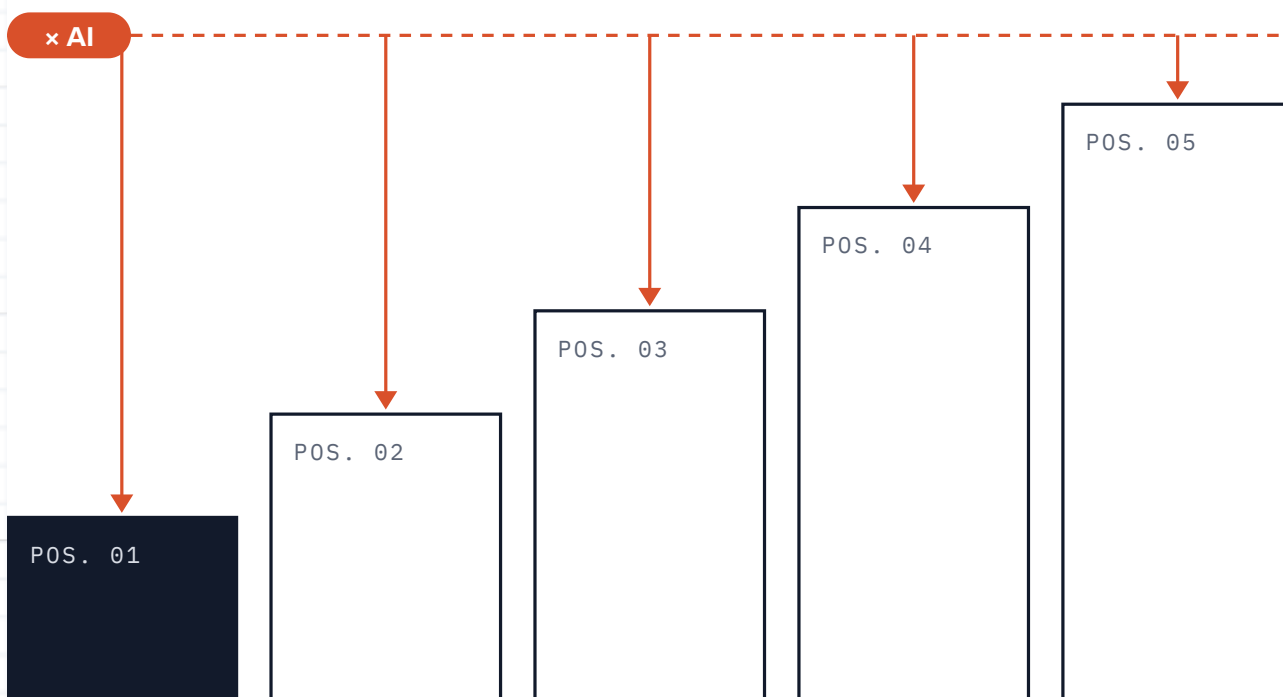




FREE WHITEPAPER

The Revenue Lever

Why qualified teams sell more than the competition



5

LEVERS, NOT A CHECKLIST

12

SOURCES, NO MADE-UP NUMBERS

23

PAGES WITH 13 FIGURES

CONTENTS

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In a hurry? Start with “At a Glance” on page 3 and the self-check on page 21.

Every lever chapter follows the same structure: key point in 30 seconds, findings, figure, first step and metric.

AT A GLANCE

The Whitepaper in Five Sentences

Companies that grow faster than average rarely have a secret trick. They have a shared language between the people who win and keep customers. That language is built through five levers that build on each other.

POS. 01

Qualification language

Marketing, sales and partners mean the same thing when they say “qualified”. Which framework you pick is secondary.

POS. 02

Lead generation

A shared ICP and a fixed response time instead of optimizing for lead volume.

POS. 03

Visibility

SEO stays, GEO is added: be one of the two to seven sources an AI answer cites.

POS. 04

Positioning

Measured against real alternatives, including doing nothing, and told the same way by all three teams.

POS. 05

Partner management

Partners are assessed on the same criteria as direct sales, including the quality of their qualification.

× AMPLIFIER

AI

Not a sixth lever but a multiplier: clarity becomes quality at scale, confusion becomes faster chaos.

~~208 %~~

The widely quoted alignment figure can't be traced to any study. Page 6.

+34 %

more issues resolved per hour for new agents with an AI assistant. Page 15.

28 %

of their working time is spent actually selling, according to sales reps themselves. Page 17.

FOREWORD

Foreword

I led sales, marketing and partner organizations before I started advising others on it. I don't mention this to impress anyone. It explains why this whitepaper is written the way it is: no made-up numbers, no consultant clichés and no claim that a single trick will double your revenue.

What there is instead is a recurring pattern. When I look at companies that grow faster than their competitors, the difference rarely lies in one brilliant marketing trick or a clever sales tactic. It lies in marketing, sales and, where it exists, partner management speaking the same language when they talk about customers. They agree on what a qualified prospect is, how to recognize buying intent and when to invest time and when not to.

That sounds trivial. In practice it isn't. Most companies I work with have good marketing and good salespeople. What they lack is translation between the two. This whitepaper describes why that costs so much revenue, what the research actually shows and which levers address the problem: shared qualification, lead generation that fits, visibility in classic and AI-powered search, sharp positioning and partner management that plays by the same rules as the rest of the company.

And because no company can avoid the question of what artificial intelligence changes in all of this, AI gets its own chapter too. The short answer up front: AI amplifies what is already there. Clarity just as much as confusion.

Manuel Willert

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THIS PAPER

Every figure is backed by a source. Where the research only argues qualitatively, so do the figures.

HOW TO READ

The margin column holds key points, sources and cross-references. Read only the margin and you have the skeleton.

