



KINETIC SEARCH

Commercial Salary Benchmarking Report 2025/26

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1. INTRODUCTION

The sports sector is undergoing rapid transformation. Revenue generation no longer relies solely on sponsorship, brand partnerships,, ticketing or traditional rights models.

It is now driven by a blend of:

- Commercial partnerships
- Digital audience growth
- Content and community
- CRM, data and lifecycle strategy
- Product and performance marketing
- Segmented revenue operations

This report provides salary benchmarks for commercially focused leadership roles in sport, across clubs, federations, rights-holders, sports-tech businesses, agencies and investor-backed sports organisations.

It covers entry level commercial management roles above £50,000 base salary, and more senior roles to C-Suite, reflecting the senior leadership and future-leadership segments Kinetic Search specialises placing talent in.

All salary data reflects London and the Southeast, of England with a clear tiering model for organisation size. We have also supplied a table to provide percentage adjustments for regional salary estimates.

A photograph of a swimmer in a pool, viewed from above. The swimmer is wearing a white swim cap and dark swim trunks, and is in a freestyle stroke. The water is a vibrant blue with white foam from the swimmer's movement.

2. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report combines data from:

- ❑ Kinetic Search past assignments
- ❑ Real candidate offers and shortlist ranges
- ❑ Benchmarking data with commercial, sales, digital, marketing and CRM
- ❑ Conversations with CCOs, CROs, CMOs, CEOs and HR leaders
- ❑ Cross-sector patterns from entertainment, gaming, ecommerce and D2C subscription businesses
- ❑ Information taken from other market reports

The aim is simple:

To help rights-holders and sports organisations benchmark accurately, plan confidently, and hire commercially minded leaders who deliver commercial and operational growth.

3. TIERING MODEL FOR SALARY BENCHMARKS

Because salary levels in sport vary heavily by organisation size, this report uses a 3-tier model.

Tier 1 — Major Sport Organisations (Baseline)

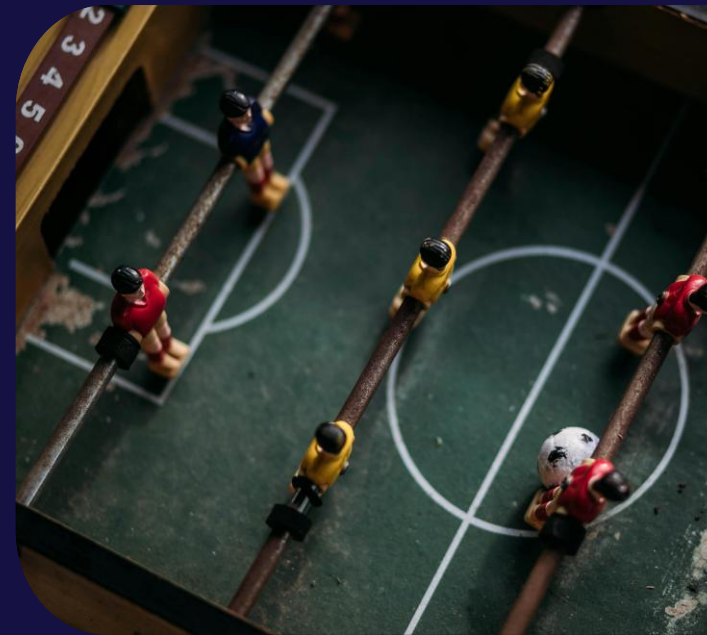
- Premier League & major European clubs
- Leading federations (World Rugby, ICC, UCI, FIA etc)
- Global rights-holders
- PE-backed sports-tech scale-ups

Tier 2 — Mid-Sized Organisations (–12.5 percent)

- EFL Championship clubs
- Premiership Rugby
- Mid-sized NGBs
- Established sports agencies

Tier 3 — Challenger / Boutique (–25 percent)

- League One / League Two
- Emerging rights-holders
- Early-stage sports-tech
- Boutique commercial agencies
- This tiering model is applied consistently across all grouped tables.



4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The commercial talent landscape in sport has shifted dramatically.

