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# How Live Chat Exposes a Fatal Flaw in Your Go-to-Market

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# 1

## Introduction

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We live in the age of convenience, where information is accessible 24/7, you can get almost anything on-demand, and everything is personalized. We want it all, and we want it now.

The most innovative businesses have always evolved in parallel with human behavior, observing changes in consumer preferences that shape how they market, sell, and deliver customer service.

Today, buyer patience is at an all-time low. Speed is more important than ever. Many marketers and salespeople are turning to live chat -- which has long been used by customer service teams -- as the new hot tool that will get acquisition cranking again. But thinking about live chat as merely a fix for speed misses the bigger opportunity.

Modern consumers want easy to navigate, honest information. They want to engage with your business on their own terms. They want their problems to be solved quickly and completely.

Speed is part of this equation, but it's not enough. Most companies are bolting live chat onto an already misaligned marketing, sales, and customer service process. And that means live chat can't, by itself, speed up your growth.

That's because the opportunity of live chat isn't about live chat at all. It's about getting rid of the fault lines between your marketing, sales, and customer service teams so you can do business on your customers' terms.

The story of live chat is about convenience. This is an inflection point for your business -- set up live chat the way buyers want to use it, and you have a shot at finally breaking down the walls between departments. That's a bigger upside than live chat could ever offer by itself, and it's why we're so excited about it.

# 1

## Introduction

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### Key Takeaways

- Consumers want to use live chat to communicate with your marketing, sales, and customer service teams, but most companies only allow buyers to chat with ONE of these three teams.
- Almost 2/3rds of buyers expect a response within 10 minutes to any marketing, sales, or customer service inquiry.
- Buyers engage with companies on 13 different channels, most of which are disconnected.
- Employees spend 10% of their time reconciling disconnected systems to ensure they're answering buyer inquiries correctly.
- The expectation of immediate responses leave little room for companies to hide the misalignment in their go-to-markets. Live chat's true opportunity is that it might finally force companies to break down their siloes.

## 2

# The evolution of communication: The slow march toward speed

The history of human communication is the history of removing hurdles. We've always looked for ways to communicate: Better ways, faster ways, more ways. We went from the pony express, to snail mail, to phones, texting, emailing, and instant messaging.

Each of these developments reduced the required waiting time between a question and answer. As answers became more quickly and readily available, the time we were willing to wait decreased as well.

At every stage of the customer lifecycle, a majority rated an immediate response from businesses as "important" or "very important" -- 82% when they had marketing or sales-related inquiries, and 90% when a customer support issue came up.

But what does "immediate" mean? Today, it means 10 minutes or less.

## Consumers are impatient

Speed is everything to today's buyers, and patience wears out at 10 minutes

### 82%

of consumers rate an "immediate" response as important or very important when they have a marketing or sales question.

Percentage of consumers who define "immediate" as 10 minutes or less, by their stage in the customer journey.

### 90%

of consumers rate an "immediate" response as important or very important when they have a customer service question.



Base: 1,000 consumers in the US, UK, Australia, and Singapore  
Source: HubSpot Research Consumer Customer Support Survey, Q2 2018

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## 2

# The evolution of communication: The slow march toward speed

Once customers are able to get connected with a company, their expectations stay high. Two-thirds of consumers report that the most frustrating aspect of getting customer service is waiting on hold or having to explain the same information to multiple representatives.

## What's the most frustrating aspect of getting customer service help?



Base: 1,000 consumers in the US, UK, Australia, and Singapore  
Source: HubSpot Research Consumer Customer Support Survey, Q2 2018

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These data points tell us two things:

First, today's buyers want help right now. This is what I call a "no sh\*t Sherlock" moment -- of course companies should provide immediate assistance to prospects and make it as easy to buy as possible. If someone is ready to give you money for your product, you owe it to your company to make that process as smooth as possible.

Second, your employees need a unified communications system to help buyers, quickly. Buyers want this too, although the way they feel this pain is having to explain their problems to multiple people at your company or waiting on hold. If they've explained it once, the burden should fall on you to track that information in a way that's instantly accessible by any customer-facing employee who might have a hand in solving their issue.

## 2

# The evolution of communication: The slow march toward speed

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Your market has immediate needs. You should provide them immediate help.

