



KEN RESEARCH · METHODOLOGY

Who are GTM engineers, and where do they come from?

The data, the methods, every number and every limitation behind the study.

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ABOUT THE DATA

This study uses Ken internal data: the company, people and web records Ken uses for sales and outreach, reused by Cristian Frunze for this study.

Aggregates only. Any group smaller than 50 people is suppressed, and no individual is named.

Figures 1 to 4 are the study page's charts, drawn from the same numbers. The methodology after them keeps the full tables.

SUMMARY

Who are GTM engineers, and where do they come from?

Mostly go-to-market people who learned to build, not software engineers. The title grew 6.5x, from 121 holders at the end of 2023 to 791 in March 2026, and 7.7% came from software or data engineering.

6.5x

growth in people holding a GTM engineer title, from 121 at the end of 2023 to 791 in March 2026, while sales and marketing headcount stayed flat.

7.7%

of new GTM engineers came straight from software or data engineering. Sales roles, marketing, ops and founder jobs each supplied more.

19.3%

of GTM engineers list Clay on their profile, against 0.2% of RevOps people. 26.6% mention AI tools, against 3.0% of SDRs.

67.8%

work at companies with 200 or fewer employees, against 39.2% of people hired as SDRs since 2024. Only 9.7% work at companies over 1,000.

Data and method

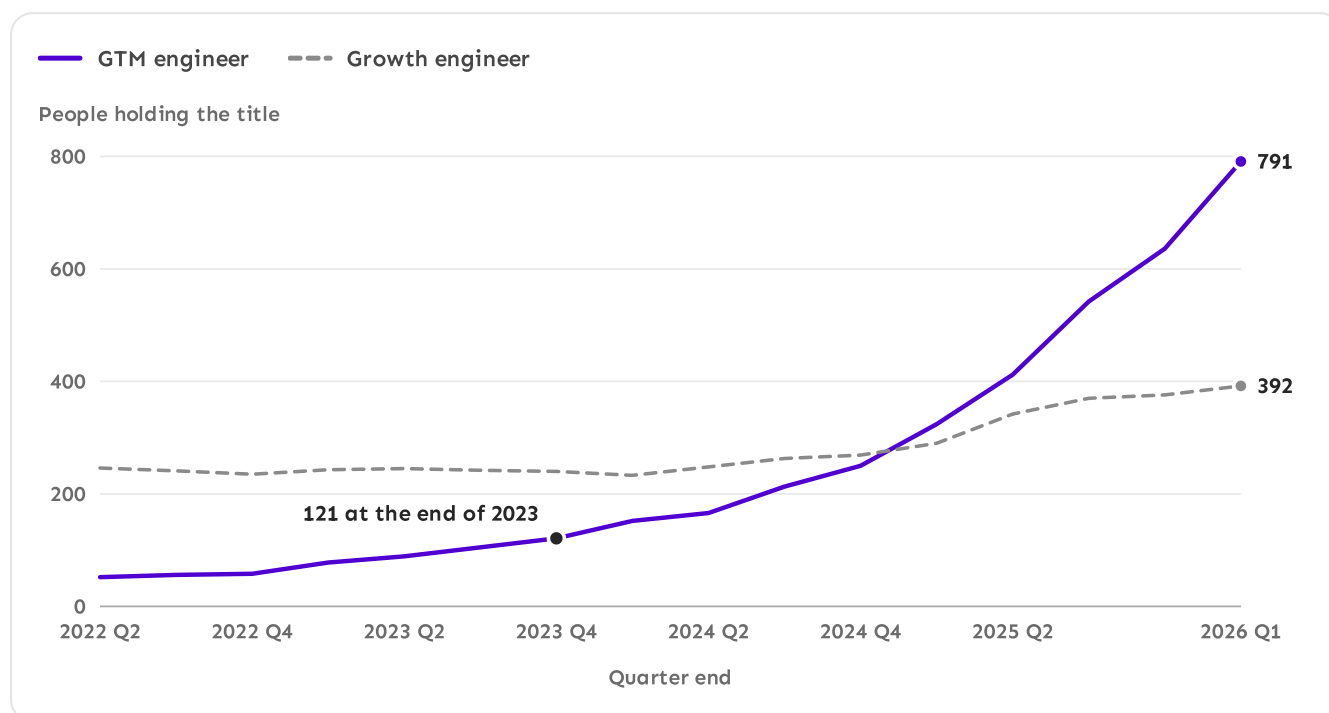
Data	Ken internal data: the public professional profiles, work histories, skill keywords and company records Ken uses for sales and outreach, reused by Cristian Frunze for this study. Six countries: the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.
Sample	1,028 people who have held a GTM engineer title (791 in March 2026), compared with 60,823 SDRs, 51,490 RevOps people and the 8,306,164 people in sales and marketing jobs in March 2026.
Date range	Quarter ends from 2019 Q1 to 2026 Q1, from profiles updated up to April 2026. Growth measured from the end of 2023.
Method	Pre-registered. Title rules with a manual audit of 200 titles per tier, quarterly headcount from job start and end dates, previous-role analysis, and tool mentions compared across groups. Headline numbers recomputed by an independent analysis.
Excluded	- Recruiters hiring for the role, Oracle and F5 "GTM" product titles, and unrelated revenue or growth engineers - Presales engineers, and titles such as "Software Engineer, GTM" - Jobs with no start date - Any group under 50 people
Privacy	Aggregates only. Any group smaller than 50 people is suppressed, and no individual is named.

