



Survey uncovers how the top UK/I SDRs and their managers operate

**(...AND WHAT THEY REALLY
THINK OF THEIR JOBS)**

Foreword

It's never said often enough: SDRs are the most important people in any sales organisation.

Every day, they're the ones going out into the market. They're the ones talking with prospects and customers. They're the ones bringing new business to your door.

It's no exaggeration to say that the SDR role has evolved far beyond mere cold calling. They have to be product and industry experts. They have to be good communicators, able to talk to people at all levels, from the office receptionist all the way to the C-suite. They have to be tech-savvy, and confident about tracking data and measuring their own performance.

The old-school view of sales is that it was an art — you had SDRs who engaged with leads and, through sheer force of personality, persuaded them to buy.

Nowadays, that has all changed. Today's SDRs aren't artists, they're scientists.

And like every good scientist, they have to benchmark their work. They have to study data, learn from it, and use it to progress in their role.

It's why reports such as this one are so important. Sometimes, when you're working at the coalface of sales development, you can lose sight of what's important. What you need to be doing. Where you should be going.

Sometimes, it's good to take a step back and learn from others (more than 250 of them in this case!). Every major scientific advancement of the last 100 years wasn't pioneered by just one person, but by teams of people, all working together, all sharing their knowledge and learning from each other's successes and failures.

Sounds just like a modern-day sales team, doesn't it?

A round of applause for SalesWorks, Aircall, and Gong in masterminding this vital study into the state of sales development today. I hope you get as much value out of it as I did.

James Isilay
CEO, Cognism

Welcome! Here's what's in this report.

Aircall, Gong, and SalesWorks ran a survey of SDRs and their managers at sales organisations across the UK to answer these burning questions:

1. Which approaches and habits do SDRs from high-performing teams use daily?
2. What can SDR managers do to ensure their teams' success?

The sections in this report reflect the main categories of an SDR and an SDR manager's work experience:

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Methodology and results

Together, our companies surveyed SDRs and SDR managers at varied sales organisations throughout the UK. They included everything from tech, recruitment, and e-commerce, to finance. As you'll see in some of the results, we paid particular attention to teams that achieved 80%+ of their quota so we could learn more about their winning tactics and strategies.

Collectively, we received 401 completed forms. After removing empty forms and forms with insufficient numbers of answers, we had two datasets: 78 SDRs and 185 SDR managers. We looked at that data separately to compare their experiences to uncover areas of alignment and gaps. The insights we gained will help sales leaders like you boost your team's performance.



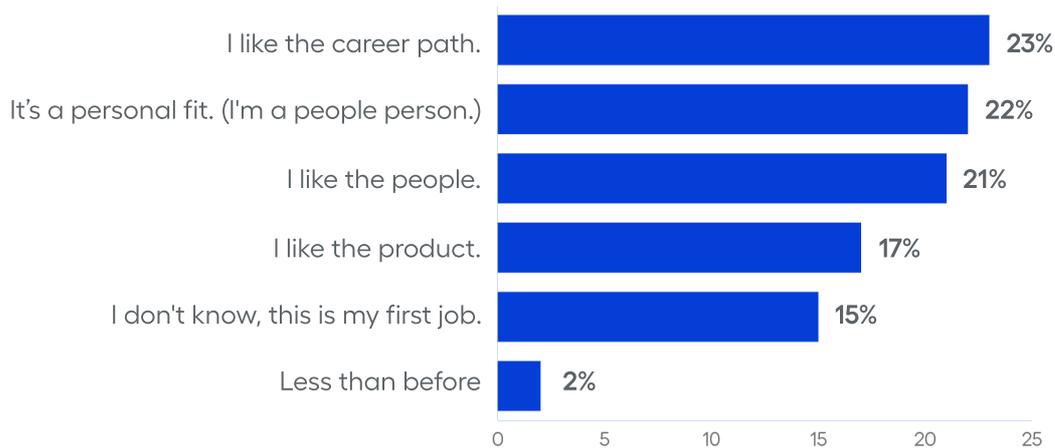
Background on our SDR respondents

Before we dive in, here's a little background on how our SDR respondents view their roles:

What SDRs like about their jobs

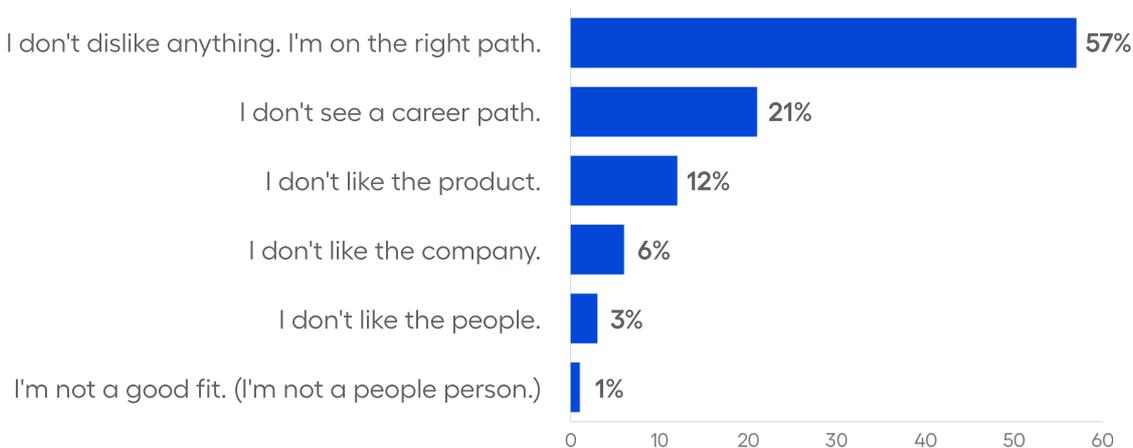
Take heed. The company itself was the number one response (23%) and career path was second (22%).

That puts a lot of onus on the organisation to get it right and boost retention.



What SDRs don't like about their jobs

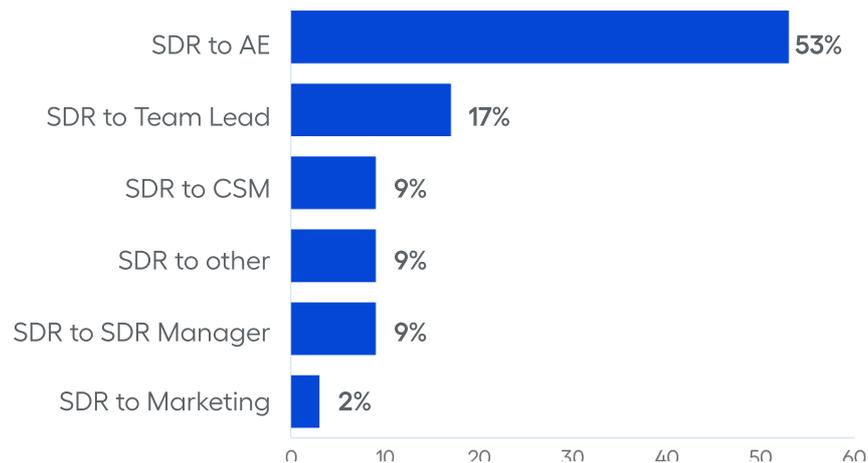
The responses were impressively positive, with a majority of SDRs believing that they're headed in the right direction.



An SDR's presumed career pathway

As expected, the majority of SDRs plan to shift into an AE role as their careers progress.

But perhaps surprisingly, relatively few plan to move into SDR leadership.



Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

So here's a conundrum: The average sales rep's tenure is about 1.5 years at any given company (Bridge Group, 2018). That's a bit surprising, given that most SDRs cite the company and their career path as the things they like most about the job.

If reps were happier and could see their path ahead, they might stay in one place longer. That matters because SDRs can be a great talent pool for the whole company, depending on their skills. With their daily exposure to customers, they develop strong and up to date knowledge on the ICP and the personas from which other teams can greatly benefit.

Focus on keeping your SDRs engaged and help them feel valued. With the right training and encouragement, they might also be persuaded to move into SDR management, for example.

It's also worth noting that SDRs and AEs require different skill sets, yet there's a long-held belief that one automatically morphs into the other. Ask yourself: Are you reinforcing this idea, or broadening the view of what's possible for your SDRs in terms of career path?

Have your SDRs really shown both an aptitude and an affinity for an AE role, or is everyone just moving along a pre-set conveyor belt? Your people may be a great fit for functions like operations, marketing, research, product, success, management, and more!

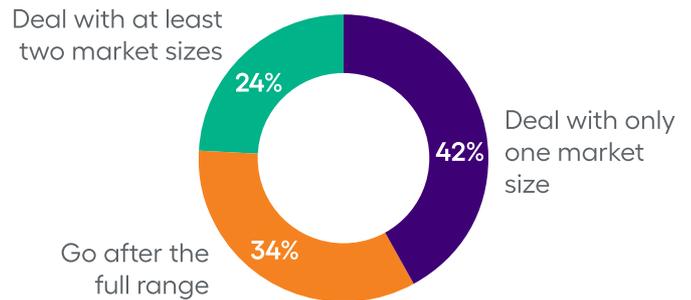
Knowing that 90% of respondent SDRs rely on their managers and internal enablement for training, sales leaders must ensure that training is in place for the right roles as SDRs progress in their careers. That may mean providing a clear path to AE, or it may mean making other options clearer.

1. Organisational structure

Everyone covers most market sizes

We learned that **42%** of our respondents deal with only one market size, **24%** deal with at least two market sizes and **34%** go after the full range, from SMB to enterprise.

