

MARKET INSIGHTS 2026

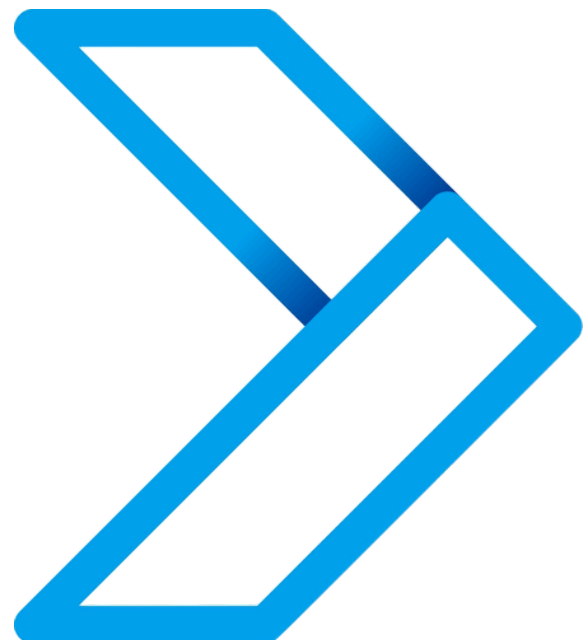
INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's hiring landscape in 2025 revealed a decisive shift in what drives successful talent acquisition. Outcomes were shaped less by market conditions and more by organisational clarity, leadership alignment, and disciplined execution. Companies that moved with precision and conviction secured talent; those that hesitated, prolonged processes, or relied solely on brand strength struggled to convert strong candidates.

This report consolidates hiring signals observed across industries and role families into practical implications for organisations preparing for 2026. It highlights how hiring strategy, process design, leadership behaviour, employer value propositions, and compensation structures are now evaluated through a sharper, more pragmatic candidate lens.

As the market becomes increasingly selective, hiring success depends not on hiring volume but on decision quality, mandate clarity, and execution speed. Organisations that align leadership early, design purposeful hiring processes, and communicate roles with transparency will continue to access deeper talent pools and convert stronger candidates.

The insights that follow translate 2025 hiring outcomes into actionable guidance for leaders seeking to strengthen hiring performance in 2026 and beyond.



Consolidated Implications from Malaysia Hiring Outcomes in 2025

The evidence from 2025 points to a fundamental shift in what determines hiring success in Malaysia. Outcomes were shaped less by market conditions and more by **internal clarity, leadership behaviour, and execution discipline**. The implications below consolidate observed signals into practical guidance for 2026.

	What we saw in 2025	What this means for you
Hiring Strategy: Precision Over Volume	Hiring did not recover evenly. Volume hiring slowed, while critical capability hiring remained active. Organisations that attempted to keep options open underperformed.	Hiring plans for 2026 must be prioritised rather than optimistic. Fewer roles should be approved, but each must carry clear business justification. Success increasingly depends on why a role exists, not how many roles are open.
Process Design Is Now a Competitive Advantage	Median effective time to hire sat between six and eight weeks. Processes extending beyond nine to ten weeks consistently resulted in offer drop-off, increased counter-offer vulnerability, and erosion of candidate confidence.	Hiring must be treated as a governed business process. Interview stages should be pre-aligned and purposeful. Final validation should confirm conviction rather than introduce delay.
Decision Quality Matters More Than Employer Brand	Strong employer brands still lost candidates, while lesser-known organisations succeeded through clarity and decisiveness. Decision hesitation correlated directly with offer rejection.	Speed and conviction now signal organisational health to candidates. Leaders must commit earlier and more visibly.



	What we saw in 2025	What this means for you
EVP Is Tested, Not Taken at Face Value	Candidates tested EVP claims against interview consistency, decision speed, senior leader presence, and transparency around trade-offs.	EVP must be demonstrated through behaviour, not messaging. Honest framing outperforms polished but abstract positioning.
Leadership Credibility Is a Primary Hiring Lever	Candidates accepted roles because of leaders. Ambiguity at C-suite or C-1 level stalled otherwise viable hires.	Leaders must be visible and aligned during hiring. Board and executive alignment should occur before going to market.
Candidate Behaviour Has Shifted	Candidates were more direct, less tolerant of opaque processes, and more sensitive to decision speed. Risk tolerance varied by seniority.	Expect more probing and fewer passive candidates. Mid-level talent remains counter-offer sensitive, while senior leaders prioritise mandate clarity.
Pay Matters , But Less Than Many Assume	Salary pressure was selective. Variable pay credibility mattered more than headline base. Benefits influenced decisions only when role clarity already existed.	Compensation cannot compensate for weak role definition or slow decisions. Clear accountability increases perceived offer value.