CHAPTER 1

The Uncomfortable Truth: Separate Languages Cost Revenue

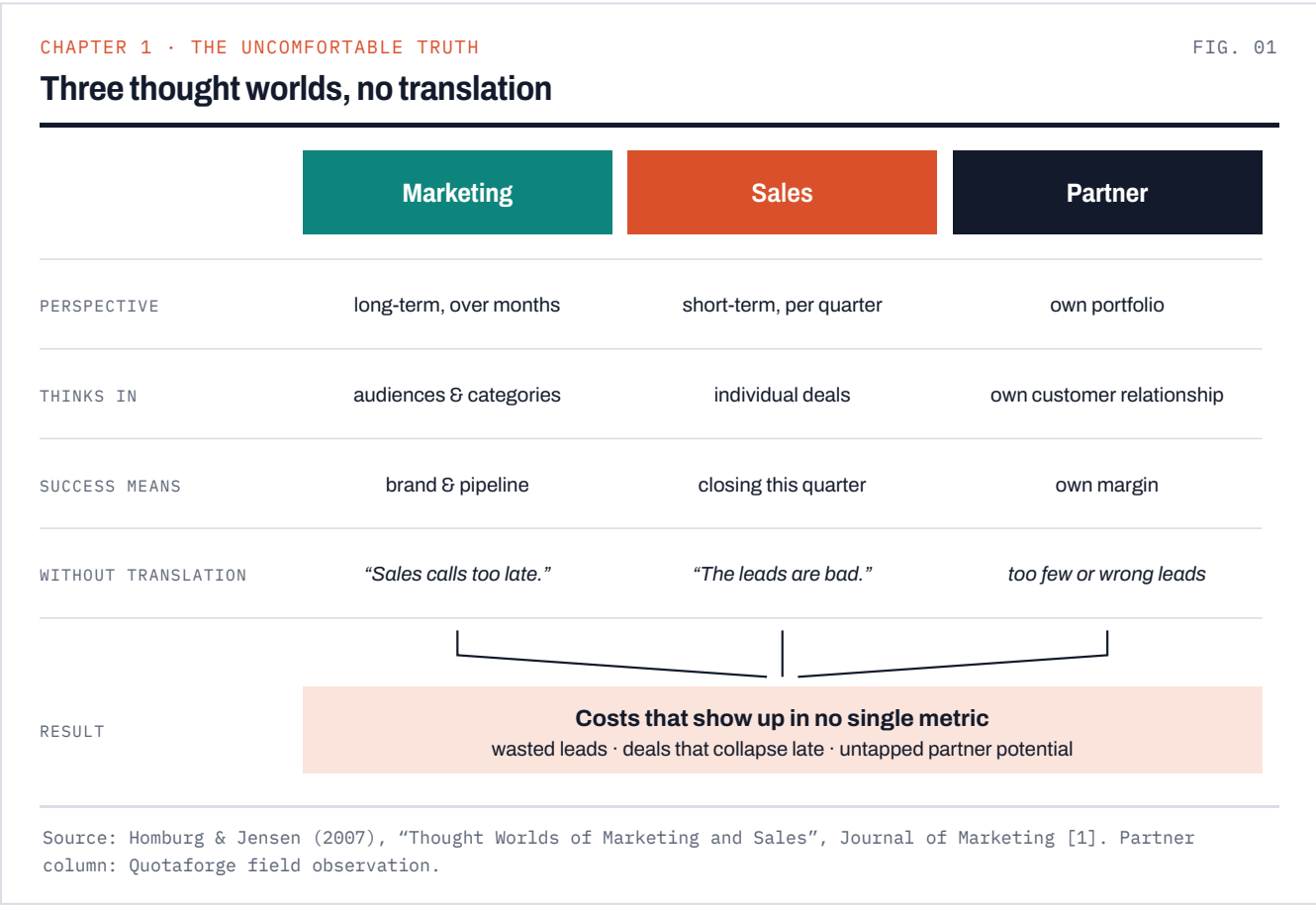
Let’s start with an observation that repeats itself in almost every company I have worked with. Marketing delivers leads. Sales says the leads are bad. Marketing says sales doesn’t call them fast enough or gives up too early. Both are right from where they stand, and that is exactly the problem: they use different definitions, time horizons and measures of success.

Marketing researchers Christian Homburg and Ove Jensen described this in 2007 in the Journal of Marketing as the “thought worlds” of marketing and sales.¹ Their key finding: what drives sales and marketing apart is not primarily a communication gap but fundamentally different professional mindsets. The problem arises when nobody organizes the translation between them.

Companies with partner sales add a third thought world. Partners sell their own portfolio, their own margin and their own customer relationship. A partner who doesn’t understand how sales judges a lead will deliver either too few leads or the wrong ones, usually both at once.

IN 30 SECONDS
Marketing, sales and partners think in structurally different ways. It gets expensive when nobody translates between them.

SOURCE 1
Homburg & Jensen (2007), Journal of Marketing 71(3).



CHAPTER 2

What the Research Really Shows

Anyone researching the revenue impact of sales and marketing alignment runs into the same claim almost everywhere: companies with tightly aligned sales and marketing supposedly achieve 208 percent more revenue. The figure appears on countless marketing websites, usually citing “MarketingProfs” or “LinkedIn Business Solutions”.

A closer look shows that the trail of this figure leads nowhere. It can’t be traced back to any verifiable original study, methodology or sample.¹²

Solid research is less catchy but verifiable. Robert Peterson, Geoffrey Gordon and Vijaykumar Palghat examined the link between alignment and company performance across several organizations in the Journal of Selling.² Better alignment shows up as better lead management, more accurate forecasting, higher customer retention and, as a result, stronger revenue growth and better goal attainment. Salespeople who act as advisors rather than purely transactionally serve as an information channel between customer and company.

