

TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGIES

FOR EUROPEAN GROWTH ORGANISATIONS



ALEX
PARTNERS

INTRODUCTION

In a world defined by rapid technological advancements, the success of technology companies hinges on more than just groundbreaking products or services; it demands visionary leadership.

Alex Partners Executive Search supports European investment backed technology companies, helping to build senior leadership teams and recruit talent to support business expansion.

In this guide, we share practical insights and strategies to develop your leadership team holistically from the outset and optimise your talent acquisition strategy to accommodate business growth – both essential factors for long-term success.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGIES

Post Investment	03
Over Hiring Considerations	05
Integrating Modern Roles	06
Hiring for Business Growth	08
Breaking the Boundaries	10
The Evolution of Your Business	12
The Value of a Great Hiring Process	13
Why Talent Pooling and Talent Benchmarking?	15
About Alex Partners	17

POST INVESTMENT

THE CRITICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

Securing investment is more than a financial milestone. It is a crucial moment in building a successful business. Post-investment, relationships between Founders, CEOs and their stakeholders play a pivotal role in the trajectory of a successful business. Nurturing these post-investment relationships requires a clear understanding of the complexities involved.

Communication, collaboration, and mentorship are the cornerstones of post-investment success. Savvy founders understand that tapping into the wealth of experience and industry knowledge of their investors can be a game-changer. Leveraging mentorship transforms challenges into opportunities, paving the way for innovation and strategic decision-making.

In the critical phase of shaping the executive leadership team, the magic lies in recognising that the C-suite is more than a collection of individual roles. It is a team where collaboration drives success.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the visionary leader and focuses on developing a culture of adaptability and resilience, steering the team through constant change.

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) delivers commercial insights and ensures spend is aligned with growth objectives. They also establish efficient sales processes, implement dynamic systems and drive Merger and Acquisition (M&A) activity.

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The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) drives innovation, this involves not just technological advancements but also the integration of digital strategies and data-driven insights to propel the company forward.



The Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) is responsible for revenue generating activities. A CRO will often ensure the company has a focused and efficient sales motion and a company wide sales methodology. This unified methodology drives accountability and enhances the accuracy of deal analysis, thereby improving forecast precision.

The strength of the CFO/CRO relationship can literally define the success of a company, positively influencing growth and overall business performance.

This interdependence expands beyond these roles to include positions such as Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), Chief Product Officer (CPO) and Chief People Officer (CPO).

Recognising the C-suite as an interdependent ecosystem reframes leadership as a collaborative endeavour. It is this understanding that elevates a group of executives into a powerhouse capable of achieving remarkable accomplishments, far beyond the capabilities of any individual role within the C-suite.

OVER HIRING CONSIDERATIONS

Over hiring at the beginning of a startup's journey, particularly in key leadership roles like CFO and COO (Chief Operating Officer), can offer several strategic advantages. Consideration should be given to these when structuring your first leadership team:

Expertise and Experience: Executives with a proven track record can provide valuable insights, strategic direction, and best practices to guide the company through its early growth stages.

Credibility and Investor Confidence: Having experienced executives on board enhances the company's credibility, instils confidence, and is likely to be viewed more favourably by investors.

Risk Mitigation: Experienced executives are more adept at identifying potential risks and implementing effective risk mitigation strategies.

Networks and Relationships: Senior executives often bring extensive professional networks and industry relationships. Leveraging these can open doors for partnerships, collaborations, and business development opportunities that may not otherwise be easily accessible.

Higher Initial Costs: Investing in top-level executives at the beginning requires clear vision and strategic planning. The goal is to ensure that the financial commitment aligns with anticipated business growth, making the recruitment of these executives a strategic investment in the company's success.

INTEGRATING MODERN ROLES

Integrating 'modern' roles, such as a Chief of Staff or a Product Marketing expert, early in the hiring process brings numerous benefits: Strategic alignment, adaptability, resource efficiency, enhanced collaboration, accelerated learning, brand development, talent attraction, risk mitigation, customer-centricity, and leadership support.

