

2026

Manufacturing GTM Outlook Report



Table of contents

Introduction	3
The 2026 GTM inflection point	3
<hr/>	
2026 GTM outlook	6
1. From selling products to delivering outcomes	7
2. The self-service, omnichannel imperative	11
3. The rise of AI and the autonomous GTM engine	15
4. Trust as a marketable asset	20
5. The human advantage: Workforce and organizational alignment	24
<hr/>	
Conclusion	28
About Seismic	30





The 2026 GTM inflection point

Manufacturing is entering a new era shaped by technology, volatility, and changing buyer expectations.

For most of human history, manufacturing was skilled craftwork. A blacksmith made a musket piece by piece; if a part broke, he hand-filed a new one to fit that specific gun.

Then, in the early 1800s, facing the threat of war with France, the U.S. government needed 40,000 muskets. Eli Whitney claimed he could produce interchangeable parts using precision machinery. To prove it, he brought 10 disassembled muskets to the White House, mixed the parts on a table, and invited President John Adams and Thomas Jefferson to assemble functioning weapons from the pile.

They did. And everything changed.

Like Whitney's innovation—which unleashed the Industrial Revolution—manufacturing has always advanced through pivotal technological leaps: steam power in Industry 1.0, electricity and mass production in Industry 2.0, robotic

automation in Industry 3.0, and the cyber-physical systems of Industry 4.0.

Today, manufacturers face seismic shifts driving Industry 5.0. Unlike past transformations, this one is defined not by a single breakthrough but by a convergence of forces. Digital-native buying behaviors, persistent economic volatility, autonomous AI, heightened cybersecurity demands, and non-negotiable sustainability expectations are rewriting the manufacturing playbook. The gap between manufacturers adapting to this new reality and those relying on the old playbook is widening fast.

Unlike past transformations, this one is defined not by a single breakthrough but by a convergence of forces.



The forces reshaping manufacturing



The profile of the B2B buyer is changing. Digital-native Millennials and Gen Z professionals now account for two-thirds of manufacturing procurement decisions,¹ bringing expectations shaped by consumer digital experiences. They are more self-directed than previous generations shaped by consumer digital experiences to work. **Sixty-one percent** prefer a rep-free buying experience,² while **70%** complete their purchase journey before contacting a vendor.³ And this shift to digital purchasing isn't limited to small purchases; a growing majority are willing to transact six- and seven-figure deals through digital channels.⁴

At the same time, pervasive volatility is changing what buyers value. With disruptions estimated to drive \$1.6 trillion in missed revenue growth annually,⁵ buyers increasingly assess suppliers on reliable delivery under adverse conditions, elevating resilience alongside price in terms of procurement priorities.

Technology is amplifying these shifts. Agentic AI is progressing from analytics to autonomous execution across

sales, service, and aftermarket operations. Gartner predicts agentic AI will be embedded in 33% of enterprise software applications by 2028.⁶

As AI takes on a larger share of day-to-day decisions and administrative work, teams can redirect time toward higher-value customer engagement, while also preparing for a future where buyer-side AI agents handle routine procurement.

Trust requirements are rising in parallel. The average cost of a breach in the industrial sector reached \$5.56 million in 2025,⁷ making cybersecurity a baseline expectation for connected products and digital services. Sustainability is similarly moving from messaging to mandate, driven by regulations such as the EU's CSRD and by buyers demanding verifiable carbon data, traceability, and audit-ready reporting.

Together, these forces are reshaping how manufacturers compete, and they are redefining what it takes to earn trust and grow.

B2B buyers now prefer a rep-free sales experience.



Buyers consistently complete their purchase journey before ever contacting a vendor.



Sources: <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2025-06-25-gartner-sales-survey-finds-61-percent-of-b2b-buyers-prefer-a-rep-free-buying-experience>
<https://6sense.com/blog/dont-call-us-well-call-you-what-research-says-about-when-b2b-buyers-reach-out-to-sellers/>



Go-to-market transformation

For decades, manufacturers relied on field sales, intermediary channels, and product-feature differentiation to drive growth. That model is no longer sufficient.

Today, competition is increasingly determined not by product innovation alone but by commercial excellence. Manufacturers gaining ground are rethinking their go-to-market (GTM) models, modernizing how they sell, and delivering buying experiences that match how customers now evaluate solutions, partners, and risk. GTM is becoming a primary competitive advantage and growth driver.

This report examines five shifts reshaping manufacturing GTM strategy: the transition from product sales to outcome-based value delivery; the rise of self-service, omnichannel buyer journeys; the emergence of autonomous AI as a commercial engine; trust as a marketable asset; and workforce transformation through human-machine collaboration. For

each, we analyze market drivers, frontline challenges, strategic responses, and the role modern enablement plays in bridging the gap between strategy and execution.

The gap between sophisticated GTM motions and the frontline's ability to execute is precisely where revenue targets are missed and customer relationships fracture. Closing that gap requires treating enablement not as a support function, but as strategic infrastructure that translates GTM initiatives into consistent execution and measurable results.

GTM is becoming a primary competitive advantage and growth driver.





2026 GTM outlook

Our 2026 Manufacturing GTM Outlook centers on five interconnected strategic shifts. Each represents both a market reality and an operational imperative, with profound implications for how manufacturers structure, enable, and measure their commercial organizations.

These shifts do not operate in isolation. Outcome-based selling requires omnichannel infrastructure to deliver on performance commitments. AI capabilities accelerate both autonomous and consultative commercial models. Trust-based differentiation depends on workforce competencies to articulate and substantiate claims. Understanding these interconnections is essential to a coherent GTM transformation strategy.



1

From selling products to delivering outcomes

Outcome-based models are redefining manufacturing value, revenue, and customer relationships.

