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# Revenue Leader *Hiring Guide*

A decision framework for founders choosing between Head of Sales, VP Sales, CRO, and Fractional. With UK salary ranges and a decision matrix by ARR stage.

4 ROLES COVERED

UK FIGURES 2024/25

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HIRING

## The Role Confusion Problem



The most expensive commercial hiring mistake isn't hiring the wrong person. It's hiring the right person for the wrong stage. A CRO who should have been a Head of Sales. A VP Sales brought in before there was anything to build on.

These four titles — Head of Sales, VP Sales, CRO, and Fractional CRO — are used interchangeably in the market and mean completely different things depending on who's using them. A "VP Sales" at a 15-person startup is a senior AE with a title. A "Head of Sales" at a 200-person company is a middle manager. Neither description is wrong — but hiring based on the title rather than the function gets founders into trouble every time.

This guide cuts through the title noise. It tells you what each role actually does day-to-day, when each one is the right hire, and what each one costs in the UK market right now.

## The Four Roles

### Head of Sales £65,000–£100,000 BASE + COMMISSION

#### WHAT THEY DO

- Manage a small team of 2–5 AEs
- Carry a personal revenue quota alongside management
- Report to the founder or CEO
- Run forecasting calls and pipeline reviews
- Hire and onboard AEs at the direction of leadership

#### RIGHT STAGE

- £500k–£2M ARR
- 2–3 AEs already hired (or imminent)
- Founder wants to step off direct sales management
- Process is founder-documented, not fully built
- Product-market fit confirmed

### VP Sales £90,000–£160,000 BASE + COMMISSION

#### WHAT THEY DO

- Own the sales organisation and revenue target

#### RIGHT STAGE

- £2M–£8M ARR

- Build and refine the sales process
- Hire, develop, and manage sales managers
- Define territory, quota, and comp structures
- Contribute to board-level commercial strategy
- 5+ person sales team or aggressive hiring plan
- Series A raised or imminent
- Sales infrastructure partially built
- Founder is off deals or nearly there

## Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) £140,000–£250,000 BASE + EQUITY

### WHAT THEY DO

- Own the entire go-to-market: sales, marketing, CS
- Align commercial functions around a single revenue number
- Build a commercial leadership team below them
- Sit on the executive team
- Responsible for revenue predictability at scale

### RIGHT STAGE

- £8M+ ARR or well-funded Series B+
- Multiple commercial functions to align
- Clear product-market fit and repeatable motion
- Existing sales and marketing leadership
- Board-level expectation of commercial executive

## Fractional CRO £4,000–£15,000/MONTH (NO EMPLOYER OVERHEADS)

### WHAT THEY DO

- Embedded, not advisory — owns commercial decisions
- Works 1–3 days per week, typically 3–12 months
- Builds the infrastructure then hands it off
- Usually works across sales + partial RevOps scope
- Available immediately — no 3-month notice period

### RIGHT STAGE

- £500k–£5M ARR (sweet spot)
- Founder still closing deals, team needs leadership
- Not ready to justify a full-time senior commercial hire
- Need to move fast — can't wait 4 months to hire
- Infrastructure needs building before a permanent hire

## Decision Matrix by ARR Stage

This matrix is a starting point, not a formula. Team size, funding stage, and deal complexity all modify the answer. Use it to pressure-test your thinking.

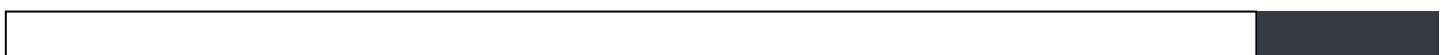
ARR STAGE	TYPICAL TEAM SIZE	RECOMMENDED HIRE	WHY
< £500k	0–1 AEs	None yet / Founder-led	Process is still being discovered. A sales leader before PMF tends to slow things down.
£500k– £1.5M	1–3 AEs	Fractional CRO	Need leadership but can't justify senior permanent hire. Fractional builds the foundation.
£1.5M– £3M	3–6 AEs	Head of Sales	Team needs day-to-day management. Process is documented enough for a HoS to run it.
£3M–£8M	6–15 AEs	VP Sales	Organisation needs architecture and leadership depth. VP Sales builds the machine.
£8M+	15+ across GTM	CRO	Multiple commercial functions need alignment. CRO owns the full revenue number.

## UK Salary Ranges (2024/25)

These are base salary ranges only. On-target earnings for quota-carrying roles typically add 30–60% on top. Equity expectations vary significantly by stage and funding.

ROLE	BASE SALARY RANGE	OTE (IF APPLICABLE)	TYPICAL EQUITY
Head of Sales	£65k–£100k	£100k–£160k OTE	0.1–0.5%
VP Sales	£90k–£160k	£150k–£260k OTE	0.25–1.0%
CRO	£140k–£250k	£220k–£400k+ OTE	0.5–2.0%
Fractional CRO	£4k–£15k/month	No OTE (retainer only)	Varies; sometimes warrants

Note: London-based roles typically command a 10–20% premium. Pre-Series A companies often negotiate down from these ranges with equity as the trade-off.



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# Common Hiring Mistakes

## MISTAKE 01 — HIRING FOR STAGE AHEAD

Bringing in a CRO when you needed a Head of Sales. The expensive hire arrives, spends three months building strategy, and there's no team to execute it. The role was right — the timing wasn't.

## MISTAKE 02 — HIRING BEFORE PMF

A sales leader before product-market fit can actually slow you down. They bring process to a situation that needs experimentation. Don't hire a commercial leader to solve a product problem.

## MISTAKE 03 — CONFUSING A GREAT AE WITH A SALES LEADER

The best AE on your team is rarely the right person to manage the next AEs you hire. These are fundamentally different skills. Promoting your top performer into management is how you lose both a great rep and a decent manager.

## MISTAKE 04 — EXPECTING A SALES HIRE TO FIX A COMP OR POSITIONING PROBLEM

A new VP Sales won't fix pricing that's wrong, messaging that's unclear, or a product gap that prospects keep raising. Hire commercial leadership to build on a working foundation — not to find the foundation.

## MISTAKE 05 — WAITING TOO LONG FOR PERMANENT WHEN FRACTIONAL WOULD DO THE JOB

Founders often spend 4–6 months trying to find a full-time Head of Sales, while the commercial infrastructure sits unmaintained. A fractional engagement over that period would have built most of what the permanent hire needs to inherit.