

TECH SALES PLAYBOOK

The SDR Job Search Playbook

Resumes, LinkedIn, applications, networking,
and offer negotiation for landing your first SDR role.

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The SDR Job Search Playbook

Resumes, LinkedIn, applications, networking, and offer negotiation for landing your first SDR role.

TechSalesPlaybook.com

The Promise: From Zero to Hired in 30 Days

What This Playbook Will Do for You

Thirty-six percent of B2B companies cut SDR headcount last year — the highest rate of any sales function. AI is replacing entry-level prospecting tasks. Competition for open roles is fierce, particularly for candidates with zero sales experience.

But companies are still hiring. They're paying more for fewer, better reps. The candidates who win aren't the most experienced — they're the most prepared. They show up with resumes that pass ATS filters, LinkedIn profiles that attract recruiters, interview answers backed by research, and networks that open doors before they ever click "Apply."

This playbook is that preparation, distilled into a 30-day system. Follow it day by day, and you will transform from an unknown name in a pile of 300 applications into the candidate hiring managers fight to hire.

Six Outcomes

- 1. Build a Resume That Beats the Bots.** Craft an ATS-optimized resume using keywords from real SDR job descriptions. No guesswork — just a document structured for the 30-50% pass rates that generic resumes never clear.
 - 2. Turn LinkedIn Into a Recruiter Magnet.** Rebuild your profile to rank in recruiter searches, activate revenue-generating features, and publish content that demonstrates sales fluency — generating inbound interest while you sleep.
 - 3. Find the Right Jobs and Apply Like a Sniper.** Stop applying to everything. Target 15-25 high-fit companies using a systematic research framework. Tailored applications generate 4-6x more interviews than generic ones.
 - 4. Network Your Way to Warm Introductions.** Build a referral pipeline using LinkedIn outreach and informational conversations. Referred candidates are 18x more likely to get hired — even if you don't know a single person in tech sales today.
 - 5. Choose the Right Company and Negotiate Your Offer.** Evaluate employers using real data: quota attainment, comp benchmarks, ramp time, promotion rates. Then negotiate from strength using market data, not desperation.
 - 6. Crush Your First 30 Days.** Hit the ground running with a proven ramp plan. Book your first qualified meeting before Day 21 and set yourself up for promotion in 12-16 months.
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Who This Is For

The Career Changer. You've worked in retail, hospitality, education, or healthcare. No sales title on your resume yet. This playbook gives you a translation framework that reframes your experience into sales-relevant achievements employers actually value.

The Recent Graduate. You're 0-2 years out of school with a thin resume and no professional network. You'll get a complete job search operating system that compensates with networking velocity, interview preparation, and personal brand building.

The Current SDR Moving Up. You've been in seat 6-18 months but feel stuck. Internal promotion rates dropped from 34% to 16%. You'll learn advanced strategies for positioning your attainment, building an AE-ready narrative, and navigating the external market without burning bridges.

The Zero-Experience Newcomer. No sales background, no degree advantage, no network. Maybe you've been driving Uber or working a warehouse. Every section assumes you know nothing. Every action builds credible signals of sales readiness from a blank slate.

30-Day SDR Job Search Bootcamp

Day	Action	Check
1	Audit resume against ATS requirements; rewrite headline and summary	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Add 5 achievement-driven bullets with metrics; run through ATS scanner	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Rewrite LinkedIn headline with SDR keywords; optimize About section	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Activate "Open to Work"; request 2 recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Build target company list (25 companies); categorize into tiers	<input type="checkbox"/>

6	Deep-dive 5 Tier 1 companies; document ICP and pain points	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Rest, consume sales content, reflect on target industries	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Customize resume for 3 Tier 1 applications; submit with tailored cover notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Send 5 LinkedIn connection requests; engage with target company content	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Apply to 3 more Tier 1 roles; schedule 2 informational conversations	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Conduct first informational call; follow up with thank-you message	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Conduct second informational call; ask for 1 referral or introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Apply to 3 Tier 2 roles; follow up on all applications sent	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Weekly review: track metrics, adjust target list based on learnings	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Practice 5 common SDR interview questions; record yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Send 5 LinkedIn connection requests; research comp data on RepVue	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Complete first phone screen; document questions, refine answers	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Apply to 3 more roles; schedule 2 more informational conversations	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	Conduct third informational call; role-play objection handling	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Follow up on pending applications (Day 10+); study product/ICP for interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Rest day; celebrate one win from this week	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Complete final-round interview or second phone screen	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Send thank-you notes within 2 hours; prepare negotiation script	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Follow up on interview pipelines; send 3 LinkedIn connection requests	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Research comp for incoming offers; prepare must-haves list	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Negotiate offer using data-backed framework; compare total comp	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Accept offer; notify network and build goodwill	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	Prepare your 30-60-90 day plan for your new manager	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	Deep-dive new company's product, competitors, and ICP	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	Set up workspace, plan commute, review First 30 Days chapter	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Non-Negotiable Commitment

Thirty days. The candidates who treat this like a part-time job — 3-5 hours daily of focused, systematic action — get hired. The ones who dabble get drowned out by the other 300 applicants competing for the same seat.

Check the boxes. Do the work. Make the calls. Send the messages. Ask for the introductions.

Your first SDR offer is 30 days away. Let's get to work.

2. The SDR Landscape in 2025

The SDR function is not disappearing. It is being restructured, repriced, and redefined. Headcount is shrinking while compensation rises for those who remain. AI is eliminating repetitive tasks while elevating the skills that command a premium. If you understand where the market actually stands—not where it was three years ago—you can position yourself on the right side of every one of these shifts.

This chapter maps the terrain: hiring data, compensation benchmarks, the industries and cities that still reward SDRs, and what the career path looks like when promotion rates have been cut in half.

2.1 Where the Market Stands

2.1.1 Hiring Data: The Great Downsizing Is Real

The single most important data point for any SDR job seeker in 2025 is this: **36% of B2B companies decreased their SDR/BDR headcount in the past 12 months.** That is the highest percentage of any sales function, by a wide margin. Only 19% of companies increased SDR headcount—the lowest growth rate across all sales roles.

