

# PURSUIT

Insights



## *Pursuit* *Sales & GTM Talent Index*

Data sourced from **1,400** North American searches conducted by Pursuit in 2025.



# *Sales and go-to-market hiring changed materially* in 2025.

Not because companies stopped hiring.  
But because leaders raised their standards.

Over the past year, we've spent time with founders, CEOs, CROs, and investors across the country. Different industries. Different stages. Very similar conversations.

Hiring didn't slow down. The margin for error shrank.

Ramp times mattered more.  
Bad hires were harder to unwind.  
And decisions showed up faster in revenue, morale, and board conversations.

We built the Pursuit Sales & GTM Talent Index to reflect what actually happened in the market, not how it was described.

This Index is grounded in real activity. Real searches. Real candidates. Real hiring decisions across the United States. It's based on more than 1,400 sales and GTM searches we conducted throughout 2025, nationwide hiring activity across industries, actual applicant flow and interview behavior, and engagement data captured over the course of the year.

This reflects what companies did, not what they said they planned to do.

We created this Index for founders and CEOs, sales leaders and CROs, private equity and venture capital firms, and executive teams building or rebuilding go-to-market organizations.

This is not a prediction report.

It's a market signal briefing.

Our goal is simple: give leaders a clearer view of how hiring actually behaved in 2025, and what those signals mean as you plan for what comes next.

I hope you find it useful.



**Carter Hopkins**

Founder & CEO, Pursuit Sales Solutions





# Pursuit Sales & GTM Talent Index

## 10 HIRING SIGNALS SHAPING HIRING IN 2026

1. Applicant volume was high, hiring confidence was not.

**Signal:** More applicants did not lead to faster decisions.

**Pursuit insight:** Standards tightened. Risk tolerance dropped.

2. Precision hiring replaced potential hiring

**Signal:** Proven, industry-aligned candidates moved faster.

**Pursuit insight:** Ramp time mattered more than raw talent.

3. Healthcare and diagnostics delivered stable demand

**Signal:** Medical, diagnostics, and device sales stayed active.

**Pursuit insight:** Problem urgency drove hiring.

4. B2B industrial and construction quietly outperformed

**Signal:** Higher conversion from applicant to interview.

**Pursuit insight:** Durable revenue beat hype.

5. Remote roles increased noise, not signal

**Signal:** Higher volume, lower alignment.

**Pursuit insight:** Access increased. Precision decreased.

6. Territory and local market expertise returned

**Signal:** Territory-based roles advanced faster.

**Pursuit insight:** Relationship density mattered again.

7. Titles lost meaning, context took over

**Signal:** AE titles varied widely.

**Pursuit insight:** Deal context mattered more than labels.

8. Compensation transparency accelerated hiring

**Signal:** Clear OTE roles moved faster.

**Pursuit insight:** Clarity became a trust signal.

9. Vertical depth beat transferable skills

**Signal:** Specialists converted faster.

**Pursuit insight:** Depth beat adaptability.

10. The best candidates were rarely applicants

**Signal:** Top hires came from proactive outreach.

**Pursuit insight:** The visible market was not the real market.



# 1. Applicant volume was high, hiring confidence was not

**Signal:** More applicants did not lead to faster decisions.

**Pursuit insight:** Standards tightened. Risk tolerance dropped.

Applicant volume increased across the board. More resumes. More interviews. More “on paper” fit than in prior years. But despite the abundance of options, hiring decisions slowed.

Not because leaders were indecisive, but because the cost of getting it wrong went up.

Ramp times mattered more.

Cultural damage from a bad hire was harder to undo.

Margins for error shrank as teams were asked to do more with fewer people.

Hitting quota in 2025 was not the same as hitting quota in 2022. The market was tougher. Fewer reps were outperforming. Past success was a weaker signal of future results.

Leaders knew they had to get it right, and many slowed down because they lacked clarity on exactly who “right” was. Without a tight role definition or conviction in what success truly required, decisions dragged.

High applicant volume created options. Low hiring confidence created friction.

And the gap between the two defined how hiring actually behaved in 2025.

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# 2. Precision hiring replaced potential hiring

**Signal:** Proven, industry-aligned candidates moved faster.

**Pursuit insight:** Ramp time mattered more than raw talent.

Companies weren’t short on candidates. They were short on conviction.

Applicant volume increased. Resumes poured in. Interview slates were full. Decisions slowed not because leaders lacked options, but because the cost of getting it wrong rose.

Ramp times mattered more.

Bad hires showed faster in the P&L.

