



KEN RESEARCH · METHODOLOGY

How many reps does a sales manager have now?

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

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ABOUT THE DATA

This study uses Ken internal data: the company, people and web records Ken 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 3 are the study page's charts, drawn from the same numbers. The methodology after them keeps the full tables.

SUMMARY

How many reps does a sales manager have now?

About five. Software and IT sales teams had 4.99 reps per manager title in early 2026, up from 4.16 at the end of 2016. The 2023 cuts nudged that up 2.8% rather than resetting it.

4.99

sales reps per manager-level title at software and IT companies in early 2026, up from 4.16 at the end of 2016. The median team had 4.0.

+2.8%

wider spans from the end of 2022 to the end of 2024 (95% interval 1.5% to 4.0%), as manager titles fell 5.3% and reps 1.7%.

+2.4 points

more managers left than normal turnover predicts where companies shrank 10% or more. Their usual 2.9-point retention edge over reps disappeared.

33.5%

of software and IT sales teams of five or more people had nobody with a manager-level sales title in 2026, up from 27.8% in 2016.

Data and method

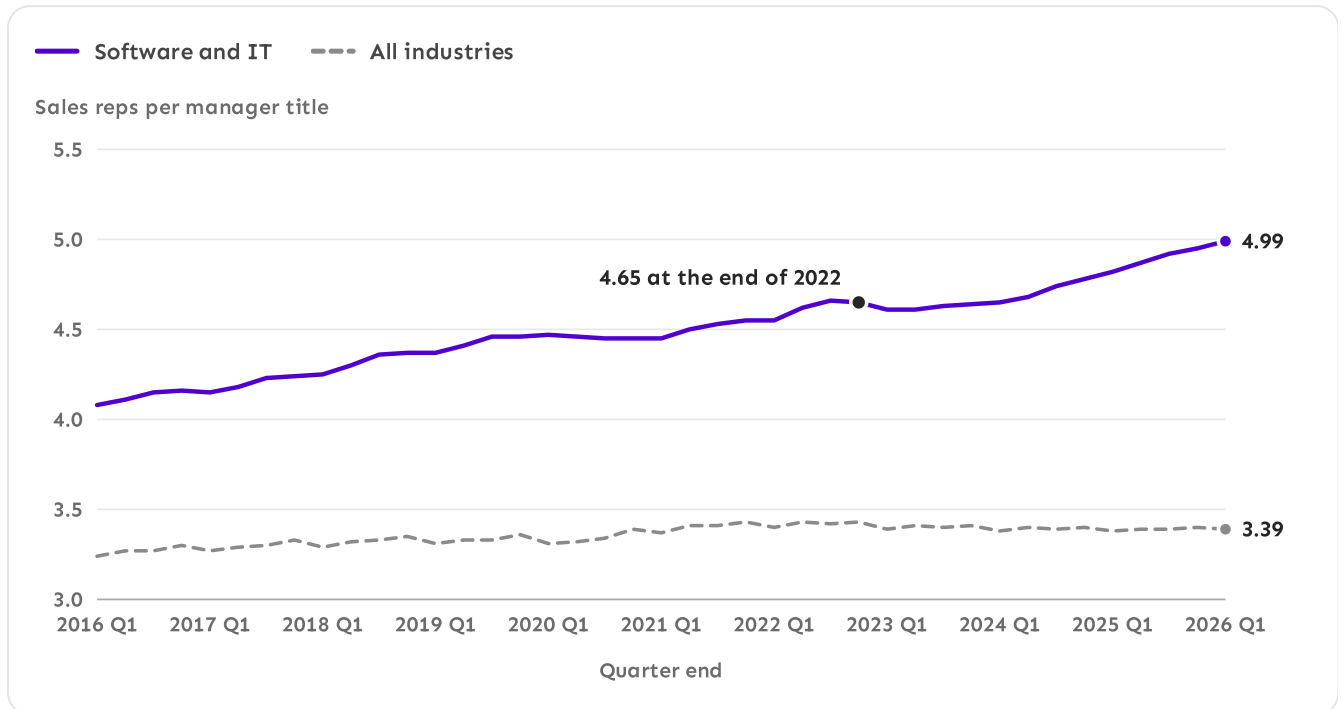
Data	Ken internal data: the public work histories and company records Ken uses for sales and outreach, reused by Cristian Frunze for this study. Six countries: the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.
Sample	Sales teams of five or more people at software and IT companies: 14,320 companies and 553,498 people in 2026 Q1, 9,524 with a manager title. Leavers: 493,276 people at 7,302 companies.
Date range	Quarter ends from 2016 Q1 to 2026 Q1. Leavers followed from the end of 2022 to the end of 2024.
Method	Pre-registered. Teams rebuilt at each quarter end from role start and end dates; reps per manager title pooled and by company, a difference in differences of exit rates, and company bootstrap 95% intervals. Headline numbers recomputed by a separate analysis.
Excluded	• Customer success, RevOps and marketing roles, which are not counted in the sales team • Sales teams with fewer than five people • Companies with fewer than 50 people, in the leavers comparison • Quarters after March 2026, which are still filling in
Privacy	Aggregates only. Any group smaller than 50 people is suppressed, and no individual is named.

