SDR LEADERS GLOBAL

SDR Leaders Global

RESEARCH & INTELLIGENCE

GLOBAL BENCHMARK REPORT

The State of Sales Development 2026

A global benchmark of 574 SDR leaders

574 SDR leaders

4 regions

13 sections

SDR LEADERS OF EMEA · SDR LEADERS OF USA · SDR LEADERS OF APAC

EMEA · USA · APAC

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† Throughout this report, † marks an exploratory result (p between .01 and .05). See Section 2.



FOREWORD

Dave Wilkins

SDR Leaders Global

For years, we have argued from anecdotes. Now we have the numbers.

Welcome to our state of global sales development survey for 2026. Our goal is to make this the go-to guide for all sales development leaders, to guide you on all parts of the top-of-funnel engine.

Every SDR leader I know has sat in a budget meeting defending their team with gut feel and a few slides. This report changes that. 574 of you told us, globally, how you run the function, and the picture is clearer than any of us expected.

The data bears this out: the SDR function is growing. Over 50% of leaders have hired more SDRs than downsized over the last 12 months. Our teams hit plan more often than the sales teams they feed. And the things we argue about the most, reporting lines and manager spans, matter far less than the things we rarely measure: enablement, activity loads, coverage and when our people leave.

> One of my biggest takeaways was the promotion cliff. Most SDRs leave around the time they would be promoted. This is a design problem and a great opportunity for all of us to fix.

Use this report to benchmark against your peers and bring it into the room the next time your team's future is on the table.

Enjoy!

Dave Wilkins

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FROM OUR SPONSOR · FOREWORD

The Future of Sales Development Is Human, Powered by AI

Jane Serra, Chief Marketing Officer, memoryBlue

For years, we've heard predictions about the death of the SDR. First, digital channels were going to replace cold calling. More recently, AI was going to replace SDRs altogether.

Yet, the findings from the 2026 State of Sales Development report tell a very different story.

Not only is the SDR function alive and well, it's growing. More than half (53%) of organisations increased their SDR headcount over the past year, and SDR teams continue to play a critical role in generating pipeline and driving revenue.

What I find particularly interesting is what the data tells us about the factors driving SDR performance, especially when it comes to AI adoption, enablement and the continued importance of human conversations.

With 78% of teams already incorporating AI into their workflows, it's clear that AI is no longer a nice-to-have. It's becoming an essential part of modern sales development. And the data suggests that teams using AI across more areas of their workflow are seeing stronger quota attainment.

> But here's the important distinction: **AI is proving its value as an enabler of SDR performance, not necessarily as a replacement for SDRs themselves.**

AI can help SDRs research accounts faster, identify buying signals, personalise outreach and spend less time on repetitive tasks. Ultimately, it gives them more time to focus on what they do best: engaging prospects, building relationships and creating meaningful sales conversations.

FROM OUR SPONSOR · FOREWORD

53%
grew SDR headcount

78%
use AI in their workflow

72%
say phone is the #1 channel

85%
attainment with enablement, vs 79%

And despite all the innovation in sales technology, one finding really stands out to me: **72% of SDR leaders still identify the phone as their number one channel for generating pipeline.**

In a world increasingly dominated by automated emails, AI-generated messages and digital noise, the human conversation remains incredibly powerful.

But technology and talent alone aren't enough. **The findings also reinforce something we strongly believe at memoryBlue: investing in SDR enablement is critical to building high-performing teams.**

Organisations with dedicated enablement functions report an average SDR quota attainment of 85%, compared with 79% for those without. Even after accounting for organisational differences, dedicated enablement is associated with higher SDR attainment, stronger sales team performance and longer SDR tenure.

That's a particularly important finding when you consider that higher activity expectations, on their own, show no measurable improvement in attainment and are associated with shorter tenure.

> In other words, **the answer isn't simply asking SDRs to do more. It's giving them the tools, training, coaching and support to do better.**

At memoryBlue, we see this first-hand through our work supporting technology companies around the world. We believe great SDR performance comes from combining the right technology with well-trained, continuously developed people who know how to turn prospecting activity into meaningful business conversations.

And that's where I believe the future of sales development lies: **AI to drive efficiency, enablement to develop capability, and human SDRs to create the conversations that generate pipeline.**

The organisations that get this balance right will be best positioned to build productive, sustainable sales development functions that deliver real revenue impact.

I hope this report provides valuable benchmarks, challenges a few assumptions and helps you think differently about how to build a more effective sales development function.

Jane Serra
Chief Marketing Officer, memoryBlue

WITH THANKS

Built by 574 SDR leaders, for SDR leaders.

This benchmark exists because sales development leaders across North America, EMEA, APAC and the UK gave their time between August 26 and September 20, 2026. Thank you to every one of you, and to the chapters and partners who carried the survey to their communities.

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This edition of The State of Sales Development is sponsored by **memoryBlue**. Thank you for backing independent benchmark data for the SDR community.

OUR CHAPTERS

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SDR Leaders of APAC

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01

SECTION 01

Executive Summary

Ten findings from 574 SDR leaders across four regions.

574 sales development leaders benchmarked across North America, EMEA, APAC and the UK

SECTION 01 · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SDR function is growing, and it delivers more reliably than the sales teams it feeds.

The State of Sales Development 2026 benchmarks 574 sales development leaders across North America, EMEA, APAC and the UK, surveyed between August 26 and September 20, 2026.

The headline: the SDR function is growing, it delivers more reliably than the sales teams it feeds, and budget and org charts explain little of its performance. What does show up in the data is how the function is run: enablement, activity load, coverage and work environment. These matter most for how long SDRs stay, and that matters because most SDRs leave at about the point they would be promoted.

+30

Net SDR headcount growth

53% grew, 25% held steady, 23% cut. Positive in every region.

82% vs 76.5%

SDR vs AE attainment

SDR teams hit plan more often than the sales teams they feed.

0.18

Investment vs performance

The correlation on the SDR Maturity Quadrant. Money explains little.

4 in 5

The promotion cliff

Organizations where average SDR tenure ends at or before the promotion point.

+4.6

Points of SDR attainment

Associated with a dedicated enablement function, with controls.

78%

List AI in their toolkit

Only 16% use AI SDR agents, and 59% never have.

SECTION 01 · KEY FINDINGS

1 The SDR function is growing, not shrinking

- 53% of organizations grew SDR headcount in the past year, 25% held steady and 23% cut, a net +30. Net growth is positive in every region: North America +35, APAC +24, EMEA +22, UK +21.
- Growth is strongest in smaller companies (net +43 under $10M revenue) and weakest at $1B+ (+16, where 28% cut).
- Expansion drives hiring. Among organizations entering a new vertical or geography, 62% grew SDR headcount, against 37% of those that didn't. When the SDR team was brought into an expansion, it supported it 95% of the time.
- Senior leaders are more cautious. Net growth is +39 among Managers, +20 among Directors and +7 among Senior Directors/VPs.

2 Cuts coincide with sales misses, not SDR misses

SDR attainment averaged 81% whether a team grew or was cut. AE attainment averaged 72% where SDR headcount was cut, against 77–79% where it held or grew. The pattern suggests SDR teams absorb cuts for misses further down the funnel. The survey did not ask why cuts were made.

SDR ATTAINMENT
81% grew or cut

AE ATTAINMENT
72% where cut, vs 77–79%

3 Investment buys less performance than you'd expect

On the SDR Maturity Quadrant (region-adjusted, n=477), investment and performance correlate at just 0.18.

- **Overachievers (22%)** match Leaders (28%) on attainment, pipeline share and tenure with fewer investments and half the median team size.
- **Underconverters (23%)** invest as heavily as Leaders but trail by about 10 points of attainment, 21 points of pipeline share and 7.5 months of tenure. The only structural difference we found is leadership: 73% of Leaders have a Global Head of SDR, against 59% of Underconverters (p=.02)†. That comparison is not size-controlled, so we treat it as a hypothesis.
- **Developing organizations (27%)** sit below the sample median on both axes and cluster in early-stage companies.

SECTION 01 · KEY FINDINGS

4 Most structural debates matter less than they seem

Reporting line (68% Sales, 27% Marketing), management span (most often 7–9), primary channel (phone 72%) and qualification framework show no measurable link to SDR attainment. A Global Head of SDR is not associated with higher attainment once company size is controlled. It is associated with a higher internal rating of the function's value (+0.5 on a 10-point scale, p=.02†).

5 Coverage drives pipeline; work design drives retention

- Each doubling of AEs per SDR is associated with a 6-point drop in SDR-sourced pipeline share (p<.001).
- Remote teams report the longest tenure: 2.7 months longer than hybrid (p=.001). Office-based teams report 2.1 months less than hybrid†. There is no attainment difference. The finding is correlational.
- Outbound-only teams (−2.4 months†) and hub-city teams (−2.2 months) also report shorter tenure, with no attainment penalty.

6 One job, four operating models

North America runs SDR as a high-volume growth engine: the fastest growth (+35), the highest activity expectations (median 100 a day), the lowest enablement coverage (48%), and the lowest attainment (79%) and tenure (18.7 months). The attainment gap persists after controls, and APAC sales teams also out-attain North American ones. That is consistent with more demanding quota-setting in North America, though the survey did not ask how quotas are set. **Benchmark against your region.** EMEA keeps SDRs longest (22.1 months), largely through fewer activities and more enablement. APAC's high attainment (91%) largely reflects large regional hubs of US companies.

7 SDR teams hit plan more often than sales teams

Average SDR attainment is 82%, against 76.5% for AEs. 62% of leaders report SDR attainment of 80% or more, against 47% for their sales team. 36% of sales teams average below 70%, against 21% of SDR teams, and AEs out-attain their SDR team in only 23% of organizations. The average SDR team sources about half of company pipeline.

SECTION 01 · KEY FINDINGS

8 The promotion cliff

The median SDR's tenure (18–24 months) falls in the same band as the median time to promotion. In 33% of organizations, average tenure ends before the promotion point. In 47% it ends at about the same point, and only about 20% keep SDRs past it. This compares two team-level banded estimates; it is not individual career data.

9 Enablement and SKOs move the needle; activity volume doesn't

- With controls, a dedicated enablement function is the only investment associated with SDR attainment, AE attainment and tenure together: +4.6 points SDR attainment ($p<.01$), +5.0 points AE attainment and +2.2 months tenure. SKOs/offsites show the largest single attainment association (+6.9 points, $p<.001$). President's Club and development budgets mostly track company size.
- Most of the attainment lift comes from having any of the four investments rather than all of them (Figure 10.1).
- Higher activity expectations (median 90/day) show no attainment gain and are associated with shorter tenure (about −1 month per doubling, $p=.015^{\dagger}$).

10 AI is standard equipment; AI SDRs are still a test

78% of SDR teams list AI in their toolkit. Each additional AI use case is associated with 1.45 points higher SDR attainment ($p=.001$). Only 16% use AI SDR agents (3% as a partial replacement for people), and 59% never have. Of the 14 organizations using them as a partial replacement for people, half cut headcount. That group is too small to generalize from.

COMPENSATION

Typical SDR base is about $57k worldwide (USD-converted); North America (~$60k) sits about 15% above EMEA (~$52.5k) and the UK (~$52.7k). Figures are converted at fieldwork-average exchange rates and not adjusted for cost of living; Section 8 also reports each region in its own currency. SDR leader compensation is withheld from this edition because the question did not pass validation (Appendix B5).

SECTION 01 · ABOUT THE DATA

How to read every number in this report.

Self-reported and correlational

All findings are self-reported and correlational. Bases vary by question (roughly 337–574).

Local currency, then USD

Compensation is reported in each region's local currency in the regional tables (EMEA assumed EUR, UK assumed GBP); the global view is USD-converted at fieldwork-average exchange rates and is not adjusted for cost of living.

