CUSTOMER STORY

affirm

Affirm Leans on Gem's Automation and Full-Funnel Insights to Hit Lofty Engineering Hiring Goals

Affirm is a payment network in the "buy now, pay later" space that empowers consumers with flexible and transparent payment options and helps merchants drive growth. Its mission is to deliver honest financial products that improve lives. Partnerships with companies such as Target, Walmart, Shopify, and Amazon have allowed the company to more-than-double gross merchandise volume year over year. In 2021, Affirm added 7 million active consumers to its network and grew its active merchants by 160,000. *Internally*, it acquired the recruiting agency Techees, whose CEO, Emily Stellick, became Affirm's Head of Global Sourcing.

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>
> **Emily Stellick**
> Head of Global Sourcing

![affirm logo]

Company Overview:

- San Francisco, CA (HQ)
- Buy now, pay later (BNPL) payment network
- 2,300+ employees
- Affirm.com
- ATS: Greenhouse

Challenges:

With aggressive hiring goals alongside a resolute decision to prioritize diversity, Affirm's talent team requires a solution that offers top-of-funnel efficiencies, full-funnel visibility, and the ability to report out to executives and hiring managers about where hiring stands at any given moment.

Results with Gem:

- Gem allows the team to track what outreach to underrepresented groups (URGs) looks like, as well as how underrepresented candidates convert through process

- Functionality such as automated follow-ups, an activity feed, a Rules of Engagement feature, and tokens give the team an "efficiency play" that gives sourcers time back and positively impacts response rates

- Sourcers begin their day in Pipeline Analytics for a birds-eye view of each funnel and what actions they need to prioritize. So does the Head of Global Sourcing, so she can help the team unblock stages in which conversion rates may be particularly low

- The team can pull precisely the data each stakeholder needs to see, empowering them to be more data-driven in their day-to-day, and fueling better collaboration and a better business partnership with leadership

"Affirm plans to hire aggressively for the long-term," Emily explains. "Techees had already placed more than 50 engineers at the company, and we were aligned in our commitment to diversity. Luckily, Gem was already a part of Affirm's tech stack; and I knew it was a tool my team needed to keep working with if we planned to drive diversity and growth simultaneously."

Prioritizing diversity with Gem's DEI insights

Emily had been using Gem at Techees before the acquisition. "We brought it on in large part for its diversity outreach insights," she says. "Techees was a certified woman-owned business, and we prioritized providing our clients with diverse pipelines whether or not they explicitly asked for them." But *prior* to Gem, Techees was manually tracking that outreach. "Gem allowed us to not only track what URG outreach looked like, but also to track how those candidates were converting through the process. It gave us an algorithm, tested on self-identified datasets, so we no longer had to infer demographics. One of the reasons this acquisition felt right is that Affirm was one of Techees' first clients who said, Hey, diversity is a priority for us. We have outreach benchmarks. We build diverse pipelines at the start of every role. And whether you're working for an agency or in-house, Gem supports those intentions."

> "Our ATS is deeply integrated with Gem. So I can track everything—top, middle, bottom of the funnel, you name it. Whatever I need to know—pipeline conversion by department, by sourcer, time-in-stage, time to fill—it's there. It's a complete game-changer."

Top-of-funnel efficiencies: outreach stats, activity history, and tokens

Gem also enabled Techees to send automated follow-ups. "That was huge," Emily says. "I knew from years of being a sourcer that candidates are more likely to respond on the third or fourth outreach than they are on the first." At Affirm, that automation is still invaluable; but Emily's relationship with Gem has deepened since she moved in-house. "I *liked* Gem before, but I'm *obsessed* with it now. Gem gave Techees critical visibility into outreach and content stats. But our instance wasn't integrated with a single applicant tracking system, because each of our clients had a different applicant tracking system (ATS). At Affirm, our ATS is deeply integrated with Gem. So I can track *everything*—top, middle, bottom of the funnel, you name it. *Whatever* I need to know—pipeline conversion by department, by sourcer, time-in-stage, time to fill—it's there. It's a complete game-changer."

At the *top* of the funnel, Emily emphasizes the efficiency Gem provides. "For example, Gem displays all activity on a prospect's profile, so we know *exactly* how long ago our last reachout was: 'Mark reached out to this person 7 weeks ago.' Other platforms will tell you—*if* they tell you at all—the date that person was last contacted. You have to count

backwards in your head. You don't get the context of prior conversations—which Gem gives you in full—so you have to go looking for it. All of *that* is time-consuming." Add to that features like Gem's tokens, which auto-populate when sourcers send out messages in bulk. "We used to have to manually adjust messaging," Emily explains, "which pulls you out of the zone if you're in search-mode. So there's an efficiency play there. With all that functionality, sourcers get their time back." In determining Gem's ROI, Emily adds, she recently asked her team about how it supports their workflows. "They looked at me a bit quizzically, and said: 'What do you mean? Gem *is* my workflow.'"

