GTM · Fall 2026 · Presented with Starbridge

PUBLIC SECTOR GTM

What's actually working in public sector GTM right now.

Old GTM vs new What our data says Practical outbound tips How to **be the answer** when your buyer asks AI.

TAM TO TARGET

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WHERE THE NUMBERS COME FROM

Six months of outbound into K-12, higher ed and government

CALLS

400,000

Half to district main lines, half to direct lines

EMAILS

193,000

Only real human replies counted; auto-replies thrown out

RECORDED CONVERSATIONS

Across 10,000 districts, colleges and agencies

April – September 2026 · K-12, higher ed, state and local www.tamtotarget.com

01

Old GTM vs new GTM: The winning teams route accounts instead of blasting lists.

PART 1 · OLD GTM VS NEW GTM

In a market of 13,000 districts, everyone is calling the same list. Leverage context layers and AI to stand out.

OLD GTM · THE LIST MOT

Build a list
Every district in the state

→

Load the sequencer
Same cadence for everyone

→

Templated email, generic call
Relevance left to the opener

NEW GTM · ONE DECISION PER ACCOUNT · RIGHT PERSON, RIGHT MESSAGE,RIGHT CHANNEL, RIGHT TIMING.

Account
One district, college or agency

→

Starbridge
Contacts, signals, board and budget data

→

GTM Brain · your context layer
Your knowledge of SLED, your product and how you sell, updated by every call and email

Who · Why now · How

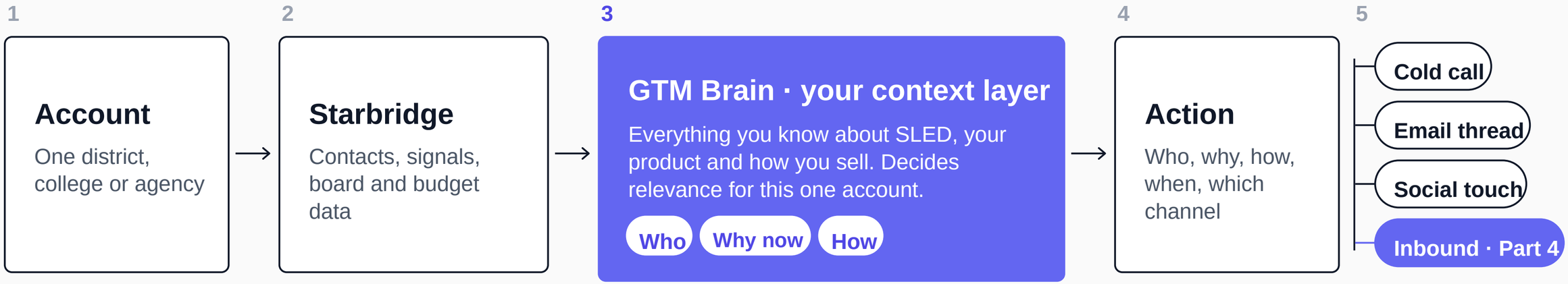
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Action
Who, why, how,when, which channel

- Cold call
- Email thread
- Social touch
- Inbound · content, AI search

PART 1 · THE ENGINE

Four stages. Every account runs through all of them, in this build order.



PART 1 · WHAT THE GTM BRAIN IS

Your GTM Brain is your data corpus on all things SLED. One place, always current, and every tool reads from it.

THREE KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

The industry

How districts, colleges and agencies buy. Funding cycles, laws, procurement rules, who owns what.

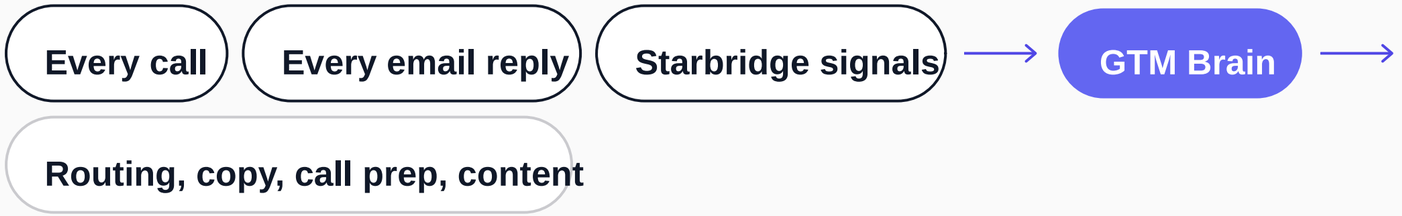
Your product

What you sell, who it's for, the problems it fixes, proof it works, who you replace.