Where the sample leans

The sample leans toward North America (55%) and companies with $100M+ revenue (52%).

Exploratory results

Results with p between .01 and .05 are exploratory (†). Full methodology is in Section 2 and Appendix B.

574
analytic sample

477
completed in full

55%
North America

52%
at $100M+ revenue

02

SECTION 02

Methodology & Respondent Profile

Who answered, and how to read the numbers

583 responses collected, cleaned to an analytic sample of 574

SECTION 02 · METHODOLOGY

Who answered, and how to read the numbers

The survey was fielded between August 26 and September 20, 2026, and collected 583 responses from sales development leaders worldwide. After cleaning, the analytic sample is 574 respondents: 6 duplicate partial submissions were removed, 2 repeat completions by the same person were removed (where chapter events used a shared device, completions by distinct respondents were kept), and the survey organizer's own response was excluded. Of the 574, 477 completed the full survey and 97 submitted partial responses. Partial responses are included for every question they answered. Each chart in this report therefore shows its own base size, which ranges from roughly 337 to 574 depending on where a question sat in the survey. Several questions were added a week into fielding and carry the smaller base.

RESPONDENTS BY REGION



LATAM 3 (included in global totals, not reported as a standalone region)

WHO RESPONDED

DIMENSION	PROFILE
Region	North America 55%, EMEA 23%, APAC 15%, UK 7%, LATAM <1%
Company HQ	North America 71%, EMEA 23%, APAC 6%
Company revenue	<$10M 17%, $10–100M 31%, $100M–$1B 33%, $1B+ 19%
SDR team size	Median 16 SDRs; 20% run teams of 1–5, 19% run 51+
Respondent title	Manager 34%, Senior Manager 20%, Director 28%, Senior Director/VP 13%, Team Lead 5%
Location	74% based in a capital city or major business hub

The sample is weighted toward mid-market and enterprise companies: 52% have revenue of $100M or more. It is also weighted toward North America. Global figures in this report should be read with that in mind. Where regional differences matter, they are reported separately in Section 12. About 30% of respondents chose "Other" for industry, so this edition does not report results by industry.

SECTION 02 · VALIDATION

Validating self-reported company data

For the 241 respondents who gave a work email address, company revenue was cross-checked against a commercial firmographic database (Apollo.io). Of the 207 responses where both figures were available, 71% fell in the same revenue band and 98% were within one band. Where the two disagreed, respondents more often reported a higher band than the database, which is consistent with the database underestimating the revenue of private, venture-backed companies.

71%
in the same revenue band

98%
within one band (n=207)

HOW TO READ THE DATA

Most questions used banded responses, such as quota attainment of 80–89%. For averages and comparisons, each band is coded at its midpoint. Compensation questions were banded and asked in local currency: dollar-labelled options for North America, APAC and LATAM (treated as US dollars) and unlabelled options for EMEA and the UK (assumed to be euros and pounds sterling; the instrument did not name a currency). Section 8's regional tables report each region in its own local currency; the global view is USD-converted at fieldwork-average exchange rates (Appendix B4). SDR leader compensation is withheld from this edition because the question did not pass validation (Appendix B5). LATAM responses (n=3) are included in global totals but are not reported as a standalone region. All findings are self-reported and correlational. Where the report says a practice is "associated with" an outcome, it has been tested with statistical controls for company size, region and reporting line, but association is not causation.

STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Comparisons are reported with p-values from models that control for the variables noted in each case. Because the report tests many relationships, some results near the conventional p<.05 threshold will be chance findings. p-values have not been adjusted for multiple comparisons.

p < .01
Treated as robust

.01 – .05 †
Exploratory, marked † in the text

03

SECTION 03

Market Outlook: Is the SDR Function Growing?

Headcount, expansion and what drives cuts

+30 net SDR headcount growth over the past year, positive in every region

SECTION 03 · MARKET OUTLOOK

The SDR function is growing, not shrinking.

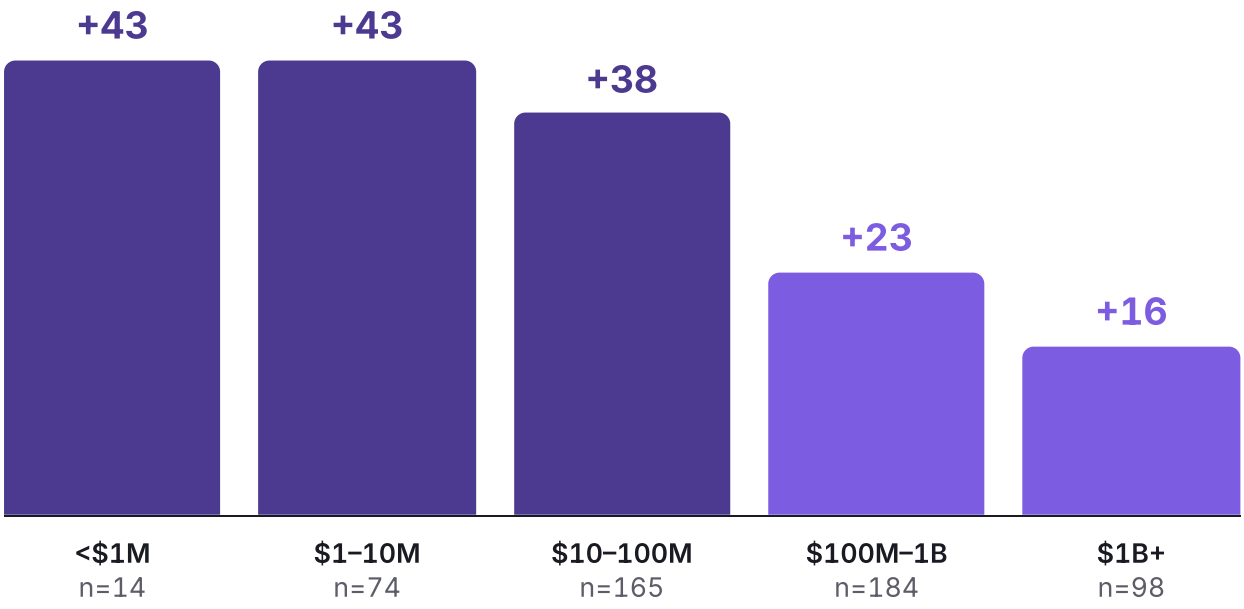
Despite years of commentary predicting the death of the SDR role, 53% of organizations increased SDR headcount over the past year. 25% held steady and 23% cut. That is a net of +30 points in favor of growth. Growth is positive in every region: North America leads at +35, followed by APAC at +24, EMEA at +22 and the UK at +21.



Growth is concentrated in smaller companies. Net growth falls steadily as company revenue rises, from +43 among companies under $10M to +16 among those above $1B. Companies under $100M are building SDR capacity. Enterprises above $1B are still growing on balance, but 28% of them cut headcount, the highest rate of any revenue band. One likely explanation is maturity: younger companies are building their outbound engine, while enterprises are rebalancing existing teams.

FIGURE 3.1

Net SDR headcount growth by company revenue



Net SDR headcount growth over the past year, by company revenue (n=535). Net growth = share that grew minus share that cut.

SECTION 03 · EXPANSION AND CUTS

Expansion is a major growth driver.

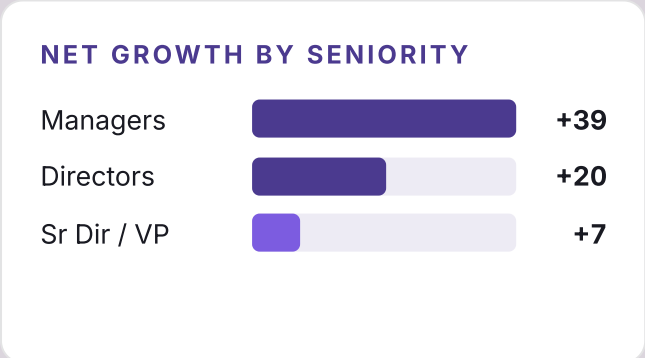
Half of organizations (51%) entered a new vertical or geography in the past year (n=337; question added during fielding). Among those that expanded, 62% grew SDR headcount, compared with 37% of those that didn't. When the SDR org was brought into that expansion, it supported it 95% of the time. SDR teams are often how companies test and open new markets.

62%
of expanding organizations grew SDR headcount

37%
of those that didn't expand

95%
supported the expansion when brought in

Headcount cuts coincide with sales underperformance, not SDR underperformance. SDR attainment is essentially the same whether a team grew or shrank (81% in both cases). What differs is the sales team. Where SDR headcount was cut, AE attainment averaged 72%. Where it held steady or grew, AE attainment averaged 77–79%. The pattern is consistent with SDR teams being cut when revenue downstream misses, even where the SDR team itself delivered.



The more senior the respondent, the less optimistic the growth picture. Managers report net growth of +39, Directors +20 and Senior Directors +7. Senior leaders see the whole organization, while front-line managers see their own team. For readers, the senior-leader view is likely the more accurate reading of company-wide trends.

GROWTH AMONG AI SDR ADOPTERS (EARLY SIGNAL)

Of the 14 organizations using AI SDRs as a partial replacement for people, half reduced headcount. Among organizations that use AI SDRs in addition to their team, 50% grew. The replacement group is too small to generalize from, but it is the first data point on this question, and it is worth tracking in a quarterly pulse survey (see Section 9).

04

SECTION 04

The SDR Maturity Quadrant

Does investment buy performance?

0.18 the correlation between investment and performance across 477 organizations

SECTION 04 · THE SDR MATURITY QUADRANT

Does investment buy performance?

Every SDR leader is asked to do more with the budget they have. This section places each organization on two axes to show how much investment in the SDR function actually translates into results.

INVESTMENT

Four forms of support (a dedicated enablement function, a professional development budget, SKO or offsite events, and President's Club eligibility) with the number of ways the team uses AI.

PERFORMANCE

SDR quota attainment, the share of company pipeline the SDR team sources, and average SDR tenure, scored against each organization's regional average.

Performance is scored against each organization's regional average, because North American teams report systematically lower attainment than other regions for reasons that may reflect quota-setting rather than capability (see Section 12). Each axis is split at its median, producing four groups.

