

2026 SALARY GUIDE UNITED KINGDOM



```
"Figma_Proficiency": 0.95,
"User_Research_Methodology": 0.80,
"Design_System_Fluency": 0.70
},
"Specialized_Weighting": {
    # High weight for AI/ML design familiarity
    "Experience_with_AI_Workflows": 0.92,
    # Weight for designing AI outputs (e.g., model feedback loops)
    "UX_for_Generative_AI_Interfaces": 0.88,
    # Weight for data-driven design decision-making
    "Data_Visualization_Competency": 0.75
},
"Search_Keywords": [
    "Human-AI Interaction",
    "Model-in-the-Loop",
    "Responsible AI Design",
    "AI Product Interface"
],

def specialized_design_talent(target_vector, talent_database):
    """
    Specialized talent search function.
    talent_database: dict for candidates matching the specialized criteria.
    """
    MIN_AI_UX_SCORE = 0.80

    # Filter candidates based on specialized criteria
    candidates = []
    for candidate in talent_database:
        # Base Skill Assessment (Ensures core 'UX' competency)
        base_score = calculate_base_fit(candidate, target_vector['Base_Skills'])

        # Specialized AI/UX Workflow Scoring
        ai_workflow_score = calculate_specialized_fit(
            candidate,
            target_vector['Specialized_Weighting']
        )

        # 3. Apply Threshold and Keyword Filter
        if ai_workflow_score > MIN_AI_UX_SCORE and \
            any(keyword in candidate['past_projects'] for keyword in keywords):

            # Final composite score calculation
            composite_score = (base_score * 0.40) + (ai_workflow_score * 0.60)

            # Add qualified candidate to results
            qualified_candidates.append({
                'id': candidate['id'],
                'composite_score': round(composite_score, 4),
                'ai_ux_fit': round(ai_workflow_score, 4)
            })

    return qualified_candidates
```

AQUENT

Funding the AI Promise

The 2026 compensation landscape presents a compelling paradox. On the surface, the market has stabilised, drawing a clear line under the volatility of the past few years. Overall Individual Contributor (IC) and Manager year-over-year salary growth in creative, marketing, and technology are still slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels, coming down to 4.2% in the United Kingdom—rates that track above **the OBR's overall projected salary increase of 3.3% in the U.K. in 2026.**

However, to focus solely on the overall average is to miss the fundamental, high-stakes story of 2026: a radical internal redistribution of capital.

The true challenge for every organisation is no longer how much to spend on labour, but where to spend it. Compensation has become one of the most critical tools to make the AI promise—the necessary, complex, and

costly transition to new, AI-driven business models—a reality.

With massive global capital flowing toward new AI infrastructure and specialised software (**projected to exceed £1.5 trillion by 2026 according to Gartner**), the business mandate is clear: secure the talent who can translate that investment into measurable enterprise value and competitive advantage. The findings in this report compel leaders to make surgical, skills-based decisions that will define their organisation's success for the next decade.

This selective investment is starkly visible in the data. While overall growth is steady, the money flows aggressively toward high-leverage digital execution. In the U.K., functions like Technology and Development (up 5.4%), Experience and Product Design (up 4.6%), and Performance, Campaigns and Analytics (up 4.6%)

led in salary growth. Conversely, the market is already pricing in the risk of automation exposure, with roles in Content, Copy and Social (up 3.6%) and Creative and Brand Design (up 3.9%) seeing comparatively lower salary growth.

This reallocation flows most intensely toward leadership, with U.K. Director+ year over year salary growth remaining robust at 5.6%. Senior leadership roles in Technology, Data and Analytics functions led the pack, with growth of 7.4% or higher year-over-year. Additionally, some of the largest salary jumps occur at the enterprise level (including Chief Data Officer at 8.8%, and Chief Technology Officer at 7.8%), confirming a premium investment in leaders who can manage the high-stakes complexity of cross-functional digital projects.

THE MANDATE

From titles to skill stacks

In 2026, compensation decisions are not merely about talent attraction and retention but about funding your organisation’s AI future. Companies must shift from funding static job titles to investing in dynamic skill stacks to translate their AI ambition into competitive advantage.

CALIBRATE PAY TO SKILLS AND VALUE

Concentrate compensation on high-leverage skills in Technology & Development, Experience & Product Design, and Performance, Campaigns & Analytics.

FUND THE AI ORCHESTRATION PIVOT

Strategic investment must shift toward emerging hybrid talent capable of managing AI systems, rather than funding general headcount.

MITIGATE PIPELINE RISK

The high executive premium and low entry-level growth are structurally breaking the internal talent model. Organisations must immediately fund and promote internal mobility to prevent a widening "experience gap."

