



MERCURY

# Go-to-market strategy checklist

## Getting to your first 100 customers

# Market validation

The foundation of your go-to-market (GTM) strategy starts with genuine validation — not simply confirming existing assumptions.

## Ideal customer profile (ICP) development

- Conduct at least 30+ structured customer interviews (focus on problems, not solutions)
- Document common pain points, challenges, and desires across segments
- Identify which customer segments experience the most acute pain
- Create detailed personas with demographic, psychographic, and behavioral attributes
- Determine your customers' buying process and decision-making criteria
- Map out where potential customers naturally look for solutions

## Problem validation

- Create a problem statement that clearly articulates what you're solving
- Test problem statement with potential customers (not friends or family)
- Quantify the impact of the problem (time/money lost, opportunities missed)
- Identify existing alternatives and how customers currently solve this problem
- Determine if customers are actively seeking solutions to this problem

## Solution validation

- Set up a simple landing page describing your solution
- Measure sign-up rates, demo requests, or pre-orders
- Conduct smoke tests to gauge interest before building
- Test pricing sensitivity and willingness to pay
- Identify minimum features required to deliver real value
- Create a low-fidelity MVP based on validation findings

## Fit evaluation

- Problem-solution fit: Does your product genuinely solve the problem?
- Market fit: Do enough people care about this problem?
- Business model fit: Will customers pay enough for a sustainable business?
- Product-market fit: Does your solution outperform alternatives?



# Founder-led GTM

Founders must lead GTM efforts initially to understand what works, develop repeatable processes, and prepare for scaling.

## Sales development

- Create a simple sales playbook documenting your pitch and process
- Develop clear messaging that resonates with your ICP
- Build a list of potential customers matching your ICP  
Set specific goals for customer outreach (weekly calls, demos, follow-ups)
- Document common objections and effective responses
- Track close rates and reasons for lost deals  
Establish a follow-up system for nurturing prospects

## Key success milestones

- Close first 10 paying customers
- Achieve first customer referral
- Reach \$100K ARR milestone
- Hit \$500K ARR (recommended minimum before hiring sales leadership)
- Document repeatable sales process with predictable conversion rates
- Identify patterns in successful deals (company size, industry, use case)

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# Channel selection and optimization

Choose channels strategically based on your ICP, not what's trendy or worked for others.

## Channel assessment

- ☐ Map where your ICP naturally discovers solutions
- ☐ Research which channels competitors use successfully
- ☐ Determine minimum viable sample size
- ☐ Establish testing timeframe appropriate to channel
- ☐ Allocate appropriate budget and resources
- ☐ Create control groups when possible

## Sales-led channels

- ☐ Direct outreach (cold email/LinkedIn/calls)
- ☐ Virtual or in-person demos
- ☐ Conference and event attendance
- ☐ Referral programs with existing customers
- ☐ Account-based marketing for high-value prospects

## Marketing-led channels

- ☐ Content marketing (blog, guides, case studies)
- ☐ SEO strategy for organic discovery
- ☐ Email marketing automation
- ☐ Webinars and virtual events
- ☐ Targeted digital advertising (LinkedIn, Google, etc.)
- ☐ PR and media outreach

## Product-led channels

- ☐ Freemium or free trial model
- ☐ Self-service onboarding flow
- ☐ In-product conversion triggers
- ☐ Viral/sharing mechanisms
- ☐ Product usage incentives
- ☐ Community building

## Partnership-led channels

- ☐ Integration partnerships
- ☐ Reseller or affiliate programs
- ☐ Co-marketing opportunities
- ☐ Strategic alliances
- ☐ Ecosystem participation



# Channel experimentation framework

Test deliberately to find what works for your specific business.

## Experiment design

- Define clear hypothesis for each channel test
- Set specific success metrics and KPIs
- Determine minimum viable sample size
- Establish testing timeframe appropriate to channel
- Allocate appropriate budget and resources
- Create control groups when possible

## Timeframe guidelines

- Direct sales: 1-2 months
- Paid advertising: 2-4 weeks
- Email campaigns: 1-2 months
- Content marketing: 3-6 months
- SEO: 6+ months
- Partnerships: 3-6 months

## Experiment analysis

- Track all relevant metrics for each channel
- Calculate customer acquisition cost by channel
- Measure conversion rates at each funnel stage
- Analyze qualitative feedback from prospects
- Compare results against success criteria
- Document learnings, even from failed experiments

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# Metrics tracking

Focus on the right metrics at the right stage of your company.

## Early-stage metrics (Pre-product market fit)

- ☐ User activation rate
- ☐ Time to first value
- ☐ Feature adoption rate
- ☐ User engagement frequency
- ☐ Qualitative feedback scores
- ☐ Churn rate and reasons

## Growth-stage metrics

- ☐ Customer acquisition cost (CAC)
- ☐ Customer lifetime value (LTV)
- ☐ LTV:CAC ratio (aim for 3:1 or better)
- ☐ Payback period
- ☐ Retention and expansion rates
- ☐ Revenue growth rate

## Channel-specific metrics

- ☐ Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs)
- ☐ Product Qualified Leads (PQLs)
- ☐ Partner Qualified Leads
- ☐ Sales Generated Leads
- ☐ Conversion rates between stages
- ☐ Time-to-conversion by channel

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# Technology stack

Choose tools that enable efficient testing and scaling.

## Essential tools

- ☐ CRM system (e.g., Salesforce, HubSpot)
- ☐ Sales engagement platform (e.g., Outreach, Apollo)
- ☐ Call recording software (e.g., Gong, Grain)
- ☐ Email automation tool
- ☐ Analytics platform
- ☐ Customer feedback collection system
- ☐ Project management tool

## Growth stack

- ☐ Marketing automation platform
- ☐ User behavior analytics
- ☐ Conversion optimization tools
- ☐ Customer data platform
- ☐ Business intelligence dashboard
- ☐ Partnership management software

**Remember:** GTM is an iterative process that will evolve as your company grows. The goal isn't perfection from day one, but to learn quickly and adapt based on customer feedback.

Download this checklist as a PDF and revisit it quarterly to assess your progress and adjust strategy accordingly.

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