### Slow communication means slow growth

Think back to your last horrible customer service interaction. (54% of consumers say they've had at least one bad customer service experience in the last month, in case you're wondering.)

Mine was with my cell phone company. I traveled internationally for work a few times this year, and had to sign up for multiple plans added to multiple numbers on my account. I tried to make changes to my account online, but had to call a support number. I got put on hold, passed around to multiple teams, and had to give my information to multiple people multiple times. An hour later, I got my problem solved -- but it was painful and slow.

Many B2B companies build their go-to-market and customer service functions this way.

It started as a simple problem -- we can't afford to hire that many salespeople. Their time is expensive, and a B2B sales process is long and educational.

So what did we do? We built the rest of our go-to-market around making things easy for salespeople, and we forgot about the customer.

We added qualification questions to forms. We added lots of complex segmentation rules to categorize prospects. We created multiple tiers of salespeople. We gave every lead an "owner" so they could manage it all.

That kept things organized -- for us. Creating these siloes allowed us to move people through a step-by-step buying process on our terms. It made lead generation, sales volume, and revenue forecasting more predictable.

But it made things harder for our buyers and customers.

## 2

# The evolution of communication: The slow march toward speed

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When you're the consumer, it's obvious why this system is broken. You should be able to engage with a business on your preferred channels, instantly get connected with the correct employee who can help you, then get help to do it (or better yet, the business has created ways for you to fix the problem yourself). No runaround. No repetition. No siloes. Just simple, baggage-free, easy.

As consumers, we know this sucks. But most of us are still running our businesses this way.

Consumers want their buying and customer service experiences to be easy, and siloes inherently make these processes more difficult.

Hurdles are the enemy, and silos create hurdles.

Flexibility is key to modern businesses. Buyers are more empowered than ever, and they don't hesitate to stop purchasing from companies that don't give them what they want -- 80% of consumers say they've stopped doing business with a company because of a poor experience.

Your customers have one unified experience with your company. It doesn't make sense to put up walls between the systems and data associated with different parts of that experience. For marketers to generate leads at scale, they need bots to answer questions, direct people to content, and qualify demand for the sales team. For salespeople to have informed conversations with prospects, they need to understand what marketing content has previously been viewed. For customer service people to provide contextual, helpful support, they need access to a full history of support inquiries, not just the current ticket they've been assigned.

When your team isn't structured in an unsiloed way, you're putting up hurdles for your employees, who have to reconcile disconnected systems and do their best to piece together incomplete data.

Your entire company should be rallied around serving the customer. And that can only happen if every customer-facing employee has access to one unified system of record.



### 3

## Software is not a fix for speed

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The changes in human behavior that have shifted us into an on-demand, always-on world are the lens through which you should view live chat.

Fundamentally, consumers just want two things from businesses: A fast way to get in touch, and a quick resolution of their inquiry.

Live chat supports an instant connection between buyers and businesses. But does it support a fast resolution of buyer problems? There are no guarantees.

Why?

*Live chat has no intrinsic value. Like any other communication channel, chat is just a vehicle for buyers and brands to get where they need to go.*

All communication channels facilitate two types of value:

1. Channels connect you with your customers and prospects so you can learn about and serve them better
2. Channels store a full history of customer issues that brings context to new customer inquiries, and that you can use to inform your business strategy

Traditionally, it's hard (and it's getting harder) for businesses to connect with their market. So the idea of a tool that connects buyers and sellers is hugely exciting to CMOs.

This doesn't actually provide any value to your buyer -- only to you. A fast connection between consumer and company is table-stakes to consumers, even though it may be new to you. But prospects, leads, and customers don't care how fast you can say, "Hi, how can I help you?" They care how fast you can help them.

But we're not thinking about that. We're thinking about how to use live chat to get leads in the door more quickly than ever before. After all, once they're in our database, we can nurture them to a point of purchase the way we've always done ... right?

Wrong. Because if we aren't developing new processes that serve people as quickly as they expect to be served, all we've done is solved for ourselves.

This isn't a new or even unique problem. Most businesses have unwittingly engineered siloes into their DNA.