FIGURES

The study's charts

FIGURE 1

Software sales spans have widened for a decade

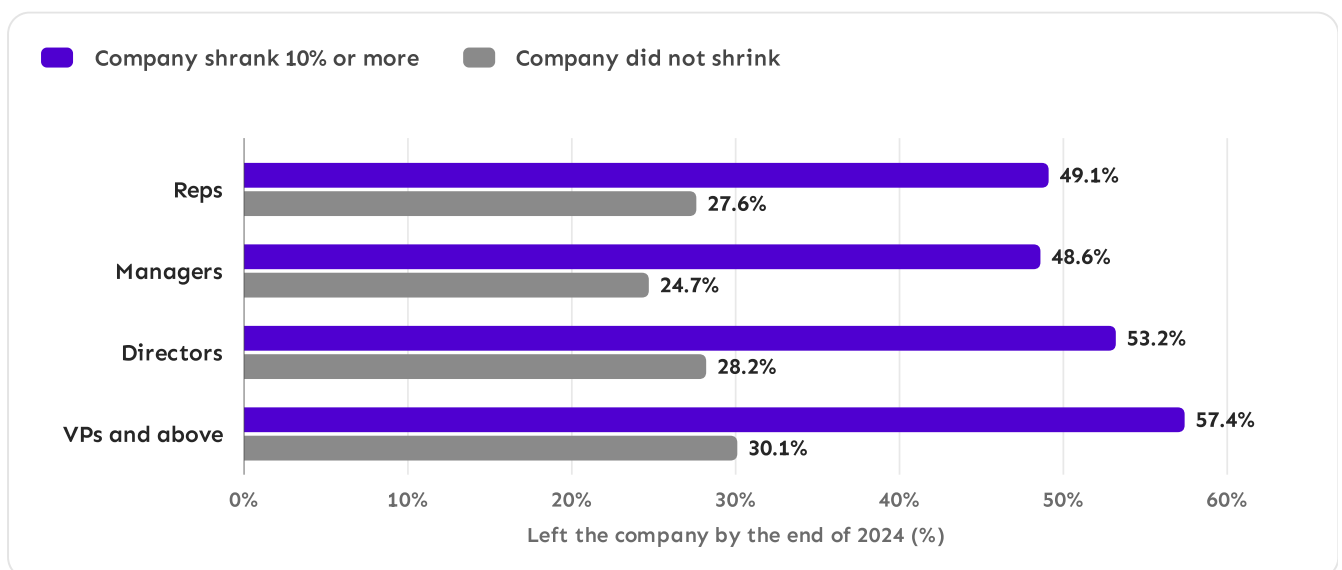


Sales individual contributors per manager-level sales title, pooled over sales teams of five or more people, at each quarter end. The dashed line is all industries.

