Strive

Strive Sessions GTM Roundtable London

Powering Hypergrowth™

Executive Summary

In October 2023, Strive hosted their fourth 'Strive Sessions' Roundtable event.

These sessions bring together Founders, GTM Leaders and Talent partners from the UK and EMEA SaaS space and offer an opportunity for networking, discussions on a variety of topics related to GTM, and sharing of best practices, across an exclusive group.

The afternoon was led by **Strive**, with hosts on the day being **Adam Richardson** and **Reece Mills**. To ensure the session was as productive as possible, all attendees were surveyed in advance of attending, to understand current priorities and keep the afternoon as focused on their needs as possible.

We will cover some of the core topics discussed throughout this Key Takeaways document, but subjects covered included:

- Scaling a business
- Sales Playbooks
- BDR Functions
- Doing more, with less
- Working towards profitability (Profit vs Scale)
- Progression within the Go-To-Market organisation
- Hiring criteria

Guest Speakers

Camilla Carson is the Chief Revenue Officer at **Gemba.**

A CF30 regulated investor by training, with a specialist area in alternative asset classes like hedge funds and private equity, she has worked in SaaS Sales Leadership since 2017.

Currently CRO at Gemba, Camilla spent the last 5 years at Black Swan Data, ending her tenure there as VP of Sales.

Gemba is the go-to workforce learning platform of the enterprise metaverse. Its trailblazing, collaborative, virtual reality training experience delivers powerful ROI for global companies going through digital transformation.

Camilla Carson
Gemba

Kyle Kearns is the VP & General Manager at **StratioBD.**

Kyle has an incredibly impressive track record of joining early-stage software companies to build and scale - including three years at Databricks and three years at Starburst.

Originally starting his career as a Technical Recruiter, Kyle now has over 9 years' experience in SaaS Sales, working and selling across all of EMEA using MEDDPICC methodologies.

Stratio BD is a Generative AI Data Fabric company helping enterprises instantly access the quality data they need for good business decisions.

Kyle Kearns
StratioBD

Peppa Wise is Vice President GTM UK&I at **Multiverse.**

Peppa has over 7 years' experience in SaaS Sales, beginning her career at Darktrace.

Joining Multiverse in 2019, she has quickly risen through the ranks from Senior Account Executive to VP level in less than four years.

Multiverse helps top companies see more than what's on paper with professional apprenticeships in tech, data, and software engineering. They train the leaders of tomorrow on-the-job, with the skills they need today. The future of learning is working.


Peppa Wise
Multiverse

atomico

AVO Automation

birdie

Crane

CROSSBEAM

dawn.

deel.

deepset

FLOCK

Frontline

GTM WORKS

Gemba.

Hg

Index Ventures

Metaview

multiverse

NEA

OXX

partech

scaleup capital

STRATIO

mongoDB

The event in numbers

23 guests

3 speakers

3 roundtables

50%
attendees **female**
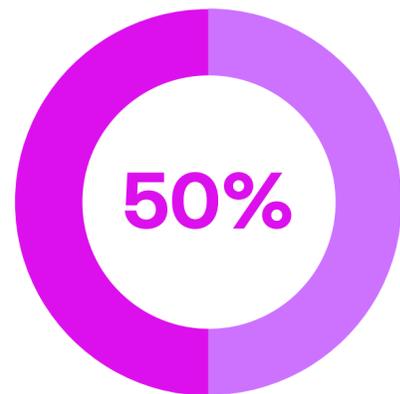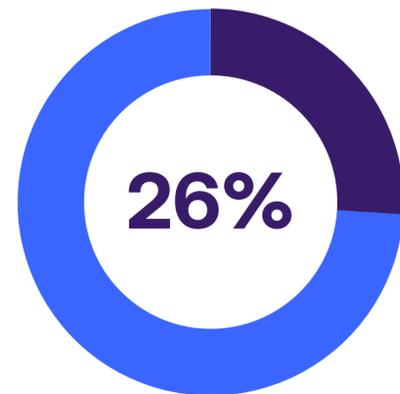
26%
attendees from a **diverse background**
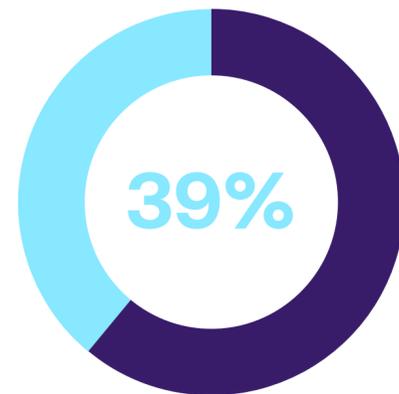
39%
attendees from a **VC**
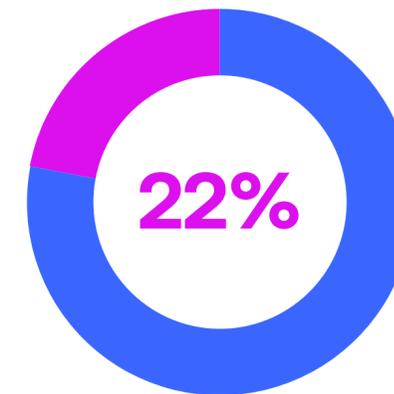
22%
attendees worked in **Talent Acquisition**
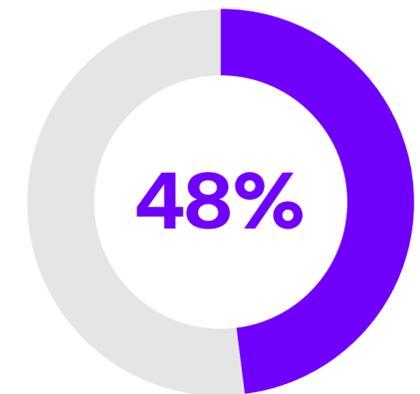
48%
attendees were **Sales Leaders**

