Accelerating revenue by adding a sales-led motion to your PLG

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Summary

Finding the right sales model is crucial for unlocking a company's growth potential. After successfully implementing a Product-Led Growth (PLG) strategy, many SaaS companies add a sales-led growth (SLG) motion to further accelerate growth.

This approach is not about replacing PLG but complementing it with a sales-led strategy that targets larger deals and, often, larger enterprise customers.

While PLG effectively drives initial adoption and user engagement, larger deals with more complex stakeholder involvement and tailored solutions often require a sales-led motion. A sales-led motion empowers SaaS companies to navigate and address complex buying processes.

In my case, adding a sales-led motion enabled our company to scale its revenue potential by securing larger contracts that provided greater value to customers.

The following steps outline how to effectively augment a PLG strategy with a sales-led motion, including overcoming internal resistance to a change in sales model.

For the sake of a complete story and for confidentiality, this piece is a conglomeration of several experiences rolled into one.

About the author

Pete Giordano has worked in early, transformative roles at companies like DoubleClick, VMware and Google Cloud. Most recently, he served as the Global Director for Go-to-Market Strategy for Google Workspace during the pandemic, and steered strategies for a product serving 3 billion users and 10 million paying customers.

Today, Pete works as an Executive in Residence and GTM Advisor at Scale Venture Partners, calling upon his expertise in Go-to-Market Strategy and innovation to advise B2B SaaS companies targeting the Mid-Market to Enterprise segments.

How we scaled this

Overview and results

Challenge

Early PLG motion did not drive desired growth

Solution

Adding a sales-led motion to an existing PLG motion to scale growth

Results

Increased ARR 300%+

Reduced CAC by improving sales process efficiency

Increased customer references 3x

Target
Mid-market, Enterprise

Product
B2B, SaaS

ACV
$50–$250K+

12 months

Time to go from initial research to full implementation of new sales motion

Map the buyer's journey

Mapping the buyer's journey is crucial for understanding the prospect's buying process, particularly for more complex solutions and within larger prospect environments. Identifying all stakeholders and their influence at each stage helps pinpoint bottlenecks, unnecessary complexities, and critical decision points, an essential step when scaling with a sales-led motion.

What we did

First, marketing and sales teamed up to identify customers who would be willing to share details about their buying processes Then we talked directly with those customers to understand their buying processes, decisions, and requirements for purchasing our solution, focusing on the complexities involved in engaging multiple stakeholders within enterprise accounts.

How we did it

Using **Gartner's B2B Buyer Journey model**, we broke the buyer journey into six stages: problem identification, solution exploration, requirements building, supplier selection, validation, and consensus creation. Leveraging Gartner's Buying Jobs to Be Done framework, we created our own framework with questions for customers.

We then conducted group interviews with customers to understand the technical buying process and the emotional and social motivations at each stage. Collaborating with our sales, product, marketing, and customer success teams, we identified all prospect touch points and actions.

Why it worked

The journey model revealed what influenced prospect actions during the purchasing process. Documenting the complex buying process with multiple stakeholders helped us understand the problem scope and business benefits of our solution, allowing us to develop requirements and business cases. For example, we learned more about customers' requirements for integrating our product with their financial and accounting software.

As a bonus, identifying overlooked requirements empowered us to tailor our engagement strategies and develop features that addressed these enterprise-level requirements.

Stakeholder map

Example of a stakeholder map
to help sellers build credibility and
engage with buyers.

	STAKEHOLDER #1	STAKEHOLDER #2	STAKEHOLDER #3
FUNCTIONAL ROLE	**Developer / Engineer**	**VP of Engineering / CTO**	**CFO**
TITLES	**Senior API Developer, Lead Engineer**	**VP of Engineering, Chief Technology Officer**	**Chief Financial Officer**
EXAMPLES	Jane Doe **Senior API Developer** **Acme Corp.**	John Doe **VP of Engineering** **Acme Corp.**	Bob Baker **CFO** **Acme Corp.**
STAKE-HOLDER TYPE	**End User / Entry Point**	**Decision Maker**	**Economic Buyer**
KEY GOALS / MOTIVATION	**Ensure API performance and uptime, reduce manual intervention**	**Implement reliable system health across platforms**	**Achieve cost savings, justify ROI**
CURRENT APPROACH	**Reactive monitoring tools, manual troubleshooting**	**Ad-hoc solutions, limited automation**	**Manual approval processes, periodic budget reviews**
CHALLENGES	**Limited automation, frequent API downtimes**	**Fragmented platforms, high operational costs**	**High downtime costs, inefficient budget allocation**

