kenso

KENSO RESEARCH · METHODOLOGY

Does hiring a Head of Growth make a company grow?

The data, the methods, every number and every limitation behind the study.

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ABOUT THE DATA

This study uses Kenso internal data: the company, people and web records Kenso uses for sales and outreach, reused by Cristian Frunze for this study.

Aggregates only. Any group smaller than 50 people is suppressed, and no individual is named.

Figures 1 to 4 are the study page's charts, drawn from the same numbers. The methodology after them keeps the full tables.

SUMMARY

Does hiring a Head of Growth make a company grow?

No sign of it. Companies hire one once growth is under way. The title is still booming: 6.004% of B2B software companies had a Growth leader in 2025, 6.59 times the 2015 share.

6.59x

rise in the share of B2B software companies with a Growth leader, from 0.911% in 2015 to 6.004% in 2025, with no flattening after 2022.

19.504%

of companies with 200 to 999 employees had a Growth leader in 2025, up from 7.941% in 2018. At 1,000 or more the share held at about 28% to 30%.

9.77%

faster headcount growth at hiring companies than at their matches in the three quarters before the first Growth hire. The run-up came first.

28.33%

gap two years after a first marketing leader hire, against 22.17% after a first Growth hire. The Growth title shows no extra lift.

Data and method

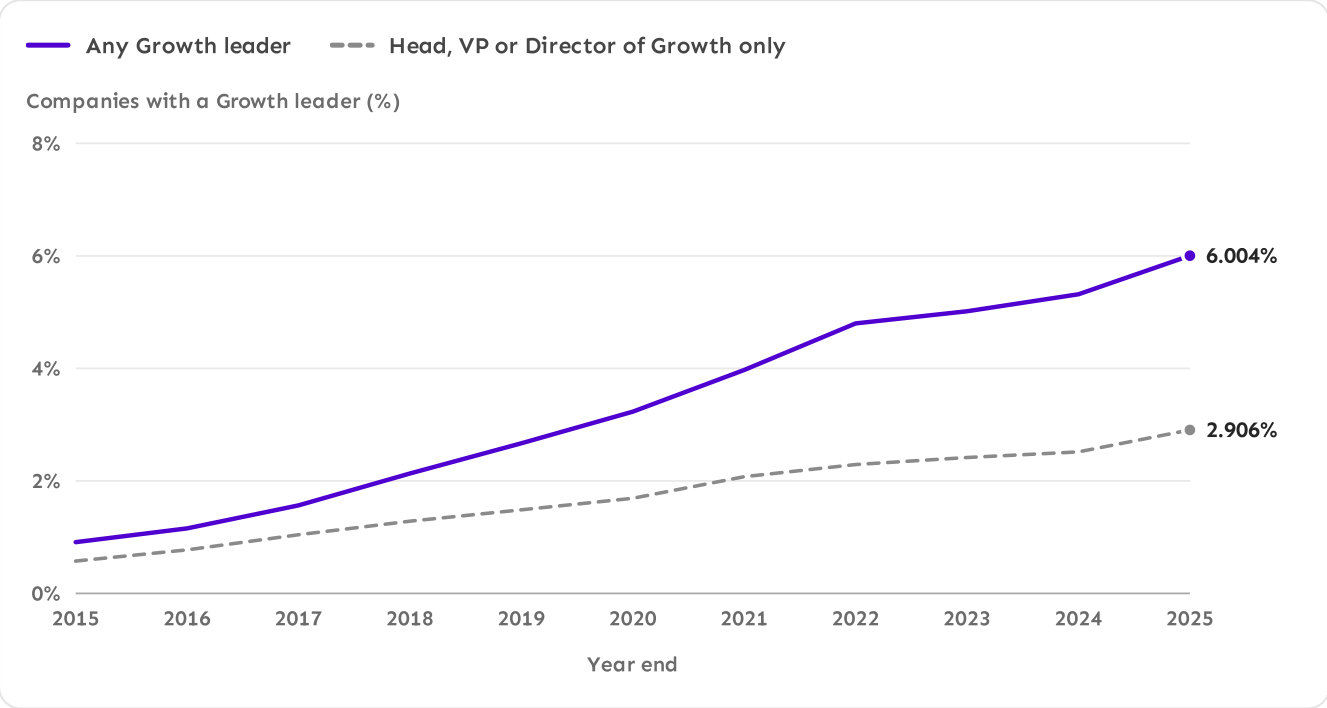
Data	Kenso internal data: the public work histories and company records Kenso uses for sales and outreach, reused by Cristian Frunze for this study. People whose current profile is in the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland or New Zealand.
Sample	B2B software companies with 10 or more employees: 9,219 in 2015 and 19,236 in 2025. 1,375 first Growth leader hires matched to 4,733 companies without one.
Date range	Year-end shares 2015 to 2025. First hires 2017 Q1 to 2023 Q3, each followed for eight quarters.
Method	Pre-registered yearly shares and a matched event study (up to five matches per hire on quarter, industry, size, age and prior growth) with 95% intervals from 1,000 bootstrap draws, benchmarked against first marketing leader hires. Headline numbers recomputed by an independent analysis.
Excluded	• 79,764 people whose senior title contains growth but means something else • The new Growth leader, taken out of their own company's headcount • Companies with fewer than 10 employees the quarter before the hire
Privacy	Aggregates only. Any group smaller than 50 people is suppressed, and no individual is named.

