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Community-Led Growth

Turning Your Customers Into Your Most Scalable Revenue Engine



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THE PROBLEM

Traditional growth levers are running out of road



Hire more reps

Headcount-driven growth gets more expensive every year



Buy more leads

CAC keeps climbing while lead quality declines



Attend more events

Diminishing returns as every competitor shows up too



Spend more on marketing

Budgets are flat or shrinking, not growing

What if your next source of pipeline isn't another SDR, campaign, or AI tool?
What if it's already out there — and your buyer is already inside it?

THE INSIGHT

The buying decision is made before you're in the room

~70%

of the buyer's journey is complete before they talk to a seller (6sense Buyer Experience Report, 2024)

Where it's happening — without you:

- Peer conversations in industry forums
- Association events and committees your competitor is already sponsoring
- Dark social — Slack channels, DMs, group chats outside your CRM
- Mentoring relationships and executive roundtables

If you're not present in these spaces, someone else is.

THE FRAMEWORK

You already use Build, Buy, Borrow — now apply it to community

BUILD

Your own ecosystem

- Customer communities
- Advisory boards
- Branded communities

18–24 months to traction.
Right for some. Not today's focus.

BUY

Acquire an audience

- Media properties
- Newsletters
- Established communities

Expensive and complex.
Rarely the right move.

BORROW

Go where they already gather

- RevOps Coop, Wednesday Women
- Women in Revenue, PayTech Women
- Industry associations

Fastest path to pipeline.
Most underused lever in B2B.

Today we're focusing on Borrow — the fastest path, and the most underutilized.

Meet DEAR — your community-led growth system

Whether you Build or Borrow, the motion is the same.

D

Develop

Find the right communities and the right people inside them

→

E

Engage

Show up with value — sponsorship, presence, naming rights

→

A

Activate

Turn relationships into pipeline and peer-driven buying moments

→

R

Retain

Make community presence your competitive moat and retention engine

Find the communities where your economic buyer already lives

Professional Peer Communities

- Revenue Operations Alliance, Wednesday Women – a global network of executive women
- Revenue — revenue practitioners
- GTM-specific communities in your vertical

Real example: a GTM software company tapped Pavilion to find advisors — and found me.

Nonprofits & Industry Associations

- PayTech Women, Society for Information Management
- Vertical associations your buyers belong to
- e.g. National Optometry Association for optometry software

Map to your ICP — not your product category. Where does your buyer spend their trust?

Nine companies that presented that day, mapped to the association where their buyer gathers

Corrections technology	→ American Correctional Association
IT services for CIOs	→ Society for Information Management
Digital engineering services	→ Technology Services Industry Association
Sales engagement software	→ Women in Sales
AI sales agents	→ Women in Revenue
Win-loss analysis	→ Product Marketing Alliance
Compliance certification	→ ISACA
Retail energy marketplace	→ Retail Energy Supply Association
Workforce learning software	→ Association for Talent Development

Every one of these associations has a flagship member program worth sponsoring. Which one serves your buyer?

Show up with value before you ask for anything

01



Participate

Contribute content, speak at events, be a known name in the community. Not as a vendor — as a peer and expert.

02



Sponsor

Events, chapter programs, content series. Offer complimentary tickets and travel to members. The entry-level move that gets you in the room.

03



Own the Moment

Naming rights on their highest member-value program. You stop being a sponsor and become part of the community's identity.

The entry move is comp tickets. The premium move is owning the program they care about most.

Don't earn trust with the economic buyer. Co-own it.

Sponsor or put your name on the association's most coveted member program — like mentoring.
The economic buyer's credibility is now tied to your success. Their name is on it too.

Not a sponsorship logo

Co-ownership of the program members value most — not a banner ad at their conference

Their name, their risk

The exec or board champion you internally because their credibility rides on the program's success

Trust transfers instantly

You inherit decades of member trust — instead of building it deal by deal

Art of Mentoring + PayTech Women

Sponsored their mentoring program → earned a board presentation + conference speaking slot in front of the biggest names in banking, payments, and fintech.

Postal + Wednesday Women

Co-created a bespoke experience→ measurable revenue impact, new sector relationships, one intentional initiative. 2 years and counting.

Peer-driven buying moments in the wild

The committee vets you before you're in the room

Buying committees ask peer members about vendors before a salesperson ever gets a meeting

The dark-social gut check

A buyer posts in a slack channel or association forum: "anyone used [vendor]?" — and the deal moves or dies in that thread

The advisory board vouch

A board member personally tells the economic buyer "we use them, they're good" — skipping a full evaluation cycle

Trust is established before the first sales conversation — not during it. That's the acceleration mechanism.