Testimonials

"We were pleased to bring together such a strong guest panel for this event, and we have received great feedback about the ideas they shared and content they covered – as well as their authenticity and openness.

It was also great to meet so many Founders, GTM Leaders and Talent partners, representing different verticals and EMEA regions to understand more about their journey and the challenges they've faced along the way. Everyone was open about sharing their best practices, and the environment felt really collaborative."

Reece Mills
Strive

"I've always sworn by coachability being two way and my mindset is that there is always more I personally can learn. The Strive event was exactly this, as it brought together GTM professionals who all have a hunger to learn and willing to share their experiences.

The Strive team did a great job in promoting the value of the event upfront and the topics were spot on in terms of GTM priorities and challenges.

The biggest validation for me was the importance of AEs being accountable to generate their own pipeline and the Inside Sales / SDR function being the cherry on the top. In the current market in particular, smart and multi-threaded PG is a non negotiable."

Kyle Kearns
StratioBD

We asked our attendees for their feedback on the overall event as well as the content, post event:

Overall rating of the afternoon

4.6 out of 5

Overall content rating

4.9 out of 5

Testimonials

"Strive put on a great event that was like having a front row seat with some of the best leaders in the market. It was an environment where people were open, honest and exchanging ideas.

I was really struck by how authentic everyone was, with people candidly sharing their highs and lows; the things that have worked well and those that didn't.

I left that event having learned something new, feeling inspired, motivated and energized!"

John Kinson
GeoFusion LLC

"I thought Strive put on a great event, with very high-quality speakers. I especially liked the fact that they were a strong mixture in terms of their experience, but also in terms of the size and sectors of their current company.

No-one in the room was competitive with each other; the diversity in the group led to some really vibrant discussions about bringing products to market, career progression for internal staff and building sales books.

A key appeal of the event for me was to be able to make connections and grow my network, and there are several people I have already had follow up conversations with!"

Andrew Duncan
Atomico

"Strive put on a well organised and smooth-running event!

The event was full of great content and interesting topics – I could happily have had it run longer!

The speakers were excellent; very clear & articulate, knowledgeable and with strong opinions.

I would definitely recommend the next event to everyone!"

Mark Walker
GTM Works

"Strive put on a great event to network and learn from others in the world of B2B GTM strategy.

I learned a lot and made some great connections who I have already arranged follow ups with, would definitely be interested in the next event!"

Joe Jarman
ScaleUp Capital

The Role, Progression & Retention of a Sales Development Representative

The SDR Role

- Although all speakers agreed the SDR role is a key role to a growing GTM function, they also liked their Account Executives to do their own pipeline generation and will give them SDR resource once earned.

- The group had reservations around the use of SDRs when targeting Enterprise level clients, with a feeling that it wasn't the best strategy to have them calling C-suite level stakeholders. It was felt that this was better done by the more experienced AEs, who have the knowledge and ability to do this.

- A discussion was had around potentially giving the SDR access to SMB or MM clients and allowing them to do the prospecting at this level, depending on the company.

The progression of a Sales Development Representative

- It was discussed that the best way for SDRs to progress is to work with AEs on their current accounts where they are looking to land and expand. It was felt this this can be a good opportunity for them to gain experience and understand all the stakeholders involved etc. to get deals over the line, giving them a good understanding of what the role of an AE is then.

- Everyone also agreed it was of course important that AEs are supporting and coaching the SDRs to help them progress.