The most fundamental shift in manufacturing GTM is the transition from product-centric selling to outcome-based value delivery. Manufacturers are no longer selling machines, they are selling guaranteed outcomes: uptime, throughput, energy efficiency, sustainability performance, and operational reliability. More than half of manufacturers have already implemented or are planning to implement service revenue models, with 27% currently using usage-based pricing and 25% using annual subscriptions.⁸

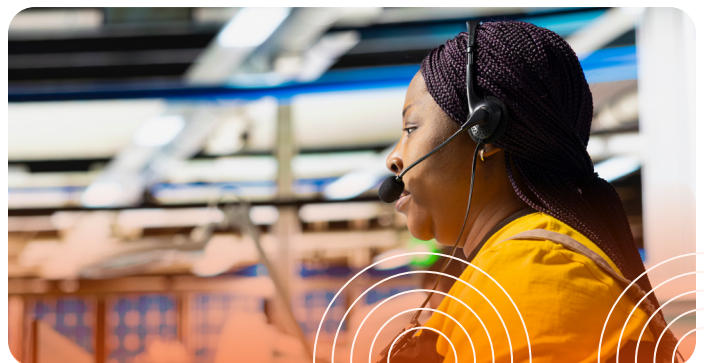
Several forces are pushing this change. To start, buyers are under constant pressure to reduce downtime and control total cost of ownership. Over 90% of enterprises report that a single hour of downtime costs more than \$300,000, with 41% of enterprises reporting this cost to be \$1 million or more.⁹

Connected products and better data availability now make outcomes measurable in ways they weren't before, creating the foundation for performance guarantees and recurring service value. Product-as-a-Service (PaaS) and servitization

models are underpinned by digital twins, IoT telemetry, and AI-driven predictive analytics—a technology stack that fundamentally changes what manufacturers can promise and how they deliver.

This shift pushes suppliers to share accountability for results, not just deliver equipment. For customers, it means less unplanned downtime and a shift from capital expenditure to operating expenditure, reducing buyer risk and accelerating adoption. For manufacturers, it creates ongoing touchpoints for value delivery and natural opportunities for expansion.

Manufacturers are no longer selling machines, they are selling guaranteed outcomes: uptime, throughput, energy efficiency, sustainability performance, and operational reliability.



THE FRONTLINE CHALLENGE

Sales teams and partners must evolve from transactional sellers to outcome-focused advisors.

This shift fundamentally changes the role of sales teams and channel partners. When value creation moves from the point of sale to the full period of use, the rep's job shifts from closing transactions to managing long-term customer relationships and ensuring ongoing success.

Sales teams often lack the training, tools, and content to articulate outcome-based value propositions. Skills like explaining total cost of ownership, modeling ROI against uptime guarantees, and navigating multi-year service agreements require different preparation than product-feature selling.

These challenges extend to channel partners. Distributors frequently cannot sell or support connected, service-oriented offerings without scalable enablement—service playbooks and co-branded content that helps them deliver on outcome promises, not just move units.

High-margin aftermarket revenue, which averages a 27% EBIT margin compared to just 11% for new equipment¹⁰, remains chronically underdeveloped when organizations cling to transactional GTM models. Enablement systems must evolve to support the consultative, relationship-oriented selling that servitization demands.

Sales teams often lack the training, tools, and content to articulate outcome-based value propositions.



THE 2026 GTM RESPONSE

Manufacturers need to build outcome-based GTM programs to scale and sustain delivery across the customer lifecycle.

Leading manufacturers are responding with integrated outcome-based GTM programs that extend across the full customer lifecycle. Outcome-based service portfolios (predictive maintenance, operator training, remote monitoring, digital twin-enabled optimization) create ongoing moments where value can be proven, expanded, and renewed. Proactive aftermarket engines support this motion with targeted campaigns around maintenance schedules, consumables, spare parts, software updates, and optimization services.

Reps and channel partners increasingly act as advisors through onboarding, adoption, optimization, and renewal. They must navigate complex offers that bundle equipment, software, SLAs, and performance guarantees with high credibility, requiring accurate, current information at their fingertips: configuration rules, pricing and availability, contract language, telemetry insights, security posture, sustainability data, and proof points tied to outcomes.

This extends beyond sellers. Field teams and service organizations also depend on accurate, up-to-date information across the lifecycle. When service engineers, account teams, partners, and specialists pull from different versions of the truth, customers feel the inconsistency immediately.

Modern enablement supports this advisory role by pairing messaging frameworks with always-current decision support. CPQ-guided configuration helps teams assemble the right service tiers and SLA levels. Playbooks and guided selling surface the right narrative, ROI models, and risk answers for each use case. Partner enablement kits give distributors the same clarity through co-branded content, service scripts, and governed telemetry dashboards.

In complex negotiations, AI meeting assistants automate pre-meeting research, capture technical details in real time, generate accurate summaries, and accelerate follow-ups so nothing gets lost across lengthy sales cycles.

As more roles access the same assets across the lifecycle, content governance becomes critical. Clear ownership, version control, review workflows, and auditability ensure in-market information stays accurate as pricing, policies, security requirements, and sustainability claims evolve.

3x

Manufacturers expect digital services revenue to nearly triple from **10.4%** today to **29%** of total revenue.

Source: <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/4487599>



The economic impact of this shift is substantial. By 2030, manufacturers expect digital services revenue to nearly triple from 10.4% today to 29% of total revenue.¹¹ Servitization creates predictable, recurring, high-margin revenue streams that stabilize performance against cyclical demand while lowering customer risk, increasing lifetime value, and building loyalty that transaction-based relationships rarely sustain. Manufacturers that invest now in modern GTM infrastructure—lifecycle enablement, content governance, partner consistency, and intelligent productivity tools—will be better positioned to scale service models profitably and capture outsized share of services growth.

How modern enablement supports

OUTCOME-BASED MESSAGING FRAMEWORKS

Equip reps and distributors with content that explains uptime guarantees, total cost of ownership (TCO) reductions, and ROI tied to predictive maintenance.

INTEGRATED PRODUCT, SERVICE, AND DIGITAL TWIN TRAINING

Ensure teams understand how to sell, configure, and support connected products and digital service bundles.

CPQ-GUIDED SERVICE CONFIGURATION

Automate the selection of service tiers, SLA levels, consumables, and performance packages.

