

# Marketing Leadership: A Hiring Blueprint

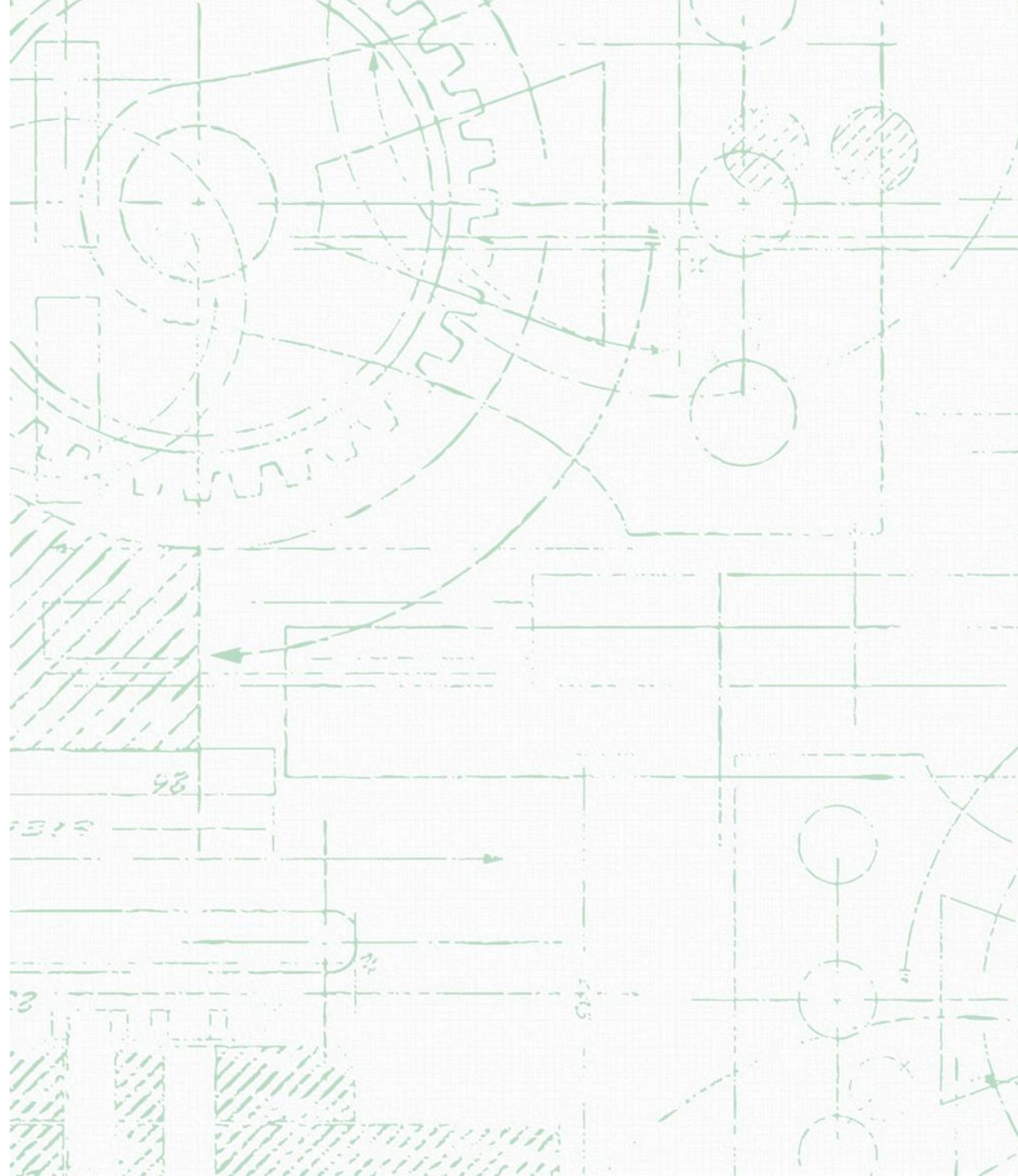
What to prioritize when hiring a Marketing executive from \$50M ARR to IPO

August 2023

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# Introduction

*ICONIQ Growth*

*Leadership Analytics*

Executive hiring is the final frontier within the modern organization that is yet to benefit from the proliferation of data. Despite having data to guide nearly every other business decision – and despite the criticality of executive hiring decisions – CEOs and Founders have heretofore been forced to rely on anecdotal guidance.

**ICONIQ Growth set out to change that.**

Determined to help de-risk hiring decisions by empowering CEOs and Founders with data, we are studying every leadership hire between Founding and IPO at dozens of high-caliber SaaS companies. We segment each hiring decision by growth stage in order to deliver hyper-relevant insights. To date, we have collected over **36,000 datapoints on over 1,000 leaders**.

The result is a series of **first-of-their-kind playbooks** that help guide decision-making across the entire private company lifecycle – whether you are making your first leadership hire or evaluating the skillsets needed to adeptly enter the public markets.

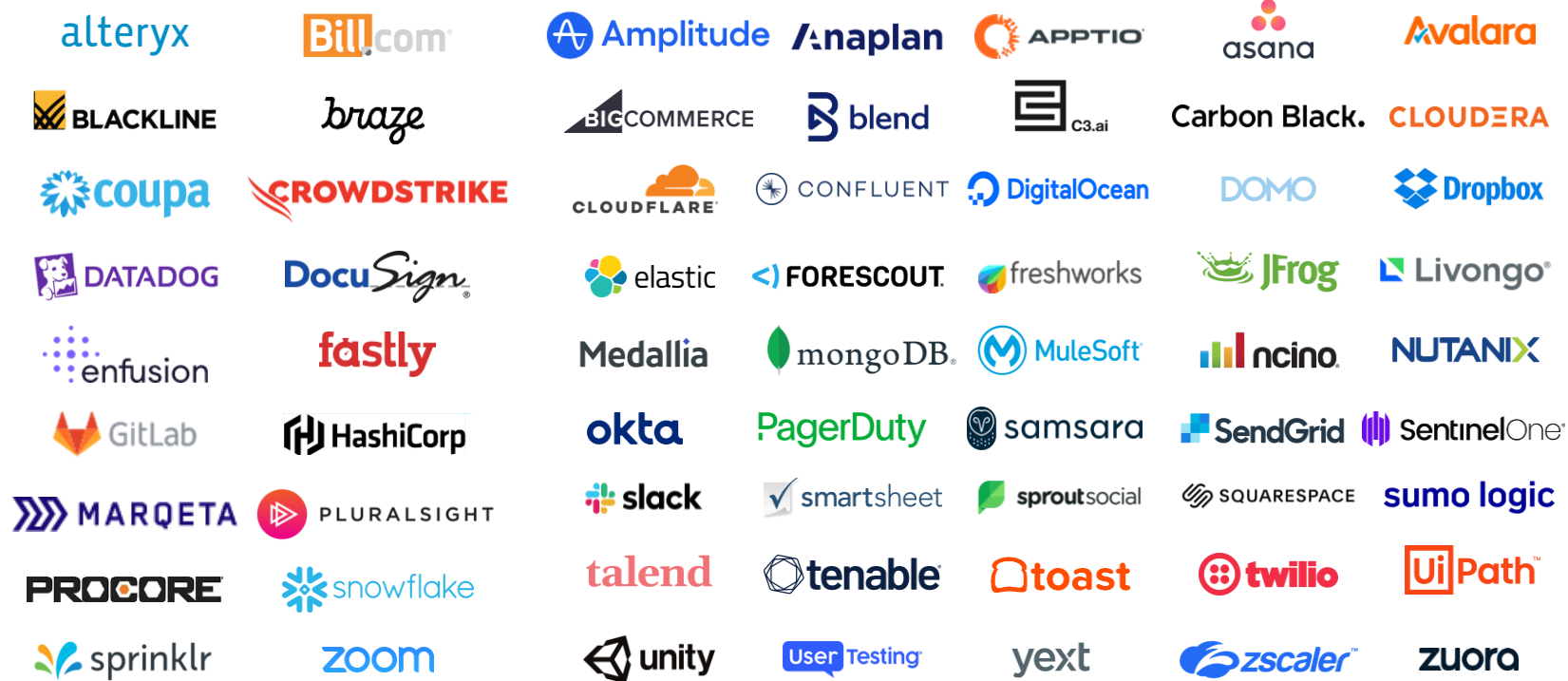
We hope this analysis, which examines **the backgrounds of Marketing executives at companies from \$50M ARR to IPO**, serves as a north star as you build and scale your go-to-market organization.

# The Dataset

We studied every Head of Marketing\* hired at these 63 B2B SaaS companies from the day they were founded to the day they went public, capturing the entire private company lifecycle<sup>1</sup>:

## ICONIQ Growth Portfolio Companies<sup>2,3</sup>

## Other Companies<sup>3</sup>



\*We defined “Head of Marketing” as the senior-most executive responsible for the entire marketing organization and strategy of the company. Throughout this analysis, we use “Head of Marketing” as a catchall term.

This is an updated version of our 2021 analysis. We’ve included 18 additional companies and 56 leaders in our proprietary Heads of Marketing dataset, totaling to 63 companies and over 200 leaders.

### Company Inclusion Criteria:

- SaaS business model
- Went public after 2016 via IPO or Direct Listing
- Raised venture capital prior to going public

(1) Data sources for this analysis included LinkedIn profiles, company websites, press releases, articles, and others.

(2) Includes fully realized investments.