Table 1: Sales Function Headcount Changes (Past 12 Months)

Role	Decreased Headcount	Increased Headcount	Net Direction
SDR/BDR	36%	19%	Sharply negative
Account Executives	25%	28%	Slightly positive
Sales Engineers	14%	17%	Positive
Professional Services	17%	34%	Strongly positive

Source: Emergence Capital "Beyond Benchmarks" report, 560+ venture-backed B2B software companies, April 2025.

This is not a cyclical dip. It is structural. Most displacement is not coming from mass layoffs—it is coming from **non-backfill attrition.** A RevOps leader at a mid-market SaaS company recently shared the stark math: her AI SDR tool booked 41 meetings in 30 days at \$1,200 per month. Her human SDR team of three cost \$22,000 per month and booked 38. She did not fire anyone—but she stopped backfilling the rep who left. This pattern is repeating at thousands of companies.

The broader tech layoff context sharpens the picture. Cumulative tech job cuts exceeded 700,000 between 2022 and 2025. AI was cited in roughly 55,000 U.S. layoffs in 2025 alone, according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas. While not all of those were sales roles, the directional signal is unmistakable: repetitive, process-driven work is being automated, and much of junior sales work falls squarely in that category.

Yet the picture is not uniformly bleak. 2025 is shaping up as a year of strategic realignment. Mid-market organizations are renewing their focus on pipeline development. Enterprise accounts continue to provide stable revenue. AI-native disruptors are still hiring SDRs to build out GTM teams—though many are folding prospecting responsibilities directly into AE roles. The market is contracting in volume but expanding in value for the right candidates.

2.1.2 Quota Attainment: Only 53–57% Hit Quota

Quota attainment across all sales roles has been stuck in the low forties for seven consecutive quarters. The Q2 2024 figure was 42.68%; Q3 2024 was 42.92%; Q4 2024 edged up to 43.14%. SDR-specific data from RepVue shows a somewhat better picture—approximately 53–57% of SDRs hit quota in 2024—but this still means nearly half do not.

The reasons are structural, not motivational. Quotas rose 37% in 2024 compared to 2023. Fifty-eight percent of companies over-assign quotas (typically by 20–30%) to align cumulative attainment with revenue plans. Connect rates have collapsed to 3–10%, down from 15–20% in 2021. Email reply rates dropped from 6.8% in 2023 to 5.8% in 2024—a 15% decline in a single year. AI-flooded inboxes have made buyers harder to reach than at any point in the past decade.

Many companies quietly lowered quotas through 2024–2025 to keep attainment numbers from looking catastrophic. So even the 53–57% figure may overstate performance against original targets. The tactical implication is direct: in interviews, ask specifically, "What percentage of the SDR team hit quota last quarter?" If the answer is below 50%, the OTE number they are advertising is largely theoretical.

2.1.3 AI Impact: A \$4.27 Billion Market Growing to \$24.32 Billion

The global AI SDR market was valued at \$4.27 billion in 2025 and is projected to reach \$24.32 billion by 2034, a CAGR of 21.2%. This is not replacing the SDR function; it is shifting it. AI handles lead research, data enrichment, initial email outreach, sequencing, basic qualification, meeting scheduling, and high-volume follow-up. Humans still handle nuanced objection handling, emotional intelligence, multi-stakeholder navigation, complex deal structuring, and relationship building.

The economics driving this shift are brutal. A fully loaded human SDR costs \$75,000–\$100,000 per year. An AI SDR platform runs \$500–\$2,000 per month (\$6,000–\$24,000 annually). Output comparisons are equally stark: a human SDR generates 15–20 qualified opportunities per month; an AI SDR tool generates 40–60 with comparable quality.

Industry consensus points to **hybrid teams** as the dominant model—AI agents handling repetitive tasks while human SDRs focus on relationship building and complex deal navigation. Only 7% of organizations report that AI is "fully scaled" across the enterprise, which means the transition is still early and the window to adapt is open.

2.2 SDR Compensation Benchmarks

2.2.1 National OTE by Experience Level

SDR compensation rose 5–10% year-over-year from 2024 to 2025. Companies that are hiring are paying more for fewer, better reps. Location remains the strongest predictor of compensation, though remote work has compressed geographic differentials significantly.

Table 2: SDR Compensation by Experience Level (2025)

Experience Level	Base Salary	OTE Range	Pay Mix (Base/Variable)
Entry-level (0–1 year)	\$45,000–\$55,000	\$65,000–\$80,000	70/30
Mid-level (1–3 years)	\$52,000–\$65,000	\$80,000–\$100,000	65/35
Senior SDR (3–5 years)	\$58,000–\$72,000	\$85,000–\$100,000	60/40
Enterprise SDR	\$65,000–\$80,000	\$100,000–\$130,000	60/40 or 50/50
Top Performers	\$65,000–\$80,000	\$100,000+	With accelerators

Sources: Bridge Group 2024 SDR Metrics Report, RepVue 2025 Salary Guide, Betts Recruiting, Prowi 2026.

By company stage, the picture diverges further. Seed and pre-Series A startups pay \$48,000–\$55,000 base with \$65,000–\$80,000 OTE. Series A/B companies typically offer \$52,000–\$62,000 base with \$75,000–\$90,000 OTE. Series C+ and mid-market firms land at \$55,000–\$68,000 base with \$80,000–\$100,000 OTE. Enterprise companies (1,000+ employees) and public tech companies push to \$62,000–\$80,000 base with \$90,000–\$130,000 OTE, often with liquid RSUs worth \$5,000–\$20,000 annually on top.

OTE varies dramatically by geography—from 20% to 60% of base salary depending on market. A fully loaded SDR costs employers \$98,000–\$173,000 per year when benefits, tools, management overhead, and ramp time are factored in. Understanding this number helps in negotiation: you are more expensive than your salary suggests, and companies know it.