FIGURES

The study's charts

FIGURE 1

Six times as many software companies have a Growth leader as in 2015

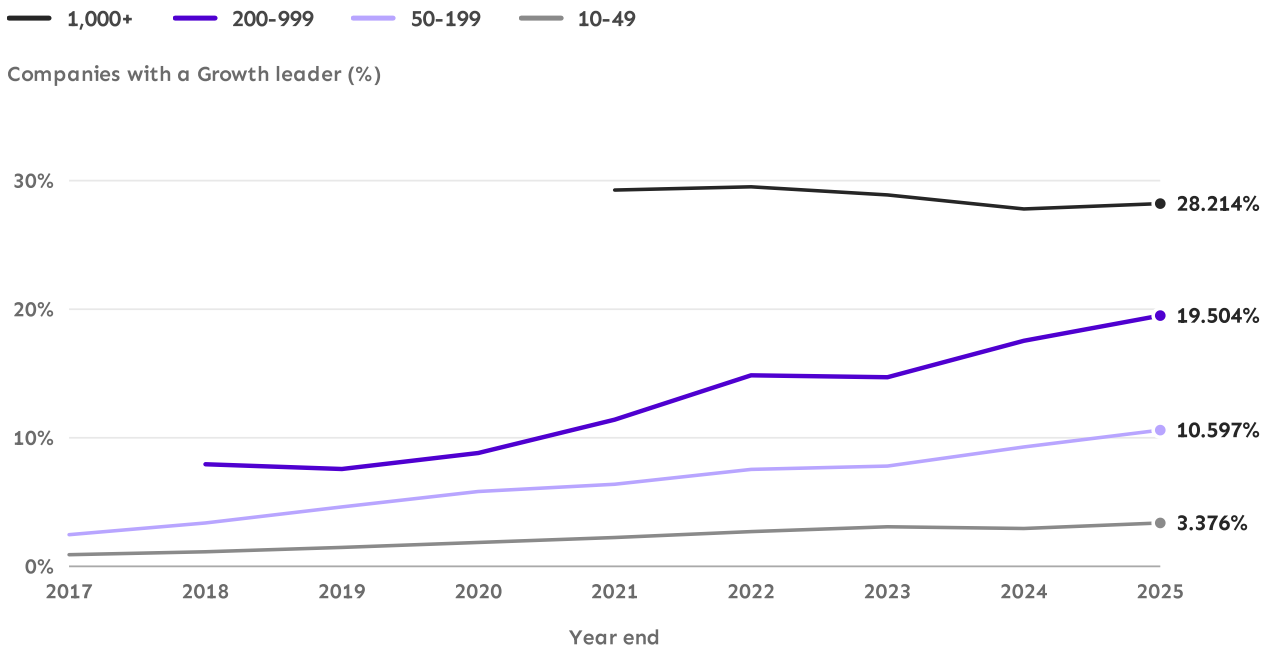


Share of B2B software companies with 10 or more employees that had a Growth leader in seat at the end of each year. The dashed line counts only Head, VP or Director of Growth titles.

