

## Clausewitz’s Four Strategies for Entering Dominated Markets

Breaking into a market dominated by powerful incumbents is a high-stakes game. Military strategist Carl von Clausewitz outlined four classic battlefield strategies that apply directly to go-to-market planning: **Attack**, **Defend**, **Outflank**, and **Guerrilla**.

Each strategy carries different levels of cost, risk, and potential return. Typically, lower-risk moves generate smaller returns, while higher-impact strategies demand greater investment and exposure.

### 1. **Attack**: Confront the Incumbent Head-On

This is the most aggressive approach—competing directly in the incumbent’s core territory.

- **Pro**: High potential return and visibility.
- **Con**: Requires major investment; high risk of retaliation.

### 2. **Defend**: Secure and Hold a Niche

Focus on a clearly defined segment where your product excels and can build loyalty.

- **Pro**: Lower risk; strong customer alignment.
- **Con**: Limited market size; incumbents may follow if you “prove” the market.

### 3. **Outflank**: Target the Blind Spots

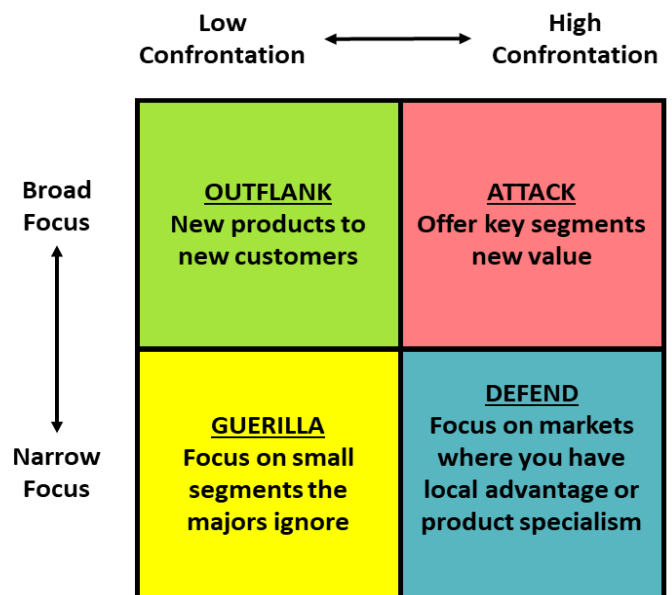
Serve market segments or channels that incumbents overlook or undervalue.

- **Pro**: Less direct competition; opportunity for first-mover advantage.
- **Con**: May take time to scale; product innovation must be significant.

### 4. **Guerrilla**: Use Agile, Low-Cost Tactics

Deploy small, opportunistic plays that generate attention without provoking dominant players.

- **Pro**: Low cost, fast learning, minimal exposure.
- **Con**: Harder to scale; limited impact on sales and profits.



### Strategy in Practice: Start Small, Build Up

Many successful challengers begin with **guerrilla** or **outflanking** tactics, **defend** their early wins, and only **attack** when they’re positioned to sustain it.

**Bottom line:** Match your strategy to your resources and risk appetite. Bold moves can deliver big results—but smart sequencing often wins the war.

If you believe that product launches are important to your organization and the sales growth you are seeking, then FL&A can help. Feel free to contact Stephen Martin at [smartin@franklynn.com](mailto:smartin@franklynn.com) for further discussion.