2.2.2 Base vs. Variable Splits: 60/40, 50/50

The standard pay mix for pipeline-generation SDR roles is **65–70% fixed, 30–35% variable**. Go above 30% variable and you introduce income instability that drives turnover. Entry-level roles skew toward 70/30 to protect new reps during ramp. Senior and enterprise roles may shift to 60/40, reflecting greater confidence in the rep's ability to control outcomes. Fifty-fifty splits are rare for SDRs and more typical of closing roles.

Commission structures vary by metric. Meetings booked typically pay \$40–\$100 per meeting. Meetings held pay \$55–\$125. Qualified opportunities (SQLs) command \$350–\$700 each. Some plans tie compensation to pipeline generated (0.5–2% of value) or closed/won revenue (1–3% of deal value). OpenView Partners recommends a hybrid model where 40% of bonus is tied to appointments and 60% to qualified opportunities—this balances activity with quality.

2.2.3 Realistic vs. Stated OTE

OTE is a target, not a guarantee. Your actual earnings depend entirely on quota attainment rates at the specific company you join. This is the single most overlooked factor in offer evaluation.

Here is the math. Assume a 70/30 base/variable split. At a stated OTE of \$85,000, your base is \$59,500 and your variable target is \$25,500. If the team's average attainment is 70%, your realistic first-year earnings are $\$59,500 + (\$25,500 \times 0.70) = \$77,350$ —nearly \$8,000 below stated OTE. If average attainment is 50%, you earn \$72,250. Only at 100% attainment do you actually collect the full \$85,000.

Eighty-two percent of SaaS startups use accelerators—multiplier bonuses when you exceed quota thresholds—so top performers can outearn stated OTE. But fewer than 15% of plans have commission caps, meaning upside is generally uncapped for those who perform. The question is not what the OTE says; it is what percentage of reps actually hit it.

Before accepting any offer, calculate: **Expected Earnings = Base Salary + (Variable Component × Historical Attainment Rate)**. If the hiring manager cannot or will not provide historical attainment data, treat the OTE as a marketing number.

2.3 Top Industries and Cities

2.3.1 Cybersecurity, AI/Data, Healthcare: Where the Demand Lives

Not all SDR verticals are created equal in 2025. SaaS remains the single largest employer—over 50% of all SDR job postings come from software companies—but it is no longer the only game worth playing.

Cybersecurity is the highest-paying vertical for SDRs, with OTE running 15–25% above the SaaS average. Companies like CrowdStrike, Palo Alto Networks, and Huntress are consistent top employers. The tradeoffs are real: ramp is longer, product knowledge requirements are higher, and the average number of stakeholders per deal is greater. Despite the premium pay, cybersecurity saw the lowest quota attainment in Q2 2024 at just 36.50%—the lowest RepVue has ever recorded for the vertical. Heavy competition and spending fatigue are making it extraordinarily difficult to sell in this space.

AI and data verticals showed 47% quota attainment in Q4 2024, outperforming the overall average of 43.14%. AI-native companies are aggressively hiring sales talent to drive commercial adoption. AI infrastructure companies—NVIDIA, CoreWeave, xAI—are hiring while legacy SaaS cuts. This is the strongest growth vertical for SDRs entering the market today.

Healthcare technology is the fastest-growing SDR vertical by absolute headcount. Boston, Austin, Chicago, and Atlanta are the strongest markets. OTE averages \$80,000–\$100,000—slightly below SaaS—but tenure is often longer and quota relief during ramp is more common, which improves realistic earnings.

Sales and marketing tools represent a sleeper vertical. This sub-industry saw the highest quota attainment growth, improving 7.82% year-over-year with Q4 2024 attainment of 46.22%. Companies selling to sales teams understand the SDR role better than anyone and often run the most structured SDR programs.

2.3.2 Top 10 Cities with OTE Ranges

Geography still matters, though remote work has narrowed the gaps. RepVue data shows the following hierarchy for SDR compensation as of 2025:

Table 3: Top Cities and Industries for SDRs (2025)

Rank	City/Region	Median SDR OTE	Standout Verticals	Market Character
1	Seattle, WA	\$100,000	Enterprise SaaS, cloud	Strong Microsoft/Amazon effect; highest verified OTE
2	San Jose, CA	\$90,000	AI infrastructure, SaaS	Silicon Valley premium; densest startup concentration
3	San Diego, CA	\$90,000	Biotech, cybersecurity	Growing tech scene; lower COL than SF
4	San Francisco, CA	~\$85,000	Fintech, enterprise SaaS	Most jobs but highest cost of living; premium narrowing
5	New York, NY	~\$85,000	Fintech, sales/marketing tools	Finance and enterprise hub; rates evening out with Midwest
6	Washington, DC	~\$80,000	Gov-tech, cybersecurity	Strong government-contractor ecosystem
7	Austin, TX	~\$80,000	Healthcare tech, SaaS	Fastest-growing tech hub; best volume-to-pay ratio
8	Denver, CO	~\$78,000	SaaS, professional services	Mountain West alternative; balanced market
9	Chicago, IL	~\$75,000	Healthcare tech, fintech	Central enterprise hub; lower COL than coasts
10	Remote (US-based)	\$70,000–\$95,000	All verticals	Best purchasing power; 60% of applications go to 20% of roles

Source: RepVue 2025–2026 verified salary data.

By base salary specifically, San Jose (\$108,524) and San Francisco (\$108,091) lead nationally, followed by Washington DC (\$96,070), New York (\$78,410), and Seattle (\$73,598). Remote SDR base salaries average \$66,616 nationally, with total comp typically landing in the \$75,000–\$85,000 range.

Companies are increasingly hiring beyond traditional tech hubs—Huntsville, Dayton, Colorado Springs, Albany, Providence, London (Ontario), Halifax—where compensation runs 10–15% lower but cost-of-living differentials often make the effective purchasing power higher. The tactical implication is clear: if you want maximum job options, target hybrid roles in Austin, Denver, or Chicago. If you want maximum compensation and can afford the risk, target Seattle or the Bay Area. If you want the best financial outcome net of living costs, a remote role in a mid-cost city is hard to beat.

