

CPO / People Director

Hiring Guide for Ambitious UK Digital Companies & Investors

EQUITY | EXECUTIVE



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What an effective CPO / People Director offers a business

Focus on Talent

If a company is unable to recruit, effectively manage or retain top talent this will prevent the company from being able to capitalise on opportunities. At this point having a greater focus on talent and HR is necessary. The HR Director will develop an appropriate talent strategy, get buy in from the leadership team and transform a company's talent to increase operational efficiency and performance and manage and mitigate against risks. This will include organisational development, talent management, company culture, communications, budgeting, staff training and development, employee relations and compensation and benefits.

Company Culture

The best companies know that fostering a strong company culture will allow them to attract, retain and develop the best talent in the market and their ability to have talented individuals in their business will be a decisive factor in their success. An effective HR Director will be able to determine the talent and culture required to achieve the company vision, model and set the company's culture, values and behaviours, share company vision and values with employees, monitor how employees link their jobs to the company vision and values and monitor culture, openness, values and morale.

Leadership of "People" Teams

An HR Director understands the role they play in the company, but they also understand that it is their teams that ensures the business functions effectively. If a company's HR function lacks leadership and needs guidance, a strong HR Director can help ensure these teams have the right people armed with the right training and knowledge to ensure that from a "talent" perspective the company is well positioned now and in the future.

Desire to Expand / Experiencing Significant Growth

A strong HR Director can advise the CEO of how to scale a company from a people point of view. He or she can work with the CEO to determine the types of people it needs to grow, how to attract these individuals, maximise their performance and output and retain them. From there he or she will go about attracting this talent and help the business to scale.

Transformation

A lack of growth, or an inability to grow consistently and sustainably, jeopardises a company's position in the marketplace. In these times it is a strategic imperative to transform a business or certain aspects of it. An HR Director will lead a "people" transformation, changing the company culture, aligning talent to the company strategy and improving output.

When Roles Start to Become Specialised

As businesses grow, their staff often shifts from general employees focused on any necessary tasks into more specialised roles and, eventually, narrowly focused departments. At that point it makes sense to develop an HR department as well.

When the Business Grows to a Certain Number of Employees

Business owners could also judge their need for an HR Director by the number of employees they have. Companies tend to hire their first HR Director when they reach between 50 and 100.

HR Tasks Becoming Onerous

Once HR tasks begin demanding a considerable amount of a business owner's attention, this could be a signal that it is time to hire a dedicated HR Director.



Traits to look for when hiring a CPO / People Director

Talent Focused / Team Builder

It is critical that the HR Director be a great recruiter and team builder. Talent attraction and retention is a key part of the HR Director role. He or she works tirelessly to ensure their company has the right talent to execute effectively. They keep an eye out for ways to improve the company by deepening the pipeline of talent, constantly raising the level of talent through strong hires and providing development opportunities for existing team members.

Results-Orientated

HR Directors commonly sit on company leadership teams and participate in strategic planning processes. They offer perspective on how to align hiring and employee management systems with profit and revenue goals of the business. Good HR Directors start with an emphasis on the top and bottom line and build HR processes centred on these goals.

Commercial Acumen and Financial Literacy

Effective HR Directors have strong business acumen that extends well beyond the HR function. Since labour is one of the largest costs to a business, the HR Director's budgeting demands are especially important. Strong HR Directors see the correlation between best practice hiring and training and the return on investment talented employees provide.

Strives for Alignment

Alignment of departmental goals with organisational goals ensures the company is moving in the right direction and helps to hold people accountable and reward achievements. It is no small feat to align behaviours, organisational design, compensation and goals across a firm. The HR Director will work with the rest of the leadership team to choose an organisational design and support internal communication and collaboration. Clear compensation plans are fundamental. An effective HR Director ensures that there are no morale hazards and that they incentivise desired behaviours from each business unit and function.

Emotional Intelligence and Empathy

The HR Director should act as the voice of the staff on the leadership team and across the business. To do this effectively they must demonstrate strong emotional intelligence and concern for employees. Empathy shows employees the HR Director cares about their needs and does not just see them as a number or revenue stream. This will build trust which in turn will drive productivity.

Strong Communicator

Clarity is perhaps the most important element of any form of communication. Too much ambiguity can be taken in a multitude of ways and too much unnecessarily complication can make words lose all meaning to their intended recipient. A smart HR Director knows how to articulate the company strategy and the part each employee plays in fulfilling this vision.

Objective

It is not the job of the HR Director to protect management. They are objective about what happens in organisations and on the side of the organisation, not of any individual. The HR Director serves as the middle person between the management and the employees and he or she plays a crucial role in ensuring workforce effectiveness.

Political Orientation

Top HR Directors seek to understand the politics of employees. Their political orientation instinctively drives them to meet and get to know staff. They strategise about people in the business, how to align them to company values and hire new talent who possess these values.