How you sell

Personas, messaging, objections and answers, what has booked meetings and what hasn't.

WHAT KEEPS IT CURRENT



This CANNOT be a doc written once a year. What you heard this week changes who gets routed, what gets written and what gets published next week.

TAM TO TARGET

HOW WE BUILD IT AT TAM

The written knowledge lives in GitHub

Industry, product and sales playbooks as plain files, versioned, so every AI tool can read the same source of truth.

Calls and emails live in Supabase

Every transcript and reply as structured data, tagged by outcome and by the signal that drove it.

Every tool feeds it and reads from it

Dialer, sequencer, Starbridge, content pipeline. One brain, not six disconnected docs.

You don't need our stack. You need one place that's always current.

PART 1 · WHAT THE GTM BRAIN DECIDES

Your GTM Brain makes three decisions for every account.

1 · WHO

Which person at this account owns the problem?

2.6×

The curriculum director, department head or functional lead replies 2.6× as often as the superintendent or provost.

2 · WHY NOW

What's true about this account this month?

~2×

A state law with money attached gets about twice the replies of the average email. A law with no money attached gets fewer than average.

3 · HOW

Which channel, and what do we say there?

½

Mention a board meeting in an email and replies drop by about half. Bring the same fact into a call and it's the credibility that gets the yes.

Use your GTM Brain to determine your GTM Motion.

Starbridge should be used for decision-making and (sometimes) influencing copy.

PICK THE ACCOUNTS

Who should we be talking to at all?

· Contracts expiring in 3–4 months

· Which competitor they use today

· Budget and fiscal-year timing

· Open RFPs (to avoid, not to pitch)

· Board-meeting mentions of your problem

PREP THE CALL

What should the rep know before dialing?

· What the board discussed and when

· The incumbent, and what people say about it

· The named initiative or pain point

· New hires in the function

WRITE THE EMAIL

The short list that earns a place in the copy.

· A law or grant with money attached

· A fact about their own district (not the market)

· The incumbent by name, when you're certain

· A conference you were both at

Everything else drives picking and prepping outbound.

PART 1 · BUILD YOUR OWN DATA

Every conversation should make the next one smarter.

1

Record and transcribe every call

Not just the booked ones. The "no" calls hold the objections.

2

Tag each call by outcome and by signal

One field linking the call to the reason you made it. Without it you can never say what worked.

3

Mine the transcripts for what buyers use today

Diligently segment the call transcripts and email into functional parts.

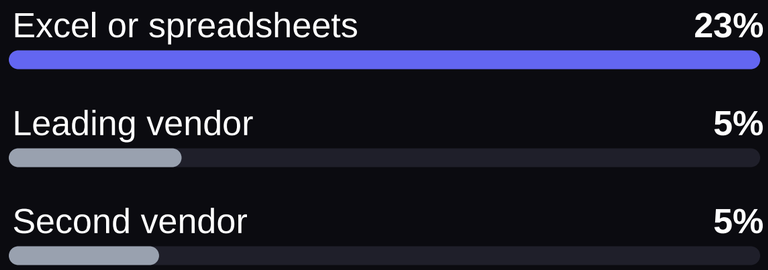
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Feed it back into the GTM Brain

What you heard this month changes who gets routed next month.

WHAT STEP 3 LOOKS LIKE

Municipal capital planning: the main competitor is a spreadsheet.



Same engine, three starting points.

FOUNDER-LED

0–1 reps

1. Map your whole finite market in the CRM or Starbridge.
2. Target the person who owns the function, not the executive.
3. Run two or three campaigns built on a funded law or a competitor contract ending.
4. Book every meeting as a handoff.