IN 30 SECONDS

The 208% figure is unsupported. What is supported: alignment improves several metrics at once.

SOURCES 2, 12

Peterson, Gordon & Palghat, Journal of Selling 15(1).
SWOTBee (2025).

CHAPTER 2 • WHAT THE RESEARCH REALLY SHOWS

FIG. 02

Fact check: 208% versus what is supported

THE CLAIM

~~208 %~~

more revenue from alignment, “according to a study”



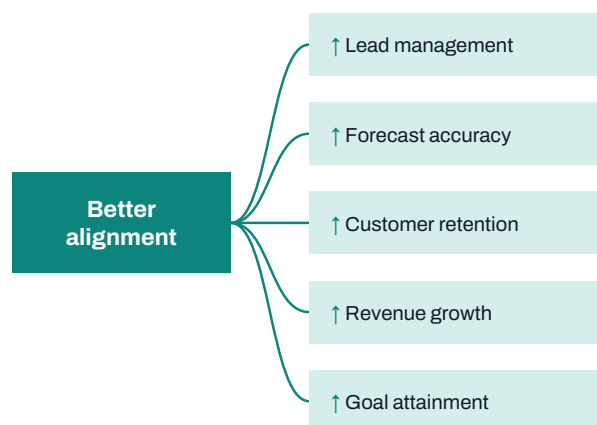
copied for years, never checked against the primary source

- ✗ no original study
- ✗ no methodology
- ✗ no sample

Less catchy, but verifiable.

WHAT IS SUPPORTED

Peterson, Gordon & Palghat, Journal of Selling



No multiplier, but several metrics.

Sources: Peterson, Gordon & Palghat, “When Sales and Marketing Align”, Journal of Selling 15(1) [2]; SWOTBee (2025) on the origin of the 208% figure [12].

The point is not “alignment brings X percent more revenue”. The point is: the thought worlds differ structurally, which is well documented, and whoever actively bridges that gap improves several metrics at once. That is something you can build a strategy on.

CHAPTER 3 · POS. 01

Lever One: A Shared Qualification Language

The most effective lever for bringing marketing, sales and partners together is surprisingly unspectacular: a shared language for what a qualified prospect is. Not three different definitions of “lead”, but one that all three functions understand and apply the same way.

There are proven frameworks for this. Which one you choose is secondary. What matters is applying one consistently and across functions. An overview still pays off, because different frameworks are built for different stages and deal sizes.

For first contact and shorter sales cycles

Lightweight frameworks work well here. SPICED, coined by Winning by Design, covers Situation, Pain, Impact, Critical Event and Decision. CHAMP starts with the Challenge, then Authority, Money and Prioritization. Unlike older models such as BANT, you don’t start with the budget but with the problem. That changes the whole conversation, because you first understand why a customer should act at all.

Once a deal gets more complex

With several stakeholders, a formal purchasing process or larger volumes, MEDDIC or its extended version MEDDPICC is the better fit. It adds two points that regularly kill deals at the last minute in larger organizations: the Paper Process, meaning procurement and contract after the verbal yes, and Competition, the customer’s alternatives, including the option of doing nothing at all.

For existing customers and partner relationships

GPCTBA/C&I, a framework shaped by HubSpot, proves its worth here. It adds Negative Consequences and Positive Implications to goals, plans, challenges, timeline, budget and authority: what happens if nothing is done, and what becomes possible if action is taken? With existing customers in particular, this forces you to justify the value of working together again and again.

POS. 01 / 05 ·
QUALIFICATION



IN 30 SECONDS

One framework that all three teams apply the same way beats the best framework that lives in a single department.

FIGURE

All acronyms spelled out in Fig. 04 on the next page.

CHAPTER 3 · LEVER ONE

FIG. 04

Which qualification framework fits when

FIRST CONTACT · SHORT CYCLE

SEVERAL STAKEHOLDERS · FORMAL PURCHASING

FOR FIRST CONTACT

ONCE IT GETS COMPLEX

EXISTING CUSTOMERS & PARTNERS

SPICED

Winning by Design

- S** Situation
- P** Pain · specific problem
- I** Impact · business impact
- C** Critical Event · time-bound trigger
- D** Decision · decision process

CHAMP

Problem first

- CH** Challenge · the problem
- A** Authority
- M** Money
- P** Prioritization

MEDDPIC

MEDDIC + 2

- M** Metrics · customer's success criteria
- E** Economic Buyer · budget authority
- D** Decision Criteria
- D** Decision Process
- P** Paper Process · procurement, contract
- I** Identify Pain
- C** Champion · internal advocate
- C** Competition · incl. doing nothing

■ Added in MEDDPIC: what kills deals at the last minute

GPCTBA / C&I

HubSpot

- GP** Goals & Plans
- C** Challenges
- T** Timeline
- B** Budget
- A** Authority
- C** Negative Consequences · if nothing happens
- I** Positive Implications · if action is taken

Forces you to justify the value of working together again and again.

The choice isn't what decides. What decides is that marketing, sales and partners apply the same framework the same way.

A conversation guide, not a checklist. The questions structure curiosity, they don't replace it.

Source: Whitepaper chapter 3. Frameworks: SPICED (Winning by Design), CHAMP, MEDDIC/MEDDPIC, GPCTBA/C&I (HubSpot).

The real value comes from marketing asking the same guiding questions at first contact as sales does in the first meeting, from both meaning the same thing when they say “qualified”, and from partners being measured in reviews against the same criteria as your own team. A framework that exists in only one department is, at worst, an extra source of friction, because it suggests structure where all you have built is another silo.

