

The SaaS Sales Hiring Playbook

How CEOs & CROs build sales teams that hit quota.

By Yu Recruitment — the #1 specialist sales recruiter for SaaS & AI
companies.
1000+ hires across 40+ countries.

1. The order to hire (SDR → AE → Manager → VP)

The mistake most founders make is hiring a VP Sales first. Don't. A VP without pipeline is a £200k cost centre.

Stage 1 — \$0–1M ARR: Founder sells. Your job is to find product-market fit by talking to 50 customers a quarter.

Stage 2 — \$1–3M ARR: Hire your first SDR + AE pair. The SDR builds pipeline, the AE closes. Both report to you.

Stage 3 — \$3–8M ARR: Hire 2–3 more AEs and a player-coach Sales Manager. Add an Account Manager for retention.

Stage 4 — \$8M+ ARR: Hire VP Sales who has scaled an org from \$5M → \$30M. Not a brand-name VP from a \$500M company.

2. Salary & OTE benchmarks (2025)

Role	UK base £	US base \$	EU base €	LATAM base \$
SDR / BDR	30k–45k	55k–75k	28k–40k	18k–32k
AE (mid)	55k–80k	85k–130k	50k–75k	35k–55k
AE (enterprise)	80k–120k	130k–180k	75k–110k	55k–85k
Sales Manager	75k–110k	130k–180k	70k–100k	50k–80k
VP Sales	120k–180k	200k–300k	110k–160k	80k–130k
CRO	180k–280k	300k–500k	160k–240k	120k–200k

OTE typically = 2x base for SDRs and AEs, 1.5–1.8x for managers, 1.6–2x for VPs/CROs.

3. The 7-stage sales hiring funnel

1. **Sourcing** — 100 outbound profiles per role (LinkedIn + AI tools like Apollo / FullEnrich).
2. **Screening** — 15-minute call. Filter for ownership, numbers literacy, and curiosity.
3. **Manager interview** — 45 minutes. Past deals, win/loss stories, ICP fluency.
4. **Role-play** — Discovery call simulation. Watch how they ask questions, not how they pitch.
5. **Panel** — Cross-functional fit (CS, Product, RevOps).
6. **Reference checks** — 3 minimum. Always include one peer and one direct manager.
7. **Offer** — Move within 48 hours. Top sellers have 3 offers on the table.

4. Scorecards — what to actually score

SDR: Activity discipline, written communication, coachability, resilience.

AE: Discovery depth, pipeline hygiene, deal storytelling, negotiation.

AM: Empathy, account planning, expansion mindset.

VP Sales: Forecasting accuracy, hiring track record, system thinking, exec presence.

CRO: P&L ownership, board comms, multi-channel revenue strategy.

5. 12 interview questions that filter out fakers

1. Walk me through your last deal — discovery to close.
2. What was the most painful 'no' you got and why?
3. How do you build a list when no one knows your product?
4. Show me your last quarter's number vs quota and explain the gap.
5. What does your week look like on Monday morning?
6. Describe a deal you lost on price — what would you do differently?
7. How do you decide which prospects to disqualify?
8. What CRM hygiene do you maintain weekly?
9. Tell me about a time you pushed back on your manager.
10. What's the last sales book / podcast / framework you used?
11. How do you use AI in your day-to-day prospecting?
12. What would you ask if you were interviewing me?

6. Red flags to spot in 15 minutes

- Vague numbers ("around quota") — top sellers know their numbers cold.
- Blames the product, the marketing, the territory.
- Can't articulate ICP or buyer persona of last role.

- No questions about your product or market.
- Was "top rep" at every job for the last 5 jobs (statistically improbable).

7. Need help building your sales team?

Yu Recruitment is the specialist sales recruitment agency for SaaS & AI companies. We've placed 1000+ candidates across 40+ countries, from SDRs to CROs.

Founded by Luigi Infante, we operate natively in English, Spanish, and Italian — and we work with founders from \$1M ARR to enterprise.

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