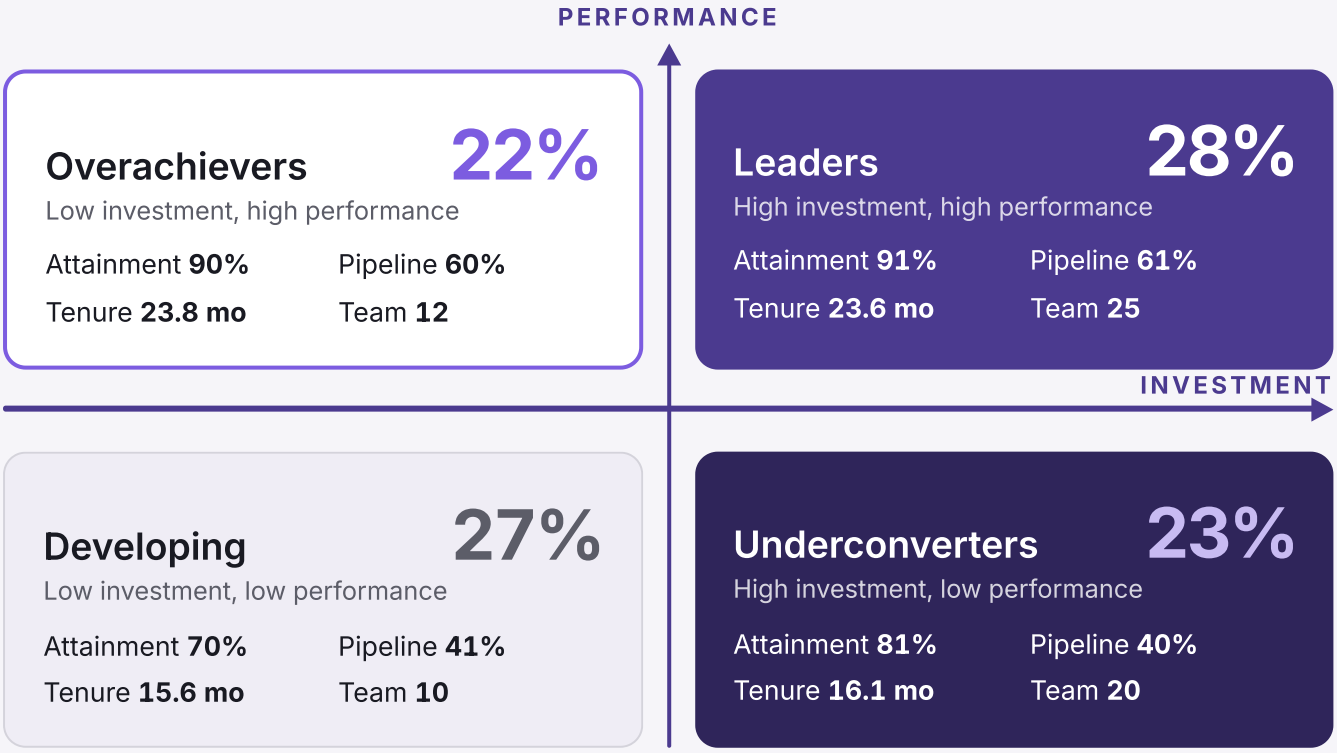


Figure 4.1. 477 organizations that completed the survey, split at the median on each axis. Attainment, pipeline share and tenure are group averages; team size is the median number of SDRs. Scores are relative to this sample and each region's average; quadrant membership indicates position relative to peers, not an absolute standard.

SECTION 04 · WHAT THE QUADRANT SHOWS

0.18
investment vs performance

Money explains little of performance.

Investment and performance correlate at just 0.18. Funding helps, but most of the variation in how SDR teams perform comes from something else.

Overachievers show what lean teams can do. They match Leaders on every outcome with fewer investments and half the team size. Small teams with little infrastructure can perform with the best-funded functions in the market.

Underconverters are the warning. They invest as heavily as Leaders, and their sales teams hit the same attainment (80%). Their SDR teams trail by about 10 points of attainment, 21 points of pipeline share and 7.5 months of tenure. We compared Underconverters and Leaders on every structural choice the survey captured: activity expectations, SDR:AE coverage, what quota is measured on, work environment, outbound-only versus blended teams, reporting line, hub location, company size and ramp time. None differ significantly. The one difference we found is leadership: 73% of Leaders have a Global Head of SDR, against 59% of Underconverters (p=.02)†. This comparison is not controlled for company size, and Section 11 shows that the raw attainment advantage of having a global head disappears once size is controlled. We read it as a hypothesis about how the function is led, not a finding that a global head causes performance. Funding and structure, as measured here, do not separate the best SDR functions from the rest.

−10 pts	−21 pts	−7.5 mo
SDR attainment	pipeline share	tenure vs Leaders

Developing organizations cluster in early-stage companies. 51% of companies with $1–10M in revenue fall in this group, most likely teams that have not yet built the infrastructure around their SDRs.

HOW TO READ THE QUADRANT

Because each axis is split at the median, half of all organizations always fall below the line on each axis. A Developing organization is below the median of this sample, not failing by an absolute standard. Two of the investment inputs, a professional development budget and President's Club eligibility, mostly track company size (Section 10), so part of the investment axis measures size. This is one reason investment and performance correlate weakly.

05

SECTION 05

Organizational Design

Which structural choices matter, and which don't

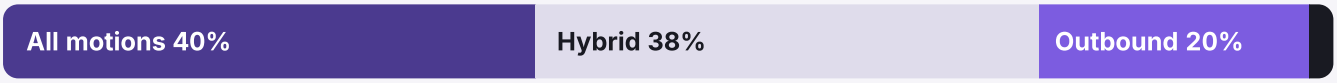
+2.7 months longer tenure on remote teams than hybrid (p=.001)

SECTION 05 · ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

Fewer structural choices matter than the debate suggests.

Most SDR leaders don't design their organization from scratch. They inherit a reporting line, a coverage ratio and a management span, and then optimize within those constraints. This section asks which of those structural choices actually matter. The short answer is fewer than the debate suggests. Where a team reports, how many managers it has and which qualification framework it uses show no measurable link to SDR performance. Two choices do show up in the data. The first is whether the team runs outbound only; the second is whether SDRs work remotely, in hybrid arrangements or in the office. Both affect how long SDRs stay rather than how well they perform.

TEAM STRUCTURE



Structure: most teams do both inbound and outbound. Only 20% of organizations run a pure outbound team, and fewer than 2% are inbound-only. The large majority blend the two, either by covering all motions (40%) or by running a hybrid team (38%). Pure outbound teams are not less productive. Their SDR attainment is statistically indistinguishable from blended teams once size and region are controlled. They do lose people faster. Average SDR tenure on outbound-only teams is 2.4 months shorter (p=.013)†, which is consistent with outbound being the more grinding role. Their sales teams also report higher attainment (+4.3 points, p=.047)†, possibly because outbound-only teams feed a more deliberately targeted pipeline. That second finding deserves further testing before anyone builds strategy on it.

REPORTING LINE

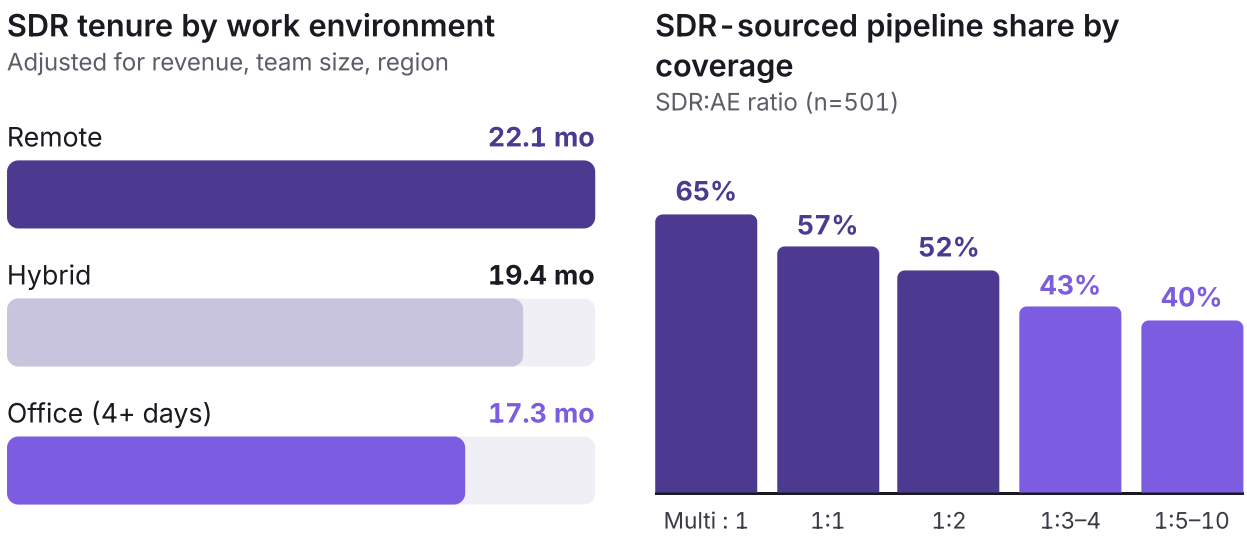


Reporting line: Sales owns SDR, and it makes little difference. Two-thirds of SDR teams (68%) report into Sales, 27% into Marketing and 5% elsewhere, usually RevOps, a CRO directly, or a standalone GTM function. The Sales-versus-Marketing question is one of the most argued-over in the function. The data suggest it matters less than the argument implies. SDR attainment, pipeline share, tenure and the perceived value of the SDR function are all statistically the same whether the team reports to Sales or Marketing. The one exception is sales-team attainment, which runs 4 points lower where SDR reports to Marketing (p=.03)†. This is an exploratory result and should be treated with caution. One plausible reading is that marketing-owned SDR teams are measured on volume while the handoff to AEs gets less attention. The survey cannot confirm this. Marketing ownership is most common in EMEA (34%) and least common in the UK (20%).

SECTION 05 · LEADERSHIP AND COVERAGE

Global leadership: it raises the function's standing more than its numbers. 61% of respondents either report to a Global Head of SDR or are one. With size controlled, having a global head is not associated with higher SDR attainment (about +2 points, not significant). It is associated with how the business views the function: organizations with a global SDR leader rate their SDR team's value 0.5 points higher on a 10-point scale (p=.02)†. A dedicated global leader appears to buy the function a seat at the table rather than a better quota number. That still matters. Section 3 found that SDR cuts tend to coincide with weaker sales-team performance, and a function with executive standing is better placed to argue against those cuts.

FIGURE 5.1



Left: average SDR tenure by work environment, adjusted for company revenue, SDR team size and region. Right: average share of company pipeline sourced by the SDR team, by SDR:AE coverage (n=501; the 12 organizations with 1:11+ coverage are excluded because of the small base).

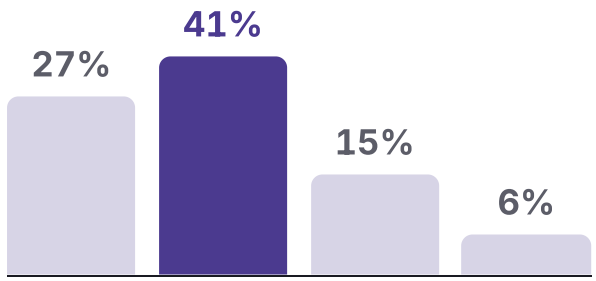
Coverage ratios: more AEs per SDR means less pipeline from SDRs, as expected. The most common coverage model is one SDR supporting three to four AEs (28%), followed by one SDR per two AEs (26%) and one-to-one pairing (19%). About one in nine organizations (11%) put multiple SDRs behind each AE. Coverage ratio has no effect on SDR attainment, but it strongly shapes how much of the pipeline the SDR team produces. Each doubling of AEs per SDR is associated with a 6-point drop in SDR-sourced pipeline share (p<.001). Pipeline share ranges from 65% where multiple SDRs support each AE to 40% at one SDR per five to ten AEs. This is largely a matter of arithmetic, but it has a strategic consequence: leaders who accept thin coverage are, in effect, accepting a smaller claim on the pipeline.

SECTION 05 · ALIGNMENT, SPAN AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

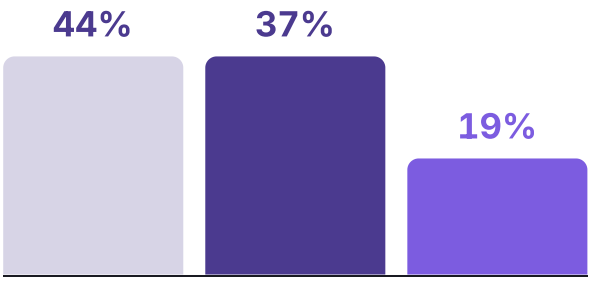
Alignment: most SDRs are tied to AEs. 70% of organizations align SDRs to specific AEs. 24% use round-robin routing, 22% align SDRs to named accounts, and 8% align to verticals or campaigns. 4% route SDR-sourced meetings to partners or resellers. Many organizations combine models, so these figures sum to more than 100%.