Buyer journey mapping example

EARLY		MIDDLE		LATE	
Prospecting	Connecting & Qualifying	Needs Assessment & Discovery	Presentation & Demonstration	Handling objections & negotiations	Closing the deal

YOUR COMPANY'S SALES PROCESS

Determine urgency: no/low or tactical vs. strategic	Confirm urgency	Develop business case
Determine tech adopter type: innovator/early vs. mid/late	Confirm current process & tools	Map pain points to business case
Identify influencers and stakeholders	Map pain points & value prop	Secure budget
	Map all buying stakeholders (see stakeholder role definitions on page 20)	Align on implementation, adoption, KPIs
		Identify conflicts/priority differences
		Drive consensus among stakeholders

Info challenges	People challenges	Option challenges

CUSTOMER'S BUYING PROCESS

Insufficient information to make a decision	Newcomer influencers & stakeholders	Too many options
Conflicting information	Different views on the problem	Intro of new options creates confusion
	Competing priorities	Unclear how to implement different options
	Different purchase criteria	

USE THESE QUESTIONS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER'S PROCESS

Problem Identification	"How are we doing?" "How do we compare to peers?" "Do we need to do something?"	**Validation**	"We need to be sure we're picking the right solution." "What do peers/references say?" "Third party reviews?"
Solution Exploration	"How can we solve the problem?" "How would a solution work in our company?" "What are the priorities and trade-offs?"	**Requirements Building**	"What exactly do we need the purchase to do?" "What criteria will we use to make a decision?" "How do we prioritize trade-offs?"
Consensus	"Do we have a shared understanding among the stakeholders?" "What are the differences in priorities to resolve?" "Do we have a solid business case?" "Where is the budget and how do we secure it?"	**Supplier selection**	"Does the solution do what we want the way we want in our company?" "What alternatives are there and how do they compare?"

Top tip

Treat this like a process, not a project. Maintain consistent touch points with sellers and all customer-facing teams to continually gather feedback, refine your understanding of the buyer's journey, and fine-tune your engagement strategies.

Map customer business value

Sales-led models are costly to set up and execute,
so ensure your offering can support that expense.

What we did

We refined our product's value prop to accommodate the sales-led motion and align with the strategic goals and pain points of large enterprises.

How we did it

We interviewed C-level executives, directors, and key stakeholders who directly influence strategic decisions to fully understand their challenges.

Their insights helped us create business value trees, mapping each prospect's strategic objectives, annual business goals, and key initiatives and linking them to our product offerings. For example, by deeply understanding the integration requirements with financial and accounting systems, we gained valuable insight into our product's ability to reduce Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) and improve customers' cash positions.

Why it worked

Each interaction refined our value proposition so that it could better resonate at the strategic level. For example, we learned to show that our product could directly improve metrics like DSO and drive top-level business objectives.

This approach allowed us to pursue much larger enterprise accounts by selling desired business value at higher levels of a given prospect's organization.

TARGET CUSTOMER BUSINESS VALUE MAP EXAMPLE

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES & KEY RESULTS (OKR)	VALUE DRIVERS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIS)	JOB FUNCTION & KEY INITIATIVES	'MUST HAVE' CAPABILITIES	PRODUCT BENEFIT TO ADDRESS
Increased Customer Satisfaction	Improved system reliability	Conversion Rate %	VP of Engineering: Improve system reliability	Predictive issue detection before impact	**Predictive Analytics and Machine Learning to preemptively identify and address API issues.**
	Reduced downtime	Mean Time to Detect (MTTD)	IT Operations: Automate incident management processes	Automated incident response	**Enhanced Automated Problem Resolution to resolve incidents automatically.**
Operational Cost Reduction	Increased operational efficiency	Mean Time to Repair (MTTR)	CTO: Reduce manual intervention	Centralized monitoring of multi-platform systems	**Cross-Platform Integration for centralized API monitoring and management.**
	Reduced manual intervention	Automated Resolution Rate	System Administrators: Reduce manual resolution effort	Automation for recurring issues	**Automated Problem Resolution for faster, efficient issue resolution.**

Top tip

Using prospects' language, describe how your solution improves the specific KPIs and value drivers that ladder up to their strategic objectives.

