

**Matthew Todd**

Hi. My name is Matthew Todd, and welcome to Inside the ScaleUp. This is the podcast for founders, executives in tech, and looking to make an impact and learn from their peers within the tech business, we lift the lid on tech businesses, interviewing leaders and following their journey from startup to scale-up and beyond scale-up everything from developing product market fit, funding, and fundraising models to value proposition structure and growth marketing.

We learn from their journey so that you can understand how they work; the successes, and the lessons along the way, so that you can take their learnings and apply them within your own startup or scale and join the ever-growing list of UK SaaS businesses.

Hey, welcome back to the podcast, really excited today to be joined by Kevin Beales, founder and CEO of My Sales Coach. Great to have you here.

**Kevin Beales**

Great to be here. Looking forward to it.

**Matthew Todd**

Yeah, likewise. Looking forward to the conversation, and learning more about your startup journey. Tell us a bit about your background. What do we need to know about you and My Sales Coach?

**Kevin Beales**

My Sales Coach is my third SaaS startups, which started at the start of this year. We provide expert sales coaching as a subscription. So we match individuals and teams, to an expert sales coach who can deliver personalized one to one coaching. So I started my first SaaS company back in 2008. That was called the Test Factory. Then subsequently, after exiting the Test Factory started, a SaaS company called called Refract.

**Matthew Todd**

Awesome. Certainly keen to learn more about that experience gathered along the way.

**Kevin Beales**

There are plenty of lessons learned. It's plenty of scars, plenty of mistakes that I hope I won't make again. Lots of lots of learnings along the way, from from those experiences.

**Matthew Todd**

I'm guessing pretty positive, otherwise, you wouldn't be in it for a third time.

**Kevin Beales**

I must admit, I went through, do I want to do this again, and am I ready to do this. I'm sure everyone listening knows, you're really committing yourself probably to what might be a journey of up to 10 years.

There is a little bit of an addiction there. I have promised this is the last time but but I think there is a little bit addiction there of that thrill of starting something from scratch against the world making something happen, doing it as a team, delighting customers, all of those things. And all of the challenges that go with it is slightly sadistically addictive, I'm sure.

**Matthew Todd**

Yeah, absolutely. But someone's got to do it. Right.

**Kevin Beales**

Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Matthew Todd**

Tell us about your first startup, the Test Factory. What did that one look like?

**Kevin Beales**

So the Test Factory was an online assessment platform. So we manage the delivery of online tests, we're going back to 2008. Fairly early the evolution of that market. So we managed everything from delivery of those online tests that question banks managing those that were examined, and the marking reporting, so. We had some amazing customers. We worked with people like Microsoft, the United Nations, a lot of the big educational publishers and the exam boards in the UK. But I made a lot of mistakes along the way. It was a hard journey. And although we were fortunate, and we had a successful outcome, and we did build a good business, it was really hard. We definitely had a lot of lessons and have a lot of scars on that journey.

**Matthew Todd**

What were some of the challenges you faced with that first one kind of going in fresh?

**Kevin Beales**

I think the number one, and there's definitely a long list here, but the number one was that we weren't truly building a complete SaaS platform. We were customizing projects on top of a SaaS platform. We were doing that because we had taken on some funding. There were opportunities. There were amazing customers there, but they needed unique customizations each time. We didn't do that in a way that just allowed us to keep evolving the product. It became lots of bespoke projects on top of a SaaS platform that gave us lots of challenges and headaches down the line. We were there managing lots of different projects and, and customers simultaneously rather than a single platform. It made it just really truly hard, hard to scale

**Matthew Todd**

Is that the maintenance overhead or the actual effort involved in accepting a new customer?