- The group felt that typical tenure in an SDR position was two years – but that we shouldn't question at this stage why someone hasn't progressed if it's not the right move for them. Do we sometimes rush people through this progression, because of that timeframe even when they're not ready? And does the SDR themselves have the same thought process; if they have not moved within two years, do that see that as failure?

- Moving a SDR into a closing role too soon means they will be set up to fail – all three speakers had witnessed this previously. The right time is when they are ready and you can't put timescales on it due to there being so many variables to consider. Ultimately, it depends on the individual and you need to assess where they're at and if they're ready to take the next step.

- Factors that can influence an SDR's progression:

  - Inbound vs outbound sales motion

  - Partners – how they operate

  - Ability to learn about closing deals

  - Do they then understand MEDDIC / Command Of the message etc.?

• **Peppa** felt that later stage companies are in a much better position to offer career progression to SDRs, as they will have a career plan and an L&D structure in place, whereas typically at Startups they are unable to do this due to cost and time required to set this up. She advised that companies like Salesforce, Okta etc. were typically much better at facilitating this progression.

• **Camilla** advised she had seen instances where there were alternative career paths in place for SDRs to work up to rather than just the 'typical' AE route – e.g., a Senior or Manager. This gives the SDR career options and the ability to progress / increase their compensation, whilst keeping them in an area they are skilled in and using them for coaching / mentoring, as well as continuing to increase pipeline generation. Several people in the room agreed this was a good approach for progression, as well as retention.

The retention of a Sales Development Representative

• In terms of retention, it was felt the best way to retain staff at this level was to build a sales team in an office where they are together and can get support and learn from each other. For entry level SDRs, working remote can be an issue, with a higher chance of failure / churn.

• **Peppa** also advised that she has worked in a company, where they created an Inside Sales SDR function, which sat separately to the AEs. Through 'ring-fencing' the team in this way, they were able to create a high performing team, with high retention.

Click for Further Info

• **A Dead Simple Checklist for Quickly Onboarding New SaaS Sales Reps**

• **Mindtickle – Voted number one in Sales Training and Onboarding platform by G2**

The Sales Playbook

When should you create your Playbook?

• It was discussed that Founders shouldn't be obsessed with building a playbook right from the start of their journey. They should ensure they have Product Market Fit first, so they should concentrate on getting their first few Use Cases won, rather than worrying about the playbook initially. It was also felt that you need to have a team in place first.

• A typical stage for when playbooks should be in place or being rolled out was discussed as being at Series A / B.

• Until this point, you should still be looking at and being driven by the data - measuring inputs vs outputs, conversions etc. Focus always on Pipeline Generation, as if this is right, then the rest can fall in place after it.

• Before making your playbook, you need to:

  • Define ICP

  • Create structure

  • Have Use Cases to share

  • Understand territories (always data-driven)

  • Have a clear PG strategy

  • Know what messaging to use, what stakeholders you are targeting, understand personas

• Your Playbook needs to be specific to your organisation and must align / fit with what problem you are trying to solve for your customers.

What should your Playbook look like and who should own it?

• Is it one document or a series of documents? It was discussed that it should be a framework owned by various Heads of Departments.

• With this approach, the CRO would own the overall playbook, with the Department Heads each owning their own section and having responsibility for implementing and updating.

• When building a new GTM team and playbook, it is a good idea to have the team help to build the playbook and share their ideas, so they all feel like they own a part of it and are more engaged and bought into using it.

Updating your Sales Playbook

• Your playbook is a working document, that should always be edited and updated as you grow and scale as a team.

• When early-stage, this means it is likely to be reviewed and updated frequently (monthly?), but as you get bigger, it is more likely it would be reviewed and updated quarterly - at this stage you should know what is working, whilst earlier in your journey you are still finding your way and pivoting to what will work best for the business.

• Ensure you review your playbook with data - to see what is working and what to focus on.

• Measure the outputs from your playbook and use from Day

1 with a new recruit in their onboarding. **Peppa** discussed that their President and Board Member, **Jeremy Duggan** advises, the true test of playbook and the way to get reps engaged, is to demonstrate that when used, how quickly a rep can bill $1m in a year. Once this happens, there is proof and trust in the playbook and people will then be behind it and follow it.

Click for Further Info

Two Playbook Examples:
• **Sales Coaching**
• **Competitive Deal Playbook**

The Sales Plan Template

Revenue vs Growth

- As a Founder, it was felt you need to choose which is the most important; revenue or growth. To achieve true 'hypergrowth', you cannot be revenue focused, so it comes down to what the end goal is for the company and what you are trying to build / achieve – i.e., the mission.