The Chief of Staff role has gained prominence recently. It tends to attract individuals with a blend of management consulting, and industry experience. Ideal profiles will be equipped with a skill set covering Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A), due diligence, transversal Initiatives, Post Merger Integration (PMI) and a deep understanding of business valuation, alongside a knack for driving operational excellence. In essence, the Chief of Staff brings discipline and focus to drive growth.

The Chief of Staff reports directly to the CEO or COO and may be part of the Executive Committee (ExCom). They play a pivotal role in supporting leaders and the broader C-Suite in executing the overall strategic plan.

This multifaceted role usually involves:

- Supporting the Leadership Team to execute, measure, analyse and refine company strategic plans. Serving as the central point for all transversal projects, ensuring seamless communication and execution aligned to the global strategic plan.
- Managing and executing individual projects to bolster growth, including due diligence on M&A targets, driving the acquisition strategy, PMI integrations, new territory expansion, and providing operational overviews.
- Enhancing teamwork by implementing value creation plans and setting Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) for operational excellence.

Integrating this role early on can significantly enhance discipline and efficiency across a business

An individual adept at blending analytical excellence and a focus on driving operational excellence ensures effective project management, successful PMI, and seamless cross-functional collaboration.

Bringing in a Product Marketing expert at an early stage of a SaaS business adds a strategic dimension to the business. This role contributes valuable insights into market trends, customer needs, and competitive landscapes. Early involvement helps shape the product or service offering in line with market demands, resulting in more targeted and effective product development and marketing strategies.

These modern roles serve as enablers, maximising the impact of your leadership team. Early incorporation of these also reflects an adaptive and forward-thinking approach to the organisation's development.



