



Do You Need a Chief Sales Officer?

So, what is a Chief Sales Officer? The Chief Sales Officer or CSO oversees all teams and processes related to Sales generation within an organization. This executive position ensures sales and marketing alignment, identifies opportunities for long-term sales growth and maximizes profitability.

The CSO enables collaboration among the teams listed below towards a unified goal of Sales generation over a sustained period of time:

- Sales, sales enablement, and sales operations
- Marketing
- Customer support and customer experience
- Account management
- Product management

While each of these departments has its own objectives, processes, and hierarchies, the CSO maintains a big picture view of the organization. Their cross-functional knowledge allows them to identify and take on previously unknown strategies, channels, and opportunities.

What does a Chief Sales Officer do?

CSO sales responsibilities vary greatly between organizations and industries but can be summarized as follows:

- **Communicate & integrate:** Drive growth across all revenue-related functions by working with department leaders, executives and key stakeholders while extracting value from teams, relationships, and partnerships.
- **Be forward-thinking:** Anticipate the future of the market to maximize innovation and craft strategy accordingly.
- **Define talent:** Define the type of talent needed currently and for the future of the organization.
- **Examine data & KPIs:** Use data to establish practical KPIs and deliverables while making informed decisions for long-term growth.
- **Consider technology:** Utilize the best sales tools and technologies available.



CSO vs VP of Sales - What's the difference?

Some question whether the CSO is simply a Head of Sales wearing another hat. Others may think it's just a modern name for the position as the head of the sales team. However, there are several clear differences between a CSO and a VP of Sales, primarily related to scope, length of outlook and number of positions within the organization:

Scope: A VP of Sales has one priority - sales. A CSO, on the other hand, considers sales as just one component of the machine that drives revenue.

Length of business outlook: Sales departments usually drive towards short-term objectives, such as quarterly goals. CSOs look at goals 18 months or two years into the future and consider what's happening in the market and what needs to be done now to reach those long-term objectives.

Number of positions: An organization will typically only have one Chief Sales Officer, while it may have multiple VPs of Sales, depending on company size, geographies, etc.

Will the CSO role replace the VP of Sales?

Generally speaking, this role will not replace the VP of Sales. Though in a smaller organization, should companies choose to hire a for this role, that individual may end up doing both jobs. Structurally, it makes sense for the CSO to drive overall **strategy** and the **go-to-market processes** while those at the VP-level run their respective departments.

Six characteristics to consider when hiring a CSO candidate

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the list of all the characteristics an ideal CSO should have. Instead, I recommend focusing on the following six attributes:

1. **Grounded and curious:** Recognition of the marketplace and the environment one's organization operates within and curiosity to question and explore new opportunities.
2. **Customer-centric:** Understanding of what will enable your customers to achieve their business results, with or without your product.
3. **Strategic:** Cross-functional strategy skills, understanding of business models, revenue models, customer service models, etc.
4. **Data-driven:** Significant analytical skills and enough comfort with the data to make informed decisions and reach goals.



5. **Visionary:** The ability to own the entire life cycle of revenue generation within an organization.
6. **Leadership:** Communication and interpersonal skills to understand different points of view, establish credibility within different departments and align siloed groups of people.

When should organizations consider hiring a CSO?

An organization should consider hiring a CSO position if they resonate with one or more of these situations:

- Currently growing and scaling
- Recently merged two organizations and have two completely different sales ecosystems
- Selling to completely different customers, even if their products are similar
- Looking to establish complex relationships with different parties in their sales ecosystem beyond classic selling.