2.4 The Career Path

2.4.1 SDR → AE: 1.9 Years Median, Promotion Dropped 34% → 16%

The traditional SDR-to-AE path has narrowed significantly. Internal promotion rates dropped from 34% in 2020 to just 16% in 2024, according to Bridge Group data. Companies have become far more cautious about promoting SDRs, and the timeline has stretched accordingly.

Median SDR tenure before promotion sits at **1.9 years** nationally. But this varies dramatically by company stage. Early-stage startups (Series A/B) may promote in 6–12 months, driven by the need for pipeline and smaller deal complexity. Mid-market SaaS companies typically operate on 12–18 month timelines with defined criteria and structured ramp. Enterprise SaaS pushes to 18–24 months, reflecting larger deal complexity and more rigorous readiness standards. Public companies like Salesforce operate multi-tier systems—BD Associate for 4–6 months, SDR for 12 months, BDR for 12–18 months—stretching the total path to 24–36 months.

Real-world company examples bear this out: Snowflake promotes in 12–15 months; Zscaler in 12–18 months; Forrester in 18–24 months. The pattern is consistent—the larger and more established the company, the longer the path, but also the more structured the criteria.

The failure rate data is sobering. Bridge Group research on roughly 205 SDR-to-AE transitions found an overall failure rate—defined as leaving the AE role within six months—of 26% for internal promotions and 41% for external promotions. But the single strongest predictor of success is patience: SDRs promoted before 11 months fail 55% of the time. SDRs promoted after 16 months fail only 6% of the time. Aircall data reinforces this: AEs with 12+ months of SDR experience performed 28% better in their first year; those with 18+ months performed 40% better.

The long view matters too. The Bridge Group tracked 236 enterprise AEs who started in sales development and found a median journey of **6.25 years** to reach the enterprise AE level, spanning 3 companies and 6 distinct roles. Only 9% made it from entry-level SDR to enterprise AE at the same company. Each company switch added roughly 8 months to the timeline. The typical path runs: Inbound SDR → Outbound SDR → Senior SDR → Associate AE → Commercial AE → Enterprise AE.

OTE roughly doubles from SDR to mid-market AE (\$140,000–\$180,000) and roughly triples to enterprise AE (\$180,000–\$250,000+). But notice the pay-mix shift: you go from 70/30 as an SDR to 50/50 as an AE. Your floor drops significantly. And with 77% of sellers missing quota last year, the closing role is not a guaranteed raise—it is a risk-reward trade that demands preparation.

2.4.2 What Companies Look for When Promoting

Roughly 40–60% of SDRs who stay 12+ months get promoted internally. The remaining 40–60% either leave for external AE roles, transition to customer success or RevOps, or remain in an SDR seat. Market conditions in 2025–2026 have stretched average promotion timelines closer to 18 months across all segments.

Companies promoting from within look for a consistent profile: demonstrated quota attainment over multiple quarters, ability to articulate business value (not just product features), evidence of full-cycle selling behaviors before the title change, and fluency with the tools and processes that AEs use daily. The SDRs who earn promotions fastest are those who start operating like AEs at month 6, not month 14—running discovery calls, proposing solutions, mapping stakeholder hierarchies, and forecasting pipeline with precision.

The playbook for this market is straightforward but not easy. Target AI/ML, fintech, healthcare tech, and enterprise SaaS—the verticals with the strongest demand and highest attainment. Demonstrate AI tool fluency before your first interview. Pick a city (or remote arrangement) that optimizes for your cost-of-living situation, not just the highest nominal OTE. Negotiate with attainment data, not just comp benchmarks. Plan for 16+ months as an SDR, because the data says patience pays—literally. And begin building full-cycle skills from month one, because the gap between the SDR who gets promoted at 14 months and the one who stalls out indefinitely is not talent. It is preparation.

3. Building Your SDR Resume

Your resume is not a biography. It is a sales pitch — and the product is you. The buyer is a hiring manager who spends less time reviewing it than you spend brushing your teeth. Every word must earn its place. Every bullet must answer one question: *Will this person book meetings?*

This chapter gives you the complete blueprint: how recruiters actually read resumes, the ATS keywords that get you past the robots, frameworks that turn bland duties into revenue-generating proof, five complete resume examples for different backgrounds, three cover letters that open doors, and a template you can use today.

3.1 The 6-Second Rule

3.1.1 Eye-Tracking Data and the "Above the Fold" Rule

Recruiters spend an average of **7.4 seconds** on the initial resume scan. Updated research suggests roughly 11 seconds with AI-assisted ATS — generous, but not by much. Eye-tracking studies show recruiters fixate on exactly six places, in order:

1. **Current job title and employer** — the #1 fixation point
2. **Dates next to that role** — to confirm tenure
3. **Previous title and employer**
4. **Those dates**
5. **Top of skills/summary section** — for keyword density
6. **Education line** at the bottom

Eighty percent of initial hiring judgments form from the top third of your resume — the portion visible without scrolling. If it does not immediately signal "SDR-ready," the rest may never be read.

SDR hiring managers scan for five things above all else:

Priority	What They Look For	Why It Matters
1. Meetings booked (vs. quota)	Pipeline generation proof	SDRs exist to book meetings
2. Qualified opportunities created	Lead quality, not just quantity	High SQL rates signal qualification skill
3. Pipeline dollar value	Revenue impact	Ties activity to business outcomes
4. Outbound activity metrics	Calls, emails, connect rates	Shows hustle and work ethic
5. Speed to promotion	Coachability and excellence	Signals high-potential hire

Your top third must answer four questions before the recruiter blinks: What is your current (or target) title? Who do you work for now? How long have you been doing this work? What is one number that proves you are good at it?

The fastest way to answer all four is with a **professional headline**:

- **Experienced SDRs:** "Sales Development Representative | B2B SaaS | 150+ Qualified Meetings/Yr | 120% Quota Attainment"
- **Career changers:** "Aspiring SDR | Customer Service Background | 98% Satisfaction Score | HubSpot Certified"
- **New grads:** "Recent Graduate | Business Administration | SDR-Certified | Fundraising: \$15K in 30 Days"

Place your strongest credential first. For experienced professionals, that is work history. For students and bootcamp grads, it may be education or certifications. Lead with whatever most convincingly answers "Can this person book meetings?"