Management span: the ratio clusters around eight, and it doesn't predict results. The most common SDR-to-manager ratio is 7–9 (41%), followed by 4–6 (27%). Only 6% of managers run teams of 13 or more. We expected span of control to affect ramp success, tenure or attainment, and we tested for both straight-line and diminishing-returns relationships. None appeared. Above the manager level, 63% of directors oversee one to three managers. The frequent debate over whether 8 or 10 SDRs per manager is right is not where performance is won or lost.

SDRs per front-line manager
Share of organizations



Where SDR teams work
Share of teams · adjusted average tenure



No span in the observed range predicts ramp, tenure or attainment. Tenure figures are adjusted for company revenue, SDR team size and region (Figure 5.1).

Work environment: remote teams report the longest SDR tenure. 44% of SDR teams work hybrid, 37% remote and 19% in the office four or more days a week. Remote work is most common in small teams: 47% of teams with 1–5 SDRs are remote, against 11% of teams with more than 150. Attainment does not differ by work environment. Tenure does. After controlling for company size, revenue, region and team size, remote SDRs stay 2.7 months longer than hybrid SDRs (p=.001). Office-based SDRs leave 2.1 months sooner than hybrid SDRs (p=.04)†. The pattern holds within North America alone. The gap between remote and full-office teams is nearly five months, against an average tenure of about 20 months. Among hybrid teams, 59% mandate specific office days, most often three per week (37%). The number of mandated days showed no consistent relationship with tenure, though the subgroups are small.

SECTION 05 · OUTSOURCED SDRS

Outsourcing adds capacity, not performance.

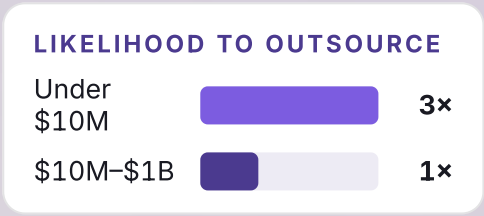
Only about 1 in 10 SDR orgs (11%) use outsourced SDRs, and they're mostly smaller companies: those under $10M in revenue are about three times as likely to outsource. Teams that use it hit the same attainment (median 84.5%), source the same share of pipeline and run at the same activity levels as teams that don't, which suggests it's mainly a way to add capacity rather than lift performance.

11%
of SDR orgs use outsourced SDRs

3×
as likely to outsource under $10M revenue

84.5%
median attainment, same as in-house

Who outsources. The one clear marker is company size. Companies under $10M are about 3× as likely to outsource as those between $10M and $1B.



LEADS TO EXPLORE FURTHER

	OUTSOURCERS	EVERYONE ELSE
Using or evaluating AI SDRs	**60%**	39%
Report into Sales	**58%**	70%
Have LinkedIn Sales Navigator	**78%**	90%
Ramp time	**1.5 months**	2.5 months

+3 mo
in-house SDR tenure at companies that outsource

Tenure: a hypothesis. In-house SDRs at companies that outsource stay longer, by about 3 months after controls. That held up in most of our checks, but it comes almost entirely from EMEA (14 users), so treat it as a hypothesis.

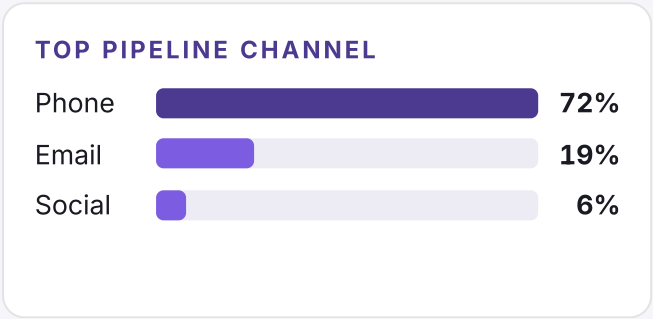
NO DIFFERENCE

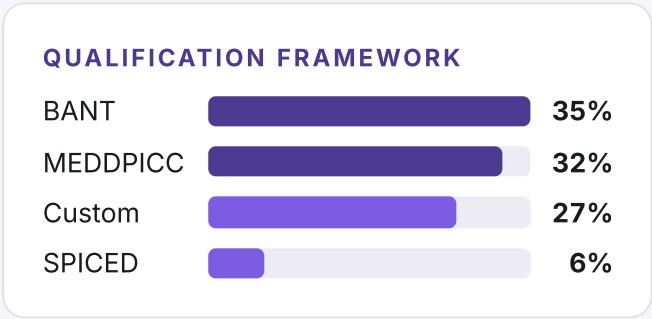
Attainment (SDR or AE) · Pipeline share · Activity · Headcount growth · Enablement · Pay · Leadership structure

SECTION 05 · CHANNEL AND QUALIFICATION

Phone still dominates.

72% of leaders say the phone generates the most pipeline. Email is next at 19%, and social trails at 6%. On qualification, BANT (35%) narrowly leads MEDDPICC (32%), with SPICED at 6% and 27% using a custom or other framework. Neither primary channel nor qualification framework is associated with a difference in SDR attainment. Outsourced SDRs remain niche: 11% of organizations use them.





This runs against the widely held view that SDRs, as early-career employees, need an office floor to develop and stay engaged. The data cannot rule out that remote-first companies differ in ways we did not measure, such as culture, pay or hiring profile, and they say nothing about whether remote SDRs develop the skills needed for promotion. **What they do show is that requiring office attendance is not associated with keeping SDRs longer, and may be associated with the opposite.**

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

- → **Stop re-litigating the reporting line.** Whether SDR reports to Sales or Marketing has no measurable effect on SDR performance. If you report to Marketing, it is worth watching the AE handoff closely; the data hints at a gap there, but the finding is tentative.
- → **If you're outbound-only, plan for turnover.** Build hiring pipelines and ramp programs that assume SDRs will leave about 2.4 months sooner than on blended teams.
- → **Guard your coverage ratio.** Thin coverage shrinks the SDR team's share of pipeline.
- → **Before mandating office days, weigh the possible retention cost.** In this survey, remote teams report the longest SDR tenure and office-based teams the shortest, with no attainment difference to offset it.
- → **A global SDR leader earns internal standing.** Make the case for the role on influence and headcount protection, not on quota attainment.

06

SECTION 06

The Talent Lifecycle

SDRs are leaving at the moment they become promotable

19.8 months average SDR tenure, against 20.9 months average time to promotion

SECTION 06 · THE TALENT LIFECYCLE

Every SDR leader runs the same cycle: hire, ramp, develop, promote or lose. The industry usually frames the problem as attrition. This year's data points to a more specific problem: timing. In the typical organization, SDRs leave at about the point they would be promoted.

HIRING

Experience is optional

37% want six months or less (7% none at all), 31% want 7–12 months and 27% want 12–24 months. Only 5% look for more than two years (n=535).

RAMP

About a quarter

2–3 months is most common (44%), then 1–2 months (27%). 15% take more than three months and 14% under a month. 58% say 75–100% of new SDRs ramp successfully, and another 32% say 50–75%. Only one in ten sees fewer than half ramp (n=535).

TENURE

About 20 months

Average SDR tenure is 19.8 months. The most common band is 12–18 months (36%), then 18–24 months (30%). One in five (21%) keeps SDRs two years or more, and 14% see under a year.

The promotion cliff.

We asked leaders for both the average tenure of their SDRs and the typical time to promotion. The two answers track each other (correlation 0.47), and the median of each falls in the same band: 18–24 months. Average time to promotion (20.9 months) is slightly longer than average tenure (19.8 months). Comparing the two answers within each organization (n=535):

33%

Average SDR tenure ends **before** the typical promotion point.

47%

Tenure and time-to-promotion fall in the **same band**. SDRs leave at about the moment they become eligible.

20%

Keep the average SDR **beyond** the promotion point.

SECTION 06 · RETENTION

For roughly four in five organizations, the average SDR's tenure runs out at or before the promotion milestone. The career path many teams use to recruit SDRs is, for the typical SDR, a path they leave before completing.

Promotion volume is modest. 63% of organizations promoted one to three SDRs in the past 12 months. 21% promoted four to six, and 16% promoted seven or more (n=535).

What is associated with SDRs staying longer

Several factors in this report show a consistent relationship with tenure, while most show none with attainment:

FACTOR	TENURE	SOURCE	STRENGTH
Dedicated enablement function	**+2.2 months**	Section 10	p<.01
Remote vs. hybrid	**+2.7 months**	Section 5	p=.001
Office 4+ days vs. hybrid	**−2.1 months**	Section 5	p=.04†
Outbound-only vs. blended team	**−2.4 months**	Section 5	p=.013†
Hub city vs. non-hub	**−2.2 months**	Section 12	p=.009
Each doubling of daily activity expectation	**about −1 month**	Section 10	p=.015†

Controlled for company size and region (see each source section for the full control set). Correlational; leader-reported average tenure.

Against an average tenure of about 20 months and a promotion point of 18–24 months, effects of two to three months are large. They can decide whether the typical SDR reaches the promotion point or leaves before it. Most of these factors are choices a leader makes: whether to fund enablement, how many activities to require, whether to mandate office days. Section 12 found that about half of EMEA's tenure advantage over North America is accounted for by lower activity expectations and more enablement.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

- → **Line up promotion timelines with real tenure.** If your SDRs stay 18–24 months and promotion takes 18–24 months, the path is too long for the typical hire. Shorten it, add an intermediate step (senior SDR, pod lead), or make the criteria visible from day one.
- → **Track how many SDRs reach promotion eligibility before they leave,** not only attrition.
- → **Use enablement and activity load as retention tools.** They are among the few tenure factors a leader controls directly (Section 10).
- → **If your structure shortens tenure (outbound-only, hub city, office-based), shorten the promotion path to match.**

07

SECTION 07

Performance & Productivity

SDR teams hit their numbers more often than the sales teams they feed

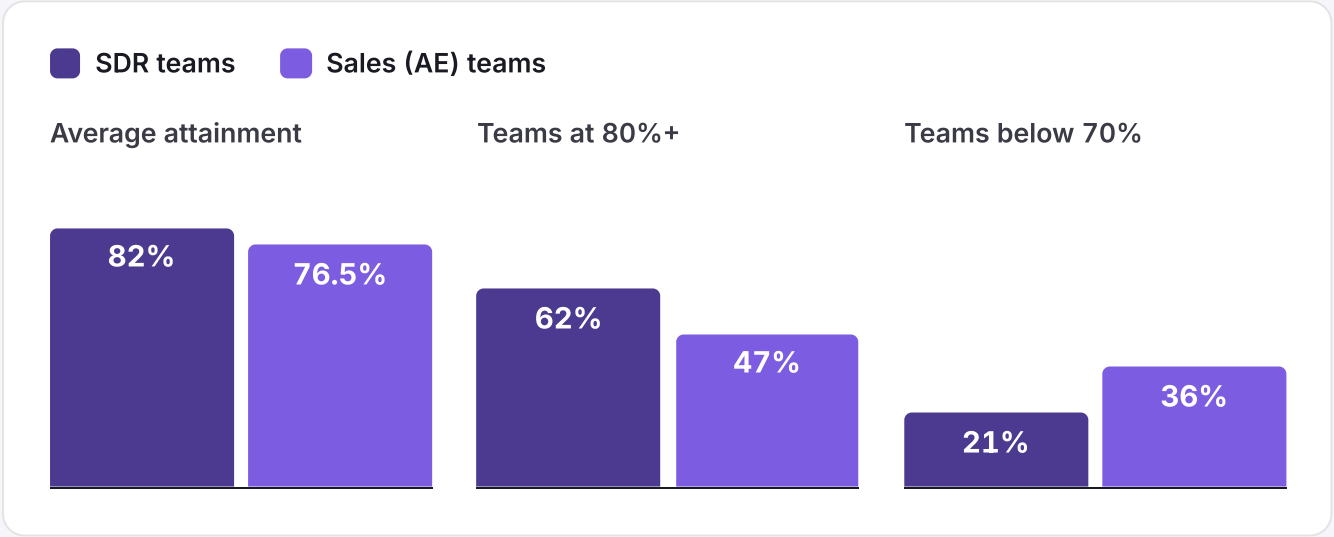
23% of organizations where the AE team out-attains the SDR team

SECTION 07 · PERFORMANCE

SDR attainment averages 82%.

