

# 2025 Annual Pay & Hiring Report

A man with a full beard and dark hair, wearing a maroon button-down shirt, stands in profile looking out a window. The window has vertical blinds and a pull cord. The background is a blurred office interior.

*WinstonRowe*  
RECRUITMENT



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# MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGING DIRECTOR

## IN 2025, THE ROLE OF MARKETING WITHIN ORGANISATIONS HAS UNDERGONE A MARKED EVOLUTION.

What was once considered a peripheral function, centred primarily on communications, brand aesthetics and event delivery, has now firmly established itself at the centre of commercial strategy. Today, marketing plays a pivotal role in value creation, working at the intersection of customer insight, digital innovation, revenue generation, and corporate reputation.

This shift has been driven by structural changes across every sector. Digital transformation has accelerated the need for agility and cross-functional capability. Customers, clients, and stakeholders now expect meaningful engagement, personalisation, and responsiveness, all of which fall within marketing's remit. In parallel, businesses are under growing pressure to deliver commercial results, often under more scrutiny and in shorter timeframes. This dual expectation *of strategic vision and measurable impact*, has redefined the competencies required of marketing professionals, particularly at senior levels.

76 %

of CEOs now see marketing as critical to driving growth, up from just 46% five years ago.

— Source: McKinsey & Company, Global CMO Survey 2024

For organisations with differing ownership models, the demands placed on marketing leadership can vary significantly. In publicly listed companies, marketing leaders must balance brand stewardship with regulatory compliance, investor communications, and ESG delivery, often navigating complex governance and reputational risks.

In private equity-backed businesses, the brief is sharper and faster: drive growth, optimise acquisition funnels, and deliver measurable EBITDA contribution, typically under time-bound performance milestones. Meanwhile, owner-managed firms often prize versatility over scale, valuing individuals who can combine hands-on execution with commercial instinct and strategic breadth, often across leaner teams and flatter structures.

This guide is designed to help decision-makers navigate the evolving compensation landscape within marketing, digital, data and creative functions. Drawing on robust benchmarking and real-world organisational insights, it offers a practical perspective on how pay, capability, and strategic ambition align in today's market. Rather than simply listing salaries, it explores how this alignment enables businesses to build resilient, high-performing teams.

At Winston Rowe, we recognise that attracting and retaining top-tier talent goes far beyond offering competitive salaries. It requires clear role design, structural alignment, strong leadership and an understanding of shifting professional expectations. In a market where skilled individuals are highly mobile, businesses must take a deliberate and strategic approach to talent. What follows is a data-led snapshot of a market in motion, where talent expectations, role design, and leadership impact are being redefined.

"We hope this guide provides the insights you need to make better, braver decisions – but remember – behind every data point is a person, a career, and a story."

**Emily Pires**  
Managing Director



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, the UK talent market for marketing, digital, data and creative professionals is being reshaped by economic caution, performance pressure and shifting employee expectations. Capability, cultural fit, and commercial impact now weigh more heavily than job titles and skill sets alone. Organisations are no longer simply filling roles; they are redesigning them. Hiring decisions are increasingly tied to business outcomes: growth, efficiency, and retention. At the same time, compensation is becoming more differentiated, with premium pay for talent that can influence revenue or operational scale. This guide presents a clear snapshot of salary levels, hiring priorities, and capability trends grounded in benchmarking data and shaped by real-world search work across PLCs, PE-backed businesses, and founder-led firms. Our aim is simple: help organisations make better hiring decisions by aligning talent to strategic intent.

## Snapshot: Talent Market Signals

33%

Surge in Digital Skills Demand

78%

Most marketing teams now budget for upskilling.

38%

Marketing hires cited as tough to source.

34%

One in three firms lack digital readiness.

— Sources: ProfileTree UK Marketing Talent Trends Report 2025; Pivotal London Market Insight Briefing 2025.

## Why The Market Is Moving

- Demand is rising for roles blending commercial and digital skills.
- Marketers are now expected to impact pipeline and revenue.
- Flexibility and growth outweigh pay in senior retention.
- Roles are evolving to drive agility and business value.

27%

Marketing leaders believe they have a mature, fit-for-purpose operating model.

37%

Marketers prioritise AI strategy, but only 7% feel their organisations can deliver it.

— Source: McKinsey & Company: Superagency in the Workplace Report, 2025

## Emerging Talent Themes

- Hybrid skills across brand, CRM, and performance are in peak demand.
- High churn in digital roles is stressing succession pipelines.
- Ownership structure shapes priorities – speed, trust, or agility.
- Marketing is now a board-level priority tied to strategic outcomes.