A NOTE FROM PRACTICE

A framework is a conversation guide, not a checklist. The questions should structure curiosity, not replace it.

FIRST STEP

Pick one framework and apply it to ten real, current deals in a joint workshop with marketing, sales and partners.

METRIC

Share of fully qualified opportunities in the pipeline.

CHAPTER 4 • POS. 02

Lever Two: Lead Generation That Fits Qualification

With a shared qualification language, what lead generation should look like changes automatically, because it is now clear what you are looking for. The most common mistake is optimizing for the wrong number: marketing is measured on leads generated, sales on deals closed. As long as the two aren't connected by a shared definition of quality, marketing rationally optimizes for volume, and sales rightly complains about quality.

The way out is a jointly developed definition of the ideal customer profile (ICP), regularly checked against real closed-won data. Define MQL and SQL together and agree on a fixed response time. Align the channel mix with your own sales cycle. And use intent data and lead scoring as support: a score sets the order of conversations, it doesn't replace qualification. The same language applies to leads from and to partners.

POS. 02 / 05 • LEAD GENERATION



IN 30 SECONDS

Not more leads, but the right ones: a shared ICP and a binding response time.

CHAPTER 4 • LEVER TWO

FIG. 05

Handover, response time and channel mix

SHARED DEFINITION



BUYING INTEREST COOLS DOWN



Schematic, no measured values.

CHANNEL MIX, NOT TREND-CHASING

Organic & content

+ cheaper, better pre-qualified – takes patience

Paid campaigns

+ visible faster – more expensive, less pre-qualified

Events & in-person formats

+ often the highest close rate – highest cost per contact

Lead score = order

Sorts conversations, doesn't replace qualification.

Source: Whitepaper chapter 4. Qualitative assessment, no measured values.

FIRST STEP

Define MQL and SQL together in writing and set a handover response time that both sides sign off on.

METRIC

Time from lead handover to first meeting.

CHAPTER 5 • POS. 03

Lever Three: Visibility Where People Actually Search

The best qualification process is of little use if nobody finds you. Visibility feeds everything described in the first two levers. And this is where something fundamental has changed recently.

Classic search engine optimization remains relevant. If you publish good, specific and current content on your audience's questions, you will still be found via Google, and organic traffic remains one of the cheapest and best pre-qualified channels. What has changed is the path there: a growing share of searches is answered by AI-generated responses, for example in Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT or Perplexity. The term Generative Engine Optimization, GEO for short, has become established for this.¹¹

The key difference is the target. SEO is about a spot among ten results. GEO is about being one of usually just two to seven sources an AI system cites. The target is smaller but more powerful, because your company becomes part of the answer itself.

POS. 03 / 05 •

VISIBILITY



IN 30 SECONDS

SEO stays. GEO is added: become one of the few sources cited in the AI answer.

SOURCE 11

Search Engine Land (2026), Mastering Generative Engine Optimization.

CHAPTER 5 • LEVER THREE

FIG. 06

SEO and GEO: from link to source in the answer

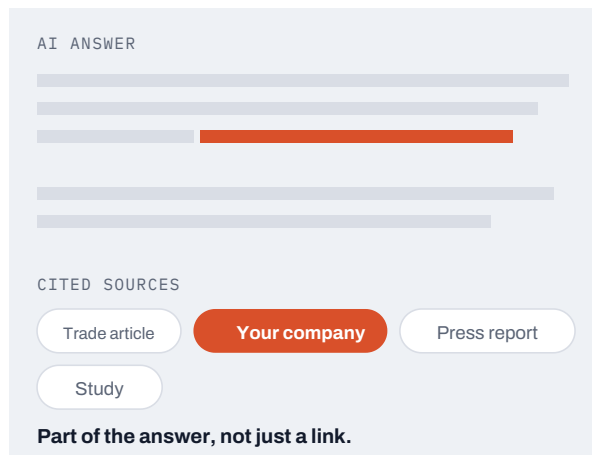
CLASSIC SEO

Goal: a spot among 10 links



GENERATIVE ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Goal: one of 2 to 7 cited sources



FOUR APPROACHES THAT COMPLEMENT SEO

■ Structure for extraction

every passage stands alone

■ Authority as an entity

third-party mentions

■ Sort out the tech

load time, schema, AI crawlers

■ Show your own data

originality gets cited

Source: Whitepaper chapter 5; Search Engine Land (2026), Mastering GEO [11]. Note: measuring GEO is still in its early days.

Four approaches that complement SEO

Structure content for extraction. Every section makes sense on its own, the key answer comes first, with clear headings and, where useful, question-and-answer sections. AI systems extract passages, not whole articles.

Build authority as a recognizable entity. A meaningful About page, clear author information, consistent mentions of name and brand. AI systems tend to weight third-party mentions, for example in trade articles or press reports, more heavily than self-promotion. That makes classic PR important again.

Sort out the technical basics. Load time, mobile display, structured data via schema markup and whether the crawlers of the major AI providers are allowed in at all.

Publish your own data and assessments. Original content instead of rewritten trend articles. That is exactly what the check of the 208 percent figure in this document attempts, because originality is one of the few reliable reasons an AI system cites one particular company.

An honest caveat belongs here: measuring GEO is still in its early days. Classic SEO tools don't reliably track how often you are cited in AI answers. Anyone selling exact percentages as a guarantee of success here should make you skeptical for the same reason as the 208 percent figure.

THIS PAPER, TOO,

is available as a structured web version on quotaforge.io, so it can be cited itself.

“GEO is about being one of usually just two to seven sources an AI system cites at all.”