GROWTH

2–10 reps

1. Write the GTM Brain — industry, product, how you sell — before the first prompt.
2. Connect Starbridge. One routing prompt per signal type that picks the person and the pain.
3. Put the copy rules in an automated checker, not a doc nobody reads.
4. Tag every campaign with its signal so you can see what books meetings.
5. One conference play a quarter, built on post-event follow-up.

ENTERPRISE

10+ reps, several products

1. Clean data once, across every list: wrong numbers and departures flagged for all teams.
2. Turn your call transcripts into a market report and brief leadership from it.
3. Route by sector. K-12, higher ed and government want different emails.
4. Test only on lists big enough to trust, and protect 20% of volume for experiments.

1 **Stop blasting lists. Make one decision per account before anyone reaches out.**

2 **Your GTM Brain is your context layer: who, why now, and how, fed by Starbridge.**

3 **Record, tag and mine every call. Your own transcripts are the data nobody else has.**

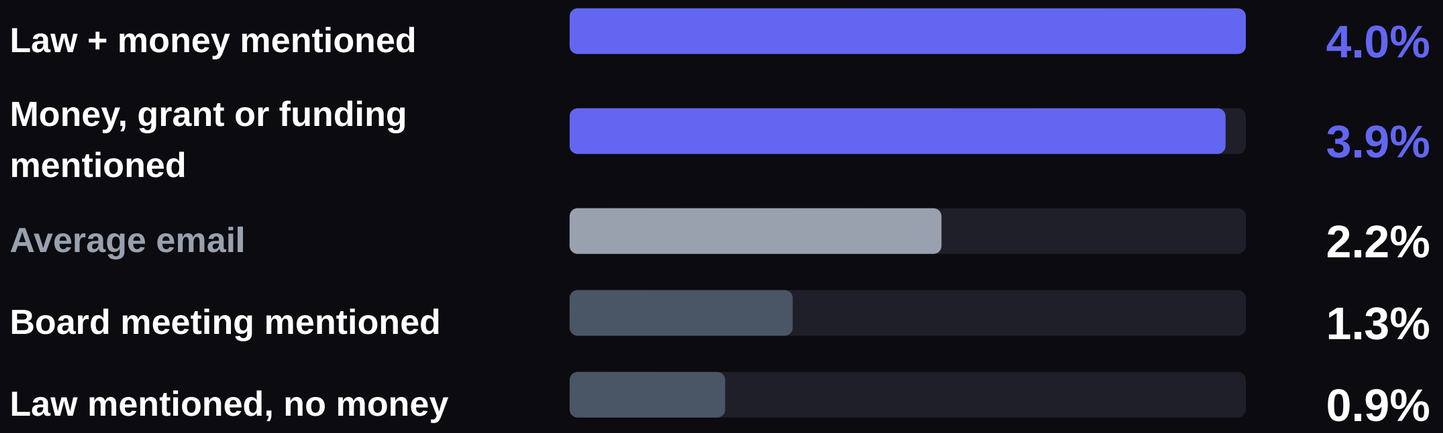
02

What the data is showing us. The same signal lands differently depending on where you use it.

PART 2 · SAME SIGNAL, DIFFERENT CHANNEL

A board meeting in the email halves your replies. Money in the email nearly doubles them.

HOW OFTEN A REAL PERSON REPLIES · EMAIL · LAST 120 DAYS



Money drives the lift, not the law. The board meeting hurts in writing (even though it's accurate)

IN THE EMAIL

Lead with the money.

The grant, the funded law, the approved list. Leave the board minutes out.

ON THE PHONE

Bring the board meeting.

Said out loud with a date, it's homework. It's what made the rep credible on the best call we read this quarter.

FOR TARGETIN

Use every signal.

A board meeting is a great reason to call a district. It's just a bad thing to write down.