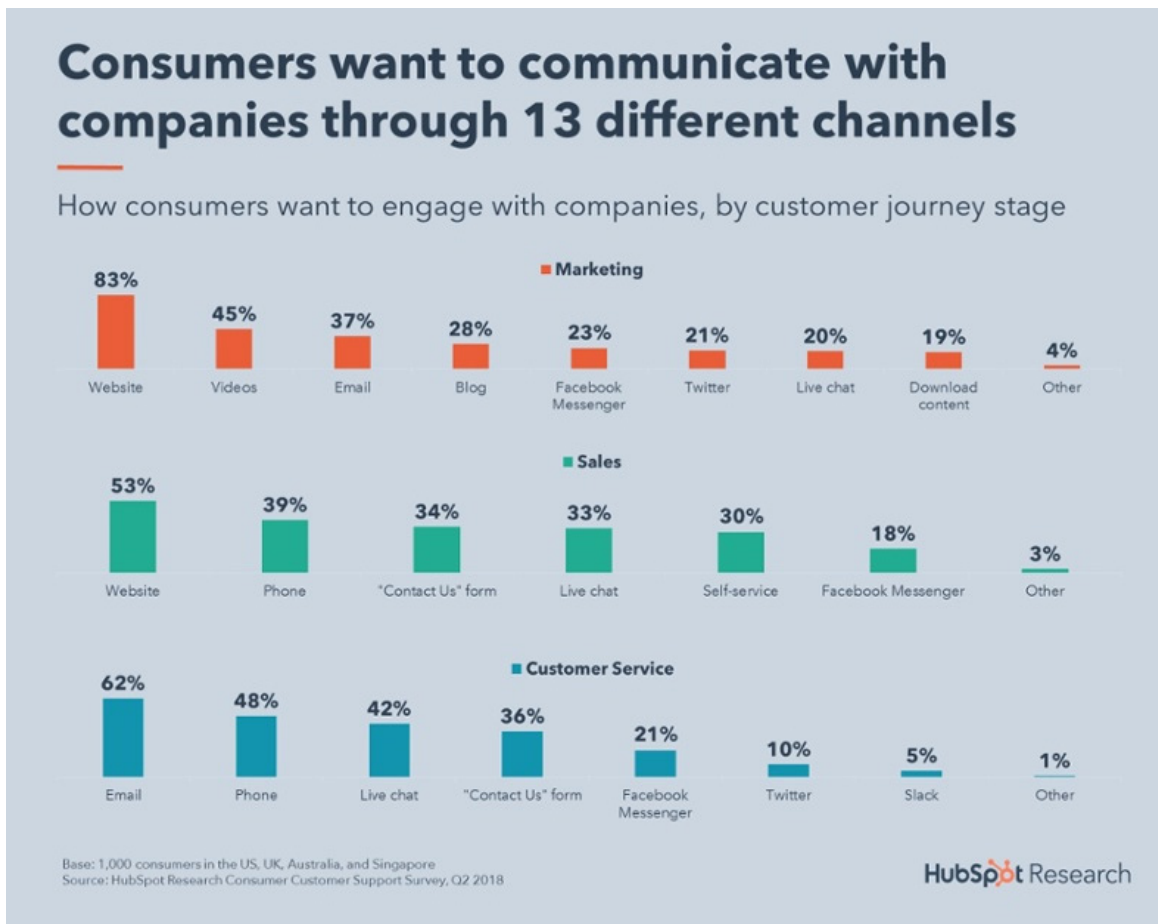
### 3

## Software is not a fix for speed

But as we move to a more responsive, more on-demand world, that inconvenience is getting magnified. Before live chat, the expectation of an instant response didn't exist -- our expectations evolve along with the tools available to us. So it was okay that work had to be done behind the scenes before we could answer an inquiry.

As technology has progressed, we've increased the speed of connection, but haven't done the work to speed up how fast we can resolve customer questions.

Let's use live chat as an example. We asked consumers which channels they use to reach out about marketing, sales, and customer service inquiries.