Influence

In order to achieve alignment the HR Director must rally different departments to work together in an effective and productive manner. A good HR Director is able to mediate situations and ensure the company's vision is still being fulfilled.

CPO / People Director job description

Organisational Development

- Consider current and future priorities and develop procedures for – Organisation design / Succession planning / Superior workforce management / Key employee retention / Existing employee morale Talent Management
- Identify the type of talent the company requires to successfully execute the business strategy
- Research and understand the job market, explore motivators and benchmark with industry trends
- From this research develop a superior workforce hiring and retention strategy
- Implement systems to make recruitment and talent management proactive across the business
- Manage recruiters to develop hiring processes and an ongoing candidate network
- Develop interview processes that really engage the candidate and enable a fully rounded assessment of the candidate
- Manage interviews and serve as an interviewer where necessary
- Chair any employee selection committees or meetings
- Lead direction of the teams by conveying the company vision
- Motivate the teams and manage conflict
- Incentivise, reward and retain high performers
- Monitor performance of teams and individuals

Communications

- Act as a conduit in advising management on the timing and impact of communications
- Target and share the appropriate information at the appropriate time so as to avoid disruption to business-as-usual or lack of clarity on priorities
- Create a clear feedback channel to enable employee input and reaction and manage this feedback

Company Culture

- Define the culture of the organisation by assessing talent required, sector, company strategy and employee satisfaction
- Promote the culture through employee interaction, setting out company values and managing events and internal communications

Budgeting

- Develop budgets for HR services
- Allocate and manage budgets
- Develop measures to monitor performance of the HR function against budget

Staff Training & Development

- Define all HR training programs and assign authority to managers of these programs. Provide necessary education and materials to employees including workshops, manuals, employee handbooks and standardised reports
- Implement and develop a performance management system that includes performance development plans and employee development programs

Legal

- Ensure company compliance with governmental and labour laws to minimise company litigation
- Protect the interests of employees and the company in accordance with company HR policies and governmental law

Employee Relations

- In order to establish a positive employer-employee relationship and promote a high level of employee morale and motivation, develop, implement, manage and monitor programs in respect to – Employee feedback / Employee complaints / Employee disciplinary / Employee non-performance / Employment terminations / Health and safety Compensation & Benefits
- Develop a salary structure through competitor market research which balances recruitment and retention of superior staff with cost effectiveness

- In partnership with the CFO determine employee benefits by considering employee retention, legal requirements and cost management

HR Team Leadership

- Consider the composition of the HR team necessary to successfully execute the business strategy over time
- Lead direction of the HR team by conveying the company vision
- Motivate the HR team and manage conflict
- Incentivise, reward and retain high performers
- Create measurable performance criteria for the HR team as a whole and as individual contributors
- Assess successfulness of the HR team by reviewing performance in respect to HR operations and assess successfulness of individual contributors by reviewing performance in respect to execution of their duties, cultural fit and representing the company's vision
- Address any weaknesses identified through performance management and recruitment

Candidate Requirements

- Extensive professional experience in Human Resources and recognised HR qualifications
- Significant business accomplishments as a People Director or similar
- Demonstrated success as a member of the leadership team
- Experience of developing and executing HR strategies and managing all aspects of HR operations
- People leadership credentials with experience of developing excellent HR teams and company cultures
- Exceptional strategic insight, commercial acumen and financial literacy
- Excellent communication, presentation and influencing skills
- Sector experience (in circumstances where only candidates from the sector will possess the necessary knowledge)
- Situational experience (in circumstances where only candidates with specific situational experience will possess the necessary knowledge – eg) investment, professionalisation, turnaround, accelerated growth and expansion, exit preparation)

CPO / People Director salary guide

Stage of Growth	Base Salary £GBP 000's
Early Stage (typically VC backed)	80 - 120
Later Stage (typically VC backed)	120 - 210
Mid-Market PE backed	120 – 260

The figures relate to average **London** salaries. We typically find the **South East** pays approx 80% of these figures, the **East of England** pays approx 75% of these figures, the **Midlands** pays approx between 70 – 75% of these figures and the rest of the UK which includes the **South West, North East, North West, Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and Ireland** pays approx 70% of these figures. Salaries in and around major cities and tech hotspots will be higher than these figures.

The information provided above is based on our internal data and external data obtained for the purposes of developing this Salary Guide. There will be exceptions to our findings and caution should be exercised before drawing absolute conclusions.

The image features a dark blue background with a glowing, abstract digital graphic on the right side. This graphic consists of numerous thin, curved lines in shades of purple and blue, each punctuated by small, brightly colored dots in cyan, magenta, and white. The lines and dots create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized human figure or a complex network structure. In the lower-left quadrant, the text "EQUITY | EXECUTIVE" is displayed in a light cyan, sans-serif font. The word "EQUITY" is positioned to the left of a vertical line, and "EXECUTIVE" is to its right.

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