(3) Includes companies that have been de-listed. Please see full list of ICONIQ Growth Portfolio companies at the end of the presentation.

Pages 6-22 include data and insights sourced from the companies and references listed on this page.

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# Executive Summary

Growth Stage: \$50M-\$100M ARR  
Late Growth Stage: \$100M ARR-IPO

## 1 Introduction

Hiring a Head of Marketing that can scale across multiple stages can be challenging, however, there is generally less turnover<sup>1</sup> as a company matures. Heads of Marketing hired during the Growth and Late Growth Stages had a **median tenure of 2.5 years**. As a result, companies typically hire one or two Heads of Marketing between crossing \$50M ARR and going public. Companies preparing for an IPO **should plan to hire their CMO 2+ years in advance of this event, given the important role that the CMO plays in the lead up to IPO.**

## 2 Leadership

**Growth Stage companies** should prioritize a leader with public company CMO experience, as 38% of hires had this qualification. Additionally, hires who have served as both a private company CMO and public company marketing SVP/VP demonstrated notable longevity. After \$100M ARR, CEOs should continue to seek a leader with public company CMO experience. Alternatively, hires should at least have senior-level (SVP/VP) public company experience as this contributes to IPO-readiness. **79% of Heads of Marketing who led companies through an IPO had no prior exposure to the IPO process**, indicating that the IPO learning curve is not insurmountable for first-timers.

## 3 Marketer Type

In addition to leadership experience, **we investigated whether companies prioritized product, revenue, or corporate marketers** and how this related to a company's scale, go-to-market (GTM) motion, and sector. **Growth Stage companies hired nearly evenly across these profiles** while **Late Growth Stage companies skewed towards product marketers**. PLG companies prioritized product and revenue marketers, while SLG companies preferred product and corporate marketers. Application companies displayed a more balanced distribution, whereas Infrastructure companies had a stronger preference for product marketers.

## 4 Go-To-Market Motion & Sector

Historically, an **executive's prior go-to-market motion has been less relevant to their longevity**, although SLG marketing leaders tend to stay slightly longer than PLG leaders. **A hire's prior sector exposure had moderate significance**, as hires with sector affinity stayed slightly longer compared to those who were new to the sector.

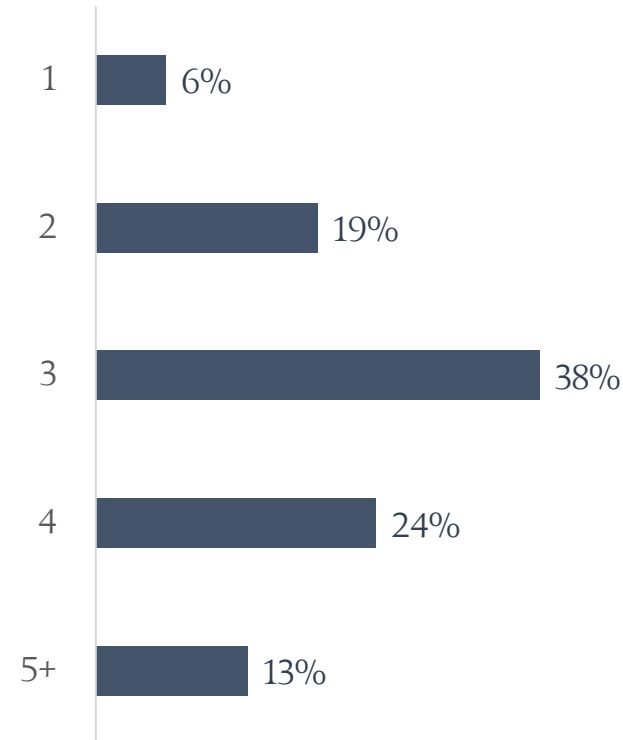
(1) We acknowledge individuals depart from their roles for various reasons, though we generally believe longevity and ability to scale across multiple growth stages are key indicators of a successful leader.

## Marketing Hiring Overview

Hiring Heads of Marketing that can scale across multiple stages can be challenging, however, there is generally less turnover as a company matures. While it is possible to have a single leader scale from \$50M ARR to IPO, 43% of companies had two leaders to attain this milestone.

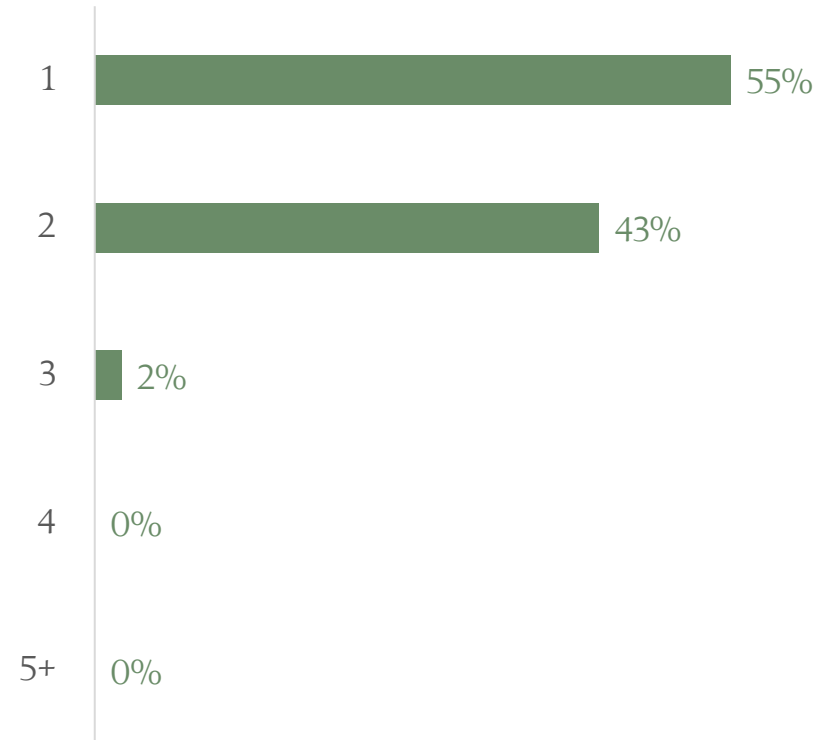
### Number of Heads of Marketing from Founding to IPO<sup>1</sup>

*n = 63 companies*



### Number of Heads of Marketing from \$50M ARR to IPO

*n = 44 companies<sup>2</sup>*



3.2

*average number of Heads of Marketing from founding to IPO*

1.5

*average number of Heads of Marketing hired from \$50M ARR to IPO*

(1) The average time to IPO for companies in this dataset was 11 years.

(2) 19 companies reached IPO with a Head of Marketing that was hired before \$50M ARR, thus resulting in an n-size of 44. This chart is reflecting companies that hired Heads of Marketing after \$50M ARR.

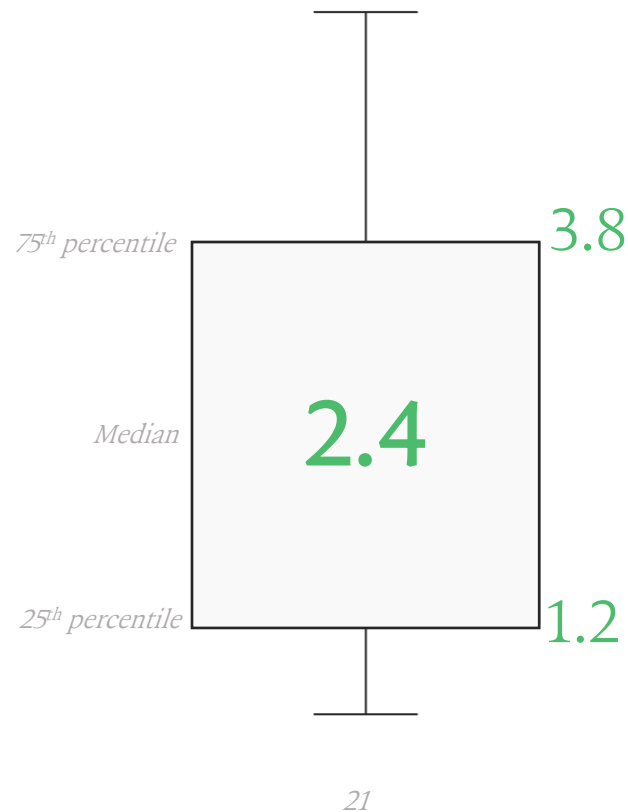
## Tenure (Years)

Heads of Marketing hired after \$50M ARR had a median tenure of approximately 2.5 years. Growth Stage hires exhibited greater variability, whereas Late Growth Stage hires demonstrated a tighter range around the median.