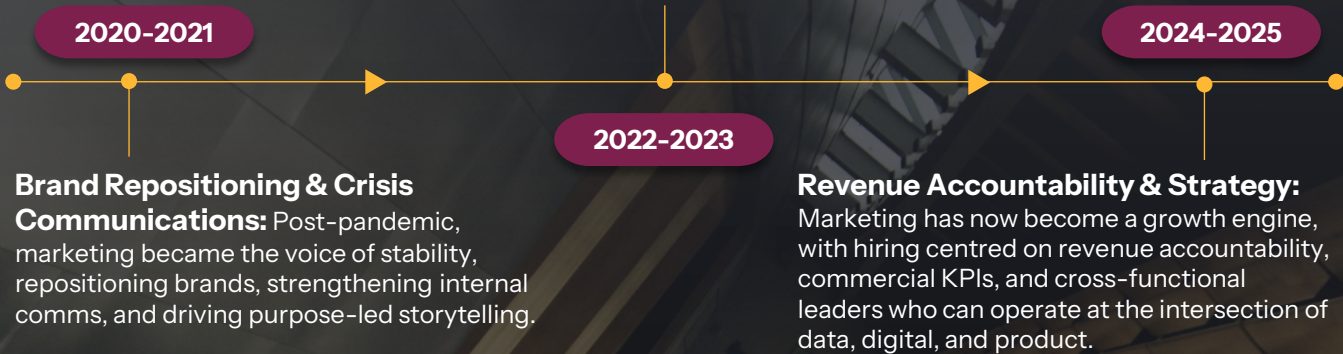


# MARKET INTELLIGENCE OVERVIEW

## FIVE YEARS OF MARKETING TALENT TRANSFORMATION

To understand how 2025 priorities emerged, we need to look at the strategic pivots that defined the past five years.

**Digital Acceleration & Retention Marketing:** With recovery underway, the focus shifted to digital acceleration, driving urgent demand for CRM, automation, retention marketing, and customer experience roles capable of delivering scale.



## WHAT’S DRIVING HIRING STRATEGY AND PAY DESIGN IN 2025

The talent agenda in 2025 is no longer defined by vacancy-filling; it’s about capability shaping. Organisations are designing roles not just to meet today’s needs, but to future-proof commercial performance. Hiring decisions now reflect a deeper strategic calculus: what expertise will shift the business forward, and under what structure? *This shift isn’t cyclical, it’s structural.*

Changing ownership dynamics, evolving customer expectations, and sharper leadership mandates are redrawing the map of who gets hired, how success is measured, and what compensation looks like. At the same time, top talent is becoming more discerning, prioritising flexibility, strategic purpose, and cultural fit alongside remuneration. To decode this complexity, we’ve identified four market forces that are actively reshaping hiring strategies. These drivers reveal how capability, commercial ambition, and organisational design are converging, and what high-performing teams will demand in the months ahead.

1

Roles with measurable commercial impact are attracting salary premiums of 10 – 15% above functionally equivalent positions with less financial accountability.

2

Cross-functional marketers who can bridge data, digital, and strategy are being hired faster and retained longer than narrow specialists.

3

In private equity-backed firms, a growing share of CMO compensation is tied to EBITDA or revenue-linked KPIs, aligning marketing leadership directly with commercial performance.

4

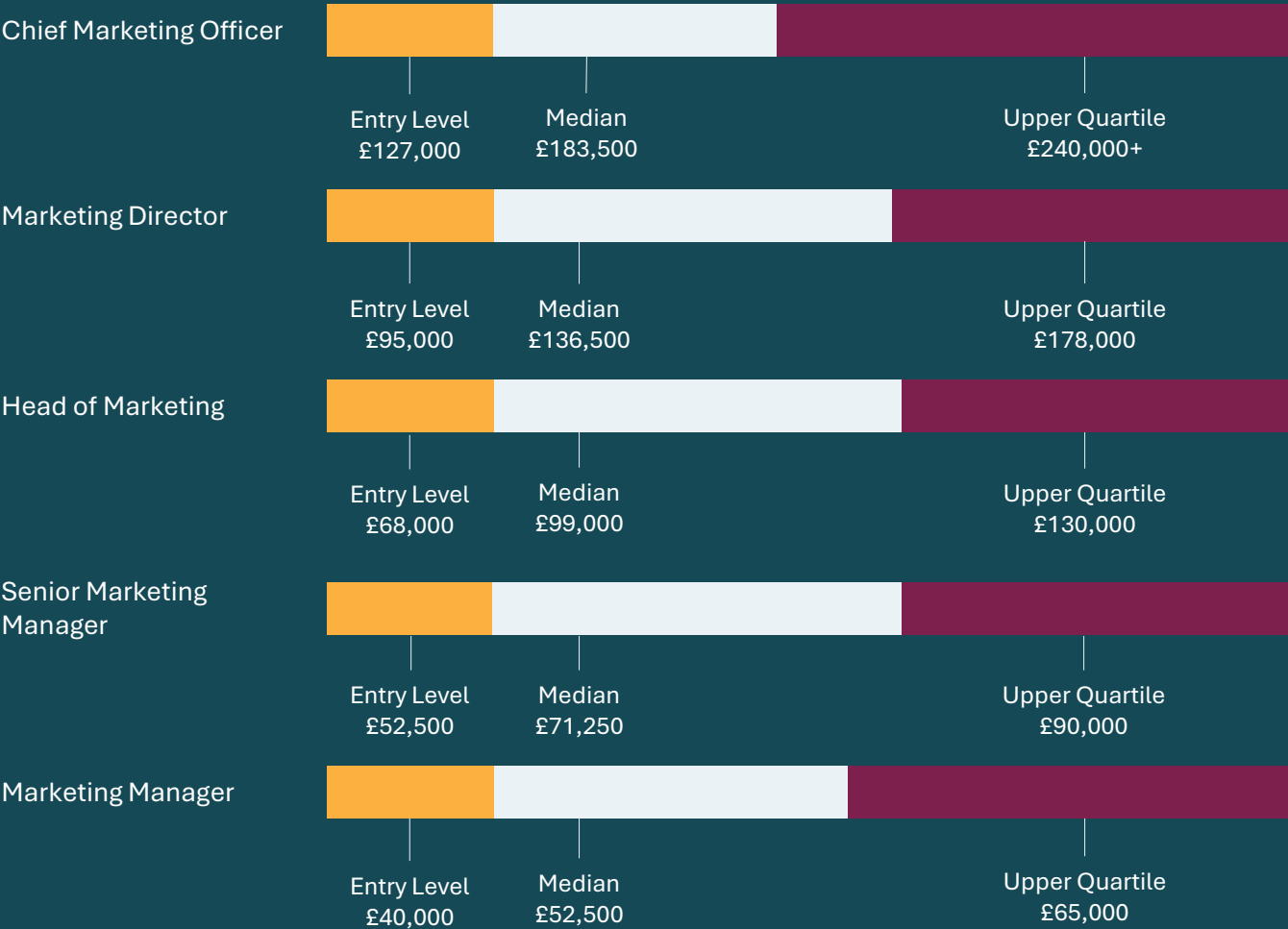
Hybrid flexibility has become a baseline expectation among senior candidates, but what increasingly differentiates employers is the quality of leadership and strategic clarity.

