CN SALES RECRUITMENT

QUARTERLY MARKET INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Sales Hiring Market Intelligence

Q2 2026 Edition

Commercial hiring trends, salary insights and market intelligence across HR Technology, Digital Customer Engagement, ESG & Sustainability Reporting, and Membership Organisations

800+ ORGANISATIONS MONITORED EVERY WEEK

Combining ONS labour market statistics, live commercial activity monitoring and proprietary recruitment data.

Reporting Period: April – June 2026

Executive Summary

The UK recruitment market continued its gradual transition back towards employers during Q2 2026. Overall vacancy numbers softened, wage growth continued to moderate and candidate availability improved across many sectors. However, beneath the national picture, specialist B2B sales recruitment remains resilient.

Whilst organisations are generally recruiting fewer people than in previous years, demand for experienced commercial professionals capable of driving revenue growth has remained comparatively strong. Across our specialist markets we continue to see investment in customer acquisition, enterprise account management, strategic partnerships and leadership appointments despite wider economic uncertainty.

At CN Sales Recruitment we monitor more than **800 organisations every week** across our specialist markets. Combined with our own recruitment performance data and wider labour market statistics, this enables us to identify emerging hiring trends before they become widely recognised.

This report brings together three complementary sources of market intelligence:

- Official UK labour market statistics (ONS)
- Weekly commercial activity across more than 800 organisations
- Live recruitment data from CN Sales Recruitment

Together they provide an informed view of where the specialist sales recruitment market is today and where it is likely to move over the coming quarter.

Quarter in Numbers

UK Labour Market

75.0% EMPLOYMENT RATE	**4.9%** UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	**707,000** UK VACANCIES
3.4% REGULAR PAY GROWTH	**4.4%** TOTAL PAY GROWTH	**30.3m** PAYROLLED EMPLOYEES

CNSR Hiring Performance Index™

Measuring the efficiency of successful B2B sales recruitment.

The CNSR Hiring Performance Index™ tracks key recruitment performance indicators from successful specialist B2B sales appointments completed by CN Sales Recruitment.

Rather than measuring recruitment activity as a whole, the Index focuses exclusively on assignments that resulted in successful offers and accepted placements. This provides a practical benchmark for hiring managers looking to evaluate the efficiency of their own recruitment processes.

The Q2 2026 Index reflects recruitment activity across our four specialist markets:

- HR Technology & Workforce Management
- Digital Customer Engagement & MarTech
- ESG & Sustainability Reporting
- Membership & Trade Associations

Q2 2026 Hiring Performance Index™

Performance Indicator	Q2 2026
Average First Interviews per Offer	**2.4**
Interview-to-Offer Conversion	**41.7%**
Offer Acceptance Rate	**80%**
Average First Interviews per Placement	**3.0**

What the Index Reveals

Quality Outperforms Quantity

One of the clearest findings from this quarter's Index is that successful recruitment campaigns were not characterised by high interview volumes.

Across completed assignments, employers typically identified an appointable candidate after just 2.4 first interviews, demonstrating that targeted shortlists can significantly reduce the time and effort required to secure the right hire.

For organisations struggling with lengthy recruitment processes, this reinforces an important principle: improving shortlist quality often has a greater impact than increasing candidate volume.

Confident Hiring Decisions

The Index shows that 41.7% of first interviews progressed to an offer.

This suggests that employers are becoming increasingly decisive when presented with well-qualified candidates who closely match the commercial, technical and cultural requirements of the role.

Rather than interviewing extensively before reaching a decision, successful organisations appear to be placing greater emphasis on upfront candidate assessment and alignment.

Securing the Preferred Candidate

Recruitment success does not end with an accepted offer.

During Q2, 80% of offers resulted in successful appointments, highlighting the importance of candidate engagement throughout the recruitment process.

Managing expectations around the opportunity, remuneration, career progression and cultural fit remains critical in reducing the risk of offer rejection.

Three Interviews to Secure a Hire

Perhaps the most practical benchmark for hiring managers is the number of interviews required to complete a successful appointment.

Across successful campaigns, organisations interviewed an average of three candidates before making a hire.

This benchmark provides a useful reference point when reviewing internal recruitment performance.

Where businesses consistently require significantly more interviews before making an appointment, it may indicate opportunities to improve:

- Role definition and hiring criteria
- Candidate targeting
- Interview structure and decision-making
- Recruitment process efficiency

Quarterly Market Insight

The data suggests that successful hiring is becoming increasingly focused on precision rather than volume.

Despite continued economic uncertainty, organisations remain willing to move quickly when presented with candidates who demonstrate the right combination of commercial capability, sector knowledge and cultural alignment. As recruitment markets continue to evolve, employers who invest in clearly defined hiring criteria and targeted candidate attraction are likely to secure talent more efficiently than those relying on broader interview processes.

CNSR Perspective

The CNSR Hiring Performance Index™ is designed to provide hiring managers with a practical benchmark for evaluating their own recruitment performance.

While every assignment is unique, the trends emerging from successful campaigns consistently demonstrate that:

- Better shortlists reduce interview volumes
- Clear hiring criteria accelerate decision-making
- Candidate engagement improves offer acceptance
- Efficient recruitment processes create a better experience for both employers and candidates

Successful recruitment is rarely a function of interviewing more people. It is achieved by identifying the right candidates earlier in the process and creating the confidence to make informed hiring decisions.