### Tenure (Years)<sup>1</sup> of Heads of Marketing<sup>2,3</sup>

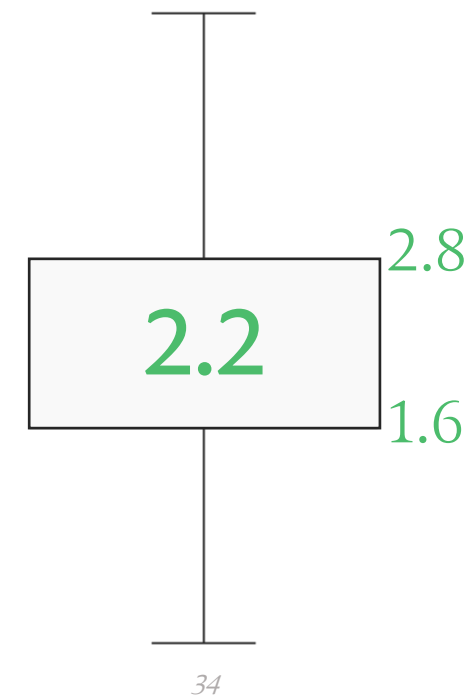
#### Growth Stage Hires

\$50M ARR - \$100M ARR



#### Late Growth Stage Hires

\$100M ARR - IPO



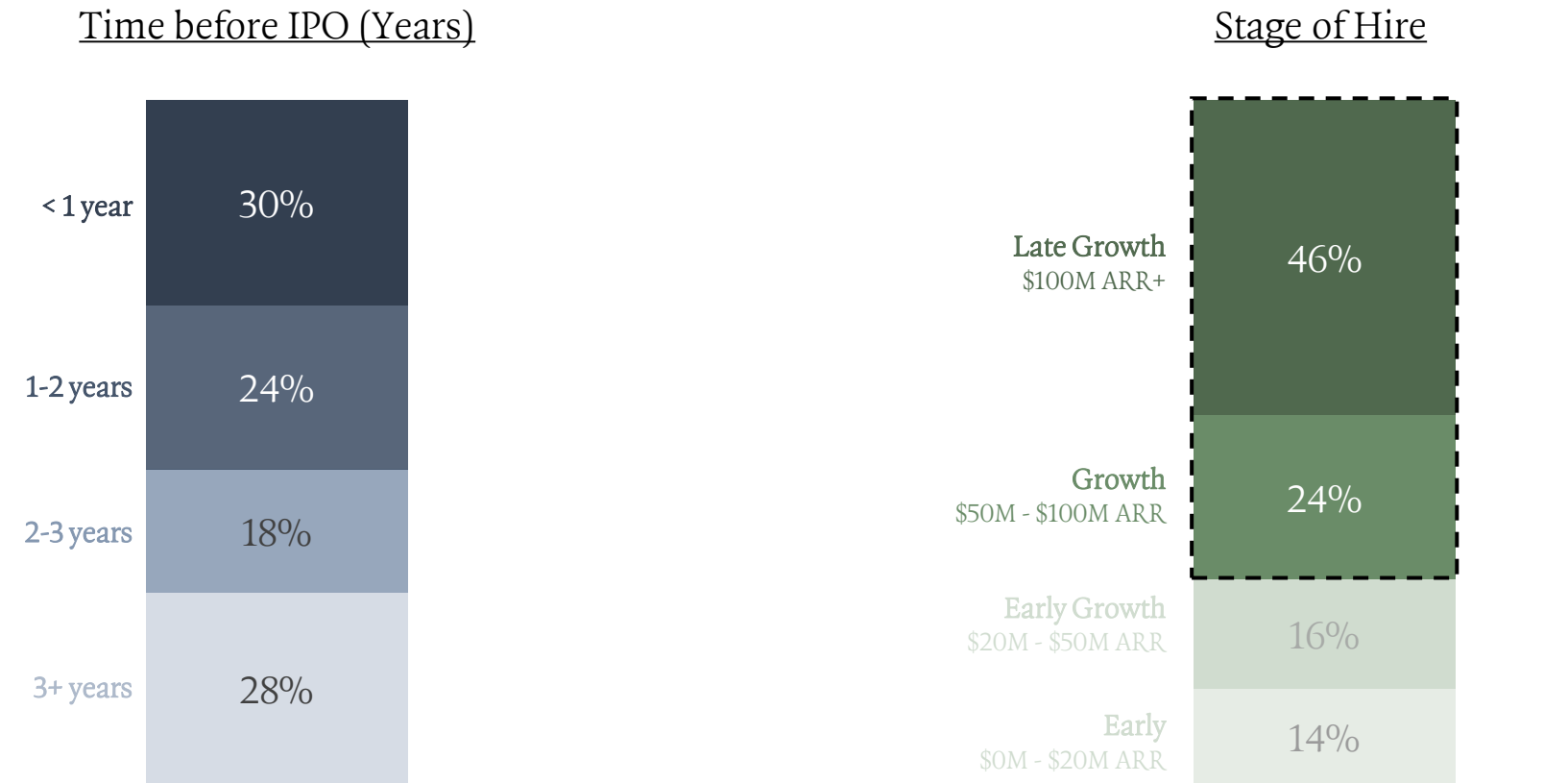
- (1) Reflects the cumulative years of a hire's tenure as Head of Marketing, including post-IPO.
- (2) Includes external hires only.
- (3) 18% of hires are still in their roles, meaning their tenure with the company continues to increase.

## Heads of Marketing at IPO

Companies should also consider their timeline to IPO. While this may not be a primary focus with current market conditions, nearly 50% of companies hired their Head of Marketing for IPO 2+ years in advance, suggesting that mature companies should start to think about this now.

### When Heads of Marketing at IPO were Hired

n = 57<sup>1</sup>



Median time hired before IPO = 1.9 years

(1) Includes all Heads of Marketing present at IPO. 6 companies did not have a Head of Marketing at IPO, resulting in n=57.

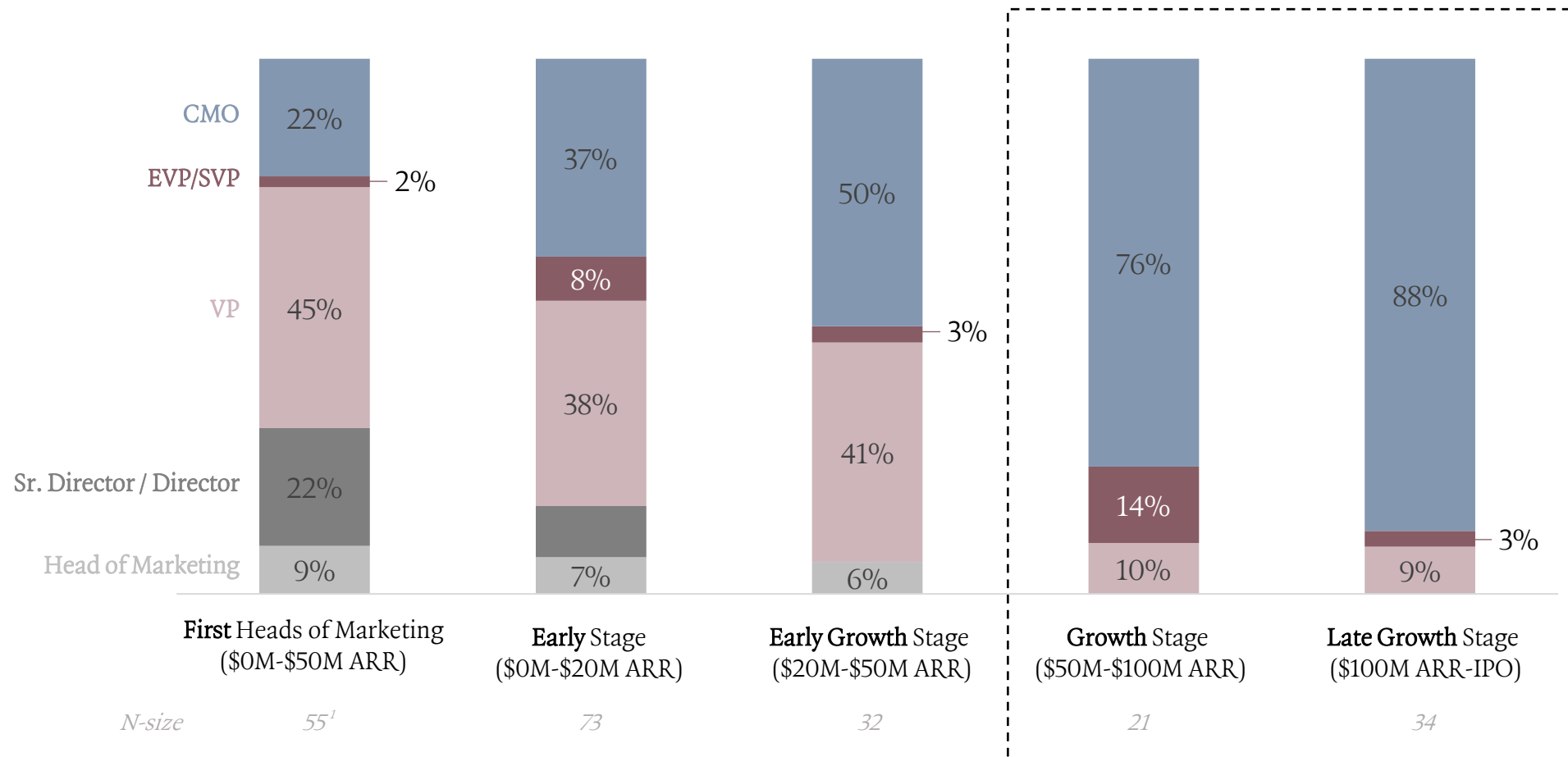


# Titling

Companies hiring after \$50M ARR primarily use the “CMO” title.

## Titles by Stage

*External hires only*



(1) Includes only first Heads of Marketing hired before \$50M ARR and first Heads of Marketing that were externally hired.

## Hiring for Success

Why do some Heads of Marketing stay for only 6 months, while others endure for 7 years? We analyzed the major traits in marketing executive backgrounds to understand how these impacted a leader's success and longevity within the company.