# SALARY BENCHMARKS | MARKETING LEADERSHIP

## Linking Pay to Strategic Influence

As hiring becomes more strategic, salary expectations are shifting in step. While the figures presented here are based on London-weighted data, it’s important to factor in regional variation: salaries outside of London and the South East typically range 15% to 25% lower. For example, while a Head of Marketing in London may earn a median of £100,000, equivalent roles in Manchester or Leeds may fall between £75,000 and £85,000, depending on sector maturity and employer size. These differences reflect local market dynamics, cost of living, and hybrid work models. Organisations are now assessing marketing roles by evaluating proximity to commercial impact, strategic influence, and enterprise visibility. This visual illustrates how salary progression evolves across leadership roles, from entry-level to upper-quartile bands. What emerges is a clear divergence: while pay bands for Marketing Managers and Senior Managers remain relatively compressed – signalling increased standardisation – compensation rises sharply for roles that operate closer to the boardroom. Nowhere is this more pronounced than at the Chief Marketing Officer level, where packages range from £130K to £500K+, depending on enterprise maturity and ownership structure. These roles are now growth-critical: influencing revenue, valuation, and investor confidence. Meanwhile, the steep leap from Senior Marketing Manager to Head of Marketing reveals a succession bottleneck, highlighting the need for clearer progression pathways within the function. Pay uplifts are steepest where roles directly shape business outcomes.