Our respondents come from multiple business sizes, with 44% operating at small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), 36% coming from mid-market orgs, and 20% hailing from enterprise-level businesses. They also court customers from all three business sizes.



Company size determines team size

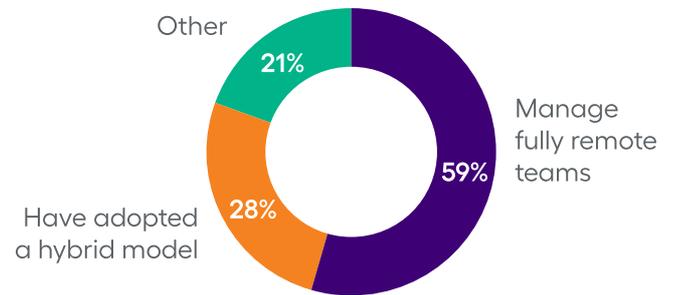
The correlation between the size of a client organisation and the size of the SDR team they typically work with is most noticeable when the SDR team is small (1-3 SDRs).

A team that small isn't most clients' first choice. Mid-market and SMB clients both tend to prefer mid-sized teams (4-9 SDRs), while enterprise clients work equally with mid-sized and larger teams (10+ SDRs).

Team size (in SDRs)	Enterprise clients	Mid-market clients	SMB clients
1-3	18%	24%	33%
4-9	41%	42%	48%
10+	41%	34%	19%

Remote work is bigger than ever

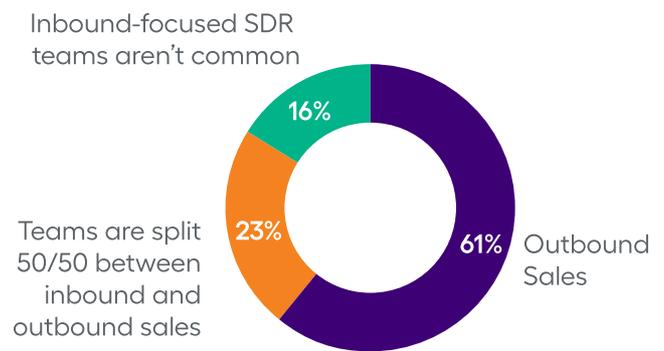
Covid has had a massive impact on teams that were largely in-person previously. We found that **59% of SDR managers now manage fully remote teams, and only 28% have adopted a hybrid model.**



Outbound work pays off

Most of the high-performing teams surveyed use outbound growth models to drive demand.

Inbound-focused SDR teams aren't common at 16%, and 23% of teams are split 50/50 between inbound and outbound sales. Our respondents' teams focus largely on outbound sales. That's where 61% of them play.



Most orgs opt for a low ratio of SDRs to AEs

The majority of organisations use a ratio of 1-2 SDRs per AE.

SDR-to-AE ratio	Percentage using this ratio
1:1	39.47%
1:2	31.58%
1:3	15.13%
1:4	13.82%

Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

SDR team size is correlated to customer size, which is no surprise, but it's worth noting how popular midsize teams are with SMBs. If this is your niche area, take note! Consider taking another look at your growth plans and cross-referencing them with your target markets.

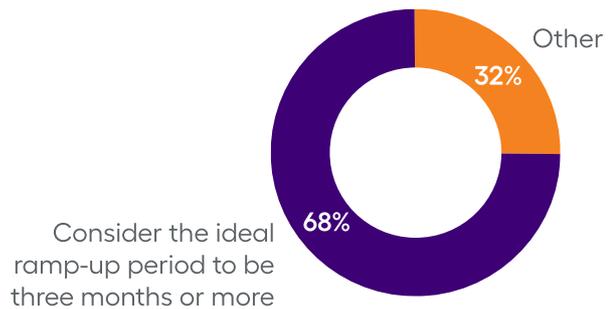
Given that SMBs tend to deal most often with teams of 4-9 SDRs, you can focus on the ease of selling to this group at this size. If you're planning to grow your small team into a mid-sized team, make sure your new SDRs leverage the knowledge of longer-term SDRs.

2. Ramp and retention

Ramp times for tech stacks and quota differ

SDRs say they need, on average, three to four weeks to fully understand their tools and tech stack.

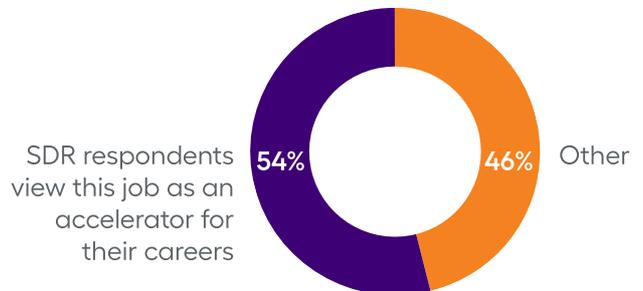
That leaves them with a number of months to get up to speed on everything else, according to a majority of managers. Of our SDR manager respondents, 68% consider the ideal ramp-up period to be three months or more.