Gem has positively impacted interested rates in part because of the ability to include hyperlinks ("which we could never do with InMail") and GIFs ("our team loves GIFs"). Metrics also allow the team to see how sequences are performing, whether by role or by sourcer. "Every other week we hold what we call a 'sourcing corner,'" Emily explains. "This is something one of our leads came up with to share best practices, trends, and strategies we're seeing across our outreach. We dig into Gem's stats and say, Okay, Sourcer X, you've got a really strong reply rate on this sequence. What are you saying to people? That's data-backed knowledge-sharing at its best, and it's enabling an already-collaborative team to share insights that aren't based on anecdote or gut-feeling."

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End-to-end funnel visibility

But Emily emphasizes that that visibility extends well beyond the top of the funnel. "With Gem, we can track reply rates all the way through to hire." Replies, after all, don't always translate to hires; "it may just mean you wrote a message that caught folks' attention. But when you have visibility into the outreach that *leads* to hires, you see that maybe a sourcer was clearer about our employer brand and it compelled just the *right* folks to respond. So what's the top-of-funnel messaging that ultimately leads to offer-*accepts*? There's nowhere else but Gem that I can get that full outreach-to-offer data."

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Affirm's sourcers begin their days in Gem's Pipeline Analytics, Emily says, "because we need to know exactly how each funnel is progressing: how many candidates are in each stage, which follow-ups need to happen so no one is sitting in a stage for too long." *Then* they turn to Outreach Stats to inform what the rest of the day will look like. "Those stats let sourcers know if they're on track to hit their outreach goals for the week," Emily explains. They also give individual sourcers visibility into where they're allocating their time. "Some sourcers are on more than one team, which means they have to pay attention to outreach allocation. Gem immediately shows us where we're spending our time."

> "Is the hiring manager out this week? Is a recalibration in order? There are so many possible variables, but Pipeline Analytics points me to precisely the place in the funnel that needs attention, so I'm not left guessing where the trouble is. With Gem, we can say, There's a clear drop-off here."

Unblocking the funnel and optimizing performance

Emily, *too*, begins her days in Pipeline Analytics. "What I'm looking for *first* is any conversions that look particularly low," she explains. "As a rule of thumb, I want to see 30% movement at the technical stages of the funnel. So whatever the onsite stage is, I want to see triple that at the department screen. And so on. And if that's *not* happening at a particular stage, I sit down with the sourcer and help identify factors that may be contributing to that pipeline block. Is the hiring manager out this week? Is a recalibration in order? There are so many possible variables, but Pipeline Analytics points me to precisely the place in the funnel that needs attention, so I'm not left guessing where the trouble is. With Gem, we can say, There's a clear drop-off here."

That data doesn't even need to be the basis for performance management conversations, Emily adds, "because my team is in Gem as well; so they're already managing their *own* performance. I'm there to help unblock, whether that's to help with messaging or setting more realistic expectations. But there's no red tape at Affirm. Sourcers are seen as subject matter experts on the candidate landscape, and the sourcing function is as important as any other function. It's another reason I love this organization. It's on sourcers to go directly to their hiring managers and work it out with their own knowledge. Gem simply allows them the data to do that with."

Executive reporting

While Gem supports Emily's conversations with ICs, she also uses it to share data out to hiring managers and executives. "Every week I share URG outreach numbers, the number of candidates converted to intro calls, the number of sourced offers. Our recruiting lead reports out on offer-accepts, declines, and decline reasons. All that data comes from Gem." Previously, the team pulled most of these numbers from their ATS, but "Gem's been a game-changer when it comes to data visualization and simplicity."

Affirm's sourcers share reports with their hiring managers regularly, pulling the data from Gem that each stakeholder needs to see—and in the order of priority in which they need to see it. Emily says this access has empowered her team to be more data-driven in their day-to-day; and "those reports have fueled a better business partnership with leadership because we're bringing them *pro*active, predictive considerations that can be actioned upon, rather than reactive observations. We can accurately predict time-to-hire, for example; or forecast how many candidates we need in each stage of the funnel to see an offer-accept. *That* drives conversations around allocation. Leaders see that data is helping us hit our goals. And so they're already bought in at the beginning of each conversation."

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Emily underscores how grateful she is for how Affirm views the sourcing function. "I'm seeing a different angle of recruiting now that I'm internal. A lot of companies look at sourcing as an entry-level role. Yet coming from the agency world, I know companies pay a lot of money for top-of-funnel sourcing support—so that entry-level perception never made sense to me. I think the industry is finally beginning to understand that sourcers are the backbone of the recruiting function. *Without* them, you don't have candidates for recruiters to close. Affirm seems to have understood this all along. It's refreshing," she says; "and it's refreshing to have a platform that's built for the *whole* of TA—sourcers as well as full-cycle recruiters, execs as well as hiring managers. Because we're ultimately all in this growth together."

To learn more about how Gem can help your team, visit gem.com or contact us at info@gem.com