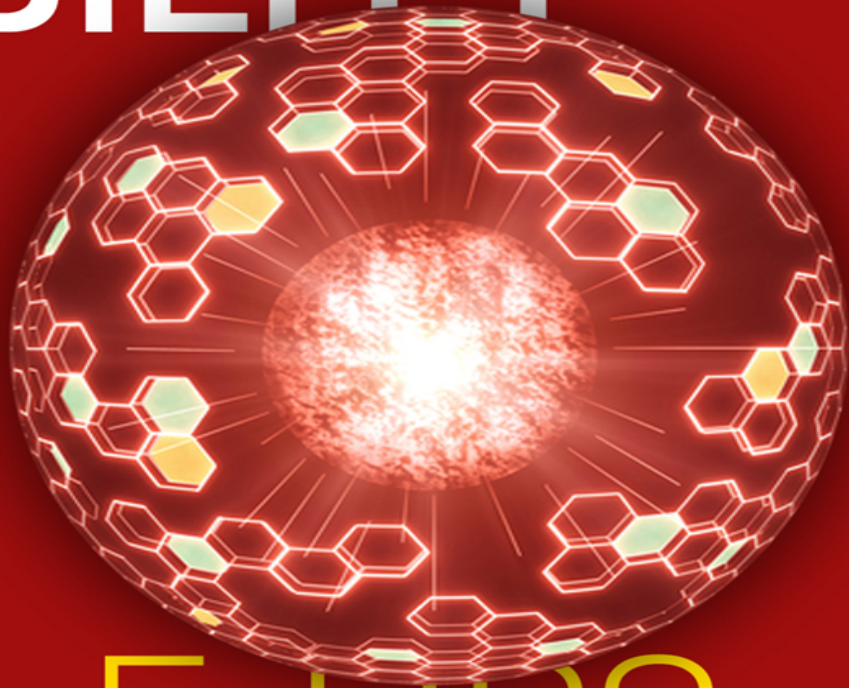


JAN BUIS

GLOBAL EXPANSION REMOTE VISIBILITY



FOR SCALE-UPS

Guidelines for Building Visibility and
Lead-Generation Activities during
International Expansion

Colophon

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For inquiries, please contact JB Telecom & Data at:

postmaster@jbtd.nl

Preface

This book is the final installment in the series. Its focus is on making the vendor visible to potential customers, with the goal of turning this visibility into leads and, ultimately, buying customers. However, this book stops at lead generation and does not explore converting leads into customers.

Although the title uses 'visibility', companies traditionally classify this concept as 'marketing' within their structures and budgets. However, this book focuses on a narrower concept than the broader scope of marketing, intentionally choosing the term "visibility."

While 'marketing' covers a broad array of activities, 'visibility' specifically focuses on creating attention.

Visibility, in this context, means making the vendor's presence known to those unfamiliar with it while continuously transferring knowledge to those who already are. By maintaining visibility, existing customers feel validated in their decision to use the vendor's solutions.

To achieve the intended success outlined in the broader perspective of this book, marketing initiatives need to support all previous steps. Relying solely on the efforts of the sales team or channel partners is insufficient. During global expansion, building visibility comes last because once leads are generated or customers show interest, the

organization must have the right support structures in place to meet those needs

Let the brand values guide the choice of visibility strategies.

This final step discusses several visibility strategies. Select those that align best with the vendor's brand values. This could mean adopting just one approach or utilizing several; costs will be a determining factor, as history has shown. Still, visibility is one of the most dynamic aspects of expansion. At the time of this book's publication, new visibility opportunities may emerge while others may fade. Staying attuned to these changes is essential.

For personalized guidance through the process—whether through training, strategy development, or full implementation—please visit www.jbtd.nl or contact us at postmaster@jbtd.nl to request an offer.

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Are you a Scale-Up?

As this book, along with the others in the series, focus on scale-ups, a valid question arises: what exactly is a scale-up? While the first book addressed this question, here we only provide a summary. For a comprehensive understanding, including the underlying concepts, please refer to *Global Expansion Feasibility Framework for Scale-Ups*.

Without a doubt, there is a significant gap between the extremes of a Start-Up and an Enterprise. Generally speaking, every Enterprise was once a Start-Up-or at least one of its predecessors was. This leads to the simple conclusion that every business organization, particularly those that are technology-driven, begins its journey as a Start-Up.

A Scale-Up either recently transitioned from the Start-Up phase or has remained stagnant for multiple decades, poised for growth.

already.