FIGURES

The study's charts

FIGURE 1

GTM engineers grew 6.5x after 2023 and passed growth engineers in 2025

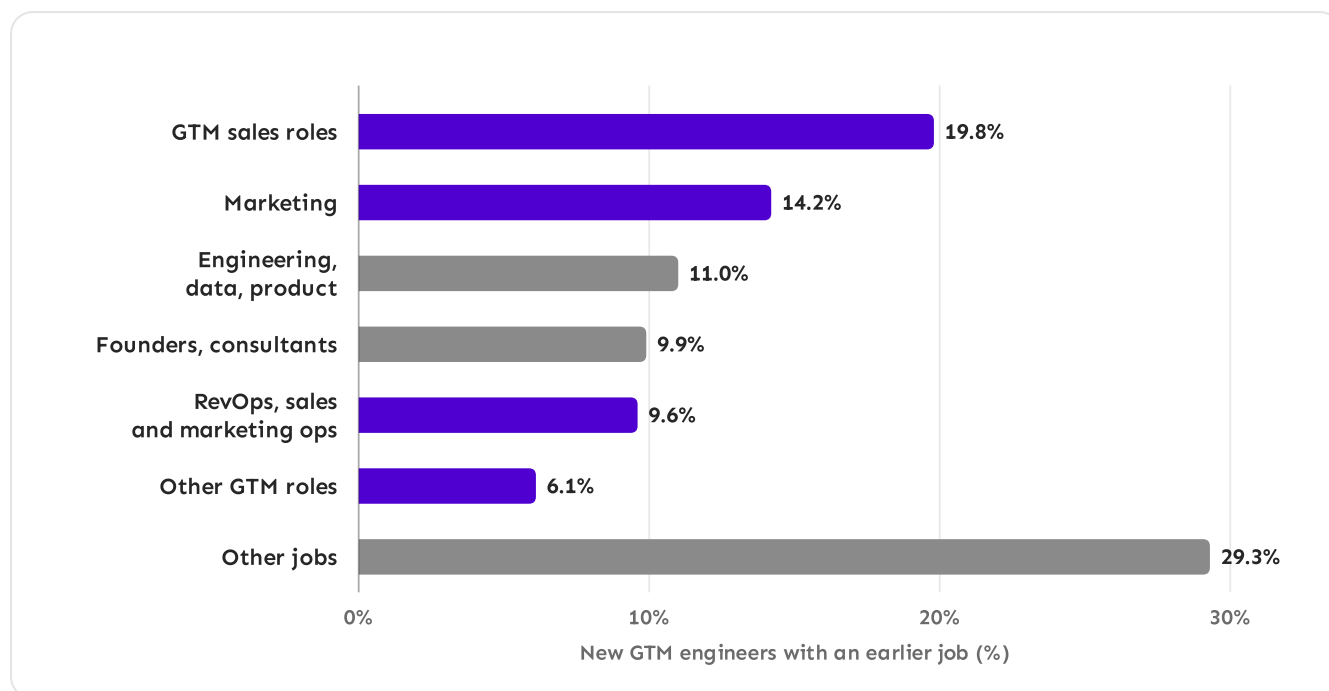


People holding a GTM engineer title, and the older growth engineer title, at each quarter end. Before mid-2022 fewer than 50 people held a GTM engineer title, so earlier quarters are not shown. March 2026 may still be missing late profile updates.

