

**CMO GROW**

Fractional CMO for B2B CEOs

# The Growth Operating System

The Three-Layer Framework Behind Every CMO Grow Engagement

*Strategy. Leadership. Execution. In that order.*

## ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK

## What this is - and who it's for

This document is the operator manual for the Growth Operating System (GOS) - the proprietary framework CMO Grow uses to diagnose, rebuild, and run the marketing function at B2B companies between \$5M and \$75M in revenue.

It's written for the CEO or founder who wants to understand exactly what their fractional CMO is doing, why, and in what sequence. Not theory. Not slides. The actual framework.

### Why most B2B marketing fails

Most B2B companies between \$5M-\$75M have the same problem: they've hired marketing tacticians when what they needed was marketing leadership. They have someone running ads or writing content, but nobody is making the upstream decisions that determine whether any of it works.

The Growth Operating System fixes that. It establishes the decisions, the ownership structure, and the execution cadence that allow marketing to compound over time instead of cycling through campaigns that don't stick.

**3**

Layers

**12**

Core decisions

**90**

Days to first proof

*The GOS is not a marketing plan. It's the system that makes marketing plans work.*

## FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

## The Three-Layer Framework

The Growth Operating System is built on three layers. Each layer depends on the one above it. You cannot execute your way out of a strategy problem, and you cannot lead your way around unclear positioning. The layers have to be built in order.

**Layer 1: Strategy**

Where to play, who to serve, and what the business stands for in the market.

**Layer 2: Leadership**

Who owns what, how decisions get made, and how budget flows.

**Layer 3: Execution**

What runs, what we measure, and how we get better every quarter.

Most marketing engagements fail because they start at Layer 3. The channels, the campaigns, the content - all of it launches before anyone has answered the Layer 1 questions. When that happens, you're optimizing execution against the wrong strategy. Fast lane, wrong direction.

# 01

## Strategy

Where to play and who to serve

## LAYER 1: STRATEGY

# Strategy: The four decisions that determine everything downstream

Strategy is not a slide deck. It's not a mission statement. It's a set of explicit choices about where the company competes and where it doesn't. Every CMO Grow engagement starts here - even if the client thinks they just need better ads.

## 1. Market position

What the company is the best choice for - not better, not good, but the best for a specific buyer in a specific situation.

## 2. Ideal customer profile (ICP)

The narrowest definition of a customer that still represents a large enough market. Most B2B companies have their ICP too wide.

## 3. Growth thesis

The primary mechanism by which new revenue enters the business. Referral engine, outbound motion, inbound category play, or partnership channel - one of these has to be the primary bet.

## 4. Message architecture

The hierarchy of claims the company makes: the core promise, the proof points, the differentiators, and the language that connects each to a buyer problem.

*A practical test: if you showed your ICP definition to five people internally and asked them to name three real accounts that fit, would they give you the same three accounts? If not, the ICP isn't tight enough.*

# 02

## Leadership

Who owns what and how decisions get made

**LAYER 2: LEADERSHIP**

## Leadership: The structure that makes execution possible

Marketing leadership is not the same as managing a marketing team. At the \$10M-\$50M stage, marketing leadership means owning three things: the resource decisions (budget and headcount), the agency and vendor relationships, and the reporting relationship upward to the CEO or board.

### The four ownership areas

- \* Team and headcount: Who does what. Clear ownership of demand gen, content, product marketing, and operations - even if that's one person wearing multiple hats.
- \* Budget governance: Where the budget goes, why, and who has authority to shift it. Most companies don't have this. They have a spreadsheet that was right in January.
- \* Agency and vendor management: Which external partners are on the roster, what their mandate is, and how their output gets evaluated. Not a relationship - a contract with accountable deliverables.
- \* Executive reporting: What the CEO sees, on what cadence, and in what format. The CMO is responsible for making marketing legible to leadership, not just running it.

### The leadership diagnostic

At the start of every engagement, CMO Grow runs a leadership diagnostic across these four areas. The output is a simple heat map: green (owned and working), yellow (unclear ownership or poor execution), red (nobody owns this). The red zones are almost always the explanation for whatever is not working in Layer 3.

# 03

## Execution

What runs, what we measure, how we improve

**LAYER 3: EXECUTION**

## Execution: The sprint and channel model

Once Strategy and Leadership are in place, Execution is a series of 90-day sprints. Each sprint has a single primary objective, a defined set of channels and programs, a weekly check-in cadence, and a scoreboard. Nothing runs that isn't tied to the sprint objective.

### The CMO Grow channel framework

We organize all execution into five channel categories:

**Demand capture**

SEO, SEM, and review site optimization. Capturing buyers who are already looking.

**Demand creation**

Content marketing, thought leadership, and social. Building the category or creating awareness among buyers not yet in market.

**Outbound**

Sales development, LinkedIn outreach, and sequenced email. Direct engagement with named accounts or titles.

**Referral and retention**

Customer success programs, referral mechanics, and expansion plays. The highest-ROI channel most companies underinvest in.

**Partnership**

Co-marketing, integration ecosystem, and channel partnerships. Scales without proportional headcount.