PARTNER ENABLEMENT KITS

Provide distributors with co-branded playbooks, service scripts, and telemetry dashboards to support outcome delivery.

AI-POWERED READINESS

Simulations and guided coaching that help sellers articulate PaaS value propositions.

AI-POWERED PRODUCTIVITY

Research, meeting prep, AI meeting notes all aid reps as they take on a more consultative role.

2

The self-service, omnichannel imperative

Buyer expectations are driving a shift toward self-service, omnichannel purchasing.

The second shift is an evolution of the buying journey itself. As buyer profiles evolve, expectations have shifted toward self-directed, consumer-grade experiences, even in complex B2B purchasing. Buyers have been trained to expect real-time availability, transparent pricing, seamless configuration, and consistency across every touchpoint. Those expectations now apply to B2B purchasing, raising the baseline for what quality experiences look like.

Recent data underscores how multi-channel these journeys have become. McKinsey's 2024 B2B Pulse Survey found a persistent "rule of thirds" across the journey, with roughly one-third of buyers preferring in-person interactions, one-third preferring remote, and one-third preferring digital self-serve at any given stage.⁴ B2B buyers use an average of ten interaction channels across a typical journey, and more than half want a truly seamless omnichannel experience where they can switch channels without losing context. E-commerce is now the top revenue-generating channel for companies that offer it, with more than one-third of revenue coming through e-commerce.

These expectations do not translate into a single, universal experience. Omnichannel success depends on matching the journey to what buyers in each market are trying to optimize. Meeting this bar requires more than a website refresh. Manufacturers are moving beyond static catalogs to an intelligent commerce stack often described as a "Store of One," where each customer sees a tailored experience reflecting entitlements, pricing, inventory, and prior behavior.

Self-service and omnichannel must deliver the right information, proof, and workflow for the buyer's reality, with consistency across every touchpoint.



THE FRONTLINE CHALLENGE

Sellers must influence decisions later in the journey with fewer, higher-impact interactions.

The frontline challenge is not just friction across channels; it is a change in timing and influence. Buyers do significant research and comparison digitally, engaging reps and channel partners later, often after requirements have formed and options have narrowed. Eighty percent of B2B buyers have chosen their preferred vendor before ever contacting a sales representative.¹³ Sixty-one percent of B2B buyers prefer a rep-free buying experience, and 73% actively avoid suppliers who send irrelevant outreach.¹⁴ That means sellers have fewer opportunities to influence decisions, and each interaction must deliver more value.

At the same time, buyers still want human guidance when decisions require contextual judgment, pushing manufacturers toward an omnichannel model that blends digital self-service with high-value advisory engagement.

As self-service expands, the role of the rep and channel partner shifts materially. Routine purchases become digitized, freeing sales teams to spend less time processing transactions and more time advising on complex, high-value decisions. The expectation is to interpret requirements quickly, align stakeholders, anticipate risk, and shape an outcome-based solution that stands up to commercial, technical, security, and sustainability scrutiny.

This is where traditional GTM models break down. When partners and reps work from different pricing, configuration logic, inventory signals, or approved messaging,

conversations restart, credibility suffers, and deals slow down. The omnichannel challenge is orchestration and information integrity: building a single source of truth across commerce, CPQ, and partner touchpoints, plus governance that keeps content and data accurate as offers, policies, and requirements evolve.



B2B buyers have chosen their preferred vendor before ever contacting a sales representative.

Source: <https://6sense.com/newsroom/6sense-launches-2024-buyer-experience-report-unveiling-global-b2b-buyer-trends/>



THE 2026 GTM RESPONSE

Manufacturers must combine intelligent commerce with enablement to support advisory selling.

This shift demands action on two fronts: manufacturers must invest in digital commerce infrastructure while preparing reps and partners for an elevated, consultative role.

On the commerce side, self-service platforms need to do more than process transactions. They must deliver configurability, pricing transparency, and real-time availability across channels. That requires robust data architecture connecting product information, inventory systems, and pricing engines so buyers get accurate, consistent information whether on a website, mobile app, or partner portal. When digital channels work well, they absorb routine transactions and free sales teams from low-value administrative work.

On the people side, as reps have fewer interactions with buyers, each carries more weight. With routine purchases handled digitally, reps and distributors shift toward strategic consultation on complex, high-value deals. Fewer touchpoints means less room for error; reps need to add value immediately and build credibility fast.

Modern enablement supports this elevated role in several ways. Role-specific digital selling playbooks equip reps, dealers, and distributors with consistent guidance aligned to omnichannel buyer journeys. AI-powered content recommendations surface the right configuration guides, comparison sheets, or service information based on what buyers have already researched or configured.

Sales teams often lack the training, tools, and content to articulate outcome-based value propositions.

Integrated CPQ enablement trains teams and partners to use AI-enhanced tools that preserve margin, ensure accuracy, and accelerate quote turnaround. D2C and partner readiness kits provide messaging frameworks, CX requirements, and escalation workflows to ensure consistency across owned and channel-led motions. Omnichannel analytics dashboards give sellers visibility into digital signals: what buyers researched, configured, compared, or downloaded before a conversation begins.



The economic case is compelling. Self-service platforms elevate revenue-driving interactions and free sales teams from low-value administrative work. E-commerce now generates 34% of B2B revenue—more than in-person sales—and buyer comfort with large digital transactions continues to climb, with 39% now willing to spend \$500,000 or more via self-service channels.⁴ These platforms also fuel AI models with first-party behavioral data, improving recommendations and personalization over time. For manufacturers with hybrid channel models, consistent omnichannel execution strengthens partner loyalty and reduces deal friction, creating a virtuous cycle where digital and human channels reinforce each other.

34%

E-commerce now generates
34% of B2B revenue—more
than in-person sales.

Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/five-fundamental-truths-how-b2b-winners-keep-growing>

How modern enablement supports

ROLE-SPECIFIC DIGITAL SELLING PLAYBOOKS

Equip reps, dealers, and distributors with consistent guidance aligned to omnichannel journeys.