## MARKETING LEADERSHIP



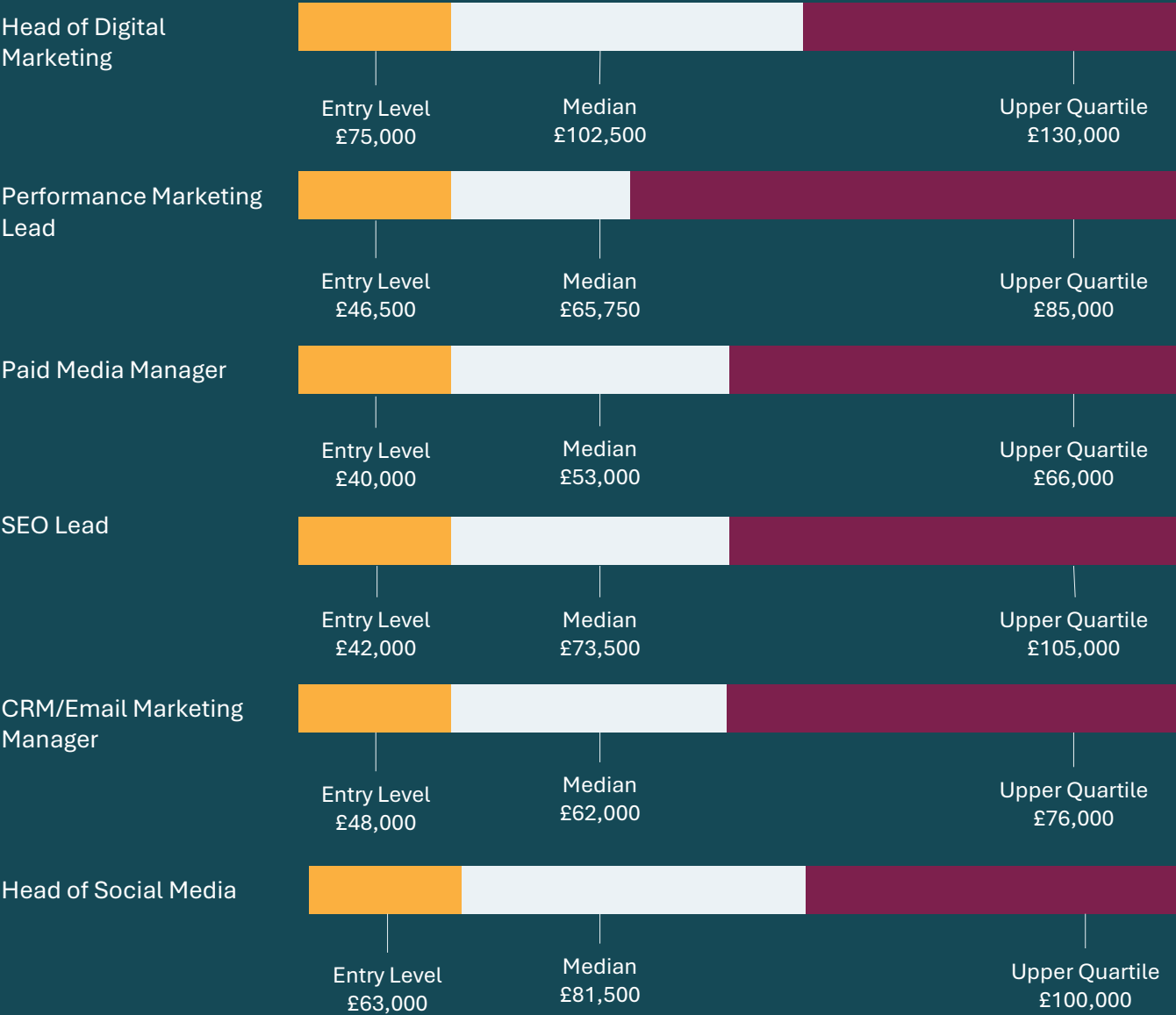
The bars are not to scale in absolute salary terms, only in relative progression from Entry to Upper.

# SALARY BENCHMARKS | DIGITAL MARKETING

## Strategic Specialists Driving ROI

Salaries across UK digital marketing roles in 2025 are being shaped by a growing demand for commercially accountable, performance-led talent. Roles with clear revenue or retention responsibilities - such as Performance Marketing Leads, Heads of Digital, and CRM specialists - consistently command premiums. This trend is evident in high-growth and private equity-backed firms, where marketing is expected to influence CAC, pipeline velocity, and lifetime value. Salaries for Performance Marketing Leads can now reach £90K+, while Heads of Digital regularly earn £100K-£120K where they manage cross-channel strategy, analytics, and martech. CRM and lifecycle roles have gained traction due to their role in customer retention and revenue predictability, often matching SEO and Paid Media peers. Social media leadership has split - content-driven roles average £60K-£70K, while growth-focused directors reach £80K+. Overall, salary levels are increasingly tied to a candidate's ability to influence business outcomes - not just campaign delivery - highlighting the shift from execution to enterprise value.