FIRST STEP

Collect your audience's ten most common questions and write a passage for each that stands on its own and gives the answer in the first sentence.

METRIC

Regular spot check: is your company cited in AI answers to these ten questions? Plus organic traffic to these pages.

CHAPTER 6 · POS. 04

Lever Four: Positioning That Makes the Difference Visible

Visibility alone isn't enough. Positioning is the work that comes before it, and it is closely tied to qualification: if positioning is fuzzy, the qualification criteria get fuzzy too, because nobody can say exactly for whom an offer really is the best option.

The most useful framework for this comes from April Dunford, described in her book “Obviously Awesome”.³ It consists of five steps that build on each other. The first is the most underestimated: competitive alternatives include the status quo, meaning spreadsheets, manual processes or simply doing nothing. A considerable share of all B2B deals is lost not to a competitor but to no decision.

POS. 04 / 05 ·
POSITIONING



IN 30 SECONDS

Positioning is measured against real alternatives. All three teams tell it the same way.

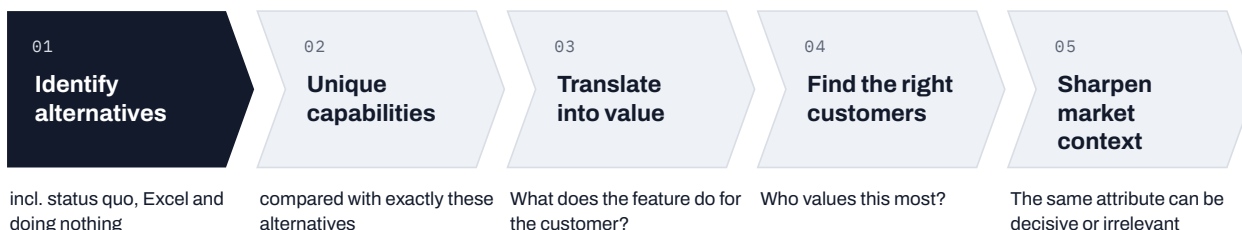
SOURCE 3

Dunford (2019), Obviously Awesome, Ambient Press.

CHAPTER 6 · LEVER FOUR

FIG. 07

Positioning in five steps, following April Dunford



OFTEN THERE IS AN ALIGNMENT PROBLEM BEHIND IT



A considerable share of B2B deals is lost to no decision, not to a competitor.

Source: Dunford, A. (2019), “Obviously Awesome”, Ambient Press [3]; Whitepaper chapter 6.

FIRST STEP

For your last ten lost deals, record which alternative they went to, including doing nothing, and sharpen your positioning from that.

METRIC

Share of deals lost to no decision.

CHAPTER 7 • POS. 05

Lever Five: Partner Management as a Revenue Multiplier

For product manufacturers and companies with multi-tier sales, the fifth lever is often the most neglected and at the same time the one with the greatest untapped potential. A partner program multiplies reach without having to build your own sales staff in every market. What gets overlooked: a partner who doesn't know how to tell a good deal from a bad one will, when in doubt, deliver what is easiest for them, not what is most valuable for the vendor.

The way out is the same as for internal teams: the same qualification language, applied consistently. Partners get the same or compatible guiding questions, opportunities are reviewed jointly rather than separately, and partners are assessed not only on their close rate but also on how cleanly they qualify.

POS. 05 / 05 • PARTNERS

**IN 30 SECONDS**

A partner with a few cleanly qualified deals is worth more than one with many unqualified ones.

CHAPTER 7 • LEVER FIVE

FIG. 08

Partner management: symptoms and the way out

SYMPTOM

Deals that never close

nobody has defined what qualified means

Conflicting forecasts

two definitions of "likely"

Reviews about the past

yesterday's revenue instead of today's pipeline

WAY OUT: THE SAME LANGUAGE

Compatible guiding questions

same criteria as direct sales

Joint opportunity reviews

not split by partner and sales

Assessment by qualification quality

not just by close rate

WHAT MAKES A PARTNER VALUABLE (SCHEMATIC)

Partner A

many deals, barely qualified

**Partner B**

few deals, cleanly qualified



○ unqualified deal

● qualified deal

B is more valuable,
even if A looks more impressive.

Source: Whitepaper chapter 7. Dot count illustrative, no measured values.

FIRST STEP

Run the next partner review with your three most important partners jointly and along the same qualification criteria as in direct sales.

METRIC

Share of partner deals that are fully qualified when registered.

CHAPTER 8

How the Levers Work Together

These five levers don't work in isolation; they build on each other. A shared qualification language is the foundation. On top of it, lead generation becomes more precise because it is clear what you are looking for. Visibility through SEO and GEO makes sure enough of the right people come in. Positioning makes sure everyone tells the same story when those people arrive. And aligned partner management extends the chain beyond your own teams.

IN 30 SECONDS

The levers are a staircase, not a menu. Implementation happens in phases, not in an afternoon.