Manage sales efficiency

What we did

When changing or adding a sales model, it's important to revisit your sales quotas, comp structure, enablement architecture, and reporting infrastructure to tailor them to the new model.

After confirming that our product's strategy and roadmap supported a sales-led motion, we drove alignment with our CRO, CFO, and CEO to develop a new sales comp plan and sales process. As we aimed for higher AARPA (Average Annual Revenue Per Account) targets, we emphasized high-value engagements and more consultative sales. Along the way, we assessed how well sales efforts aligned with the broader strategic goals and financial health of our company.

How we did it

We built a six-month program to efficiently scale the new sales-led motion. After introducing the motion, we regularly reviewed key financial measures of sales efficiency like CAC payback period and LTV to CAC ratio (more details at right).

For example, we found that, within two quarters, over 30% of the opportunities were attached to a sales-led motion and estimated to be six-figure deals versus traditional four- and five-figure product-led deals.

Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) payback period: Ensured resources invested in acquiring customers were recovered within a reasonable period, typically 12 to 18 months. (Less than 12 months is excellent!)

Lifetime Value (LTV) to CAC ratio: Assessed the long-term value of customers relative to acquisition costs, aiming for a ratio of 4:1 or higher for sustainability in enterprise sales.

	MONTH 1–2	MONTH 3–4	MONTH 5–6	NOTES
SALES PROCESS RAMP	**Early: qualification & discovery** Sellers are focused on qualifying Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) to Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs). Insights from the qualification process are used to refine the ICP.	**Mid sales cycle: align on needs & present value prop** Sellers are now capable of aligning the prospects' needs, quantifiable business value, and value prop.	**Later sales cycle: prove business case & close** Sellers begin to win deals. Feedback from 'Closed/Won' deals improves sales enablement, marketing, and sales processes.	The sales process ramp may be longer or shorter for your business. The key is to start with the end in mind (Closed/Won Deals) and work backward from there.
GOAL	**Qualify 20 SQLs per seller**	**> 10 qualified opportunities per seller**	**> 1 opportunity 'Closed/Won' per seller**	This number varies according to your market, industry, use case, product, etc. Make sure you start with an appropriate number for your business.
ACTIVATE & TRAIN	Provide MQLs from the enterprise segment (1,000+ employees) with high potential AARPA and propensity for premium features. Provide new marketing and sales playbooks developed from Steps 1 and 2 above that address the new ICP's needs, qualification, and buying process.	Train sellers to articulate the value proposition of enterprise-wide adoption to key buying stakeholders.	Train sellers to demonstrate the product's ability to improve the KPIs and value drivers crucial to achieving the prospect's business objectives (Step 2). Use the Buyer's Journey and Buying Stakeholder map (Step 1) to train sellers to quickly identify the right people, surface requirements and priorities, resolve conflicts, and build compelling business cases.	In our case, we trained sellers to focus on prospects that highly valued premium enterprise features such as SSO, digital loss prevention (DLP), and eDiscovery.
MEASURE & MANAGE	Confirm SQLs meet requirements for premium features to ensure a baseline AARPA.	Refine ICP and target accounts for sales-led motion in response to new data. Perform an initial review of key financial metrics inputs, including estimated CAC, LTV, and sales cycle time.	Enable executives in C-suite, PM, marketing, and customer success to support sellers and prospects through final stages of the deal cycle. Regularly review key financial metrics such as Contract Value and LTV:CAC ratio.	Use data from your tech stack to drive decision making: Sales Automation Tools (e.g.,Outreach, Salesloft) CRM Systems (e.g.,Salesforce, HubSpot) Financial Tools (e.g.,Xero, QuickBooks) Product Analytics Tools (e.g.,Mixpanel, Amplitude) Performance Tracking (e.g.,Tableau, Power BI)

'ALWAYS ON' ACTIVITIES

Weekly debrief sessions between PM, marketing, and sales to identify and resolve friction.

Over-communicate what's working and what's not across the organization.

Refine enablement activities and tools based on feedback from sellers, marketing, and customer success.

Top tip

Design and implement a month-by-month plan to accelerate efficiency of the new sales-led motion. Engage product marketing, marketing, and customer success to support sellers and refine the sales process.