LEVERAGE PAY TRANSPARENCY FOR RETENTION

Compensation transparency is a high-value, non-monetary anchor.

CONTENTS

06 U.K. SALARIES

07 INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR AND MANAGER ROLES

17 DIRECTOR-LEVEL AND ABOVE ROLES

21 EMERGING ROLES

23 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

24 SKILLS THAT POWER AI PERFORMANCE

25 REBUILDING FROM WITHIN

26 RETAIN WITH PAY TRANSPARENCY

HOW TO INTERPRET
THE DATA

This guide leverages data from the **Economic Research Institute** covering over 190 job titles.

Salary tables represent the overall market in the United Kingdom. To determine salaries in a specific location, multiply the country-level salary by the relevant city multiplier.

EXAMPLE: <u>ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE</u> IN <u>MANCHESTER</u>			
ROLE	U.K. MEDIAN SALARY	CITY MULTIPLIER	LOCATION SALARY
Account Executive	£37,113	x 0.91	= £33,773
CITY MULTIPLIERS			
Belfast	0.75	Edinburgh	0.97
Birmingham	0.93	Glasgow	0.9
Bristol	0.94	Leeds	0.89
Cardiff	0.91	Liverpool	0.92
		London	1.27
		Manchester	0.91
		Newcastle	0.87
		Southampton	0.96

U.K. SALARIES

```
        "Design_System_Leadership": 0.90,      # Core 'Design' Skill
        "Global_Branding_Strategy": 0.95,      # Core 'Branding' Skill
        "Full_Funnel_Marketing_Mastery": 0.88,  # Core 'Marketing' Skill
        "Campaign_Optimization_Expertise": 0.92, # Core 'Optimization' Skill
        "Executive_Strategy_Alignment": 0.94     # Core 'Strategy' Skill
    },
    "AI_Data_Mandate": {
        "Data_Analytics_Modeling_Skill": 0.94,
        "AI_Workflow_Integration_Experience": 0.96, # High weight
        "Generative_AI_Tool_Proficiency": 0.90
    },
    "Market_Adjustment_Factors": {
        "Boston": 1.10,
        "New_York_City": 1.15,
        "San_Francisco": 1.20,
        "Los_Angeles": 1.08,
        "Atlanta": 0.95,
        "Seattle": 1.12,
        "Denver": 1.03,
        "Chicago": 1.05
    }
}

# Target Markets List (from JSON)
target_markets = ["New_York_City", "San_Francisco", "Los_Angeles", "Chicago"]

# Candidate Skills (from JSON)
candidate_skills = {
    "Creative": "Human-AI Creative Workflow",
    "Marketing": "Marketing Modeling (MMM)",
    "Data": "Data Analytics Modeling Skill",
    "AI": "AI Workflow Integration Experience",
    "Design": "Design System Leadership",
    "Branding": "Global Branding Strategy",
    "Marketing": "Full Funnel Marketing Mastery",
    "Optimization": "Campaign Optimization Expertise",
    "Strategy": "Executive Strategy Alignment"
}

def search_multi_market_creative(target_vector, talent_database):
    """
    Searches talent database, filters by geographic market list, and
    returns qualified candidates based on composite score.
    """
    MIN_COMPOSITE_SCORE = 0.85

    final_qualified_candidates = []
    target_markets = target_vector['Target_Markets']

    for candidate in talent_database:
        # 1. Geographic Filter Check
        if candidate['location'] not in target_markets:
            continue # Skip candidates outside the defined target

        # 2. Core Competency Score (Design/Branding/Marketing/Strategy)
```



U.K. TRENDS

Individual Contributor and Manager Roles

TECH AND DIGITAL ROLES CONTINUE TO LEAD GROWTH

Year-over-year growth exceeded the national forecast in functions critical to digital results: Technology & Development (5.4%), Experience & Product Design (4.6%), and Performance, Campaigns & Analytics (4.6%). This hiring trend reflects an urgent focus on securing talent that can fuse technical capability with measurable commercial impact.

LOWER GROWTH AREAS POINT TO RISK

Comparatively lower growth in Content, Copy, & Social roles (3.6%) and Marketing & Communications (3.6%) confirms that content is increasingly commoditized from the ubiquity of AI. In the medium term, this will drive down the ROI and cause tactics to shift toward other, higher-value capabilities. Furthermore, the lower year-over-year growth suggests the market is already pricing in the risk of automation exposure as AI absorbs the foundational workload of these positions. **Content Marketing Institute's 2025 statistics** show that 89% of marketers now use AI, with 44% specifically using it to draft content—a clear shift where the “first pass” work traditionally assigned to more junior staff is now handled by algorithms.