**Kevin Beales**

Both. So we actually got to a situation where we had like an order book, if you like, of 12 months' worth of work. Winning work was perhaps the easy bit, the delivery of those custom projects on top of our platform was hard and challenging. It was almost like running an agency, a software development

company, which is not what we ever intended to be. So, as you can imagine projects over ran, they took longer. We got to the point where we had a year's worth of work. We actually then at that point said, "this is madness, we need to stop selling". And we looked to totally reengineer the whole platform. But it actually meant we had to stop selling to do that and that was obviously tough.

**Matthew Todd**

So were you successful in that reengineering? Did you emerge from that with a better platform that you could sell and scale?

**Kevin Beales**

We did. But ironically, that's actually what led to our exit. So towards the end of that project, having gone through that and taken everything that we've learned and put it into a new platform that would truly be scalable. That's when we got our acquisition approach from a company called JL Education and the largest provider of testing schools. And here we were, with this shiny platform with all of our learnings with no existing customers on it, it became actually quite a compelling proposition for an acquirer at that point, particularly in acquirer that had a bit of a technical gap themselves.

**Matthew Todd**

Interesting. So was it the technology that was the main value add for them in that acquisition?

**Kevin Beales**

Primarily, whilst we were fortunate with some amazing customers, they were definitely nice to have rather than essential for their journey. So it was really a tech lead acquisition.

**Matthew Todd**

Why do you think from your perspective, why didn't they have what you are building in-house? If you are able to successfully re-engineer yourself? What do you think that was?

**Kevin Beales**

It's an interesting one. They were a couple of years into a private equity cycle, they were looking at their own exit two or three years out, okay. And there was obviously quite a timescale, especially with the expertise that we had, and the team that we had for them to do this themselves, which was definitely possible, but would have taken a lot of time would have taken, money would have taken building out a team.

I think the acceleration of their own exit journey, as well as adding obviously some customers and income and revenue and the like. So yeah, it was technology, it was team as well, as you know, as well as some of the revenue and customers that went with it.

**Matthew Todd**

Yeah, interesting. I think it's always really useful to look into the rationale for different types of acquisitions. Many founders can make a lot of assumptions about why they might be acquired. It's always interesting to look at that there are different reasons and motivations for it.

**Kevin Beales**

I'm sure we'll come on to it in a second. I think our journey that refract to exit was a little bit more orthodox. But definitely some really good learnings and experiences from that, which I'm sure we'll come on to.

**Matthew Todd**

Yeah, so I guess that's a natural segue then from the Test Factory to Refract. Did you jump straight into that? Or was there a bit of a gap in between? How did that pan out?

**Kevin Beales**

So to say I jumped into it, it's probably a little bit of an under-appreciation. I agreed to stay with our requirements for 18 months, and that was part of the original agreement. That lasted three months. So yes, straight back in straight back into it. I really had the itch to do something again and was ready for something new.

**Matthew Todd**

So with Refract, what was the idea for that? Was that something that had been on your mind for a while?

**Kevin Beales**

As soon as you get to the point of acquisition, it's very hard to not start thinking about what's next. After a Christmas break, jumped straight back into it. The reason for that work, I'll tell you what Refract is. So we took sales conversations, analyzed those sales conversations and highlighted what is happening in each of those conversations using AI, of where revenue is being won or lost. Where you're building rapport, where is objections coming out, where is their commercial negotiations, where it competitors mentioned, and what the top performers do differently in their conversations.

This really kind of came about from one of the things that frustrated me at the Test Factory, again, going back a long way now was that in order to coach and improve the sales team, and my background was in sales, we were sitting alongside people on what now might be referred to as ride alongs. Literally sitting on people's side people on calls and demos, and then trying to retrospectively coach and talk about what happens. It was highly ineffective, you know, and that kind of felt like there has to be a better way, so we started looking at what was done in other industries at this time.

In truth, we actually tried to solve the problem of what we call the sales coaching dichotomy, which is the organization's coaching is the priority of their frontline sales managers. So countless studies that show that it's the most impactful thing that organizations and managers can do. And, the difference it makes to the development and outcomes. But yet, managers typically spend less than 5% of their time on their own remittance coaching. Then when you ask their team, it's even, it's even less than that.

