

Hi there,

As 2025 comes to a close, I've been reflecting on the hundreds of conversations we had with GTM Operating Partners and the thousands of GTM leaders we met across workshops, summits, dinners, and advisory engagements.

Our team at Winning by Design feels an immense sense of gratitude for the moments we've shared and our collaboration in navigating what has been a wild 2025.

As we look back at some of the most important takeaways and research resources from the prior year, I want to capture the pulse of 2025 – the ups and downs we uncovered, traversed, and excelled through thanks in large part to our willingness to grow alongside each other. I think it's important to keep these insights top of mind as you finalize 2026 plans for your portfolio companies.

1. Winning by Design Impact Summits: AI Was the Catalyst, But Systems Were the Story

At our San Francisco and Ghent Summits, AI earned the spotlight — but the real shift was how the best organizations were redesigning growth itself.

We saw teams move beyond individual tactics and begin building growth loops, stronger signal systems, and closed-feedback motions across the Bowtie. AI wasn't treated as a sparkly add-on; it was integrated thoughtfully into cleaner, more intentional GTM architectures.

We're already organizing the next [Spring and Fall 2026 Gatherings](#), and would love to see you there. And, if you didn't access our [8 AI Research Papers](#) earlier this year - now is a great time to see our recommendations for best in class AI solutions.

2. The GTM Value Creation Survey: A Snapshot of Where Portfolios Are Today

This fall, we released our first GTM Value Creation Survey - and a few patterns were impossible to ignore:

- AI activity is high — but pointed in the wrong direction.**

Most portfolios are investing in AI for automation (lead scoring, content generation, chatbots), while the *highest-leverage levers* — diagnostics, process design, segmentation, and product-led growth — receive almost no AI investment.

- Measurement is the greatest blind spot.**

Nearly 80% of firms size GTM uplift during diligence, yet only ~25% formally track GTM value created after the deal. There's a clear disconnect between strategy and sustained measurement.

- **The fundamentals still drive outcomes.**

Talent, ICP clarity, pricing, RevOps, and aligned operating models continue to be the GTM levers that create the most meaningful impact across portfolios.

If you haven't read the full report yet, it's a sharp lens into where the ecosystem is aligned — and where the greatest opportunity sits going into 2026. [[See the full survey findings report](#)]

3. Six Jeffersonian Dinners: What We Heard Across the Table

Across our six GTM Operating Partner dinners this year — in San Francisco, New York, and London — the conversations revealed a shared story across hundreds of portfolio companies:

- **2025 was a year of value recovery.**

Leaders described a deliberate shift back to fundamentals: tighter ICPs, cleaner data, sharper messaging, stronger handoffs, renewed focus on customer impact, and a more disciplined operating cadence across the Bowtie. Companies with the courage to "slow down to clean up" saw momentum return.

- **People remain the true differentiators.**

No matter how advanced the tooling, the companies making the most progress were the ones investing in leadership alignment, coaching, enablement, and culture. Tools may scale efficiency — but people create performance.

- **AI maturity is uneven, but accelerating quickly.**

Most organizations are still automating manual workflows, but a few have moved into early "orchestration" — connecting data, systems, and human insight into compounding loops. In every case, progress was fastest when AI was a CEO-level priority, not a departmental experiment.

These dinners have become one of my favorite ways to hear what's really happening inside portfolios. We'll continue them next year — in SF, NYC, Boston, and London — and would love to have you join us. [[Join the 2026 Dinner List](#)]

4. The Growth Institute + Growth Journal: Two New Platforms for Operators

This year, we also launched two new platforms designed to strengthen GTM capability and help leaders across your portfolios share a common language:

- **The Growth Institute**

A learning hub built around the core systems of modern recurring revenue — Revenue Architecture, Bowtie, SPICED, and GTM diagnostics. It's designed for operators who need practical, systems-based education they can apply immediately inside fast-moving teams. [[Become a Founding Member](#)]

- **The Growth Journal**

Long-form interviews and essays from the leaders shaping the next era of sustainable growth. One of the

most-read pieces this year was our conversation with **Rob Giglio, Chief Customer Officer at Canva**, on why simplifying systems — not adding complexity — is the real unlock for scalable growth. These perspectives offer operators a chance to learn directly from people doing the work at scale. [[Subscribe to the digital or print editions](#)]

Thank you for your partnership and your perspectives throughout the year. This community continues to shape how modern B2B companies grow! If you're interested in connecting on any of the topics above or to see how we're helping build sustainable businesses - please let me know!

To continued growth,

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