Five clear trends stand out:

1. Salaries are resilient and continuing to rise

Roles in the £50,000 to £130,000 bracket have seen the most upward pressure.

2. Hybrid commercial roles are in highest demand

Organisations want leaders who blend:

- ☐ Partnerships
- ☐ Digital
- ☐ Content
- ☐ Data
- ☐ Strategy

Traditional “sales-only” roles are less common.



4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Continued)

3. CRM, performance marketing and data roles have surged

This reflects the industry's growing reliance on subscription revenue, membership, ticketing data and digital engagement.

4. Content teams now directly drive commercial revenue

High-performing content teams contribute to sponsorship value, media rights, brand partnerships and D2C channels.

5. Future leaders sit at Senior Manager, Lead and Head of levels

This cohort is experiencing the strongest inflation and the highest rate of counter-offers.

This report guides organisations through these shifts with clear, structured salary benchmarking.



5.0 SALARY BENCHMARKS

5.1 Commercial Partnerships, Sponsorship and Revenue

5.2 Revenue Operations & Commercial Strategy

5.3 Revenue Operations and Commercial Strategy

5.4 Marketing, Digital & Fan Engagement

5.5 Data, Analytics, and Insights

5.6 CRM, Loyalty & Lifecycle

5.7 Content, Social and Audience

5.8 Product, Performance & Growth

5.9 Communications AND PR

5. SALARY BENCHMARKS

5.1 COMMERCIAL, PARTNERSHIPS, SPONSORSHIP & REVENUE

All figures represent **London and Southeast** before tier adjustments.

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Senior Commercial / Partnerships Manager	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Senior Sponsorship / Rights Manager	£55,000–£80,000	£48,000–£70,000	£41,000–£60,000
Lead Partnerships / Senior BD Manager	£70,000–£90,000	£61,000–£79,000	£53,000–£68,000
Head of Commercial / Partnerships	£85,000–£120,000	£74,000–£105,000	£64,000–£90,000
Head of Sponsorship / Rights	£80,000–£115,000	£70,000–£101,000	£60,000–£86,000
Senior Head / VP Commercial	£110,000–£150,000	£96,000–£131,000	£83,000–£113,000
VP Sponsorship / Rights	£110,000–£145,000	£96,000–£127,000	£83,000–£109,000
Commercial Director	£130,000–£190,000	£114,000–£166,000	£98,000–£143,000
Director of Rights / Licensing	£130,000–£190,000	£114,000–£166,000	£98,000–£143,000
CCO / CRO (Chief Commercial / Revenue Officer)	£180,000–£300,000	£158,000–£263,000	£135,000–£225,000

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5.1.1 COMMERCIAL, PARTNERSHIPS, SPONSORSHIP & REVENUE (Continued)

Commentary:

Commercial, partnerships and sponsorship teams have become more strategic and data-led. Sponsorship now contributes 45–70 percent of revenue across major rights holders, so expectations on leaders have risen sharply.

Brands demand measurable outcomes. According to Nielsen, 87 percent of brands require audience data, content performance and clear ROI, not just exposure. Partnership leaders must now combine commercial acumen, brand strategy, digital activation and insight-driven reporting.

Deal cycles have lengthened by 46 percent (SponsorPulse), leading to more complex negotiations, deeper due diligence and a higher premium on experienced senior talent.

The strongest commercial leaders now operate comfortably with CMOs, agency strategy teams and senior brand stakeholders, shaping cross-channel ideas that deliver real commercial impact.

5.1.2 COMMERCIAL, PARTNERSHIPS, SPONSORSHIP & REVENUE (Continued)

Evolving Skills, Talent Trends and Seniority Expectations

Modern commercial functions touch multiple areas: partnerships strategy, pricing, rights management, digital revenue, CRM, content activation and revenue operations. Roles are more integrated, analytical and audience-driven than ever.

Cross-sector talent is increasingly common, with leaders hired from agencies, entertainment, creators and digital media. These hires push salary expectations upward, particularly in Tier 1 and Tier 2 organisations.

Rights and licensing have grown in importance through ecommerce, global fan growth and digital IP, making Director of Rights/Licensing roles more commercially central.

