SEPTEMBER 2026 HIRING SNAPSHOT

# SALES & MARKETING

## PREPARING FOR Q4 COMMERCIAL HIRING

Commercial hiring remains active heading into Q4, but changing candidate behaviour and year-end deadlines are creating a narrower window to secure talent. Here's where employers need to act now.

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## Q4 COMMERCIAL TALENT OUTLOOK

### The market may taper, but hiring does not stop

Commercial candidate activity typically slows as Q4 progresses, particularly approaching the holiday period. However, the perception that businesses stop hiring at this time of year does not reflect what is happening across the market. Many employers continue hiring throughout Q4, particularly where budgets have already been approved and need to be utilised before year-end.

In the US, technically qualified sales professionals remain among the hardest people to attract and move. In UK FMCG, businesses are increasingly looking at National Account Executives with the potential to progress into National Account Manager positions, developing future commercial capability while managing hiring costs.

## WHY TIMING MATTERS

### Businesses hiring for Q4 need to move now

The window for securing commercial talent before year-end is already narrowing.

This is particularly important in UK FMCG, where three-month notice periods can significantly extend hiring timelines. Securing people now creates an opportunity to complete onboarding toward the end of the year and have new hires ready to hit the ground running from the start of 2027.

Vacancy volumes are also beginning to increase, creating the potential for greater candidate movement through the remainder of the year. For employers, early planning means identifying priority hires, confirming budgets and ensuring key stakeholders are available throughout the process.

## WHAT IS SLOWING HIRING DOWN

### Internal delays are costing businesses talent

Lack of planning remains one of the biggest barriers to efficient commercial hiring. Stakeholder availability, changing priorities and day-to-day demands can quickly disrupt recruitment. When interviewers, decision-makers and those responsible for offers and contracts are not aligned, delays quickly creep into the hiring process.

Strong candidates are often progressing with competing opportunities at the same time. The businesses securing talent most effectively are establishing the process upfront and treating hiring with urgency from first interview through to offer.

## RETENTION RISK

### Employers need to understand what could make their people move

Year-end is a natural point for commercial professionals to reassess salary and progression in their current role. Outside sales representatives are particularly exposed to competitor approaches, with some willing to trade base salary for reduced travel and stronger bonus potential.

Employees want to understand how bonuses are calculated, when they are paid and how performance translates into reward. Regularly reviewing travel expectations, flexibility and compensation can help businesses identify retention risks.

## WHAT COMMERCIAL TALENT EXPECT

Strong candidates want clarity throughout the hiring process.

The conversations taking place across the market increasingly centre around:
- A clear picture of the role and business
- Transparency around challenges and future direction
- Defined interview stages from the outset
- Fast, consistent communication
- Clear progression opportunities
- Transparent bonus structures
- Realistic travel and flexibility expectations

Unexpected stages, lengthy gaps and unclear communication can quickly reduce candidate engagement.

> *"There is still plenty of movement in the commercial market heading into Q4. The businesses in the strongest position are planning early, being clear about what they can offer and moving decisively when they find the right person. A thorough hiring process does not need to be a lengthy one."*
>
> MYLES BREARTON, DIRECTOR
> SALES & MARKETING

### Three ways to strengthen Q4 hiring

**Plan before the pressure builds**
Confirm budgets, priority hires and internal stakeholders now. Account for notice periods and planned leave so hiring continues moving throughout Q4.

**Make every stage count**
For entry to mid-level hiring, two well-structured stages can provide sufficient assessment without lowering the bar by removing unnecessary inefficiency.

**Be clear from the outset**
Give candidates a realistic view of the role, challenges and process. Clear communication builds confidence and reduces the risk of losing talent to competitors.

### The bottom line

Commercial hiring is entering Q4 with greater optimism and continued investment in growth. While candidate activity may slow toward the holidays, this creates an opportunity for employers prepared to act while others wait.

The strongest hiring teams are securing budget early, acting decisively and streamlining processes without compromising assessment, positioning themselves to secure scarce talent.