AI-POWERED CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Deliver the right configuration guides, comparison sheets, or service information based on buyer behavior.

INTEGRATED CPQ ENABLEMENT

Train teams and partners to use AI-enhanced CPQ tools that preserve margin, ensure accuracy, and accelerate quote turnaround.

D2C AND PARTNER READINESS KITS

Provide messaging, CX requirements, and escalation workflows to ensure consistency across owned and channel-led motions.

OMNICHANNEL ANALYTICS DASHBOARDS

Give sellers visibility into digital signals—what buyers researched, configured, compared, or downloaded.

The rise of AI and the autonomous GTM engine

AI is reshaping how manufacturing GTM operates, scales, and engages buyers.

AI is changing the economics and mechanics of manufacturing GTM in three ways. First, it reduces operational overhead by automating time-consuming work adjacent to selling: meeting capture, follow-ups, internal handoffs, and routine documentation. Second, it accelerates deal execution by helping teams draft and tailor proposals, presentations, ROI narratives, and customer-specific responses while improving consistency with approved positioning. Third, it improves customer engagement by surfacing relevant account context, product constraints, and next steps, enabling sellers and partners to focus their limited buyer interactions on diagnosis, value framing, and risk mitigation.

As agentic capabilities mature, AI is beginning to take on greater autonomy within defined workflows, shifting from

assistance to coordinated execution. AI can assemble required inputs, trigger downstream tasks, and progress work through predefined steps, with humans supervising exceptions and decisions requiring judgment. The result is not just incremental productivity; it is a different operating rhythm for commercial teams.

Three engagement models are emerging to match how buyers want to buy. For commodity procurement, autonomous machine-to-machine transactions are becoming reality. By 2028, 90% of B2B buying will be AI agent intermediated, pushing over \$15 trillion of B2B spend through AI agent exchanges and shifting GTM focus toward making products and pricing machine-readable.¹⁵ For standard purchases, digital-native buyers expect self-service e-commerce with B2C-like personalization, completing most of their research before ever engaging a rep. And for complex, high-value deals, human expertise remains essential; 75% of buyers still prefer human interaction for high-stakes transactions,¹⁵ but AI augments rather than replaces, freeing sellers from administrative work to focus on consultative relationships and outcome-based solutions.



Three AI buyer engagement models



Autonomous model

- Machine-to-machine transactions for commodity procurement
- AI agents negotiate quotes and execute purchases autonomously
- GTM shifts to making products and pricing machine-readable



Self-service model

- B2C-like e-commerce for digital-native buyers
- AI-powered personalization and concierge support
- Buyers complete most research before engaging a rep



Consultative model

- Human expertise for complex, high-value deals
- AI augments sellers, eliminating administrative burden
- Focus on outcome-based solutions and strategic relationships

The scale of the shift is reflected in recent forecasts. Recent survey data suggests AI is moving quickly from experimentation to operational impact in commercial teams. Salesforce’s 2024 State of Sales research found that **81%** of sales teams are either experimenting with or have fully implemented AI, and **83%** of teams using AI reported revenue

growth versus **66%** of teams without AI. AI is becoming embedded in the systems commercial teams already rely on, and the operating model must adapt accordingly, including how work is routed, how outputs are governed, and how teams remain accountable for accuracy and customer impact.

Sales teams experimenting with or have fully implemented AI



Teams using AI that reported revenue growth



Teams not using AI that reported revenue growth



Sources: <https://www.salesforce.com/news/stories/sales-ai-statistics-2024/>



THE FRONTLINE CHALLENGE

AI is reshaping seller and partner responsibilities as automation absorbs routine work.

AI dramatically shifts the role of sellers and channel partners. As routine activity moves into digital workflows and automation, reps and distributors have fewer opportunities to influence decisions, and each interaction must deliver more value. Buyers enter later-stage conversations with stronger opinions, clearer requirements, and less patience for discovery that does not move the deal forward. Sellers must diagnose needs quickly, shape the solution, align stakeholders, and build a defensible business case addressing commercial value, operational risk, and trust requirements.

At the same time, the internal workload does not disappear. Quotes, proposals, mutual action plans, technical validation, risk reviews, and customer-specific materials still have to be produced, approved, and kept current, often on shorter timelines. In manufacturing, this burden is amplified by configuration complexity, regional and channel variability, service attachments, and escalating expectations around cybersecurity and sustainability. When field teams and partners cannot access accurate, up-to-date information and approved assets, they either stall internal steps or improvise customer-facing answers. Both outcomes slow execution and introduce avoidable commercial risk.



THE 2026 GTM RESPONSE

Manufacturers need to embed AI into GTM workflows to improve speed, consistency, and execution.

Leading manufacturers are using AI in practical ways that align to the modern selling motion. It starts by reducing overhead and allowing sellers to reclaim time. AI assists with operational work such as capturing call notes, drafting meeting follow-ups, summarizing account history, and preparing for meetings. This creates capacity for advisory work and improves responsiveness when interactions are limited.

AI also accelerates complex deal execution. For high-value opportunities, AI supports consultative work by speeding the creation of accurate, compliant, customer-ready assets: tailored presentations, proposals, ROI narratives, and executive summaries. It can streamline internal coordination by assembling approval packets, drafting statements of work, and ensuring required inputs are present.

AI also improves consistency and lifecycle engagement. AI can summarize telemetry insights for account conversations, recommend service attachments, and identify expansion triggers tied to usage, renewal timing, and service performance. As agentic capabilities mature, these workflows increasingly move from suggestion to orchestration, with humans supervising exceptions and decisions requiring judgment.

Modern enablement makes this scalable. High-performing programs connect AI to governed content, product data, pricing logic, and configuration rules so outputs remain



accurate and auditable. They also equip sellers, service teams, and partner networks with clear guidance on where AI accelerates work, where human oversight is required, and how to keep customer-facing interactions compliant.