SDRs use their jobs as launchpads

Of our SDR respondents, 54% view this job as an accelerator for their careers.

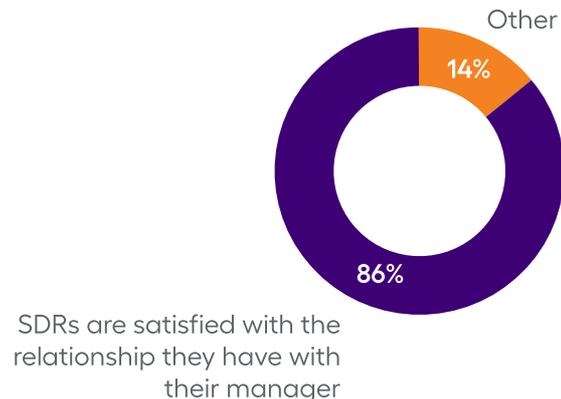
That helps explain why the majority of SDRs tend to leave their jobs after only nine to 15 months. More than 50% of managers consider nine to 15 months a normal tenure for an SDR.



SDRs like their relationships with their managers

Sitting at 86%, most SDRs are satisfied with the relationship they have with their manager.

Given their overall satisfaction with their companies, career paths, and their managers, most of our SDR respondents seem like they launch their careers in sales from a fairly positive position, even if their time spent in the role is fairly brief.



Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

Given most SDRs' short stays at their jobs, it's imperative that you shorten their ramp up period as much as possible to ensure that each SDR is well leveraged while they're in that role.

Interestingly, ramp up time has no impact on tenure. You might think that helping SDRs succeed more quickly would make them more apt to stay in their job, given their successes, but this appears not to be the case. The reduction in ramp time is largely about the benefit it provides to the team and organisation in ROI.

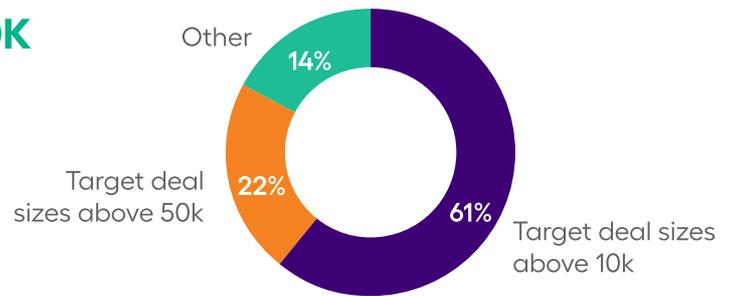
The fact that most reps are happy with their relationship with their manager, and that most of those managers still expect them to leave after only nine to 15 months may suggest that the SDR role is undervalued. Consider your compensation packages if you want to keep your SDRs from converting into AEs as quickly as possible!



3. Metrics, quota, and technology

Respondents target deals over 10K

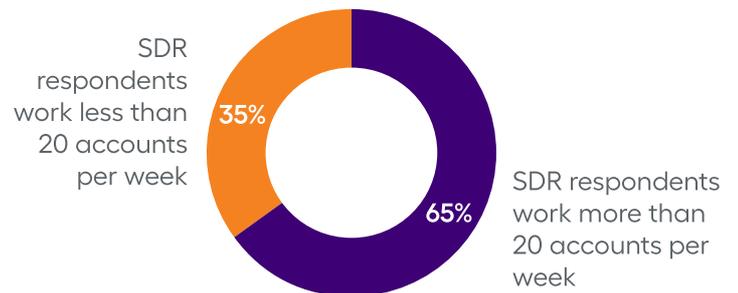
For context as we move into this section, of our respondents' teams, 61% target deal sizes above 10k and 22% target deal sizes above 50k.



Most SDRs work 20+ accounts weekly

Only 35% of the SDR respondents work less than 20 accounts per week.

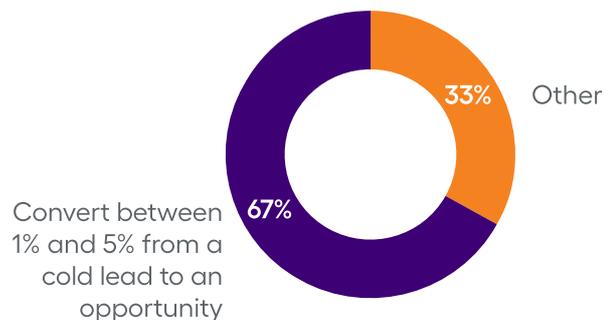
On average, the SDRs work between 21 and 60 accounts per week with only 11% working more than 60 accounts a week. Half of those who work fewer than 20 accounts per week say they use a sales enablement tool, and the other half don't. Of those who reach 20 or more accounts per week, 88% use a sales enablement tool. We'll leave it to you to draw conclusions there!



