



Phil Brown | 2019

# Does your go-to-market plan have a cowboy's head and ballerina's legs

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My kids used to enjoy playing a drawing game, sometimes called 'Heads, Bodies, Legs'. You may know it. It involves folding a piece of paper into three sections. The first person draws a head and neck on the top section and then turns it over before passing it to the second person with just a small piece of the neck showing below the fold.

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The second person then continues the drawing with the torso, the arms and the tops of the legs, before passing it on to a third person to draw the legs and feet. Obviously the fun of the game is that each drawer can't see the preceding sections of the drawing, so you end up with some interesting looking characters and much hilarity ensues.

I'm sometimes reminded of this drawing game when observing how some companies create and execute go-to-market plans. Often one group will develop a strategy and then hand it over to one or more marketing departments to develop an execution plan. The marketing departments then brief their delivery agencies, who in turn will distil those briefs down to individual briefs for the designer or the sales trainer or the copywriter.

The general principle that seems to apply is that each person in the chain should pass on the minimum set of information required for the next person to do their job. Which means, to extend our drawing metaphor, the PR or the Campaigns manager knows that they need to draw a pair of legs of a certain rough size, but without knowing if they're for a cowboy or a ballerina.

Now, the kids drawing game is good for a few laughs but it rarely produces a work of art. Similarly, such a fragmented approach to building and executing your go-to-market plan will rarely deliver successful results.

We work with clients on the end-to-end go-to-market process, from developing strategies through to building sales tools, which gives us an interesting perspective on what works but also what can go wrong. Based on my observations, there are a couple of common traps that companies fall into.

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The first is that nobody has the full picture. In particular, the people at the end of the chain don't understand the overall goals or the context and rationale for what they're tasked with doing. This means that when they're making detailed tactical decisions, they're basing those decisions on incomplete information. Not surprisingly, the execution is often poorly aligned with the intended strategy, much to everyone's puzzlement and frustration.

The second is that valuable information is discarded during the process. So, for example, the strategy team will capture lots of market insight during the planning process, which they'll use to inform their strategy decisions. Having access to this information can be incredibly useful to the downstream agencies, whether it is the copywriter working on a brochure or a sales trainer putting together an enablement programme, yet it rarely gets shared. All that's communicated downstream is the final output – 'we're targeting this segment with this proposition', and all of the valuable data and the important thought processes are lost.

To address these issues, companies need to have the right processes and frameworks in place. It's important that key information is captured at each stage and is then flowed through to subsequent stages. Each person involved in the process should be building on what's gone before, rather than just taking the bits they need and discarding the rest, so that over time an increasingly rich and detailed picture is produced.

So to use the example of the strategy department, part of their role should not just be to decide and communicate the strategy, but also to distil all of the market insight data they've gathered into a summary which can easily be referenced by anybody else involved in the process. This can form part of a GTM Plan communications document, which is built up in stages as the more detailed execution plans are developed.

Encouraging the right mind-set is also important. Everyone involved in the process needs to see knowledge transfer as a key accountability. There's no point doing your own bit of the process fantastically well if other people around you don't have the information they need to do their bits just as well. So people should be encouraged to think proactively about what information will help other people deliver the best possible outputs, not just what's the minimum required to communicate the task.

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### About OneGTM

OneGTM specialises in helping clients in the technology and telecoms sectors to create and execute go-to-market programmes that deliver profitable growth. Our services range from market research and strategic planning, through to channel enablement and demand generation.

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