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### Leadership

What type of prior Head of Marketing experience did leaders have?

Of the hires that reached IPO, did they have prior exposure to an IPO process?

[p. 11-13](#)

### Marketer Type

How do different types of marketers compare to one another?

[p. 14-17](#)

### GTM Motion

What is the relationship between a leader's prior GTM motion to the company GTM motion?

[p. 18](#)

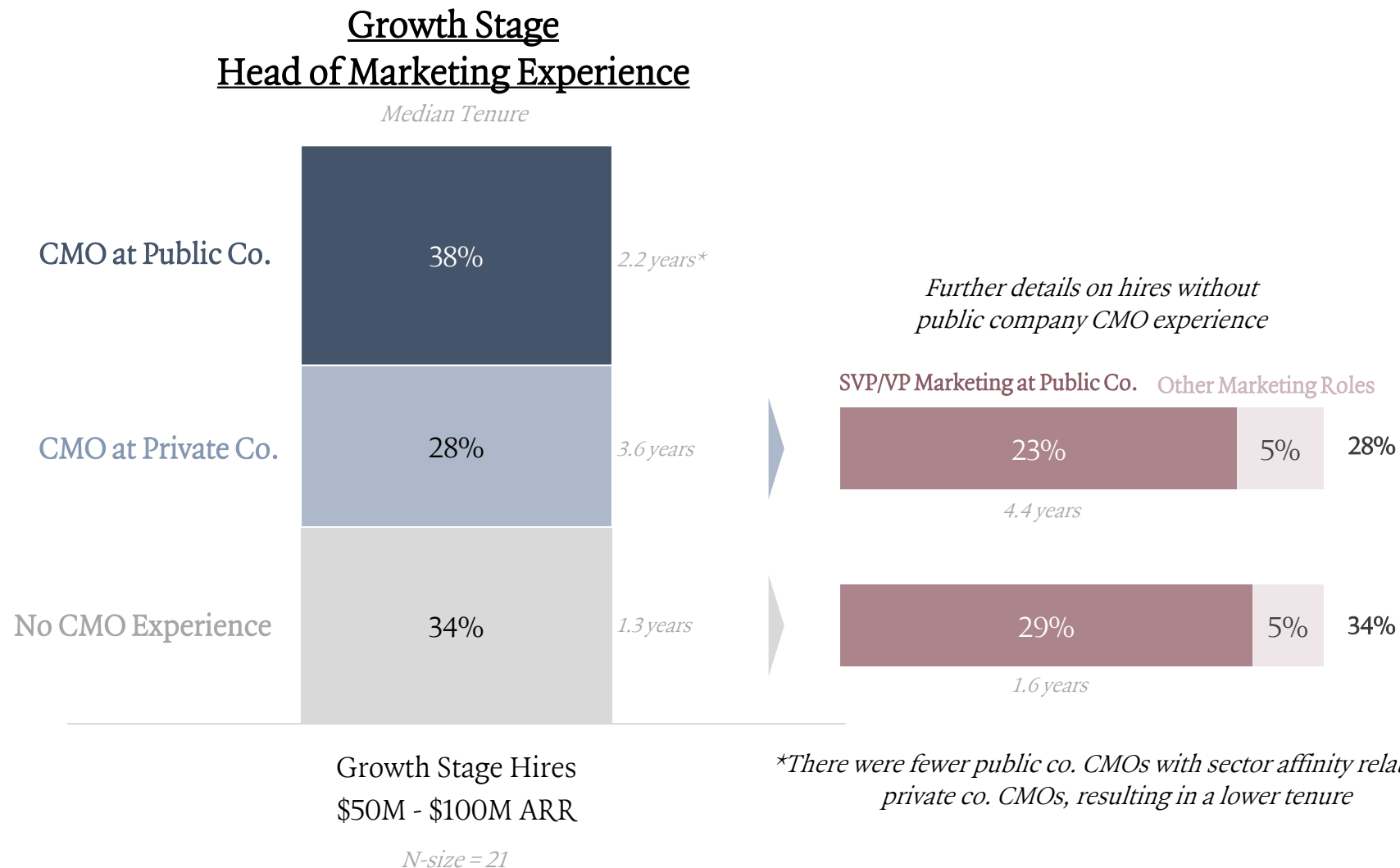
### Sector

Do leaders need to have experience marketing to customers within the same sector?

[p. 19-20](#)

## Leadership | Growth Stage

From \$50M-\$100M ARR, CEOs should prioritize a leader with public company CMO experience, as 38% of hires had this qualification. Additionally, hires who have served as both a private company CMO and public company marketing SVP/VP demonstrated notable longevity.

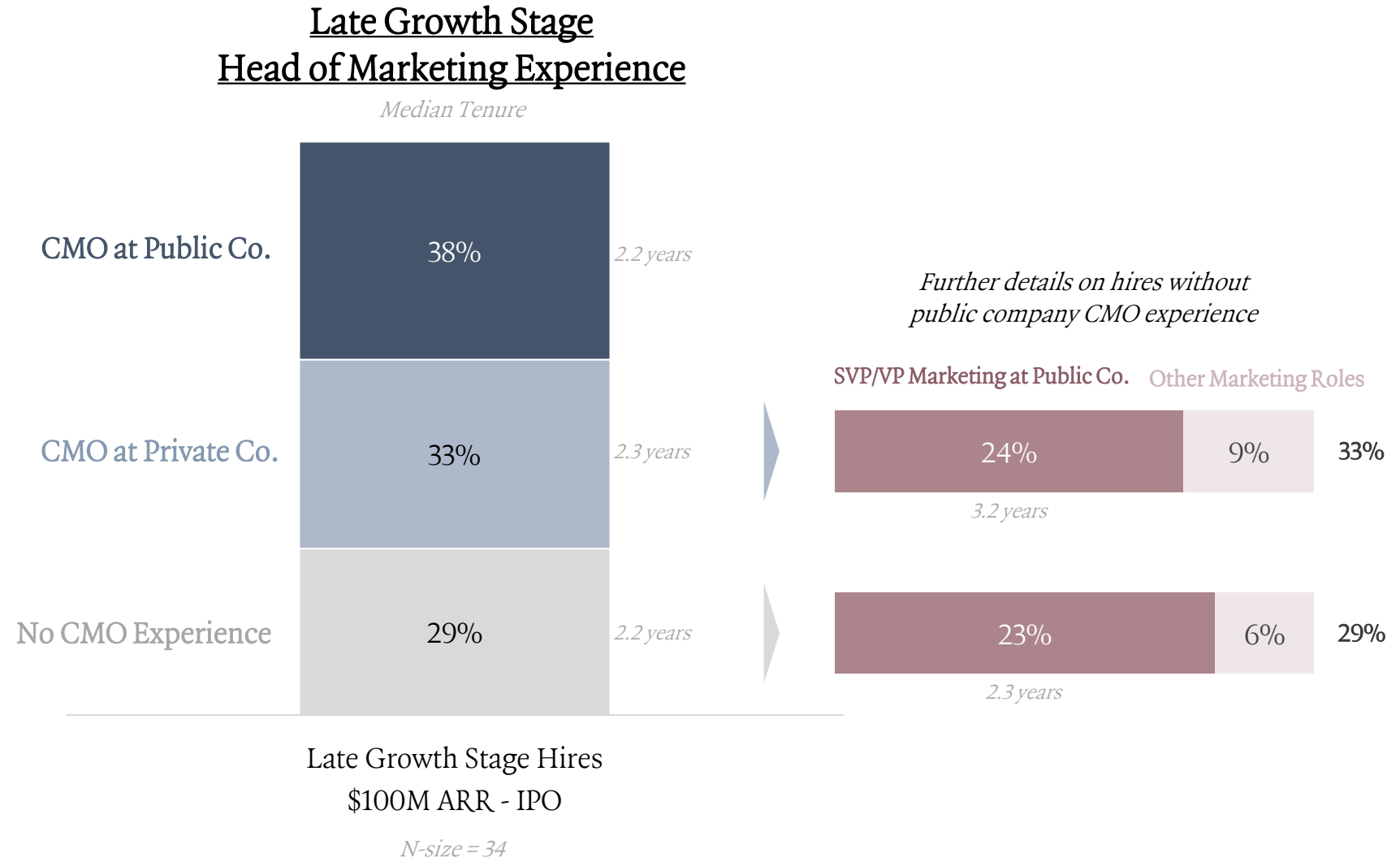


**Notes:**

- "CMO" is being used interchangeably with "Head of Marketing".
- Public company CMO experience does not suggest that this was their immediate prior role.
- Prior company ARR data estimated using proxy metrics (e.g., per headcount, PIC) if actual figures unavailable.

## Leadership | Late Growth Stage

After \$100M ARR, CEOs should continue to seek a leader with public company CMO experience. Alternatively, hires should at least have senior-level (SVP/VP) public company experience as this contributes to IPO-readiness.