Source: Ken internal data (company and career records Ken uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FIGURE 2

Most came from go-to-market jobs, not engineering

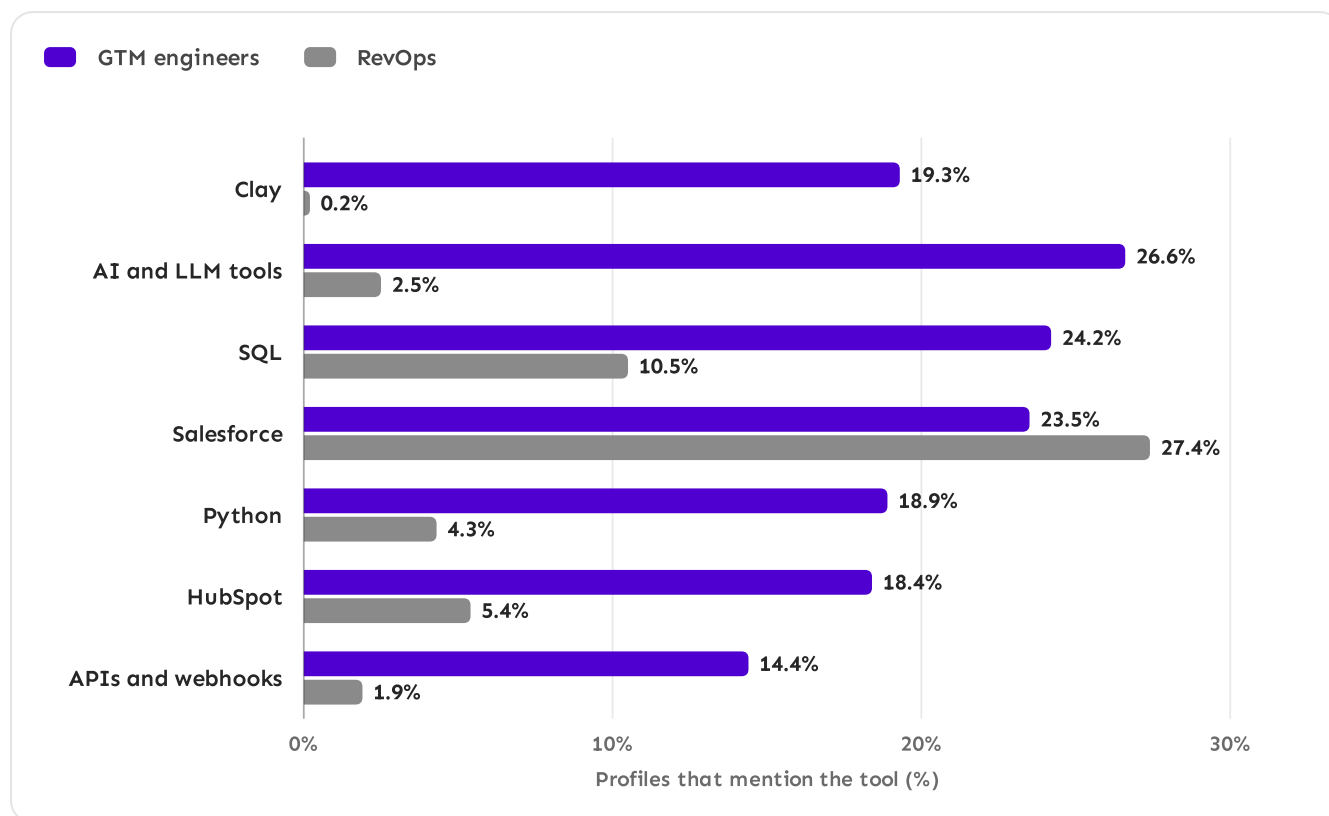


Job held just before the first GTM engineer title, for the 999 people with an earlier job. Go-to-market jobs are in purple. Software and data engineers, 7.7% of the total, are part of engineering, data and product.

