How CMOs are Rewriting the Industry-Marketing Playbook

The New Reality of B2B Marketing in Healthcare & Life Sciences

An industry report from Sirona Marketing

Executive Summary: Past tactics no longer work… and CMOs are rewriting their playbooks

Capital is tighter, buyer attention is scarcer, and AI has reset the rules. In three roundtables with eighteen CMOs, VPs of Marketing, and GTM leaders, one theme dominated: yesterday's tried-and-true tactics no longer earn tomorrow's pipeline. Despite these challenges, a few things emerged that showed how these same leaders move the needle. They shared 10 practical strategies that are already producing double-digit lift in demo conversions, partner-sourced revenue, and pipeline velocity. This report distills those lessons into an actionable guide you can put to work this quarter and beyond.

Sirona
MARKETING

Roundtables At-a-Glance

3 Sessions in June

6+ Hours of discussion

18 GTM leaders

GTM leaders from seed to public selling to:
- Payers
- Providers
- R&D
- CROs

Introduction

Rewriting the Industry's GTM Playbook Amidst Slashed Budgets & Unrealistic Expectations

As B2B vendors selling into hospitals, health systems, CROs, and biopharma, we don't get the luxury of "ordinary" tech marketing. Despite the fact that our buyers navigate FDA scrutiny, HIPAA risk, and purchasing cycles that extend across multiple quarters, boards still demand a next-quarter pipeline. "The pressure to deliver MQLs, even if they're worthless, is unbearable," one CMO said, capturing the mood of every single round-table. At the same time, staff cuts are eating capacity: another leader noted that "attrition gets 'treated' as a budget cut. The roles never actually get back-filled."

> **"The pressure to deliver MQLs, even if they're worthless, is unbearable."**

Against that backdrop, legacy tactics are crumbling. Trade-show sprawl, batch-and-blast email, and one-size ABM can't break through noise or procurement firewalls. As one head of marketing put it, "Anything that worked in the past is kind of out… we're being forced to re-architect the recipe again." Even when marketing delivers, sales teams are often not ready to pick up. "We're doing a dozen events, and sales still won't follow up on the leads [because of their own resource limitations]," a solo head of marketing confessed.

Meanwhile, AI is simultaneously a mandate and a minefield. Boards demand "AI in the plan," but at the tactical level, it's not as straightforward: "It's not as simple as 'just use AI.' We're in a highly regulated space, and buyers push back hard," a VP observed. The result? "Urgency, but a lot of confusion on where to apply that urgency," summed up another roundtable voice.

"We're moving from 'how many leads can we capture' to 'how many conversations can we meaningfully earn."

This report distills three virtual sessions with 19 CMOs, VPs of Marketing, and GTM leaders who are navigating through the chaos. We surface the pressure points unique to healthcare, life-sciences and AI. And, more importantly, we highlight the plays that are currently delivering gains in demo-to-deal velocity, partner-sourced revenue, and brand authority. Recommendations are field-tested, validated in the industry, compliant with regulations, and sized for lean teams under pressure.

Get ready for a new GTM blueprint you can start deploying this quarter.

About Sirona Marketing

Sirona Marketing helps healthtech and life sciences software companies launch smarter, scale faster, and avoid costly missteps – whether teams need to augment GTM or build a GTM foundation from the ground up. We've led GTM at companies like Veeva, Medable, Benchling, Lexitas and Omada Health, and advised dozens more in diagnostics, AI-driven R&D, and digital health.

Top Challenges Healthcare and Life Sciences Marketing Leaders Encounter

"We've been doing all the things we were taught. None of it is translating to pipeline anymore."

Challenge	Insight
(1) Boards are fixated on near-term MQLs over other GTM goals	Boards are focused on attribution and activities that they believe will lead to immediate sales, even though this is not how healthcare and life sciences companies purchase. Impactful but long-term brand and product development are disregarded.

"We've had to fight to keep the non-immediate activities, like content, community, education, because they don't show up next quarter, but they matter six months from now."

"We're delaying longer-term, innovative product work in favor of short-term features for the sake of renewals."

Challenge	Insight
(2) Capital squeeze and constrained budgets	From smaller headcount, to fewer tools and resources, to smaller events, Marketing leaders are contending with tightening budgets and are expected to justify their spending more than was required in the past. The reaction has been to operate smarter internally and to focus on the few, most effective tactics.