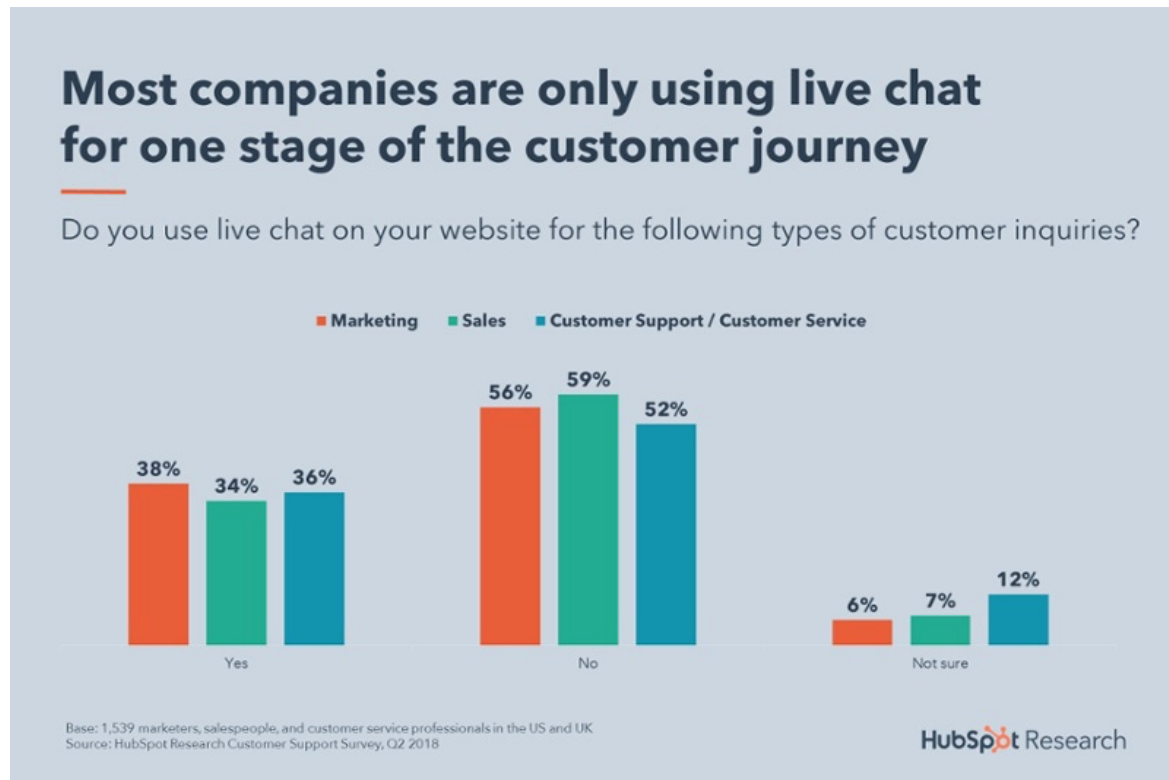


### 3

## Software is not a fix for speed

Consumers want to use chat tools (whether it's onsite chat or Facebook Messenger) at every stage of the customer lifecycle. That means they'll have marketing, sales, and service-related inquiries they could potentially flag via chat.

But businesses typically have only one of those teams "own" live chat.



This means that at any given point of time, less than half of your site visitors will be able to achieve what they want.

Disconnected systems lead to misalignment. Across the board, executives are more optimistic about how things are going than their frontline employees:

- 55% of C-levels and VPs are extremely confident that they have access to a complete record of a customer's previous interactions with their company, compared to 23% of individual contributors
- 54% of C-levels and VPs think it's very easy for marketing to pass leads to sales with contextual information, compared to 24% of individual contributors

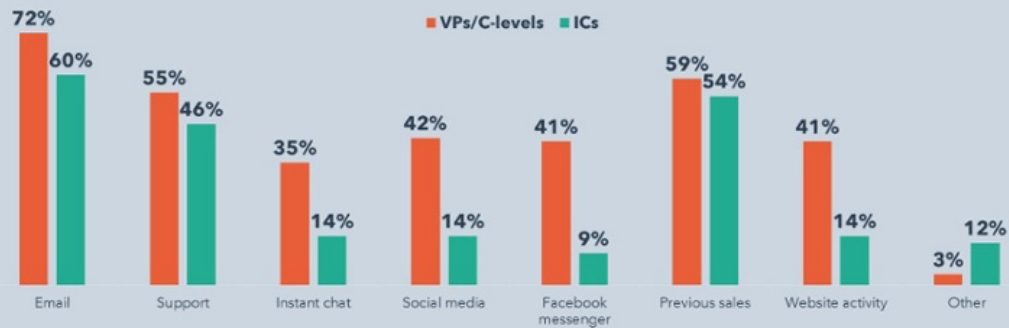
## 3

## Software is not a fix for speed

C-levels and VPs are also overly optimistic about the records their frontline employees can access.