Source: Ken internal data (company and career records Ken uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FIGURE 3

Clay, code and AI set GTM engineers apart from RevOps

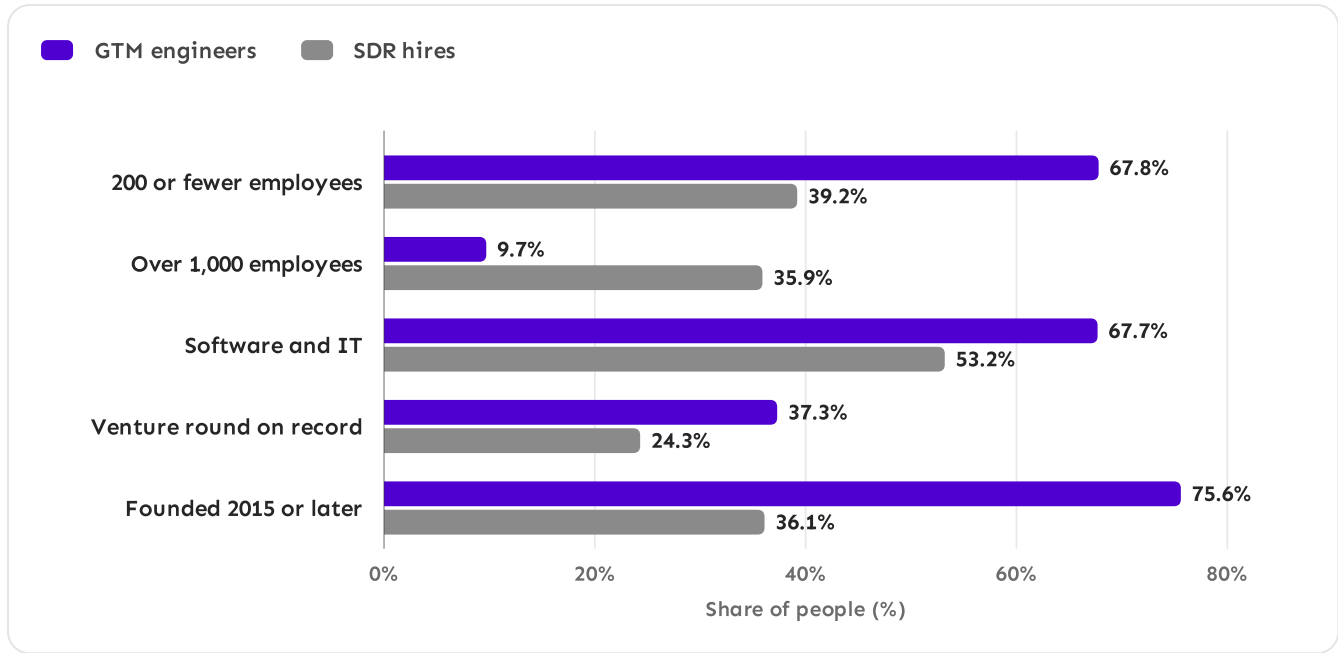


Share of profiles that mention each tool in their skills or headline: 792 current GTM engineers and 51,490 people who started a RevOps job in 2024 or later. Fewer than 50 of 60,823 comparable SDRs mention Clay.

Source: Ken internal data (company and career records Ken uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FIGURE 4

GTM engineers work at smaller, younger companies than new SDRs



Share of current GTM engineers (March 2026) and of people hired as SDRs from January 2024 to March 2026, by their employer's company record. Each share uses the people whose employer record has that field, such as 566 GTM engineers for size.

Source: Ken internal data (company and career records Ken uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

The data, the methods and every number

The question

How fast did the GTM engineer title grow? Which jobs do GTM engineers come from (SDR, RevOps, engineering, growth)? Which tools appear on their profiles, compared with SDRs and RevOps people? And what kind of companies employ them?

The hypothesis and plan were pre-registered on 15 October 2026, before any data was pulled. This document reports every result against that plan, including the parts that came out differently.

Data

Ken internal data is Ken's dataset of public professional profiles, work histories and company records. Each profile lists past and current jobs (title, employer, start and end month), a headline, and skill keywords. Each company record has a size band, industry, founding year and funding rounds.