That was the problem we set out to solve. In truth, we pivoted a little bit more away from that, because the bit that we couldn't solve, and that really comes down to, you know, ends up to why we founded My Sales Coach is that we can never solve the problem of managers not having enough time to coach or time to prioritize coaching, against all the very time sensitive things that managers are tasked to do.

So we never solved that problem. In the early days we had a real churn challenge. We would sign up lots of customers who were motivated to solve this problem. We'd capture their conversations, we'd surface moments where revenues won and being won or lost. But no one was really listening to him or actually them because again, problem of time hadn't gone away. So we had a fairly horrific churn challenge in the early days, I'd say really, before we'd really found product market fit. And that's where we started pivoting in more way of like, we got to make things happen automatically here. We've got to provide insights, tell people what top performers do share across organizations, the champagne moments that happen, the times when competitors are being mentioned.

We started to create a platform that was really about automating the value that comes out of the black box of sales compensations, sharing them right across an organization not just to a sales team, but providing insight in what works. It was quite a significant pivot from that original problem. It which which had the desired effect of like, totally changed. You know, we went from, as I say, fairly horrific levels of churn. I think we were at about 5% monthly churn at one point and ended up with net revenue retention at around 120 since the end of the journey.

### **Matthew Todd**

That's pretty decent. It's interesting to, to look at things from that churn perspective because I think so many people obviously focused on the acquisition piece and then assuming that churn will just take care of itself, it will be fine. Something they can deal with later, but it can certainly become a constraint in the business if you're not careful. It's a lot harder to win those customers back a second time around, isn't it?

### **Kevin Beales**

Totally. In fairness, we kind of fell into that trap that was all around acquiring customers, acquiring logos, being really excited about that, having enough success stories, and we had two great success stories amongst those clients that gave us the fuel and the energy that we're winning, we're onto something.

Then just this frustration that we're not growing as fast as we think we should be. The root cause really, was that we were delighting some customers but we weren't solving the problem for everybody and that was giving us this big challenge.

### **Matthew Todd**

How obvious was that at the time? Were you one of those organizations that got the metrics really on top of it? Or was it kind of being surfaced later? And in other ways?

### **Kevin Beales**

No, I think we were on top of it. In fact, I even recall a board meeting with our investors where they kind of said "Will you stop going on about churn all the time and almost try to focus on some of the positives of wins".

So I think what took us a while is working out exactly how we're going to fix it. So we knew we had a problem. There were a number of things that we did. The first as I say was really starting to look at

product value. Where can we ensure we're providing product value to everybody, not just people that have the time to invest in listening to those sales conversations? So we think we knew by this stage, I guess, that what is captured in people's calls and conversations is golden, and can have huge impact right across an organization is this black box that doesn't otherwise get revealed of what really happens in the front line that has huge value. How do we make sure we're surfacing that?

So as I say, there was a lot of like, okay, we need to make things happen automatically, we need, we need to think about our core user as being someone that doesn't have the time to listen to that and needs to get immediate value. We also totally re-engineered our customer success team, we brought on a new Head of Customer Success who totally re-engineered that team.

There was a lot of learning again, in that team, we were probably closer to being account managers, on the customer success team in those early days before product market fit. That made a huge difference. We put in all the right processes. Then I think we were just more deliberate in our go-to-market of knowing exactly the kind of customers that we knew we would be a great fit for. We all point to the same moment where we had a lot of team away days where in late 2020, where we really felt like now we have got product market fit. There's almost that high-five moment that we were all convinced like this is repeatable. This is scalable. We know exactly the kind of customers that we're delighting, where we've got a repeatable process to really build and scale that.