HIRING FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

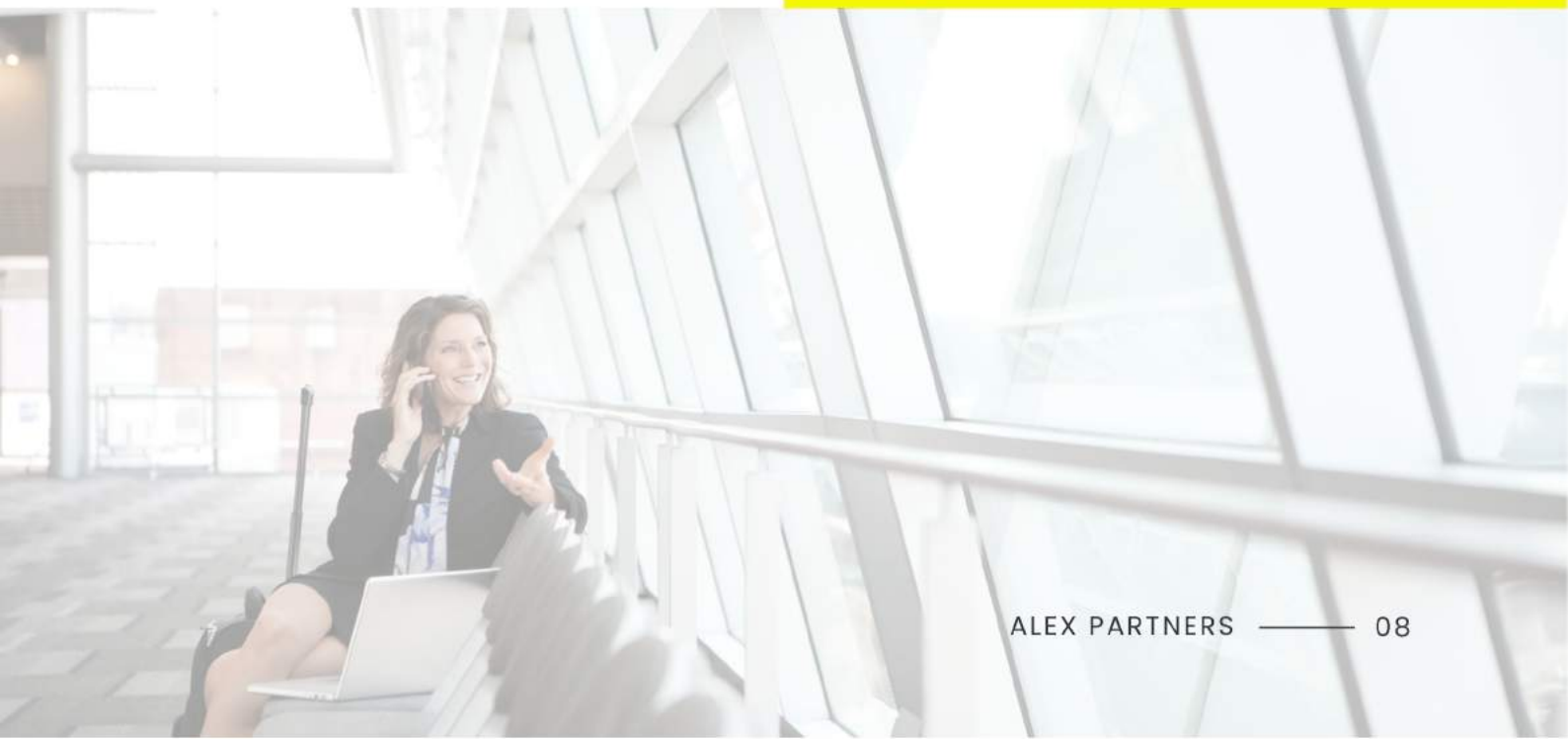
Beyond the C Suite

As a Founder, CEO, or Investor, you know your organisation's true value lies in its people. Having built a stellar C-suite, the challenge shifts to hiring for growth - bringing on individuals with the right experience and qualities to drive expansion. Growing the team requires a mix of skills and perspectives to enhance innovation and adaptability.

The challenge is assembling a diverse team that shares a cultural connection. When diversity and cultural fit harmonise, it creates an environment where each team member's strengths contribute to collective success.

Cristina Fonseca is a founding Partner at Indico Capital Partners. Christina's advice for founders is simple:

“Focus on product and team early on. Start with a solid product that solves a problem for your customer and delivers value. Prioritise hiring the right people and be fair to them. Building confidence within the team and instilling a sense of purpose can transform startups into resilient entities.”



As the business evolves, so do the roles within it. Businesses often begin with development, engineering and finance. Sales and marketing teams follow once the product or service is launched. As the business expands further, the need for other functional roles such as Customer Success, Product Management and Product Marketing emerge. These roles signify a paradigm shift in customer-centric strategies. Knowing when to hire for these positions is critical.

Customer Success: The Customer Success team is both strategic and holistic. They resolve issues but also actively contribute to the customer's overall success and satisfaction. The focus is on building strong relationships, ensuring customer value realisation, and driving sustainable business growth through customer retention and expansion.

Product Management: Product Management requires a strategic mindset, strong communication skills, and the ability to balance user needs with business objectives.

Product Marketing: Product Marketing plays a crucial role in connecting a product with its target audience, creating compelling narratives, and driving its success throughout its lifecycle.

As your business grows, every role counts. Your organisation is as strong as its individual parts. By cultivating and fine-tuning each role, you build a robust company ready to overcome challenges and capitalise on opportunities.



BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

Optimising the value derived from hires is an art that involves thinking beyond geographical boundaries. While local talent is valuable, restricting a search to a specific location risks overlooking the ideal candidate. Considering the global talent pool can be a game-changer, especially in regions where specialised talent is limited.

Embracing multiculturalism and multinational hiring accelerates international growth and injects diverse perspectives. It is a strategic move that drives innovation and enhances the adaptability of your team. This approach broadens your talent acquisition horizons and positions your company as a global player from day one.

To achieve fast growth consider hiring individuals whose skillset spans several corporate functions. As the business matures and gains institutional investment the focus is on creating value. Senior roles become more linear and scaling the teams below becomes more critical.

Developing a defined company culture has a direct impact on the ability to attract and retain top-tier talent. Communication and leadership styles, as well as diverse representation, play a key role in the people landscape of the business as it grows. A proactive approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) positively influences the organisation's culture and serves as a talent magnet, drawing individuals who value inclusive workplaces.