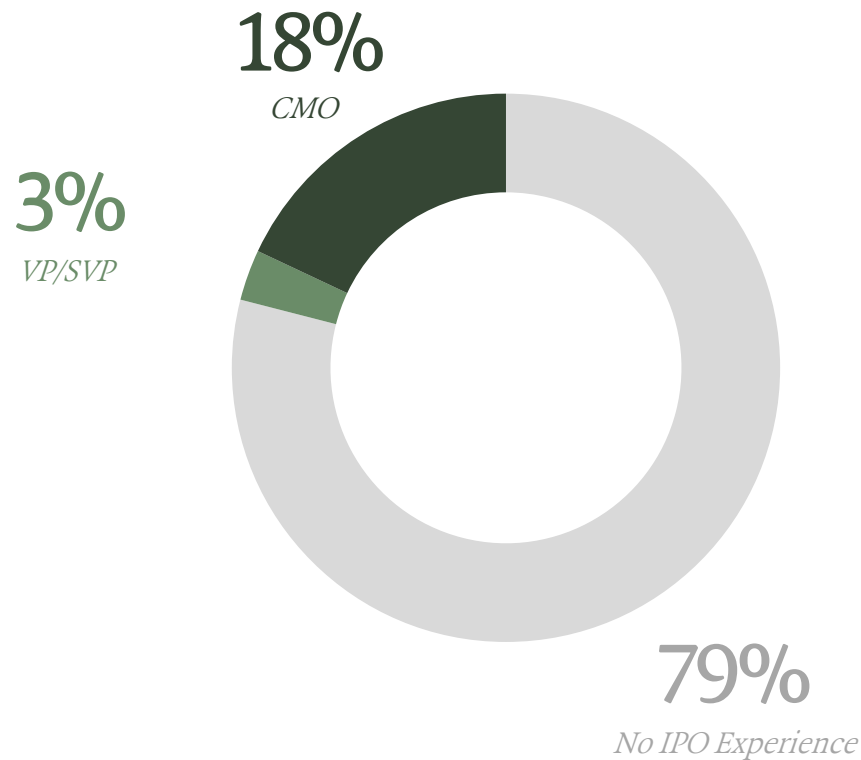
**Notes:**

- "CMO" is being used interchangeably with "Head of Marketing".
- Public company CMO experience does not suggest that this was their immediate prior role.
- Prior company ARR data estimated using proxy metrics (e.g., per headcount, PIC) if actual figures unavailable.

79% of CMOs that took a company public were not involved in an IPO process before, suggesting that this is not a necessary qualification.

### Heads of Marketing at IPO with Prior IPO Experience<sup>1</sup>

n = 57<sup>2</sup>



### The CMO Role in an IPO Process

- The IPO preparation process requires a high degree of coordination from all members of the executive team. Specifically, a **CMO plays a key role in nearly all pre-IPO activities and the timeline to prepare can often be 2-3 years in advance of the offering.**
- Throughout this process, there are **two primary audiences a CMO should expect to target: the investment community and customers/prospects.** While the investment community should be the primary focus pre-IPO, customer/prospect campaigns should be developed in parallel.
- For the investment community, **CMOs are responsible for developing consistent messaging across all roadshow related activities** (e.g. presentations, video/digital media). Investors want predictability, so establishing a consistent tone both pre- and post-IPO is critical to gaining interest and trust. In addition to the roadshow, **CMOs contribute significantly to the S-1 “Business” section.**
- For customers and prospects, **CMOs should start developing marketing strategies and processes that align with the scale of a \$10B-\$20B company.** Part of this involves establishing a PR team and a customer reference program.

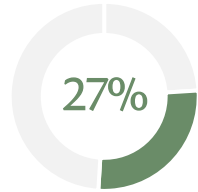
*This information was sourced from an ICONIQ Growth webinar featuring several CMOs with IPO experience in the SaaS industry.*

(1) In this study we define IPO experience as being the CMO or direct report of a CMO at time of initial public offering.  
(2) Includes all Heads of Marketing present at IPO. 6 companies did not have a Head of Marketing at IPO, resulting in n=57.

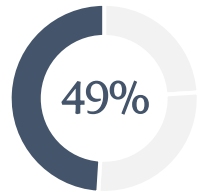
## Marketer Type Primer

There are three marketing backgrounds<sup>1</sup> we use to categorize leaders in this study: revenue, product, and corporate. Several leaders had experience in multiple marketing sub-functions; however, each hire is categorized based on their dominant background.

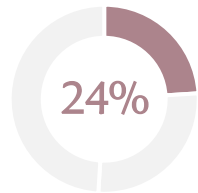
### Marketer Type Composition<sup>2</sup>



**Revenue Marketing:** Identifies, converts, and nurtures prospects and existing customers through data-driven strategies that generate revenue for the business. This includes demand generation, growth marketing, partner marketing, and field marketing.



**Product Marketing:** Refines competitive positioning and messaging, and plays an integral role in bringing products to market. Responsible for product launches and driving usage by ensuring customers understand product benefits and differentiation.



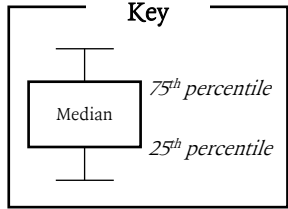
**Corporate Marketing:** Builds brand awareness and constructs the company narrative. Communications, PR, content marketing, advertising, and brand strategy fall under this purview.

(1) We believe the core SaaS marketing skill sets can be captured within one of these three groups. Several leaders in this analysis had experience in multiple marketing sub functions; each person is categorized according to their dominant/primary background.

(2) Charts reflect both Growth and Late Growth Stage hires.

## Tenure by Marketer Type

Hires across all marketer types typically stayed for 2-2.5 years, though prior leadership was a stronger driver of longevity. Product marketers had fewer leaders with Head of Marketing experience, which could contribute to their shorter tenure relative to other marketing profiles.