- **Snapshot.** The profiles in this study were last updated between December 2025 and 29 April 2026. We treat 30 April 2026 as the snapshot date. The last complete quarter is January to March 2026 (2026Q1).
- **Coverage.** 246,725,412 profiles in six countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand. Results describe those six markets, not the world.
- **Pulls for this study** (all filtered and logged):
 1. Every profile with at least one job whose title contains a GTM word (gtm, go to market, revenue, revops, growth) and an engineering word (engineer, engineering, engineers): 6,966 profiles with 65,306 jobs.
 2. The company records of the employers in those jobs: 1,453 companies, and of the employers of SDR/BDR hires since 2024: 24,200 companies.
 3. A shared extract of every profile with at least one sales or marketing title (23,543,766 profiles and 136,156,211 jobs), built for this and six other studies. It supplies the SDR and RevOps comparison groups and the size of the sales and marketing workforce over time.

Who counts as a GTM engineer

Titles were lower-cased and every run of punctuation became a space. Each job title was then sorted into one tier by ordered rules (the shared sales title taxonomy, also used by other Ken Research studies).

Tier	Rule	Counted where	People who ever held it
Core GTM engineer	"gtm" or "go to market", up to three modifiers (ops, operations, systems, automation, growth, data, revenue, technical, AI, outbound, strategy), then engineer, engineering or engineers	The headline	1,038 (1,028 with a usable start date)
Revenue engineer variants	"revenue", "revops" or "revenue operations", optional modifier, then engineer(ing)	Extended series only	224
Growth engineer	"growth", optional modifier, then engineer(ing)	Its own comparison series	1,260

Tier	Rule	Counted where	People who ever held it
Not counted	Presales engineers (sales, solutions, customer engineer), titles where "engineer" comes before the GTM word ("Software Engineer, GTM", 395 people; "Software Engineer, Growth", 2,393), marketing automation and CRM engineers	Not counted	-

Seniority and lead forms count as core: "Senior GTM Engineer", "Founding GTM Engineer", "Head of GTM Engineering", "GTM Engineering Manager".

Audit. We read 200 random titles per tier and the 100 most common near-misses before any analysis, and excluded titles that share the words but name other jobs:

- Recruiters and HR staff who hire for GTM engineering ("talent partner, GTM engineering").
- "GTM" meaning Oracle's Global Trade Management, F5's Global Traffic Manager or Google Tag Manager.
- Revenue "engineers" in toll-road traffic and revenue work, airline revenue management, hospital revenue cycle, telecom revenue assurance and finance.
- Growth engineers in crystal growth, epitaxy, oil reservoirs and urban growth planning.

Growth engineer is kept apart because it has been a product-engineering title (engineers who run in-app growth experiments) since the early 2010s. Pooling it would make the trend about product engineering.

Methods

Spells. A job counts from its start month. It ends at the end of its end month, or at the snapshot if it is current. Jobs with no start date, jobs that start after the snapshot, and finished jobs with no end date are dropped.

1. Growth. The number of distinct people holding a core title at the end of each quarter, 2019Q1 to 2026Q1. The headline is the ratio between 2026Q1 and 2023Q4. Older quarters undercount everyone a little, because only currently active profiles exist and people drop old jobs. So we also divide by the number of people holding any sales or marketing job in the same quarter, from the shared extract.

2. Origins. For each person, the previous role is the most recent other job that started before their first core GTM engineer job (ties go to the longer job). It is sorted into 18 groups by the same title rules, and those into seven families for publication. A robustness version uses only jobs that ended no later than three months after the GTM engineer job started. That drops side roles that keep running, such as an advisory post or the person's own company.

3. Tools and skills. Ken internal data stores a list of skill keywords for each profile. These are extracted from the profile's own text (job titles, descriptions, summary) rather than picked by the person. The median current GTM engineer has 107.5 keywords (SDRs 46, RevOps 71), and generic keywords largely repeat the job title. So the main comparison uses a dictionary of named tools (Clay, n8n, Zapier, Python, SQL, APIs, HubSpot, Salesforce and others) matched in the keywords and the headline. Comparison groups are people whose current SDR/BDR or RevOps job started in 2024 or later, the years when most GTM engineers started. People who ever held a core GTM engineer title are removed from the comparison groups. Ratios are shares, not raw counts.

4. Hiring companies. People holding a core title at the end of 2026Q1, joined to their employer's company record. These are compared with people hired into SDR/BDR jobs between January 2024 and March 2026. Shares use the people whose employer record has the field filled in. "Venture round on record" means the company's funding history includes a pre-seed, seed, angel or lettered series round.