Align Internal Leaders

Gaining internal consensus is vital when adding a sales-led motion to complement your PLG strategy, especially in complex organizations.

What we did

Aligned leaders across departments on market needs and strategic objectives to ensure cohesive market engagement.

How we did it

We convened leaders from product, engineering, marketing, sales, and customer success to address concerns and perspectives in sessions focused on the integration of a sales-led motion with our existing PLG strategy.

Why it worked

Encouraging open dialogue, we delved into each leader's viewpoint, aligning them with overarching business objectives. Transparent communication and inclusive decision-making paved the way for a smooth transition in sales strategy.

Once a clear Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) and market potential had been established, internal discussion shifted to how to effectively implement the change. This alignment smoothed earlier frictions around the strategy shift, focusing collective efforts on a high-touch enterprise sales strategy for high-value customers.

After alignment, the leadership team committed to the strategic pivot, recognizing its importance for long-term sustainability and value creation despite potential short-term disruptions.
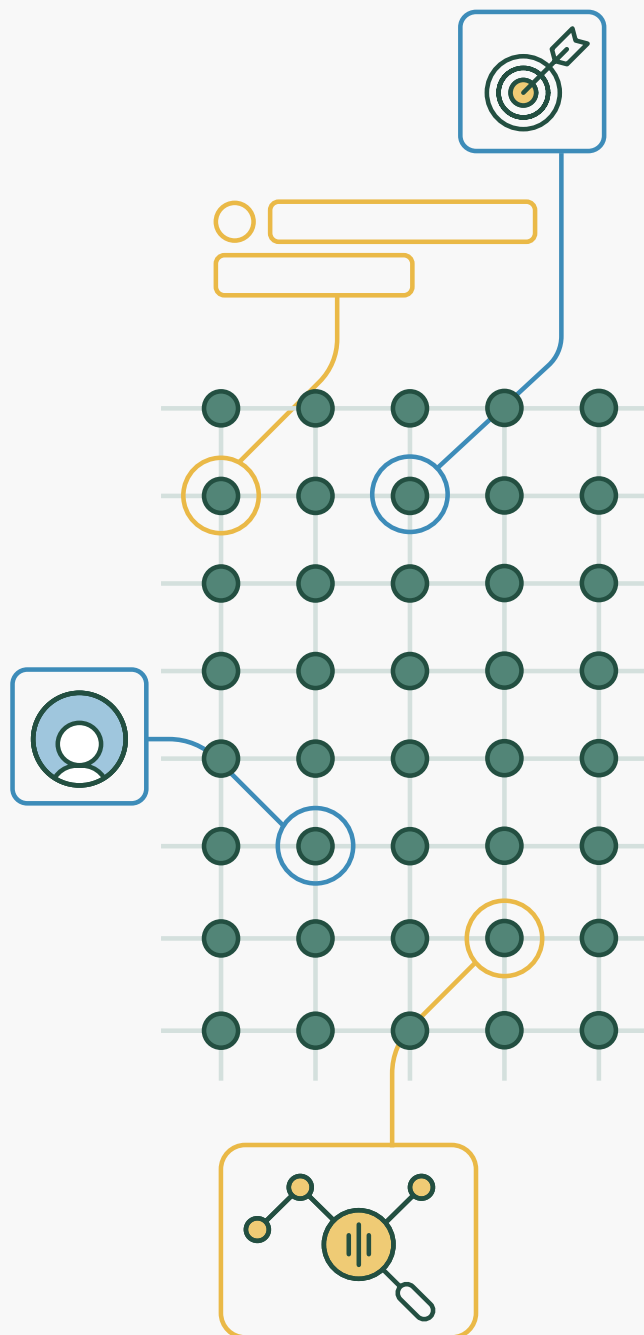
Top tip

Maintain transparent communication with leaders from all key departments about the reasons for adding a sales-led motion and how it complements the existing PLG strategy.
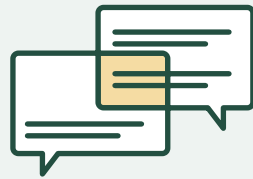
Key takeaways

Leverage your product and sales model to address the complexity

Create and distribute customer enablement materials that showcase the full benefits of your product, empowering buyers to make informed decisions swiftly and independently.

Overcome internal resistance: educate leaders on the financial and strategic reasons for change and involve them in shaping the path forward.