Cultural damage was harder to undo.

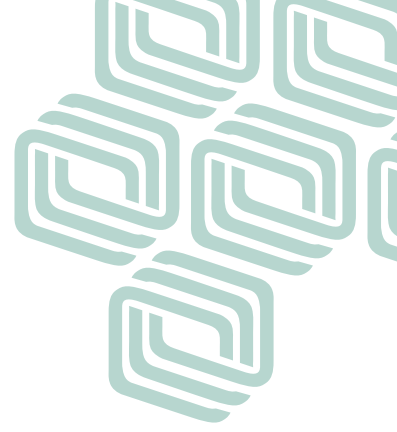
Margins for error shrank as teams were asked to do more with fewer people.

At the same time, past performance became a weaker signal. Hitting quota in 2025 was harder than in 2022, making it tougher to evaluate who would actually succeed.

Without clarity on the role or confidence in the outcome, hiring managers hesitated.

The result wasn’t fewer candidates. It was slower decisions.





### *3. Healthcare and diagnostics delivered stable demand*

**Signal: Medical, diagnostics, and device sales stayed active.**

**Pursuit insight: Problem urgency drove hiring.**

While many sectors adjusted hiring in response to economic pressure, healthcare and diagnostics remained steady.

Demand in these industries is less tied to discretionary spend and more anchored to insurance reimbursement and patient need. When care can't be delayed, neither can the teams that deliver it.

As a result, hiring in healthcare and diagnostics moved with more consistency than in tech or other hype-driven industries. Revenue pressure existed, but demand didn't disappear. Hiring activity reflected that stability.

**In short: when the buyer can't wait, the hiring can't either.**

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### *4. B2B industrial and construction quietly outperformed*

**Signal: Higher conversion from applicant to interview.**

**Pursuit insight: Durable revenue beat hype.**

Private equity flowed heavily into industrial, construction, and other historically "unsexy" B2B businesses. With that capital came operational change. New owners inherited sales organizations that were outdated, under-tooled, or informal and moved quickly to modernize them.

That meant building full sales motions, adding structure, implementing tech stacks, and hiring talent capable of professionalizing revenue teams from the ground up.

On the candidate side, something shifted as well. While many sellers stayed loyal to tech or medical, a growing number leaned into these overlooked sectors. The appeal was not flash. It was stability, ownership, and the opportunity to build.

As attention followed capital, these industries quietly outperformed by turning long-ignored fundamentals into growth engines rather than chasing hype.



## 5. *Remote roles increased noise, not signal*

**Signal: Higher volume, lower alignment.**

**Pursuit insight: Access increased. Precision decreased.**

Many companies pulled hiring back toward proximity last year.

Remote roles promised a broader talent pool, but in practice, they created more volume without more clarity. Applicant flow increased, conversations multiplied, and evaluation got noisier.

Teams that had been burned by fully remote setups began prioritizing collaboration, coaching, and shared context. Being in the room with peers or close to a manager mattered more, especially for roles where development, speed, and execution were critical.

At the same time, remote roles lowered the cost of interviewing. Without the friction of in-person meetings, companies stayed open longer, took more conversations, and built informal benches. Many were interviewing without urgency and without true intent to hire.

Role level amplified this effect. For early-stage teams or foundational sales hires, proximity mattered. Fully remote roles, by contrast, often became exploratory rather than decisive.

The result was decision fatigue.

**In 2025, many companies were interviewing. Fewer were actually hiring.**

## 6. *Territory and local market expertise returned*

**Signal: Territory-based roles advanced faster.**

**Pursuit insight: Relationship density mattered again.**

As online selling grew louder, in-person advantage regained value.

AI, automation, and oversaturation made online outreach easier to execute but harder to win with. More messages reached buyers. Fewer broke through. The result was diminishing returns on purely digital sales motions.

In response, companies refocused on territory and local presence. Hiring shifted toward reps who could operate within specific geographies, build relationships face to face, and create signal where digital channels had become crowded.

Local market knowledge mattered again. Knowing the buyers, the events, the nuances, and the competitive landscape became a differentiator rather than a nice-to-have.

In a noisy market, proximity restored trust.





## 7. *Titles lost meaning. Context took over.*

**Signal: AE titles varied widely.**

**Pursuit insight: Deal context mattered more than labels.**

Job titles became less reliable indicators of value.

Titles drifted upstream across the market, so the same role could carry very different labels depending on the company. “Director,” “Head of,” or “Enterprise” no longer guaranteed scope, impact, or experience.

Companies adjusted accordingly.

