

HIRING GUIDE

CRO



- Hiring a Chief Revenue Officer
- Hiring Principles
- Interview Questions



GroWise

A Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) is essential for harmonizing and unifying all revenue-related operations within an organization, such as sales, marketing, and customer service, to guarantee steady growth and profitability. They are instrumental in crafting strategies that maximize revenue streams, improve customer acquisition and retention, and elevate overall business performance.

Chief revenue officers often bring with them long-term experience from companies large and small.

Background and work experience of unicorn chief revenue officers,¹ %



¹N = 100 unicorns from Europe and North America, equal split on B2B and B2C.

McKinsey & Company

'Organizations need an executive with in-depth experience in sales, marketing, product, and even technology.'
McKinsey



CRO

Broader Scope Beyond Sales

Oversee all revenue-related functions, including sales, marketing, customer success, partnerships, & pricing strategies.



VP Sales

Focus primarily on managing the sales team, closing deals, and hitting sales quotas.

Alignment Across the Revenue Funnel

Ensure alignment across lead generation (marketing), sales conversions, customer success (retention & expansion), and revenue operations.

Work mainly on top-line growth through new customer acquisition.

Strategic vs. Tactical Execution

Develop go-to-market strategies, optimize pricing models, and create sustainable revenue streams.

Execute sales strategies, manage quotas, and optimize the sales process.

Revenue Diversification & Risk Mitigation

Expand revenue streams through partnerships, new business models, or upselling/cross-selling strategies.

Focus on selling more of the core product.



Which Companies Should Hire a CRO?

A CRO is most valuable for companies looking to scale revenue beyond direct sales and ensure cross-functional alignment. Ideal candidates include:

Fast-Growth Startups & Scaleups (\$10M+ ARR)

When sales, marketing, and customer success are growing independently and need alignment.

If the company is shifting from founder-led sales to a scalable revenue model.

Companies Expanding Internationally

A CRO ensures that marketing, sales, and partnerships work in tandem for global revenue growth.

Companies with a Hybrid Revenue Model (Direct + Partnerships + PLG)

SaaS, B2B marketplaces, or platform businesses with direct sales, channel partners, and product-led growth (PLG) need a CRO to unify strategy.

Organizations Facing Stagnant Growth or High Churn

If revenue is plateauing despite more sales efforts, a CRO can align customer retention, upselling, and new acquisition strategies.

Enterprises Entering New Markets or Product Lines

If a company is adding new products, launching new pricing models, or expanding into adjacent markets, a CRO can drive revenue innovation.



When NOT to Hire a CRO

- Early-stage startups (<\$5M ARR): Founders or a VP of Sales typically drive revenue directly.
- Highly transactional businesses (e.g., pure e-commerce) where marketing and sales function independently.
- If revenue functions are already well-aligned under existing leadership.

Would you say your company is at the point where a CRO makes sense?



Hiring a Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) is a critical decision that directly impacts your company's growth and revenue strategy.

Here are **5** key hiring principles to ensure you bring in the right CRO:

Alignment with Business Stage & Growth Strategy

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- A CRO must match where your business is **today** and where you want it to be in the next **3–5 years**.
- If you're scaling from **\$5M to \$50M**, you need a CRO who has done it before—not just someone from a billion-dollar company.
- Ensure they align with your **sales model** (e.g., direct sales, partnerships, marketplace).

Proven Ability to Build & Scale Revenue Teams

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- Look for **evidence of hiring, mentoring, and scaling sales teams** (e.g., growing a team from 5 to 50+ sellers).
- A strong CRO can **develop playbooks** and build repeatable processes—especially in sales and partnerships.
- Their leadership should foster **cross-functional collaboration** with marketing, product, and customer success.

Mastery of Go-to-Market & Revenue Diversification

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- They should **understand multiple revenue streams**—not just traditional sales.
- Experience in **partner-led growth, international expansion, and digital channels is key**, especially for reducing reliance on any single revenue source.
- A strong **data-driven mindset**—knowing how to measure pipeline efficiency, Customer acquisition costs (CAC), Lifetime Value (LTV), and revenue retention.



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Adaptability & Resilience in Challenging Markets

- Can they navigate downturns, market shifts, or competitive threats?
- Look for examples of how they've **pivoted strategies**, handled slow quarters, and **optimized pricing** or partnerships.
- In today's market, a CRO must **balance short-term wins with long-term sustainability**.

Cultural & Leadership Fit

- A CRO must be a **culture carrier** who fits the leadership team's vision.
- Do they thrive in **fast-moving, entrepreneurial environments**, or do they need large corporate structures?
- Their ability to **collaborate with the CEO, CFO, and CMO** is critical—misalignment can kill revenue momentum.

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Bonus Tip: Test Before You Hire

Before making the hire, consider a **fractional CRO** or a **fractional CRO arrangement** to test fit and execution ability.



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS





Revenue Growth & Strategy

- Tell me about a time you scaled revenue from X to Y. What was your strategy?
- What are the key levers you focus on to drive revenue growth?
- How do you balance short-term revenue goals with long-term growth?
- How do you approach pricing and monetization strategy in a competitive market?

Sales & Go-to-Market Execution

- What's your playbook for building a scalable and repeatable sales process?
- How have you structured and optimized a sales team in a high-growth company?
- What's your approach to pipeline forecasting and improving conversion rates?
- How do you integrate direct sales, partnerships, and digital channels for revenue growth?

Partnerships & Revenue Diversification

- Have you built a successful channel or partnership strategy? What worked and what didn't?
- How do you evaluate and structure strategic partnerships?
- What are the biggest risks in relying too heavily on a single revenue source?