A strong People leader will help you execute on talent strategies and guide the development of company core values which will form the foundation of recruitment decisions.





AND SOMETHING I'M
SUPER PROUD OF...

**AT NORMATIVE,
WE'RE 42% FEMALE
AND WE HAVE 48
NATIONALITIES.**

**WITH THAT MIX
IN THE MELTING
POT, BUSINESS
ACCELERATES
WAY QUICKER.**

MAGGIE BUGGIE

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT NORMATIVE

THE EVOLUTION OF YOUR BUSINESS

As a startup evolves, so must its team. The individuals who kick-started the journey may not necessarily be the ones to navigate the scale-up phase. Recognising this reality is crucial. Startups thrive on agility and that includes making tough decisions when necessary.

Indecision at the point of growth can be detrimental. Embrace change proactively, acknowledging that the skills and dynamics required for a small, nimble team differ from those essential for a larger, more complex organisation. It is a testament to the company's maturity and foresight to make structural decisions aligned to the evolving needs of the business.

Talent acquisition for business expansion demands intentional focus. Building a team that possesses the right skills and embodies the values and culture is essential for sustained success. Beyond the C suite, consider the variety of roles that fuel operational excellence. Geo-distributed teams bring new possibilities.

Embrace the evolution of your team, recognising that change is not a setback but a strategic move towards securing the future of your business.



THE VALUE OF A GREAT HIRING PROCESS

A hiring process is more than a procedural step, it is a strategic imperative. Without a well-defined process there are risks, from mismatched skill sets to cultural misalignment, that can impede growth.

Hiring, when approached strategically, becomes a powerful competitive advantage. By viewing hiring as a strategic investment, leaders can cultivate a workforce that meets the current needs and is positioned to drive the company's future growth.

Ensuring 100% of people offered, accept a role with your business might sound ambitious, but it is a tangible goal with a candidate-focused hiring process. In a competitive talent market, adopting a candidate-centric approach is non-negotiable.

Potential hires are evaluating your company just as rigorously as you are assessing them.

To stand out, provide a seamless and positive candidate experience that begins from the initial interaction and extends through the onboarding process. This highlights your commitment to a collaborative and supportive workplace culture, positioning your organisation as an employer of choice.

The key to this lies in a well coordinated team effort and a streamlined approach. When leaders actively participate in the hiring process, offering a clear vision and aligning it with the company's culture, the likelihood of candidates accepting job offers significantly increases. Collaboration between leadership and the hiring team strengthens the company's appeal to top talent and enhances the overall candidate experience.

Equally crucial is the aspect of cultural fit, aligning hiring practices to it from the outset is paramount to future performance. Cultural fit goes beyond skills and experience; it encompasses shared values, work ethic, and a collective commitment to the company's mission. Prioritising cultural alignment in hiring integrates new hires seamlessly, creating a cohesive, collaborative work environment.



Alex Partners' blog 'Cultivating Success: Aligning Talent Acquisition and Company Culture' outlines ten strategies for enhancing the hiring process. These strategies aim to recruit individuals who have with the right skills for business growth and will positively contribute to company culture.

A great hiring process requires constant refinement and adaptation. Founders, CEOs, and Investors must stay abreast of industry trends, emerging skills, and evolving workplace dynamics for continual optimisation of the hiring process, aligning talent acquisition with the company's growth objectives.

A successful hiring process goes beyond filling positions; it de-risks the entire journey for the candidate and extends beyond the immediate recruitment phase. It serves to mitigate the risks of talent mismatches, promotes cultural alignment, and is the cornerstone for achieving a 100% conversion rate on job offers.

WHY TALENT POOLING AND TALENT BENCHMARKING?

Talent Pooling and Talent Benchmarking are both crucial to an effective talent acquisition strategy.

Talent Pooling is the proactive strategy of cultivating a group of skilled professionals aligned with your company's vision, values, and objectives. Think of it as assembling a future team of specialists, each chosen for their ability to contribute to the innovation and growth of your organisation. Nurturing a Talent Pool provides a pipeline of active and passive candidates for potential future positions.

