Fix the home market first.

Why SaaS and GenAI scale-ups in the Nordics–DACH corridor should clean up at home before crossing borders – and why the first step abroad should be a POC, not a hire.

The reset rewrote the playbook. The 2022–2024 public-market reset did not kill SaaS growth. It killed unprofitable growth. The pattern in the top quartile of B2B SaaS is now consistent across the major benchmark surveys: growth above 30–40% YoY at scale, Net Revenue Retention above 110%, and CAC payback inside 18 months (KeyBanc/OPEXEngine Private SaaS Survey; SaaS Capital Private SaaS Retention Study, annual editions), with 3–4x pipeline coverage managed as a discipline rather than a vibe (Pavilion Revenue Benchmarks; The Bridge Group SaaS Sales Benchmark). The companies that struggle most in international expansion are almost always the ones falling short of those same numbers at home.

“International expansion is rarely the problem. It is the amplifier of a problem the home market was already hiding.” - Melanie Tschugmall, CRO2go

What we see across the Nordics–DACH corridor

Demand for Fractional Executives is up 16 percent year-over-year (Forbes, 2025) and across the Nordics–DACH corridor, where deep engineering talent consistently outpaces commercial go-to-market capability, the timing couldn't be better. Two Swiss female founders are addressing exactly this gap: bringing the Fractional Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) model to the region, combining senior revenue leadership with Go-to-Market Excellence built for how Nordics and DACH companies actually operate. They team-up with a Swedish Powerhouse, Fractional COO, to provide end-to-end solution. One sweet spot is the cost-effect. Up to 50 percent lower cost than a full-time hire (Toptal, 2024). Demonstrably higher ROI (Harvard Business Review, 2023).

“Companies often scale internationally before they have truly validated what works in their home market. Expansion then exposes what was previously held together by founder intuition and manual workarounds.”
- Ida Kurvinen, N Star Advisory

Why expansion multiplies every gap

International expansion is not the same game played in a different language. Four forces compound at once, and any one of them will expose a fragile setup:

- Time pressure: boards and investors expect pipeline in six months, revenue in twelve. There is no quiet learning year.
- ROI pressure: every euro spent abroad competes with home-market investments that look more certain on a model.
- Uncertainty: ICP, pricing, sales cycle length, buying centres and competitive dynamics in the new market are hypothesis, not data.
- Cultural distance: even between DACH and the Nordics – often labelled "similar" – decision-making, hierarchies, trust-building and selling tone are materially different.

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What "doing your homework" actually means

Before expanding, five things should be in place at home:

1. ICP sharpness: a written, data-backed ideal customer profile, traceable in pipeline reporting. Who you are not selling to matters as much as who you are.
2. Documented sales motion: discovery, demo, negotiation, closing as a repeatable playbook in a sales wiki – not in the founder's head.
3. Role specialisation: SDR, AE and CS separated, handoffs defined, compensation tied to outcomes rather than activity (The Bridge Group SaaS AE Metrics & Compensation Report).
4. Pipeline mechanics and forecast discipline: 3–4x coverage as the standard, weekly forecast calls, stage definitions with objective exit criteria (Pavilion Revenue Benchmarks).
5. Customer Success and NRR: retention measurable above 110%, health-scoring established, expansion and renewal as their own motion (KeyBanc/OPEXEngine; SaaS Capital Private SaaS Retention Study).

“These are not nice-to-haves. They are the assets you translate into the new market. Without them, you are not exporting a playbook – you are exporting improvisation” - Melanie Tschugmall, CRO2go

The first step abroad: a POC, not a hire

Even when the home market is cleaned up, the second most common mistake is the default answer to "How do we start?" – which is almost always "Find a country lead, hire the country lead, let the country lead build pipeline."

The numbers argue against the default. A senior commercial hire in a new European market typically runs €250–400k all-in per year (Index Ventures, Rewarding Talent; Balderton Capital, European Compensation Benchmarks), takes 6–9 months to ramp (The Bridge Group SaaS AE Metrics & Compensation Report), and is hard to unwind once on board. During that window the company does not buy three things it actually needs: real ICP validation in the new market, an unbiased read on the sales hypotheses, and a pipeline mechanic that does not depend on one individual.

This is where fractional senior operators earn their place. A fractional CRO or country lead brings:

- Experience from five to ten expansions rather than one career stop.
- A network a direct hire only builds in year two.
- Output focus rather than internal politics, because the mandate is time-boxed.
- A 90-day hypothesis test that produces a better hiring decision – or an honest "not yet" on the market.

“A fractional POC costs a fraction of a full-time hire and delivers what a new market needs first: hard data, not expensive hope.”
- Ida Kurvinen, N Star Advisory

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N Star Advisory × CRO2go – the Nordics–DACH corridor

N Star Advisory brings Nordic DNA and a strong understanding of how expensive it can be to scale too fast without the right operational foundations in place.

CRO2go brings DACH expertise to the Nordics, Singapore and UAE and fractional GTM leadership for SaaS scale-ups and Service Companies. Together we cover the Nordics–DACH corridor with the same setup-first mindset on both sides.

Melanie Tschugmall - Co-Founder CRO2go
melanie.tschugmall@cro2go.ch

Ida Kurvinen - Founder N Star Advisory
hello@nstar-advisory.com

If you are weighing an expansion decision, or quietly suspect your home market is not yet where it should be: a 30-minute call costs nothing and produces an honest diagnosis. We are diagnosticians, not closers.