C-suite roles like CCO and CRO reflect sport's shift toward corporate governance, data-driven performance and board-level accountability. Tier 1 rightsholder salaries of £180,000–£300,000 are now typical, often with significant bonus potential.

Overall, commercial leaders today must blend revenue mindset, strategic thinking, digital literacy and brand partnership capability to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving sponsorship market.

5.2 REVENUE OPERATIONS & COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Revenue Operations Manager	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Senior Revenue Ops Manager	£70,000–£90,000	£61,000–£79,000	£53,000–£68,000
Head of Revenue Ops / Strategy	£90,000–£125,000	£79,000–£109,000	£68,000–£94,000
Director of Revenue Ops / Strategy	£120,000–£170,000	£105,000–£149,000	£90,000–£128,000

Commentary

RevOps in sport mirrors SaaS and ecommerce models. It ensures commercial teams r

- ❑ Clear pipelines
- ❑ Forecast accuracy
- ❑ Pricing optimisation
- ❑ Conversion analysis
- ❑ Data-driven planning

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5.3 REVENUE OPERATIONS & COMMERCIAL STRATEGY (Continued)

- Revenue Operations and Commercial Strategy roles have become essential as sport moves toward more predictable, data-led revenue models. Rights holders now align sales, partnerships, pricing, forecasting, CRM, ticketing and digital products through RevOps structures that mirror high-performing SaaS and subscription businesses. McKinsey reports that organisations with strong RevOps alignment achieve up to 20 percent faster revenue growth, and significantly better forecasting accuracy, which is increasingly critical for clubs, leagues and governing bodies.
- RevOps teams support dynamic pricing, yield optimisation, pipeline management and commercial reporting, while strategy teams shape long-term revenue plans, partnership valuations and new digital income streams. Salaries reflect this growing technical and strategic complexity. Managers typically earn £55,000–£75,000, senior managers £70,000–£90,000, Heads of RevOps or Strategy £90,000–£125,000, and Director-level roles £120,000–£170,000, particularly where they influence board-level planning and multi-year revenue forecasting.

5.4 MARKETING, DIGITAL & FAN ENGAGEMENT

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Senior Marketing / Digital Manager	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Digital / Performance Lead	£65,000–£85,000	£57,000–£74,000	£49,000–£64,000
Head of Marketing / Digital	£80,000–£120,000	£70,000–£105,000	£60,000–£90,000
Head of Fan Engagement	£75,000–£115,000	£66,000–£101,000	£56,000–£86,000
Fan Engagement Lead / Senior Manager	£60,000–£80,000	£53,000–£70,000	£45,000–£60,000
Head of Fan Experience / UX Lead (Sport)	£80,000–£120,000	£70,000–£105,000	£60,000–£90,000
Head of Digital Product	£90,000–£130,000	£79,000–£114,000	£68,000–£98,000
Head of Digital Content & Channels	£85,000–£125,000	£74,000–£109,000	£64,000–£94,000
VP Marketing / VP Digital / VP Fan Engagement	£110,000–£145,000	£96,000–£127,000	£83,000–£109,000
Marketing Director / Digital Director	£130,000–£180,000	£114,000–£158,000	£98,000–£135,000
Director of Fan Engagement / Audience	£110,000–£150,000	£96,000–£131,000	£83,000–£113,000
Director of Digital Product	£140,000–£190,000	£122,000–£166,000	£105,000–£143,000
Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)	£200,000– £250,000	£175,000–£219,000	£150,000–£188,000
Chief Digital Officer (CDO)	£180,000–£260,000	£158,000–£228,000	£135,000–£195,000

5.4 MARKETING, DIGITAL & FAN ENGAGEMENT

(Continued)

Commentary

Marketing and digital roles in sport have broadened significantly in scope over the last 5 to 7 years. Rights holders and clubs now operate as **content-led, audience-driven brands**, not just event businesses. As a result:

1. Fan Engagement is now a core commercial lever

It sits between marketing, digital, content and partnerships.

Skills blend community, CRM, matchday experience, social content and product thinking.

2. Digital product capability has become essential

Clubs and federations now run:

- ☐ Membership platforms
- ☐ OTT and streaming environments
- ☐ Ticketing ecosystems
- ☐ Fan apps
- ☐ Content-led D2C products

This pushes up salaries for digital product roles, especially at tier one organisations.