MEDIAN SALARIES FOR MACHINE-LEARNING ENGINEERS ARE GROWING 6.5% YEAR OVER YEAR, VERSUS 3.0% FOR TECHNICAL WRITERS.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY				
General Manager	£82,775	£91,528	£102,908	+4.5%
Senior Account Manager	£61,295	£67,381	£75,293	+4.0%
Account Manager	£54,728	£60,162	£67,226	+4.0%
Account Executive	£28,159	£37,113	£50,039	+3.5%
Head of Strategy	£85,965	£94,500	£105,596	+3.8%
Strategist (Senior)	£54,971	£65,415	£85,040	+4.0%
Strategist (Mid)	£46,039	£54,787	£71,223	+4.0%
Strategist (Junior)	£39,938	£47,526	£61,784	+4.0%
CONTENT, COPY, AND SOCIAL				
Head of Content Marketing	£63,070	£84,511	£123,798	+3.8%
Content Marketing Manager	£38,846	£46,722	£61,135	+3.8%
Content Marketing Specialist	£35,348	£41,937	£54,306	+3.5%
Content Strategist	£41,240	£44,811	£49,454	+4.2%
Content Producer	£33,951	£40,062	£51,613	+3.5%
Head of Social	£87,157	£95,977	£108,186	+4.2%
Social Media Manager	£44,617	£53,115	£68,994	+3.8%
Community Manager	£35,561	£42,276	£54,909	+3.8%
Editor	£50,301	£54,974	£61,049	+3.5%

NOTE: Tables above represent country-level data. For salaries in a specific market, use the [city multiplier table](#) on page 5.

[†] Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
CONTENT, COPY, AND SOCIAL (continued)				
Copywriter (Senior)	£45,611	£49,276	£54,041	+3.5%
Copywriter (Mid)	£38,382	£41,466	£45,476	+3.5%
Copywriter (Junior)	£32,418	£35,023	£38,409	+3.5%
Technical Writer	£44,773	£48,095	£52,413	+3.0%
Proofreader	£27,970	£30,218	£33,139	+3.0%
CREATIVE AND BRAND DESIGN				
Head of Design	£82,347	£98,298	£128,072	+4.2%
Art Director (Senior)	£68,263	£73,749	£80,880	+4.2%
Art Director (Mid)	£58,520	£63,222	£69,336	+4.2%
Art Director (Junior)	£51,611	£55,758	£61,150	+4.2%
Creative Copywriter	£39,375	£50,053	£60,730	+3.5%
Graphic Designer (Senior)	£38,359	£41,681	£45,999	+3.5%
Graphic Designer (Mid)	£33,024	£35,884	£39,602	+3.5%
Graphic Designer (Junior)	£28,838	£31,335	£34,582	+3.5%
E-learning Designer	£37,550	£44,793	£58,302	+3.0%
Presentation Designer	£26,667	£34,774	£46,425	+3.0%
UI Designer (Senior)	£51,872	£56,364	£62,204	+4.0%
UI Designer (Mid)	£44,627	£48,492	£53,516	+4.0%
UI Designer (Junior)	£38,893	£42,260	£46,639	+4.0%

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[†] Percentage change year over year.

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
CREATIVE AND BRAND DESIGN (continued)				
Visual Designer	£47,897	£51,159	£55,399	+3.5%
Motion Graphics Designer	£40,389	£48,578	£63,564	+4.5%
Retoucher	£25,397	£26,913	£33,557	+3.0%
Video Editor	£32,673	£38,764	£50,246	+4.2%
Artworker	£27,945	£32,733	£41,827	+3.0%
Animator (3D)	£44,889	£53,402	£69,364	+4.8%
Prototyper (3D)	£44,025	£47,838	£52,794	+4.0%
Digital Designer	£41,103	£44,663	£49,290	+3.5%
Illustrator	£34,379	£37,142	£40,733	+3.5%
EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCT DESIGN				
Head of Product Design	£88,985	£107,771	£141,879	+5.2%
Product Design Lead	£66,822	£78,957	£101,926	+4.8%
Product Designer (Senior)	£41,099	£44,658	£49,284	+4.5%
Product Designer (Mid)	£35,194	£38,241	£42,203	+4.5%
Product Designer (Junior)	£30,700	£33,359	£36,815	+4.5%
Head of UX Design	£87,409	£99,122	£112,427	+5.2%
UX Design Lead	£67,796	£74,528	£83,279	+4.8%

