

— THE BRIEFING

From Funnel *to Unfunnel.*

The linear pipeline was built for an era when software was the bottleneck. That era is over. What replaces it is something continuous, intelligent, and uncomfortably different from the one you have spent a decade optimising.

BY GTM BENCH EDITORIAL · 11 MIN READ · 3-PAGE BRIEF

5x

Signals available versus signals used at the average B2B company. The Unfunnel is what happens when you stop ignoring four out of every five intent signals you already collect — and put an AI layer in the centre to act on every one of them, continuously, in real time.

The funnel was built for a *different era.*

The classic GTM model looks logical from the outside — a clean, sequential pipeline:

TRAFFIC → MARKETING AUTOMATION → SDR → AE → CRM → **CLOSE**

Underneath, it is riddled with inefficiencies. **Fragmentation** — siloed tools and dashboards. **Manual handoffs** — leads lose context at every transition. **Batch processing** — campaigns happen in waves, not continuously. **Lagging signals** — by the time a human acts, the moment has passed. **Stage fiction** — prospects rarely move in the clean way our CRMs assume.

Most importantly, the system is *human-orchestrated*. Every step depends on people stitching workflows together manually. That made sense when software was the bottleneck. Today, it is not.

The shift — AI as the *operator*, not the assistant.

The real transformation is not about adding AI features to existing tools. It is about *changing who, or what, runs the system*. Instead of humans coordinating across a dozen point solutions, AI becomes the **central operator** — ingesting signals, making decisions, and executing actions across the stack. The CRM does not disappear; it stops being the interface. Users do not live inside the CRM anymore. The AI does.

The winners will not upgrade their memory. They will own the brain.

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The Unfunnel — a new *five-layer* GTM architecture.

Linear stages replaced by a continuous, signal-driven system. Five layers, one direction of flow, one feedback loop.

SIGNALS → AI OPERATOR → ACTIONS → SYSTEMS OF RECORD → FEEDBACK LOOP ↻

01 Signal Layer — *the new starting point*

Website engagement, product usage, CRM activity, hiring trends, intent data, community chatter, support tickets. Most companies have these signals already; they are just scattered across fifteen tools and chronically underused.

02 AI Operator Layer — *the brain*

The most important shift. Interprets signals, identifies high-value accounts, determines timing and messaging, orchestrates actions across channels. Decision-making at scale — not automation.

03 Execution Layer — *actions in real time*

Personalised outbound, dynamic ads, generated content, meetings booked, follow-ups delivered, CRM updated. No batching, no waiting for campaign cycles. Continuous, triggered by signals.

04 Systems of Record — *still critical, no longer central*

CRMs and ERPs become the *memory layer* — system of record for transactions and state. They are no longer the interface. Users do not live inside them anymore. The AI does.

05 Feedback Loop — *continuous learning*

Every action feeds back: which messages convert, what drives velocity, why deals are won or lost. The operator layer uses this to continuously improve. A self-optimising GTM engine.

Funnel vs. Unfunnel — a *side-by-side*.

DIMENSION	TRADITIONAL FUNNEL	THE UNFUNNEL
STARTING POINT	Leads	Signals
CADENCE	Batch / campaign cycles	Continuous · always-on
ORCHESTRATION	Humans across tools	AI as central operator
PROGRESSION	Fixed stages (MQL → SQL → Opp)	Fluid · signal-driven
INTERFACE	CRM dashboards	AI layer · CRM as memory
KEY METRIC	Lead volume & conversion rate	Account progression & signal coverage
TEAM SHAPE	Large SDR bench, siloed	Lean, judgement-heavy, cross-functional
OPTIMISATION	Quarterly reviews	Real-time · self-correcting

New metrics for a *new model*.

Volume KPIs were proxies for human effort. In the Unfunnel, what matters is different.

Signal coverage — what percentage of your TAM are you receiving usable signals from? **Time-to-action** — from signal detected to first relevant touch. **Account progression velocity** — how quickly accounts move toward buying readiness. **Revenue per AI action** — efficiency of the operator layer, not the humans. **Message-to-context fit** — relevance scoring of outbound touches. **Feedback loop latency** — how fast learning reaches the operator layer.

A 90-day pragmatic *starting point*.

- 01 Pick one motion.**
Outbound to a defined ICP, expansion within existing accounts, or churn prevention. One.
- 02 Inventory your signals.**
List everything you already collect. You have more than you think, you just are not using it.
- 03 Define 3–5 trigger-to-action pairs.**
e.g. "New VP of Engineering + product usage drop → CSM alert + tailored executive email." Specific. Testable.
- 04 Put a human in the loop — at first.**
Review every AI-generated action for the first few weeks. Builds trust. Surfaces where the AI is wrong before it scales.
- 05 Measure against the new metrics.**
Time-to-action, reply rates, progression velocity. Not lead volume.
- 06 Expand the loop.**
Once one motion is humming, extend to the next. Compounding beats moonshots.

<p>SIGNALS <i>Senses</i></p>	<p>AI LAYER <i>Brain</i></p>	<p>EXECUTION TOOLS <i>Hands</i></p>	<p>SYSTEMS OF RECORD <i>Memory</i></p>
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The *operator's takeaway*.

The funnel is not disappearing because it was wrong. It is disappearing because it is no longer necessary. What replaces it is a continuous, AI-driven system that does not move prospects through stages — it moves the entire market toward you. If you are rethinking your GTM architecture, the question is not whether to adopt AI. It is whether you will treat it as a feature — or as the operator.