

Senior demand is rising. The pipeline behind it is emptying.

Placements across our searches rose 14% quarter over quarter and more than doubled against the same quarter last year, with senior demand leading while the pipeline underneath it thinned. Roles are being rewritten rather than backfilled, revenue teams are funded first and brought back in person, and the hiring signal itself is under pressure. If your 2027 plan rests on 2025 assumptions, these five observations come first.

Practitioner intelligence drawn from active searches since 2014. Senior-led. Observations are ours; supporting data is sourced.

THE FIVE OBSERVATIONS

- 01 The engineering leader role has been rewritten.** Senior demand up, junior demand down, and computer science enrollment in its first national decline in nearly 20 years. Hiring panels now ask candidates how they will lead a team that is part human, part offshore, and part AI agent.
Executive Takeaway: The leader who can run a hybrid human-AI team is the scarcest profile in the technical market, and the collapsing junior pipeline means the shortage compounds for a decade.
- 02 Revenue roles are funded first, and increasingly in person.** SDR and AE demand up across our client base. Office attendance enforcement has more than doubled year over year. Meanwhile the blended model holds: in-office where presence matters, onshore and offshore remote capacity where skills and flexibility matter more.
Executive Takeaway: When budgets tighten, companies still fund the top of the funnel, and they want to see the people they hire.
- 03 Candidate identity verification is now a business problem.** A passable deepfake candidate takes about 70 minutes to build. In 2026 the Department of Justice sentenced facilitators who placed workers under stolen identities at more than 100 US companies, and security researchers are now documenting the same scheme moving into healthcare and sales roles. MOGEL's response: a layered Identity Continuity Stack that checks the person, not just the paperwork, from first screen through the first month of work.
Executive Takeaway: Identity verification is moving from operational afterthought to contract clause and financial control. Ask your recruiting partners what stands between an application and an offer.
- 04 The HR rebuild has started.** Strong HR leaders unemployed 9 to 12 months are being hired, with offers in some searches running as much as 40% above prior compensation. HR is cut first in downturns and rebuilt first when companies decide the next phase is growth.
Executive Takeaway: A senior HR hiring wave is a leading indicator. Companies are moving from contain to build, and comp is repricing ahead of budgets.
- 05 The human in the loop is now an operating requirement.** AI is built into nearly every ATS and the efficiency gains are real. But the idea that AI alone can fill positions is increasingly a false narrative. And with the Workday AI-bias case moving forward, human judgment is a compliance position, not just a quality one.
Executive Takeaway: Know where in your hiring process a human makes the call, and be able to prove it.

SECTOR WATCH · Q3 2026

SaaS & Enterprise Tech	GTM hiring leads, engineering close behind. AE, demand generation, and product marketing dominate plans, with revenue operations and sales engineering the fastest-growing categories. Senior PM and Sr/Director Engineering demand sustained as platforms ship AI features.
EdTech	Commercial and technical hiring running in parallel. Sales, customer success, and marketing openings outnumber engineering roughly two to one across our searches, while senior and director-level engineering is the hardest to fill. Product, project management, and pre- and post-sales roles all active.
FinTech	Regulation is the hiring driver. Compliance, AML, and risk roles lead demand as oversight expands, with AI engineering and product managers fluent in KYC workflows close behind. CFO searches calibrating toward strategic-partner profiles over pure controls backgrounds.
HR & People	Demand accelerating out of a long freeze. Senior HR leaders who sat out 9 to 12 months are being hired, and offers are repricing materially above prior compensation.
Legal & LegalTech	Employment disputes are driving demand. AI-in-hiring and pay transparency litigation are creating sustained need for employment and compliance counsel. Legal operations is emerging as a new role category, and LegalTech product and engineering hiring remains active.

-4.6% COMPUTER SCIENCE ENROLLMENT First national decline in nearly 20 years. Stanford, 1,019 institutions	100+ COMPANIES HIT BY ID FRAUD Stolen identities. US Dept. of Justice sentencing, 2026	37% RTO ENFORCEMENT Companies enforcing attendance, up from 17% in 2024. CBRE Occupier Survey 2025	No. 1 AI ENGINEER Fastest-growing job title in the US. LinkedIn Jobs on the Rise 2026
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WHAT TO WATCH IN Q4

- › **Identity verification moves into contracts.** Expect verification protocols to become a standard MSA clause for third-party recruiting.
- › **Finance leadership follows the HR rebuild.** The contain-to-build shift extends to CFO and controller searches into 2027 planning.
- › **AI-in-hiring compliance goes from optional to expected.** As the Workday case proceeds, boards start asking where the human decision point sits.

Before You Build the 2027 Plan

Quarterly market intelligence drawn from active searches. Practitioner intelligence from a firm running the work, with every external number sourced.

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