Unfortunately, within about four or five months along came COVID. We had a whole heap of customers that were in travel and recruitment and media and events, and all of the industries that were really impacted. We went through six pretty scary weeks of where is this going? We took call after call of "can we cancel?" "Can we pause, all in all our team have been furloughed?" We went through a scary six weeks before we kind of came out bigger and stronger on the other side.

### **Matthew Todd**

I can imagine that was pretty scary, especially for those sectors. I know many people, myself, business owners that are in those spaces, and some of them just said, "Oh, it's okay. We're just gonna stop for a couple of weeks and see what happens." Which as we all know, it took longer than a couple of weeks for some of those in-person events to come back. Interesting to hear that.

Just Before that, you kind of felt that you got that product market fit, you got that repeatability in place. It'd be interesting to know what that looked like in terms of the elements that you think were missing before, that you felt had finally, slotted into place, or what didn't quite align before perhaps there's another way of looking at it?

### **Kevin Beales**

Reflecting on it, we knew we could create someone really excited about the problem that we were solving and, and the value of solving that problem. But we weren't winning customers with a product that we knew we knew would work, we were reliant on them having time, and maybe seeing a change to what they did and a change to their current process to get value and making that change or getting them to commit that time. It was essentially where it fell down.

It was that combination of how do we know that we can delight every customer whether they ever listened to a conversation or not, combined with what are the exact ideal customer profiles that we absolutely know we're going to be successful with, and we're going to be able to delight, it was the combination of those two things that and the reengineering of customer success, as I mentioned. That was a 12 to 18-month journey from really appreciating the journey to really feeling like we got that product market fit. It took a while.

### **Matthew Todd**

What did your own sales process and teams look like at that stage? How were you trying to get the product down to market?

### **Kevin Beales**

So I think this was the frustrating thing, because, you know, my background was in sales, my co founders background was sales. So we were very sales-heavy business. We were obviously selling that product to sales leaders that were about improving the performance of their sales teams. Making their sales conversations better. We had to be at the top of our game to be successful.

That was definitely from the very early days, something we were good at it, it was our background. The product actually helped us learn a lot, because we started capturing ultimately millions of conversations and really understanding what works. We were driven by an outbound sales team. And that worked.

I think this is where we had some of those early frustrations is that we were winning customers and growing revenue, but then losing out to the other side and left with this frustration. We're not going fast enough. But yeah, fortunately, that did all solve itself. And yeah, we got, we got some, some really strong growth in 2021.

### **Matthew Todd**

Good to hear a little bit more about what that approach looked like as well. And that, you know, outbound was so successful for you. I think one of my frustrations with a lot of clients that we work with, and you know, you go to various SaaS conferences, things like that. There's a lot of talk from very overfunded companies about the virtues of product-led growth. I think it can lead a lot of founders at the startup and scale-up stage to think that they can build it and people will come and that's what product lead looks like, which is a misconception.

So I think, because of that, they can be a bit wary of going down and outbound routes. I think it's quite refreshing to hear someone talk very positively about actually, that's what you knew. That's what works, and it can be a very good strategy.

### **Kevin Beales**

Again, we were fortunate that was our background. And you know, we obviously lacked in other parts of expertise, but that was what we were good at and where our experience led. So that was a natural thing to do. I work with lots of SaaS startups as customers, I do some angel investing. I think you're one of the things that I see most frequently on the sales side, particularly where there are technical founders right, there's an aversion to sales and let's build with product lead growth. And as you say that's not

necessarily quite as easy. There's very little thought given to sales. We're going to build this great product, we'll create marketing leads, then oh, yeah, we get a salesperson or two and they can close your revenue. It's almost like an afterthought and how could that possibly go wrong? And, as we know, it is much more difficult than that.

We built that business purely based on outbound being every channel. It was phone, email, LinkedIn, the social selling. All of those channels combined but with an outbound motion, and a real leaning towards an outbound team.

### **Matthew Todd**

For anyone listening to this that maybe has an outbound approach or is thinking of trying an outbound approach, what advice would you give someone just starting out that hasn't gotten that prior experience?