The Definition of a Scale-Up

To identify a Scale-Up, it's useful to highlight its characteristics:

- Growth is central to most Scale-Ups. It is not a modest Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of a few percentage

points. Scale-Ups often target sustainable double-digit growth.

- Expansion of market presence is a key driver for creating growth.
- Process improvement and operational optimization are powerful indicators that a company is scaling.
- The product portfolio has proven itself in certain markets and is ready for expansion into new ones.
- Often, Scale-Ups are funding their growth through new investment or transitioning to another investment partner.

Remote Visibility: Why?

Once, the CEO of a software company publicly stated, ‘Good software sells itself!’ While there may be some truth in this, if potential customers are unaware of the software’s existence, no one will benefit from it.

Introducing the strengths of a solution that has proven successful in the home market to other markets can often feel like starting over. This is both true and false. While there is a gap between past achievements and future goals, it is essential to understand why certain visibility activities need to be repeated—or perhaps adapted—to suit new markets.

What is familiar in the home market may be entirely unknown in regions targeted for expansion.

The author has often observed technology-driven scale-ups struggling with—let’s call it—marketing. There is frequently a mismatch between effort, cost, and outcome, and marketing departments often find themselves defending their activities.

Therefore, the ‘why’ behind visibility initiatives is even more crucial than the previous ‘whys’ introduced in each of the prior steps in this book. Visibility activities typically require significant investment, yet their outcomes are often difficult to measure precisely.

In essence, increasing visibility helps narrow the gap between the vendor’s solution and market adoption, while keeping the following

considerations in mind:

- **Value Communication:** Technology vendors often convey highly technical details, showcasing the solution's strengths. However, it is crucial that the receiving side can process the information in a way they understand.
- **Brand Credibility:** Building brand credibility is no easy feat and requires consistent messaging to achieve. A single misstep can quickly diminish credibility.
- **Differentiation:** Based on the PMA analysis (step 1), the vendor may not be the first on the market. Emphasizing perceived uniqueness is essential to capturing attention.
- **Scalability:** Information and messaging can spread far beyond the original target. However, it must first be set in motion; without this initial push, visibility cannot be achieved.
- **Feedback:** Visibility efforts will generate both positive and negative feedback, which can provide valuable market insights. Responding constructively to feedback can further enhance interest.
- **Lead Generation:** The ultimate goal of visibility is to attract the attention of potential customers. This involves not only visibility but also well-designed, proactive outreach campaigns.

Case Study 1: Result - Brand damage

Who:	A non European-based IoT vendor
Why:	To accelerate outreach

What:	Targeted governmental institutes across mainland Europe
How:	Utilized a non-validated external database to contact listed individuals via email and LinkedIn invitations
Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Out of over 1,000 emails sent, only three were opened, with no responses.- Nearly 100 recipients requested to be removed from the list.- Some initial conversations were halted due to GDPR compliance concerns.- It took a year to regain some level of interest.

Remote Visibility: How?

As with most of the previous books, there is no universal rule for achieving the optimal. The 'how' in this book has an added challenge, as the methods for increasing visibility change almost daily. With digitalization, new avenues for visibility are constantly emerging.

Before delving into the operational aspects of visibility, it is essential to understand the brand's implications in other countries. Numerous examples exist where a vendor's brand closely resembles or even duplicates an existing local brand.

The following chapters present the most common visibility activities, along with emerging trends—both rising and declining in popularity. This list is by no means exhaustive, and updates will be made in future editions. Accordingly, activities will be categorized into short- and long-term initiatives.

The goal is to combine essential short-term activities with the groundwork for long-term, sustainable initiatives.

Just as building an effective channel sales strategy takes time, so does establishing sustainable visibility. This doesn't mean that short-term activities are irrelevant; they are essential for aligning the current vendor visibility with new, remote regions. While these efforts may not yield

complete, long-term success, they are valuable in demonstrating a local presence.

The goal of visibility is to attract the interest of potential customers. Marketing, therefore, is a supportive activity for the organization, particularly for the sales teams. Establishing visibility naturally attracts interest and makes prospective customers known. Although visibility is beneficial, it might not be sufficient to achieve goals, so targeted lead generation activities are frequently required to augment visibility efforts.

The following chapters will touch on cultural differences, and this step will conclude with an additional chapter on this topic, highlighting common missteps. A powerful message or well-received brand representation at home may fall flat—or worse, cause offense—in other markets.

Call-to-Action Concepts

When discussing visibility, integrating a call-to-action (CTA) strategy is essential. Being visible to potential new customers is the initial step toward creating awareness, eventually converting prospects into paying customers. This process speeds up when potential customers are engaged actively. Several approaches can gauge and test interest, all encapsulated under the concept of a CTA.