Reporting rules. Any group under 50 people is shown as "<50", and its percentage is left out. Every percentage carries its count. No person is named.

Results

1. Growth (hypothesis 1: partly supported)

We expected at least tenfold growth from the end of 2023 to the last complete quarter, and set below fivefold as the refutation line.

Quarter end	Core GTM engineers	Growth engineers	Core per 10,000 sales and marketing workers
2022Q2	52	246	0.06
2023Q4	121	240	0.15
2024Q4	250	269	0.30
2025Q4	636	376	0.77
2026Q1	791	392	0.95

- **Headline:** $791 / 121 = 6.5x$. Between the expected 10x and the 5x refutation line, so partly supported.
- **By year:** 2.07x during 2024 and 2.54x during 2025. 196 people started their first GTM engineer job in 2026Q1.
- **Recency:** 714 of the 1,028 people who ever held the title (69.5%) started it in 2025 or later, as expected.
- **Normalized:** people in sales and marketing jobs went from 8,204,748 to 8,306,164 (1.01x). The per-10,000 growth is therefore also 6.5x. Counting core GTM engineers from the shared extract gives the same 791.
- **Contrast:** growth engineer grew 1.63x. GTM engineer overtook it in 2025Q1. The extended series (core plus revenue engineer variants) reaches 868 in 2026Q1.
- **Countries in 2026Q1:** US 586 (74.1%), UK 95 (12.0%), Canada 84 (10.6%), all others fewer than 50.

2. Origins (hypothesis 2: partly supported)

We expected operations, SDR/BDR and other sales roles to supply more than half, and software and data engineering less than 20%. The refutation lines were engineering as the largest group, or 30% or more.

Of 1,028 people, 999 have a previous job.

Previous-role family	People	Share	Sequential rule
GTM sales roles (SDR/BDR, AE, account management, CS, presales)	198	19.8%	22.4%
Marketing (growth, demand gen and other)	142	14.2%	14.2%
Engineering, data and product	110	11.0%	12.2%
Founders, consultants and agencies	99	9.9%	7.4%
GTM operations (RevOps, sales ops, marketing ops, CRM)	96	9.6%	9.6%
Other GTM roles (GTM lead, Clay or outbound specialist)	61	6.1%	5.2%
Other (business ops, students, other titles)	293	29.3%	29.1%

- **Not engineers:** software and data engineering is 77 (7.7%), well under both lines.
- **Not a majority from sales and ops either:** operations, SDR/BDR and other sales together are 240 (24.0%). The largest named group is AE and other sales, with 101 (10.1%).
- **Inside moves:** 149 (14.9%) took the job inside the company where they already worked.
- **Independents:** 94 of 1,028 (9.1%) first held the title as a founder, freelancer, fractional hire, consultant or agency owner.

- By entry year:** 2025 is the only year with enough people per family to report. Its shares match the pooled ones (GTM sales roles 18.7%, marketing 15.4%, engineering, data and product 11.0%).

3. Tools and skills (hypothesis 3: mostly supported)

Groups: 792 current GTM engineers, against people whose current job started in 2024 or later: 60,823 SDR/BDRs and 51,490 RevOps people.

Tool mentioned in skills or headline	GTM engineers	RevOps	SDR/BDR	GTM / RevOps
Clay	153 (19.3%)	87 (0.2%)	<50	114.3x
AI and LLMs	211 (26.6%)	1,274 (2.5%)	1,798 (3.0%)	-
SQL	192 (24.2%)	5,416 (10.5%)	1,776 (2.9%)	2.3x
Salesforce	186 (23.5%)	14,112 (27.4%)	8,538 (14.0%)	0.9x
Python	150 (18.9%)	2,197 (4.3%)	1,328 (2.2%)	4.4x
HubSpot	146 (18.4%)	2,804 (5.4%)	2,467 (4.1%)	3.4x
APIs and webhooks	114 (14.4%)	957 (1.9%)	681 (1.1%)	7.7x
JavaScript or TypeScript	109 (13.8%)	836 (1.6%)	660 (1.1%)	-
n8n	60 (7.6%)	<50	<50	-