Across organizations, average SDR quota attainment is 82.1% (n=512). One in six teams (16%) averages above 100%. The most common band is 80–89% (25%), and 12% average below 60%.

SDR teams are more likely to hit plan than sales teams. 62% of leaders report average SDR attainment of 80% or more, against 47% for their sales team. Average AE attainment is 76.5%, more than five points below SDR attainment. 36% of sales teams average below 70%, against 21% of SDR teams. Within the same organization, the AE team out-attains the SDR team in only 23% of cases.



This matters for how the function is judged. Section 3 found that SDR headcount cuts coincide with weaker AE attainment, not weaker SDR attainment (SDR 81% where cut and where grown; AE 72% where cut against 77% where grown). The attainment data is consistent with that: in most organizations, the SDR team is not where the number is being missed.

READ ATTAINMENT AGAINST YOUR REGION

79%	84%	91%	82%
North America	EMEA	APAC	UK

Average SDR attainment by region (Section 12). The North America gap persists after controls.

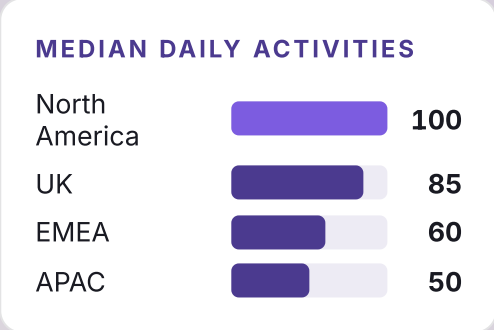
SECTION 07 · PIPELINE AND ACTIVITY

50%
of company pipeline sourced by the average SDR team

Pipeline: SDR teams source about half. The average SDR team sources 50% of company pipeline (n=512). The spread is wide: 19% source less than 30%, and 12% source 80% or more. Coverage drives much of it. Pipeline share falls from 65% where multiple SDRs support each AE to 40% at one SDR per five to ten AEs, about 6 points per doubling of AEs per SDR (p<.001; Section 5).

How the business values the function. Leaders rate how their business values the SDR function at an average of 7.45 out of 10 (median 8; n=337; question added during fielding). Organizations with a Global Head of SDR rate it higher (Sections 5 and 11).

Activity: more does not buy attainment. The median organization expects 90 activities per SDR per day (n=509; North America 100, UK 85, EMEA 60, APAC 50). Higher expectations show no association with attainment. They are associated with shorter tenure: about one month less per doubling (p=.015)†.



Sequences: about two to three weeks, about a dozen touches. The most common prospecting sequence has 9–12 touchpoints (37%), followed by 13–16 (27%) (n=511). The most common sequence length is 15–21 days (36%; n=469). Phone is the channel that generates the most pipeline for 72% of organizations, followed by email (19%) and social (6%) (n=488).

What doesn't predict performance. Section 5 found no attainment difference by reporting line, management span, qualification framework, primary channel or work environment. Coverage ratio shapes pipeline share but not attainment.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

- → **Report SDR and AE attainment side by side.** In more than three-quarters of organizations, the SDR team is level with or ahead of the AE team.
- → **Manage to pipeline share as well as attainment.** It is the clearest measure of the SDR team's contribution, and coverage decisions shape it (Section 5).
- → **Audit your activity target.** Above the regional median, it is more likely costing tenure than adding attainment.

08

SECTION 08

Compensation & Incentives

What SDRs are paid, region by region and worldwide

$57k global median SDR base, USD-converted at fieldwork-average exchange rates

SECTION 08 · COMPENSATION

SDR base salary by region, in local currency

How to read this section. Compensation questions were banded and asked in local currency: dollar-labelled options in North America, APAC and LATAM (treated as US dollars) and unlabelled options in EMEA and the UK (treated as euros and pounds sterling). Figures are the SDR leader's report of the average base salary of an SDR on their team. We show pay two ways. The regional tables are in local currency, which is the right benchmark for setting pay. The global view is USD-converted, which is useful for comparing markets but is not adjusted for cost of living. Medians and ranges are estimated from the bands. LATAM (n=3) is included in the global figure but not reported on its own. This edition reports SDR base salary only.

	North America USD	EMEA EUR	APAC USD	UK* GBP
Respondents	314	133	84	40
Median base	**$60,300**	**€45,300**	**$48,000†**	**£39,000**
Middle 50% of teams	$53,900 – $65,000+	€38,200 – €52,400	$22,700 – $61,100	£33,900 – £43,600
Share under 30,000 (local)	3%	5%	39%	8%
Share at 65,000+ (local)	28%	4%	17%	3%

*UK sample is small; treat as indicative. †APAC responses are bimodal; read the median with caution.

SECTION 08 · REGION BY REGION

NORTH AMERICA
$60,300

The top of the scale is cut off. The median North American SDR base is about $60,300. The highest option offered was "$65,000+", and 28% chose it, more than any other band. 71% of North American leaders report an average SDR base of $55,000 or more. Because the top band is open, we can't say how far above $65k the top of the market sits. We plan to raise the top band in the 2027 survey.

EMEA AND UK
€45,300
£39,000

Tighter distributions. The middle half of EMEA teams pay between €38,200 and €52,400 (median €45,300). In the UK the middle half sits between £33,900 and £43,600 (median £39,000).

APAC
$48,000†

Read the median with caution. APAC responses are bimodal: they fall into two clusters, one well below and one well above the median, so the median describes relatively few teams. This fits Section 12's picture of APAC as a mix of well-resourced regional hubs of US companies (68% of APAC respondents work for US- or North America-headquartered firms) and local teams. That link has not been tested.

SDR base salary worldwide (USD-converted)

Converting every answer to US dollars at the average exchange rate during fieldwork gives a global median SDR base of about $57,000 (n=574). The middle half of teams pay between $48,700 and $64,100.

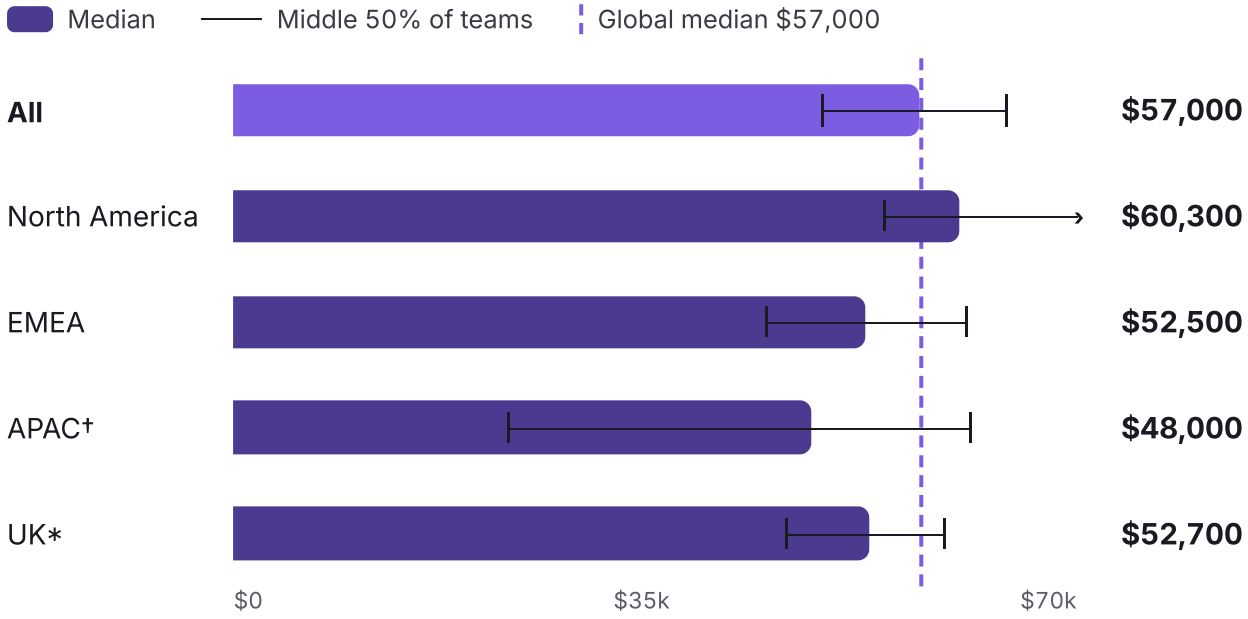
	RESPONDENTS	MEDIAN (USD)	MIDDLE 50% (USD)
All respondents	**574**	**$57,000**	**$48,700 – $64,100**
North America	314	**$60,300**	$53,900 – $65,000+
EMEA	133	**$52,500**	$44,200 – $60,800
APAC	84	**$48,000†**	$22,700 – $61,100
UK*	40	**$52,700**	$45,800 – $59,000

USD-converted at fieldwork-average exchange rates; not adjusted for cost of living or purchasing power. EUR converted at $1.1590 and GBP at $1.3511 (ECB averages, August 26–September 18, 2026; Appendix B4). *UK indicative. †APAC responses are bimodal; read the median with caution. The global figure includes LATAM (n=3).

SECTION 08 · THE GLOBAL VIEW

FIGURE 8.1

Average SDR base salary by region (USD-converted)



USD-converted at fieldwork-average exchange rates (not adjusted for cost of living or purchasing power). Bars show the median; whiskers show the middle 50% of teams; the dashed line is the global median ($57,000). The North American range reaches the open $65,000+ band. Final sample n=574.

In dollar terms, North American SDR base pay is about 15% higher than in EMEA ($52,500) and the UK ($52,700), which are effectively level with each other (Figure 8.1). The global median leans toward North America, which is 55% of respondents. Weighting the four regions equally would put it at about $54,400. Exchange rates matter less than you might expect: a 5% swing in the euro and sterling moves the global median by about ±$800 (Appendix B4).

How SDR pay is structured



70/30 is the standard. The most common base-to-variable split for SDR pay is 70/30 (57% of organizations), followed by 60/40 (22%) and 80/20 (15%). Only 4% run 50/50, and fully salaried or fully commissioned plans are rare (1% and under 1%) (n=477). 70/30 is the most common split in every region: 55% in North America, 66% in EMEA, 55% in APAC and 41% in the UK*, where 60/40 is close behind (35%). Regional differences in pay mix are not statistically significant.

SECTION 08 · INCENTIVES

President's Club

Once company size is controlled, President's Club eligibility for SDRs shows only a weak, non-significant association with SDR attainment. It mostly tracks company size (Section 10).

SDR leader compensation

Withheld from this edition. Validation showed many respondents appear to have reported their SDRs' on-target earnings rather than their own, so the figures can't be reported reliably. The 2027 survey will reword the question and add a currency selector (Appendix B5).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

Set pay against your own region and currency.

Use the USD-converted view to compare markets (for example, where to locate a team), not to set salaries.

In North America, watch the top band.

The useful benchmark is the share of peers at $65k+ (28%), not an average.

In APAC, pick your market first.

Decide which market you're competing in, hub or local, before benchmarking.

70/30 is the default.

Deviate deliberately.