Build an adaptable sales model

Monitor leading KPIs (e.g., engagement rates, pipeline velocity) and lagging KPIs (e.g., sales conversion rates, customer churn, CAC) to dynamically adjust the sales strategy. This may involve introducing new sales models or modifying existing ones to align with changing market demands.

Match your capabilities to the market

Re-assign, train, and enable existing PLG sales resources (e.g., offshore, inside, etc.) to fit the right market, average deal size, and customer requirements. It's okay if the initial sales-led motion targets the corporate or mid-market segments; you can then work up to the enterprise segments as the company and product capabilities evolve.

Simplify the buying process

Understand how prospective customers think about integrating your product into their operations and provide the evidence or validation they need to build confidence in the purchase.

Target customer business value map

In this example, we start with Strategic Business Objectives on the left and map those into Value Drivers, KPIs, 'must have' capabilities, and supporting product features.

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES & KEY RESULTS (OKR)	VALUE DRIVERS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIS)	JOB FUNCTION & KEY INITIATIVES	'MUST HAVE' CAPABILITIES	PRODUCT BENEFIT TO ADDRESS
	Value Driver 1	KPI 1	Function 1: Initiative	Capability 1	**Benefit 1**
		KPI 2	Function 2: Initiative	Capability 2	**Benefit 2**
OKR 1	Value Driver 2	KPI 3	Function 3: Initiative	Capability 3	**Benefit 3**
		KPI 4	Function 4: Initiative	Capability 4	**Benefit 4**
	Value Driver 3	KPI 5	Function 5: Initiative	Capability 5	**Benefit 5**
		KPI 6	Function 6: Initiative	Capability 6	**Benefit 6**
	Value Driver 1	KPI 1	Function 1: Initiative	Capability 1	**Benefit 1**
		KPI 2	Function 2: Initiative	Capability 2	**Benefit 2**
OKR 2	Value Driver 2	KPI 3	Function 3: Initiative	Capability 3	**Benefit 3**
		KPI 4	Function 4: Initiative	Capability 4	**Benefit 4**
	Value Driver 3	KPI 5	Function 5: Initiative	Capability 5	**Benefit 5**
		KPI 6	Function 6: Initiative	Capability 6	**Benefit 6**

Stakeholder map definitions

Stakeholder map guide
definitions and best practices.

	DEFINITION	BEST PRACTICES
FUNCTIONAL ROLE	**The main function of a buyer**	**Identify the function (e.g., Head of Sales) vs. the title (e.g., Chief Sales Officer)** **Limit to 4–5 primary roles involved in all buying decisions**
TITLES	**The most common titles for that stakeholder**	**Limit to the 2–3 most commonly found titles**
EXAMPLES	**The name and company of a real life customer who personifies this stakeholder**	**Identify the name and company of a current customer to ensure the stakeholder map reflects real people, goals and challenges**
STAKE-HOLDER TYPE	**The stakeholder's role in the buying process (see stakeholder type definitions)**	**Be honest about the most common entry-point stakeholder vs. being aspirational**
KEY GOALS / MOTIVATION	**What the buyer wants to accomplish, key outcomes that they want to achieve**	**Stay focused on the buyer; mirror their perspective, not ours** **Focus on business outcomes and what they care passionately about vs. initiatives and tactics**
CURRENT APPROACH	**What the buyer currently uses to meet their goals**	**Base on different approaches and options, not a list of competitors** **Account for ad hoc or manual process not requiring investment**
CHALLENGES	**What the buyer's current challenges are**	**Use the buyer's language, not ours** **Only include challenges that can be tied to ROI** **Relate challenges to time, money, control and complexity**