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

FIGURE 2

Where companies shrank, managers left as often as reps

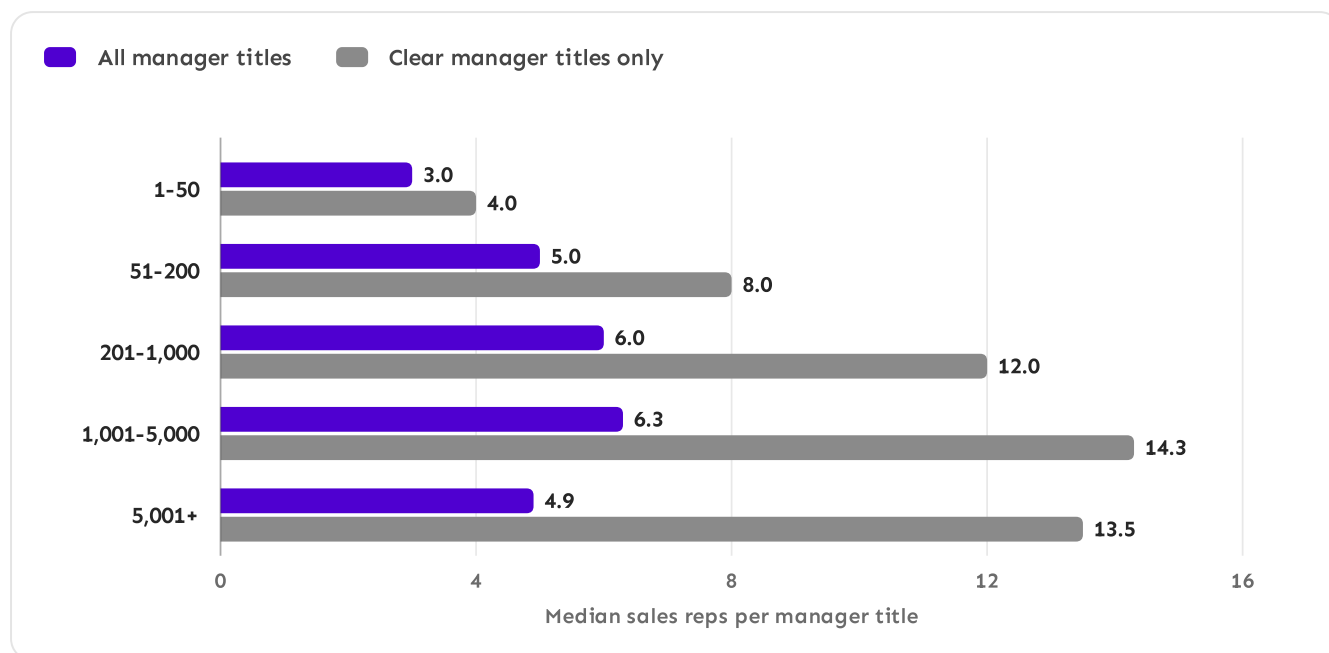


Share of people in a sales role at the end of 2022 who had left their company by the end of 2024, at software and IT companies with at least 50 people, by level and by whether the company's headcount fell 10% or more.

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

FIGURE 3

Spans are widest at companies of 1,001 to 5,000 people



Median sales reps per manager title among software and IT sales teams in 2026 Q1, by the company's headcount in Ken internal data. The strict definition counts only titles that clearly name a people manager.

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

The data, the methods and every number

Data: Ken internal data (Ken's dataset of public professional profiles, work histories and company records). All numbers are about people who live in the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.

1. Question and answer in brief

Question. How many sales individual contributors (ICs) are there per sales manager and per sales director, by company size, from 2016 to 2026? Did the 2023 cuts remove managers faster than reps?

Answer.

- In software and IT companies, sales teams of five or more people had 4.99 sales ICs per sales manager title in 2026 Q1 (pooled over 9,524 teams with at least one manager title). The median team had 4.0. Counting only titles that clearly name a people manager (the strict definition), the pooled span is 11.54 and the median 7.2.
- From 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4, manager titles in these teams fell 5.3% and ICs 1.7%, so the pooled span widened 2.8% (95% interval 1.5 to 4.0). That is part of a longer drift: +11.7% from 2016 Q4 to 2022 Q4, and +4.5% from 2024 Q4 to 2026 Q1. Across all industries the span barely moved (3.30 in 2016 Q4, 3.39 in 2026 Q1).
- In software and IT companies that shrank 10% or more between 2022 Q4 and 2024 Q4, 48.6% of the 2022 Q4 sales managers and 49.1% of the ICs had left by 2024 Q4. In the companies that did not shrink, 24.7% and 27.6%. Managers' usual 2.9-point retention edge disappeared where companies shrank; the difference in differences is +2.4 points (95% interval 0.5 to 4.0).
- Pre-registered hypotheses: 1 and 4 right; 2, 3 and 5 wrong (section 7).

2. Data

All data stay on Ken's servers; only aggregate tables leave them.