PART 2 · WHERE EACH SIGNAL BELONGS

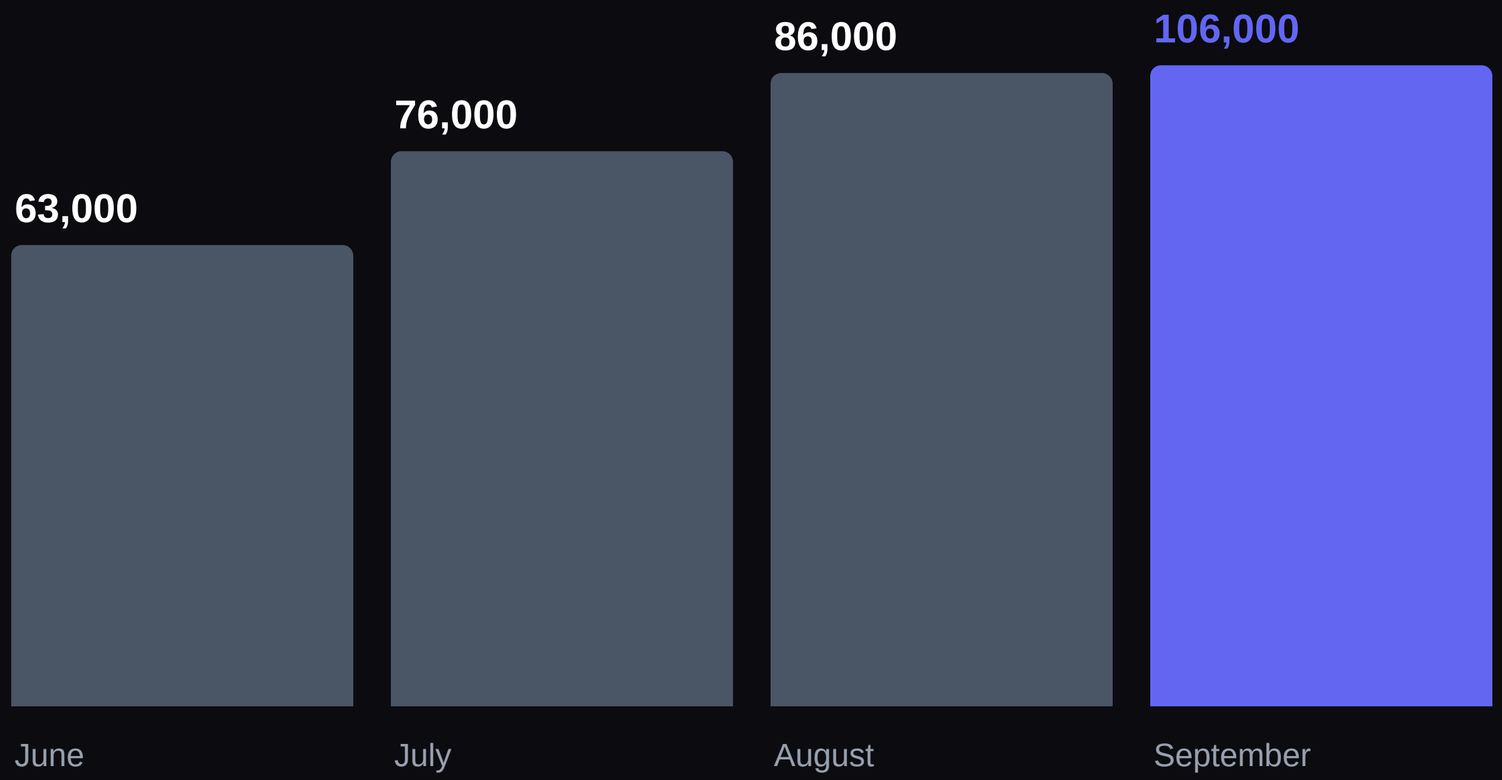
Most signals are for picking accounts and prepping calls. Only a few belong in the email.