5.4 MARKETING, DIGITAL & FAN ENGAGEMENT (Continued)

3. Senior roles now blend brand, digital, data and revenue

Marketing Directors and Digital Directors often oversee:

- ☐ End-to-end fan journeys
- ☐ Multi-channel campaigns
- ☐ Data-driven decision making
- ☐ Revenue-driving digital products
- ☐ Audience growth strategies
- ☐ Oversight of content and social teams

4. UX and fan experience roles are on the rise

Clubs are investing heavily in:

- ☐ Matchday experience
- ☐ Cross-channel journey design
- ☐ Digital ticketing journeys
- ☐ Membership retention
- ☐ Mobile product flows

These roles previously didn't exist at most clubs and federations.



5.5 DATA, ANALYTICS & INSIGHT

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Senior Data / Insight Analyst	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Analytics / Insight Lead	£70,000–£90,000	£61,000–£79,000	£53,000–£68,000
Head of Data / Insight	£90,000–£130,000	£79,000–£114,000	£68,000–£98,000
Director of Data / Insight	£130,000–£180,000	£114,000–£158,000	£98,000–£135,000
Chief Data Officer	£160,000–£250,000	£140,000–£219,000	£120,000–£188,000

Commentary

Data functions in sport have expanded rapidly as rights holders shift towards measurable, digital-first revenue models. According to Deloitte, organisations using fan data in ticketing and membership grow revenue two to three times faster than those relying on legacy sales models. Modern data teams now underpin key commercial areas such as dynamic pricing, targeted membership retention, partnership valuation, performance marketing and OTT or D2C product optimisation. As a result, data roles are increasingly embedded across commercial, marketing and digital teams, driving more informed decisions and measurable outcomes.

5.6 CRM, LOYALTY & LIFECYCLE

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
CRM Manager	£55,000–£70,000	£48,000–£61,000	£41,000–£53,000
Senior CRM Manager	£65,000–£85,000	£57,000–£74,000	£49,000–£64,000
Head of CRM / Loyalty	£80,000–£120,000	£70,000–£105,000	£60,000–£90,000
Director of CRM	£120,000–£160,000	£105,000–£140,000	£90,000–£120,000

Commentary

Salaries in CRM have risen sharply as the function becomes more revenue critical. Rights holders are now competing with ecommerce, subscription and entertainment businesses for the same talent, pushing Tier 1 salaries for senior CRM managers into the £65,000–£85,000 range and Head of CRM roles into £80,000–£120,000. Where CRM drives recurring revenue or subscription growth, Director-level roles increasingly sit between £120,000–£160,000, reflecting the commercial impact and scarcity of experienced lifecycle specialists.

5.7 CONTENT, SOCIAL & AUDIENCE

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Senior Content / Social Manager	£50,000–£70,000	£44,000–£61,000	£38,000–£53,000
Content / Social Lead	£60,000–£80,000	£53,000–£70,000	£45,000–£60,000
Head of Content / Social	£75,000–£110,000	£66,000–£96,000	£56,000–£83,000
Director of Content / Audience	£110,000–£150,000	£96,000–£131,000	£83,000–£113,000

Commentary

Content is now considered to be a pivotal part of a revenue generation function.

The best teams directly support:

- Sponsorship value
- Broadcast deals
- Owned-channel monetisation
- International expansion

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5.7 CONTENT, SOCIAL & AUDIENCE (Continued)

- Content and social teams have shifted from being creative support functions to becoming core revenue drivers. As fan behaviour moves increasingly toward digital consumption, high performing content teams directly influence sponsorship value, broadcast negotiations and owned-channel monetisation. Nielsen reports that more than 80 percent of sponsorship assets now rely on digital content delivery, and rights holders with strong social output see up to 3x higher partner engagement.
- Clubs and federations are also monetising owned channels more effectively, with digital advertising, branded content, subscription products and international audience growth creating new income lines. This is why content teams are now tightly integrated with commercial, marketing and data functions, shaping campaigns that drive measurable impact rather than simply pushing creative output.
- Salaries have risen accordingly. Senior content and social managers now command £50,000–£70,000 in Tier 1 organisations, with Heads of Content earning £75,000–£110,000 and Directors sitting between £110,000–£150,000, especially where content contributes to sponsorship reporting, OTT products or global fan growth. Roles that blend content strategy, digital storytelling and revenue impact are among the fastest-growing and most competitive across sport.