The commercial implications of AI are significant. Sales reps spend only about 30% of their time actually selling,¹⁷ with much of their day consumed by administrative tasks like entering data, prioritizing leads, and generating quotes. AI-driven automation frees capacity for higher-value customer engagements while accelerating deal cycles, improving personalization, and strengthening compliance. The outcome is a rebalanced commercial role where routine overhead moves to automation and customer interactions become more consultative, increasing the organization's ability to execute complex deals with speed, consistency, and trust.

AI-driven automation frees capacity for higher-value customer engagements while accelerating deal cycles, improving personalization, and strengthening compliance.

How modern enablement supports

AI-INTEGRATED TRAINING AND SIMULATIONS

Prepare reps and partners to work alongside AI—interpreting recommendations, validating configurations, and overseeing autonomous workflows.

EMBEDDED CPQ GUIDANCE

Provide just-in-time recommendations for optimal configurations, pricing thresholds, and service options.

PARTNER AI TOOLKITS

Extend AI-powered quoting, inventory insight, and guided selling to distributors and dealers.

AUTONOMOUS WORKFLOW OVERSIGHT

Train teams on how to manage exceptions, supervise AI-initiated actions, and ensure alignment with compliance and regulatory requirements.

REAL-TIME COACHING AND ANALYTICS

AI evaluates seller behavior, readiness gaps, and engagement effectiveness, enabling continuous improvement.

4

Trust as a marketable asset

Trust has become a measurable GTM differentiator shaped by resilience, security, and sustainability requirements.

Trust has become a measurable GTM differentiator, not a brand aspiration. In a market shaped by geopolitical instability, supply disruption, and rising scrutiny of digital and sustainability claims, buyers prioritize manufacturers that can prove resilience, security maturity, and verifiable ESG performance.

Supply chain resilience is increasingly visible in the buying process. Buyers want evidence that suppliers can deliver reliably under adverse conditions: diversified sourcing, contingency planning, and realistic lead-time commitments. Seventy-two percent of companies are willing to accept higher prices if the supplier is considered a reliable partner in uncertain times.¹⁸ Supply assurance is no longer an operations topic; it is a frontline proof point that commercial teams must explain and defend.

Cybersecurity has followed a similar path. As connected products, remote monitoring, and AI-enabled workflows

expand, customers assess cyber posture as part of vendor selection. Security maturity, secure data flows, and adherence to standards are now prerequisites for trust, and shortcomings create direct commercial friction. This elevates the importance of accurate, approved security messaging and customer-facing artifacts that hold up in risk reviews.

Sustainability is moving from aspiration to audit. Buyers and regulators demand verifiable carbon data, transparent supply chains, and documentation that supports environmental claims. Sustainability is now one of the top three purchasing criteria for B2B buyers, with more than a third (36%) already willing to leave suppliers that don't meet their expectations (a figure expected to approach 60% within three years). Nearly half of corporate buyers say they would pay a 5% or more premium for sustainable products today.¹⁹ When sustainability performance is proof based, information must be accurate and consistent across channels and partners to establish credibility and compliance.



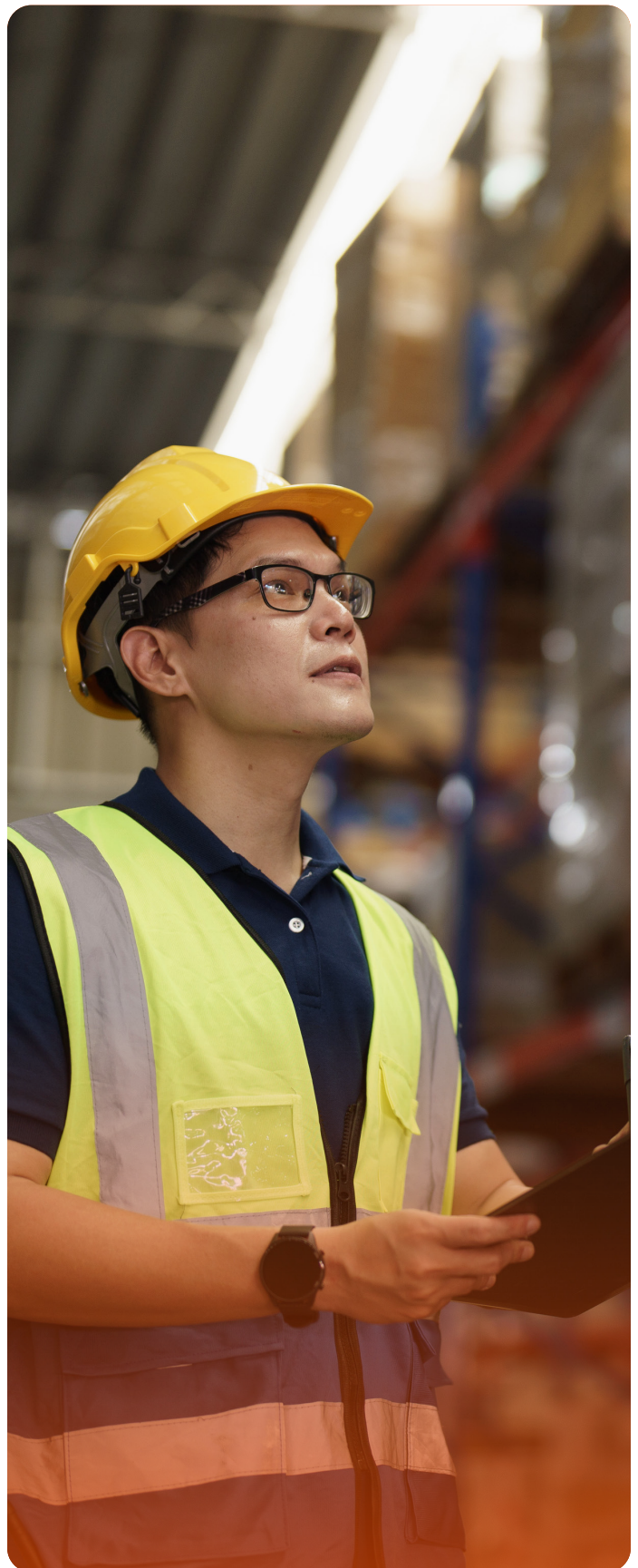
THE FRONTLINE CHALLENGE

Sellers and partners must credibly build trust across complex risk domains.