SIGNAL	PICK ACCOUNTS	PREP THE CALL	IN THE EMAIL	WHAT WE SAW
Law or grant with money attached	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongest thing we have. Our top email campaigns all used one.
Competitor contract ending in 3–4 months	Yes	Yes	Yes	Small lift in copy. Frame it as "replacing", not "we're better".
Competitor they use today	Yes	Yes	When sure	Naming the incumbent: 7.8% replies vs 4.4% without. Wrong name, dead thread.
Conference you were both at	Yes	Yes	Yes	Post-event follow-up: 6% replies, 3× average. Booth blast: 1 in 290.
Board meeting mention	Yes	Yes	Never	Cuts email replies about in half. Say it on the phone instead.
Open RFP	Yes	No	Never	Replies fall when mentioned; procurement rules usually bar contact anyway.
Budget season, fiscal year	Yes	No	No	Good for timing who you call. Zero lift in the email.
Pending legislation	Never	No	Never	Only a passed law starts a campaign. (We killed this off last month)

PART 2 · SCALE, NOT CONVERSION

Once the routing is right, the lever is volume. We called 1.7× more, the booking rate held, and meetings nearly doubled.

CALLS PER MONTH



K12 MEETINGS BOOKED A MONTH

197 → 366

June to September

WHAT THIS MEANS

Nobody found a magic script. We found the right accounts and called more of them. Fix the routing first, then turn up the volume.

1 Money in the email. Board meetings on the phone. Every signal for choosing who to reach.

2 A law without funding is worse than no law at all. Only passed, funded laws start a campaign.

3 Fix routing first, then turn up the volume.

03

Practical tips for outbound. What to write , what to say, how to close.

Thread it, sign it, keep it plain, end with a question.

DO

4× **Send follow-ups as a reply in the same thread.** The biggest single effect we measured, at every client.

2.7× **Open email 1 with a plain "We…" or "I…".** Say who you are and why you're writing. No preamble.

2.2× **End with a soft question,** not "book a demo". "Worth a look?" works.

5.8× **In higher ed, put your name and title at the bottom of every email,** not just the first. In K-12, the first email is the one that needs it.

<30 **Subject line under 30 characters, no digits.** Their district or a real trigger. "Quick question" did no better than specific.

DON'T

–60% **Open with "When your board…" or "With the new law…".** The trigger-first line was the worst opener we measured.

–70% **Quote a market-wide statistic to higher ed.** A fact about their own campus works. "73% of colleges…" doesn't.

–50% **Write 60 words or fewer to higher ed.** K-12 wants 40–60 words. Higher ed wants 100–140.

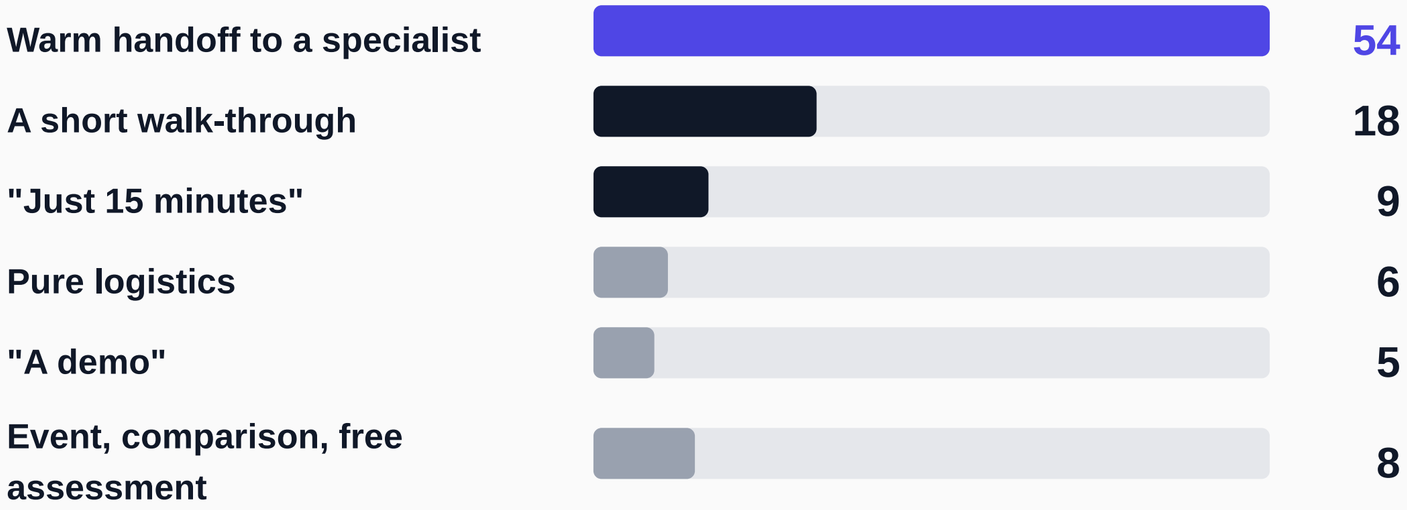
ON TESTING

We once sent the identical email twice as an A/B test to a list of 100 accounts . One "won" by 32%. Most small tests are noise. Test fewer things, on bigger lists.