### **Kevin Beales**

First of all, like everything, it's hard. There's an argument, it's harder than ever, there are also some arguments that it's easier than ever right now. Because there's so much unpersonalized crap that comes into our inboxes. I think particularly where there is no sales background, how do you hire someone, onboard them, coach them to be great? That is part of the reason that we launched and look to solve that problem. Because if you haven't got that expertise internally, it does become very difficult to do that.

I think in terms of some of the things that I see that make that outbound work and make that outbound work in teams, is, first of all in those early days and if it's founder-led sales, look for repeatability, not scalability. That there is an absolute process that someone can come in and repeat and expect success to happen on the back of that if they do those certain things and make sure that the sales process is really repeatable.

People talk about scalability very early on but don't use the word repeatability. That sales process in the early days is all about the repeatability of knowing that if I get to talk to this number of people if I send this number of emails, I know what is likely to happen as a result.

I can then identify if someone else is coming in and following that process and not getting the same results. I can really like just laser in what are they doing differently? Why are they not getting as much success from their LinkedIn messages or their or their social selling or their LinkedIn voice notes or their cold calling or whatever? I can like really laser focus on where I can see they're not getting the same results and I can see there's an issue and then look to what they are doing differently as part of that process. Or where do I need to coach them and improve their skills? So I know that gap between that founder-led sales and those first sales hires.

### **Matthew Todd**

Repeatability should definitely come before that scalability because otherwise you've got no baseline you've got nothing to compare against is it's hard to improve everything will just happen kind of organically in semi-randomly wanted.



What was the second to third startup transition, going from Refract to My Sales Coach?

### **Kevin Beales**

So probably worth just touching on how that acquisition came about, and some of the experiences post-acquisition there as well. So I think this is where it was more orthodox and there's definitely some sort of takeaways hopefully in what I'm about to share here as well.

So reasonably early in refracted journey and you know, I done my first bits of angel investing and one of the companies that angel invested in, they got an amazing offer from a really well funded us business. That was like 25 times revenue or something like that, because that was how they were valued back in the day, you know, like, for the, for the younger members of the audience. I thought, well, we've got some competitor, we had a couple of really well funded competitors.

In fact, to put it in perspective, even though all we did was analyzed sales conversations, our biggest competitor, had the same market cap as Sainsbury's. As a business and the funding that they is had. And I thought, yeah, well, we've got some big competitors that have got amazing valuations. I need to make sure that everyone who is a potential acquirer in our competitors, in adjacent markets, in markets that I can see coming into this area in the future, knows who we are.

So I had a mad mental two weeks, that was not very well planned, where I just flew around the US having told every CEO, I'm in your town, be great to meet up for a coffee, love to have a strategic introduction or something like that. It was my little hint that I wanted to know that whenever any of those were thinking of expanding into this into this vertical expanding into Europe, they knew us and knew why this maybe is a name that they should be thinking about around the board table.

That worked brilliantly, because three of those companies, we ended up in conversations around acquisition at various times around and that would definitely be my takeaway and advice. One of those companies was a company called Allego. I walked out of Allego's offices, got on the phone with my co-founder, and said, this is the company that's going to acquire us one day. Indeed, it was nearly two years later, but that is exactly what happened.

I stayed with Allego for a couple of years after we got acquired and really learned a lot about working for a much bigger SaaS business. And, took a lot of lessons away from that.

### **Matthew Todd**

Interesting. So it sounded like there was a pretty clear strategy that it was looking for potential acquirers be that competitors, or others in the space that have a sufficiently high valuation themselves, but also valuation multiple on revenue, and you are then looking to basically build that awareness, at the higher level within those companies that you thought would essentially give you a good acquisition price on on revenue?