Quota perspectives clash for SDRs and Managers

On average, 67% of our surveyed SDRs said they only convert between 1% and 5% from a cold lead to an opportunity.

Once they're past that stage, 46% of SDRs say they reach 90% to 100% of their target (defined as 63% on qualified opportunities.) But there's a notable clash of data here: Only 15% of SDR managers claim their SDRs reach their target at 90% to 100%.



Winning teams use tools

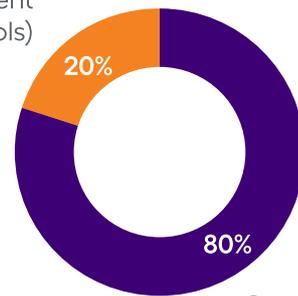
Managers say that on average, 15-25% of SDR-sourced opportunities end up as closed business. Businesses that reach 35% or more in this metric are rare at only 12%.

We looked more closely at teams that achieve 80%+ of their quota.

Those using between three and eight tools were the most likely to achieve this target. Of those with less than 80% quota attainment, 73% used fewer than five tools.

The poorest performers, who hit 80% quota attainment about 40% of the time, have only one to three tools in place.

Quota achievement (Less than 3 tools)



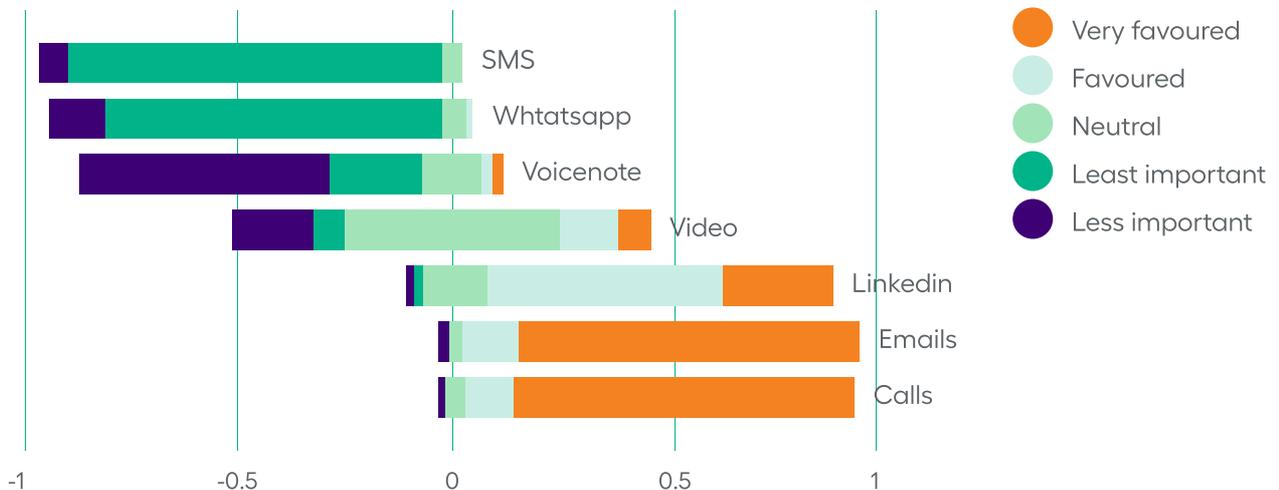
Quota achievement (3-8 Tools)

There's a right # of tools

Approximately 50% of the teams that responded use between three and five tools.

71% of these use a sales enablement tool such as Salesloft or Outreach.

SDR favorite channel



Teams win using four priority areas

Looking at the SDR managers whose teams achieved 80%+ of their quota achievement, their top four sales development priorities were:

Of this same group, 45% aim for a 10-25% 'opportunities-to-closed-business' rate.



Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

It's clear that the most active teams (i.e., those who work 20 or more accounts per week) win the most often, and that they turn to tools to boost their productivity. What's more, the highest-achieving teams (i.e., 80%+ of quota attainment) use between three and eight tools in their sales process.

That's no coincidence, and it's one we can't stress enough. From tracking and smoother handoffs to coaching insights, visibility into risks, and more, there's simply no replacement for well-designed sales tools, particularly sales enablement tools. It's how the top teams hit quota.

On another note, we know that despite the number of SDRs working remotely, only 4% of them use video on calls, and that even fewer turn to Whatsapp and SMS. It's time for teams to leverage these underused channels to gain a competitive advantage.

Turning on webcams may be the simplest way to move deals forward and boost win rates, as it's been shown to be exceptionally useful in achieving both ends (see this post).