## DIGITAL MARKETING & GROWTH



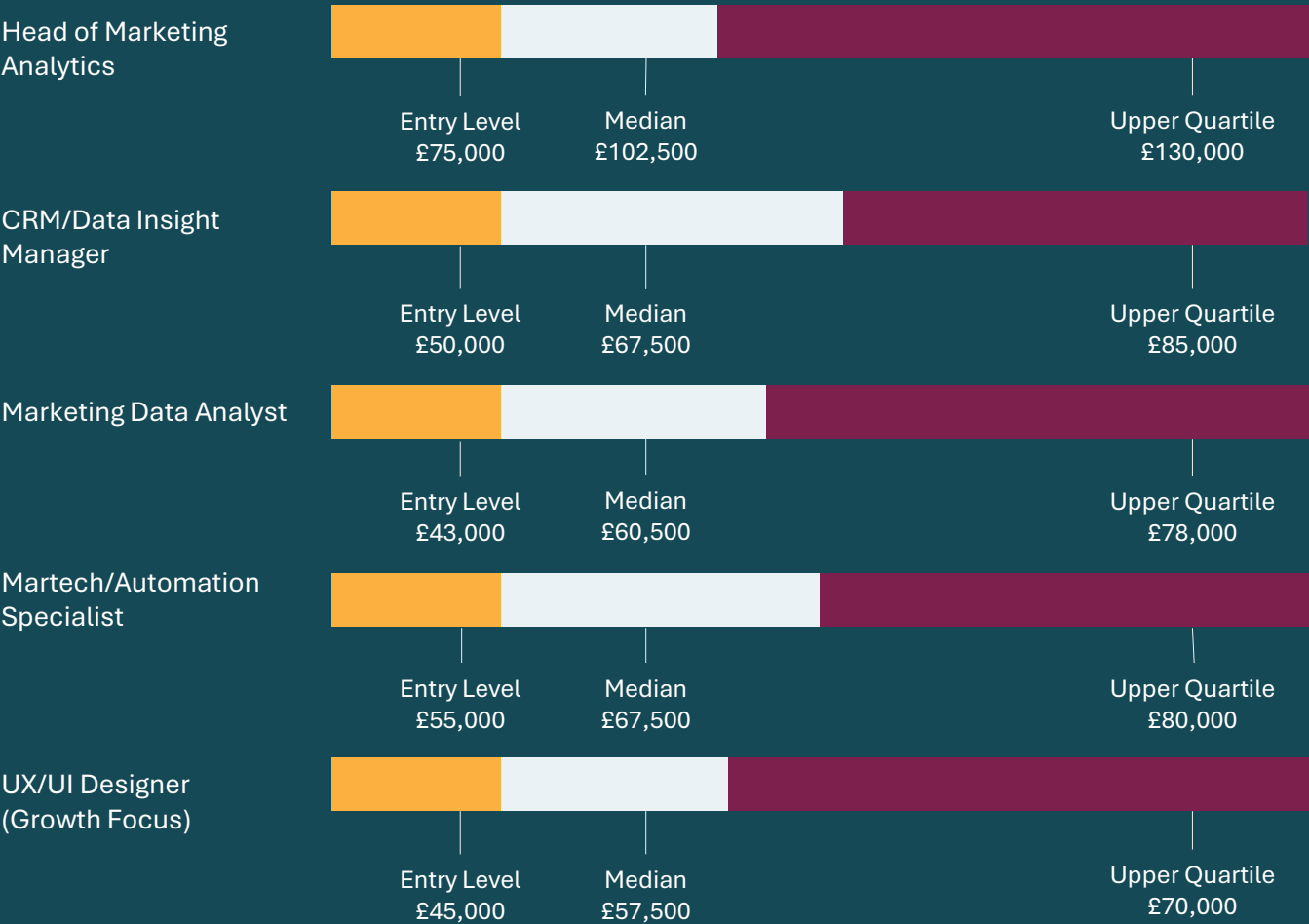
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# SALARY BENCHMARKS | DATA & MARTECH ROLES

## Marketing Data & Martech: Operational to Strategic

As marketing becomes more accountable for revenue and customer value, data-driven roles are moving from the periphery to the core of commercial strategy. The rise of customer-centric growth models and martech ecosystems has elevated roles like Head of Marketing Analytics (£75K-£130K) and CRM/Data Insight Manager (£50K-£85K) to positions of significant influence. These aren't just support functions they are now instrumental in shaping campaign direction, influencing budget allocation, and forecasting commercial performance. This shift is being driven by a growing need to translate complexity into clarity. Leaders are seeking professionals who can convert fragmented data into actionable insight linking behavioural signals to real-world outcomes like CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost), LTV (Lifetime Value), and retention uplift. Candidates who combine SQL fluency, platform literacy, and a commercial mindset are now commanding premium salaries, particularly in PE-backed and high-growth environments. Importantly, the market is no longer just looking for analysts or systems implementers it's prioritising marketers who can work across the funnel, connect with finance and product teams, and influence spend efficiency. Martech and automation specialists are being hired not only to manage workflows, but to embed scale into the operating model. UX/UI Designers with a growth focus are increasingly bridging marketing and product, optimising user experience around conversion and commercial value.

## DATA & MARTECH ROLES (MARKETING-ALIGNED)



The bars are not to scale in absolute salary terms, only in relative progression from Entry to Upper.



# SALARY BENCHMARKS | CREATIVE ROLES

## Creative Talent: From Execution to Brand Equity

As organisations place greater emphasis on brand distinctiveness and customer experience, creative roles are becoming more strategically valued. While executional design remains critical, there is rising demand for creative professionals who can influence storytelling, differentiation, and emotional engagement across channels. Roles like Creative Director (£70K–£130K) and Senior Copywriter (£45K–£80K) are attracting top-tier salaries, particularly in sectors where brand equity directly supports commercial growth. Visual design roles – such as Art Directors and Motion Designers – are seeing uplift where they intersect with performance marketing, digital product, or social content strategy.

Notably, salary progression within creative functions reflects both specialisation and scope of influence, with premiums emerging for individuals who can collaborate cross-functionally and translate brand into measurable impact. As creativity shifts from a cost centre to a value driver, attracting and retaining top design talent is increasingly core to competitive advantage.

## CREATIVE ROLES



The bars are not to scale in absolute salary terms, only in relative progression from Entry to Upper.

# SECTOR COMMENTARY

## DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE IN MARKETING TALENT DEMAND

The demand for marketing, digital, and data talent across the UK economy is not uniform, it is shaped by sector-specific commercial models, regulatory intensity, digital maturity, and growth ambition. While hybrid skills and performance fluency are in high demand across the board, the pace of adoption, role prioritisation, and salary trajectories vary markedly by vertical.