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U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCT DESIGN (continued)				
UX Designer (Senior)	£41,099	£44,658	£49,284	+4.5%
UX Designer (Mid)	£35,194	£38,241	£42,203	+4.5%
UX Designer (Junior)	£30,700	£33,359	£36,815	+4.5%
UX Writer	£63,184	£68,655	£75,768	+4.0%
UX Strategist	£46,528	£67,011	£87,494	+5.0%
Service Design Lead	£47,605	£57,100	£74,559	+4.8%
Service Designer	£41,396	£49,652	£64,834	+4.5%
CX Design Lead	£47,164	£56,571	£73,869	+4.0%
CX Designer	£41,012	£49,192	£64,234	+4.0%
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS				
Head of Marketing	£73,596	£103,596	£186,280	+3.8%
Senior Marketing Manager	£58,033	£77,764	£87,447	+3.8%
Marketing Manager	£47,504	£63,656	£73,997	+3.8%
Marketing Specialist	£34,054	£37,217	£41,330	+3.5%
Marketing Coordinator	£31,766	£34,717	£38,553	+3.2%
Brand Manager (Senior)	£60,604	£65,852	£72,674	+4.0%
Brand Manager (Mid)	£51,846	£56,335	£62,172	+4.0%
Brand Manager (Junior)	£45,094	£48,999	£54,075	+4.0%
Loyalty Manager	£25,397	£29,258	£36,857	+4.0%

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[†] Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS (continued)				
Events Manager	£38,559	£42,142	£46,799	+3.5%
Events Specialist	£33,144	£36,223	£40,226	+3.0%
Head of Communications	£91,528	£111,316	£147,960	+3.5%
Communications Manager (Senior)	£62,773	£68,605	£76,187	+3.5%
Communications Manager (Mid)	£52,440	£57,312	£63,645	+3.5%
Communications Manager (Junior)	£43,950	£48,034	£53,342	+3.5%
Communications Specialist	£43,461	£47,498	£52,748	+3.0%
Head of Product Marketing	£83,635	£113,128	£147,258	+3.8%
Product Marketing Manager (Senior)	£66,488	£79,786	£103,722	+3.8%
Product Marketing Manager (Mid)	£56,155	£67,386	£87,602	+3.8%
Product Marketing Manager (Junior)	£48,956	£58,747	£76,371	+3.8%
Product Marketing Analyst	£47,172	£50,672	£55,222	+3.0%
eCommerce Manager	£39,627	£52,792	£71,619	+4.0%
Senior Media Planner / Buyer	£40,571	£44,211	£48,943	+3.5%
Media Planner / Buyer	£33,809	£36,843	£40,786	+3.5%
Assistant Media Planner / Buyer	£28,738	£31,316	£34,668	+3.2%

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[†] Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
OPERATIONS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT				
Head of Design Operations	£93,903	£112,093	£146,046	+4.5%
Design Operations Manager	£65,324	£77,978	£101,597	+4.2%
Head of Creative / Marketing Operations	£70,374	£85,290	£112,499	+4.5%
Marketing Operations Manager	£42,749	£56,515	£76,354	+3.0%
Marketing Operations Specialist	£37,306	£40,772	£45,278	+3.5%
Creative Operations Manager	£39,553	£51,141	£68,601	+4.2%
Creative Operations Specialist	£37,353	£44,281	£57,315	+3.0%
Studio Manager	£32,348	£38,431	£49,865	+4.2%
Traffic Manager	£32,782	£43,472	£54,162	+3.5%
Marketing Project Manager	£43,115	£51,537	£67,153	+9.3%
Design Project Manager	£39,757	£58,012	£76,267	+3.8%
Digital Project Manager	£34,294	£45,866	£62,351	+4.0%
Technical Project Manager (Senior)	£63,246	£69,935	£78,629	+4.0%
Technical Project Manager (Mid)	£53,765	£59,450	£66,842	+4.0%
Technical Project Manager (Junior)	£46,401	£51,307	£57,686	+4.0%
Executive Digital Producer	£64,617	£78,368	£103,470	+4.0%
Digital Producer	£46,951	£50,148	£54,305	+3.8%