However, cultivating and managing a talent pool can be challenging when faced with limited resources and fierce market competition. Partnering with a specialist European Executive Search consultancy has many advantages:

- **International Reach:** An extensive international talent network taps into a diverse pool of candidates beyond local boundaries. This can prove invaluable for identifying top-tier talent, including individuals who may not actively be seeking new opportunities but could be the perfect fit for your company.
- **Specialised Expertise:** Offering a deep understanding of the unique talent requirements in the technology eco-system. This expertise ensures a more targeted search for candidates who not only meet but exceed the company's expectations.
- **Time Efficiency:** Streamlines the hiring process, allowing your company to access a curated pool of pre-screened candidates promptly. This efficiency is crucial for maintaining momentum in the competitive tech industry.
- **Strategic Talent Acquisition:** Closely collaborating to ensure a deep understanding your growth objectives, culture, and specific needs. This results in a more strategic and tailored approach to talent acquisition, aligning hires with your long-term vision.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Building an international talent pool requires a deep understanding of different markets, legalities, and cultural nuances.

Talent Benchmarking complements Talent Pooling as it guides your talent acquisition efforts. It involves analysis of your existing talent against industry benchmarks and competitors to provide you with a clear understanding of where your organisation stands in the market. It is a proactive measure to identify areas for improvement and development, refining your talent strategy to cultivate a cutting-edge workforce.

For many organisations, the time-consuming nature of internal benchmarking processes may impact the company's ability to make swift, data-driven decisions crucial for staying competitive in a fast-paced environment. Budget constraints may limit access to high-quality benchmarking data, potentially compromising the accuracy and comprehensiveness of analyses.

Partnering with a European Executive Search consultancy to deliver Talent Benchmarking services is an ideal solution for several reasons:

- **Industry Expertise:** Outsourcing talent benchmarking provides access to a wealth of industry knowledge and specialised skills, ensuring a thorough and accurate benchmarking analysis.

- **Regional Insight:** Offering an established talent network and expertise in the European technology landscape is a unique vantage point, allowing the company to benchmark against regional and industry-specific standards effectively.
- **Current and Relevant Data:** Commitment to staying informed of dynamic market conditions ensures that the benchmarking data remains current and relevant, providing up-to-date insights.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** This collaborative approach not only overcomes resource limitations but positions the company to make informed, strategic decisions based on comprehensive benchmarking insights, contributing significantly to its sustained growth and success.

Talent Pooling and Talent Benchmarking are dynamic tools that address current talent needs and future-proof your organisation. Delivered effectively, these services will dramatically enhance your business through successful hires and the value these placements have on your business outcomes.

ABOUT ALEX PARTNERS

Your choice of a European Executive Search partner is as critical as your hiring decisions themselves. Alex Partners is a founder-led, European Executive Search consultancy, we are small and agile, and distinguish ourselves by the quality of placements and the depth of our partnership.

Alex Partners goes beyond the transactional and operates as an extension of your team.

This level of integration is founded on trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to your strategic talent acquisition objectives. Our deep understanding of your organisation, coupled with a constantly evolving international network, positions us as a strategic ally.

The true value of this partnership is not just in the number of candidates presented but in the positive impact these hires bring to your business. It is not about filling positions; it is about building a team that propels your business toward sustained success and growth.



TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGIES

In conclusion, these considerations, both individually and collectively, are fundamental pillars of your strategic talent acquisition approach. Amid the challenges of post-investment growth, numerous investment decisions, and establishing a solid hiring process, remember that assembling a team effectively is constructing a powerhouse that will transform your vision into reality.

Alex Partners are executive search experts and will guide you through these complexities to help you, and your business, achieve your ultimate potential.



LISBON, PORTUGAL

+351 308 807 924

lisbon@alexpartners-search.com

LONDON, ENGLAND

+44 203 868 7390

london@alexpartners-search.com

www.alexpartners-search.com