OVERVIEW & CHAPTER 8 · HOW THE LEVERS WORK TOGETHER

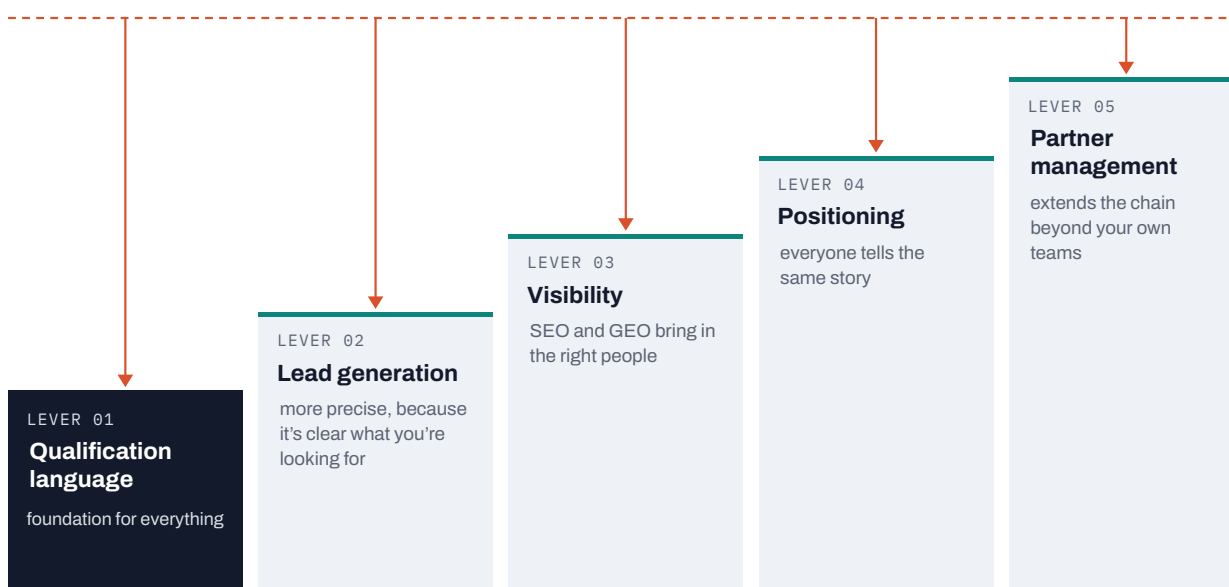
FIG. 03

The lever staircase

AMPLIFIER



enlarges every step. Clarity just as much as confusion.



The levers build on each other. They are not a menu you pick single items from.

Source: Whitepaper "The Revenue Lever", overview and chapter 8.

In practice, this can hardly be done in an afternoon. What works is a phased approach: an honest diagnosis of where the thought worlds actually diverge, then building shared skills and a shared mindset, then tools that support the approach, and finally anchoring it as a playbook in day-to-day business. Whether a framework sticks rarely depends on its quality. It depends on whether people practice it on real deals and whether anyone is still paying attention after the rollout.

NEXT

What happens when you accelerate this chain with AI? Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 9 · × AMPLIFIER

The Amplifier: Efficiency Gains Through AI Tools and Services

A look at what can actually be measured is more encouraging than many skeptics believe, and less comfortable than vendors would like: AI makes people faster at what they already do. That applies to good habits just as much as to bad ones.

What the research measures

The largest field study to date comes from Brynjolfsson, Li and Raymond, covering 5,179 customer support agents.⁴ The AI passes the approach of the best performers on to everyone, and new agents benefit most. The condition: only what has been defined as good practice can be passed on.

Harvard and Boston Consulting Group found, with 758 consultants, clear gains on tasks within the AI's capabilities and clear losses outside them, a “jagged technological frontier”.⁵ For writing tasks, Noy and Zhang show similar gains in Science.⁶

IN 30 SECONDS

AI is not a sixth lever but a multiplier on all five.
Criteria first, then tools.

SOURCES 4, 5, 6

QJE 140(2), 2025 · HBS WP 24-013 · Science 381, 2023.

CHAPTER 9 · THE AMPLIFIER

FIG. 09

What AI measurably changes, in four studies



Sources: [4] QJE 140(2), 2025 · [5] HBS Working Paper 24-013, 2023 · [6] Science 381, 2023 · [8] METR, arXiv:2507.09089, 2025.

AI as a translator between thought worlds

For this whitepaper, the most recent study is the most important one. A team led by Fabrizio Dell'Acqua studied 776 professionals at Procter & Gamble to see how AI changes collaboration.⁷ Individuals with AI matched the performance of teams without AI. And: without AI, participants stayed within their professional mindsets, R&D proposed technical solutions and the commercial side commercial ones. With AI, this difference largely disappeared.

That is the theme of chapter 1, seen from the other side. Homburg and Jensen showed that marketing and sales live in different thought worlds. This study suggests that AI can translate between them. That is no license to leave alignment to software, but it is an opportunity: an AI that works with the shared qualification language helps everyone think in terms of the whole.

Perceived versus measured efficiency

Honesty requires a counterexample. In early 2025, METR observed sixteen experienced software developers on 246 real tasks.⁸ With AI tools they took 19 percent longer, even though they had expected to save 24 percent beforehand and believed afterwards that they had been 20 percent faster. The sample is small, but the lesson holds: perceived efficiency is not measured efficiency.

SOURCES 7, 8

NBER WP 33641 (2025) · METR, arXiv:2507.09089.

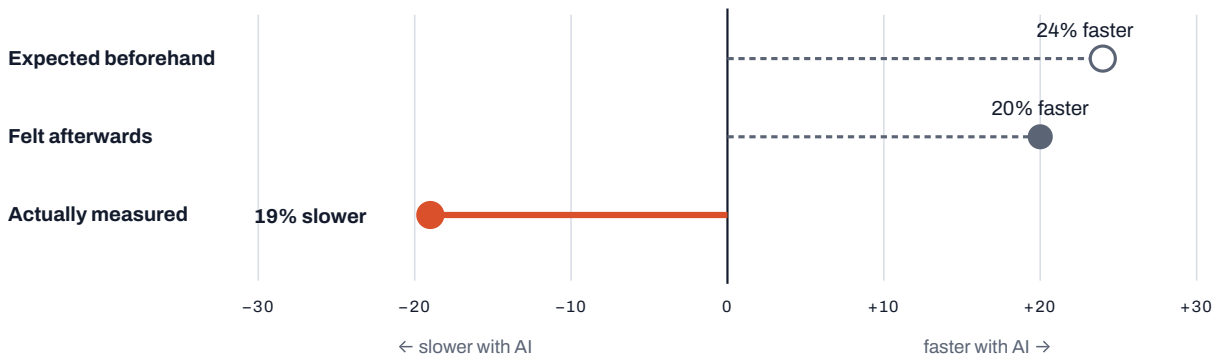
SEE ALSO

Thought worlds of marketing and sales: chapter 1, page 5.

