SMP Concerto

Orchestrating Growth in FinTech
and Fast-moving Technology Firms

Sales

Marketing ⟷ Product

Introduction

SMP Concerto is a flexible Go-To-Market framework designed to help FinTech and fast-moving technology firms overcome common structural pitfalls and unlock scalable, sustained growth.

Too often, leadership teams do all the right things within their own functions – hiring smart people, building great products, launching creative campaigns – yet still find themselves falling short of expectations. Why? As businesses grow, especially rapid, opportunistic growth, Sales, Marketing, and Product functions often drift out of sync. This isn't due to poor leadership – it's a result of competing priorities, delivery pressure, and the everyday busyness that pulls teams into silos.

SMP Concerto helps leadership teams and investors:

- ▲ Step back and see where the alignment is slipping
- ▲ Reconnect the critical touchpoints between Sales, Marketing, and Product
- ▲ Identify gaps in structure, communication, and shared focus
- ▲ Build a system that adapts and scales without constant reinvention

Unlike rigid sales methodologies, **SMP Concerto** doesn't tell you *how* to sell – it shows you how to structure your organisation so that selling, marketing, and product development reinforce each other.

Whether launching, scaling, or resetting, **SMP Concerto** offers a practical way to align your teams, amplify your efforts, and accelerate growth.

Optional Modules

This introduction covers the core topics that should be considered when (re)evaluating your G2M structures and strategies. The complete **SMP Concerto** framework includes a series of modules, each encapsulating industry best practices and, where relevant, structured questions, operational metrics or assessment criteria.

- ▲ Sales Team Complexity
- ▲ Pricing Philosophy
- ▲ Pricing Economics
- ▲ Commercial Considerations of AI
- ▲ International Expansion
- ▲ Channels and Partnerships
- ▲ Regulatory Imperatives
- ▲ Product Marketing
- ▲ Sales Operations
- ▲ Customer Success
- ▲ Pre-Sales / Sales Engineers
- ▲ Optimising Product Demonstrations

Background to the Framework

I am "lucky" enough to have worked for many (around 15) different FinTech firms over the past 30 years in various market-facing roles covering Sales, Marketing and Product Strategy. I even started a business where I did all three roles simultaneously and wrote the software, too. That didn't go so well – hindsight taught me dearly that you need more than one person to start a business like the one I envisaged!

Regardless, I have seen many ways to structure the G2M part of a FinTech business, some staggeringly successful and others less so. There are a few key takeaways:

- there is no "one size fits all" model, hence the non-prescriptive framework approach that does not stifle innovation
- some often-made mistakes do not become evident until further down the line, often only becoming evident when it is too late
- competing agendas can generate conflict within firms and strong leaders address this with their vision and values but also by aligning objectives and rewards

Of course, getting these things correct is no guarantee of success, but failing to structure appropriately, both early on and as the business grows, adds additional barriers to success – the more barriers, the harder it becomes to scale.

SMP Concerto combines this experience with input directly from FinTech leaders into a framework that can be applied to any FinTech business, and probably other domains too.

Why "*SMP Concerto*?"

The name was borne from the concept that Sales, Marketing and Product must work in concert to support a G2M strategy.

Another sales methodology?

It should be noted that *SMP Concerto* does not aim to replicate or restrict common sales methodologies, such as SPIN Selling, MEDDIC, Challenger, etc. These approaches provide structure and discipline to various types of sales teams and are completely complementary to *SMP Concerto*.

Nor does *SMP Concerto* aim to assess whether the underlying commercial model is actually viable; impinge on the lead generation and sales strategies; or have any bearing on the choice of technology stack or product development philosophy.

The "Right" Structure

It should be obvious that having the right structure is important for any business, and having the right structure *at the right time* is equally important, especially in a fast-growing company Philosophically, there is no such thing as a single "right" structure, but there are always optimal characteristics to aim for.

Rather than describe an idealised structure, which would be very restrictive, the framework focuses on ensuring the correct balance of resources is deployed across the Sales, Marketing and Product teams and that communication lines are effective.

To assess these, various metrics and best practices are deployed, allowing an assessment of the current structure and the potential for changes to support business growth. This allows agile businesses to stay ahead of the curve, especially if recruitment and training could take a long time. The objective is to provide some support to the objective that structure should not be constant – it needs to grow and evolve as the business grows and evolves.

Of course, every organisation is different, with different resources, constraints and rates of growth. The metrics and best practices included with **SMP Concerto** are designed to be simple yet flexible enough to support different businesses at different stages of evolution.

When It All Goes Wrong

It's often much easier to look at what goes wrong before assessing how to get it right. Here are the most common (in my experience) mistakes that companies make. It should be noted that these mistakes tend to apply to early-stage businesses – they either recognise and correct early on, or the business fails to reach the later stages of maturity.