KEY BENCHMARK

The average successful specialist B2B sales appointment during Q2 2026 required just three first interviews and converted more than four in every ten first interviews into an offer.

The UK Labour Market

According to the Office for National Statistics, the UK labour market continued to cool during June 2026, with vacancy numbers falling to 707,000, the lowest level since early 2021. Employment remained relatively stable while unemployment edged higher compared with the previous year. Average earnings continued to increase but at a slower rate than seen throughout 2024 and early 2025.

What does this mean for employers?

Whilst overall recruitment activity has slowed, hiring high-performing commercial talent remains competitive.

Our own experience suggests organisations are recruiting fewer people overall but are investing more selectively in roles that directly contribute to revenue generation. This includes:

- Enterprise Sales
- Strategic Account Management
- Business Development
- Customer Success
- Commercial Leadership

The result is a recruitment market where quality has become more important than quantity.

Market Confidence Index

Sector	Confidence	Outlook
HR Technology & Workforce Management	● Improving	Continued investment in AI, compliance and workforce efficiency platforms.
Digital Customer Engagement & MarTech	● Stable	Businesses remain focused on customer retention and digital transformation despite tighter budgets.
ESG & Sustainability Reporting	● Strong	Regulatory change continues to generate commercial hiring demand.
Membership & Trade Associations	● Stable	Membership growth remains challenging but investment in commercial capability continues.

Companies on the Move

Each week we monitor commercial activity across more than 800 organisations. During Q2 the most common hiring triggers included:

Leadership Appointments

New CROs, Sales Directors and Managing Directors continued to join businesses across our specialist sectors. New leadership appointments frequently signal organisational change, restructuring and future commercial recruitment.

Investment & Funding

Private equity investment and growth funding remained active throughout the quarter. Businesses receiving new investment typically begin scaling commercial functions within six to twelve months.

Product Launches

Multiple organisations announced new software platforms, AI capabilities and digital solutions. New product launches often precede recruitment across sales, partnerships and customer success teams.

International Expansion

Several organisations announced expansion into new territories including North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific. International growth continues to create demand for experienced enterprise sales professionals.

Strategic Partnerships & Acquisitions

Partnership announcements remained consistent throughout the quarter. As organisations broaden their offerings through acquisition and partnership activity, commercial integration becomes a significant recruitment priority.

Salary Watch

Current live vacancies across our specialist markets indicate continued demand for experienced consultative sales professionals. Current opportunities include:

Role	Salary
Head of New Business	**£110,000**
Enterprise Sales Specialist	**£90,000**
Account Executive	**£90,000**
Senior Business Development Consultant	**£85,000**
Regional Director	**£85,000**
Head of Business Development	**£80,000**
Account Director	**£75,000**
Commercial Sales Executive	**£60,000**
Strategic Account Manager	**£55,000**

Market Insight

Whilst salary inflation has slowed, employers continue to compete through:

- Bonus structures
- Career progression
- Flexible working
- Equity participation
- Company culture
- Product quality

Candidates are increasingly evaluating the complete remuneration package rather than basic salary alone.

Recruitment Performance

Our recruitment activity throughout Q2 reinforced several consistent market trends.

Passive candidates remain critical

Approximately 75% of successful placements originated from passive candidates who were not actively applying for jobs.

Quality outweighs volume

Our average ratio of 1.9 CVs per first interview demonstrates that clients continue to prioritise targeted introductions over high-volume candidate submissions.

Speed matters

Average time from assignment to accepted offer remained approximately 54 days, with exclusive assignments consistently progressing faster than contingent searches.

Long-term success

Our twelve-month retention rate remains at 92%, reinforcing the value of thorough assessment and cultural alignment.

Looking Ahead to Q3

We expect several themes to continue shaping specialist B2B sales recruitment during the coming quarter.

AI Investment

Businesses continue investing in AI-enabled solutions, creating commercial hiring demand across software and technology providers.

Commercial Efficiency

Rather than expanding teams significantly, organisations are seeking experienced sales professionals capable of delivering higher productivity.

Candidate Confidence

Candidate confidence continues to improve gradually, although experienced professionals remain selective about changing employers.

Employer Brand

The strongest candidates increasingly assess employers on leadership, culture, flexibility and career progression rather than salary alone.

Key Takeaways

For Employers

- High-quality commercial talent remains competitive despite softer vacancy numbers.
- Employer branding continues to influence hiring success.
- Exclusive recruitment partnerships reduce time to hire.
- Passive candidates represent the largest untapped talent pool.

For Sales Professionals

- Demand remains strongest for consultative, enterprise and strategic sales experience.
- Career progression and long-term opportunity increasingly outweigh salary alone.
- Businesses continue investing in commercial talent capable of delivering measurable revenue growth.

About this Report

This report combines intelligence from three independent sources:

- Official labour market statistics published by the Office for National Statistics.
- Weekly monitoring of more than 800 organisations across HR Technology, Digital Customer Engagement, ESG & Sustainability Reporting, and Membership Organisations.
- Live recruitment performance data from CN Sales Recruitment.

The objective is to help employers and sales professionals understand the trends shaping specialist B2B sales recruitment and make better-informed hiring and career decisions.

About CN Sales Recruitment

CN Sales Recruitment is a specialist executive recruitment consultancy focused exclusively on B2B sales appointments across four specialist markets.

We partner with organisations ranging from high-growth technology businesses through to established international organisations, helping them identify, engage and secure high-performing commercial talent.

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