Give your best community relationships a path to do more

TIER 1

Ally

Testimonials, intros, and quick referrals

→

TIER 2

Strategic Partner

Co-marketing, co-selling, event co-hosting

→

TIER 3

Founding Champion

Helps build new offerings, opens rooms you can't enter alone

Buildable in 30 days using relationships you already have — inside the communities you've developed and engaged.

Community presence is your competitive moat

The Tiebreaker Effect

When your product is relatively comparable to a competitor's, buyers choose — and stay with — the vendor who shows up at their events, sponsors their mentoring program, and is known by name inside their community.

Leaving you doesn't just mean switching software.
It means leaving the network.

Vendor A

Better features • No community presence • Unknown inside buyer's association

Vendor B ✓

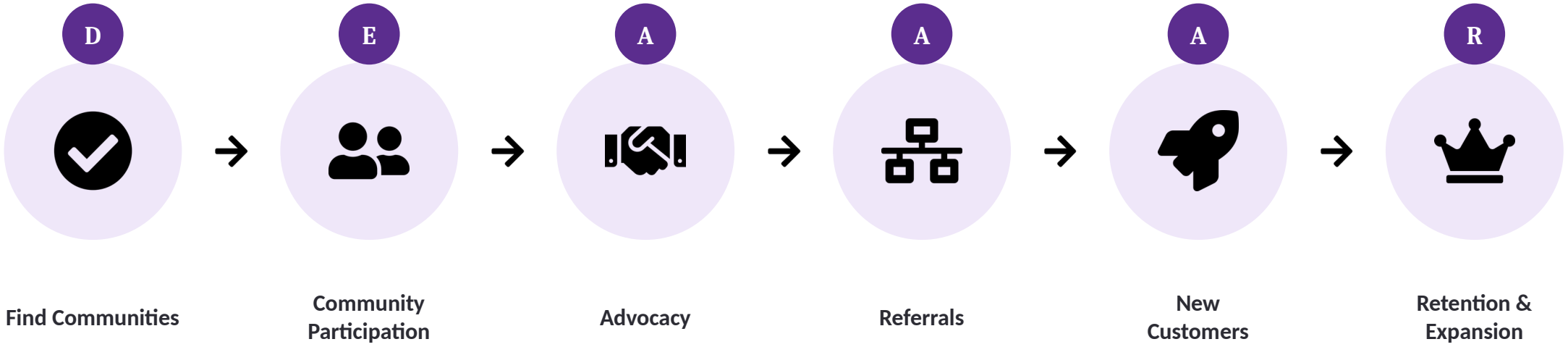
- Same features
- Sponsors the annual mentoring program
- Presents at chapter events
- Known by name in the community

Customers don't become advocates because they're satisfied.

They become advocates because they're invested.

Investment = a mentoring relationship, a sponsored conference seat, a peer intro they made and want to see succeed.

The community-led growth flywheel



...and back into More Community

Most companies stop at satisfaction. The best create investment — and retention follows.

MEASUREMENT

If community is strategic, measure it like a CRO

Revenue Metrics

- Community-influenced pipeline
- Referral pipeline
- Community-sourced opportunities
- Expansion revenue

Customer Metrics

- Logo Retention & NRR
- Product adoption
- Community engagement score

Network Metrics

- Active advocates by tier
- Referrals generated
- Association sponsorships active
- Event participation rate

THE TWO NUMBERS THAT GET COMMUNITY ON THE CRO DASHBOARD

Time-to-close delta for community-sourced deals vs. average opportunity

Advocate-to-deal ratio — how many advocates generate one

TAKE ACTION

Four things to do this Monday

No new headcount. No new budget.

1

Map the communities your economic buyer belongs to

Not your product category — your buyer. Where do they spend their trust?

2

Pick one and show up

Participate in an event, contribute content, or offer comp tickets for members

3

Find their highest member-value program

Ask about naming rights or sponsorship. A mentoring program is the best place to start.

4

Identify your 10 most invested customers

Not the happiest — the ones who've referred, spoken, or mentored. Give them a tier.

The most scalable growth engine isn't your sales team.

It's a community of customers who trust each other more than they trust your marketing.

The companies that win the next decade won't have the biggest funnels. They'll have the strongest networks.

Bijay Alex Mathew • CRO, Art of Mentoring • Pavilion Austin Chapter Head

LET'S BUILD YOURS

Want a community-led growth strategy for your business?

I work with revenue teams to:

- Map the communities your buyers already live in
- Identify the highest-leverage Engage plays (sponsorship, naming rights)
- Build a DEAR motion that drives pipeline, accelerates deals, and increases retention



Bijay Alex Mathew
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Find me at the break • Connect on LinkedIn

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