3.2 Resume Structure

3.2.1 Reverse Chronological vs. Hybrid: Sections to Include and Exclude

There are three resume formats. Only two work for SDR roles.

Format	Best For	SDR Use Case	ATS-Friendly?
Reverse Chronological	Clear career progression	Experienced SDRs moving up	Highly — standard format
Functional (Skills-Based)	Skills stronger than timeline	Not recommended	Poor — dates/titles buried
Hybrid (Combination)	Career changers; mixed experience	Best for career changers & entry-level	Yes — if structured properly

Use reverse chronological if you have two or more years in sales-adjacent roles. Recruiters expect it; your most recent title, company, and quota attainment are immediately visible.

Use hybrid if you are switching careers, fresh out of school, or coming from the military. Lead with a skills summary that translates your background into sales language, then follow with dated work history.

Pure functional resumes fail because ATS systems misread experience when dates, titles, and employers are not clearly structured — and recruiters assume you are hiding gaps.

Hybrid format structure:

1. Contact Information
2. Professional Headline
3. Skills Summary / Core Competencies (6-8 bullets)
4. Selected Achievements (3-5 quantified outcomes)
5. Work Experience (reverse chronological, with dates)
6. Education and Certifications

Sections recruiters look at vs. skip:

Section	View Rate	Verdict
Current job title + company	94%	Critical
First 2-3 bullets of recent role	71%	Lead with best metric
Skills section	18%	Only if above the fold
Hobbies/Interests	8%	Skip
References	6%	Skip — assumed
Objective statement	17%	Skip — wastes prime space

Skip your full mailing address — city and state suffice.

3.2.2 30+ ATS Keywords for SDR Roles

The average job description lists 21.8 skills. The average resume lists 13. Candidates include just 51% of relevant keywords. Do not be average.

Must-have keywords:

Category	Keywords
Core SDR Activities	Lead generation, Prospecting, Cold calling, Email outreach, Pipeline development, Outbound sales, Inside sales
Qualification	Qualifying leads, Sales qualified lead (SQL), Discovery calls, BANT, MEDDIC, Lead qualification
CRM Systems	Salesforce CRM, HubSpot CRM, CRM management, Salesforce.com
Sales Engagement	Outreach.io, SalesLoft, LinkedIn Sales Navigator, Email sequencing, Sales cadence, Apollo.io
Data/Intelligence	ZoomInfo, Data enrichment, Market research, Account-based selling, ICP (Ideal Customer Profile)
B2B Terminology	B2B sales, SaaS, Business development, New business development, Demand generation
Performance Metrics	Quota attainment, Meetings booked, Pipeline generated, Conversion rate, SQL creation

Should-have keywords — use these to differentiate:

Category	Keywords
Methodologies	MEDDIC, SPIN Selling, Sandler, Challenger Sale, Consultative selling, Solution selling
Tools	6sense, Bombora, Orum, Nooks, ConnectAndSell, Lemlist
Functions	Social selling, Multi-channel campaigns, Account research, Objection handling
Analytics	Sales enablement, Predictive analytics, Conversational intelligence, Sales forecasting

Placement strategy: Put 1-2 core terms in your headline, 6-8 in your skills section, and integrate keywords into the first two bullets of your most recent role. If the job posting calls the role "Business Development Representative," use that exact phrase — not "Sales Development Rep."

3.3 How to Write SDR Resume Bullets

3.3.1 The CAR Framework, Power Verbs, and Quantifying Without Sales Metrics

Every bullet should follow the **CAR** structure:

- **Context:** What was the situation?
- **Action:** What did you do?
- **Result:** What was the quantified outcome?

Example: "Increased email response rates by 62% (Result) by implementing personalized A/B testing (Action) across 5,000+ prospect touchpoints (Context)."

Start every bullet with a strong action verb:

Category	Power Verbs
Revenue/Results	Generated, Exceeded, Grew, Accelerated, Expanded, Drove, Closed
Prospecting	Prospected, Sourced, Identified, Qualified, Researched, Targeted
Outreach	Booked, Scheduled, Connected, Converted, Engaged, Reached
Process	Optimized, Streamlined, Implemented, Automated, Built, Created
Leadership	Trained, Led, Coached, Mentored, Managed, Directed

Weak vs. strong bullets:

Weak (Dead Text)	Strong (Survives the Scan)
"Responsible for making cold calls"	"Averaged 70 daily outbound calls, booking 18 qualified meetings monthly generating \$250K in pipeline"
"Managed customer relationships"	"Renewed 38 customers and drove \$640K net expansion, reducing churn by 3 pts"
"Helped with lead generation"	"Generated 150+ qualified opportunities totaling \$12M in pipeline over 18 months"

If you do not have sales metrics, translate your existing experience:

Background	Instead of...	Write...
Customer Service	"Resolved complaints"	"De-escalated 15+ complaints per shift, achieving 96% satisfaction resolution rate"
Retail	"Helped customers at checkout"	"Processed 80+ transactions daily, upselling loyalty program to 40% of customers"
Hospitality	"Worked in fast-paced restaurant"	"Served 60+ covers per shift, maintaining 4.8/5 rating across 200+ reviews"
Military	"Led a squad"	"Supervised team of 12, managing \$2M+ in equipment with zero loss over 18 months"
College/No Experience	"Member of fundraising club"	"Led 5-person team to raise \$15,000 in 30 days through cold outreach to 200+ alumni"

The universal formula: **Action Verb + What You Did + Quantified Result + Context**. If a bullet does not contain a number, rewrite it until it does.

