JULY 2026

SALES & MARKETING

H1 2026 HIRING INTELLIGENCE SNAPSHOT

Where commercial hiring investment remained strong in H1, and where budget caution slowed decisions

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H1 2026 OVERVIEW

Commercial hiring in H1 2026 was more active than the wider economic mood suggested. Volume increased across the board, with the strongest growth at the senior end of the market.

H1 2026 delivered a strong picture for sales and marketing hiring. Technical Sales roles across North America and Europe were consistently active, and VP of Sales demand reached its highest level in any six-month period on record. The only hiring pause came from a business undergoing a global HQ budget review ahead of a planned sale. One freeze. Everything else moved.

WHERE HIRING HELD

Active and growing

- Strong
- Steady

- **VP of Sales:** More placements in H1 2026 than in any previous six-month period, reflecting continued investment in senior commercial leadership
- **Technical Sales across North America and Europe:** Consistently high hiring volume throughout H1 and one of the most active profiles in the market
- **Senior commercial leadership broadly:** Demand at Director and VP level remained strong across sectors
- **Commercial hiring overall:** Volume increased across seniority levels with hiring activity remaining strong throughout H1
- Businesses continued to invest in revenue-generating commercial talent despite wider economic uncertainty

"Overall volume increase across the board and more noticeably at the senior end of the market. We did more VP of Sales placements in the past six months than ever before."

MYLES BREARTON, DIRECTOR
SALES & MARKETING

TALENT AND HIRING CHALLENGES

What shaped hiring decisions

- Junior Sales Engineers remained one of the hardest commercial profiles to secure, with demand significantly outweighing available talent
- Many businesses are still offering compensation packages based on historic benchmarks, creating a noticeable gap between candidate expectations and employer budgets
- Senior candidates were increasingly motivated by career progression, greater strategic influence, stronger leadership teams and long-term growth opportunities
- Company stability, culture and future direction became increasingly important factors when evaluating opportunities

Why candidates said no

- Compensation packages did not meet expectations
- Concerns around perceived business risk
- Counteroffers from current employers
- A lack of confidence in the hiring company's growth plans or long-term direction

TALENT PICTURE

A candidate-driven specialist market

Strong senior and specialist talent is not sitting idle. The best candidates had options in H1 and used them carefully. Senior commercial professionals were thoughtful and selective, only willing to move when there was a clear step forward both professionally and financially.

- Senior and specialist commercial talent remained highly sought after throughout H1
- Businesses that moved quickly and communicated a clear growth story were more successful in securing top talent
- Slow hiring processes or unclear opportunities were more likely to result in candidate drop-off
- Candidate expectations around compensation, career progression and business stability remained high throughout the period

H2 Implications

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR PLANS

If you are planning commercial hires in H2, the businesses best positioned going into the second half made deliberate hiring decisions in H1. What they had in common was not budget size but behaviour.

THREE THINGS TO DO NOW

- **Benchmark compensation before going to market.** The Junior Sales Engineer pay gap is costing businesses candidates at offer stage.
- **Be clear on your growth story.** Senior candidates walked away in H1 when they lacked confidence in company direction, and that is unlikely to change in H2.
- **Move quickly when you find the right person.** The best senior and specialist commercial talent has options and will not wait.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Technical Sales and senior commercial hiring were active and growing in H1. The businesses that moved quickly, offered competitive packages, and communicated a clear vision made the strongest hires. Those that came to market slowly or with below-market compensation lost candidates they needed. The dynamic in H2 will be no different.