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

One of the most mature sectors for CRM, data, and marketing automation. With customer trust and regulatory compliance front of mind, hiring is focused on CRM and insight professionals who can deliver personalised experiences, optimise onboarding journeys, and support long-term retention strategies. Martech capability is becoming a differentiator as banks and insurers strive to improve performance transparency and meet ESG mandates.



## RETAIL & E-COMMERCE

Retailers and D2C brands remain at the forefront of omnichannel innovation. With aggressive performance targets and short product cycles, demand is high for data-literate marketers who can influence CAC, LTV, and conversion through owned and paid channels. CRM/Data Insight Managers and UX/UI Designers with growth experience are in strong demand to drive conversion, personalisation, and campaign ROI.

## TECHNOLOGY & SAAS

Technology firms are embedding marketing talent into commercial and product-led growth teams. Here, roles such as Marketing Data Analysts, Automation Specialists, and CRM leads are directly tied to acquisition and user journey performance. Candidates with experience in SQL, CDP implementation, demand generation, product marketing and revenue attribution frameworks are especially valued.

## HEALTHCARE & LIFE SCIENCES

This sector remains more conservative in marketing investment, though digital health is driving a slow but steady shift. Growth in diagnostics, patient engagement, and content-led journeys is fuelling the need for CRM, martech infrastructure, and regulated campaign oversight. Candidates who understand compliance frameworks (e.g. GDPR, MHRA) are highly sought after.

## PROFESSIONAL & B2B SERVICES

Many professional services firms are still early in their martech journey. Hiring here often starts with standalone Insight or CRM hires tasked with foundational enablement – e.g. systems integration, reporting automation, and board-level insight generation. As competition intensifies, firms are increasingly recognising marketing as a lever for revenue protection and market share defence.

As marketing continues to evolve from a delivery function to a strategic lever, sectors across the economy are realigning talent strategy. Whether the driver is regulation, customer acquisition, or digital transformation, the race for talent is sector-shaped but commercially aligned. Businesses that connect hiring to strategic outcomes, not just roles, will gain the clearest advantage.



# COMPETENCY TRENDS

## WHAT HIGH-IMPACT TALENT LOOKS LIKE IN 2025

As the UK marketing landscape becomes more integrated and outcome-driven, employers are redefining what "high-impact" talent looks like. Technical expertise alone is no longer enough. Instead, top-tier candidates are those who combine commercial acumen, cross-functional fluency, and adaptive leadership, especially in roles close to customer value, digital infrastructure, and enterprise performance.

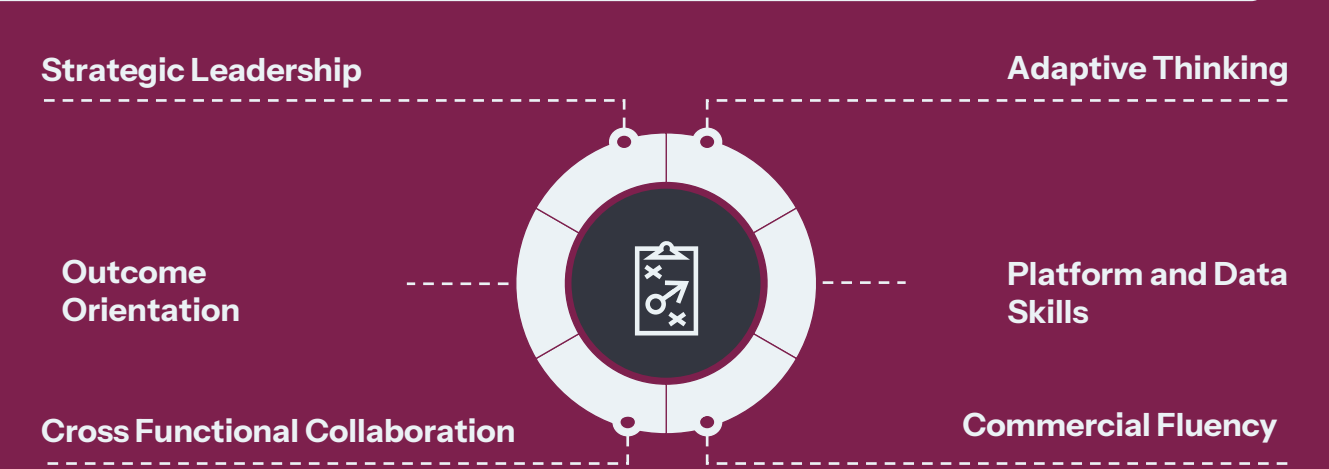
Whether hiring a Head of Analytics, Performance Marketing Lead, or CRM Manager, employers now expect fluency in core metrics like customer acquisition cost (CAC), lifetime value (LTV), and return on marketing investment (ROMI). These are no longer specialist metrics they are foundational to mid- and senior-level marketing roles. At the same time, platform agility and martech literacy are now seen as differentiators.