3.4 Five Complete Resume Examples

3.4.1 Career Changer: Retail/Hospitality to SDR

MARCUS RIVERA

Chicago, IL | (312) 555-0176 | marcus.rivera@email.com | linkedin.com/in/marcusrivera

SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE | High-Volume Customer-Facing Background | HubSpot Certified

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Cold calling & phone skills – 3+ years high-volume phone-based customer engagement (80+ calls/day)
- Consultative selling – Top 5% in upsell conversion across 3 restaurant locations
- CRM & tech tools – HubSpot Sales Certified; POS expert; fast learner on new software
- Objection handling – De-escalated 500+ difficult customer interactions with 95% resolution rate
- Resilience & drive – Thrived in fast-paced, high-rejection environments for 4+ years
- Goal attainment – Exceeded targets 8 consecutive quarters; promoted twice in 3 years

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Increased beverage upsell revenue by 35% in 6 months through consultative technique
- Served 60+ covers per shift, maintaining 4.9/5 customer rating
- Trained 12 new servers on upsell scripts, reducing ramp time by 25%
- Built repeat customer base of 40+ regulars through personalized service

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Restaurant Manager | Bella Vista Bistro | Chicago, IL

March 2022 – Present

- Manage floor operations for 120-seat restaurant generating \$1.2M annual revenue
- Train and coach 15-person FOH team on upsell techniques, increasing average check by 18%
- Personally handle 50+ guest interactions per shift; maintain 4.9/5 rating on Google/Yelp
- Developed incentive program that boosted wine upsell rate from 15% to 34% in 90 days
- Schedule staffing across 3 shifts, managing \$200K annual labor budget

Senior Server | Coastal Kitchen | Chicago, IL

June 2021 – March 2022

- Averaged \$3,200 in weekly sales – top 3 among 25 servers across 3 locations
- Upsold specials to 40% of tables, 20% above team average
- Resolved 20+ customer complaints per week with 95% satisfaction rate
- Cross-trained 5 new hires on POS and service standards

Server | The Grill House | Chicago, IL

May 2020 – June 2021

- Handled 50+ covers per shift in fast-paced downtown location
- Promoted to Senior Server in 8 months – fastest promotion in restaurant history

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

A.A. in Business Administration | City Colleges of Chicago | 2020

HubSpot Sales Software Certification | HubSpot Academy | 2024

Certified Sales Development Representative (CSDR) | 2024

Hospitality background reframed entirely in sales language. Clear progression signals growth. Every metric quantified.

3.4.2 Recent College Graduate

ETHAN BROOKS

Austin, TX | (512) 555-0198 | ethan.brooks@email.com | linkedin.com/in/ethanbrooks

ASPIRING SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE | Business Graduate | SDR-Certified | Cold Calling Trained

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Outbound prospecting – 50+ cold calls during SDR bootcamp; 12% connect rate
- CRM proficiency – HubSpot Sales Software Certified; Salesforce via Trailhead
- Email sequencing – Built 3-step sequences using Lavender.io; 28% open rate
- Lead qualification – Trained in BANT; practiced qualifying 25+ mock prospects
- Social selling – LinkedIn Sales Navigator certified; prospected 100+ accounts
- Communication – President of university debate team; top 5 regional finisher

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Led 5-person team to raise \$15,000 in 30 days through cold outreach to 200+ alumni
- Booked 8 discovery calls during SDR bootcamp capstone – #2 in cohort of 30
- Built mock outbound campaign targeting SaaS companies; 25 qualified leads in 2 weeks
- Ranked top 10% in sales role-play competition against 100+ participants

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Campus Fundraising Team Lead | University of Texas Development Office | Austin, TX
September 2023 – May 2024

- Managed team of 5 conducting cold outreach to 200+ alumni per semester
- Raised \$15,000 in 30-day campaign, exceeding \$10K goal by 50%
- Implemented CRM tracking in Google Sheets, improving follow-up rate by 40%
- Trained 3 new team members on objection handling frameworks

Retail Sales Associate | Summit Outfitters | Austin, TX
June 2022 – August 2023

- Assisted 50+ customers daily, achieving 115% of personal sales target
- Upsold protection plans to 35% of customers, averaging \$22 per transaction
- Maintained 4.9/5 customer satisfaction rating across 150+ reviews

Sales Development Representative Bootcamp | Higher Levels | Remote | 2024

- Completed 6-week SDR training covering cold calling, email outreach, CRM
- Practiced 50+ cold calls weekly; 12% connect-to-conversation rate
- Capstone: Booked 8 discovery calls, ranking #2 in cohort of 30

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

B.B.A. in Marketing | University of Texas at Austin | May 2024 | GPA: 3.6

HubSpot Sales Software Certification | HubSpot Academy | 2024

LinkedIn Sales Navigator Certification | LinkedIn Learning | 2024

SDR Bootcamp Certification | Higher Levels | 2024

Salesforce Trailhead: Sales Development Rep | Salesforce | 2024

Bootcamp positioned as professional experience. Fundraising reframed as sales. Specific metrics and competitive drive signal coachability.

3.4.3 Military Veteran

DAVID "DAVE" TANAKA

San Diego, CA | (858) 555-0134 | david.tanaka@email.com | linkedin.com/in/davidtanaka

SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE | U.S. Army Veteran | Mission-Driven Prospector | HubSpot Certified

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Cold calling & outreach – Fearless phone prospector; briefed senior leadership weekly
- CRM management – HubSpot Sales Certified; learning Salesforce; process-oriented
- Lead qualification – Intelligence analysis background; expert at prioritizing targets
- Objection handling – 4+ years managing high-stakes negotiations and conflict resolution
- Discipline & quota attainment – Mission-driven; never missed an operational target
- Team leadership – Led team of 12 through 3 deployments; trained 20+ soldiers

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Supervised logistics team managing \$2.5M in equipment with 100% accountability over 18 months
- Delivered weekly executive presentations on readiness across 500+ personnel
- Reduced supply delivery time by 25%, saving \$150K annually
- Trained 20+ junior soldiers; 95% retention rate vs. 78% brigade average

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Logistics Team Supervisor | U.S. Army | Fort Bragg, NC & Deployed

June 2020 – June 2024

- Supervised 12-person team managing \$2.5M in equipment across forward operating bases
- Planned and executed 50+ supply missions with 98% on-time delivery rate
- Presented weekly operational briefings to battalion commander and staff
- Implemented inventory tracking system reducing equipment loss by 40%
- Coordinated cross-functional operations with 4 units, managing stakeholder relationships