- Clay vs SDRs:** fewer than 50 SDRs mention Clay, so the ratio is at least 235x (computed with 50 as the count).
- Against the plan:**
 - Clay is above 5x against both groups (supported).
 - Python (4.4x) and APIs (7.7x) are above 3x; SQL (2.3x) is not. Supported, since the test needed any one of them.
 - Salesforce is within a factor of 2 of RevOps (0.9x). HubSpot is not (3.4x).
- Refutation tests:** neither is met. Clay is far above 2x against RevOps, and only 9 of the GTM engineers' top 20 skill tags are also in the SDRs' top 20 (11 for RevOps).
- Sales-engagement tools:** Apollo, Outreach, Salesloft, ZoomInfo and Sales Navigator are each mentioned by fewer than 50 GTM engineers.
- Profile length:** GTM engineer profiles carry more keywords. Neutral tags sit close to the RevOps rate (management 0.88x, leadership 1.18x, communication 1.09x), so the large tool ratios are not a profile-length effect.
- US only:** Clay at least 180x against SDRs and 124.0x against RevOps, Python 4.5x, APIs 7.9x.

4. Hiring companies (hypothesis 4: supported)

Measure	GTM engineers, March 2026	SDR/BDR hires, Jan 2024 to Mar 2026
1-10 employees	113 (20.0%)	4,553 (5.3%)
11-50	138 (24.4%)	11,711 (13.6%)
51-200	133 (23.5%)	17,462 (20.3%)
201-500	96 (17.0%)	11,052 (12.9%)
501-1,000	<50	10,311 (12.0%)
1,001+	55 (9.7%)	30,875 (35.9%)
200 or fewer (base: known size)	384 of 566 (67.8%)	33,726 of 85,964 (39.2%)
Software and IT industries (base: known industry)	382 of 564 (67.7%)	45,752 of 85,981 (53.2%)
Venture round on record (base: known size or industry)	211 of 566 (37.3%)	20,948 of 86,029 (24.3%)

Measure	GTM engineers, March 2026	SDR/BDR hires, Jan 2024 to Mar 2026
Founded 2015 or later (base: known year)	307 of 406 (75.6%)	22,214 of 61,456 (36.1%)
Median company age	7 years	15 years

- **Supported:** more than half of GTM engineers work at companies with 200 or fewer employees, most are in software and IT, and the venture share is higher than for SDR hires.
- **Not refuted:** only 9.7% work at companies over 1,000 employees.
- **Same picture for recent hires:** counting only GTM engineer jobs started in the same window as the SDR group (877 people) gives the same result.

Verification

Wave 1 (2026-10-15). An independent re-analysis, written from the study plan without seeing our code, recomputed the headline numbers. It got only the plan, the definitions and the raw extracts, and had no access to the study's notes, outputs or working files. It imported the shared title classifier, which is part of the pre-registered instrument; everything else was its own code.

Number	Study	Verifier	Match
Core holders 2023Q4 / 2024Q4 / 2025Q4 / 2026Q1	121 / 250 / 636 / 791	121 / 250 / 636 / 791	yes
Growth multiple 2023Q4 to 2026Q1	6.5	6.5 (6.5372)	yes
Ever held core; first start 2025 or later	1,028; 714 (69.5%)	1,028; 714 (69.5%)	yes
Entrants with a previous role	999 of 1,028	999 of 1,028	yes
Ops + SDR/BDR + AE and other sales	240 (24.0%)	240 (24.0%)	yes
Software and data engineering	78 (7.8%) at first, then 77 (7.7%)	77 (7.7%)	yes, after the fix below
Largest named group	AE and other sales, 101 (10.1%)	AE and other sales, 101 (10.1%)	yes
Companies: 200 or fewer / over 1,000 / software and IT / venture	384/566, 55/566, 382/564, 211/566	same	yes

The one miss traced to the study's code. Nineteen people have two previous-role jobs with the same start month and length, and the study's sort did not fix their order. Ties now go to the job listed first on the profile (recorded in the study's decision log). The verifier's alternate tie-break (last listed) moves software and data engineering to 79 (7.9%) and leaves everything else unchanged, so the conclusion does not hang on the tie rule.

Wave 2 (2026-10-16). The same independent re-analysis, under the same restrictions, recomputed the comparison numbers from the shared extract.