- **People and roles.** The shared quarterly headcount history (built for the Ken Research study *Did AI kill the SDR role?*, first build finished 2026-10-17): every experience entry of every non-deleted profile in Ken internal data, 555,053,752 entries of 171,326,491 people, with title, company id, start and end dates and a current flag, plus labels for 87,154,785 distinct normalized titles. The labels are the shared sales title taxonomy (built for the Ken Research study *Who are GTM engineers, and where do they come from?*), unchanged for sales functions. The data snapshot is 2026-04-30; profiles were last refreshed between late 2025 and April 2026.
- **Companies.** Company records (industry label, size band, employee count) and rebuilt quarterly headcount per company, from the same shared extract.
- **Cross-check extract.** Spells from the shared sales careers extract (136,156,211 spells of people whose titles matched its search filter), used to recompute the headline spans.
- One pass over all 192 spell parts read 555,053,752 entries; 18,010,486 were sales-team roles with a company id that cover at least one quarter end in the shared extract's window (2015 Q1 to 2026 Q1), and 17,065,186 of them cover at least one from 2016 Q1 on. The resulting panel has 26,347,545 company-quarter rows at 1,242,419 companies with a company record; 195,955 companies (24,544 in software and IT) had at least five sales-team people at some quarter end.
- Nothing new was pulled from the search index for this study.

3. Definitions

- **At a quarter end.** A person counts at a company when one of their roles there covers the date: it started on or before it, and it ended on or after it (the end month counts in full) or is current. Current roles run to the snapshot. This is the shared extract's own rule.
- **Sales team.** Taxonomy functions: SDR and BDR, account executive, account management, general sales, business development and partnerships, and sales engineering (the same sales team as the SDR study). Customer success, RevOps, enablement and marketing are not counted.
- **Levels.** From the title only. IC = individual contributor and senior individual contributor titles. Manager = titles with manager, lead, leader, supervisor and similar words, after the taxonomy removes titles where "manager" names an individual job (account, customer success, partner, territory, product, brand and similar managers). Director = director and head of. VP+ = vice president and C-level titles. Leaders = managers + directors + VP+. Intern and founder titles are not counted. Each person counts once per company and quarter, at the highest sales-team level they hold there.
- **Strict definition.** A manager counts only when one of their manager-level titles names a manager word (manager, supervisor, team or group lead or leader) and does not name business development, a partner, alliance or channel job, marketing, or a territory or segment in front of "manager" (regional, area, territory, district, field, zone, national, country, key, strategic, enterprise, major, named, global, corporate). A director counts unless the title is an account, client or customer director title or names business development, a partner, alliance or channel job. People who fail the rule leave the leader counts; IC counts do not change, so the strict span is an upper bound. The regular expressions were pre-registered with the plan, before any data was read.
- **Company span** = ICs / managers at one company-quarter. **Pooled span** = all ICs / all managers across the company-quarters in a sample, the span of the average manager title.
- **Software and IT.** 18 industry labels on the company record (the audited list of the SDR study): software development and software product labels, IT services and IT system labels, data infrastructure and analytics, technology, information and internet, internet marketplace and social networking platforms, and computer and network security.
- **Company size.** People at the company in Ken internal data at that quarter end, in bands 1-50, 51-200, 201-1,000, 1,001-5,000 and 5,001+. Staff outside the six countries are missing, so bands describe people in Ken internal data, not total employees. In the 2022 to 2024 comparisons by size, the band is fixed at 2022 Q4.
- **Shrank** = headcount at 2024 Q4 at least 10% below 2022 Q4; grew = at least 10% above; flat = in between; did not shrink = flat + grew.
- **Left** = no role at the same company, in any function, that covers 2024 Q4.

4. Sample

- **Span samples.** Company-quarters from 2016 Q1 to 2026 Q1 with at least five people in sales-team roles. ICs per manager uses the company-quarters with at least one manager title; ICs per director and managers per director, those with at least one director title; ICs per leader, those with at least one leader. In 2026 Q1: 14,320 software and IT companies with 553,498 sales-team people, 9,524 of them with a manager title; 124,548 companies with 3,412,790 sales-team people across all industries.
- **Leaver cohort.** Everyone in a sales-team role at 2022 Q4 at a company with at least 50 people in Ken internal data and at least five in sales-team roles at that date. Software and IT: 493,276 people at 7,302 companies, of which 2,897 shrank, 2,399 stayed flat and 2,006 grew.
- Every published number is built on at least 50 people; smaller groups are suppressed, and no company-level rows leave Ken's servers.