57%
run a 70/30 split

28%
of North America at $65k+

$54.4k
global median, regions weighted equally

09

SECTION 09

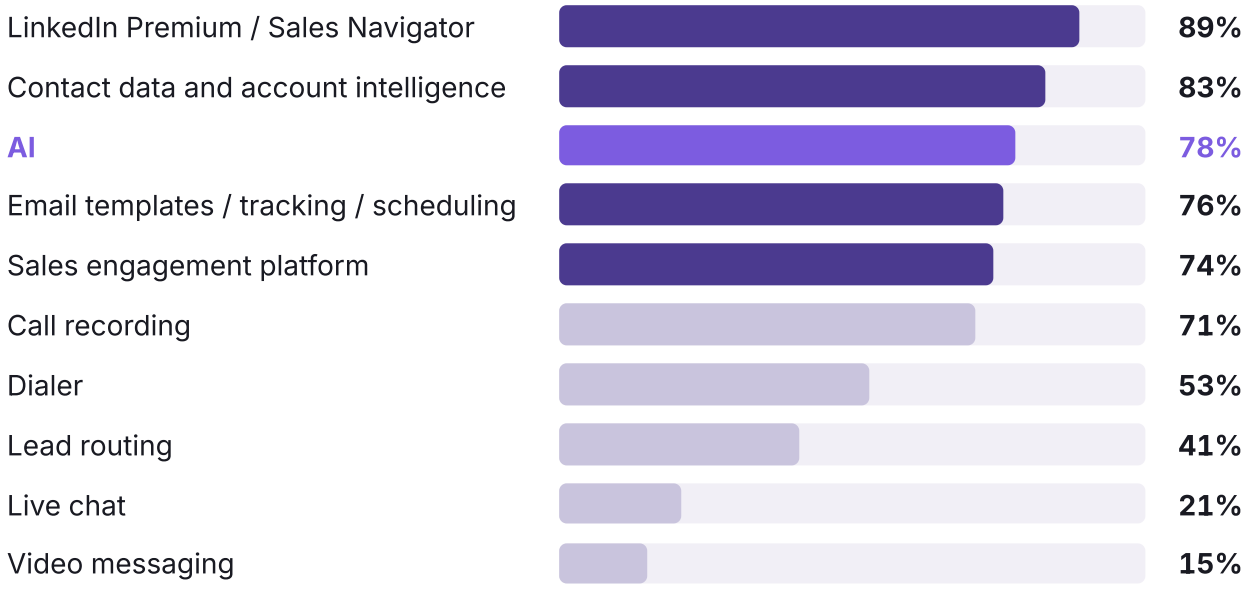
Technology, AI & the Automation Question

AI is now standard SDR equipment. AI SDRs are still mostly a test.

78% of organizations list AI as part of the SDR toolkit

SECTION 09 · TECHNOLOGY

The core stack: the typical SDR team runs on five tools.



Share of SDR teams using each tool (n=477).

AI is part of the standard toolkit. 78% of organizations list AI as part of the SDR toolkit. The survey also asked about seven specific uses of AI in the SDR workflow:

- Account and persona research
- Message creation
- Review of data
- Training and coaching
- List building
- ICP building
- Intent monitoring

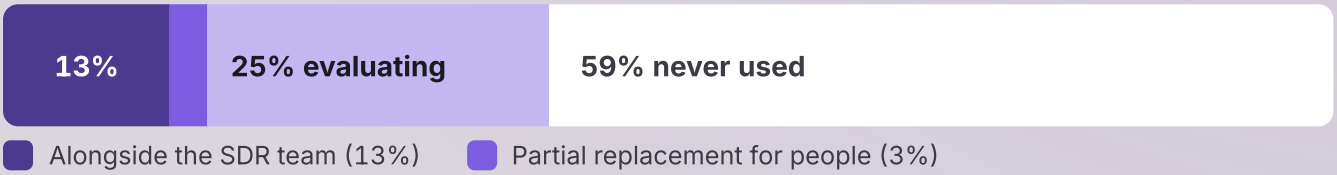
+1.45
points SDR attainment per AI use case

Breadth of use is associated with attainment. Each additional AI use case is associated with 1.45 points higher SDR attainment (p=.001). AI breadth may stand in for broader operational maturity, since teams that adopt AI widely may also be better run in ways the survey can't separate. Section 12 found that adding AI adoption to the regional model barely changes North America's attainment gap.

SECTION 09 · THE AUTOMATION QUESTION

AI SDR agents: mostly watching.

Autonomous AI SDR agents get far more attention than use. 16% of organizations use them: 13% alongside their SDR team and 3% as a partial replacement for people. Another 25% are evaluating them, and 59% have never used them (n=477). UK teams are the least likely to use them (6%, Section 12; small base).



Replacement is rare, and the early signal is mixed. Only 14 organizations use AI SDRs as a partial replacement for people, and half of them reduced SDR headcount (net −7). Among organizations using AI SDRs in addition to their team, 50% grew headcount (net +25). Organizations that have never used AI SDRs report the strongest net growth (+39).

−7
net growth, AI SDRs as partial replacement (n=14)

+25
net growth, AI SDRs in addition to the team

+39
net growth, never used AI SDRs

Outsourcing remains niche. 11% of organizations use outsourced SDRs (n=477).

Where AI does and doesn't show up. The phone is still the top pipeline channel for 72% of organizations (Section 5). AI's measured association with attainment comes from the breadth of everyday uses that support SDR work, not from replacing the conversation.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

- → **Go broad before going autonomous.** The attainment association is with the number of ways the team uses AI, not with AI SDR agents.
- → **Treat AI SDR agents as a pilot, not a headcount plan.** The replacement evidence is 14 organizations with mixed results.
- → **Don't expect AI to close a regional or quota-setting gap.**

10

SECTION 10

Investment & Enablement: What Actually Moves the Needle

Two investments stand out. Activity volume doesn't.

+6.9 points SDR attainment associated with SKOs and offsites, the largest single association

SECTION 10 · INVESTMENT AND ENABLEMENT

Section 4 showed that investment and performance correlate at only 0.18. Total spend explains little of how SDR teams perform, but not every investment is equally weak. This section looks at the four organizational investments one at a time, along with the most common operational lever, the daily activity expectation.

75% SKO or offsite events

63% Professional development budget

54% Dedicated enablement function

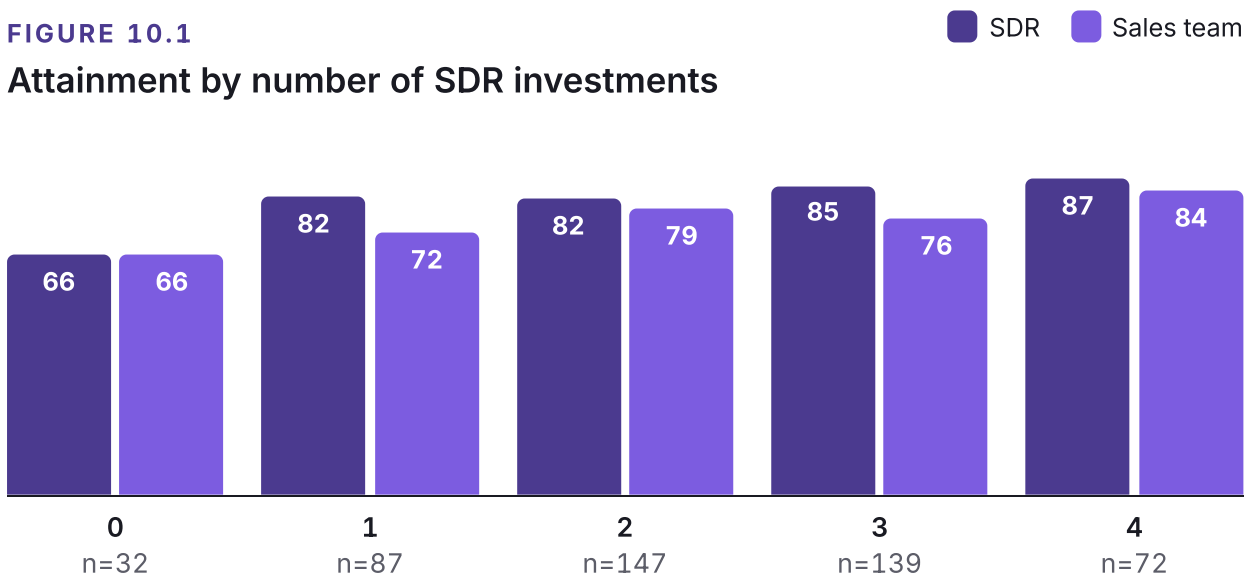
36% President's Club eligibility for SDRs

How common each investment is (n=477).

Stacked investments: most of the lift comes from the first one. Organizations with none of the four investments report the lowest average SDR attainment. The largest step is between teams with no investments and teams with one; after that, the steps are small and uneven (Figure 10.1). Sales-team attainment follows a broadly similar upward path.

FIGURE 10.1

Attainment by number of SDR investments



Average attainment (%) by number of the four organizational investments in place (enablement, professional development, SKO, President's Club). Completed responses, n=477. Group averages, not controlled for company size.

Larger companies are more likely to fund more of these programs, so the chart partly reflects company size. To separate the investments from each other and from size, we tested each one with controls for company size, region and reporting line.

SECTION 10 · ENABLEMENT

Enablement is the broadest lever.

With controls, a dedicated enablement function is associated with:

+4.6
points of SDR attainment (p<.01)

+5.0
points of sales-team attainment

+2.2
months of average SDR tenure (both p<.01)

It is the only investment in this analysis associated with SDR performance, sales performance and retention at the same time. In raw terms, teams with dedicated enablement average 85% SDR attainment and 21.1 months of tenure, against 79% and 18.3 months without it. The sales-team association suggests enablement may also improve the pipeline SDRs hand to AEs, although the survey can't show the mechanism.

WITH VS WITHOUT ENABLEMENT

85%
vs 79% attainment

21.1 mo
vs 18.3 mo tenure

WHO HAS DEDICATED ENABLEMENT



Dedicated enablement is far from universal: 48% of North American organizations have it, against 66% in EMEA and 65% in APAC (Section 12).

SKOS AND OFFSITES

The largest attainment association. With controls, SKO or offsite events are associated with +6.9 points of SDR attainment (p<.001). They are also the most common investment (75%), so the 25% of teams without them stand out.

PRESIDENT'S CLUB AND PD BUDGETS

Mostly track company size. Once size is controlled, a professional development budget shows no association with SDR attainment, and President's Club eligibility only a weak, non-significant one. Larger companies are more likely to offer both. That doesn't make them worthless for recognition or recruiting, but the survey doesn't show them moving performance.

SECTION 10 · ACTIVITY VOLUME

Activity volume: the lever that costs tenure.

The median organization expects about 90 activities per SDR per day. Higher activity expectations show no association with attainment. They are associated with shorter tenure: each doubling of the daily expectation is associated with about one month less tenure (p=.015)†, a result replicated on the final sample.

The two operating levers, together. Enablement is associated with higher attainment and longer tenure. High activity expectations are associated with shorter tenure and no attainment gain. North America sits at the unfavorable end of both: it has the highest activity expectations (median 100 a day) and the lowest enablement coverage (48%). EMEA, which asks for fewer activities and invests more in enablement, keeps SDRs longest, and about half of its tenure advantage is accounted for by those two factors (Section 12).