In lean teams and digitally mature environments, candidates must demonstrate their ability to evaluate and optimise systems such as CRM, CDP, and automation platforms—often without reliance on deep engineering support.

Knowledge of no-code/low-code solutions is increasingly prized for enabling speed, integration, and ownership. Data confidence is also spreading beyond analytics roles. Today’s marketers must be able to interpret datasets, brief analysts, and contribute meaningfully to performance measurement. Core technical fluencies like SQL, A/B testing, and data storytelling are becoming baseline for roles that influence spend or pipeline outcomes.

Adaptive leadership is now a critical differentiator, especially at Head and Director levels. In resource-constrained environments, leaders who bring strategic clarity, coach hybrid teams, and drive commercial outcomes are in high demand. As the diagram shows, expectations for high-impact marketing talent are shifting, toward more enterprise-aligned, commercially minded, and collaborative profiles.

### The 6 Core Competencies Defining High-Impact Marketing Talent in 2025



# STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR BOARDS

## WHY MARKETING TALENT BELONGS ON THE BOARD AGENDA

The shift of marketing, digital, and data roles from operational enablers to enterprise-critical functions is no longer theoretical; it's a reality boards must address. Today's senior marketing leaders are influencing levers historically owned by the CFO or COO: revenue acceleration, margin expansion, brand equity, valuation, and exit preparedness. In private equity and high-growth environments, these capabilities are particularly vital to commercial strategy and investor confidence. Boards that continue to view marketing roles as discretionary spend rather than strategic investment risk underestimating their role in enterprise value creation.

The current compensation landscape reinforces this urgency. As pay for CMO and data-focused roles expands, boards are observing compression at the top, where mid-senior roles are no longer significantly cheaper than executive talent. This is not inefficiency; it's a signal of market scarcity and increasing complexity. Remuneration committees should not benchmark solely on title or tenure, but also on the commercial outcomes these roles drive, especially in sectors where performance hinges on digital acquisition, lifecycle efficiency, or customer data utilisation. Without recalibrated pay strategies, businesses risk losing high-impact talent to better-funded or faster-moving competitors.

Boards also face a growing responsibility for governance around marketing capability. In regulated sectors, such as financial services, healthcare, and utilities, how marketing functions are structured, incentivised, and governed can materially impact compliance, customer protection, and ESG delivery. Succession planning, accountability frameworks, and team structure must now be scrutinised not just for delivery capacity but for transformation readiness. In this context, marketing talent is no longer a departmental issue. it's a boardroom consideration.

### MARKETING TALENT NOW IMPACTS ENTERPRISE

Boards must recognise that senior marketing roles, particularly those in digital, data, and growth, are no longer operational cost centres. These roles influence core business levers: revenue, margin, valuation, and exit readiness. This makes hiring decisions, capability planning, and retention strategy board-relevant.

### PAY EXPECTATIONS REFLECT MARKET TENSIONS

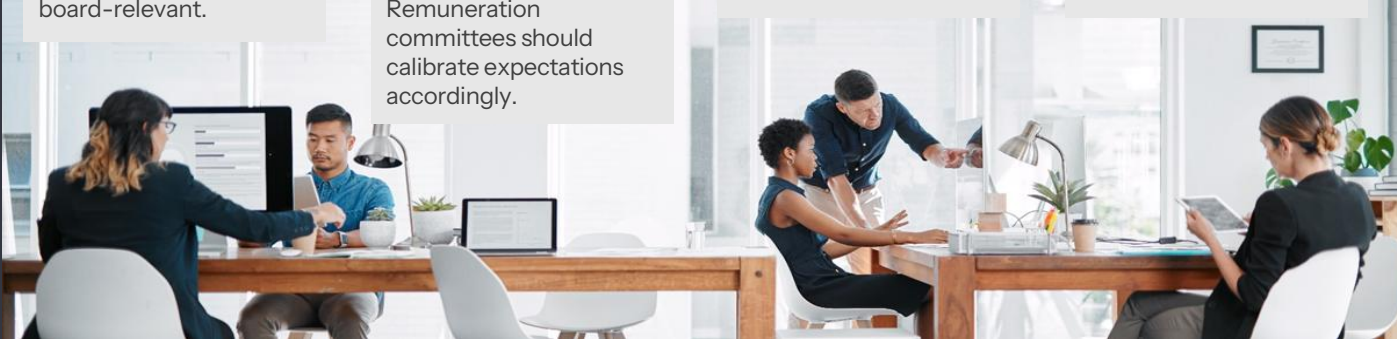
The widening salary ranges - especially for CMO, data, and automation roles - signal increased competition for talent. Boards need to understand that salary compression at the top is not an inefficiency but a reflection of talent scarcity, especially in PE-backed or scale-up environments. Remuneration committees should calibrate expectations accordingly.

### CAPABILITY GAPS CAN BLOCK TRANSFORMATION

Where organisations lack senior marketing leaders who can translate strategy into revenue outcomes - especially through data or digital infrastructure - growth plans stall. Boards must ensure that succession pipelines and team structures can support transformation, not just day-to-day delivery.

