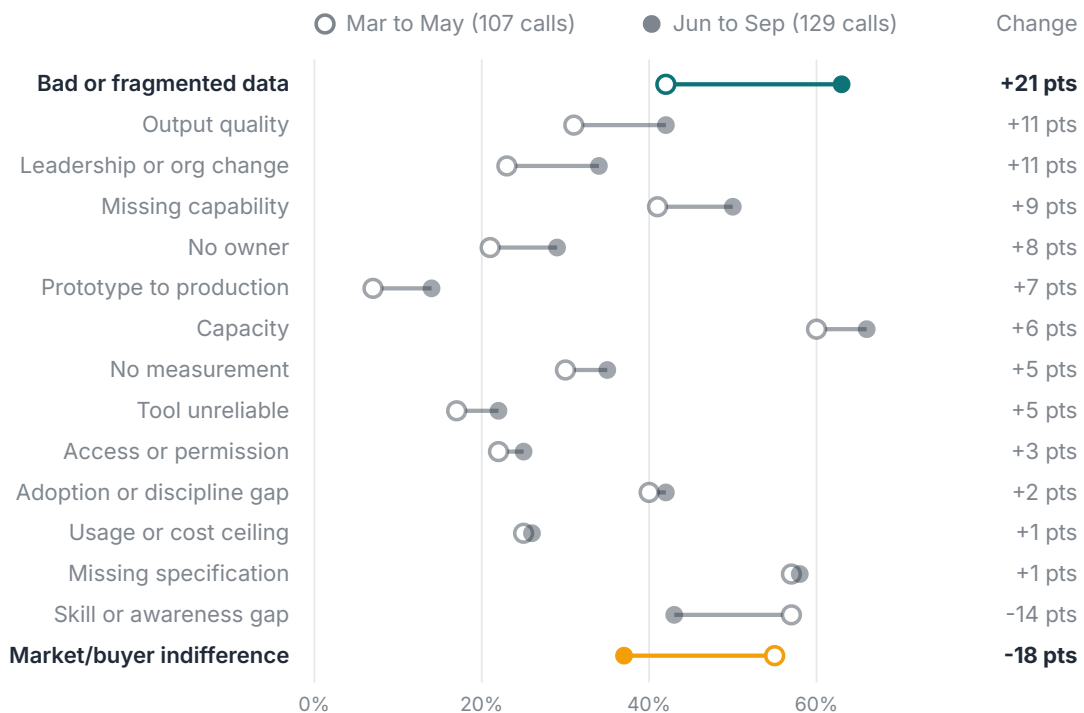
08

Eight months on, the problem **moved inward**



As teams moved from using AI to building with it, the blockers moved from the market and the skills gap to their own data and plumbing.

Bad data rose 21 points, market/buyer indifference fell 18



Share of calls where each friction appears. 236 calls split at 1 June 2026. Both big moves hold with the largest client removed.

That holds without the largest client in the data, too: bad data still goes from 31% of calls to 53%, and market/buyer indifference from 64% to 39%.

Missing specification didn't move at all, sitting at 57% of calls in spring and 58% in summer.

- “ What I've always had to do with board reporting is go through and really validate each deal.
- “ I opened up my seven spreadsheets, isolated what the real CPA trend was, and then figured it out and fed it to the LLM.

09

Who feels it

The higher up someone sits, the more their problem is the plan, and the closer they are to the work, the more it's the tools.

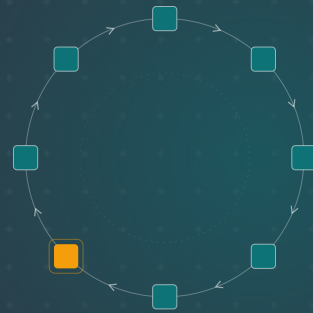
Role	Moments	Companies	Top frictions (share of theirs)	Main job	Gaps worked around
Founder or CEO	175	41	Market/buyer indifference 21%, capacity 11%, output quality 10%	Writing content (22%)	22%
Commercial leadership	1,189	21	Capacity 17%, missing specification 12%, data 10%	Lead routing, strategy	14%
Individual contributor	1,044	9	Capacity 14%, market/buyer indifference 13%, missing capability 12%	Outreach (13%)	20%

- **Founders** live at tier 1, with 21% of their moments there against 8% for leaders. They're often writing their own content with AI while worrying about the market.
- **Leaders** own the backlog. 40% of their gaps are "in progress", the highest of any group, and capacity and specification dominate what they talk about.
- **ICs** hit the tool gaps and route round them. They report missing capability at 3 times the rate leaders do, and work around 1 in 5 of their gaps by hand.

Roles here come from names, call titles and context rather than being confirmed one by one, and 35% of moments couldn't be assigned, so treat this cut as directional.

10

What to do **about it**



The pattern across all of this is that the unglamorous layer underneath (rules, data, ownership, enablement) decides whether the AI work lands. These are the 8 changes I'd make first, each tied to what the calls showed.

01

Write the rules before you build.

Why Missing specification shows up at 13 of 17 companies and didn't move in 8 months.

How One page each for ICP, qualification and routing, with a named owner and a review date. No AI build starts until its rules are written down.

02

Fix the data plumbing before adding agents.

Why Bad data rose from 42% of calls to 63% as teams started building.