"Don't worry, I've hired a top salesman!"

No matter how good the salesperson may be, without the right Marketing and Product interactions, hiring a "rainmaker" is a very short-term option. With an immature product, the salesperson will end up shaping a product roadmap biased towards short-term demand. With a more mature product, the salesperson will leverage their existing network and pick the low-hanging fruit before running out of steam.

Without feedback to Product and Marketing capturing the value expressed by customers in a broad form, version 2.0 will never quite hit the mark, and subsequent versions will fail to deliver the excitement and unique value that version 1.0 brought to the market.

Summary: the organisation is too Sales-led.

"The product's so good, it sells itself!"

I have seen several (many!) incarnations of this challenge first-hand. It usually happens in businesses created and managed by strong technical teams who lack the experience to take products to market themselves. The products are almost always cutting-edge from a technology perspective and the core team has a clear roadmap for its evolution.

Unfortunately, they are often unwilling to introduce a salesperson into the mix, who could rock the boat and compromise technical purity to deliver sales. Likewise, an unwillingness to leverage marketing efforts to educate the market about value rather than focusing on features. The unshaking faith in the quality of the product rarely results in more than a few initial customers, sometimes

Summary: the organisation is too Product-led.

"Our social media is so strong, orders will be flooding in!"

For low-cost products and services, that may be true. In fact, you could say that social media presence is essential to build awareness. For business solutions in a competitive marketplace, you cannot sit back and expect orders to come flooding in. Various marketing activities will be valuable and will help explain the value a solution brings to customers, but sales interaction is essential to follow up leads and understand why they purchase and why they do not.

Unless Marketing can deliver qualified leads to Sales and solicit feedback that can be used to refine and iterate the message, sales growth will not follow.

Summary: the organisation is too Marketing-led.

The Key Departments

S = Sales

On day 1, your Sales team is the Founder. I know, I've been there! 10 years down the line and you might have a full sales organisation with a CRO, regional sales managers in key markets, salespeople of mixed abilities and experience, dedicated sales support staff (sales operations, pre-sales/sales engineers), etc.

Regardless of the shape, size and maturity of your sales organisation, the way it interacts with the Marketing and Product teams will determine your long-term success. Some key drivers are analysed in detail in the optional modules.

Team structure and development are too complex to cover in this overview but are covered in the optional modules. Of course, you need to recruit and develop a team with the right mix of skills and energy to deliver results. The key message is that addressing the Sales team in isolation is suboptimal and the interactions with Marketing and Product must also be considered to position for long-term success.

M = Marketing

What's the difference between Sales and Marketing? The generally accepted definition is that Sales has one-to-one conversations with prospects (and customers) about their products and services, while Marketing has one-to-many interactions with a much broader universe.

These one-to-many interactions take many forms but usually consist of outbound emails, thought leadership (whitepapers, research reports, etc.), events (webinars, conferences, etc.), sponsorship and many more. Increasingly, social media is a key channel for customer acquisition.

The direct goal of Marketing should be to deliver leads to Sales, plus indirect goals such as brand building, Some of the key Marketing interactions are detailed in the optional modules.

P = Product

What is your product or service? It's the "now" plus the future. The product roadmap is key – no product is ever really complete. On day 1, you'll be racing to develop the MVP that you can take to market. Further down the line, you'll be worrying about your biggest customers each wanting different things and not being able to build them all. Plus, all the things in the backlog that you haven't built…yet.

The roadmap is managed based on the overall product vision, customer enhancement requests, bug fixes, technology evolution and feedback from sales and marketing. Plus external factors out of your control, such as regulatory changes or technology innovation with an impact on your product. Balancing scarce development resources with competing agendas that factor in revenues is why your product team needs to be close to the market.

The Key Interactions

Sales ⇔ Marketing

Joint Activities

Establishing the Total Addressable Market is an essential task for Sales and Marketing, which drives much of the G2M strategy.

For example, a vendor of trading systems to global investment banks probably knows of almost every potential customer for their product. The sales cycle will be lengthy, it is primarily a replacement market, and progress will require influencing multiple people at each prospect. Deal sizes will be large, perhaps $1m ARR per customer and there might only be 100 target firms that would ever use a solution like this.

On the other hand, a vendor of accounting software to small businesses in the UK has a potential market of hundreds of thousands of customers across many different industries. The sales cycle will be relatively short, prospects will be company directors or their accountants, but individual deal values will be low.

The next key task is to understand the Ideal Customer Profile. In the former case, the ideal customer might be the Head Trader. In the latter case, it might be the company directors of any UK firm with fewer than 10 employees.