### TALENT STRATEGY IS A GOVERNANCE ISSUE

In regulated sectors (e.g. financial services, healthcare), marketing governance is tied to risk, compliance, and public trust. Boards have a responsibility to oversee not just outputs, but how marketing teams are structured, incentivised, and aligned to corporate values and ESG expectations.

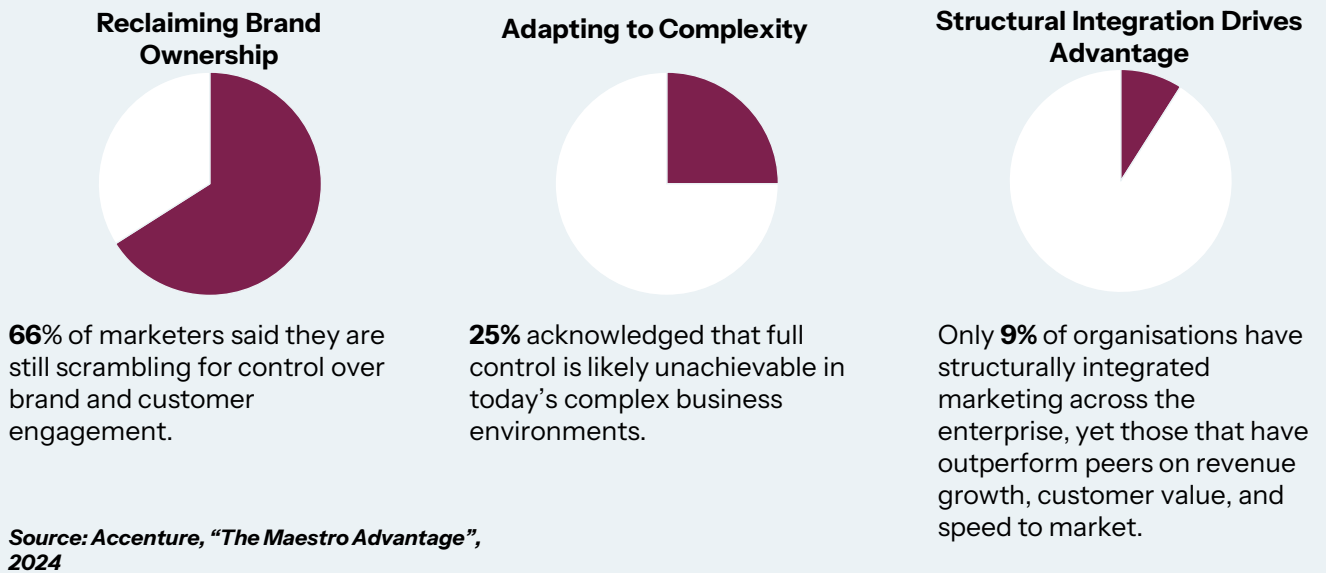




# WINSTON ROWE PERSPECTIVE

## FRAMING TALENT AS A STRATEGIC LEVER IN THE MARKETING FUNCTION

As this report demonstrates, in 2025, the answer is no longer just about skillsets – it’s about structure, strategy, and impact. Marketing has become a centre of gravity for commercial performance. It now touches product, pricing, data, digital infrastructure, customer lifecycle, and even investor relations. As a result, expectations of senior marketing professionals, particularly those operating in Head, Director, and CMO have shifted dramatically. This pay and hiring report exists to help organisations understand those shifts. While we provide robust benchmarking data, our broader aim is to give context to the numbers to explain why compensation is moving, where capability gaps lie, and how ownership structure, business maturity, and team design are influencing the market. Recent research by Accenture, in its Maestro study, reinforces the structural change underway. In a global survey of over 1,000 cross-functional leaders:



This is a striking insight. It highlights a market where most organisations recognise the importance of marketing, but haven’t yet restructured their leadership to reflect it. The firms that have particularly high-growth scale-ups, digitally native brands, and forward-thinking PLCs, are gaining disproportionate returns. They’re hiring CMOs and building teams who are business architects, not just brand storytellers. They’re investing in performance leaders who understand martech, measurement, customer data, and growth economics. And they’re aligning pay to accountability, not just title.

At Winston Rowe, we help our clients define and deliver the talent required to drive meaningful commercial outcomes from C-suite leadership through to critical executional and specialist roles. Whether scaling post-investment, reconfiguring for digital maturity, or addressing succession and capability gaps, we approach every brief through a strategic lens: what kind of marketing talent will shift the needle? Our role goes beyond placement. We advise on team structure, capability design, and market positioning, ensuring that every hire contributes to growth, agility, and enterprise value. In a market where marketing roles are evolving rapidly, blending data, digital fluency, and commercial ownership, the cost of misalignment is high.

The benchmarks presented here are grounded in our experience across live assignments, candidate insight, and compensation intelligence drawn from across the UK market. While not exhaustive, this guide reflects the salary patterns we consistently observe in practice, shaped by company scale, ownership structure, and the commercial maturity of the marketing function.

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