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[†] Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY †
PERFORMANCE, CAMPAIGNS AND ANALYTICS				
Data and Analytics Manager	£56,162	£61,379	£68,162	+5.5%
Data Analyst	£33,534	£43,450	£53,165	+5.0%
Data Scientist (Senior)	£55,972	£61,171	£67,931	+5.8%
Data Scientist (Mid)	£46,676	£51,013	£56,650	+5.8%
Data Scientist (Junior)	£39,001	£42,625	£47,336	+5.8%
Customer Insights Analyst	£42,270	£46,197	£51,302	+5.0%
SEM Manager	£36,020	£40,644	£52,628	+4.4%
SEM Specialist	£32,609	£35,433	£39,104	+3.0%
Performance Marketing Manager (Senior)	£60,925	£71,282	£89,102	+4.7%
Performance Marketing Manager (Mid)	£51,886	£60,707	£75,883	+4.7%
Performance Marketing Manager (Junior)	£45,290	£52,990	£66,237	+4.7%
Performance Marketing Specialist	£34,054	£37,217	£41,330	+3.5%
SEO Manager (Senior)	£47,035	£51,405	£57,086	+4.4%
SEO Manager (Mid)	£40,324	£44,070	£48,940	+4.4%
SEO Manager (Junior)	£35,376	£38,663	£42,935	+4.4%
SEO Specialist	£39,648	£43,082	£47,545	+3.0%
Growth Marketing Manager	£48,319	£64,623	£87,849	+4.7%

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† Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
PERFORMANCE, CAMPAIGNS AND ANALYTICS (continued)				
Campaign Manager (Senior)	£57,161	£68,593	£89,171	+4.8%
Campaign Manager (Mid)	£48,252	£57,902	£75,273	+4.8%
Campaign Manager (Junior)	£42,030	£50,436	£65,567	+4.8%
CRM Marketing Manager	£45,437	£60,206	£81,426	+4.4%
Lead Generation Manager	£47,434	£56,934	£74,416	+3.5%
Digital Business Analyst	£50,700	£55,090	£60,798	+3.0%
TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT				
Front End Developer (Senior)	£49,159	£53,416	£58,949	+5.0%
Front End Developer (Mid)	£41,705	£45,317	£50,011	+5.0%
Front End Developer (Junior)	£35,975	£39,091	£43,141	+5.0%
Back End Developer (Senior)	£57,753	£62,754	£69,255	+5.2%
Back End Developer (Mid)	£46,839	£50,895	£56,168	+5.2%
Back End Developer (Junior)	£37,521	£40,770	£44,994	+5.2%
Full Stack Developer (Senior)	£54,448	£62,800	£71,153	+5.2%
Full Stack Developer (Mid)	£44,540	£48,396	£53,411	+5.2%
Full Stack Developer (Junior)	£38,471	£41,803	£46,133	+5.2%
Technical Lead	£73,291	£79,638	£87,888	+5.2%
Scrum Master	£53,997	£58,673	£64,752	+4.0%

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[†] Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
AND MANAGER ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)				
Head of DevOps	£114,762	£126,897	£142,673	+5.5%
DevOps Manager	£68,007	£75,198	£84,547	+5.0%
DevOps Specialist	£55,041	£60,155	£66,802	+5.0%
iOS Developer	£62,035	£67,407	£74,391	+5.0%
Android Developer	£43,394	£54,653	£65,912	+5.0%
Machine Learning Engineer	£63,391	£68,880	£76,016	+6.5%
Data Architect	£52,284	£60,974	£69,663	+6.2%

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[†] Percentage change year over year.



U.K. TRENDS

Director-Level and Above Roles

SENIOR LEADERSHIP IS CRITICAL

Senior leadership pay remains a retention priority, confirming that the strategic investment flows to the top tier. Director+ year-over-year growth remains robust at 5.6%, significantly higher than the growth seen at the IC and Manager levels. This commitment to senior roles is validated by **Accenture's 2025 "Europe's AI reckoning" report**, which found that strong leadership support and a top-down strategy are essential to prevent AI adoption from stalling among front-line workers and to achieve meaningful enterprisewide transformation.

SALARY BUDGETS FOLLOW DIGITAL AMBITION

The largest salary jump occurs at the enterprise level, demonstrating a premium investment in leaders who can manage the high-stakes complexity of multi-year, cross-functional digital projects. **According to MIT research**, large companies that are "future-ready" having effectively blended technology investment and organisational change outperform less mature competitors with significantly higher financial performance. As a result, the market places a premium on securing leaders (Director+) who possess the rare combination of technical acumen, strategic alignment, and the ability to drive massive-scale transformation.

MEDIAN BASE SALARIES ARE 28.2% HIGHER AT GLOBAL ORGANISATIONS COMPARED TO THE UK NATIONAL AVERAGE.