Team Leader | U.S. Army | Fort Bragg, NC

March 2018 – June 2020

- Led team of 8 through combat deployment; zero safety incidents across 12-month tour
- Managed training for 20+ soldiers; improved qualification rate by 30%
- Selected for accelerated leadership program reserved for top 15% of NCOs

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

B.S. in Organizational Leadership | Penn State University (Online) | Expected 2025

HubSpot Sales Software Certification | HubSpot Academy | 2024

Certified Sales Development Representative (CSDR) | SalesHood | 2024

Lean Six Sigma Green Belt | Army Credentialing Program | 2023

Veteran Transition Training (Sales Focus) | Hire Heroes USA | 2024

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Army Commendation Medal (2x) | Meritorious Service Medal | Army Achievement Medal (3x)

Military jargon eliminated; every term translated to business language. Equipment values provide tangible scale. Awards signal excellence; veteran credentialing shows proactive commitment to transition.

3.4.4 Customer Service Professional

JASMINE CARTER

Boston, MA | (617) 555-0142 | jasmine.carter@email.com | linkedin.com/in/jasminecarter

SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE | B2B SaaS | Customer-Facing Background | HubSpot Certified

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Cold calling & outbound prospecting – 50+ calls/day via customer retention campaigns
- CRM management – HubSpot Sales Software Certified; Salesforce Trailhead 15+ badges
- Lead qualification – Experience qualifying needs and routing to solutions
- Objection handling – 3+ years de-escalating difficult situations with 96% resolution rate
- Email outreach – A/B tested subject lines achieving 34% open rate on 500+ emails
- Metrics-driven – Ranked top 10% on team of 20 for satisfaction and upsells

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Generated \$48K in new product revenue over two quarters through consultative upselling
- De-escalated 15+ complaints per shift, maintaining 4.8/5 satisfaction score
- Onboarded 8 new hires, reducing ramp time by 30%
- Processed 80+ transactions daily, upselling loyalty program to 40% of customers

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Customer Experience Associate | TechRetail Inc. | Boston, MA

March 2021 – Present

- Handle 75+ customer interactions daily across phone, email, chat with 98% satisfaction
- Ranked #2 of 20 associates for upsell conversion, 22% above team mean
- Trained and mentored 8 new associates on product knowledge and consultative selling
- Implemented follow-up email sequence for abandoned cart recovery, recovering \$12K monthly
- Qualify and warm-transfer high-value accounts, passing 30+ qualified leads/month to sales

Customer Service Representative | ServeWell Solutions | Boston, MA

June 2019 – March 2021

- Resolved 60+ support tickets daily with 96% first-contact resolution
- Identified 15+ upsell opportunities per week, contributing to \$200K quarterly revenue
- Developed FAQ documentation reducing repeat inquiry volume by 18%
- "Rookie of the Year" among 50+ new hires for fastest quality metric improvement

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

B.A. in Communications | University of Massachusetts, Boston | 2019

HubSpot Sales Software Certification | HubSpot Academy | 2024

Certified Sales Development Representative (CSDR) | SalesHood | 2024

Salesforce Trailhead: Sales Development | Salesforce | 2024 (In Progress)

Leads with target role in headline — immediately signals intent. Every customer service metric reframed as sales-relevant. "Selected Achievements" provides proof before work history validates it.

3.4.5 Current SDR Moving Up

ALEX MORGAN

Denver, CO | (720) 555-0192 | alex.morgan@email.com | linkedin.com/in/alexmorgan-sdr

SENIOR SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE | B2B SaaS | 130% Quota Attainment | \$4.2M Pipeline

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Outbound prospecting – 85+ calls, 120+ emails daily; 18% connect rate, 3x team average
- Pipeline generation – \$4.2M qualified pipeline over 18 months; 150+ SQLs
- Multi-channel campaigns – Email, phone, LinkedIn, direct mail cadences via Outreach.io
- Lead qualification – MEDDIC-certified; 42% SQL-to-opportunity conversion
- CRM & analytics – Salesforce power user; built pipeline forecasting dashboards
- Team leadership – Mentored 4 junior SDRs; improved team connect rate by 15%

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Exceeded quota 6 consecutive quarters (130% avg); promoted SDR I to Senior SDR in 12 months
- #1 performer on 8-person team: \$4.2M pipeline, 150+ SQLs in 18 months
- Launched ABM campaign targeting enterprise fintech; booked 22 meetings in 45 days at \$50K ACV
- Reduced lead response time from 2 hours to 18 minutes, increasing conversion by 28%

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Sales Development Representative | DataFlow Analytics | Denver, CO

March 2023 – Present

- Promoted after 12 months for consistent overperformance (130% average quota attainment)
- Generate \$250K+ monthly qualified pipeline through outbound to VP-level enterprise buyers
- Manage full-cycle outbound: research, personalized outreach, qualification, AE handoff
- Mentor 4 junior SDRs through weekly call coaching; 3 promoted within 12 months
- Built Salesforce dashboard adopted by team for pipeline velocity tracking
- Collaborate with marketing on 5 ABM campaigns generating \$800K+ pipeline

Sales Development Representative | DataFlow Analytics | Denver, CO

June 2022 – March 2023

- Booked 35+ qualified meetings monthly within 90 days, ramping to 50+ by month 6
- 120% of quota in Q3 and Q4 2022; "Rookie of the Quarter" in first full quarter
- Prospected 300+ accounts using LinkedIn Sales Navigator, ZoomInfo, Apollo.io
- 95% data hygiene in Salesforce, enabling accurate forecasting
- 40+ hours sales methodology training (MEDDIC, Challenger Sale)

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

B.A. in Economics | University of Colorado Boulder | 2022

MEDDIC Sales Methodology Certification | MEDDIC Academy | 2024

Salesforce Certified Administrator | Salesforce | 2023

HubSpot Sales Software Certification | HubSpot Academy | 2022

Outreach.io Power User Certification | Outreach | 2023

Headline leads with exact target title and three hard numbers. Every bullet contains a metric. Promotion in 12 months signals exceptional performance; mentorship shows readiness for team lead or AE roles.