Source: Kenso internal data (company and career records Kenso uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FIGURE 2

Mid-size companies drive the rise; the largest stayed flat

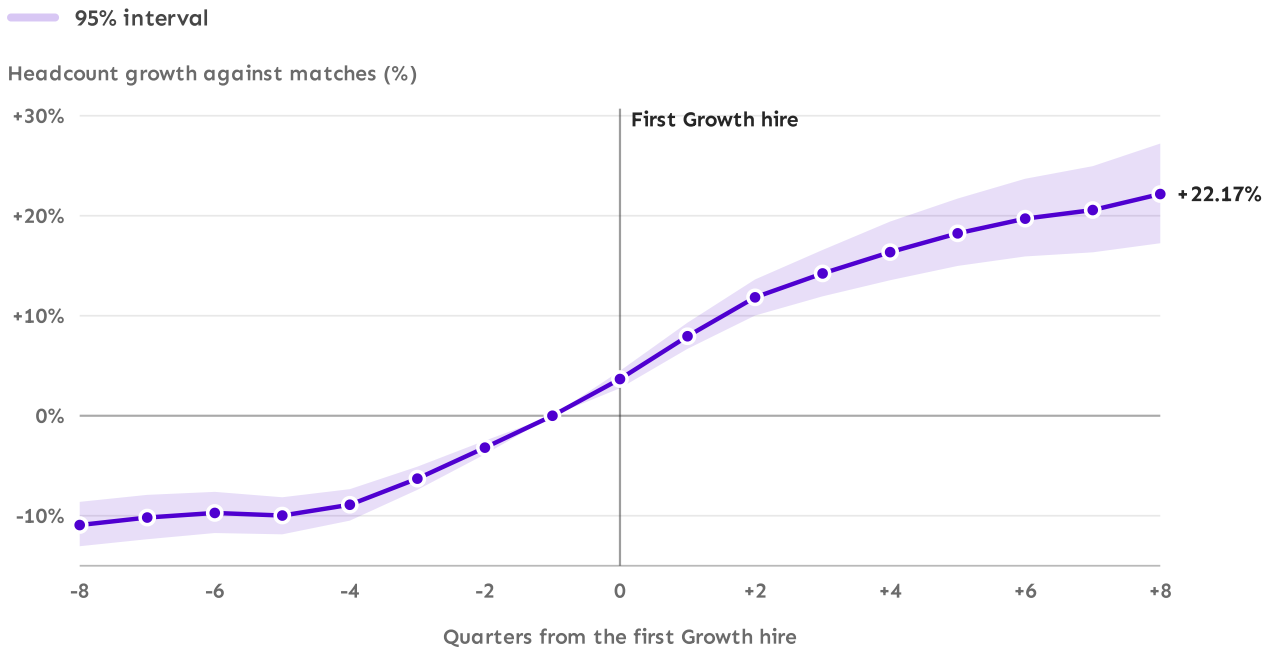


Share of B2B software companies with a Growth leader at year end, by employee count. Years in which fewer than 50 companies in a size band had a Growth leader are not shown.

Source: Kenso internal data (company and career records Kenso uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FIGURE 3