U.K. DATA

DIRECTOR-LEVEL
AND ABOVE ROLES

ROLE	SMALL* Local Businesses	MEDIUM* National Businesses	LARGE Global Businesses	% Δ YOY †
ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY				
Group Account Director	£74,038	£97,707	£126,412	+3.8%
Senior Account Director	£63,698	£81,904	£103,008	+3.5%
Account Director	£53,082	£68,253	£85,840	+3.4%
CONTENT, COPY, AND SOCIAL				
Content Marketing Director	£44,482	£63,136	£86,614	+3.7%
Social Media Director	£46,101	£67,030	£83,672	+3.6%
CREATIVE AND BRAND DESIGN				
Chief Creative Officer (CCO)	£92,353	£121,082	£153,224	+4.3%
Executive Creative Director	£79,379	£100,316	£124,754	+4.4%
Associate Creative Director	£53,978	£68,215	£84,833	+4.8%
Creative Director	£63,503	£80,253	£99,803	+4.7%
Chief Design Officer (CDO)	£86,668	£112,923	£143,350	+4.2%
Design Director	£69,322	£90,323	£114,661	+4.6%

NOTE: Tables above represent country-level data. For salaries in a specific market, use the [city multiplier table](#) on page 5.

* 50th percentile reported at each company size.
† Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

DIRECTOR-LEVEL
AND ABOVE ROLES

ROLE	SMALL* Local Businesses	MEDIUM* National Businesses	LARGE Global Businesses	% Δ YOY †
EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCT DESIGN				
Chief Customer Officer (CCO)	£101,523	£131,929	£168,697	+5.7%
Chief Experience Officer (CXO)	£85,170	£113,055	£146,096	+5.6%
Chief Product Officer (CPO)	£95,357	£129,155	£188,166	+6.4%
Product Design Director	£63,570	£82,447	£104,275	+5.5%
UX Design Director	£61,868	£79,749	£100,719	+5.4%
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS				
Chief Brand Officer (CBO)	£95,590	£125,700	£159,950	+4.5%
Chief Revenue Officer (CRO)	£96,958	£128,254	£165,278	+6.8%
Chief Commercial Officer (CCO)	£91,227	£119,484	£151,672	+6.5%
Chief Communications Officer (CCO)	£99,586	£129,698	£165,764	+3.9%
Communications Director	£64,785	£83,346	£105,185	+4.0%
Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)	£92,370	£138,795	£181,651	+5.0%
Marketing Director	£68,727	£88,769	£110,977	+5.2%
Chief Digital Officer (CDO)	£95,862	£129,120	£173,993	+5.8%
Product Marketing Director	£62,029	£89,597	£127,624	+6.1%
OPERATIONS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT				
Chief Operations Officer (COO)	£131,735	£188,213	£291,967	+6.7%
Marketing Operations Director	£50,443	£65,339	£82,476	+6.2%

NOTE: Tables above represent country-level data. For salaries in a specific market, use the [city multiplier table](#) on page 5.

* 50th percentile reported at each company size.

† Percentage change year over year.

U.K. DATA

DIRECTOR-LEVEL
AND ABOVE ROLES

ROLE	SMALL* Local Businesses	MEDIUM* National Businesses	LARGE Global Businesses	% Δ YOY †
PERFORMANCE, CAMPAIGNS AND ANALYTICS				
Chief Data Officer (CDO)	£97,929	£129,270	£163,516	+8.8%
Head of Data and Analytics	£76,114	£99,519	£125,675	+8.4%
TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT				
Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	£94,568	£126,945	£169,963	+7.8%
Chief Information Officer (CIO)	£106,161	£142,992	£192,686	+7.2%
Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)	£90,486	£118,132	£152,226	+8.5%
Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer (CAIO)	£112,358	£145,394	£178,430	+8.8%
Chief Innovation Officer (CInO)	£77,593	£101,689	£128,686	+6.0%
VP, DevOps	£82,628	£99,487	£109,572	+7.5%

NOTE: Tables above represent country-level data. For salaries in a specific market, use the [city multiplier table](#) on page 5.

* 50th percentile reported at each company size.
† Percentage change year over year.



U.K. TRENDS

Emerging Roles

EMBRACING THE AI FUTURE

This section details compensation for new roles with growing demand focused on generative AI, machine learning, and advanced data orchestration that build on the more traditional data analytics and tech skill sets that are always in demand. These positions represent the critical frontier where organisations are investing to drive business advantage in 2026. The fundamental shift is from task execution to systemic orchestration and governance. Since AI can automate content and design execution, the focus will shift to professionals who can manage and leverage intelligent systems to ensure ethical output, brand compliance, and continuous optimisation.

NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING ENGINEERS SAW THE HIGHEST YEAR-OVER-YEAR GROWTH AT 8.4%.