### Executives think frontline employees have more information about customers than they do

What kind of historical records of your customers can you see?



Base: 1,539 marketers, salespeople, and customer service professionals in the US and UK  
Source: HubSpot Research Customer Support Survey, Q2 2018

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It's time to run your business the way you think it's running. There's a huge opportunity here to eliminate internal misalignment and empower frontline employees to know they're serving customers to the best of their ability.

The answer? Omnichannel communication -- one unified system of record that includes records of the one-to-one conversations happening between your business and your customers across multiple channels.

One unified system of record means one source of truth and one place for employees to go to resolve customer inquiries. It means total transparency into your customers' entire journey with your company, making it easy for people from any team to respond with the information your customers want.

### Your employee productivity would be 10% higher if they had unified data

It's not just that we have a bunch of different options to communicate -- we want to use many different channels and communication methods. We asked consumers how they want to learn more, buy from, and be serviced by businesses, and here's how they responded:

1. Blog
2. "Contact us" form
3. Emails
4. Messenger
5. Onsite chat
6. Phone
7. Self-service
8. Slack
9. Support tickets
10. Twitter
11. Videos
12. Website
13. White papers and other downloadable content

For those keeping score at home, this is no less than 13 different channels or types of content buyers expect to be able to reach you through.

This poses a challenge to businesses. How on earth can we develop and staff this many channels? More importantly, can we deliver a great customer experience on all these channels?

Spoiler alert: We can, but we aren't.

To our credit, we're trying. We asked businesses what systems they use to communicate with prospects and customers, and what systems they use internally to communicate about customers. (That is, when Susan in sales needs to track down information about the lead Mike in marketing handed her yesterday, how does she do it?)

# 3

## Software is not a fix for speed

Here's what we found:



This is ... a lot of systems to navigate. If the information they contain isn't centralized in one place, you're introducing complexity and uncertainty into every stage of your customer experience.

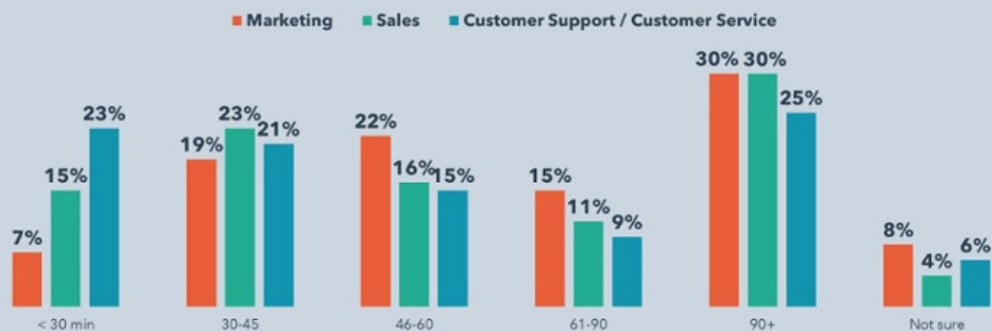
There's a significant monetary cost associated with this kind of fragmented system. Here's how much time frontline marketing, sales and customer support employees spend reconciling systems every day:

## 3

## Software is not a fix for speed

### Frontline employees spend 10% of their time reconciling disconnected communication systems

How much time do you spend managing and accessing your different communication tools per day?



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Here's how much money you spend on system reconciliation per employee per year (based on median salaries in the U.S. and a 50-week working year):

- **Marketing:** \$6,513 - \$8,685 per employee per year (\$69,483 salary)
- **Sales:** \$4,963 - \$6,617 per employee per year (\$52,946 salary)
- **Customer support:** \$2,284 - \$3,045 per employee per year (\$24,360 salary)

There's also a mismatch between how fast buyers want a response and how quickly your business can provide one. Buyers want their issues resolved in 10 minutes or less, but your employees spend far more than that time searching for answers. Before the introduction of chat, your customers might not have felt that mismatch. Today, they certainly do.