"I stitched 20 free tools together and spent $1000 bucks a month total."

"You can't do 30 events and expect ROI. We've trimmed it to five, and we surround each one with a full campaign."

(3) Headcount cuts with no backfill

Marketing teams have shrunk significantly in the past two years. The result is less headcount and fewer backfills. The smaller marketing team is now covering more responsibility.

In multiple instances, the incoming Head of Marketing was expecting to hire multiple marketers, only to find themselves as the solo marketer in the org.

"Attrition doesn't get replaced. The roles never actually get back-filled."

(4) What worked in the past no longer works today

Tactics that were traditionally highly effective seem to no longer move the needle. SEO, big budget events, and some ABM are all cited as low- to no-ROI activities.

"ABM is like Kleenex...everyone claims they do it, but most are just blasting a list."

(5) Cutting through AI noise vs. effectiveness

AI has become an instrumental marketing tool, especially for smaller teams. However, the results are mixed. Some report promising productivity and effectiveness. Others argue that they have to contend with leadership pressure to 'do something AI-related' without a clear strategy. There is a sense of the bandwagon effect: AI being used superficially or for PR rather than solving real problems, distracting from the work that actually needs to get done.

"There's urgency, but a lot of confusion on where to apply that urgency."

"Everyone's doing AI because they think they have to, not because they've figured out what actually helps."

(6) Ongoing pressure to comply with industry regulations	Marketing in healthcare and life sciences is heavily constrained by regulatory scrutiny, which slows down content production and limits how boldly teams can message. Traditional B2B tech tactics often fail here, as buyers expect precision, proof, and compliance-first positioning (especially when AI is involved).

"It's not as simple as 'just use AI'. We're in a highly regulated space and buyers push back hard."

"We serve biopharma, so any statement we make goes through legal. Timelines are brutal."

"Our buyers are risk-averse by design. You can't just throw slick SaaS messaging at them."

Takeaway: reduce wasted effort, align to the healthcare buyer's actual journey

Legacy demand gen engines, which were built for lead volume, broad reach, and marketing-sourced attribution, are no longer delivering. Nearly every CMO we spoke with described a breakdown in the old playbook: email blasts are ignored, event ROI is questionable, and MQLs rot in CRM queues with limited sales follow-up. One leader said bluntly, *"We've been doing all the things we were taught to do, and none of it is translating to pipeline anymore."*

Instead, the teams that are thriving are shifting to a highly personalized, low-waste model: ruthlessly narrow ICP lists, precision ABM with real personalization, content that educates instead of demanding attention, and scrappy AI-powered automation that scales human effort without bloating the team. As one VP put it, *"We're moving from 'how many leads can we capture' to 'how many conversations can we meaningfully earn.'"* These companies are re-architecting their GTM for how healthcare and life sciences buyers actually navigate through the buyer journey today.

What's Working: Ten Plays You Can Borrow Now

""We've gone back to hyper-focusing on our ICP.
Our ICP drives everything we do."

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① Hyper-focus on your ICP

- Focuses efforts on the most important people

- Guides all future targeting and resource allocation

"Our ICP definition gradually expanded over time. By refocusing it, we now know where to target our limited resources."

"We've gone back to hyper-focusing on our ICP. It drives everything we do."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Ruthlessly reassess your ICP company and customer
- ☐ Build focused and targeted account lists
- ☐ Work closely with sales to align targets

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② MacGyver your tool stack

- Scrappy, AI-driven automation beats six-figure software

"I stitched twenty free tools together and spend a thousand bucks a month total."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Audit redundant licenses
- ☐ Sunset anything that can be replicated with Zapier or Make
- ☐ Redirect savings into data enrichment or on-site activations

3 Focused, surround-sound events

- Far cheaper than big booths that attract 'pen collectors'

- Cuts through noisy trade shows

- Feeds sales with warmer, context-rich leads

"Events only pay when you rifle-focus on twenty names and orchestrate dinners, roundtables, and follow-ups around the show."