Marketing efforts aim to increase market penetration and generate sales leads. This is generally done via targeted outbound emails, adverts, etc.; or thought leadership approaches, such as webinars, whitepapers, sponsorship, etc. Effort is also required to position the product or service and provide case studies, etc. Distilling the value from the functionality and presenting that in a customer-friendly way is essential – too many companies attempt to sell features rather than benefits.

The key is to ensure Sales and Marketing are focused on the same ICP within the TAM and share feedback on their interactions.

One core area for joint discussion is pricing strategy – is the model to price aggressively to gain market share, to match competitor prices with better features, to position as a premium product, etc. How does the feedback from Sales and Marketing drive the G2M model?

Information Flows

Feedback from Marketing to Sales could include outbound mail analysis - open rates, click-throughs, etc. It could also include anecdotal feedback on competitors and information gained from conferences attended.

Feedback from Sales to Marketing might be that prospects are unaware of a unique key product feature competitor that saves them time and money. It could also be about targeting other customer profiles that were not currently in scope, e.g. the trading system vendor may want to target the Chief Technology Officer in addition to the business users.

Sales ⇔ Product

Joint Activities

Financial technology is a continually evolving space. The salesperson should be selling the current product plus the future roadmap, but how far out depends on the sales cycle, the platform deployment model, etc. The key is to balance selling "vapour" – product that doesn't (and may never) exist – with failing to win a deal because a planned feature hasn't yet been delivered. An experienced salesperson will involve the Product team in the process to ensure that the proposed solution will be delivered in a way that suits their functional and commercial requirements without compromising the overall roadmap.

Smaller sales teams will rely on Product for help with demos for more complex opportunities, but larger sales teams will have their own pre-sales resources (usually referred to as Sales Engineers, Product Marketing or Product Specialists).

One often unnoticed observation is how pre-sales and Product staff respond to difficult sales queries. Generally, when asked about a specific capability, pre-sales staff will respond with "*yes, we can do but we'd have to develop it first,*" whereas Product staff respond with "*no, we don't do X but we could develop it.*" At face value, there is no difference but the first thing the prospect hears is either "yes" or "no" – you can guess which is most powerful in a sales situation.

Ensuring the right mix of skills in a sales opportunity is essential and the required knowledge should come from the interactions between the Sales and Product teams.

Information Flows

Feedback from Sales to Product usually focuses on functional gaps, either defects or enhancements that sales prospects require. Other information passed could include regulatory changes whose impact may create opportunities.

The core feedback from Product to Sales is focused on the roadmap and upcoming product releases, especially their potential value to customers.

Marketing ⇔ Product

Joint Activities

A key aspect of the marketing process is to distil the solution value proposition from the functionality delivered by the solution and position it in the market. This involves deep understanding of the customer use cases and requires analysis jointly with Product. Marketing efforts stemming from this should be aimed at delivering the right messaging to the right customer profile.

Market and Product also should jointly conduct market research into the applicability of current and planned solutions, soliciting feedback from customers, prospects and advisors, such as consultants and analysts.

The marketing efforts can be split into Product Marketing and Marketing Communications (Marcoms) – the former focussing on product fit for the target market, understanding value that can translate into pricing strategy with Sales and identifying opportunities for new capabilities; and the latter focussed on the delivery of marketing messages to the target audience via emails, webinars, events, etc. Companies that excel at product marketing do so because of the rich and fluid interactions between the different parts of their business, ensuring that a culture of information sharing prevails.

Information Flows

The main feedback from Product to Marketing is the roadmap covering scheduled product releases and highlighting the value areas with most customer relevance. This should be a regular update and, ideally, Marketing should attend any regular roadmap discussions.

The main feedback from Marketing to Product is feedback on customer interactions. For example, A:B testing an email covering two areas of value received much more interaction with feature A than B. Feedback should also be anecdotal based on interactions at conferences and events, supplemented by industry news such as regulatory changes.

How To Proceed?

Audit Your GoToMarket Strategy

You can't change what you can't measure. Ultra Corporation can provide an impactful assessment of your current capability with an audit and detailed report using ***SMP Concerto***. This analysis includes key operational metrics on the Sales, Marketing and Product teams and identifies strengths and weaknesses both now and in the foreseeable future. The report will guide leadership teams and investors towards a successful GoToMarket strategy.

Additional Services

Where resource shortcomings are identified, Ultra Corporation can help you move quickly. We can deploy experienced Sales, Marketing and Product resources on a consultancy basis to help you structure and implement strong processes.

Recruiting the right people for your team can take time, typically 6 months or more for senior staff. Ultra Corporation can provide staff on an interim or fractional basis to cover the gaps while helping you recruit the right team for the longer term.

Expanding internationally can be challenging. Ultra Corporation can help overseas firms establish a London presence, ranging from offering a local presence to support Sales activity, right through to sourcing office space and recruiting a permanent team.