How One source of truth per field, call and activity logging that happens automatically, and scheduled audit checks so drift gets caught daily rather than at board time.

03

Give every tool and integration a named owner.

Why "No owner" is 98% self-inflicted, and orphaned integrations are where leads go missing.

How A short register of tool, owner and purpose, checked before anyone builds something new so you don't end up with two versions of the same agent.

04

Manage AI spend like any other budget.

Why 75% of usage-cap problems are internal choices, not provider limits.

How Match models to tasks, move heavy users onto team plans, run heavy research jobs overnight and look at credit burn weekly.

05

Keep a human checkpoint on anything a customer sees.

Why Output quality is the top AI friction, at 16% of AI-related moments.

How AI drafts land in an outbox for review and never go straight out. The best tier 3 build in the calls works exactly like that.

06

Plan for the last 20% of every build.

Why Prototype-to-production gaps were 65% in progress and 0% fixed.

How Define "production-ready" before you start, covering edge cases, error handling, an owner and one success metric, then timebox it.

07

Enable people before you roll out, and put the tool where reps already work.

Why Skill gaps appear at 13 of 17 companies and tool roll-outs stall on adoption at 11.

How A proper enablement session at launch, builds that live inside the CRM and sequencer rather than in another tab, and one agreed way of using each tool.

08

Baseline before you test.

Why Teams were running tests with nothing to compare them against.

How One shared test at a time, with the before number written down first.

By role:

- **Founders:** hand off the tier 1 work so your time goes on the market problem.
- **Leaders:** turn "in progress" into shipped by cutting the backlog to 3 things with owners and dates.
- **ICs:** log your workarounds, because each one is a missing capability that someone above you probably can't see.

Score your own team

15 statements, one per friction. Score each one: strongly disagree 0, disagree 1, agree 2, strongly agree 3. The higher your total, the more friction your team is carrying.

Statement	Strongly disagree 0	Disagree 1	Agree 2	Strongly agree 3
1 People regularly run out of tokens, credits or seats mid-task.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 Reps are blocked from connecting AI to the CRM or other core tools.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 People re-check CRM data before they trust it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 Our ICP, qualification or routing rules are missing, unwritten or disputed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 At least one tool, process or integration has no clear owner.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 We run tests without a baseline to judge them against.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 People aren't sure which tool to use for which job.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 AI outputs usually need rewriting or fact-checking before they go out.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 We pay for at least one tool that can't do the job we bought it for.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 Automations break or stop part way without anyone noticing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 We have a build that has been "nearly done" for more than a month.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 Manual steps eat into the time meant for selling.	☐	☐	☐	☐
13 Prospects tell us they could build it themselves, or that everyone sounds the same.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14 A tool we rolled out is being quietly ignored by much of the team.	☐	☐	☐	☐
15 A new leader or board push has reset our go-to-market motion in the last 6 months.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your total, out of 45				

0 to 12

The basics are mostly in place, so the gains are in tier 2 and 3 builds.

13 to 27

Pick the 3 highest-scoring statements and fix those before starting anything new.

28 to 45

Fix the layer underneath before buying another tool, because new tools will inherit every one of these problems.

What next

If any of this looks familiar, the useful next step is working out where your own team sits on the ladder and what it would take to get to tier 3.

Book a private consultation with me and we'll lay that out together:

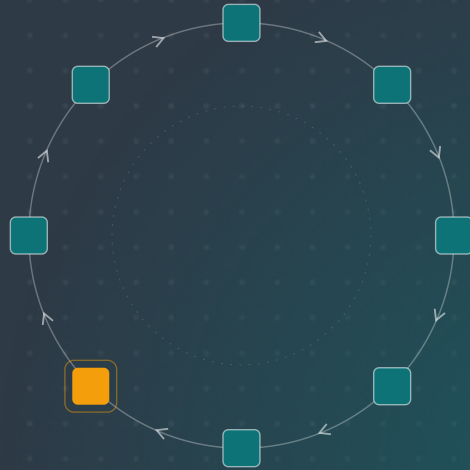
- Where your team sits on the three tiers today, and which of the frictions in this report are holding it there.
- The roadmap from there to tier 3, in the order I'd tackle it, starting with the layer underneath.
- What getting there should change, in results, in new capabilities your team doesn't have yet, and in the hours it gives back.

Book a private consultation →

calendly.com/mark-aigtmstudio

Methodology

- 261 calls recorded between 16 March and 1 October 2026, worked from full transcripts rather than AI summaries. 236 calls from 107 companies had codeable content.
- Every friction, workaround and win was coded five ways (the job, the constraint, the response, SWOT and AI maturity tier) against a 16-constraint codebook that was frozen before the full pass.
- A stronger second model re-coded 434 moments blind, agreeing 76% of the time on job, 78% on constraint and 90% on SWOT.
- Before writing anything, a recall test checked the results against 11 findings I knew were in the calls, and all 11 came back.
- My own voice is excluded: 1,016 moments where I was speaking, or talking about my own businesses, are out.
- This is my network, so it skews towards teams already thinking about AI in go-to-market. Company names are removed throughout.



Where does your team sit on the ladder?

Book a private consultation and I'll lay out the roadmap from where your team is today to tier 3, in the order I'd tackle it.

Book a private consultation →

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