PART 3 · PHONE · THE LAST 100 BOOKED CALLS

More than half of booked meetings closed on "let me bring in my colleague." Almost none closed on "demo".

WHAT GOT THE YES · OUT OF 100 BOOKED CALLS



Handoffs were about 80 of 500 in the summer. Now 270 of 500. The specialist is the offer; the meeting is just how they meet.

OPENERS

1%

Calls that led to meetings that named a real trigger in the first two lines. Replace with: "got a minute?" and a broad question.

WHAT TO TEACH

Name the trigger because it makes you credible, but not as the opener. Then close on the colleague, not the product.

SDR "…California State Board of Education approved a list on September 9. So what that means for your district is there's over 200,000,000 in dedicated state funding now available specifically for TK–5 literacy PD through 2030, and [client] is on that state approved list…"

PROSPECT "…We are interested in funding… Could you tell what's the need of the funding, what you would need us to do in collaboration with being your client?"

SDR "…I can bring in my colleague so that they could explain it better for you since you wanted to find the details of that funding. Do you have any time open this week on your calendar for a short fifteen minute talk walk through?"

PROSPECT "We'd love that... and honestly its all bout funding, and if something's gonna help the children, then I'm all for it."

K-12 example

THREE THINGS IN ONE CALL

1 · Money, with a date

A passed law, a real dollar figure, the client on the approved list.

2 · The handoff

"I can bring in my colleague." The specialist is the offer.

3 · The walk-through

Fifteen minutes, this week, framed around the prospect's own question.

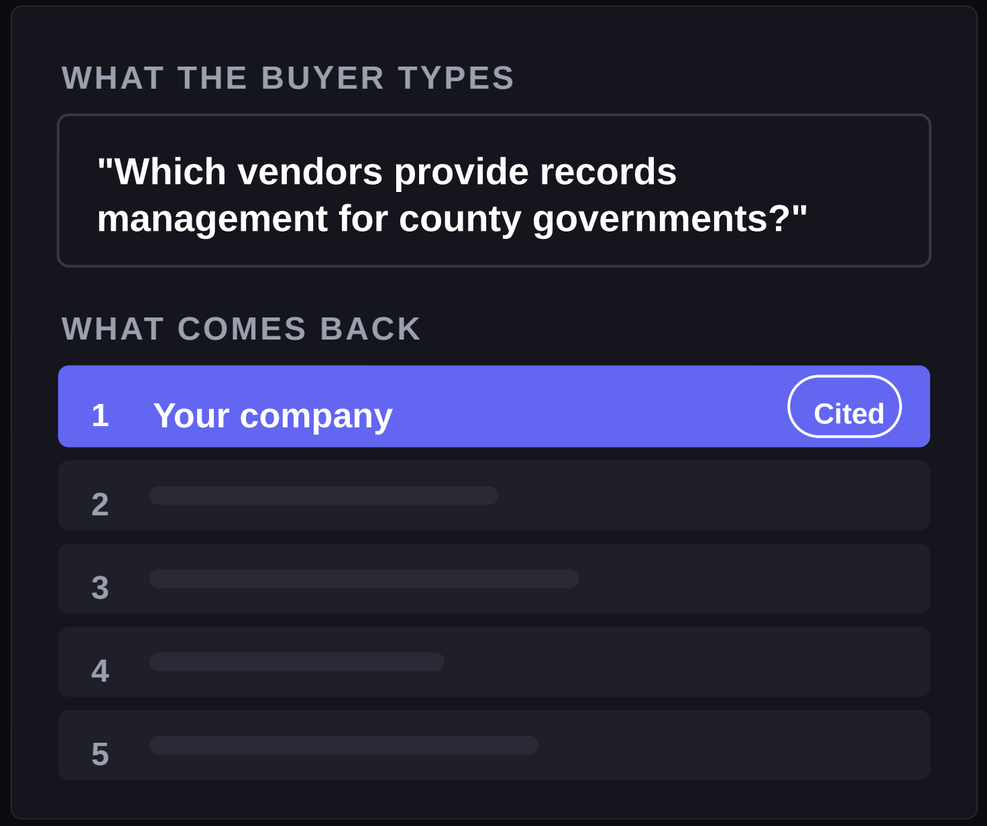
1. Email: reply in the same thread, open with "We" or "I", end with a soft question, sign it. K-12 short, higher ed longer.
2. Phone: name the trigger for credibility, then close on "let me bring in my colleague", not on a demo.
3. Most A/B tests are noise. Test fewer things on bigger lists, and put the rules you trust into a checker.