### **Kevin Beales**

So it started like that. Then it became like, well, who might we want to be acquired with? Who might we be an amazing fit for? And it really just became, I need to know our potential acquirers now and I need

to make sure that when they're thinking of this space, or this region, or growing or whatever it might be, that my name is being mentioned in that conversation. Then at least we have the choice or the conversation. I didn't want to miss out on the conversation, because frankly, they've never really heard of us, or we just didn't have a relationship and we weren't being thought of or we weren't top of mind, I needed.

I felt compelled to make sure that everyone that I thought could acquire us and I'm talking about like, there was 20 companies. I saw over that a couple of weeks, that they all knew who I was, who we were, and that I had a relationship. So yeah, basically, every competitor and everyone who knew adjacent markets,

### **Matthew Todd**

If that first startup acquisition was mainly technology-based to accelerate their timelines, what do you think that kind of motivation was for the acquisition of this one?

### **Kevin Beales**

I'm gonna say maybe three or four or five fold, it was far more orthodox. We were at the time we were acquired, we were growing at around 100%. year on year. We'd come out of COVID and that combination of post COVID Product Market Fit starting to really know what we're doing flywheel working. We were having strong success at that point.

Obviously, with a lot of great clients, and now some more meaningful revenue, obviously the team, also the technology. So again, thinking about our acquirers, the value of that technology was different depending on the acquirer. If it was a competitor it might be one thing, but if it was someone in an adjacent market who the value proposition of putting together what we did, sales conversation intelligence or revenue intelligence, and what they did, if those two things brought together magic as well as you know as upsell, and that was the case with our acquire Allego, so they were a sales enablement company. So, you know, for those, you know, maybe not familiar with sales enablement, all around the the onboarding, the training, the learning for organizations, sales teams, if we could take what is actually happening in people's frontline sales conversations, and pinpoint the learning, the training, the coaching, the onboarding that will most accelerate their journey, that was a truly unique proposition. So that then became all of those things, but it was product, team, revenue, and customers. Geographic as well. They were US based and didn't have a European presence. So geography played a part there as well.

### **Matthew Todd**

That's interesting, that geography part, especially for UK founders is worth considering and worth looking at. What are those US companies that, that maybe at that right scale to acquire you that for them, and entry into geography is a pretty major tick box? Then all the other elements that you just mentioned, come alongside that, as well as just making a far more attractive proposition for them.

### **Kevin Beales**

As I say, far more orthodox. It was a combination of all of those things, that's why I walked out of there building two years before I predicted that this was going to happen. All these things sound cheesy, but it

was totally real. The fit of culture, the fit between myself as a founder and, and the founder of that business. It just felt like it was all there. That's totally how it came to pass. That was why I was there for a couple of years and enjoyed two great years post-acquisition where I loved being part of that team and love the learning that I went through there as well.

**Matthew Todd**

Sounds like a well-aligned and positive experience, the best kind of acquisition you would you would hope for.

**Kevin Beales**

It was the right thing for us to do. It was the right thing. We were unanimous as a management team about doing we had we had options and choices. Obviously, at that time, we were growing fast. We were still fairly early in our on our journey. We definitely had choices at that moment. But it was 100%, it played out the way that we hoped.

**Matthew Todd**

So why go in for a third run? What are you hoping to get out of the this kind of process and experience in My Sales Coach?

**Kevin Beales**

One, I felt a real frustration that I hadn't solved the problem that we set out to solve with Refract. We kind of pivoted away from that. That problem still existed, and no one else had solved it either. So I felt a real compelling need to come back to that.

I think, also that you've gone through the journey, and then even post-acquisition, you know how much you've learned, how much better you would do things, I definitely did things a lot better the second time. It felt like a real waste to not put those learnings and those experiences into action. There is a bit of addiction.