EMERGING ROLES

ROLE	LOW 25 th Percentile	MEDIAN 50 th Percentile	HIGH 75 th Percentile	% Δ YOY [†]
AI Content Moderator / Auditor	£32,683	£42,410	£52,136	+7.2%
Character Artist (3D)	£43,631	£52,154	£67,958	+4.8%
Concept Artist (3D)	£34,330	£40,646	£52,528	+4.8%
Technical Artist (3D)	£43,049	£51,213	£66,521	+6.0%
Creative Technologist	£33,363	£39,422	£50,890	+5.5%
UX Researcher (Senior)	£61,011	£66,294	£73,162	+4.5%
UX Researcher (Mid)	£52,223	£56,745	£62,624	+4.5%
UX Researcher (Junior)	£45,193	£49,106	£54,194	+4.5%
AI Conversation Designer	£44,839	£57,340	£69,841	+7.0%
AI Product Manager	£48,960	£66,547	£84,134	+4.6%
Prompt Engineer	£40,301	£55,457	£70,613	+6.5%
Natural Language Processing Engineer	£67,520	£73,793	£81,948	+8.4%
AR / VR / XR Engineer	£47,938	£56,951	£73,897	+3.8%
Blockchain Engineer	£63,257	£75,822	£99,001	+5.2%
AI Automation Engineer	£51,311	£61,250	£79,802	+4.5%

NOTE: Tables above represent country-level data. For salaries in a specific market, use the [city multiplier table](#) on page 5.

[†] Percentage change year over year.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

```
    "Strategic_Branding_Mastery": 0.95,  
    "Integrated_Campaign_Design": 0.90,  
    "Design_System_Governance": 0.85  
  },  
  "Generative_AI_Fluency": {  
    # High weight for understanding and applying AI across media  
    "Prompt_Engineering_for_Creative_Output": 0.98,  
    # Specialized knowledge of 'Image' and 'Video' models  
    "Proficiency_in_Image_Video_Generative_Models": 0.97,  
    "Experience_with_Text_Based_Generative_AI": 0.95,  
    # Focus on motion graphics/3D 'animation'  
    "Familiarity_with_Generative_Animation_Tools": 0.92  
  },  
  "AI_Workflow_Integration": {  
    "AI_Powered_Optimization_Skills": 0.90,  
    "Creative_Automation_Experience": 0.94,  
    "Responsible_AI_Creative_Practice": 0.88  
  },  
  "Specialized_Areas": [  
    "Digital_Marketing_Optimization",  
    "Data_Driven_Creative_Decision_Making",  
    "Content_Optimization (DCO)",  
    "Synthetic Media Production"  
  ],  
  "Recommendations": calculate_recommendations(  
    talent_profile,  
    creative_foundation  
  ),  
  "Summary": {  
    # 1. Core Creative Score (Weight: 40%)  
    creative_fit = calculate_weighted_fit(  
      talent_profile,  
      target_vector['Core_Creative_Competencies']  
    )  
    # 2. Generative AI Fluency Score (Weight: 45%) - Highest weight  
    genai_fluency_fit = calculate_weighted_fit(  
      talent_profile,  
      target_vector['Generative_AI_Fluency']  
    )  
    # 3. AI Workflow Integration Score (Weight: 15%)  
    workflow_fit = calculate_weighted_fit(  
      talent_profile,  
      target_vector['AI_Workflow_Integration']  
    )  
  }
```

RECOMMENDATION #1

Prioritise pay for skills that power AI performance

The shift from rigid job titles to a "skills, not jobs" model is now nonnegotiable for competitive advantage. Compensation decisions must directly reflect the market value of the specific skill stacks required to execute core digital and AI strategy.

DEFINE THE HIGH-LEVERAGE SKILLS

Concentrate compensation resources on the functional areas that generate the highest commercial impact (Technology and Development, Experience and Product Design, and Performance, Campaigns and Analytics). Our data shows the growth premium for these specialised roles directly enables innovation, improves efficiency, and drives measurable revenue growth.

ANCHOR COMPENSATION TO SKILL DEPTH

Audit job descriptions and pay scales to clearly articulate the high-value skills required (e.g., Data Engineering, AI Governance). This strategy, which moves pay scales away from rigid organisational hierarchy and toward verifiable niche capabilities, is strongly validated by **WorldatWork research**, which highlights that rewarding workers based on their competencies helps close skill gaps and ensures organisations have the adaptability to remain competitive by incentivizing continuous upskilling.

FUND THE AI ORCHESTRATION PIVOT

Strategic investment must shift directly toward emerging hybrid talent capable of managing AI systems, rather than funding general headcount. This is critical because **research by BCG** shows that, "The next horizon is agent-led orchestration, where AI takes on end-to-end execution and humans steer strategy and oversight," indicating a fundamental re-prioritisation of talent investment.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Focus on rebuilding the talent pipeline from within

The combination of low salary growth in entry-level roles and high executive premiums creates a structural risk to the mid-level talent pipeline. If this continues, it will increasingly contribute to a shortage of qualified internal candidates for mid-level positions. By mobilizing existing high-potential talent and restoring internal career progression, businesses can turn the tides before core digital initiatives are jeopardised.