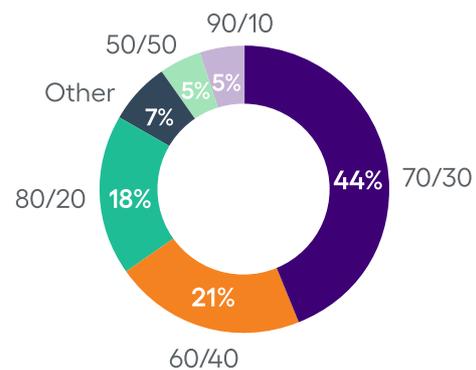


4. Compensation

Most teams use similar splitting

Almost half (44%) of our respondent SDR managers use a 70/30 split between base salary and commission.

A whopping 83% of them are currently split between 60/40 and 80/20.



Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

We learned that more than 49% of top-tier performers (+80% pipeline achievement in the past two quarters) have a 70/30 split, which was by far the most popular option. It's followed by 25% of managers who use a 60/40 split. Why is a 70/30 split the most popular choice?

We suggest that it's likely used as a way to retain SDRs, especially those living in high-cost areas. In the UK, OTE is not included if an SDR applies for a rental property or a mortgage. Given the cost of living in key cities such as London, it's easy to understand why SDR managers consider this split important in reducing staff turnover.

Again, we'll point out that there's a strong likelihood that SDRs are often undervalued. It's worth taking the time to work with SDRs directly to build a compensation model that works for your team.

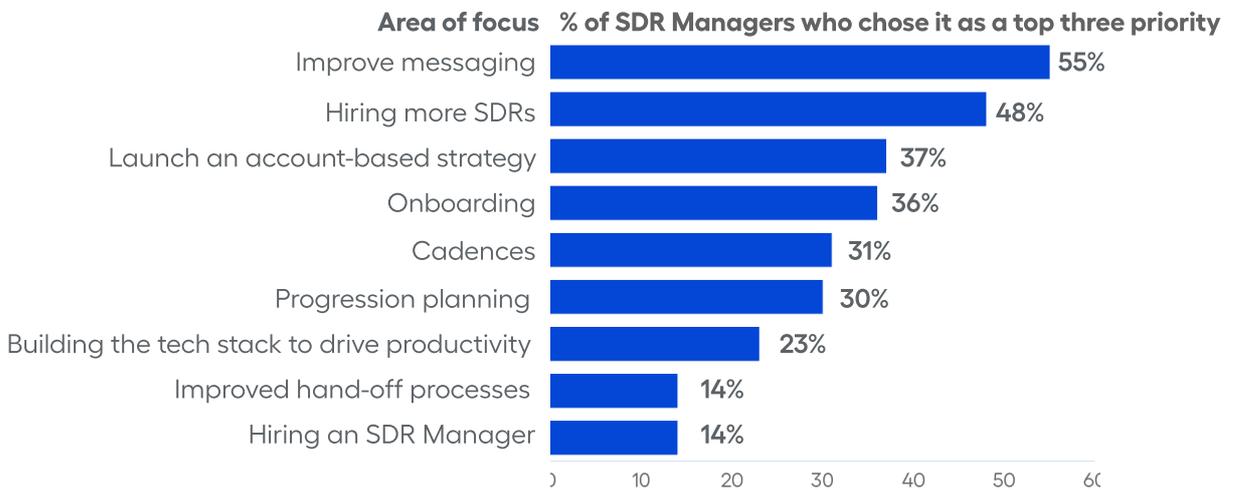
Remember though, that doesn't mean creating an overcomplicated commission plan. In fact, it's probably best to keep it simple and clear. Consider implementing a points-based system that allows SDRs to calculate with ease exactly how much they'll earn — one that drives the right behaviours (e.g., three points for a meeting qualified from inbound, six points for outbound, etc.). Also, make sure your plan is achievable, motivating, and within their control. Don't target closed-won deals only or you'll be left with demotivated SDRs!

5. Sales leadership

Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

Most of the SDR managers surveyed want to improve on their teams' messaging.

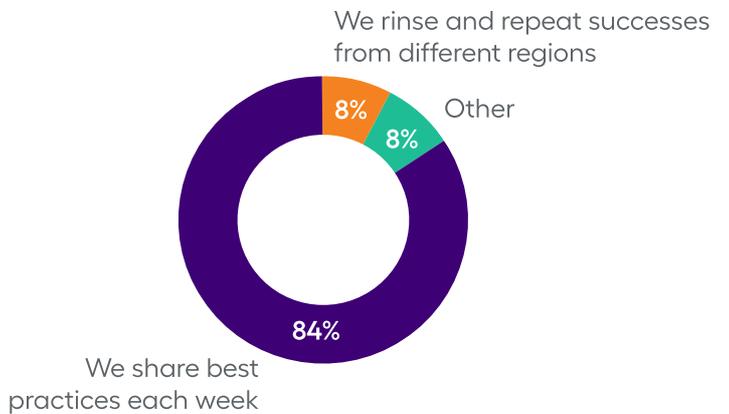
They also want to scale their teams over the next 12 months. Notably, 37% of them want to start an account-based strategy, while 60% say they already have one.



Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

SDRs said they have two main ways to ensure consistent performance: sharing best practices (85%) and following a routine (47%).

They also say they collaborate with other SDRs, and approximately 46% collaborate frequently, mainly by sharing best practice each week.



SDRs and managers *sometimes* agree on necessary qualities

Half the SDRs ranked communication as one of the most important skills, which aligns with 57% of managers ranking it as important or essential.

Sales experience isn't seen as mandatory. Even though 37% of SDRs consider it important, 52% of managers don't source their teams based on that quality.

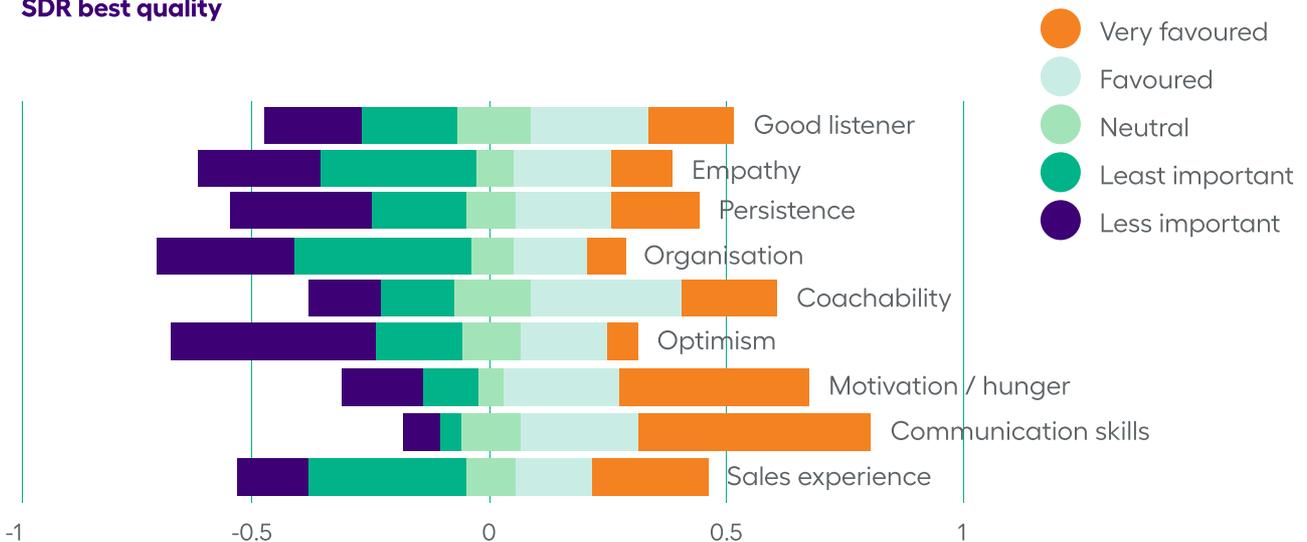
Surprisingly, managers ranked optimism as a key quality. Not so for SDRs.

Managers also want a team they can coach — 40% of respondents believe it's essential that they can educate and coach their team.

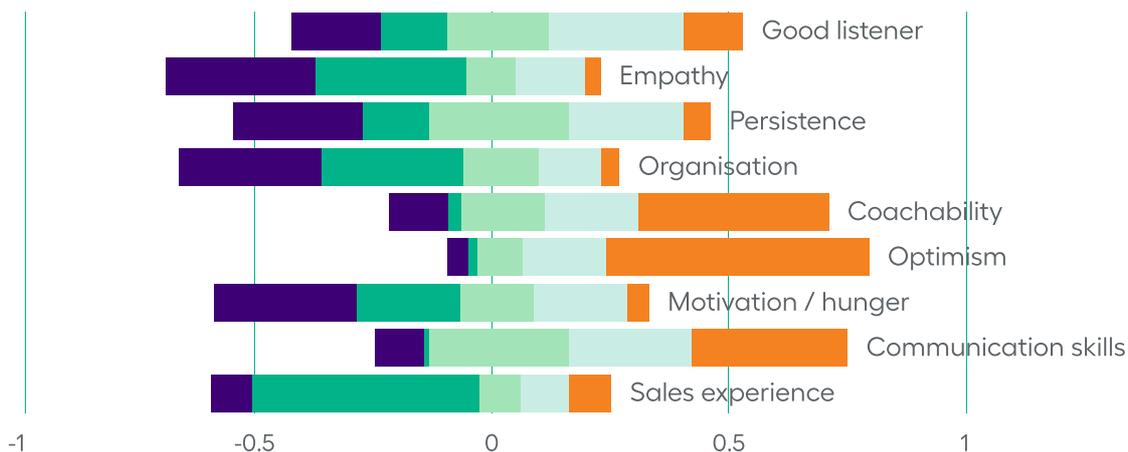
Organisation doesn't rank high

SDRs and managers do not deeply value organisation.