5.8 PRODUCT, PERFORMANCE & GROWTH

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Performance / Growth Marketing Manager	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Growth Lead / Senior Performance Lead	£70,000–£90,000	£61,000–£79,000	£53,000–£68,000
Head of Growth / Performance	£85,000–£120,000	£74,000–£105,000	£64,000–£90,000
Director of Growth	£120,000–£170,000	£105,000–£149,000	£90,000–£128,000

Commentary

The above roles contribute heavily support Growth, they are most commonly found in:

- Sports-technology
- OTT / streaming
- Subscription platforms
- D2C digital products
- Membership-based clubs

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5.8 PRODUCT, PERFORMANCE & GROWTH

- Product, performance and growth roles have become core revenue drivers as sport continues to adopt digital-first and subscription-led models. These teams are most commonly found in sports-technology businesses, OTT and streaming platforms, D2C digital products, subscription services and membership-based clubs.
- Product roles now shape fan experience and commercial outcomes end-to-end, from UX and app development to personalisation and new feature rollout, with strong product-market fit linked to 20 to 40 percent improvements in retention across digital platforms (McKinsey).
- Performance and growth teams support this by driving targeted acquisition, lifecycle optimisation and measurable ROI across channels.
- Salary levels have risen sharply as sport competes with entertainment, ecommerce and SaaS for the same talent. Performance and product managers typically sit between £55,000–£75,000, with Growth Leads and Product Leads earning £70,000–£95,000. Heads of Product or Growth range from £85,000–£120,000, while Director-level roles now command £120,000–£170,000 in Tier 1 organisations, particularly where digital products or subscription revenue form a major part of the commercial strategy.

5.9 COMMUNICATIONS & PR

Role	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Senior PR / Communications Manager	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Media Relations Manager	£55,000–£75,000	£48,000–£66,000	£41,000–£56,000
Press Officer / Senior Press Officer	£50,000–£68,000	£44,000–£60,000	£38,000–£51,000
Head of Communications / Head of PR	£80,000–£120,000	£70,000–£105,000	£60,000–£90,000
Head of Media / Head of Press & Broadcasting	£85,000–£125,000	£74,000–£109,000	£64,000–£94,000
Director of Communications / Corporate Affairs Director	£120,000–£170,000	£105,000–£149,000	£90,000–£128,000
Director of Media & Public Affairs	£120,000–£165,000	£105,000–£144,000	£90,000–£124,000
Chief Communications Officer (CCO)	£160,000–£230,000	£140,000–£201,000	£120,000–£173,000

Commentary

As clubs, federations and competitions become more global and politically visible, these teams have expanded in both scope and influence.

C-suite communications roles are becoming more common and are appearing at:

- Larger clubs
- Governing bodies
- High-profile federations
- Organisations involved in global tournaments. Especially where political sensitivity, regulatory pressure or high commercial visibility exist.

5.9 COMMUNICATIONS & PR (Continued)

- PR and Communications roles have become significantly more influential in sport as rights holders navigate a fast-moving, high-scrutiny media environment. With sport now operating across global broadcast networks, social media, political stakeholders and highly active fan communities, demand for experienced communications leaders has grown sharply. Cision's 2024 Media Report notes that 68 percent of journalists say sport is one of the most reactive and high-pressure beats, increasing the need for rapid, accurate and strategic communication.
- Modern PR teams directly support commercial outcomes. Strong narrative and reputation management can influence sponsorship value, strengthen broadcast negotiations and reduce brand risk. Deloitte highlights reputation as a top two factor in sponsor renewal, while governing bodies increasingly view communications as essential to safeguarding trust and maintaining partner confidence.
- The function has broadened well beyond media relations. Today's leaders manage crisis communication, corporate affairs, government relations, stakeholder engagement, digital PR and executive positioning. This cross-functional influence has pushed salaries higher. Senior Managers typically earn £55,000–£75,000, with Heads of Communications in the £80,000–£120,000 range.
- Directors command £120,000–£170,000, especially in clubs or federations with international profiles. At the top end, Chief Communications Officers now sit between £160,000–£230,000, reflecting their impact on risk, reputation and overall organisational resilience.

6. REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The salaries we've reflected in this report, are typically representative of London and The South East. Although not exact, salaries for other regions in the UK (Excluding Northern Ireland) can be estimated using the table below.

Region	Typical Adjustment
London / South East	Baseline
Midlands	– 10 percent
Manchester / North West	– 10 percent
Scotland	– 15 to –20 percent
North East	– 20 percent
South West / Wales	– 20 percent

Note – Digital functions such as CRM, Data and Growth show the least regional variation

7. HIRING TRENDS IN SPORT

1. Salary uplift expectations are stabilising at 7 to 12 percent

Especially for roles with digital, CRM or data components.

2. Hybrid skillsets matter

- Partnerships + Strategy
- Marketing + Analytics
- Content + Commercial

3. Contract and interim hiring remains strong

Most common in transformation phases.

4. Talent pipelines remain thin; still a market driven by credible candidates, due to lack of strong options.

Particularly at Head → Director → C-suite level.

5. AI literacy is becoming a baseline expectation

Not technical, but operational.



8. KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR HIRING LEADERS

- ❑ Benchmark salary bands annually
- ❑ Protect Senior Manager → Head layer
- ❑ Build digital and data capability
- ❑ Focus on role clarity and scope
- ❑ Incentivise with progression as much as pay
- ❑ Use specialist search for key commercial hires



9. NOTABLE LEADERSHIP HIRES in UK Sport (2025)



AARTI DABAS

Chief Revenue Officer
England and Wales Cricket Board



SHARON LACEY

Chief Executive Officer
Crystal Palace Football Club



OLAF GUELDNER

Chief Customer Officer
Scottish Rugby



ZARAH AL-KUDCY

Chief Revenue Officer
Women's Super League & Barclay's Women's Championship



STEPHEN HAINES

Chief Revenue Officer
Birmingham City Football Club

MERCURY 13

HANNAH HAYNES AND LINDSEY ECKHOUSE

Chief Strategy Officer & Chief Revenue Officer
Mercury 13



STUART RAMSEY

Chief Commercial Officer
Professional Triathletes Organisation

Burson

CLAIRE HOLDEN

Head of Brand, Sports & Entertainment
Burson UK and EMEA



EMMA WHITE

Chief Executive Officer
Leicestershire County Cricket Club



SIMON HAYES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Sport England



LISA KNIGHTS

CEO at Bristol Flyers Basketball, and
Director of Comms Bristol Sports Group



CHARLIE BEAL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Saracens Rugby FC

10. LOOKING TO HIRE IN 2026?



FRASER BRYDEN

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Fraser Bryden is the Founder and CEO of Kinetic Search, an experienced executive recruiter and entrepreneur. He previously scaled and sold a successful entertainment recruitment firm before moving into senior roles at leading search firms, delivering hires across the UK, Europe, and the US, in Sports Entertainment, and Technology.

He has a proven track record of placing senior leaders across commercial, partnerships, sales, strategy, marketing, content, data, and fan engagement, supported by a strong C suite network. Fraser combines his deep sector knowledge with a genuine interest in new trends shaping the industry.

If you require hiring support, please contact us .



Two Decades in Executive Search



Cross Sector Experience



Strong Network at C-Suite and Head of levels



Experience with PE & VC Funds



International Experience (UK, & USA)



Trusted by Leading Brands and Rightsholders

11. ABOUT US



Kinetic Search Solutions is a boutique leadership search firm at the forefront of the executive talent market, providing tailored leadership search, and market mapping solutions for investors and businesses across converging sectors in Sports, and Entertainment, with, Technology businesses represented horizontally across these sectors.

Our extensive network, talent mapping, and deep industry insights ensure our clients secure transformative commercial leaders that fit with their unique culture.