Hiring conversations shifted away from titles and toward substance. Leaders focused on what the person had actually built, sold, owned, and influenced. The goal was simple: find the best operator for the work, regardless of what their last title happened to be.

On the candidate side, titles were often used to open doors. Elevated titles helped secure meetings and establish credibility, even when the underlying responsibilities hadn’t materially changed.

Titles still mattered for access. Context mattered for hiring.

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## 8. *Compensation transparency accelerated hiring*

**Signal: Clear OTE roles moved faster.**

**Pursuit insight: Clarity became a trust signal.**

Vague comp slowed everything down.

Top candidates moved faster and asked better questions. They wanted to know not just the number, but how the number was achieved. Leaders who could explain the path to earnings moved candidates forward. Those who relied on hopeful OTEs did not.

There was a clear difference between compensation built on data and compensation built on aspiration. Proven deal sizes, historical attainment, and a clear roadmap created confidence. Lofty targets without evidence created friction.

Transparency mattered more than upside. Candidates wanted the full picture up front, including what percentage of reps were actually hitting plan. When only a small fraction succeeded, the stated OTE lost credibility, regardless of how attractive it looked.

In many cases, unclear or inflated compensation wasn’t a closing issue. It was a disqualifier.

The teams that hired fastest were not offering the highest numbers.  
They were offering the clearest ones.



## 9. *Vertical depth beat transferable skills*

**Signal: Specialists converted faster.**

**Pursuit insight: Depth beat adaptability.**

Familiarity beat flexibility.

As expectations to do more with less rose, companies placed greater value on candidates who had sold similar offerings before. Understanding the buyer, the buying process, and the technical nuances mattered more than broad sales aptitude.

At the same time, teams were leaner. With fewer hires planned and less tolerance for slow ramps, leaders became more risk-averse. The preference shifted toward sellers who could step into complexity quickly rather than grow into it over time.

Hiring only candidates who have done the exact job in the exact market narrows the talent pool quickly. It favors familiarity over adaptability and can screen out strong sellers who could succeed with a short ramp.

It also reinforces backward-looking decisions. As markets, products, and buyers evolve, past patterns become less predictive. Teams optimized for yesterday's motion struggle when the next one looks different.

Transferable skills still mattered, but they were no longer enough on their own. Experience within the same vertical reduced uncertainty and shortened time to impact.

This trend reinforced a broader shift toward precision.

When margins tightened, depth became safer than upside.

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## 10. *The best candidates were rarely applicants*

**Signal: Top hires came from proactive outreach.**

**Pursuit insight: The visible market was not the real market.**

The strongest hires did not come from inbound applications.

Applicant pools were full, but they skewed toward people actively searching. The highest-performing sellers were rarely in that group. They were employed, producing, and well-compensated. They were not applying. They were being approached.

Companies that relied solely on inbound applicants saw only a fraction of the available talent. The rest of the market remained invisible to them.

The teams that hired best treated recruiting like outbound sales. They identified the right profiles, led with relevance, and engaged candidates who were not actively looking but open to the right opportunity.

Passive candidates were not harder to find. They simply required a different motion.

In a competitive hiring market, waiting for applications limited outcomes.

Hunting talent expanded them.





# Regional Market Signals / 2025

## Central Region (including Texas)

Strong and consistent hiring activity driven by population growth, healthcare, business services, and industrial demand.

**Pursuit insight:** Revenue-first markets continued to attract hiring momentum and talent migration.

## Northeast

Resilient and stable hiring demand across finance, healthcare, and professional services, with a strong preference for industry-specific experience.

**Pursuit insight:** Experience and credibility mattered more than upside narratives.

## Southeast

Steady hiring activity supported by business services, healthcare, and lower-cost growth markets.

**Pursuit insight:** Companies hired deliberately, favoring operational stability over aggressive expansion.

## Midwest

Lower overall hiring volume with strong role stability, especially in industrial, manufacturing, and B2B services.

**Pursuit insight:** Fewer roles. Clearer expectations. Longer tenures.

## West Coast

Active hiring environment with slower decision cycles and increased scrutiny across sales and marketing roles.

**Pursuit insight:** Selectivity increased as leaders focused on efficiency, not headcount growth.

### Key Regional Insight:

Sales and GTM hiring in 2025 was less coast-driven and more durability-driven.

## Secondary Signals

- AI fluency entered interviews as a differentiator.
- Compensation tightened around execution and real production.
- Sales and marketing alignment was scrutinized earlier in the hiring process.





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**HERE'S HOW WE CAN HELP**

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