I tell you what I actually found really, really difficult and, you know, I haven't probably admitted this publicly anywhere before, after we acquired and people said "what do you do?" I never knew how to answer that question. Because, it's part of my identity, not in a boastful way. I used to always play down that I started a small, SaaS company but that was part of my identity. I definitely found after we acquired and people said, "what do you do?" I was like, I don't know how to answer this anymore. I'm actually a general manager for a software company, I was never comfortable with that label. I think I felt I lost part of my identity., I really enjoyed those two years. But I think, being at being a founder is just ingrained in my identity. It's hard not to be a founder.

**Matthew Todd**

Yeah, absolutely. I certainly completely resonate with that. It would definitely be hard for me personally, not to imagine myself in a position where I was doing something with one type of company or another.

**Kevin Beales**

Absolutely, yeah. It's part of who we are.

**Matthew Todd**

So yeah, My Sales Coach. Can you just give people a bit of an overview of the premises and how it operates as a platform?

**Kevin Beales**

I had this frustration about solving the same problem, I started looking at what was happening in other industries and started looking at things like mental health and well-being, for example, where there are some really successful big companies that are delivering one to one personalized virtual coaching, as a subscription service, creating great brands. And essentially, I'm going to describe this as a half marketplace, half SaaS. That there is a platform, there is a subscription, and it's a SaaS go-to-market, but it's also a little bit of a marketplace for putting together the best coaches with a brand and a subscription service.

I looked into the success of those companies, I actually even applied for a CEO job at one of those companies just to find out a little bit more and understand that market. That's when it became this is the answer to the problem that I've spent half my life, half my working life trying to solve. At that moment, I was like, I need to do this and I need to do this now. That was when My Sales Coach was born.

I agreed to stay with Allego for another six months in order to make sure that that was all done in the best way. But I think as well, that kind of mentally gave me six months of runway to kind of plan out in my head, what is this going to look like? One of the things that we've shared publicly is we grew faster in the first two months of My Sales Coach than we did in the first two years of Refract.

It took longer to find product market fit. There were challenges and pivots that we still needed to take. Here at My Sales Coach, we had that six months' worth of planning in our heads, we had the experiences that we've gone through. We were able to achieve a lot more, a lot quicker.

**Matthew Todd**

I think one thing would be kind of interested to know is that with a marketplace type of platform, obviously different from the previous companies, how was it jumping into that type of platform and products where you need both sides of that marketplace to exist in order for it to be sustainable, workable?

**Kevin Beales**

In terms of the marketplace challenge it is probably a bit of a cheat in the fact that you know, we had a good network of great sales coaches. Yes, I won't say it's not easy to acquire great sales coaches, but we always felt when we launched, we were providing something unique, almost like a gig economy to people that maybe don't even want to run their own sales coaching business and they don't want to invoice people, chase payments, and find customers. They want to be a great coach. That didn't really exist.

So the supply side was fairly easy. It was about quality rather than quantity. We wanted to be meaningful to a small number of coaches that we knew would be really high value because we would live or die by the quality of our coaching. Our go-to-market is all SaaS and it's mainly outbound. A bit

more marketing this time around. But again, outbound is what we know and what we're good at. That is our go-to market motion. It's 100%, a SaaS go-to-market motion, not a marketplace.

### **Kevin Beales**

We've perhaps in the industry, certainly brought a different view of things like we'd look at it as, as your audience well as a SaaS model where you're thinking, it's all about customer acquisition costs, and could you do free trials, and as long as the customer acquisition cost works, then that works well.

For example, we'd embrace things like, can we use scholarships as a way to get into organizations where we can actually give out free scholarships, which are almost like giving out free trials that lead us to then be able to grow within an organization having proved the value. Again, looking at maybe more of a services industry through SaaS eyes and through SaaS go to market dynamics and metrics that you have helped us in our early success.

### **Matthew Todd**

It's really interesting perspective that you can take something that is typically viewed from a very service-oriented perspective, but then shift that into that SaaS perspective and metrics and models of go-to-market customer acquisition, etc. Actually, yeah, that can give you a very, very different perspective in terms of your customer's eyes as to how they see their problems, and then how obviously, they see you and how you're able to successfully engage with them.