- If you are looking to achieve hypergrowth, you will go through times when you need to take risks and invest in your sales, marketing, and product teams, in order to achieve fast growth. Without taking these risks, it is impossible to truly be in hypergrowth.

- The 'growth at all costs' model seems to be less common now over the last 12-18 months but prior that is exactly what it was. **Camilla** advised she would rather add AEs to her team when the team is hitting quota and they are ready to increase as being successful; as opposed to adding a number of reps because they need to hit a growth target for next round of funding, then so many will churn etc. This is a model that has worked for companies, but again comes down to what you want to achieve.

- 'Doing more with less' was discussed a number of times during the event – do more with your current team / don't overdilute your TAMs and territories. Do not have a large number of 'average performers' across the board.

Utilising Artificial Intelligence

Unanimously across the speakers, it was advised that they hadn't made massive progress in using AI – but were however starting to plan for it now and was something they see becoming more important as we move forward.

A suggestion was to utilise younger, more 'tech savvy' employees as AI champions and support them to accelerate this as leads for the company.

No-one saw AI as replacing entry-level (BDRs), as it was still felt that it was important to have the human touch. It was also discussed around the interaction and relationship building that people can do, which AI cannot.

AI was seen as more of an essential tool to help a BDR to be more successful – improve conversions, data, help to understand things they don't know be e.g., leveraging ChatGPT, etc. when prospecting.

Click for Further Info

- **Recommendation from Kyle Kearns: Apollo.io**
- **Online Guide: Smarter Selling with AI - New Data on how the Sales Process is changing**
- **Discussion held on the day re: Seismic**

Recruitment Strategy

What does good look like? Define your ICP (Ideal Candidate Profile):

- Pipeline Generation, skill, drive, data-driven

- Alignment through the process

- Personality complements the current team; not just all the same personality types

- Coachability

- Integrity

- Do they build a champion through the hiring manager?

  - Kyle used an example of one of his AEs who followed up with him to arrange a meeting before his Panel interview, to get as much information from him as possible and build a champion in him.

  - If a candidate can display that skill during the interview stage, they will be the same with clients.

- Entrepreneurial spirit

  - Have they had side hustles previously?

  - Do they have a good work ethic?

  - Are they happy to work hard / dig in?
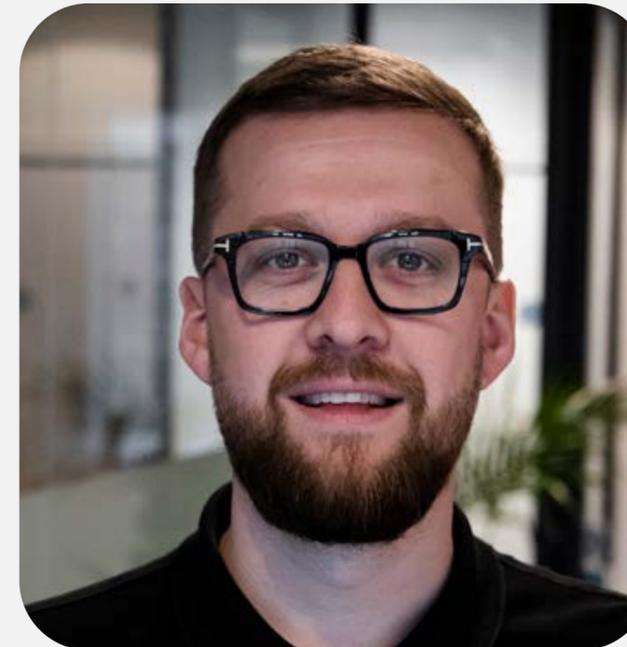
Adam Richardson
Strive Co-Founder and Director

Adam is a Co-Founder and Managing Director of Strive.

Adam supports all of Strive's key relationships globally, as well as having overall responsibility for the leadership of the company, including strategy, client management, line management of internal staff, operations and hiring world-class recruiters to join Strive.

Click for Further Info

- **Whitepaper - Creating for Scale: How to optimise your recruitment process for accelerated growth.**

- **The Seven Traits of Successful Sales People**

- **Interview Questions and Quick Tips**

Contact Us

Founded in 2017, Strive is a specialist go-to-market talent partner whose network spans the globe.

With offices in the UK and US and a headcount of 30, Strive has the size to offer talent acquisition services at scale, whilst also the capability to deliver on strategic hires.

Working with leading VC's, Strive has helped scale their portfolio of B2B SaaS companies, placing key hires within the go-to-market function.

For more information, please reach out to Reece:

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Reece Mills
Head of Partnerships

Scaling go-to-market teams for the world's leading, VC-backed SaaS companies

Powering Hypergrowth™