Hiring companies were pulling ahead before the Growth hire

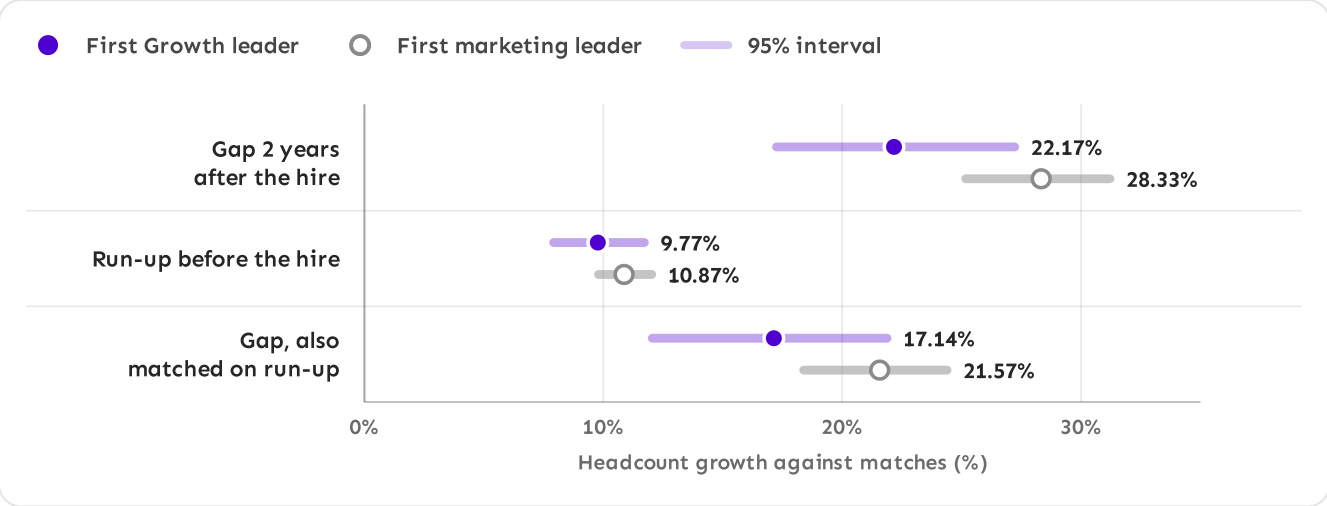


Headcount growth since the quarter before the first Growth hire, hiring companies minus their matched companies, averaged over 1,375 hires, with 95% intervals. The quarter before the hire is 0 by construction.

Source: Kenso internal data (company and career records Kenso uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FIGURE 4

A first marketing leader shows the same jump, and a bigger one



Headcount growth gap against matched companies around a first Growth leader hire and a first marketing leader hire (Head, VP or Director of Marketing, or CMO), with 95% intervals. The third row also matches on growth in the year before the hire; it was not in the plan.

Source: Kenso internal data (company and career records Kenso uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FULL METHODOLOGY

The data, the methods and every number

Question

What share of B2B software companies have a Head, VP or Director of Growth, how has it changed since 2015, and how does headcount grow in the eight quarters after a company's first such hire?

Data

Kenso internal data: Kenso's dataset of public professional profiles, their work histories and company records. Two prepared tables were reused:

- Role histories of everyone with a sales or marketing title: 136,156,211 role spells, each with a normalized title, function and level.
- Quarterly headcount per company from 2015 Q1 to 2026 Q1, rebuilt from the start and end dates of every role, plus company records with industry and founding year. A person counts at a company at a quarter end when one of their roles there covers that date.

The profile data covers people whose current country is the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland or New Zealand. It was last refreshed between November 2025 and April 2026.

Sample

B2B software companies are company records in these industries: software development, IT system custom software development, mobile, desktop, data security and embedded software products, data infrastructure and analytics, and computer and network security (329,172 records). IT services and consulting and consumer internet industries are used only in a sensitivity check (949,325 records together). The share series uses companies with 10 or more rebuilt employees at each Q4 quarter end.

Who counts as a Growth leader

We first took every role at director, VP or C-level whose title contains "growth" (129,425 roles). A title counts only when the whole title is a leader word plus Growth as the department: Head of Growth, VP or Vice President (of) Growth, Director of Growth or Growth Director, Chief Growth Officer, and the same with "Growth Marketing". Seniority words (senior, global, interim, SVP, EVP and similar) and a region (EMEA, US, North America and similar) are allowed. The title must also sit in a marketing or growth function in the shared title rules, so "VP Sales and Growth" and "Head of Product Growth" never count.

That gives 33,457 people: 19,495 with Head, VP or Director of Growth, 5,039 with Growth Marketing titles, and 9,927 Chief Growth Officers. "Marketing and Growth" titles (1,267 people) are used only in a sensitivity check. We reviewed the most common titles on both sides of the line before the analysis and logged every change.