Leadership & Team Building

- How do you hire, develop, and retain top sales talent?
- What are the key traits you look for in a high-performing sales or revenue leader?
- Tell me about a time you had to make a tough leadership decision—what was the impact?
- How do you align sales, marketing, and customer success teams for maximum revenue

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Around 50-70% of CRO fail within the first 18-24 month.

Why?

1. Misalignment with CEO.
2. Unrealistic Expectations
3. Poor Cross-Functional Influence
4. Wrong fit for Stage
5. Lack of Clear Metrics



Metrics, Data, and Performance Optimization

- What are the top three metrics you track daily, weekly, and monthly? Why?
- How do you diagnose and fix underperforming sales teams or channels?
- Tell me about a time you turned around a declining revenue trend. What did you do?
- How do you use data to make better revenue decisions?

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Adaptability & Resilience

- How have you navigated an economic downturn or major industry shift?
- Tell me about a time you failed in a revenue initiative. What did you learn?
- How do you balance aggressive growth targets with financial sustainability?

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Cultural Fit & Leadership Style

- How do you work with CEOs, CFOs, and investors on revenue strategy?
- What kind of company culture do you thrive in?
- How do you handle pressure in high-stakes sales environments

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SCENARIO BASED QUESTIONS

Revenue Growth & Strateg (Testing Thinking & Execution)

✓ Case Study: *"Our company is currently at \$5M ARR and wants to scale to \$20M in the next 3 years. Our primary revenue source is direct sales, but we want to expand into partnerships and digital channels. Walk me through your step-by-step plan to achieve this goal."*

- Follow-up: *What metrics would you track at each stage?*
- Test Purpose: See if they understand growth levers beyond just "hire more sales reps."

✓ Live Breakdown: *"Here's our current sales funnel data for the last 6 months. What problems do you see, and what changes would you make?"*

- Test Purpose: See if they can diagnose real sales performance issues and recommend fixes.

Sales & Go-to-Market Execution (Testing Playbook & Decision-Making)

✓ Role Play: *"I'm a VP of Sales who's struggling to close deals because our pricing is perceived as too high. Convince me why our pricing makes sense, and how you'd help me improve close rates."*

- Follow-up: *What changes, if any, would you make to our pricing model?*
- Test Purpose: See if they understand sales psychology and pricing strategy.

✓ Go-to-Market Test: *"We're launching a new product. You have 90 days to drive \$1M in sales. What's your GTM plan?"*

- Test Purpose: See if they can move fast and think strategically under constraints.

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SCENARIO BASED QUESTIONS

Partnerships & Revenue Diversification (Testing Strategic Thinking)

✓ Scenario: "Our revenue is 50% dependent on Amazon. We want to reduce this risk. What would you do?"

- Follow-up: Give me three new revenue streams you'd explore and why.
- Test Purpose: Assess if they can think beyond direct sales and diversify revenue.

✓ Partnership Test: "A large partner is interested in working with us, but they want exclusive rights in certain regions. What's your response?"

- Follow-up: How would you structure a fair partnership deal?
- Test Purpose: Evaluate their negotiation and risk management skills.

Leadership & Team Management (Testing Real Leadership)

✓ Role Play: "You just took over as CRO. Your VP of Sales is underperforming but is well-liked. What's your plan?"

- **Follow-up:** What's your threshold for letting them go?
- **Test Purpose:** See how they handle tough leadership decisions.

✓ Live Feedback Test: "Here's a recorded sales call from one of our reps. Listen to it and coach them live."

Test Purpose: See how they give constructive feedback and coach a team

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SCENARIO BASED QUESTIONS

Metrics, Data & Revenue Optimization (Testing Analytical Thinking)

- ✓ Data Analysis: "Here's our pipeline report for the last two quarters. What's broken, and what would you do?"
 - **Test Purpose:** Gauge their ability to analyze data and act on it.
- ✓ Forecasting Test: "It's Q2, and we're behind on our revenue target. We need to catch up in Q3. What adjustments do you make to hit the goal?"
 - **Follow-up:** What early warning signs should we look for in Q2?
 - **Test Purpose:** See if they think proactively rather than reactively.

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Adaptability & Resilience (Testing Agility in Uncertainty)

- ✓ Crisis Scenario: "A key customer just canceled a \$2M deal at the last minute. How do you handle this?"
 - **Test Purpose:** Assess their ability to manage high-pressure situations.
- ✓ Market Shift Test: "A competitor just released a cheaper and better version of our product. What's your response?"
 - **Test Purpose:** See if they can think strategically and adjust to competition.

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SCENARIO BASED QUESTIONS

Cultural Fit & Leadership Style (Testing Long-Term Fit)

✓ Decision Test: “You have two VP of Sales candidates—one is a process-driven leader from a Fortune 500 company, the other is a scrappy startup builder. Who do you hire and why?”

- **Test Purpose:** Understand how they make leadership decisions based on company stage.

✓ Ethical Dilemma: “Your top sales rep is crushing quota but selling to bad-fit customers, leading to high churn. What do you do?”

Test Purpose: See if they prioritize long-term revenue health over short-term gains.

Bonus Tip: Reverse the Interview

✓ **Ask them:** “If you were hiring a CRO for our company, what questions would you ask?”

- **Test Purpose:** Gauge how well they understand the role and business needs.

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CONCLUSION CRO HIRING



“ Be adaptive by Design “

*Have the ability to undertake focused organizational change rapidly and with minimal disruption.
Set up fractional CRO arrangements first.*



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