NORTH AMERICA

100 activities/day

48% enablement

EMEA

60 activities/day

66% enablement

Why money still explains so little. The largest single investment associations are about five to seven points. North American teams trail APAC by 8.7 points even with size controlled (Section 12). Underconverters invest as heavily as Leaders and still trail by about 10 points (Section 4). Investment matters at the margin. Much of the variation in SDR performance lies in things this survey measured only indirectly, such as how quotas are set and how the function is led day to day.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

- → **If you fund one thing, fund enablement.** It is the only investment associated with SDR attainment, AE attainment and tenure together.
- → **Don't cut the SKO.** It shows the largest attainment association of any single investment, and three-quarters of peers run one.
- → **Don't count on President's Club or a PD budget to move the number.** Keep them for recognition, not as performance levers.
- → **Get from zero to one.** The biggest attainment gap in Figure 10.1 is between teams with no investments and teams with one.
- → **Lower the activity bar before you raise it.** The data shows no attainment return from higher activity quotas and a possible tenure cost.

11

SECTION 11

The SDR Leader

Who runs the function, and what a dedicated leader changes

61% either report to a Global Head of SDR or are one

SECTION 11 · THE SDR LEADER

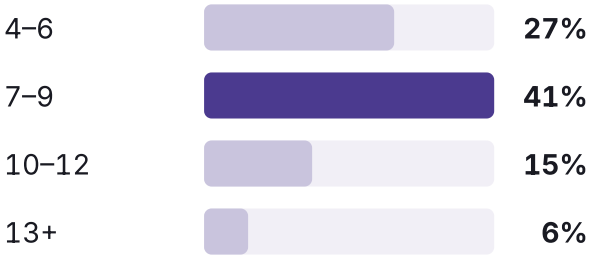
Who answered. This report reflects SDR leadership at every level: Managers (34%), Directors (28%), Senior Managers (20%), Senior Directors and VPs (13%) and Team Leads (5%) (n=477).



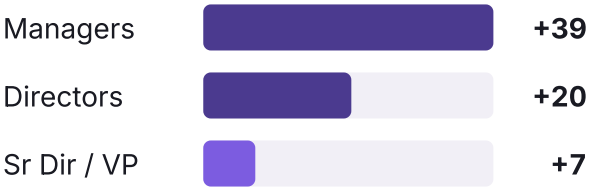
Spans are moderate. The most common front-line span is 7–9 SDRs per manager (41%), followed by 4–6 (27%). 15% run 10–12 and 6% run 13 or more. Above the front line, 63% of directors oversee one to three managers and 29% oversee four to six (n=424). Section 5 found no link between span and ramp, tenure or attainment.

Where you sit shapes what you see. The more senior the respondent, the less optimistic the growth picture: net SDR headcount growth is +39 among Managers, +20 among Directors and +7 among Senior Directors/VPs (Section 3). Senior leaders see the whole organization. Their view is the better guide to company-wide trends.

SDRs per front-line manager
Share of organizations



Net headcount growth by seniority
Share that grew minus share that cut



THE GLOBAL HEAD OF SDR IS NOW THE NORM

33% report to one + **28%** are one

61% of respondents in total (n=557).

A GLOBAL HEAD BUYS STANDING, NOT QUOTA

≈ +2 pts attainment, not significant

+0.5 value rating, of 10 (p=.02)†

With company size controlled, having a global head is not associated with higher SDR attainment (about +2 points, not significant). It is associated with standing: organizations with a global SDR leader rate their SDR function's value to the business 0.5 points higher on a 10-point scale (p=.02)†.

SECTION 11 · LEADERSHIP AND STANDING

LEADERS

73%

have a Global Head of SDR

UNDERCONVERTERS

59%

have a Global Head of SDR (p=.02)†

Leadership and the Maturity Quadrant. Section 4 compared Leaders and Underconverters on every structural choice the survey captured. It found no reliable difference except one: 73% of Leaders have a Global Head of SDR, against 59% of Underconverters (p=.02)†. This is the only structural difference found between organizations that invest equally but perform very differently, which suggests how the function is led may matter. Because the global-head attainment gap disappears once size is controlled, we treat this as a hypothesis, not a finding.

Why standing matters. Section 3 found that SDR headcount cuts coincide with weaker sales-team performance, not weaker SDR performance. Section 7 found that SDR teams hit plan more often than the AE teams they support. A function with executive standing and a clear pipeline-share story is better placed to make that case when budgets are set.

Leader compensation. SDR leader compensation is withheld from this edition. Validation showed many respondents appear to have reported their SDRs' on-target earnings rather than their own, so the figures can't be reported reliably. The 2027 survey will reword the question and add a currency selector (Appendix B5).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

Make the case for a global SDR leader on influence, not quota.

The data doesn't support promising higher attainment. It does support higher standing.

Own the pipeline-share number.

It is the clearest evidence of the function's contribution, and coverage decisions shape it (Section 5).

Bring the SDR-vs-AE attainment comparison into budget conversations.

See Section 7.

If you're senior, trust your growth read over front-line optimism.

12

SECTION 12

The SDR Function Around the World

One job, four operating models

22.1 months EMEA SDR tenure, the longest of any region, against 18.7 in North America

SECTION 12 · AROUND THE WORLD

The SDR role looks similar everywhere. How it is run does not.

Phone is the dominant pipeline channel in every region (70–83%), Sales owns the function in most organizations (60–78%), and teams everywhere cluster at 7–9 SDRs per manager. How the role is run differs sharply by region, and so do the results. North America runs the SDR function as a high-volume growth engine. EMEA and APAC run it as a more invested, more selective function. On most measures of attainment and retention, EMEA and APAC come out ahead.

	North America	EMEA	APAC	UK*
Respondents	314	133	84	40
Net headcount growth	**+35 ▲**	+22	+24	+21
Median SDR team size	11	19	40	10
Average SDR attainment	79%	84%	**91% ▲**	82%
Average SDR tenure	18.7 mo	**22.1 mo ▲**	20.1 mo	19.6 mo
Median daily activities	100	60	**50 ▲**	85
Dedicated enablement	48%	**66% ▲**	65%	50%
Fully remote	42%	36%	25%	28%
Outbound only	21%	18%	14%	33%

▲ marks the most favorable region on each marked metric (fewer daily activities counted as favorable). *UK sample is small; treat as indicative. LATAM (n=3) not shown.

70–83%
phone is the top channel in every region

60–78%
of SDR teams are owned by Sales

7–9
SDRs per manager, everywhere

FIGURE 12.1

The regional picture at a glance

How the SDR function runs, region by region (final sample, n=574).

North America
n=314

Grow fast, push hard

Net headcount growth	+35 ▲
Median team size	11
SDR attainment	79% ▼
Avg tenure	18.7 mo ▼
Daily activities	100 ▼
Dedicated enablement	48% ▼
Remote	42%

EMEA
n=133

Invest and retain

Net headcount growth	+22
Median team size	19
SDR attainment	84%
Avg tenure	22.1 mo ▲
Daily activities	60
Dedicated enablement	66% ▲
Remote	36%

APAC
n=84

The regional hub

Net headcount growth	+24
Median team size	40
SDR attainment	91% ▲
Avg tenure	20.1 mo
Daily activities	50 ▲
Dedicated enablement	65%
Remote	25%

UK
n=40 · indicative

Outbound, sales-led

Net headcount growth	+21 ▼
Median team size	10
SDR attainment	82%
Avg tenure	19.6 mo
Daily activities	85
Dedicated enablement	50%
Outbound only	33%

▲ most favorable and ▼ least favorable region on each metric (fewer daily activities counted as favorable); team size, remote working and outbound-only are not marked. Activities are medians of expected daily activities per SDR. UK sample is small (n=40); treat as indicative. LATAM (n=3) excluded.

SECTION 12 · REGION BY REGION

NORTH AMERICA

Growing fastest, getting the least out of its SDRs. North America has the strongest headcount growth in the survey (net +35). It also reports the lowest SDR attainment (79%) and the shortest tenure (18.7 months). North American leaders expect a median of 100 activities per SDR per day, against 50–60 in APAC and EMEA. Only 48% have a dedicated enablement function, compared with about two-thirds elsewhere. These are the two levers Section 10 identifies: high activity expectations are associated with shorter tenure†, and enablement with higher attainment and tenure. North America is at the unfavorable end of both.

+8.7
pts APAC vs North America SDR attainment (p<.001)

+3.9
pts EMEA vs North America (p=.03)†

+5.4
pts APAC vs North America sales teams (p=.03)†

The attainment gap is not just about size or process. With company revenue and team size held constant, APAC teams report attainment 8.7 points higher than North America (p<.001) and EMEA teams 3.9 points higher (p=.03)†. Adding activity expectations, enablement and AI adoption to the model barely changes those gaps. Something else is driving North America's lower attainment. One explanation consistent with the data is how quotas are set: APAC sales teams also report higher attainment than North American ones (+5.4, p=.03†), so the difference extends beyond SDR teams. That pattern is more consistent with more demanding quota-setting in North America than with weaker SDRs. North American leaders should read their own attainment against this regional benchmark, not the global one.

EMEA

Longer tenure, largely explained by how it runs the team. EMEA SDRs stay the longest, 22.1 months on average and 3.3 months more than in North America with size controlled (p<.001). About half of that advantage disappears once activity expectations and enablement are added to the model: it falls to 1.7 months and is no longer significant (p=.08). EMEA's retention advantage is largely accounted for by fewer activities and more investment in enablement, rather than by anything specific to the region. Both levers can be copied. EMEA is also the region most likely to use MEDDPICC (46%) and to have SDR report into Marketing (34%).

SECTION 12 · REGION BY REGION

APAC

Largely made up of regional hubs of US companies. Two-thirds of APAC respondents (68%) work for US- or North America-headquartered companies, and 95% are based in a capital city or major business hub. APAC teams are much larger than anywhere else, with a median of 40 SDRs against 11 in North America. They are also the most office-based (29% in office four or more days). Many of these teams appear to be centralized regional hubs run by global companies. APAC's high attainment should therefore be read as the performance of well-resourced hubs, not of the APAC market as a whole. BANT is the dominant framework there (49%).

UK

Small, outbound-heavy and sales-led. The UK sample is small (n=40), so these findings are indicative only. UK teams are the most likely to run outbound-only (33%, against 14–21% elsewhere) and to report into Sales (78%). They are the least likely to use AI SDR agents (6%) and have the slowest net headcount growth (+21).

HUB VS. NON-HUB

City-based SDRs leave sooner. 74% of respondents are based in a capital city or major business hub. SDRs on hub-based teams leave 2.2 months sooner than those on teams outside a hub (p=.009), after controlling for region, revenue and team size. Attainment is statistically no different. A plausible explanation is labor-market competition: in a hub, an SDR with 18 months of experience has more employers to move to.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SDR LEADERS

- → **Benchmark against your region, not the global average.** A North American team at 80% attainment is performing in line with the North American average (79%), not below it.
- → **North America's best improvement opportunities are EMEA's standard practices:** lower activity quotas and a dedicated enablement function.
- → **Treat APAC hub benchmarks as a separate category.** A 40-person office-based hub is not comparable to a five-person local team.
- → **If you hire in a major city, plan for turnover.** Succession planning and promotion paths matter more where tenure is shorter.

13

SECTION 13

Recommendations: The Leader's Playbook

Twelve moves for SDR leaders in 2027 planning

12 moves, grouped for the SDR leader, the CRO and GTM leadership, the function's standing and running the team

SECTION 13 · THE LEADER'S PLAYBOOK

This year's data points to a consistent conclusion. **Budget and org charts explain less of SDR performance than the industry's debates assume.** The leaders who come out ahead protect their pipeline share, treat retention as a design problem, benchmark against the right peers, invest in the few things that are associated with results, and make the function visible to the business.

FOR THE SDR LEADER

1

Benchmark against your region and your peers, not the global average.

North American teams report 79% SDR attainment, against 84% in EMEA and 91% in APAC. The gap persists after controlling for company size, activity, enablement and AI adoption, and it extends to sales teams. That pattern is more consistent with how quotas are set than with weaker SDRs (Section 12; interpretation). APAC benchmarks largely reflect large regional hubs of US companies.