A supplier's failure in any trust-based domain can introduce unacceptable customer risk. A sourcing disruption can halt production, a cyber incident can shut down operations and compromise connected ecosystems, and inaccurate sustainability claims can trigger fines and reputational damage. This creates a new burden for commercial teams: sellers, service leaders, and partners must explain how the company manages risk across supply continuity, data protection, and ESG performance.

This challenge compounds in ecosystems. Distributors and partners amplify trust-risk when they operate with incomplete, outdated, or inconsistent information. If one channel describes capabilities differently than another, or if claims outpace evidence, credibility erodes quickly. Fragmented content also increases internal friction, as reps spend time searching, recreating materials, and routing questions through experts, while partners fill gaps with their own interpretations.

A supplier's failure in any trust-based domain can introduce unacceptable customer risk.



THE 2026 GTM RESPONSE

Manufacturers are operationalizing proof to make trust a competitive asset.

As buyers scrutinize supply chains, sustainability claims, and cybersecurity posture, governance itself is becoming a competitive differentiator and a core GTM talking point.

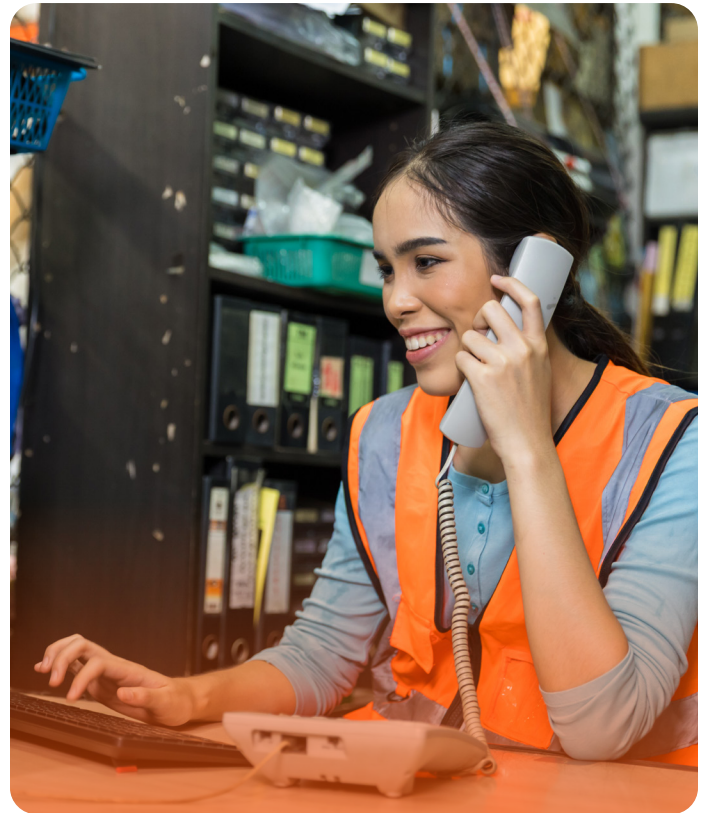
Manufacturers are turning operational rigor into sales messaging. On supply chain resilience, they're showcasing regionalized production, diversified sourcing, reshoring initiatives, and supplier redundancy. On sustainability, AI-augmented reporting validates carbon accounting, lifecycle impact, and circular economy participation. In Europe, transparent disclosure and circularity models (repair, reuse, remanufacturing) are table stakes for procurement. On cybersecurity, the shift to connected services creates new scrutiny.

But governance as a differentiator only works if the underlying information is accurate. When reps cite supply chain resilience, sustainability metrics, or security certifications, that information must be current, compliant, and defensible. The risk compounds as more people engage with this content (sales, marketing, service, field teams, channel partners), each pulling from the same assets and representing the brand in customer-facing moments. A single outdated claim or inconsistent proof point can erode the trust these messages are designed to build.

Modern enablement addresses this through rigorous content governance. Trust-aligned content frameworks provide sellers and partners with proof-ready ESG claims, cybersecurity positioning, supply chain transparency sheets, and regulatory documentation, all version-controlled and centrally

managed. Partner kits ensure distributors and dealers carry the same certifications, proof points, and messaging. And AI-augmented compliance training keeps teams current on evolving cybersecurity requirements, sustainability regulations, and data-handling expectations.

The economic case is clear. Manufacturers with demonstrable ESG credibility win procurement-led deals. Resilient supply chains reduce churn and position manufacturers as low-risk partners. Strong cybersecurity unlocks the high-margin digital services and connected products that fuel long-term recurring revenue.



As buyers scrutinize supply chains, sustainability claims, and cybersecurity posture, governance itself is becoming a competitive differentiator and a core GTM talking point.





How modern enablement supports

TRUST-ALIGNED CONTENT FRAMEWORKS

Provide sellers and partners with proof-ready ESG claims, cybersecurity positioning, supply chain transparency sheets, and regulatory alignment documentation.

CRISIS-RESPONSE AND RISK-COMMUNICATION PLAYBOOKS

Equip commercial teams to communicate disruptions proactively and credibly.

PARTNER TRUST KITS

Ensure distributors and dealers have the same proof points, certifications, and messaging to maintain consistency across the ecosystem.

AI-AUGMENTED COMPLIANCE TRAINING

Keep teams current on evolving cybersecurity requirements, sustainability regulations, and data-handling expectations.

SUPPLY CHAIN TRANSPARENCY DASHBOARDS

Give reps visibility into lead times, availability, and risk indicators so they can communicate proactively with customers.

The human advantage: Workforce and organizational alignment

Workforce constraints and rising skill demands are reshaping how manufacturers build GTM capability.