UPSKILL AND RESKILL JUNIOR TALENT

According to [Deloitte's 2025 Global Human Capital Trends Report](#), AI is automating foundational tasks that once served as the primary training ground for early career talent. This has led to 66% of managers reporting that recent hires are unprepared. Given this loss of traditional on-the-job training, HR must formalise and fund high-impact, AI-integrated apprenticeship and mentorship programs to bridge the widening experience gap. The focus must be on hands-on, cross-functional training that builds proficiency in intelligent systems, platform architecture, and essential soft skills required for future management and leadership roles.

FUND AND PROMOTE INTERNAL MOBILITY

HR and functional leaders must proactively define and fund tiered career paths (e.g., Production Artist to UI Designer) that demonstrate a clear, financially compelling reason for internal movement. Combating this risk through transparency is critical, as [Workday's 2025 Global Research](#) noted that promotions are down in 10 of 11 industries and internal hiring has fallen 8%, signifying that existing progression paths are failing to retain high-potential talent. This is particularly concerning where countless other sources cite hiring intentions remaining at historically weak levels going into 2026—a dangerous combination likely to lead to dissatisfaction, burnout and - if not addressed - potentially drive skilled talent to explore alternative career paths.

LINK COMPENSATION TO TECHNICAL COMPETENCY

Connect professional development budgets and performance reviews directly to the acquisition of new AI, data literacy, and platform-specific certifications. This ensures compensation growth is explicitly tied to advanced technical capability, confirming a strategic and necessary “build, don’t buy” strategy for future leaders who must be fluent in leveraging intelligent systems.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Retain top performers with pay transparency

Compensation transparency is no longer simply a compliance issue; it is a high-value, non-monetary anchor organisations can deploy to win and retain skilled talent.

BUILD TRUST AS A RETENTION MULTIPLIER

View transparency as a critical non-monetary tool for mitigating retention risk when salary budgets are constrained. [Payscale's 2025 Fair Pay Impact Report](#) reveals that at organisations with high pay transparency, employees are 60% less likely to seek a new job, confirming its immense power in building employee trust and commitment in an era of wage stabilisation.

EMPOWER MANAGERS FOR PAY CONVERSATIONS

HR must train and equip all functional leaders with objective market data and confidence to discuss pay and explain raises, especially in high-growth roles. This managerial capability is proven to manage employee expectations, build credibility, and significantly reduce regrettable attrition by mitigating distrust caused by perceived unfairness.

GUARD AGAINST INTERNAL DISPARITY

Proactively audit pay distributions in high-growth areas to prevent wide, unjustified salary disparities between new hires and long-tenured employees (pay compression). This is a vital internal equity check, ensuring that the urgency of external hiring does not inadvertently erode the morale and commitment of your core, high-performing incumbent talent.

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```
        "Figma_Proficiency": 0.95,
        "User_Research_Methodology": 0.80,
        "Design_System_Fluency": 0.70
    },
    "Specialized_Weighting": {
        # High weight for AI/ML design familiarity
        "Experience_with_AI_Workflows": 0.92,
        # Weight for designing AI outputs (e.g., model feedback loops)
        "UX_for_Generative_AI_Interfaces": 0.88,
        # AI-driven design decision-making tendency
        "AI_Design_Decision_Making_Tendency": 0.75
    }
}

def calculate_ai_workflow_score(candidate):
    """Calculate AI workflow score based on specialized weighting"""
    base_score = calculate_base_score(candidate)
    ai_workflow_score = calculate_ai_workflow_score(candidate)
    composite_score = (base_score * 0.40) + (ai_workflow_score * 0.60)

    return composite_score

def filter_candidates(target_vector, talent_database):
    """Filter candidates matching the specialized AI workflow requirements"""
    qualified_candidates = []

    for candidate in talent_database:
        # Ensure core 'UX' competency
        if not candidate['UX_Score'] > 0.80:
            continue

        # Calculate specialized fit
        specialized_fit = calculate_specialized_fit(
            candidate, target_vector['Specialized_Weighting']
        )

        # Keyword Filter
        if not candidate['past_projects'] for keyword in target_vector['Keywords']:
            if keyword not in candidate['past_projects']:
                continue

        # Final composite score calculation
        composite_score = (base_score * 0.40) + (ai_workflow_score * 0.60)

        qualified_candidates.append({
            'id': candidate['id'],
            'composite_score': round(composite_score, 4),
            'ai_workflow_fit': round(ai_workflow_score, 4)
        })

    return qualified_candidates
```