

CSO / Sales Director

Hiring Guide for Ambitious UK Digital Companies & Investors

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What an effective CSO / Sales Director can offer a business

Focus on Sales Growth

When a company is looking to grow this can often be the right time to consider hiring a CSO / Sales Director. Such an individual will have successfully led expansion efforts and will work with the CEO to develop and implement optimal sales strategies and growth initiatives. A high calibre Sales Director with the support of a strong sales team gives a company the chance to dominate a market. Equally if a business is growing quickly, deals are becoming more complex and deal sizes are becoming ever larger, this can be a good time to bring in a highly experienced CSO / Sales Director who knows what good looks like and can quickly professionalise the sales function through development of people, processes and technology in order to fully capitalise on sales and growth opportunities.

Development of a High Performance Sales Team

The Sales Director will know how to go about building and developing a high performing sales team with the right people, focused on the right things at the right times. The Sales Director will work with the existing sales team, mentoring them and holding them to account. He or she will also look at whether the current sales team has the right mix of people to successfully deliver against the sales strategy. If changes and new hires need to be made a strong Sales Director will know when to hire certain positions and the type of candidates' best placed to deliver.

Sales Team Culture

Linked to the last point, sales executives are commonly regarded as some of the most challenging people to manage and therefore smart companies focus on having a good culture within the sales team. An effective Sales Director will be able to determine the talent and culture required to achieve the company vision, model and set the culture, values and behaviours, share the vision and values with the team, monitor how employees link their jobs to the company vision and values and monitor culture, openness, values and morale.

Growth Partner to the CEO

An astute Sales Director gives the CEO another informed voice to help shape an organisations' strategic vision, as well as a commercial leader to turn the vision into effective customer-facing activities. A strategic Sales Director can be a person the CEO can lean on and consult with in terms of how the company should interface with its customers to drive growth.

Transformation & Accelerated Growth

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. A Sales Director will lead a transformation of the sales function, developing and implementing an optimal sales strategy, building a high performance sales team, implementing good processes and in time affecting positive revenue and profit growth. The Sales Director will have successfully led expansion efforts in other businesses and is ideally placed to work with the CEO to develop and implement optimal growth strategies.

Traits to look for when hiring a CSO / Sales Director

Achievement Focused

Top Sales Directors are fixated on achieving goals and continuously measure their performance in comparison to their goals.

Inquisitive & Politically Orientated

Top sales performers are naturally inquisitive and seek to understand the politics of customer decision-making. Their political orientation instinctively drives them to meet with key decision makers and ask customers difficult and uncomfortable questions in order to close gaps in information. They strategise about the people they are selling to and how the products they are selling can benefit the customer instead of focusing on the functionality of the products themselves.

Holistic Approach

Today effective revenue generation depends on a holistic approach. Buyers are empowered by unprecedented information and companies that create a seamless customer journey are gaining market share. Good CSOs / Sales Directors work effectively with other functional leaders and teams to break down silos so that sales, marketing and CRM are aligned and working together to create the best possible experience.

Team Builder

It is critical that the CSO / Sales Director is a great recruiter and team builder because they will need top tier sales executives to support them if they are to successfully implement their sales strategy.

Team Orientated

As opposed to establishing themselves as the focal point of the purchase decision, high calibre sales leaders position the team that help them win the account as the centrepiece.

Consultative, Modest & Humble

Contrary to conventional stereotypes that successful salespeople are pushy and egotistical, the best sales people are consultative, modest and humble. Rather than alienate customers they win them over by showing a genuine interest in the customers and aiming to provide a solution to each customer's personal needs.

The Ability to Forecast

There are many facets to sales management including numbers, headcount, attrition and development needs. The ability of the CSO / Sales Director to forecast accurately gives the leadership team and investors a level of predictability and an ability to plan for the future.

Emotional Intelligence & Empathy

Having the ability to empathise is essential for a CSO / Sales Director. Whether it is empathising with customers or staff, this shows the CSO / Sales Director cares about their individual needs and does not just see them as a revenue stream. Empathy builds trust which in turn should drive productivity. In respect of their teams specifically, knowing how and when to motivate, support, console and even reign in the sales team is essential to maximising their performance.

Ability to Challenge and Inspire Growth

An effective sales leader should be a mentor who challenges and inspires growth in all of their team members. They should be someone who is respected and has an outstanding and accomplished history in their vertical on top of very strong interpersonal skills. They must also have brutal honesty, as sales executives tend to respect those who explain their thought process versus directing without explanation.



CSO / Sales Director job description

Sales & Company Strategy

- Contribute to the development of the company's strategy in partnership with other members of the management team through provision of sales, marketing and customer insight
- Implement and direct strategic plans
- Convey the company strategy to the wider business
- Devise and implement an optimal company sales strategy to sell each product to the most valuable segment with a focus on generating the most revenue possible, with support and insight from the wider management team
- Lead and support key business initiatives in pursuit of strategic goals e.g.) M&A, new product development, new market entry, geographical expansion
- Develop performance measures and monitor progress of sales and customer success strategies against budget
- Partner members of the management team on budgeting and planning
- Develop policies promoting the company's values and desired culture

Sales Development

- Sales Operations – development of robust sales processes (pipeline, account planning, proposals), CRM systems and sales training
- Client Management – prospect, develop and close relationships with key target clients
- Revenue Pipeline Management – Forecast and adjust to maximise revenue generation
- Revenue Cycle – monitor the strategies and processes across the revenue cycle from customer acquisition to engagement to customer success

Team Development

- Consider the composition of the Sales team necessary to successfully execute the business strategy over time
- Recruit high calibre executives into the right positions at the right times
- Lead direction of the Sales team by conveying the company vision
- Motivate the Sales team and manage conflict
- Incentivise, reward and retain high performers
- Create measurable performance criteria for the Sales team as a whole and as individual contributors
- 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 with significant business accomplishments as a CSO / Sales Director or similar
- Proven track record of achieving sales growth, meeting and exceeding targets
- Exceptional strategic insight, commercial acumen and financial literacy
- People leadership credentials with experience of developing high performing Sales teams and company cultures
- Excellent communication, presentation, influencing and negotiations skills
- Sector experience in circumstances where only candidates from the sector will possess the necessary knowledge
- Situational experience in circumstances where only candidates with experience of dealing with specific business situations will possess the necessary knowledge – eg) professionalisation, turnaround, supporting growth and expansion, M&A, exit preparation
- Ability to travel as required

CSO / Sales Director salary guide

Stage of Growth	Base Salary £GBP 000's
Early Stage (typically VC backed)	100 - 150
Later Stage (typically VC backed)	150 - 200
Mid-Market PE backed	150 – 250

Typically Sales positions include healthy bonus / commission potential based on results. Some of the things to think about when developing a bonus / commission scheme for your incoming CSO / Sales Director are A) fixed or tiered B) uncapped or capped C) percentage of gross sales or gross margin.

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.



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