

Operating Model Shifts: How GTM Strategy Changes When You Scale Multiple PortCos

As private equity portfolios grow, the complexity of go-to-market (GTM) operations grows with them. What starts as entrepreneurial freedom across a few portfolio companies (PortCos) can quickly devolve into fragmentation that increases cost, slows learning, and blurs performance visibility.

Sponsors and operating partners face a crucial decision: how much autonomy to trade for repeatability, visibility, and synergy. A well-designed GTM operating model ensures each PortCo maintains domain nuance while aligning to portfolio-wide standards for measurement and acceleration.

“The most successful PE firms treat GTM not as a marketing function, but as a portfolio operating system.” — G2IM Insights

Centralized vs. Decentralized (and the Hybrid Reality)

According to Gartner’s 2024 Marketing Organization Benchmark, most B2B enterprises have fully or partially centralized GTM functions to strengthen prioritization and consistency. For PE firms, that means centralizing core disciplines that deliver portfolio-wide leverage:

- **Revenue Data & RevOps Stack** — MDM, attribution, stage definitions, and dashboards for board level reporting
- **Pricing & Deal Desk** — Standardized governance for pricing discipline and faster approvals.
- **Enablement COE** — Shared playbooks, talk tracks, certifications, and an asset vault.
- **Proof & Reference Library** — Central repository for case studies organized by segment or vertical.
- **Partner & Ecosystem Standards** — Unified contract frameworks, partner tiers, and co-sell guidelines.

At the same time, decentralization builds specialization. PortCos in distinct verticals need autonomy to tailor messaging, field plays, and route-to-market strategies. Localization is key for:

- Segment-specific messaging and persona-aligned narratives.
- Geo or vertical-based field plays that reflect local buying triggers.
- Product feature focus where customer priorities differ by market.

“The best portfolios decentralize storytelling, not systems.” — G2IM Insights

Hybrid with a Center of Excellence (COE)

Between autonomy and uniformity lies the hybrid model, anchored by a Center of Excellence (COE) and Shared Services Center (SSC).

A COE concentrates expertise in high-value areas like ABM design, pricing science, and lifecycle analytics, while a Shared Services Center centralizes repeatable tasks such as campaign ops or SDR enablement.

Gartner defines this model as 'centralized excellence, distributed execution' — enabling scalability without sacrificing innovation.

“Centers of Excellence are where innovation lives; Shared Services are where efficiency scales.” — G2IM Insights

Governance and Cadence

A high-performing portfolio GTM model depends not just on structure, but on rhythm. Governance should create transparency without bureaucracy.

Recommended governance cadence includes:

- **Quarterly Commercial Councils** — sponsors and PortCo GTM leaders reviewing unified KPI packs: win rate, NRR, payback, and play performance.
- **Play-Release Trains** — every 6–8 weeks, update sales plays, content, and enablement assets like agile product sprint cycles.

Why This Matters in Today's Market

The private equity industry is under increasing pressure. Bain & Company's 2025 Private Equity Report highlights subdued exits and compressed valuations. In this environment, sponsors must engineer commercial acceleration within portfolios to drive liquidity and returns.

A portfolio-level GTM operating model shortens the distance between best practice and DPI (Distributions to Paid-In). It enforces pricing and pipeline standards while converting fragmented data into a consolidated performance story.

“When GTM becomes repeatable, scalability stops being a theory and starts becoming a financial outcome.” — G2IM Insights