SDR best quality



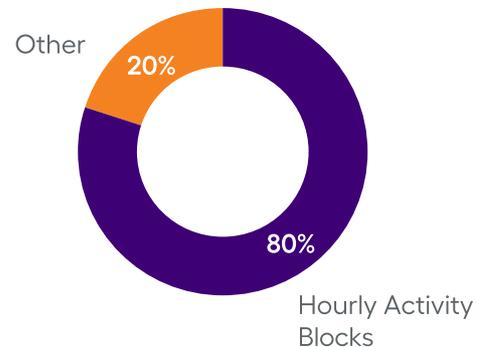
Manager



BANT wins over CHAMP

We learned that 50% of managers use the BANT program to help structure their calls, and CHAMP comes in second place.

Additionally, 80% of SDRs say they structure their day through hourly activity blocks based on their current priorities.



Sales leaders: Turn insights into action

An account-based strategy appears to be highly effective for growing teams. It helps companies focus on easy-to-close or high-value targets that can provide them with additional proof of value to newly engaged targets, generate referrals, etc., and further strengthen efforts to reach cold targets. That's why it's particularly useful in resource-strapped sales organisations. It's a coveted strategy for most managers who don't have one in place, but it shouldn't be the only revenue strategy you use.

In terms of qualification, BANT is the minimum-viable methodology if calls are managed appropriately. It's supported by target research without engagement. Because of this, it's a good fit for junior SDRs who engage in initial conversations but have less ability to manage the direction and content of conversations. BANT and CHAMP are essentially the same, but CHAMP's "challenges" component is better-defined than BANT's "need" component, so it instills consistency in the qualification process.

The fact that SDRs and their managers don't seem to value organisation is surprising. Clarity comes from organisation, whether that's in a single deal, or a view of the entire market. In order to be ahead of the competition, successful SDRs can focus on gaps left by the competition, but knowing where they are requires an organised view of things.

It may sound a bit prescriptive in terms of where time and effort is spent, and which targets the organisation considers the most valuable. But SDRs' processes tend to be quite systematic already (or they should be!). That's why playbooks can be extremely powerful tools for prospecting teams, with end-to-end decision and action trees for certain conditions. Ensure that both your view of every deal is transparent and that your playbooks provide clear and organised direction.

Your next steps

Want to move any of these areas forward for your SDR team? We can help.

Our complementary offerings will help you transform customer experiences, improve your training and coaching, and boost win rates.

Connect with us today:



SalesWorks is a leading global provider of Sales Training and RevOps Consulting services that help performance-focused teams deliver optimal results. With offices in London and Boston, SalesWorks has successfully delivered hundreds of data driven training programmes for sales teams all over the world, ranging from SDR onboarding to Sales Leadership.

SalesWorks is reimagining the legacy approach to training and enablement as traditionally most sales teams fail to meet management's expectations, and under-performance often leads to under-investment. SalesWorks offers the foundation required to deliver optimal return on sales investment by leveraging their unique 4S methodology: Skills, Structure, Strategy and Systems.



Aircall is the cloud-based call center and phone solution of choice for high performing Sales teams. Sales professionals use Aircall to meet monthly targets, increase productivity and have more meaningful conversations with prospects. Aircall was built to empower each professional to have richer conversations—and for Sales people, this means making their lives easier by simplifying the way teams communicate, onboard and train.

Sales teams at Soldo, Global Shares and SumUp, all with offices in the UK/I, have generated more qualified pipe and closed more deals by having a call center solution that integrates with all their business productivity tools and CRMs. Learn more about how the Aircall call centre solution will help you build a stronger sales organisation.



Gong unlocks reality to help people and companies reach their full potential. The patented Gong Revenue Intelligence Platform™ empowers customer-facing teams to take advantage of their most valuable assets – customer interactions, which the Gong platform automatically captures and analyzes. Gong then delivers insights at scale, empowering revenue and go-to-market teams to determine the best actions for winning outcomes.

Over 2,000 innovative companies like Morningstar Inc., Paychex, LinkedIn, Shopify, Slack, SproutSocial, Twilio, and Zillow trust Gong to power their customer reality. Gong is a private company headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information visit www.gong.io.

Thanks to the teams at

Salesloft.

Cognism 

HubSpot 

 **SEISMIC**

 **Reachdesk**

(and 100+ companies in the UK!) for taking part in our survey, helping to provide us with invaluable trends for Sales Development in the UK&I.