3.5 Cover Letters That Work

Most SDR cover letters fail for the same reason most cold emails fail: they lead with what the writer wants instead of what the reader needs. Treat your cover letter like a sales email — four paragraphs, 200 to 280 words.

Paragraph 1: The Hook. Open with a company-specific observation, not "I am writing to express my interest."

Paragraph 2: The Proof. One achievement. One number. One sentence on how you got there. Formula: [What you did] + [Result as number] + [How, in one detail].

Paragraph 3: The Value Proposition. Connect your skills to their context. Name their ICP. Mention one or two tools.

Paragraph 4: The Close. State availability. Name the next step. Do not end passively.

Cover Letter Example 1: Career Changer (Customer Service to SDR)

Dear Hiring Manager,

[Company]'s expansion into the mid-market healthcare vertical aligns with my background — I have spent 3 years supporting healthcare technology users and understand clinical operations pain points. I am applying for the Business Development Representative role to bring that domain expertise to your outbound team.

At ServeWell Solutions, I resolved 60+ support tickets daily while identifying 15+ upsell opportunities per week, contributing to \$200K in quarterly expansion revenue. When customers described workflow problems, I probed deeper, documented pain points, and transferred them to account managers with context that closed 35% of conversations.

Your posting mentions outbound to healthcare operations directors using Salesforce and LinkedIn Sales Navigator. I have used Salesforce for 2 years, earned my HubSpot Sales Certification, and completed 50+ practice cold calls through an SDR bootcamp at 12% connect rate. I understand the ICP, I know the tools, and I know how to start conversations that convert.

I am available Tuesday or Thursday afternoon next week. Would 2 PM work for a 15-minute conversation about how I can contribute to [Company]'s Q1 pipeline?

Best,
[Your Name]

Cover Letter Example 2: Recent Graduate

Dear Hiring Manager,

Researching [Company]'s product-led growth strategy, I was impressed by your approach to converting free users through targeted outbound — exactly the model I have studied and practiced. I am a recent Business Administration graduate with SDR certification, applying for the Sales Development Representative role.

At TechStart Solutions, I contributed to a 23% lead generation increase by connecting with 47 qualified prospects over three months. I also led a campus fundraising campaign, cold-calling 200+ alumni to raise \$15,000 — exceeding our \$10K goal by 50%. Both experiences taught me that personalized research and persistent follow-up separate good outreach from spam.

I see your team uses Outreach.io and values multi-channel prospecting. I have built sequences in Apollo.io and completed my LinkedIn Sales Navigator certification. I am coachable, hungry, and ready to hit the phones on day one.

I would welcome the chance to discuss how I can contribute to [Company]'s pipeline goals. I am free next week — would Wednesday at 10 AM work?

Best,
[Your Name]

Cover Letter Example 3: Military Veteran

Dear Hiring Manager,

After 6 years in the U.S. Army leading logistics operations and briefing senior leadership, I am transitioning to a career where discipline and mission-focus drive revenue. [Company]'s veteran hiring program and emphasis on structured outbound make the SDR role a natural fit.

I supervised a 12-person team managing \$2.5M in equipment across forward operating bases, achieving 98% mission success rate. I delivered weekly presentations to battalion commanders — translating complex operational data into clear recommendations under time pressure. Those skills map directly to CRM management, pipeline forecasting, and executive-level conversations.

I have completed HubSpot Sales Software Certification and SDR training through Hire Heroes USA, practicing 50+ cold calls weekly. Your posting emphasizes Salesforce — I am actively completing my Administrator certification, expected [Date].

I am available next week to discuss how military discipline translates to sales success at [Company]. Would Tuesday afternoon work for 20 minutes?

Respectfully,
[Your Name]

Cover letter mistakes to avoid:

Mistake

Why It Kills

Fix

"I am writing to express my interest..."	Generic from word one	Open with company-specific observation
"I am a people person" / "I am eager to learn"	Empty claims, zero proof	Replace with achievement + number
Over 300 words	Long = poor judgment for SDR roles	Keep to 200-280 words
Passive close	Puts action on them	State availability + specific CTA
No metrics	Generic claims = rejection	Include at least one quantified achievement

3.6 Resume Submission Checklist

Before you submit, run through this checklist. One missed item can cost you the interview.

Content:

- Tailored to this specific role
- Contains exact keywords from the job description
- Every bullet quantified with numbers where possible
- No unsupported clichés ("hard worker," "team player")
- No irrelevant info (hobbies, references, full address)
- Professional email; customized LinkedIn URL included
- City and state only; file named FirstName.LastName.Resume.pdf

Format:

- One page for 0-3 years; 2 pages max for extensive achievements
- Clean, ATS-friendly single-column; standard fonts (Arial, Calibri, 10-12pt)
- No photos, graphics, tables, or text boxes; saved as PDF

Quality:

- Spell-checked; read aloud; reviewed by another person
- LinkedIn headline matches resume target role

Universal Resume Template:

```

[NAME – 18-22pt font]
[City, State] | [Phone] | [Email] | [LinkedIn URL]

[PROFESSIONAL HEADLINE – Target Role | Domain | Key Metric | Certification]

CORE COMPETENCIES
- 6-8 bullets using exact keywords from job description
- Mix technical skills (CRM, tools) and sales skills (prospecting, qualification)
- One bullet showing quantified achievement

[Optional: SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS – 3-4 quantified bullets across roles]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

[Job Title] | [Company] | [City, State]
[Month Year] – [Month Year]
- [Strongest achievement – quantified, with sales language]
- [Second strongest – different skill/metric]
- [Third – showing range or growth]
- [Fourth – only if adds value]

[Job Title] | [Company] | [City, State]
[Month Year] – [Month Year]
- [Quantified achievement]
- [Quantified achievement]

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS
[Degree] | [School] | [Year]
[Certification] | [Issuer] | [Year]

```