Excluded people with a senior "growth" title, by reason (a person can appear under more than one title):

Reason	People
other co-function or qualifier	20294
strategy or strategic growth	13986

Reason	People
sales, revenue, commercial or business growth	6554
taxonomy put it in partnerships or business development	6479
growth and development, expansion or innovation	4952
fractional, advisor, assistant or agency partner	4695
client, customer, partner or enterprise growth	4394
taxonomy put it in sales	4205
product growth	3924
marketing and growth as co-functions (sensitivity only)	3773
operations, analytics or engineering	3513
taxonomy put it in another sales or support function	3039
investing (growth equity, capital, fund)	1745
non-business meaning (spiritual, economic, club, campus, chapter, membership, practice, plant)	1744
taxonomy put it in engineering	646
taxonomy put it in founder	under 50
taxonomy put it in product	under 50

The marketing-leader benchmark uses the same rule with Marketing as the department (Head, VP or Director of Marketing) plus CMO.

Method 1: share over time

For each year 2015-2025 we counted the companies with at least one Growth leader role covering the Q4 quarter end, over all B2B software companies with 10+ rebuilt employees then.

Year	Companies	With a Growth leader	Share	Head/VP/Director of Growth only	Marketing leader
2015	9,219	84	0.911%	0.575%	20.111%
2016	10,208	118	1.156%	0.774%	20.455%
2017	11,311	177	1.565%	1.043%	21.165%
2018	12,619	269	2.132%	1.284%	21.27%
2019	13,864	370	2.669%	1.486%	21.646%
2020	15,195	491	3.231%	1.691%	22.02%
2021	16,768	666	3.972%	2.075%	23.306%
2022	17,811	855	4.8%	2.291%	23.867%
2023	18,462	926	5.016%	2.416%	23.719%
2024	18,881	1004	5.318%	2.516%	23.193%
2025	19,236	1155	6.004%	2.906%	23.087%

Method 2: event study around the first Growth hire

Treated companies. B2B software companies whose first Growth leader role ever (any start date in the data) starts in a quarter from 2017 Q1 to 2023 Q3. That leaves eight quarters before and eight after, ending two quarters before the last complete quarter, because people add new jobs to profiles late. The new leader is taken out of their own company's headcount, so the hire is not a mechanical +1. Companies need 10+ employees the quarter before the hire and at least one employee in every quarter of the window.

Matched companies. For each treated company, up to five companies with no Growth leader starting by the end of the window, in the same hire quarter, industry, size band four quarters before (10-19, 20-49, 50-99, 100-199, 200-499, 500-999, 1,000+; companies under 10 then join the lowest band), age band (under 5, 5-9, 10-19, 20+ years, unknown), and fifth of growth from eight to four quarters before. Draws are random within the cell with a fixed seed.

Outcome. Headcount growth since the quarter before the hire (log change), treated minus the mean of its matches, averaged over treated companies, with 95% intervals from 1,000 bootstrap draws of treated companies. Percentages are exp(gap) - 1.

Pre-trend check. Growth from four quarters to one quarter before the hire is not used in matching, so a fair comparison should show no gap there. It shows one.

1,375 treated companies were matched to 4,733 distinct companies; the median treated company had 48 employees the quarter before the hire.

Quarter vs hire	Growth leader gap	Marketing leader gap (benchmark)
-8	-10.93% (-13.05 to -8.61)	-11.11% (-12.42 to -9.74)
-7	-10.18% (-12.35 to -7.91)	-10.95% (-12.25 to -9.61)
-6	-9.72% (-11.73 to -7.61)	-11.34% (-12.63 to -10.08)
-5	-9.98% (-11.86 to -8.15)	-10.93% (-12.07 to -9.79)
-4	-8.9% (-10.49 to -7.34)	-9.8% (-10.74 to -8.93)
-3	-6.29% (-7.41 to -5.09)	-7.16% (-7.86 to -6.52)
-2	-3.19% (-3.86 to -2.49)	-4.07% (-4.54 to -3.64)
-1	0.0% (0.0 to 0.0)	0.0% (0.0 to 0.0)
0	3.67% (2.75 to 4.49)	4.82% (4.29 to 5.35)
1	7.95% (6.69 to 9.31)	9.91% (9.09 to 10.75)
2	11.84% (10.02 to 13.63)	14.0% (12.83 to 15.18)
3	14.23% (11.94 to 16.58)	17.8% (16.35 to 19.26)
4	16.36% (13.55 to 19.42)	21.26% (19.45 to 23.04)
5	18.24% (14.98 to 21.72)	23.89% (21.69 to 25.96)
6	19.71% (15.93 to 23.7)	26.17% (23.67 to 28.5)
7	20.57% (16.34 to 24.96)	27.25% (24.45 to 29.97)
8	22.17% (17.25 to 27.22)	28.33% (25.17 to 31.21)

