

Clausewitz and Market Entry: Strategy Must Match Reality

When entering a market dominated by powerful incumbents, your launch strategy must align with your capabilities. Clausewitz's four military strategies, **Attack**, **Defend**, **Outflank**, and **Guerrilla** map directly to go-to-market choices. **But not all strategies are available to everyone.**

Attack: Requires Superior Resources

You can only launch a direct attack if your resources exceed those of the incumbent. As Napoleon said, it takes 2.5 times the strength to successfully attack a defended position. In business, that means more capital, more people, more reach, and staying power.

- *Failure mode:* Outspent and outlasted before achieving scale.

Defend: Requires Loyal Market Share

Defence only works when you already hold a segment that is both large enough and loyal enough to sustain your business. If your position is weak or customers aren't committed, defence becomes delay, not strategy.

- *Failure mode:* Wasting time protecting something not worth defending.

Outflank: Requires True, Desired Innovation

Outflanking incumbents by targeting overlooked segments only works if you offer **genuine innovation** the market values. A "me-too" product will not win in unclaimed territory.

- *Failure mode:* Gaining access but failing to win adoption.

Guerrilla: The Default for Most Challengers

For most new entrants, guerrilla tactics, targeted, agile, low-cost manoeuvres, are the only viable starting point. These strategies allow you to test, learn, and win small battles while building momentum and conserving resources.

- *Failure mode:* Mistaking early traction for readiness to scale broadly.

The Strategic Reality

- You can only **attack** if you're stronger.
- You can only **defend** if customers are loyal.
- You can only **outflank** with real innovation.
- That's why **guerrilla** is the most accessible—and often the smartest—starting point.

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 for further discussion.