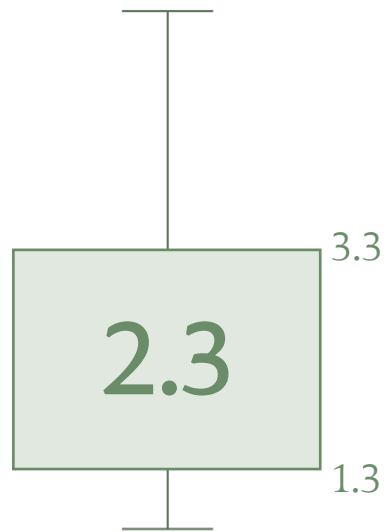


### Tenure by Marketer Type

Growth + Late Growth Hires / n = 55

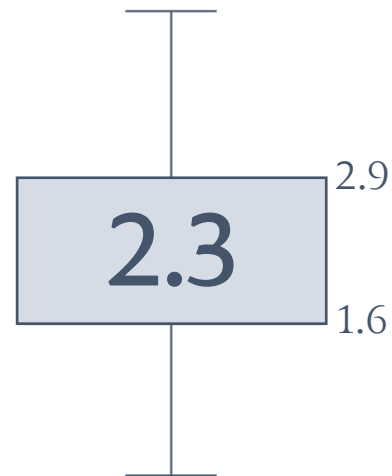
#### Revenue Marketing

n = 15



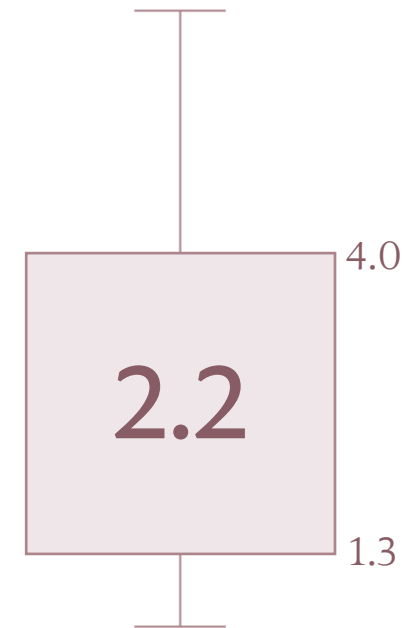
#### Product Marketing

n = 27



#### Corporate Marketing

n = 13

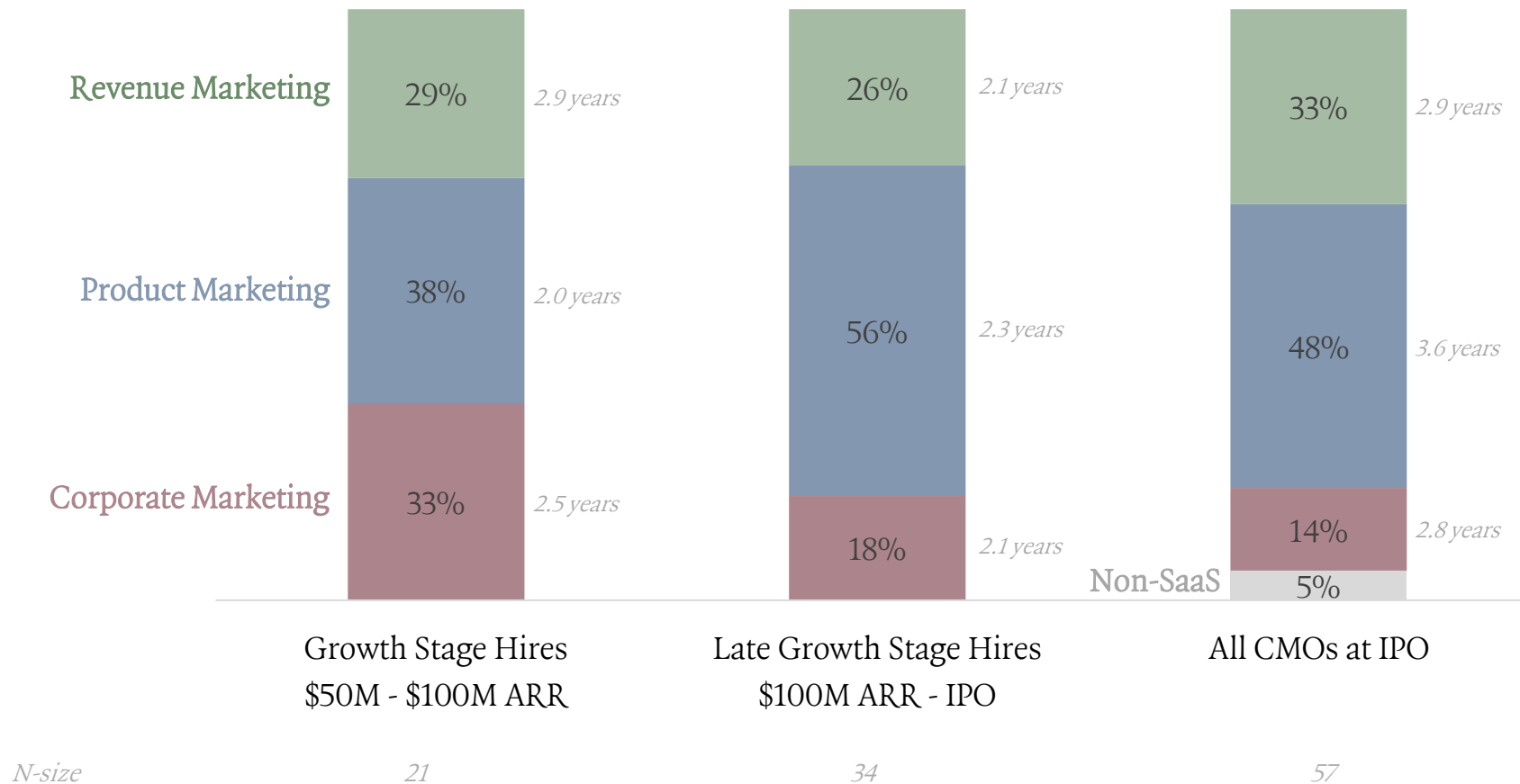


## Marketer Type

While Growth Stage companies hired nearly evenly for each marketing background, Late Growth Stage companies prioritized product marketers. Additionally, product marketers were 1.5x-3x more common at IPO relative to revenue and corporate marketers.

### Marketer Type Composition

*Median Tenure*



- Notes:
- For "All CMOs at IPO", the n-size reflects CMOs at IPO from all four growth stages.
  - Tenure reflected only for groups with a significant n-size.

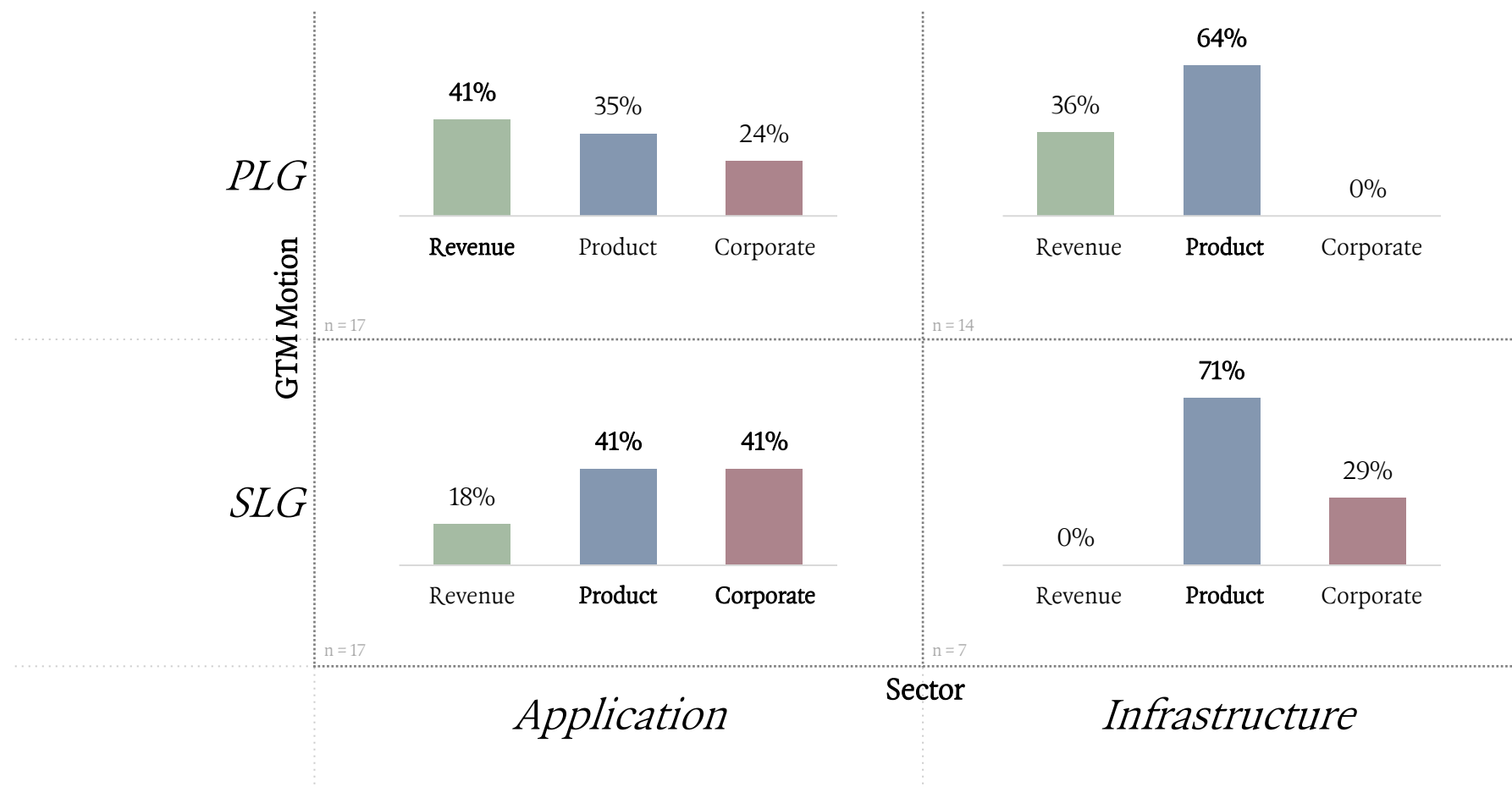


## Marketer Type by Company GTM Motion & Sector

PLG companies prioritized product and revenue marketers whereas SLG companies preferred product and corporate marketers. Application companies showed a more balanced distribution, while Infrastructure companies had a stronger preference for product marketers.

### Marketer Type by Company GTM Motion & Sector

*Growth + Late Growth Hires / n = 55*



Notes:

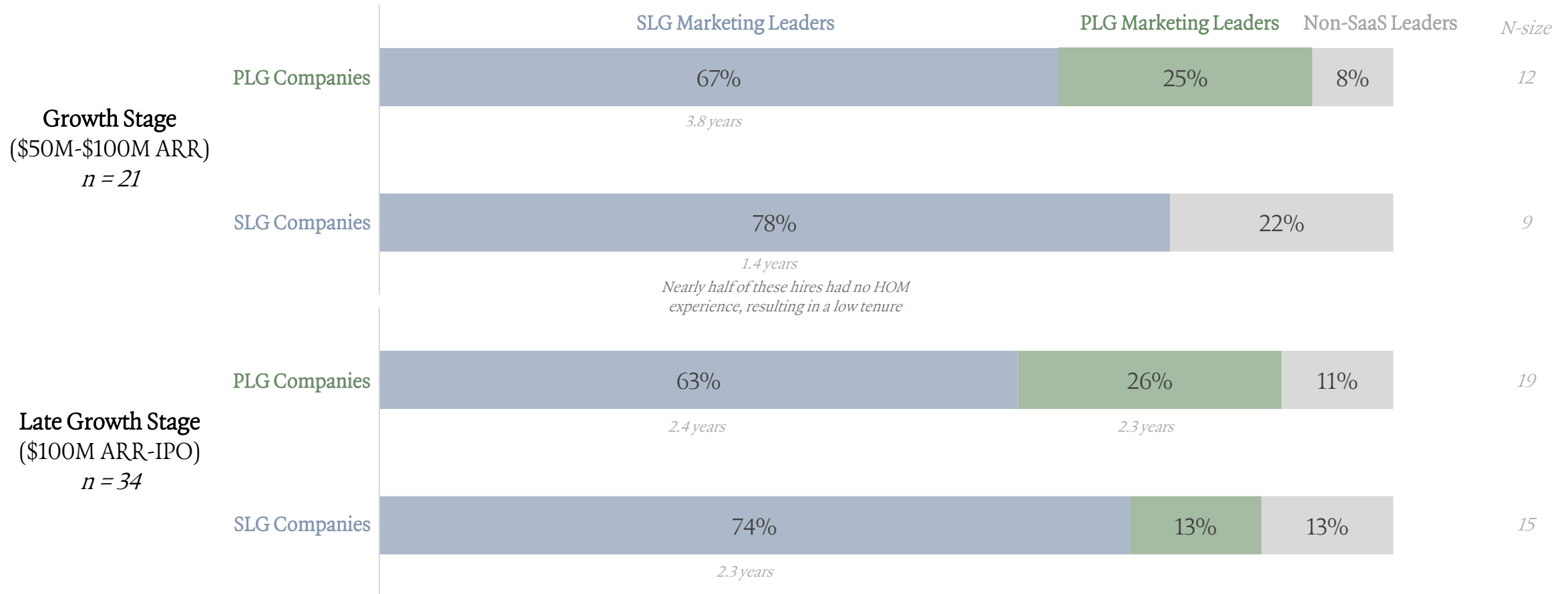
- See page 22 for list of GTM motion and Sector companies.