Do this: Report attainment against your regional average. Benchmark APAC hubs against hubs. Check that your quota-setting method is comparable before you conclude your team is underperforming.

2

Diagnose before you ask for more budget.

Investment and performance correlate at only 0.18 (Section 4). Overachievers match Leaders' results with fewer investments and half the team size. Underconverters invest like Leaders but trail by about 10 points of attainment, 21 points of pipeline share and 7.5 months of tenure.

Do this: Place your team on the two axes before requesting new programs. If you're high-investment, low-performance, look at how the team is led and run day to day before asking for more budget. If you're in the Developing group, start with the first investment (Section 10).

3

Treat retention as a design decision.

Remote teams report 2.7 months longer tenure than hybrid; office-based teams report less† (Section 5). Outbound-only teams† (−2.4 months) and hub-city teams (−2.2 months) also report shorter tenure. None of these carries an attainment difference. Lower activity load and more enablement account for about half of EMEA's tenure advantage over North America (Section 12).

Do this: Estimate the rehiring and re-ramp cost before mandating office days. If you run outbound-only or hub-based teams, plan for shorter tenure with a warm candidate bench and a repeatable ramp.

SECTION 13 · THE LEADER'S PLAYBOOK

FOR THE CRO / GTM LEADERSHIP

4 Protect coverage, because it protects pipeline share.

Each doubling of AEs per SDR is associated with a 6-point drop in SDR-sourced pipeline share ($p<.001$). Share falls from 65% with multiple SDRs per AE to about 40% at one SDR per five to ten AEs (Section 5).

Do this: When AE headcount grows faster than SDR headcount, model the pipeline-share drop before approving the plan. Set a coverage floor.

5 Don't cut SDR capacity to fix a sales problem.

SDR attainment was 81% whether teams grew or were cut. AE attainment was 72% where SDR headcount was cut, against 77–79% elsewhere (Section 3). The data can't prove why cuts were made.

Do this: Before reducing SDR headcount, find where the funnel is actually breaking: SDR attainment, meeting-to-opportunity conversion or AE win rates.

6 Use the SDR team to open new markets.

Organizations entering a new vertical or geography were far more likely to grow SDR headcount (62% vs 37%). When the SDR org was brought in, it supported the expansion 95% of the time (Section 3).

Do this: Bring the SDR leader into market-entry planning early. Resource expansion as SDR pods with test-and-learn targets.

FOR THE FUNCTION'S STANDING

7 Make the function visible, and stop re-litigating the reporting line.

Reporting to Sales (68%) or Marketing (27%) makes no measurable difference to SDR attainment, pipeline share, tenure or perceived value (Section 5). A Global Head of SDR is not linked to higher attainment once size is controlled, but is associated with a higher internal value rating† (Sections 5, 11).

Do this: Spend political capital on executive visibility, not the org chart. Make the case for a global SDR leader on influence and headcount protection, not quota. If you report to Marketing, watch the AE handoff (tentative signal).

SECTION 13 · THE LEADER'S PLAYBOOK

RUNNING THE TEAM

8

Fix the promotion cliff.

Median SDR tenure and median time to promotion both fall at 18–24 months. In about four in five organizations, the average SDR's tenure ends at or before the promotion point (Section 6; derived comparison).

Do this: Shorten or stage the path (senior SDR, pod lead), publish promotion criteria at hire, and track how many SDRs reach eligibility before they leave.

9

If you fund one thing, fund enablement. And keep the SKO.

A dedicated enablement function is the only investment associated with SDR attainment, AE attainment and tenure together. SKOs/offsites show the largest single attainment association. President's Club and development budgets mostly track company size (Section 10). 46% of organizations still have no dedicated enablement, including 52% in North America.

Do this: Make the case for enablement on all three outcomes, including sales-team attainment. Protect the SKO line in budget cuts. Keep President's Club for recognition, not as a performance lever.

10

Lower the activity bar before you raise it.

Higher activity expectations show no association with attainment and are associated with about a month less tenure per doubling† (Sections 7, 10). The median is 90 a day (North America 100, EMEA 60).

Do this: If your target is above your regional median, test a lower target with one pod and track attainment and tenure for two quarters.

SECTION 13 · THE LEADER'S PLAYBOOK

RUNNING THE TEAM

11 Go broad with AI before going autonomous.

Each additional AI use case is associated with about 1.5 points higher SDR attainment. Only 16% use AI SDR agents, and the 14 that use them as partial replacements show mixed results (Section 9).

Do this: Extend AI across more of the workflow, from research and messaging to data review, coaching, list and ICP building and intent monitoring. Run AI SDR agents as bounded pilots with a human control group, not as a headcount plan.

12 Manage to pipeline share, and show SDR vs. AE attainment side by side.

SDR teams source about half of company pipeline, and AEs out-attain their SDR team in only 23% of organizations (Sections 7, 11).

Do this: Put pipeline share and the SDR-vs-AE attainment comparison on the same slide in every QBR and budget conversation.

WHAT NOT TO OVER-ENGINEER

Span of control
7–9 SDRs per manager is the norm, and no ratio in the observed range predicts results (Section 5).

Qualification framework
BANT, MEDDPICC, SPICED and custom frameworks show no attainment difference (Section 5).

Primary channel mix
No attainment difference by channel; phone still leads at 72% (Section 5).

Daily activity volume
More activity doesn't buy attainment (Section 7).

B

APPENDIX B

Data Decisions and Methodology Notes

This appendix records the data decisions behind the published figures.

B1–B12

notes on sample, bases, coding, currency, withheld data, statistics and corrections

APPENDIX B · DATA DECISIONS

B1. Sample construction. The survey was fielded August 26 to September 20, 2026, and received 583 responses (103 of them partial). Six partial submissions that duplicated a completed response from the same device were removed. Where a device produced more than one completed survey, duplicates were resolved by respondent, not by device: two later repeat completions by the same person were removed, while completions by distinct people at chapter events that shared a device were kept. The survey organizer's own response was excluded. The final analytic sample is 574 respondents (477 complete, 97 partial): North America 314, EMEA 133, APAC 84, UK 40, LATAM 3.

583	−9	477	97
responses received	removed in cleaning	complete	partial

B2. Base sizes. Partial responses are used for every question answered, so bases differ by block: headcount growth and talent questions n=535; performance questions n=512; organization, technology, investment and pay-structure questions n=477 (completed responses); questions added on September 1 (expansion, SDR support for expansion, perceived value) n≈337. Daily activity expectations exclude three answers above 1,000 (n=509).

Headcount growth and talent	n=535
Performance	n=512
Daily activity expectations	n=509
Organization, technology, investment, pay structure	n=477
Added September 1 (expansion, perceived value)	n≈337

B3. Coding. Banded answers are coded at band midpoints for averages and models. Averages built from bands are approximate; distributions are reported where midpoints would mislead (for example, the censored North American top salary band).

APPENDIX B · CURRENCY AND WITHHELD DATA

B4. Currency and exchange rates. Compensation questions were banded and routed by region. North America, APAC and LATAM saw one version with dollar-labelled options (for example "$50,000-$54,999"), which we treat as US dollars. The EMEA and UK versions used the same bands without a currency symbol; we assume euros (EMEA) and pounds sterling (UK). No question named a currency or asked respondents to choose one, and the survey has no country field, so answers in other local currencies (for example Swiss francs or Nordic kroner in EMEA, or Australian or Singapore dollars in APAC) cannot be identified. EMEA and APAC figures are indicative on this point. Because options were full annual amounts, answers entered in thousands are not possible; a monthly figure would have no matching option. No compensation answers were recoded or excluded. Twelve North American answers below $35,000 were kept; excluding them would move the North American median from $60,300 to $60,700.

The regional tables report each region in its own local currency; the global view is USD-converted. Each respondent's answer is converted to US dollars at the average ECB euro reference rate over the fieldwork period (18 business days, August 26–September 18, 2026; September 19–20 fell on a weekend): €1 = $1.1590 and £1 = $1.3511 (sterling derived from the ECB euro rates on each day). Federal Reserve H.10 rates for the same days ($1.1589 and $1.3510) give the same result. Moving the euro and sterling rates 5% either way changes the global median by about ±$800 (±1.4%). Converted figures are not adjusted for cost of living, tax or purchasing power. Medians and middle-50% ranges are interpolated within bands and rounded to the nearest $100; ranges reaching the open top band are shown as "65,000+".

€1 = $1.1590
ECB fieldwork average

£1 = $1.3511
derived from ECB rates

±$800
global median, 5% rate swing

B5. Withheld data: SDR leader compensation. SDR leader compensation is withheld from this edition. Validation showed many respondents appear to have reported their SDRs' on-target earnings rather than their own, so the figures can't be reported reliably. The 2027 survey will reword the question and add a currency selector.

APPENDIX B · STATISTICS AND REPLICATION

B6. Industry. About 30% of respondents chose "Other" for industry, so no industry cuts are reported in 2026.

B7. Company HQ. "US" and "North America" HQ answers are combined; the instrument offered no UK or LATAM HQ option.

B8. Revenue validation. Self-reported revenue was checked against a commercial firmographic database for respondents who supplied a work email (241; 207 comparable). 71% matched the same band and 98% were within one band.

B9. Statistical approach. Controlled comparisons use linear regression with controls for company size (revenue band and SDR team size), region and, where noted, reporting line. Results with p<.01 are treated as robust and results with p between .01 and .05 as exploratory (†). p-values are not adjusted for multiple comparisons. All findings are correlational.

B10. Replication on the final sample. The key controlled effects were re-estimated independently on the final sample of 574, with controls for revenue, log team size and region:

EFFECT	PUBLISHED ESTIMATE	FINAL-SAMPLE RE-ESTIMATE
Dedicated enablement → SDR attainment	+4.6 points, p<.01	**+3.8 points, p≈.017**
Dedicated enablement → sales-team attainment	+5.0 points, p<.01	**+5.4 points, p≈.002**
Dedicated enablement → SDR tenure	+2.2 months, p<.01	**+2.7 months, p≈.001**
SKO/offsite → SDR attainment	about +6 points	**+6.9 points, p≈.0001**
Professional development budget → SDR attainment	no association after size controls	**−0.1 points, p≈.94**
President's Club eligibility → SDR attainment	no significant association after size controls	**+3.1 points, p≈.06**
Global Head of SDR → SDR attainment	+2.1 points, not significant	**+2.2 points, p≈.16**
Each additional AI use case → SDR attainment	+1.45 points, p=.001	**+1.54 points, p≈.0004**
Doubling of daily activity expectation → SDR tenure	about −1 month, p=.015	**−0.94 months, p≈.015**

In every case the direction of the effect agrees, and every association reported as significant remains significant at p<.05.

APPENDIX B · CORRECTIONS AND THE QUADRANT

Corrections and the Maturity Quadrant

B11

Corrections

Earlier working notes compared attainment for teams with and without a Global Head of SDR without controlling for company size. That raw gap is a size effect and is not significant once size is controlled; it does not appear in this report.

B12

The Maturity Quadrant

Investment and performance scores are relative to this sample, and performance is adjusted for each region's average. Quadrant names describe position relative to peers. The low-investment, low-performance group is labeled "Developing".

SDR LEADERS GLOBAL

SDR Leaders Global

RESEARCH & INTELLIGENCE

The State of Sales Development 2026

A global benchmark of 574 SDR leaders across North America, EMEA, APAC and the UK.

SDR LEADERS OF EMEA

EMEA
sdrleaders.global/emea

SDR LEADERS OF USA.

USA
sdrleaders.global/usa

SDR LEADERS OF APAC

APAC
sdrleaders.global/apac

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