



[Verve](#), the U.K, startup formerly known as StreetTeam that offers a sales platform to enable brands to easily run advocacy programs, has picked up \$18.5 million in Series B funding. The round is being led by publicly-listed VC Draper Esprit, with participation from [previous investors](#) Kindred, Frontline Ventures, and Backed.

Focussing initially on tickets for live events, Verve's sales software is designed around the premise that the best advocates for a product are existing customers who can be incentivised to help sell the products they love with a rewards program that makes it easy to do so.

The platform is essentially white labeled for the brands Verve works with, who then provide various rewards, such as VIP access or free tickets, to customers signed up to campaigns run via the software and as they hit certain sales milestones. Or, put another way, the company reckons it has worked out a way to make word-of-mouth or many-to-many marketing scalable.

To that end, Verve says that over the last 12 months it has seen significant success in the live entertainment industry, growing from 170 to 450 clients, and selling more than 500,000 tickets globally. As part of this, the startup has partnered with leading ticketing companies including Ticketmaster, Eventbrite, Paylogic and Front Gate Tickets.

In a call, Callum Negus-Fancey, who founded Verve with his brother Liam, told me the new capital will be used to further develop the product, including hiring more developers, along with bolstering sales as the startup readies for further international expansion. In addition to the U.K. and U.S., it is eyeing up other parts of Europe, as well as additional product categories beyond live events, such as travel.

He also explained that Verve-powered advocacy sales campaigns are about not only helping brands attract new customers but also pulling potential existing customers over the line. Lots of people show interest and, to a certain degree intent, regards attending events, but this doesn't always translate into ticket sales. Having a friend sell you a ticket to an event that they are already signed up to and a fan of is far more effective at converting sales than other types of less authentic marketing, says the Verve co-founder.

Simon Cook, CEO of Draper Esprit, echoes this sentiment, noting that today's audience is becoming immune to traditional advertising and increasingly prefer to discover products through friends and people they trust. "[Verve] has already proven word-of-mouth is a scalable and powerful tool for live entertainment, and we will support them in taking this channel to other markets and sectors," he says.