Engaging existing and potential customers will accelerate market adoption.

Over time, various CTA techniques have evolved. Below is a summary of the most common types, including some less typical in B2B contexts, though anticipated to gain popularity.

- **Immediate Action:** Simple, direct CTAs such as “Sign Up Here,” “Buy Now,” or “Get Started.”
- **Value-Oriented:** Often highlights price-related incentives like “10% Discount Today” or “Get a Free Trial.”
- **Urgency-Based:** Adds a sense of scarcity, with phrases like “Only a Few Left” or “Limited Time Offer.”
- **Lead Generation:** Encourages actions to capture initial interest, such as “Subscribe to Newsletter,” “Download Whitepaper,” “Learn More,” “Watch the Demo,” or “Get a Free Quote.”
- **Soft Sell:** Keeps initial interest warm without pressuring for immediate action, using phrases like “Maybe Later” or “Browse Solutions.”
- **Social Proof:** Leverages testimonials or existing customer success stories with CTAs like “Read Success Stories” or “Join 500+ Happy Customers.”
- **Multi-Step:** Structured around the customer journey, this approach takes incremental steps to sustain interest without overwhelming the prospect. It builds on the soft-sell approach, requesting actions like “Step 1: Select Industry” or “Step 2: Identify the Problem.”
- **Interactive and Gamified:** Often seen in B2C but increasingly popular in B2B, these CTAs encourage engagement through

participation, such as “Take a Quiz,” “Spin the Wheel,” or “Unlock the Options.”

Simply disseminating information is not enough; the goal is to engage those who express interest. Not every visibility effort may allow for a direct CTA, but whenever possible, including one maximizes engagement potential.

Perceived value of marketing

When discussing the ‘how’ of remote visibility, the perceived value of marketing must be considered. The term ‘perceived’ is intentionally used here, as measuring the results of any marketing activity is challenging and often leads to unnecessary debates.

However, there are ways to assess the impact of marketing efforts. CRM systems, increasingly equipped with integrated marketing modules, allow for campaign tracking and offer methods to measure outcomes.

Engaging in a thorough discussion on the intended impact of marketing before launching visibility efforts will lead to a shared understanding of the perceived value of these activities.

How a company chooses to incorporate the impact of marketing activities into its KPIs is unique to each vendor and likely influenced by the specific solution offered. Awareness of available tools and their potential uses is outlined below:

- **Website/Profile Traffic:** The digital landscape offers a wealth of established tools for analyzing website or profile visits (e.g.,

LinkedIn). The goal is to look beyond quantity to assess the quality and engagement levels of visitors to the website.

- **Content Engagement:** Many say, “Content is king”—and rightly so. Sharing content provides ample opportunities to measure interest, typically through downloads. Implementing a small gated access for downloads can help gather initial contact information for lead generation.
- **Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC):** In assessing the value of visibility, CAC is one of the most crucial metrics. The simplest formula is marketing spend divided by the number of generated (qualified) leads or new paying customers. Adding nuance to this calculation is advisable, as it greatly aids in making strategic spending decisions.
- **Conversion Rates:** A key metric tied to CAC, particularly in cost-per-lead, this measures the journey from incoming leads to qualified prospects and, ultimately, to customers. A focus solely on lead volume can obscure quality, as only a fraction of leads progress to the final stages of the sales funnel.
- **(Social) Media Metrics:** Those with access to company social media admin pages know the vast array of metrics available. Post impact is relatively easy to gauge and can be benchmarked against peers. Similarly, traditional (and digital) print media can also be assessed. External platforms can measure press release impact, highlighting where the information has been picked up publicly.
- **Email/Mail Distribution:** Directly addressing a (potential) user remains a popular approach. Regardless of the address source, it’s essential to measure impact. Email distribution effectiveness is

easier to track than traditional mail, though a postcard with a specific URL or event invitation can also provide useful data insights.

- **Feedback and Surveys:** Tools like Net Promoter Score (NPS) or the more complex Customer Satisfaction Scores (CSAT) are excellent ways to gather user feedback. However, these are most effective when there is an established user base and may be less applicable in the initial stages of global expansion.
- **Return on Investment (ROI):** No matter the activity, ROI can always be measured. However, using ROI as a KPI often brings the discussion back to perceived value versus spending.

Focusing on the most relevant metrics will not only enable clear reporting within the organization but also support the effective steering and evaluation of each campaign. Utilizing multiple metrics simultaneously is often beneficial; however, as with any KPI dashboard, an overload of metrics may obscure insights and even cause confusion.