## Go-to-Market Motion | PLG vs SLG

Regardless of a company’s GTM motion, Heads of Marketing with substantial SLG exposure remained the preferred choice across both stages. Notably, there were no PLG leaders hired for SLG companies between \$50M-\$100M ARR.

### Marketing Leader’s GTM Background vs. Company’s GTM Motion

*Median Tenure*



Notes:

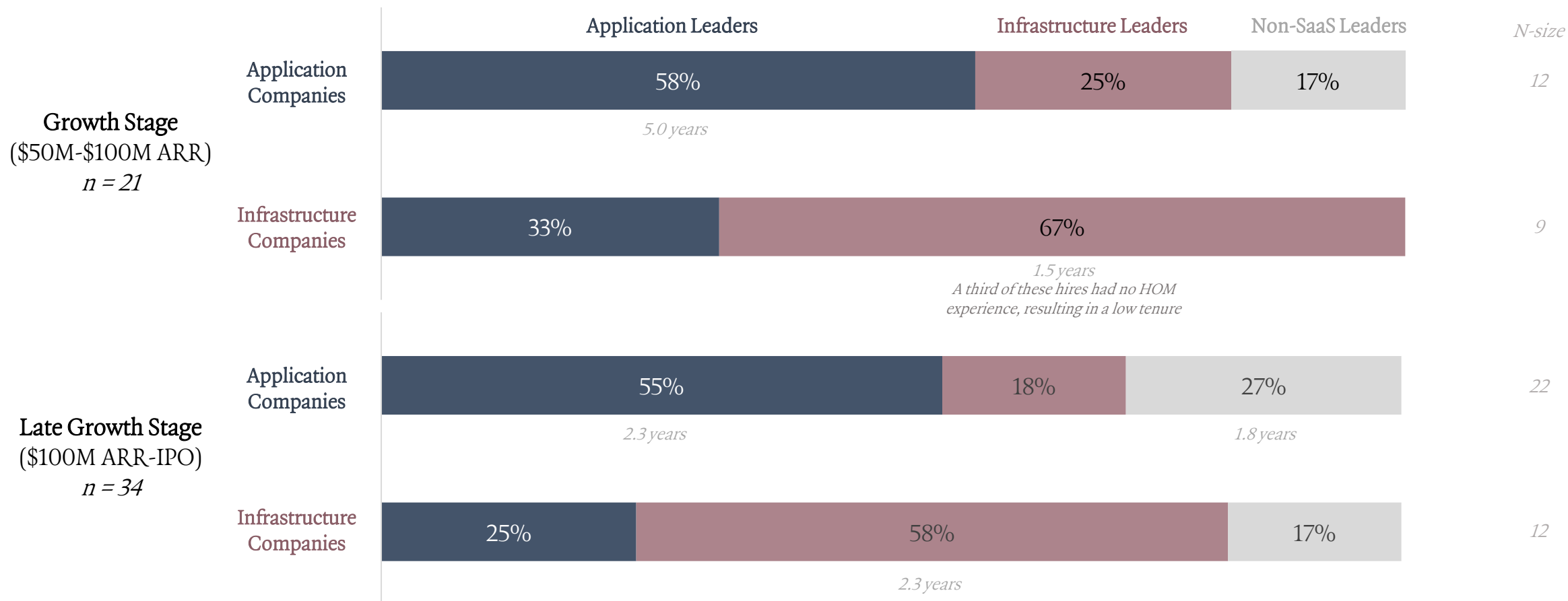
- See page 22 for list of PLG and SLG companies.
- Tenure reflected only for groups with a significant n-size.
- "HOM" is abbreviated for Head of Marketing.

## Sector | Applications vs. Infrastructure

Across both stages companies largely prioritized leaders with sector affinity, however \$100M+ ARR companies had slightly more variability.

### Marketing Leader's Sector Background vs. Company's Sector

*Median Tenure*



**Notes:**

- See page 22 for list of Application and Infrastructure companies.
- Tenure reflected only for groups with a significant n-size.
- "HOM" is abbreviated for Head of Marketing.

## Sub-Sector

Infrastructure companies hired leaders with more sector affinity compared to Application companies. However, for both sectors, having sector affinity resulted in a slightly longer tenure relative to those who were new to the sector.

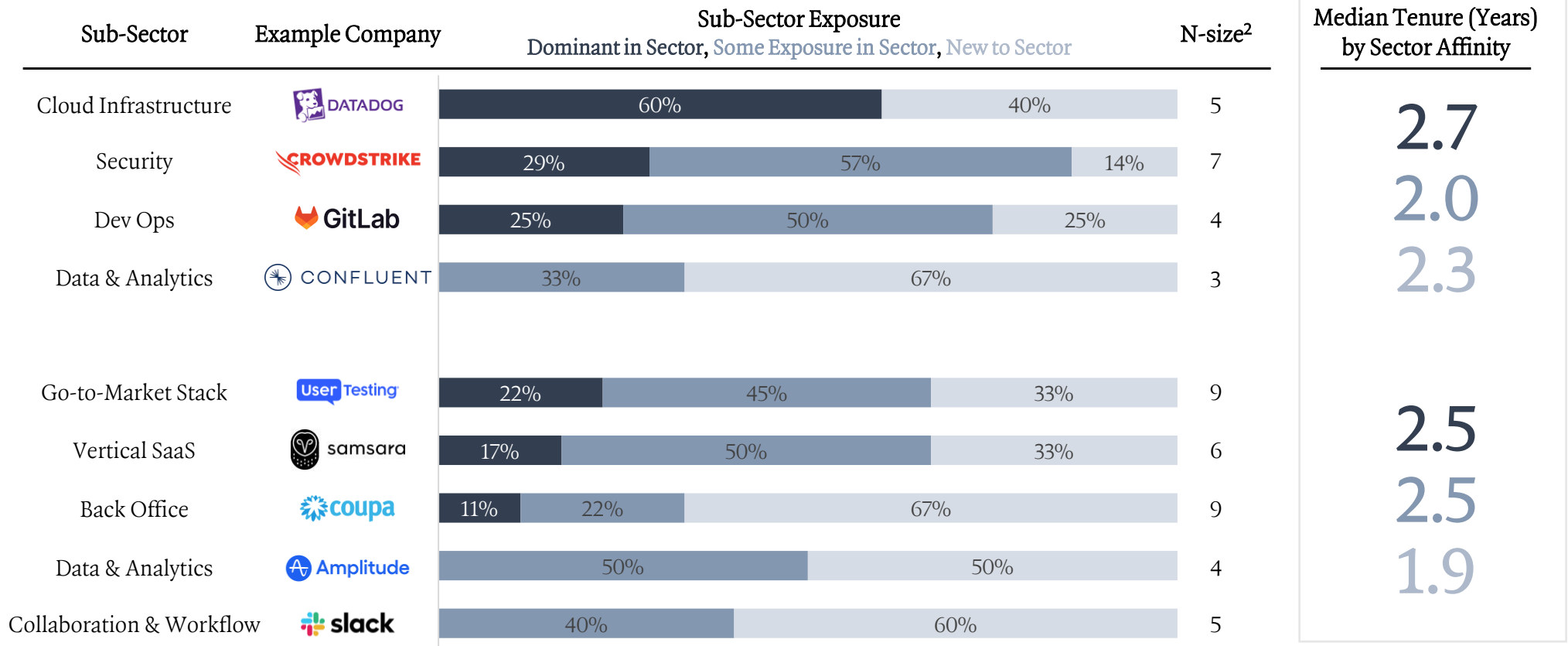


### Heads of Marketing by Prior Sub-Sector<sup>1</sup> Exposure

Growth + Late Growth Hires / n = 55

## Infrastructure Companies

## Application Companies



(1) See page 22 for list of Application and Infrastructure companies.

(2) Fintech, Education, and Vertical SaaS (Infrastructure) companies are included in the tenure medians but not broken out separately due to small n-size.

## Ready to hire?

When initiating a Head of Marketing search, your company profile (GTM Motion, Sector, and Growth Stage) will be instrumental in identifying the operational traits that can enhance the likelihood of a leader's success and longevity<sup>1</sup>.

Company Profile		Suggested Head of Marketing Profile			
GTM Motion	Sector	Marketer Type	GTM Motion	Sector	Leadership
PLG	Application	Revenue or Product	PLG or SLG	Application	CMO at public co. <u>OR</u> Head of Marketing at private co. + SVP/VP Marketing at public co.
	Infrastructure	Product	PLG or SLG	Infrastructure	CMO at public co. <u>OR</u> Head of Marketing at private co. + SVP/VP Marketing at public co.
SLG	Application	Product or Corporate	SLG	Application	CMO at public co. <u>OR</u> Head of Marketing at private co. + SVP/VP Marketing at public co.
	Infrastructure	Product	SLG	Infrastructure	CMO at public co. <u>OR</u> Head of Marketing at private co. + SVP/VP Marketing at public co.

(1) We acknowledge individuals depart from their roles for various reasons, though we generally believe longevity and ability to scale across multiple growth stages are key indicators of a successful leader.