Not every sprint runs all five categories. Strategy determines which two or three are the primary investment for the next 90 days. The others may run at maintenance level or not at all.

## EXECUTION: METRICS

## What we measure - and what we don't

The CMO Grow measurement framework has three levels. Each level serves a different audience and a different decision. Conflating them is one of the most common causes of marketing dysfunction.

**Board / CEO level (monthly)**

- \* Pipeline created (\$)
- \* Revenue influenced (\$)
- \* CAC vs. LTV ratio
- \* Marketing-sourced bookings (%)

**Team / CMO level (weekly)**

- \* MQLs by source
- \* Opportunities created
- \* Website sessions and conversion rate
- \* Email performance
- \* Ad spend efficiency (ROAS)

**Channel level (daily)**

- \* Impressions, clicks, CTR
- \* Cost per click / cost per lead
- \* Keyword rankings
- \* Sequence reply rates

*The CEO should never be looking at daily channel metrics. The channel manager should never be optimizing to board-level KPIs. Each audience needs a different view - built by the CMO.*

## HOW THE LAYERS INTERACT

# The system in motion

The Growth Operating System is not a static document. It's a living system that runs on a quarterly and annual cadence. Here's how the three layers interact.

### Annual strategy review

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Layer 1 gets revisited once a year, or when a material market shift warrants it. Not every quarter. Over-rotating strategy is as dangerous as no strategy.

### Quarterly sprint planning

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Layer 3 gets reset every 90 days against the current Layer 1 priorities. The sprint plan is built top-down: from growth thesis to channels to programs.

### Monthly leadership review

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Layer 2 governance runs monthly: budget, vendor performance, team structure, and executive reporting. This is where the CMO makes the case for or against resource shifts.

### Weekly execution standup

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Layer 3 runs weekly with the internal team. Blockers, pacing, tests, and optimizations. The CMO chairs it; the team owns the work.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

# The Growth Operating System diagnostic

Rate each of the following on a scale of 1-5. 1 = does not exist or is unclear. 5 = explicit, written, and operating well.

## Strategy

We have a written ICP definition that the whole company agrees on.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a single primary growth thesis that guides budget allocation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a message architecture that is consistent across all channels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We know exactly which market positions we are NOT pursuing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Leadership

Marketing has a clear owner with explicit budget authority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Every agency and vendor has a written scope and review cadence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The CEO receives a monthly marketing report tied to business outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a documented decision-making process for marketing priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Execution

We run 90-day sprint cycles with a written objective and scoreboard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a weekly marketing standup with defined agenda and ownership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our metrics are organized into board, team, and channel levels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a testing cadence - at least one test running per sprint.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## HOW CMO GROW WORKS

## The CMO Grow engagement model

CMO Grow operates as a fractional CMO: one senior marketing leader embedded in your business one or two days per week. This is not consulting. We are not delivering a report. We are running your marketing function - making decisions, owning vendors, and producing measurable results.

**1-2**

Days/week in your business

**90**

Days to first data

**3**

Layers of the GOS running

### What a typical engagement looks like

**Month 1**

Diagnostic. Run the GOS audit across all three layers. Identify the highest-leverage gaps. Produce a 90-day sprint plan.

**Months 2-3**

Sprint 1. Execute the plan. Build or rebuild the systems, channels, and reporting that don't exist. Establish the leadership cadence.

**Months 4-6**

Sprint 2. Prove the thesis. The first real data on whether the strategy is working. Adjust and compound.

**Month 6+**

Hand off or deepen. Some clients transition to internal leadership. Others extend the engagement. Either is a success.

*We work with a small number of clients at any time. If we're not the right fit, we'll tell you on the first call. That's not a sales line - it's the only way the model works.*

## IS THIS RIGHT FOR YOU?

# Who the Growth Operating System is built for

The GOS is designed for a specific type of company at a specific stage. It is not a fit for every B2B business, and we will tell you if it isn't.

### Strong fit:

- \* B2B company, \$5M-\$75M in revenue
- \* No current CMO or head of marketing, or a CMO who is primarily a tactician
- \* CEO is spending meaningful time on marketing decisions they shouldn't be making
- \* The company has a working product and paying customers - marketing is the growth constraint
- \* Leadership is willing to make the upstream strategy decisions, not just buy more ads

### Poor fit:

- \* Pre-revenue or very early stage - strategy is still product-market fit, not marketing
- \* CEO wants tactics without strategy - a vendor, not a leader
- \* Company needs a full-time CMO on-site, not a fractional model
- \* Primary growth constraint is sales capacity, not marketing quality
- \* Company is in a category where brand and marketing are not primary purchase drivers

## NEXT STEPS

## What to do next

If you've read this document and you think the Growth Operating System is the right framework for your company, the next step is a 30-minute call with CMO Grow.

Here's what happens on that call:

- \* We ask you ten diagnostic questions drawn from the GOS audit.
- \* You tell us what's working, what isn't, and what the CEO is losing sleep over.
- \* We tell you honestly whether we're the right fit and what a first sprint would look like.
- \* No deck. No proposal. No follow-up cadence unless you want one.

### Book a 30-minute growth call

[cmogrow.com/contact](https://cmogrow.com/contact)