Marketing budgeting

When evaluating marketing activities and their perceived value, it is essential to establish the necessary investment. Experienced marketers are well acquainted with creating annual budgets aligned with planned spending. More costly aspects of marketing may have their own specific budget allocations and often require multi-level cost approvals.

Similar to sales target planning, there are two primary methods for calculating a marketing budget: 1) Top-down and 2) Bottom-up. A bottom-up approach involves analyzing all required marketing activities to support sales targets, using a combination of activities and metrics,

such as CAC, to guide calculations. In contrast, the top-down approach is often finance-driven, with a percentage determined by leadership and balanced within the overall budget.

For most technology-driven B2B scale-ups, a common rule-of-thumb is to allocate 2% of planned revenue toward marketing, aligned with expected growth. Note that the percentage may vary when using gross margin as a reference. In B2C, marketing budgets are often higher, reaching up to 10%.

Most B2B companies follow a rule-of-thumb approach in their marketing budgeting. However, when expanding into new markets, companies should view marketing as a vital investment.

In the context of global expansion, marketing costs should be part of the related investment. Assuming that localization costs for an existing solution are lower than initial development, a higher percentage can be allocated to marketing and sales. This remains true up to the maturity phase, typically reached within three to five years.

When planning, it is wise to factor in the following recurring elements across years:

- **Mutual Support:** Commitments or contracts may require participation in partners' marketing activities. Reserving funds for this in advance prevents budget shortages. Setting quarterly targets helps avoid last-minute pile-ups and enables budget reallocation if unused.

- **Resource Allocation:** Not all marketing activities will be handled internally; external resources will be required, and their costs should be included in the budget.
- **Contingencies:** Markets are dynamic, and new opportunities may arise that were not initially anticipated. Setting aside 5% or more for such activities is prudent.
- **Benchmarking:** Competitors are unlikely to remain silent, making it valuable to observe their visibility efforts and compare them. Consider not only the volume but also the style and methods they used to position themselves.

Regardless of the budget amount, awareness among the marketing team and beyond is critical. One large-scale activity can quickly consume a significant portion of the budget, so assessing whether it's the right move is essential. Nevertheless, a single well-executed initiative can be transformative when expanding into new markets.

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In this section, you will find references organized by key subject area for further reading. These sources have been instrumental in the creation of this book, whether through direct implementation or as foundational material to help build a well-rounded mindset.

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This book, *Global Expansion Remote Visibility for Scale-Ups*, is the fourth and final installment in this series. After deciding on which regions to enter, how to sell, and what resources to use, it's time to establish visibility. Multiple approaches, all aimed at generating leads, can capture the interest of potential customers.

For Scale-Ups, in particular, with limited budgets, taking the wrong approach in global expansion efforts can be far more costly than anticipated. Missteps not only result in financial losses but can also leave lasting scars and foster negative sentiments toward future expansion efforts.

With the limited time available to Scale-Up management teams and their investors in mind, this book—and the entire series—is based on real-life, practical knowledge. It encourages stakeholders to invest a little more time and resources upfront to ensure that both the company and its leadership are better prepared for the journey of becoming a global player.

By the release of this book, the **Global Expansion Go-to-Market Strategy** series is complete and together with the other key topics such as **Feasibility Framework**, **Go-to-Market Options**, and **Remote Presences**—all specifically tailored to the needs of technology-driven Scale-Ups.

JB Telecom & Data is an independent boutique management consultancy firm with a focus on supporting innovative technology start/scale-up's developing their global Go-to-Market strategies.

Jan Buis, founder of JB Telecom & Data, brings over 20 years of experience in global expansion. He has consistently demonstrated his

talent at growing business and sales operations by swiftly implementing essential structures and processes, all while considering the cultural context. His expertise enables him to establish connections quickly with a diverse range of stakeholders, resulting in successful outcomes in various markets.

Jan's career path has led him through a diverse array of organizations, ranging from large public-listed corporates and mid-sized companies to start-ups. He worked in several technology sectors with global operations, primarily in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

He was privileged to be educated at several levels: In 2012, Jan attained Dual Executive Master of Business Administration (MBA) with a focus on "International Master's in Management" at Purdue University Daniels (Krannert) School of Business in West-Lafayette (IN), United States of America and at the TIAS School of Business and Society based in Tilburg, the Netherlands. Prior to that, from 1994 to 1997, he attended the Eindhoven University of Technology, earning a MSc in International Technical Development Science. The undergraduate studies took place from 1990 to 1994 at Windesheim in Zwolle, earning a BEng. in Industrial Management.