"It's not just showing up. The work around the event is where the money is."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Define a list of hyper-targets attending the event. Cap show list at five ICP accounts per rep
- ☐ Pre-book 70% of meetings in advance
- ☐ Host a small VIP dinner with executives and industry influencers
- ☐ Trigger a personalized, highly relevant cadence the morning after

4 Hyper-personalized ABM 2.0

- AI-built pages and emails scale relevance without bloated platforms

- Replaces spray & pray, respects long sales cycles

"With Clay plus ChatGPT, I personalize pages in one click. My previous company needed four people; I do it solo."

"ABM is Kleenex...if you're only blasting a list, you're not doing it"

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Build an ABM system by connecting data enrichment, GenAI, + CRM
- ☐ Limit target list to ≤50 accounts
- ☐ Auto-generate landing pages; human-review the output and CTA

5 Company-wide marketing ambassadors

- Engineers and PMs become demand creators

- Expands reach without headcount

- Builds product credibility

"Our engineers present monthly webinars; prospects love hearing from builders."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Publish an internal speaker roster (including executives, advisers, board members where appropriate)
- ☐ Pair each product sprint with a 'builder demo' webinar
- ☐ Bonus SDRs for owning field events

6 Partner & community co-marketing

- Borrowing your partners' trust and brand cuts through inbox noise

- Shares budget, multiplies reach

"Sponsoring a niche [industry] council gives us reach into fifty target logos for minimal spend."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Identify horizontal platform alliances, Slack user groups, peer-to-peer forums
- ☐ Rank the top 5 associations or user groups buyers already love
- ☐ Trade content or sponsorship for email access and/or intros
- ☐ Track sourced pipeline per partner quarterly

7 Funnel friction fixes

- Small UX tweaks drive large conversion jumps

"A navbar cleanup and captivating demo page pushed form-fill-todemo book rate from sub-30% to 80%."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Heat-map your top three pages
- ☐ Add micro-copy that sets clear 'what happens next'
- ☐ Re-test every form monthly

8 Internal AI pilots before public hype

- Proves ROI safely

- Wins leadership trust

- Creates evidence for clients

"We launched three co-pilot agents, measured before-and-after metrics, then briefed the CEO."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Choose one process in Product, CS, and Ops
- ☐ Benchmark manual cycle time
- ☐ Rollout AI pilot for 30 days
- ☐ Measure delta and develop customer-facing proof

9 Facilitate peer-to-peer discussions

- Builds trust and develops relationships

- Creates referral flywheels

"Regularly focused roundtables with the right ICP helped us vastly increase market share over time."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Host monthly 60-min virtul sessions with your ICPs around a burning topic
- ☐ Focus on peer sharing; sales are not invited but can listen after
- ☐ Publish anonymized insight briefs to attendees within 24 hours

10 Build your advocates

- Builds credibility

- Leverages their network

- Allows you to be seen as thought leader

"Our influencers are among the highest ROI activities we do."

Do this now checklist:

- ☐ Identify up to 5 advocates who have deep influence and recognition among your ICP
- ☐ Align on goals and point of view
- ☐ Set clear metrics and expectations for advocates
- ☐ Be transparent about compensation
- ☐ Remember: they advocate your thought leadership point of view, they are not shills for your company or product

Takeaway: Focused GTM Pays Off

The strongest-performing marketing teams in healthcare and life sciences are doing less but with more intention. Faced with headcount constraints, budget scrutiny, complex buying committees, and long sales cycles, they've abandoned the old "spray and scale" approach in favor of prioritization. Whether it's cutting down event participation to just a few high-impact shows, building focused account lists with fewer targets, or scrapping bloated MarTech stacks in favor of scrappy AI-driven workflows, the common thread is clear: focus delivers results. These teams are measuring quality over quantity, optimizing for engagement over exposure, and leading with human-first experiences.

The roundtable leaders who made these moves are already seeing results: higher demo conversions, stronger partner-sourced pipeline, and better alignment between marketing and sales. The implication is clear: discipline beats volume.

Action: ask yourself...

1. Who is truly our ICP?
2. Which are the accounts that matter?
3. What are my most important events?
4. Which legacy tools can we sunset?
5. Which channel partners or communities drive results?
6. Who are advocates we can work with?
7. Can we join a future Sirona Marketing roundtable? (Yes, you can. See below)

Join Future Roundtables

We conduct regular roundtable discussions with healthcare and life sciences GTM leaders. Want to join the next one? Let us know.

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