Stakeholder map

Stakeholder map template—
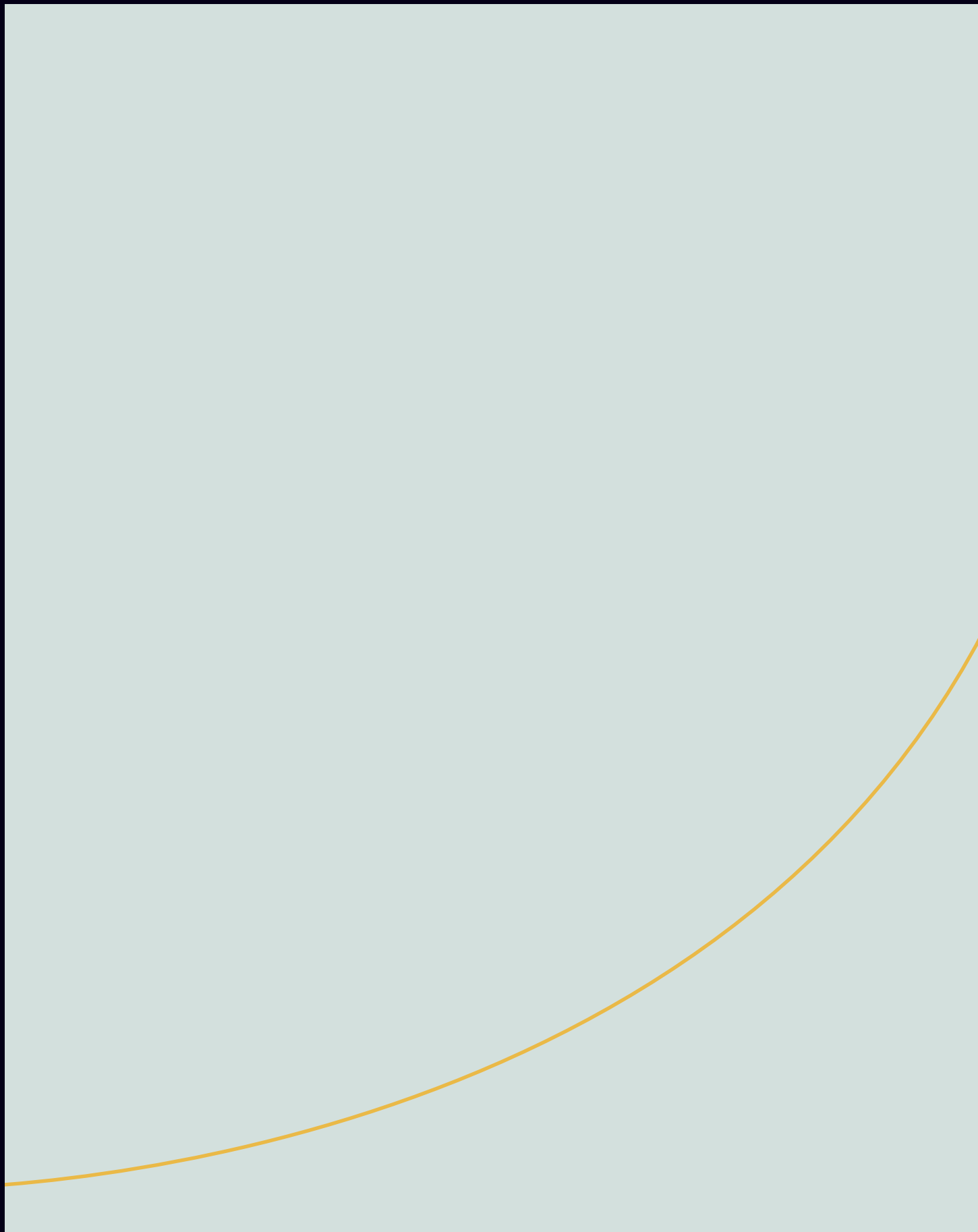help sellers build credibility and
engage with buyers.

	STAKEHOLDER #1	STAKEHOLDER #2	STAKEHOLDER #3
FUNCTIONAL ROLE			
TITLES			
EXAMPLES			
STAKE-HOLDER TYPE			
KEY GOALS / MOTIVATION			
CURRENT APPROACH			
CHALLENGES			

Buying stakeholder role definitions

Today's startups typically need to embrace the entry point stakeholder, having clear strategies for how to collaborate with them to help them champion and progress the deal.

STAKEHOLDER ROLE	DESCRIPTION
ENTRY POINT	Most likely to engage in early conversations. Owns the investigation of your solution.
END USER	The primary user of your solution who typically experiences the most pain related to what you solve and sell. May not be involved in the buying process.
TECHNICAL BUYER	Determines whether your solution meets the technical requirements of the organization, including required integrations.
ECONOMIC BUYER	Owns the budget. Part of the buying committee and often recommends / signs-off on solutions. Not the owner of the process and does not lead the buying process.
DECISION MAKER	Makes the final decision.
APPROVER	Typically involved late in the process. Must approve moving forward and budgeting for the chosen solution

SCALE