5. Methods

1. **Panel.** One pass over the spells dates every role, joins each title to its labels, keeps sales-team roles and counts, per company and quarter end, the people at each level under both definitions. The same pass records, for every person in a sales-team role at 2022 Q4, their level then and whether they were still at the company at 2024 Q4.
2. **Series.** For each quarter from 2016 Q1 to 2026 Q1 and each population (software and IT; all companies; size bands; the 10 industries with the most sales-team people in the 2026 Q1 sample): pooled ICs per manager, ICs per director, managers per director and ICs per leader; the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 90th percentiles of company spans (linear interpolation); and the share of sales teams with no manager title.
3. **Changes.** Relative change in the pooled ratios and in summed ICs and managers between 2016 Q4, 2022 Q4, 2024 Q4, 2025 Q3 and 2026 Q1. Cross-sectional (every sample company-quarter at each date) and within-company (companies in the span sample at both dates). 95% intervals from 200 bootstrap draws that resample companies with replacement (seed 69, companies in a fixed order).
4. **Leavers.** Exit rates by level and shrink group, and the difference in differences: (manager exit rate minus IC exit rate in companies that shrank) minus (the same in companies that did not shrink), with a 95% interval from 200 bootstrap draws resampling companies within each shrink group.
5. **Robustness.** The strict definition throughout; size bands from the company record instead of rebuilt headcount; comparisons ending at 2025 Q3; a minimum sales team of 10; level counts against the shared extract's own function-level table; headline spans recomputed from the sales careers spells.
6. **Post-hoc, not pre-registered.** A title-overwriting sensitivity (section 8.4), and exploratory leaver comparisons for directors and VP+ against ICs. Spans of SDRs per SDR manager and sales engineers per sales engineering manager are exploratory too.
7. The whole analysis was run twice from the shared extracts; all 25 output tables were byte-identical.
8. After verification, shrink groups were recomputed with a whole-number test and the leaver step was run again (section 9); a check of how much the bootstrap intervals move with the random draws was added.

6. Results

6.1 Spans in 2026 Q1

Software and IT, 2026 Q1	Title definition	Strict definition
Pooled ICs per manager	4.99	11.54
Median company span	4.0	7.2
10th / 25th / 75th / 90th percentile	1.0 / 2.0 / 7.2 / 12.0	2.0 / 4.0 / 13.0 / 22.7
ICs per director (pooled)	6.58	-
Managers per director (pooled)	1.20	-
ICs per leader (pooled)	2.63	-
Sales teams with no manager title	33.5%	-

Across all industries, the pooled span in 2026 Q1 was 3.39 and the median 2.7. In software and IT, 39.6% of manager titles in the sample pass the strict rule. Exploratory: SDRs per SDR manager 5.4 (2.8 in 2016 Q4); sales engineers per sales engineering manager 7.9.

6.2 The trend, 2016 to 2026 (software and IT)

Quarter	ICs per manager	ICs per director	Managers per director	ICs per leader	Teams with no manager title
2016 Q4	4.16	6.52	1.46	2.37	27.8%
2022 Q4	4.65	6.42	1.29	2.49	29.8%
2024 Q4	4.78	6.44	1.24	2.54	31.7%
2025 Q3	4.92	6.55	1.22	2.61	32.6%
2026 Q1	4.99	6.58	1.20	2.63	33.5%

All companies: 3.30 (2016 Q4), 3.43 (2022 Q4), 3.40 (2024 Q4), 3.39 (2026 Q1).

6.3 Changes (software and IT, cross-sectional unless noted; 95% intervals in brackets)

Measure	2016 Q4 to 2022 Q4	2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4	2024 Q4 to 2026 Q1
ICs per manager	+11.7% [6.4, 16.1]	+2.8% [1.5, 4.0]	+4.5% [3.2, 5.8]
ICs per manager, within company	+13.0% [7.8, 17.5]	+3.1% [1.8, 4.7]	+4.9% [3.4, 6.2]
ICs per manager, strict	+17.3% [9.4, 27.5]	+4.1% [2.6, 5.7]	+6.7% [5.1, 8.2]
ICs per director	-1.6% [-8.0, 6.1]	+0.3% [-1.6, 2.3]	+2.2% [0.8, 3.4]
Managers per director	-12.1% [-19.1, -3.8]	-3.5% [-5.5, -1.3]	-3.0% [-4.4, -1.7]
ICs per leader	+5.0% [1.1, 9.0]	+2.0% [0.9, 3.3]	+3.5% [2.5, 4.5]
Summed ICs	+62.9% [49.6, 77.0]	-1.7% [-3.3, 0.0]	+6.2% [4.6, 7.6]
Summed managers	+45.4% [30.6, 62.4]	-5.3% [-6.9, -3.8]	+1.0% [-0.4, 2.3]
Summed directors	+67.1% [56.0, 80.9]	-2.8% [-4.5, -1.0]	+4.0% [2.5, 5.3]

From 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 the summed counts went from 386,135 to 379,581 ICs and from 77,548 to 73,424 managers. Across all industries the pooled span changed -0.9% from 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4. Exploratory: SDRs per SDR manager +6.2% [0.5, 12.1] and sales engineers per sales engineering manager +2.5% [-1.1, 5.8] over the same two years.