Number	Study	Verifier	Match
Sales and marketing holders 2023Q4 / 2026Q1	8,204,748 / 8,306,164	8,204,748 / 8,306,164	yes
Core per 10,000, 2023Q4 / 2026Q1; multiple	0.15 / 0.95; 6.5x	0.15 / 0.95; 6.5x (6.4574)	yes
Groups: GTM / SDR / RevOps	792 / 60,823 / 51,490	792 / 60,823 / 51,490	yes
Clay: GTM / RevOps; ratio	153 (19.3%) / 87; 114.3x	153 (19.3%) / 87; 114.3x	yes
Clay: SDRs	<50 (ratio at least 235x)	under 50 (ratio above the bound)	yes

Number	Study	Verifier	Match
Python / SQL / APIs ratio vs RevOps	4.4 / 2.3 / 7.7	4.4 / 2.3 / 7.7	yes
HubSpot / Salesforce ratio vs RevOps	3.4 / 0.9	3.4 / 0.9	yes
AI and LLMs: GTM / SDR / RevOps	211 / 1,798 / 1,274	211 / 1,798 / 1,274	yes
SDR hires; with known size	99,476; 85,823 at first, then 85,964	99,476; 85,964	yes, after the fix below
SDR hires at 200 or fewer / over 1,000	39.3% / 35.8% at first, then 39.2% / 35.9%	39.2% / 35.9% (with all size spellings)	yes, after the fix
SDR hires: software and IT / venture	53.2% / 24.3%	53.2% / 24.3%	yes

The miss traced to the study's code. Three non-standard size spellings in the company records ("1-10 employees", "501-1000 employees", "1001-5000 employees", 141 SDR hires in all) fell out of the size map, so those people counted as unknown size. Size strings are now matched after removing commas (recorded in the study's decision log). No GTM engineer number changed. The verifier also noted that the SDR venture share, 24.3499%, sits on a rounding boundary; the study reports 24.3%.

Every headline number now matches to the reported precision.

Alternative explanations considered

- **More profiles, not more GTM engineers.** Only currently active profiles exist, so older quarters undercount everyone. Check: per 10,000 sales and marketing workers, the growth is the same 6.5x, because the workforce count is flat (1.01x). Growth engineer, a title from the same profiles, grew only 1.6x over the same window (240 to 392), so a general coverage effect cannot explain 6.5x.
- **Retitling.** Some people may have relabelled earlier jobs as "GTM engineer". That would inflate early quarters, not recent ones, so if anything it understates recent growth. It cannot be measured, and the methodology names it as a limitation.
- **Reporting lag.** New jobs are added late, which depresses the last quarter and makes the 6.5x a lower bound. 2026Q1 is flagged in the series.
- **Title noise.** Recruiters, Oracle and F5 "GTM", and non-GTM revenue and growth engineers were removed after an audit of 200 titles per tier (core went from 1,062 to 1,038 people).
- **Classifier gaps in origins.** About a quarter of previous roles fall into a residual "Other". Software and data engineering is 7.7% of people with a previous role (77 of 999), or 10.1% (77 of 764) if the residual "Other" is left out. Either way it is well under the pre-registered 20% ceiling, so the "not from engineering" finding holds.

Limitations

- **Six English-speaking countries only.** The data covers the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.
- **Self-reported, and late.** People add new jobs months after they start and leave short jobs off. The last quarter may undercount, and early GTM engineers who later changed their old titles are invisible.
- **Survivors only.** Only currently active profiles exist. People who deleted their profile are missing, which undercounts older quarters.
- **Retitling.** Someone may have relabelled an earlier job as "GTM engineer" after the term became popular. We cannot see when a title was written.
- **Titles, not tasks.** A title is what a person calls the job. Some RevOps or growth people do GTM engineering work under another title, and are not counted.

- **Classifier gaps.** About a quarter of previous roles fall into a residual "Other" group of many small, generic or unclassified titles ("member", "director", finance and research jobs).
- **Keyword skills.** Skill keywords are machine-extracted, so their shares partly track how long a profile is. Named tools are the more reliable signal.
- **Patchy company records.** Only 566 of the 791 people holding the title in March 2026 have a matched company record with a size or industry, and funding data covers only rounds that were recorded.
- **No causal claims.** All comparisons are descriptive.

Sources

- Ken internal data: Ken's dataset of public professional profiles, work histories and company records (snapshot April 2026).

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