Results

- Share with a Growth leader: 0.911% in 2015, 6.004% in 2025 (6.59 times). The highest year is 2025.

- Gap at eight quarters after the first Growth hire: 22.17% (17.25 to 27.22). Treated growth 23.58%, matched growth 1.16%.
- Pre-trend, four to one quarter before: 9.77% (7.92 to 11.72). Gap widening per quarter: 0.0311 log points before, 0.0222 after.
- First marketing leader benchmark: 28.33% (25.17 to 31.21), pre-trend 10.87%.

Because the pre-trend check fails, this design cannot separate the hire from momentum that was already there. The gap is linked with the hire in time; it is not evidence that the hire causes growth.

Sensitivities

Variant	Treated	Gap at +8 quarters	Pre-trend
Primary	1,375	22.17% (17.25 to 27.22)	9.77% (7.92 to 11.72)
Head, VP or Director of Growth only	747	17.24% (10.44 to 23.93)	8.68% (6.01 to 11.47)
Without Chief Growth Officer	1,181	20.94% (15.53 to 25.95)	9.98% (7.85 to 11.93)
Plus "Marketing and Growth" titles	1,410	22.0% (17.32 to 26.84)	9.92% (8.23 to 11.77)
Broad software and IT industries	2,352	18.24% (15.17 to 21.36)	8.58% (7.24 to 10.05)
20+ employees before the hire	1,076	17.36% (12.26 to 22.42)	7.99% (6.23 to 9.75)
Different random seed	1,375	21.25% (16.45 to 25.88)	9.67% (7.92 to 11.56)
Companies under 10 employees four quarters before in their own size band	1,372	21.75% (17.16 to 26.75)	9.98% (8.22 to 11.61)
Benchmark: first marketing leader	4,022	28.33% (25.17 to 31.21)	10.87% (9.8 to 12.03)
Exploratory: also matched on growth in the 3 quarters before	1,322	17.14% (12.05 to 21.88)	2.64% (1.56 to 3.76)
Exploratory benchmark, same matching	3,812	21.57% (18.39 to 24.39)	1.95% (1.3 to 2.57)

The two exploratory rows were added after the pre-trend check failed and were not in the pre-registered plan.

Pre-registration

The hypothesis and plan were pre-registered before any data was pulled. Expected: the share at least doubles to a peak around 2021-2022 and then flattens; a 0-10% gap after matching; no bigger gap than for a marketing leader. Found: the share rose 6.59 times with no flattening; the gap is larger than expected but fails the pre-trend check; the Growth gap is not larger than the marketing gap.

Limitations

- **Momentum and selection.** Companies hire a Growth leader when they are already growing. Matching on size, age and earlier growth does not remove the run-up in the year before the hire.
- **Funding.** Funding rounds are not in this analysis. A raise can drive both the hire and the growth.
- **Who is in the data.** Six countries only, by the person's current country, so staff elsewhere are missing. Only profiles that still exist are included, so older years undercount people and leaders alike; we compare companies with each other rather than reading absolute headcounts.
- **Self-reported titles.** People write their own titles, leave short jobs off, add new jobs late, and sometimes rename an old role after a promotion. A marketing leader retitled "Growth" shows up as a new Growth hire.
- **Survival.** Both groups must have staff through the whole window, so companies that shut down are left out of both.

- **Coverage over time.** The share uses only companies with 10+ rebuilt employees; the number of such companies doubled from 2015 to 2025 as data coverage improved. The flat marketing-leader share suggests this does not drive the Growth trend.

Sources

- Kenso internal data (Kenso's dataset of public professional profiles, work histories and company records), Kenso Research analysis.