6.4 By company size (software and IT)

Size (people in Ken internal data)	Companies, 2026 Q1	Median span	Strict median	Pooled span	Within-company change, 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4
1-50	6,821	3.0	4.0	2.52	+4.9%
51-200	5,157	5.0	8.0	4.36	+4.0%
201-1,000	1,872	6.0	12.0	5.42	+3.9%
1,001-5,000	387	6.3	14.3	6.15	+4.6%
5,001+	83	4.9	13.5	5.00	+2.6%

Within the same companies, ICs and manager titles changed from 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 by +12.6% and +8.5% (1-50), +1.0% and -4.1% (51-200), -5.9% and -9.7% (201-1,000), -1.3% and -5.6% (1,001-5,000), and -5.2% and -7.6% (5,001+).

6.5 By industry (all company sizes, 2026 Q1)

The 10 industries with the most sales-team people in the 2026 Q1 sample, median company span (pooled span in brackets): software development 5.0 (5.42); insurance 5.0 (6.24); retail 4.0 (4.78); real estate 4.0 (5.78); advertising services 4.0 (4.56); IT services and IT consulting 3.8 (4.36); wholesale 3.5 (4.06); telecommunications 3.3 (4.34);

financial services 2.7 (2.97); medical equipment manufacturing 2.6 (3.69).

6.6 Leavers, 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 (software and IT)

Level at 2022 Q4	Shrank 10% or more	Flat	Grew 10% or more	Did not shrink	All
ICs	49.1%	26.7%	29.9%	27.6%	33.5%
Managers	48.6%	24.1%	26.3%	24.7%	31.0%
Directors	53.2%	28.4%	27.5%	28.2%	36.4%
VP+	57.4%	31.8%	27.3%	30.1%	40.5%

- Manager minus IC exit rate: -0.5 points [-1.8, 0.7] where companies shrank, -2.9 points [-3.9, -1.9] where they did not. Difference in differences +2.4 points [0.5, 4.0] (2,890 and 4,397 companies).
- Strict definition: managers left at 46.6% (shrank) and 21.5% (did not shrink); gaps -2.5 [-4.2, -1.2] and -6.1 [-7.3, -4.8]; difference in differences +3.6 [1.5, 5.5].
- Exploratory, directors and VP+ against ICs: +3.5 [1.4, 5.6] and +5.8 [3.3, 8.8] points.
- All industries (same cohort rules): difference in differences +1.4 [0.2, 2.6] with the title definition and -0.4 [-1.7, 0.8] with the strict one; directors +6.5 [5.4, 7.9] and VP+ +9.7 [7.8, 11.2].
- Headcount in the same software and IT companies: where they shrank, ICs -31.2% and managers -33.9%; where they did not, ICs +6.3% and managers +1.7%.
- Promotions: 2.8% of the 2022 Q4 ICs held a sales leader title at the same company at 2024 Q4 (2.1% where companies shrank, 3.0% elsewhere).

6.7 Titles

In software and IT companies in 2026 Q1, business development manager accounts for 14.2% of everyone with a manager-level sales title, sales manager 6.5% and regional sales manager 3.9%. Among director-level titles, sales director is 6.0%, account director 4.7% and director of business development 4.3%. The share of manager-level title holders that pass the strict rule fell from 42.3% in 2016 Q4 to 37.7% in 2026 Q1 (all company sizes); for directors, from 57.0% to 53.2%. Of 5,105,654 distinct sales-team titles, 1,274,969 are manager-level (650,151 pass the strict rule) and 697,820 director-level (412,604 pass).

7. Pre-registered hypotheses

The hypothesis and plan were pre-registered on 2026-10-19, before any data was read. Each is scored by its rule as written.