CHAPTER 9 · PERCEIVED VERSUS MEASURED EFFICIENCY

FIG. 10

Feels faster, measures slower



Source: Becker, Rush, Barnes & Rein (2025), METR, arXiv:2507.09089 [8]. Small sample, not generalizable according to the authors.

Where the time saved needs to go

According to Salesforce's State of Sales report, salespeople spend only about 28 percent of their working time actually selling.⁹ This is self-reported data from a software vendor's survey and should be treated with caution. But the direction matches practice: most of the week goes into CRM upkeep, internal alignment, research and proposal documents. The real gain therefore isn't writing emails faster, it's giving time back to customer conversations. Without a deliberate decision, that time seeps away into meetings, longer presentations and one more report.

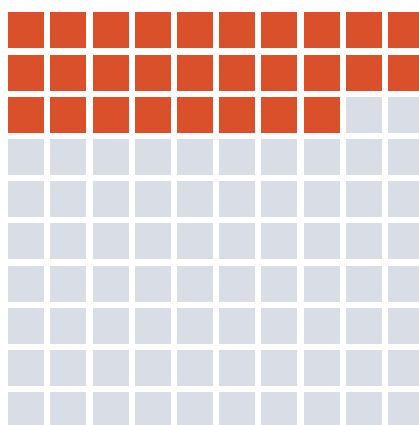
SOURCE 9

Salesforce (2022), State of Sales, 5th edition, 7,775 respondents.

CHAPTER 9 · WHERE THE TIME SAVED NEEDS TO GO

FIG. 11

Only just over a quarter of the week is selling



■ Selling ■ everything else

28 %

of working time is actual selling

The rest: CRM upkeep, internal alignment, research, proposal documents

TIME SAVED BY AI FLOWS ...

✓ into customer conversations

✗ into meetings, slides, reports

... only reaches the customer by deliberate decision.

Source: Salesforce (2022), State of Sales, 5th edition, 7,775 respondents [9]. Self-reported data from a software vendor's survey, to be treated with caution.

Use cases along the five levers

Marketing: drafting content according to GEO principles, analyzing won and lost deals to sharpen the ICP, and lead scoring that uses the same criteria as sales. Otherwise you create a second silo, this time automated.

Sales: account research, call analysis along SPICED or MEDDPICC, automatic CRM upkeep, drafts for proposals and follow-ups. An AI that shows after a call that the economic buyer and paper process are still open is worth more than any elegant summary.

Partner management: assessing partners and registered deals against the same criteria as direct sales, preparing enablement material per partner type, starting reviews with data instead of gut feeling.

Tools and services: the right order

On the market there are tools, meaning AI assistants in office and CRM systems, conversation analysis, tools for research, content and lead scoring, and increasingly AI agents. And there are services: advice on selection and rollout, team enablement and translating your own qualification criteria into prompts, scorecards and automations.

Most companies start with the tool, because it is tangible and quick to buy. It is still the wrong order. If you introduce conversation analysis before it is clear what a conversation is judged on, you get very precise analyses of something arbitrary. If you automate lead scoring before marketing and sales have agreed, you accelerate exactly the dispute from chapter 1.

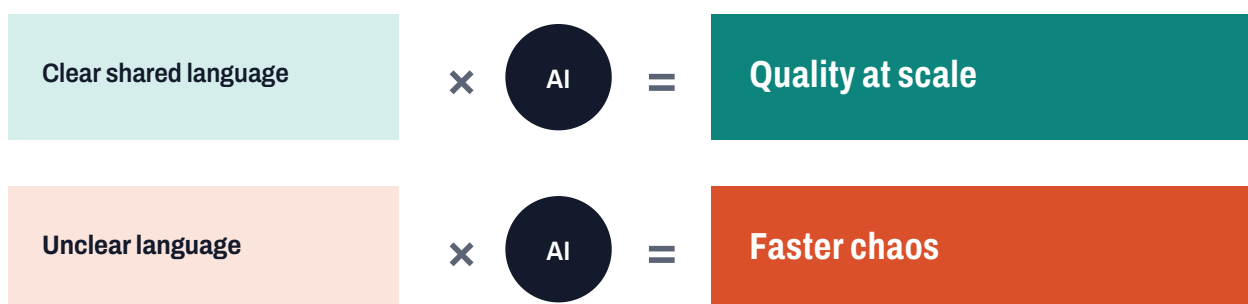
THE AMPLIFIER PRINCIPLE

AI is not an add-on but a multiplier. It enlarges what is there.

CHAPTER 9 · THE AMPLIFIER PRINCIPLE

FIG. 12

AI is not an add-on but a multiplier



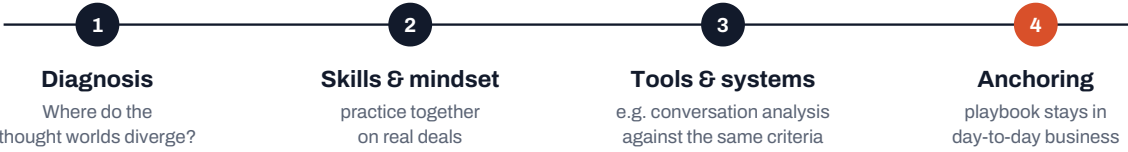
Order: criteria first, then tools.