04

Winning inbound. Your buyers are asking AI for a shortlist. Be the answer.

PART 4 · THE SHIFT

Ten Google searches became one question. The answer is five names.



Visibility is binary.

AI pulls from a handful of pages it trusts and names them. You're cited or you're absent. Page two used to bring some traffic; inside an AI answer it brings none.

Shortlists write the RFP.

Public-sector research runs 12–18 months and starts with a question, not a vendor name. The five names in that first answer shape the spec everyone else responds to.

The ranking decays in weeks, not months.

Answers shift every time a model updates or a competitor publishes. SEO gave you a half-life of months. AI search gives you weeks. This is a weekly job, not a project.

PART 4 · PICK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

How to start? Monitor 100 questions/prompts per quarter, in four buckets.

BEST OF

"What are the leading…"

The category shortlist. The question your buyer asks first, before they know any names.

"Leading student information systems for K-12 districts?"

Refresh quarterly

COMPETITOR

"Alternatives to…"

Buyers who already have something and are unhappy. Your call transcripts tell you which incumbents to name.

"Compare permitting software used by mid-sized cities."

Refresh quarterly

USE CASE

"How do districts handle…"

The problem, not the product. Compliance, contract vehicles, cooperative purchasing, accessibility.

"How can I embed more PBL into middle school curricula?"

Refresh quarterly

SIGNAL · FROM STARBRIDGE

"Now that the state passed…"

Tied to what's happening right now: a newly funded law, a wave of contracts ending, a topic trending in board meetings. Chosen dynamically from the same data that routes your outbound.

"Which TK–5 literacy PD providers are on California's approved list?"

Refresh every 6 weeks

PART 4 · HOW TO ACTUALLY WIN

Best practice: the weekly loop. Five pieces of content refreshed every week.

1

Baseline

Run your 100 questions across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, Claude and Google. Record who's named today.

→

2

Write for AI to quote

Answer first, then the reasoning. FAQ structure. Same company name everywhere. Structured data behind it.

→

3

Confirm it's indexed

Publishing isn't enough. Check the AI crawlers can read it, and get listed on the sources the models already cite.

→

4

Monitor

Track citations and share of voice for all 100 questions with a tool like Airops. Weekly, not monthly.

→

5

Update, every week

At least five pieces refreshed. Defend what you've won, add new questions, swap the signal bucket every six weeks. Then back to 1.

FIRST MOVEMENT

2–6 weeks

Measurable ranking improvement

TOP SPOT

8–10 weeks

Clients at #1 for their top questions

WE RAN IT ON OURSELVES FIRST

Top-ranked GTM agency for SLED. We stopped paying for ads.

1 Pick 100 questions a quarter across best-of, competitor, use case and signal. Let Starbridge choose the signal ones.

2 Write for AI to quote: answer first, consistent naming, structured data. Then confirm it's actually indexed.

3 The ranking decays in weeks. Monitor weekly and refresh at least five pieces every week, or lose the spot.

CLOSER · QUESTIONS

Everyone here is calling on the same finite list of acounts. The ones who win decide who, why now, and how — before they dial.

Build the engine. Trust the data. Say the right thing in the right place. Be the answer when they ask AI.

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