

Q1 MARKET UPDATE

Sales & Marketing

Q1 Overview

Q1 has accelerated hiring conditions across the Sales and Marketing market, with activity moving faster and more decisively than in previous quarters. Vacancy volume is significantly up compared to both Q4 and the same period last year, with hiring activity growing. Where much of 2025 was defined by caution, Q1 has opened with intent.

Businesses that held back on hiring last year have re-entered the market with urgency, resulting in a mix of growth and replacement hiring. Importantly, this is not purely backfill. There is a noticeable increase in newly created roles tied to expansion.

Geographically, North America continues to outperform, with stronger hiring and faster decision-making than the UK and EU. This gap is widening, particularly in revenue-generating roles.

Demand remains focused on commercially impactful hires. External sales professionals and regional managers are seeing the strongest activity, especially those who combine technical understanding with strong relationship-building capability. The shift seen last year, where commercial acumen overtook technical expertise, is now firmly embedded.

Demand Trends

Demand in Q1 is defined by speed as much as volume. The most in-demand roles are moving from interview to offer in as little as 24 to 48 hours, with some businesses making decisions on the same day as final interviews.

This pace is most evident in external sales and regional leadership roles, where delay directly impacts revenue. Professionals are frequently progressing through multiple processes at once, increasing competition and reducing tolerance for slow hiring cycles.

There is a balanced mix of newly created roles and backfills, although replacement hires are often being re-scoped to deliver greater commercial impact.

The underlying drivers remain consistent with last year. Investment in infrastructure, expansion into new regions, and the need to strengthen distribution and customer relationships are all contributing to sustained demand.

Compensation

Salary growth is strongest in roles that directly influence revenue, nonetheless, pressure points are emerging where talent supply is limited. Businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to secure experienced field sales professionals and regional managers, driving both salary increases and more competitive packages.

Counteroffers are rising sharply as employers try to retain high performers. However, as seen last year, they rarely resolve underlying issues. Many who accept counteroffers return to the market within a short timeframe.

Bonus and commission structures remain varied. Some organisations favour higher base salaries for stability, while others continue to use appealing commission models to attract high performers. The most competitive offers balance both, combining security with strong earning potential.

North America continues to lead on total compensation, with more aggressive incentives linked to growth.

Candidate Behaviour

In Q1 we have seen previously risk-averse professionals become more open to new opportunities, particularly where there is clear upside.

Compensation remains the primary driver, but progression is now equally important. Professionals want to understand how a role supports their longer-term trajectory, not just immediate gain.

Flexibility still matters, but less than last year. With more businesses reintroducing office expectations, professionals are adjusting. Hybrid working remains important, but it is no longer the deciding factor on its own.

Dropouts are most commonly driven by competing offers and counteroffers. This is especially true at mid to senior level, where strong talent rarely remains available for long.

Job search activity is becoming more proactive. High-performing individuals are increasingly testing the market, recognising that demand for their skill set is strengthening.

Hiring Process Trends

Hiring processes have become significantly more efficient among high-performing employers. The average time to offer now sits between 24 and 48 hours, with acceptance rates exceeding 90 percent when processes move quickly.

Where delays occur, they are typically internal. Lack of clarity around role requirements, slow approval processes, and insufficient preparation before going to market are the most common causes.

The main drop-off points remain consistent. Delays between interview stages and poor communication reduce engagement and increase the risk of losing talent to competing offers.

The organisations securing top talent are those that are decisive and well-prepared. They enter the process with clear alignment, move quickly through interview stages, and make offers with confidence.

Q2 Outlook

Competition for talent is set to intensify further in Q2. Demand will remain strongest for external sales professionals, regional leaders, and individuals who combine technical understanding with commercial delivery.

One emerging challenge is the shortage of professionals who bring both engineering knowledge and sales capability. This hybrid profile is becoming increasingly valuable and harder to secure.

North America is expected to continue driving growth, while other regions may see more measured progress depending on economic conditions and investment cycles.

The biggest risk for businesses is not lack of talent, but lack of speed. Organisations that delay hiring decisions or rely on extended processes will continue to miss out on high-performing talent.

For hiring leaders, the priority is to align internally before going to market, move quickly once engaged, and position opportunities around both compensation and progression.

KEY TRENDS



Vacancy volumes are up and businesses are moving with urgency



Top talent is receiving offers within 24-48 hours



Revenue-generating roles are driving demand and salaries



Priorities are evolving beyond pay alone



North America continues to outpace the UK and EU

HENDERSON SCOTT