Otherwise you're buying a bigger engine for a car without steering.

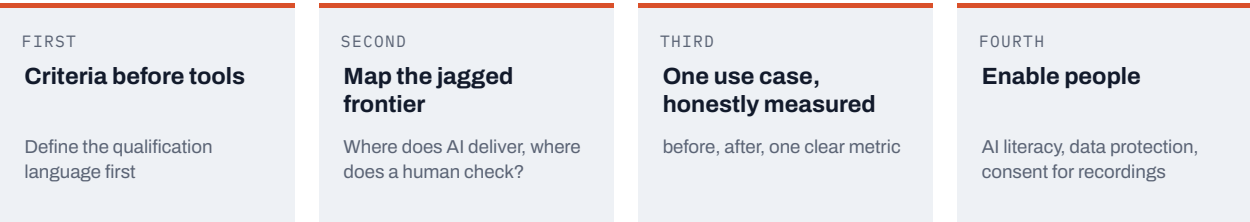
Source: Whitepaper chapter 9 and conclusion.

From findings to playbook

PHASED ROLLOUT



STARTING WITH AI PRAGMATICALLY



Example metrics: time from lead handover to first meeting · share of fully qualified opportunities

Sources: Whitepaper chapters 8 and 9; Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 and (EU) 2026/1744, Art. 4 AI literacy [10].

Starting pragmatically

First: criteria before tools. Define the shared qualification language before automating anything.

Second: map your own jagged frontier. Go through the tasks in marketing, sales and partner management and check for each whether AI demonstrably delivers good results there or whether a human must check the outcome.

Third: one use case, honestly measured. One measurement before, one after, one clear metric, such as the time from lead handover to first meeting or the share of fully qualified opportunities. Only when the first case holds up does the second one follow.

Fourth: enable people. Since 2 February 2025, the EU AI Act has required companies that use AI to take care of their employees' AI literacy. The Digital Omnibus softened this obligation as of 27 July 2026: companies now have to promote that literacy rather than ensure it.¹⁰ The real reason for training, though, is the jagged frontier: only those who understand where AI becomes unreliable can use its strengths. Wherever conversations are recorded, data protection and the consent of the other party belong on the table from the start.

Efficiency is never the actual goal. The goal remains more revenue than the competition. AI gets you there if the time saved flows into better conversations with the right customers. It doesn't get you there if, in the end, everyone just builds slides a little faster.

SOURCE 10

Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 and (EU) 2026/1744, Art. 4.

FIGURE

The four steps at a glance: Fig. 13 above.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Boiled down to one sentence, this remains: companies that grow faster than average usually don't have a secret trick, they have a shared language between the people who win and keep customers. That language doesn't emerge on its own. It has to be built deliberately, across qualification, lead generation, visibility, positioning and, where relevant, partner management.

Artificial intelligence doesn't change this finding. It sharpens it. Companies with a shared language get faster with AI, companies without one just get more hectic. Choose the right order, clarity first, then tools, and you get both: the edge from alignment and the edge from speed.

None of this is complicated in the sense of hard to understand. It is demanding in the sense that teams who used to work side by side start truly working together. That is exactly the work Quotaforge does, together with teams that are ready to take an honest look.

You can buy tools, often by tomorrow.

A team that speaks the same language, you can't.

That is exactly why it is the edge that lasts.

SELF-CHECK

Where do you stand? Ten questions, five minutes

Answer each question honestly with yes or no. Every no shows where the thought worlds in your company are currently drifting apart.

Lever	Question	Yes	No
POS. 01	Would marketing, sales and partners give the same answer if you asked them what a qualified lead is?	☐	☐
POS. 01	Do all three functions use the same or a compatible qualification framework?	☐	☐
POS. 02	Is there a binding response time within which handed-over leads are contacted?	☐	☐
POS. 02	Is your ICP regularly checked against real closed-won data?	☐	☐
POS. 03	Do you know whether your company is cited in AI answers to your audience's core questions?	☐	☐
POS. 04	Do your website, sales conversations and partner pitch tell the same story?	☐	☐
POS. 04	Do you know how many deals you lose to doing nothing rather than to competitors?	☐	☐
POS. 05	Are partners also assessed on how cleanly they qualify, not just on their close rate?	☐	☐
× AI	Were your qualification criteria defined before you introduced AI tools in marketing or sales?	☐	☐
× AI	Did you define before rollout how the success of an AI tool will be measured?	☐	☐

8 to 10 × yes

Your teams largely speak the same language. AI can work as a full amplifier here.

4 to 7 × yes

The foundation is partly in place. The no answers show which lever comes first.

0 to 3 × yes

Start with lever one. Any tool before that mostly speeds up the dispute.

ABOUT QUOTAFORGE

About Quotaforge

Quotaforge is a small team of people who have run sales, marketing and partner organizations, not just advised them. We work with tech companies, software service providers and manufacturers in three formats.

8 WEEKS

Core program

Teams train on real, current deals instead of textbook examples.

ON SITE

Shadowing

A coach joins real discovery calls, QBRs and partner reviews and gives direct feedback.

FIXED TERM

Interim management

We take over operational leadership in sales, marketing or partner management.

AI is a natural part of it: we tie deal scoring and conversation analysis to MEDDIC and MEDDPICC, lead qualification in marketing to the same language as in sales, and partner scoring to the same criteria as direct sales. In all three formats, what remains at the end is a playbook, not a dependency on us.

FREE INTRO CALL

Where do the thought worlds diverge in your company?

15 to 30 minutes, no obligation, no sales pressure and no ready-made answer. Feel free to bring your self-check result.

Manuel Willert, Founder

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