Manufacturers are facing a labor inflection point. Experienced talent is retiring faster than it can be replaced, roles are becoming more technical, and digital-first GTM demands new capabilities in data literacy, configuration accuracy, and cross-functional collaboration. The World Economic Forum expects 39% of workers' core skills to change by 2030, with technology skills including AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, and technological literacy among the fastest-growing requirements.²⁰ In manufacturing specifically, the supply constraint is structural. Deloitte and The Manufacturing

Institute estimate the U.S. manufacturing sector will need roughly 3.8 million new employees between 2024 and 2033, with up to 1.9 million roles potentially unfilled if the skills and applicant gaps persist.²¹

Industry 5.0 reframes the path forward as human-machine collaboration. As AI becomes embedded in selling, service, and operations workflows, the differentiator shifts from access to technology to the organization's ability to develop, deploy, and sustain new skills safely and consistently.

This workforce reality intersects directly with the evolution of commercial roles. As buyers shift research and routine purchasing into digital channels, reps and partners are engaged later and expected to add value faster. The role is increasingly consultative, spanning sales, service, and lifecycle expansion. That transition raises the performance bar and increases the demand for enablement that keeps people current as products, offers, tools, and requirements evolve.



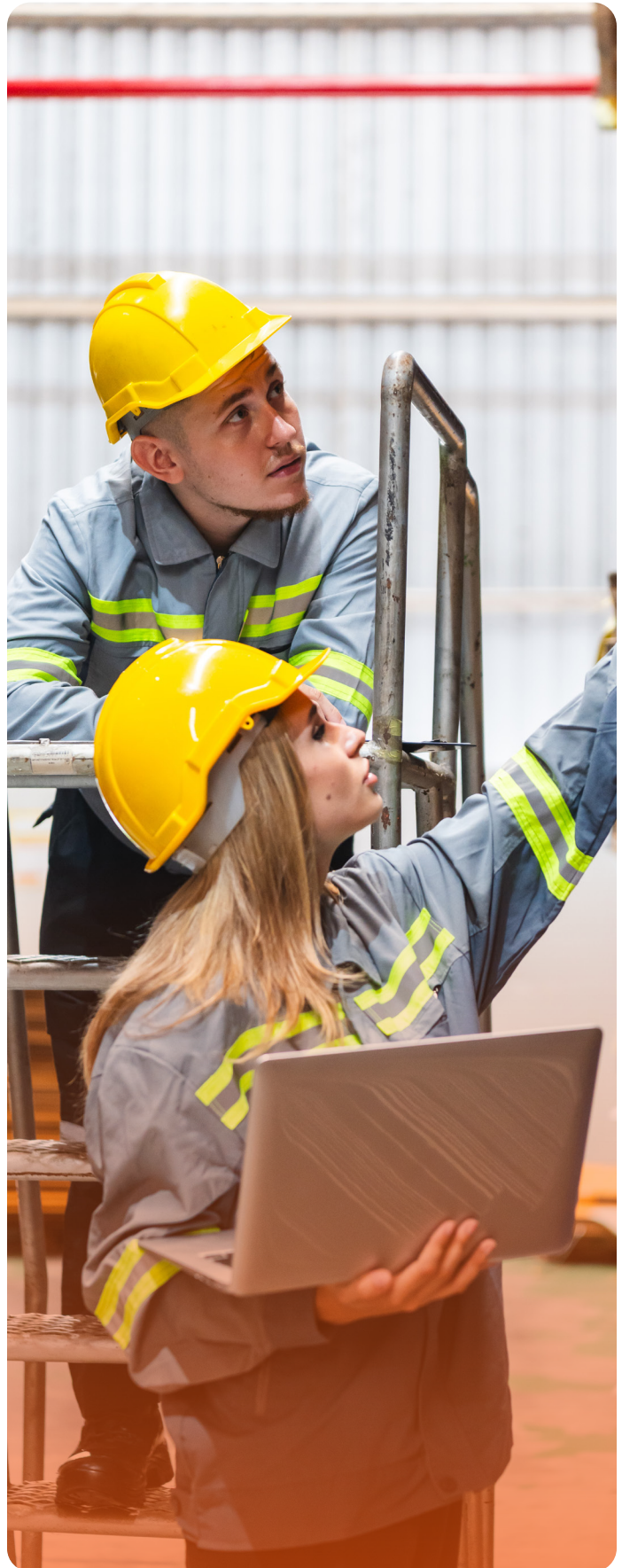
THE FRONTLINE CHALLENGE

Teams are stretched by increasing complexity and the need to develop new capabilities.

Sales, service, and distributor teams are stretched thin, and the work they are asked to do is becoming more complex. Connected and outcome-based offerings require a blend of product expertise, digital fluency, and the ability to communicate risk, security, and sustainability with credibility.

Much of the week is still consumed by non-customer work. Gong's 2024 State of Sales Productivity report found sellers spend 44% of their time on customer-facing activities,²² leaving the majority for internal work and overhead. That gap shows up directly in slower deal velocity, inconsistent follow-through, and uneven customer experience.

The risk is not limited to selling. Service and field teams face similar pressure as connected offers expand, because troubleshooting and account support increasingly span software, connectivity, and hardware. Partner ecosystems amplify the challenge. If distributors and dealers are not trained and updated at the same pace as direct teams, variation in guidance, claims, and service execution becomes a structural constraint on growth.



THE 2026 GTM RESPONSE

Manufacturers are investing in human-machine collaboration to scale skills and execution.

As roles evolve and skill requirements shift, manufacturers are rethinking how they build, train, and deploy commercial talent.

New workforce models are emerging around human-machine collaboration. Roles like AI supervisors, configuration specialists, and lifecycle value advisors are appearing alongside digital tools that augment rather than automate. Cobots, predictive analytics, and guided workflows reduce cognitive load and accelerate decision-making across sales, service, and operations. This Industry 5.0 mindset, where technology amplifies human expertise, is reshaping effectiveness in customer-facing roles.

Manufacturers are also building adaptive talent pipelines tailored to regional realities: apprenticeship partnerships in Europe, reskilling accelerators in the U.S., and rapid-training academies in APAC.