## GTM Motion

### PLG Companies

Alteryx, Amplitude, Asana, BigCommerce, Bill.com, CloudFlare, Confluent, Datadog, DigitalOcean, DocuSign, Domo, Dropbox, Elastic, Fastly, Freshworks, Gitlab, HashiCorp, Jfrog, MongoDB, PagerDuty, Pluralsight, Sendgrid, Slack, Smartsheet, Snowflake, Sprout Social, Squarespace, Sumo Logic, Tenable, Toast, Twilio, Unity, UserTesting, Yext, Zoom

### SLG Companies

Anaplan, Apptio, Avalara, Blackline, Blend, Braze, C3.ai, Carbon Black, Cloudera, Coupa, CrowdStrike, Enfusion, ForeScout, Livongo, Marqeta, Medallia, Mulesoft, nCino, Nutanix, Okta, Procore, Samsara, SentinelOne, Sprinklr, Talend, UiPath, Zscaler, Zuora

## Sector & Sub-Sector

### Application Companies

Data & analytics  
Back Office  
Collaboration & Workflow  
Education  
Go-to-Market Stack  
Vertical SaaS

Alteryx, Amplitude, Anaplan, Apptio, Asana, Avalara, BigCommerce, Bill.com, Blackline, Braze, C3.ai, Coupa, DocuSign, Domo, Dropbox, Enfusion, Freshworks, Livongo, Medallia, nCino, Pluralsight, Procore, Samsara, Slack, Smartsheet, Sprinklr, Sprout Social, Squarespace, Talend, Toast, UiPath, UserTesting, Yext, Zoom, Zuora

### Infrastructure Companies

Data & analytics  
Fintech  
Cloud Infrastructure  
Dev Ops  
Security  
Vertical SaaS

Blend, Carbon Black, Cloudera, CloudFlare, Confluent, CrowdStrike, Datadog, DigitalOcean, Elastic, Fastly, ForeScout, Gitlab, HashiCorp, Jfrog, Marqeta, MongoDB, Mulesoft, Nutanix, Okta, PagerDuty, Sendgrid, SentinelOne, Snowflake, Sumo Logic, Tenable, Twilio, Unity, Zscaler

# Thank You!

## ICONIQ GROWTH LEADERSHIP ADVISORY



**Chris Hubbell**

General Partner



**Caroline Brand**

Leadership Analytics



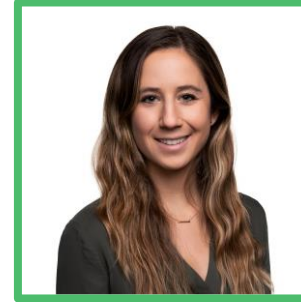
**Greg Brown**

Functional Lead – G&A



**Brad Delaplane**

Functional Lead – GTM



**Katherine Dunn**

Leadership Analytics



**Zack Osman**

Portfolio Compensation



**Adam Snyder**

Analyst

## ICONIQ GROWTH PORTFOLIO ANALYTICS



**Christine Edmonds**

General Partner &  
Head of Analytics



**Addison Anders**

Portfolio Analytics



**Claire Davis**

Portfolio Analytics



**Vivian Guo**

Portfolio Analytics



**Sam O'Neill**

Portfolio Data Manager

Please reach out to [LeadershipAdvisory@iconiqcapital.com](mailto:LeadershipAdvisory@iconiqcapital.com) with any questions

# Other Reports from ICONIQ Growth

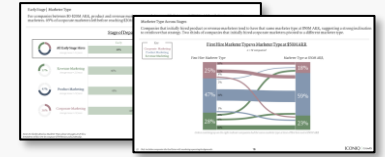
## Leadership Advisory Overview

- Overview of our core motions and ways that we can support your organization



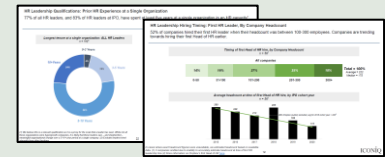
## Chief Marketing Officer Study (Two-Part Series)

- Quantitative analysis of the most prevalent – and most successful – operational backgrounds and qualifications for Heads of Marketing at private SaaS companies, segmented by Growth Stage
- *Data source: Proprietary dataset of >200 marketing leaders at 63 SaaS companies*



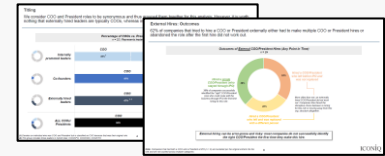
## Chief People Officer Study

- Quantitative analysis of the most prevalent – and most successful – operational backgrounds and qualifications for Heads of People at private SaaS companies, segmented by Growth Stage
- *Data source: Proprietary datasets of >100 People leaders at 59 companies; 2021 Cloud 100 People leaders*



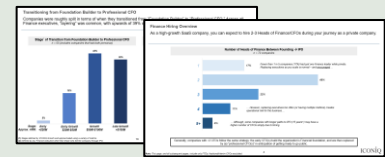
## President & Chief Operating Officer Study

- Examination of the advantages and challenges of having a COO and/or President role
- *Data source: Proprietary dataset of every past and current COO/President at 61 SaaS companies*



## Chief Financial Officer Study

- Quantitative analysis of the most prevalent – and most successful – operational backgrounds and qualifications for Heads of Finance at private SaaS companies, segmented by Growth Stage
- *Data source: Proprietary dataset of >170 finance leaders at 72 companies*



## Chief Revenue Officer Study (Two-Part Series)

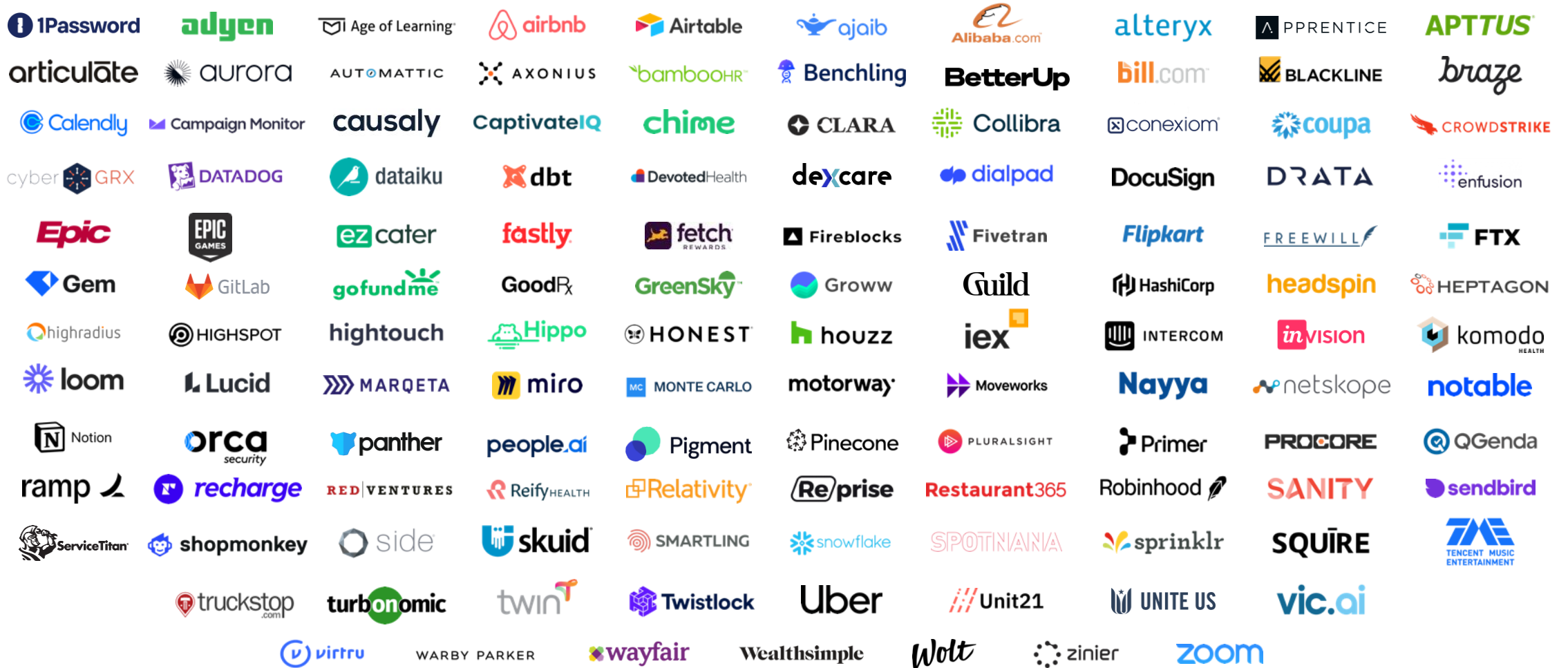
- Quantitative analysis of the most prevalent – and most successful – operational backgrounds and qualifications for Heads of Sales/CROs at private SaaS companies, segmented by Growth Stage
- *Data source: Proprietary dataset of >180 sales leaders at 72 companies*



Please reach out to [LeadershipAdvisory@iconiqcapital.com](mailto:LeadershipAdvisory@iconiqcapital.com) with any questions



# A global portfolio of category-defining businesses



• These companies represent the full list of companies that ICONIQ Growth has invested in since inception through ICONIQ Strategic Partners funds as of the date these materials were published (except those subject to confidentiality obligations). Trademarks are the property of their respective owners. None of the companies illustrated have endorsed or recommended the services of ICONIQ.

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