#	Hypothesis	Result	Verdict
1	2026 Q1 median span in software and IT between 2 and 5; strict median higher	median 4.0; strict 7.2	right
2	Pooled span at least 10% lower in 2022 Q4 than 2016 Q4	+11.7%	wrong
3	Pooled span at least 5% higher in 2024 Q4 than 2022 Q4; strict and ICs-per-director changes positive	+2.8% [1.5, 4.0]; strict +4.1%; ICs per director +0.3%	wrong
4	Difference in differences at least 2 points, interval above zero; managers' exit rate below ICs' in both groups	+2.4 [0.5, 4.0]; 48.6% against 49.1% and 24.7% against 27.6%	right
5	1-50 lowest and 5,001+ highest median; largest widening at 201-1,000 or 1,001-5,000	highest median at 1,001-5,000 (6.3); largest widening at 1-50 (+4.9%)	wrong

Hypothesis 2 expected spans to narrow through the growth years; they widened instead. Hypothesis 3 had the direction right but the size wrong: the widening was about half the 5% threshold. In hypothesis 4, managers' exit rate in shrinking companies was only 0.5 points below ICs', within noise. Hypothesis 5 fails on both parts, and its second part depends on the size definition (section 8).

8. Robustness and cross-checks

8.1 Alternative samples and size bands

- **Minimum team of 10.** Pooled span 5.28, median 6.0; change 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 +3.3%.
- **Size from the company record.** 2026 Q1 medians 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, 5.3 and 5.0 from the smallest to the largest band; within-company widening 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 -0.2%, +2.0%, +3.1%, +3.1% and +3.5%. With record bands, the widening is largest in the largest band.
- **Comparisons ending at 2025 Q3** (seven months before the snapshot): 2024 Q4 to 2025 Q3 +2.9% [1.9, 4.0], the same direction as the change to 2026 Q1.

8.2 Cross-check against the sales careers extract

Recomputed from the sales careers spells with the same rules, the software and IT pooled span is 4.80 in 2026 Q1 (median 4.0), and the change from 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 is +3.0%. Its 2026 Q1 sample has 92.0% as many sales-team people as the main sample; the difference is people whose titles its search filter did not match.

8.3 Cross-check against the shared function-level table

Per level and key quarter, the panel's counts are 0.976 to 0.998 of the shared extract's function-level headcount table, which counts a person once in every level they hold; the panel counts each person once, at their highest level, so it can only be lower.

8.4 Title overwriting (post-hoc sensitivity)

When some people are promoted inside a company, they edit their old title instead of adding a new position. Their whole tenure then shows the new title, so in earlier quarters a rep promoted later counts as a manager. That makes the past look more managerial and the widening look larger than it was. Ken internal data cannot show who did this. We counted visible promotions instead: of the software and IT sales ICs at 2022 Q4, 2.2% held a manager title at the same company at 2026 Q1 (1.1% a director title or higher), and 4.2% of the managers held a director title or higher. If a share f of all in-place promotions were recorded by editing the old title, the hidden ones number $\text{visible} \times f / (1 - f)$, and correcting for them changes the 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 widening to +2.5% at $f = 10\%$, +2.1% at 20% and +1.6% at 30%. The widening disappears at $f = 50\%$; the 2024 Q4 to 2026 Q1 widening at 40%, and the 2016 Q4 to 2022 Q4 widening at 94%. Promotions of people who later left the company are not visible at all, so these break-even shares are upper bounds.

9. Verification

An independent re-analysis, written from the study plan alone without seeing our analysis code, recomputed 45 headline numbers on 2026-10-19. It received the study plan (hypothesis, plan and logged decisions), the pre-registered title definitions, the shared extracts' documentation and the data handling rules, and did not read this study's code or outputs.

The first comparison matched 38 of the 45 numbers at the reported precision; 3 interval bounds were within bootstrap noise and 4 numbers differed:

- **Companies that shrank: 2,884 here, 2,897 in the re-analysis.** 13 cohort companies fell exactly 10%. The plan counts them as shrank (at least 10% below), but this study's code tested the change in floating point, where $90 / 100 - 1$ is slightly above -0.10, and put them in "flat". The test now uses whole numbers, and the leaver step was run again. Managers' exit rate in shrinking companies moved from 48.66% to 48.63% (48.7% to 48.6% as reported) and the difference in differences from 2.435 to 2.439 points; its interval moved from 0.8 to 4.2 to 0.5 to 4.0, because the resampled groups changed. Every leaver number in this report is the corrected one.
- **Managers' exit rate in shrinking companies:** the same cause; equal after the fix.
- **Cohort people: 493,276 here, 426,549 in the re-analysis,** which counted ICs and managers only, the two levels of the test. Its directors (50,045) and VP+ (16,682) equal this study's, so the cohorts are the same.
- **Lower end of the interval for the 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4 change: 1.5 here, 1.0 in the re-analysis.** Both resample the same 11,557 companies; only the random draws differ. Recomputed with this study's code for 50 seeds of 200 draws, the lower end runs from 1.0 to 1.5 and the upper end from 3.9 to 4.6, so the re-analysis interval (1.0 to 4.1) is within the noise of 200 draws. With 2,000 draws the interval is 1.4 to 4.1. The interval of the difference in differences starts between 0.3 and 1.0 across the seeds (2,000 draws: 0.6 to 4.2) and stays above zero in all 50.

After the fix, 41 of the 45 numbers match at the reported precision, and the other 4, all interval bounds, lie inside the range of this study's own bounds over the 50 seeds. The re-analysis scored the five hypotheses the same way as section 7.

10. Alternative explanations

- **Title overwriting on internal promotion** inflates past manager counts and so the widening. Sensitivity above: the 2022 to 2024 widening survives unless about half of in-place promotions were recorded by editing; not ruled out beyond that.
- **Ambiguous manager titles** (business development, regional and territory managers). The strict definition gives the same direction and a larger widening (+4.1%), so the trend is not driven by these titles; the level is.
- **Title inflation** adds manager titles without reports, which narrows title-based spans over time and so works against the widening we measure. The share of manager-level titles that pass the strict rule fell from 42.3% to 37.7%: more of today's manager titles are ambiguous ones. Consistent with that, the strict span widened faster than the title-based one (+17.3% against +11.7% from 2016 Q4 to 2022 Q4). A separate Ken analysis of title inflation had no results to cite on 2026-10-19.
- **Late-added jobs** undercount the latest quarters. The direction holds when comparisons end at 2025 Q3.
- **Offshore staff.** Ken internal data only holds six countries. Teams whose reps sit elsewhere (offshore SDR and inside sales teams) look narrower than they are; a shift of reps offshore after 2022 would make spans look narrower, not wider.
- **Changing sample of companies.** The within-company version gives the same result (+3.1% from 2022 Q4 to 2024 Q4).
- **Survivorship.** Only currently active profiles exist; people who left the workforce before 2026 are missing, and they were more often senior. That makes the past look less managerial than it was, so past spans look wider and, if anything, the real widening is larger than the one measured.
- **Other measures of who was cut.** The Ken Research study *Who gets cut first in a B2B layoff? Recruiters, then SDRs* (in review and not yet verified on 2026-10-19) follows each shrinking company from its own headcount peak to its trough. In software and IT, its sales leaders (managers, directors and VPs together) fell 26.6% and its sales ICs 28.1%, while the companies fell 26.2%. Its sales function is broader (it includes RevOps and enablement) and it counts a person at every level they hold, so its numbers are not directly comparable with the counts here. Here, managers and ICs left shrinking companies at about the same rate (48.6% against 49.1%), and the number of

manager titles fell slightly more than ICs (-33.9% against -31.2%). Neither result shows sales managers cut much faster than reps.

- **Leavers are not only layoffs.** "Left the company" includes resignations. The comparison with companies that did not shrink nets out normal turnover, but not differences in who resigns when a company shrinks.

11. Limitations

- Level comes from the title only; a manager title does not prove that someone manages people, and the strict definition also drops some real managers.
- Only people who currently live in the six countries are in Ken internal data; rebuilt team sizes and company sizes miss staff elsewhere.
- Profiles are self-reported. People leave short jobs off, add new jobs months late and sometimes edit old titles when promoted.
- Industry is the current industry label on the company record, applied to all years.
- Spans are company-level ratios of people with titles, not reporting lines; a manager title may lead a team in another function or no team at all.
- All comparisons are descriptive: changes over time and differences between companies that shrank and those that did not. They show what went with the 2023 cuts, not that the cuts caused it.

12. Sources

- Ken internal data: public professional profiles, work histories and company records (snapshot 2026-04-30).
- Shared extracts: the quarterly headcount history (built for the SDR study) and the sales careers extract (built for the GTM engineer study).
- The SDR study: the sales team definition, the software and IT label list and the size bands, reused unchanged.
- The layoffs study: the IC and leader split of its cut index, cited in section 10 (not yet verified).

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