## 4

# This is the age of convenience, where speed is everything

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The rise of the internet in the 1990s ushered in the age of information.

Anyone with an idea could earn attention for free. Companies, products, and media platforms rose and fell. Information was everywhere, and consumers had limitless choice.

But then something interesting (and very human) happened: The novelty wore off.

We got used to having the world at our fingertips. It was no longer exciting to have access to infinite content and choice -- it was exhausting. We needed help to sift through millions of options.

Once again, the internet rose to the occasion. Google introduced Featured Snippets and People Also Ask boxes to pare down an overwhelming number of search results. Amazon saves previous purchases and introduced Amazon's Choice products to make buying easier.

In short, we moved from the age of information to the age of convenience.

The march of progress favors convenience.

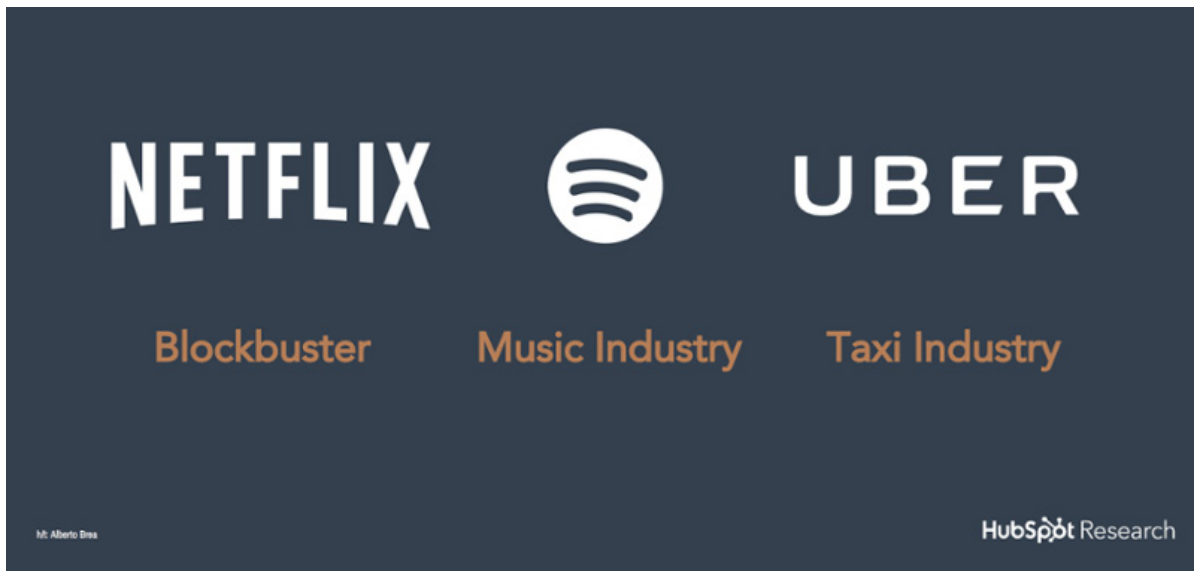
You probably pay a premium for more convenient products and services without thinking twice. But have you ever done business with a company that made your life more complicated? Probably not. (And if so, why?)

Entire industries have been disrupted by companies who offer the exact same thing in a more convenient form.



# 4

## This is the age of convenience, where speed is everything



Netflix disrupted Blockbuster by giving us access to any movie we wanted without late fees.

Spotify disrupted the digital music industry by allowing you to stream anyone’s music without having to own it yourself.

Uber disrupted the taxi industry by getting you from Point A to Point B without having to wait out in the rain for a cab.

Netflix, Spotify, Uber: None of these companies rose to the top by inventing a new product or service. They offered you the exact same thing their competitors did -- just in a simpler way.

Today, your biggest risk of disruption isn’t your competitor’s products or services. It’s their go-to-market. The company with the simpler, more relevant, baggage-free process will always come out on top.