We've had a couple of people in different types of marketplace businesses before but I think you're probably the first one that's articulated a go-to-market strategy quite like this one. So I think for anyone else looking at marketplaces and other sectors and different places, it's certainly worth listening to, and, and looking at it through that lens to see what are their numbers looking like? What are the strategies that they could try if they were treating it more like a SaaS business?

### **Kevin Beales**

A very deliberate thing that we've done is that we think of ourselves as a SaaS company. I think we are a SaaS company. We definitely position ourselves as a SaaS company. Even in terms of our price point, it's not a service price point. It's buying another tool in your tech stack price point. We know that selling SaaS products to sales teams is successful. The average SaaS sales team has 27 SaaS products, they are used to buying tech products, and they probably buy tech products and subscriptions easier than they buy services. So even packaging it and thinking about it in that way definitely helped us in that in that motion in that success.

### **Matthew Todd**

What is the plan for My Sales Coach? How do you see the next year or few years panning out? And what does that exit potentially look like?

### **Kevin Beales**

As you go through more than one more than my business, you know, bigger and better and taking, you know, taking the lessons is key. This feels more like a lifelong passion. This is the problem that I've

really been trying to solve for certainly half my working life so there's a real passion about solving that problem and the value. There is a greater ambition to put a little bit of meat on the bones.

We are anticipating getting to over a million in revenue in our first year, which I think out of the gate feels reasonably ambitious. It's a big market problem that we're solving. If this is my last SaaS business, I've got to have no regrets and feel like I achieved everything in my SaaS world. You're slightly more privileged as a third-time founder at taking bigger risks as well. You've got all the learnings, you've got all the experience, you can afford to take perhaps bigger risks, and chase a bigger market and bigger opportunity.

**Matthew Todd**

Very much chasing a pretty big ambition with this one.

**Kevin Beales**

If we achieve and get what we want to get right, then we're solving a big global problem.

**Matthew Todd**

That's great that you're in a position to not only hold that ambition but in a perfect place, by the sounds of it to drive things forward and strive to achieve that. Thank you for sharing your startup journey of all of those three startups so far. It's been a whistlestop tour but I think there's a lot here for founders to take away from in terms of lessons learned and focus on the problem, as well as ways to think about, different types of acquisitions as well. Which will hopefully help them strategically think about the way that they're running their businesses. Just before we do wrap things up, is there any kind of parting advice you'd like to leave our audience with?

**Kevin Beales**

From the sales side, a couple of the big things that I see happen a lot in SaaS companies, especially in those early stages, are two things. One is pricing. Just remember that pricing is the very biggest lever that you have, in terms of growth. We spend so much time talking about products and marketing and sales and customer success and all those things. Pricing is the biggest lever to grow, if we have and make sure that that gets the airtime, it deserves to really consider making sure that that is adding the best value to the business.

The second is being brave. We're all chasing growing a business where we desperately want to win every opportunity, particularly in those early days, and win those logos. It's so easy to concede things in negotiation because we were so desperate for that deal.

Another very quick learning is, we used to always do rolling monthly subscriptions, at Refract. After that, we were tasked with changing that to annual subscriptions all paid up front and we were kind of very resistant. This is a big differentiator for us. A lot of kickback from the team. The founder of Allego said, "We'll double the commission for new deals and we'll treble it if it's annually paid up". Well, guess what happened? Every deal was an annual deal. Most of them were paid upfront. It's just hard to be brave when so much depends on it.

**Matthew Todd**

I definitely echo all of that advice. Great advice to leave our audience with. So yeah, thank you for your time today. Thank you for sharing that journey so far. I look forward to catching up a few months down the line, and seeing how My Sales Coach is going in terms of that global ambition.

**Kevin Beales**

Thanks, everyone, for listening.