Modern enablement supports this transformation in several ways. AI-driven skills assessments identify gaps in product knowledge, digital fluency, and customer engagement across internal teams and channel partners. Adaptive, role-based learning paths deliver personalized readiness aligned to evolving products, regulations, and tools. Digital twin-enabled training provides immersive simulations for complex equipment and service workflows, accelerating proficiency without physical access to machines. Cross-functional playbooks align sales, marketing, product, engineering, and partners around shared outcomes. And embedded

onboarding with continuous learning reduces ramp time and enables rapid scaling.

The economic impact compounds across the organization. A capable, AI-augmented workforce maximizes productivity, reduces onboarding time, and improves customer experience. Cross-functional alignment eliminates friction, accelerates deal velocity, and strengthens retention. Workforce modernization becomes both a competitive differentiator and a requirement for delivering outcome-based, digitally enabled value propositions.





How modern enablement supports

AI-DRIVEN SKILLS ASSESSMENTS

Identify gaps in product knowledge, digital fluency, configuration accuracy, and customer engagement across reps and partners.

ADAPTIVE, ROLE-BASED LEARNING PATHS

Personalized readiness for sellers, service teams, and distributors—aligned to evolving products, regulations, and digital tools.

DIGITAL TWIN-ENABLED TRAINING

Immersive, hands-on simulations for complex equipment, troubleshooting, and service workflows.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION PLAYBOOKS

Align sales, marketing, product, engineering, and channel partners around shared revenue and customer outcomes.

EMBEDDED ONBOARDING AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Reduce ramp time, improve consistency, and enable rapid scaling of global teams.





Conclusion

Manufacturing is entering a new era where advantage is earned less by what you build and more by how you bring it to market. Buyers are better informed, expectations are higher, and trust requirements are stricter. Volatility, digitization, and AI are compressing decision cycles and changing how value is evaluated. Go-to-market is no longer a downstream function. It is a primary growth lever.

Manufacturers that win will treat GTM as a system that continuously converts capability into customer outcomes. They will design digital paths that let customers move with confidence, then deploy sellers, service teams, and partners as advisors where complexity demands judgment. They will operationalize resilience, cybersecurity, and sustainability as proof-based value propositions that withstand scrutiny. And they will use AI to remove friction from execution so

teams spend more time creating value and less time managing processes.

The imperative is clear: evolving GTM is not only about keeping pace with change; it is how manufacturers expand share, grow recurring services, and earn long-term preference. The next step is to choose the motions that matter most for your segments, build the enablement and governance to execute them consistently, and commit to a roadmap that turns GTM transformation into durable growth.

Manufacturing is entering a new era where advantage is earned less by what you build and more by how you bring it to market.

Sources

1. GlobalWebIndex, GWI Work, (2022-2025).
2. Gartner. (2025). Gartner sales survey finds 61% of B2B buyers prefer a rep-free buying experience.
3. 6sense. (2024). Don't call us, we'll call you: What research says about when B2B buyers reach out to sellers.
4. McKinsey & Company (2024). Five fundamental truths: How B2B winners keep growing.
5. Accenture Research. (2022). Resiliency in the making: Turning adversity into advantage for engineering, supply, production and operations.
6. Gartner. (2025). Gartner predicts over 40% of agentic AI projects will be canceled by end of 2027.
7. IBM. (2024). IBM report: Escalating data breach disruption pushes costs to new highs.
8. Conga. (2023). Service revenue trends in manufacturing.
9. ITIC Corp. (2024). ITIC 2024 hourly cost of downtime report.
10. Kearney. (2025). Tapping into the growing opportunity in aftermarket services.
11. Gartner. (2023). Manufacturers' Push for Greater Servitization Revenue Creates Opportunities for Tech Providers.
12. 6sense. (2024). 6sense launches 2024 Buyer Experience Report unveiling global B2B buyer trends.
13. Gartner. (2025). Gartner sales survey finds 61% of B2B buyers prefer a rep-free buying experience.
14. Gartner. (2025). Strategic predictions for 2026: How AI's underestimated.
15. Gartner. (2025). Gartner says by 2030 that 75% of B2B buyers will prefer sales experiences that prioritize human interaction over AI.
16. Salesforce. (2024). Salesforce report: Sales teams using AI 1.3x more likely to see revenue increase.
17. Salesforce Research. (2023). State of Sales Report.
18. Brixon Group. (2025). Resilient sales strategies: Successfully navigating supply chain volatility in B2B business.
19. Bain & Company. (2024). CEOs' prioritization of sustainability has declined sharply as AI and inflation now sit atop their agendas; consumers, B2B buyers remain deeply concerned.
20. World Economic Forum. (2025). The Future of Jobs Report 2025: Digest.
21. Deloitte & The Manufacturing Institute. (2024). Taking charge: Manufacturers support growth with active workforce strategies.
22. Levis, S. (2024). Gong on Gong: How we expedite the call review process with Ask Anything.



About Seismic

Seismic is the global leader in AI-powered enablement, empowering go-to-market leaders to drive strategic growth and deliver exceptional client experiences at scale. The Seismic Enablement Cloud™ is the only unified AI-powered platform that prepares customer-facing teams with the skills, content, tools, and insights needed to maximize every buyer interaction and strengthen client relationships.

The platform integrates content management, learning and coaching, buyer engagement, and enablement intelligence into a single system of record to ensure sales, service, and partner teams operate with consistent messaging, current content, and actionable insights. AI-powered capabilities including content recommendations, guided selling, skills assessments, and analytics connect enablement investments to measurable business outcomes.

Trusted by approximately 2,000 organizations worldwide—including leading manufacturing enterprises—Seismic helps businesses achieve measurable outcomes and accelerate revenue growth. For manufacturing organizations navigating the GTM transformation outlined in this report, Seismic provides the strategic infrastructure required to close the gap between commercial strategy and frontline execution across direct teams, channel partners, and global operations.

Seismic is headquartered in San Diego with offices across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

[Learn more at seismic.com](https://www.seismic.com)