HIRING FRICTION BY ROLE FAMILY

Observed execution difficulty in Malaysia during 2025

Role Family	Hiring Friction
Technology & Engineering	Medium-High
Product & Data	Medium
Marketing & Growth	Medium
Commercial, Sales & Operations	Medium
Finance & Shared Services	Low-Medium
C-suite & C-1 Leadership	High

Low = straightforward hires

Medium = effort required

High = difficult or fragile hires

Key insight

Friction was driven more by **decision behaviour** than talent scarcity. Strong shortlists did not translate into hires when leadership alignment, decision speed, or role clarity broke down.



WHAT THE FRICTION RATINGS MEAN IN PRACTICE

Technology & Engineering (Medium-High)

Hiring is fragile when technical validation is prolonged or when roadmap and stack realities are unclear. Clear business case and early technical alignment materially improves conversion.

Product & Data (Medium)

Conversion is strongest when ownership and decision rights are defined. Ambiguity between product, tech, and commercial stakeholders increases drop-off late-stage.

Marketing & Growth (Medium)

Hiring works best when success metrics and operating freedom are explicit. Misalignment on budgets, measurement frameworks, or mandate causes avoidable failure.

Commercial, Sales & Operations (Medium)

Friction is usually driven by unclear ownership, territory, or incentive credibility rather than lack of candidates. Fast commitment wins.

Finance & Shared Services (Low-Medium)

Generally more stable. Friction appears when hiring teams over-specify backgrounds or remain undecided between strategic leadership and hands-on execution.

C-suite & C-1 Leadership (High)

The highest friction category. Board misalignment, shifting goalposts, and delayed commitment are the most common reasons viable leaders disengage.



PAY MIX, BENEFITS & FLEXIBILITY

How candidates in Malaysia assessed the “real offer” in 2025 and what drives acceptance and retention in 2026

In 2025, candidates increasingly evaluated offers through **total reward realism**, not base salary alone. Incentives, benefits and flexibility were assessed for credibility, clarity and consistency. Variable pay remains widely used in Malaysia, making incentive design a decisive factor in offer acceptance and retention.

Short-Term Incentives (STI)

STI was the most trusted incentive where metrics were measurable and within the individual's control. It was discounted when framed as discretionary or loosely defined.

In **tech and product environments**, STI worked best when tied to delivery outcomes such as growth or platform stability. In **telco and FMCG**, it was most persuasive when linked to commercial execution and margin. **Banking** candidates viewed STI as credible but scrutinised calibration and deferral, while **manufacturing** candidates responded to productivity, quality or safety-linked metrics.

Across business types, **start-ups** could offer lighter STI only where scope and growth were clear, **SMEs** performed better with simple, consistently paid STI, and **corporates** were expected to offer STI as standard.

Mid-Term Incentives (MTI)

MTI influenced decisions where delivery spanned multiple cycles. It worked when time-bound, outcome-linked and documented, particularly for transformation leaders and senior commercial roles.

Long-Term Incentives (LTI)

LTI mattered mainly at senior levels when valuation and governance were clear. **Start-up equity** was heavily tested for realism and exit visibility, **SMEs** benefited from simple retention-based LTIs, and **corporates** were expected to define success over a 12–24-month horizon.



BENEFITS, PERKS & FLEXIBILITY

Medical coverage was one of the most scrutinised offer components. **Outpatient coverage** shaped daily experience, **inpatient coverage** signalled employer maturity, and **family coverage** strongly influenced mid-senior hires. Allowances reduced negotiation friction but rarely secured hires alone.

Hybrid work became a baseline expectation, but candidates assessed the **reality**, not the policy. Flexibility strengthened offers when applied consistently and undermined EVP credibility when it was not.

Pay mix will not compensate for weak role definition or slow decision-making. Incentives, benefits and flexibility drive outcomes only when they are **clear, measurable and believable**.

FINAL IMPLICATIONS FOR 2026

Hiring success in Malaysia will be determined by clarity of intent, leadership decision quality, and disciplined execution, not louder branding or higher salaries. Organisations that align early, decide clearly, and execute quickly will access deeper talent pools and convert stronger candidates in a more selective market.



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

TECHNOLOGY

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
CTO				36,750 - 47,250	47,250 +
Head of Engineering				26,250 - 31,500	
Software Developer	4,725 - 8,925	8,925 - 13,125	13,125 - 17,325		
QA Engineer		6,930 - 11,550	11,550 - 15,525		
Automation Engineer		6,930 - 11,550	11,550 - 15,525		

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist
i.e. no CTO with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

DATA

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Chief Digital/Data					47,250 +
Head of Data Science				23,100 – 28,875	28,875 +
Data Engineer		10,500 – 13,125	13,125 – 18,900		
Data Scientist		10,500 – 13,125	13,125 – 18,900		

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist i.e. no Chief Digital/Data with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

MARKETING

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Chief Marketing Officer					40,425 – 51,975
Head of Marketing			15,750 – 23,100	23,100 – 28,875	
Digital Marketing	6,930 – 11,550	11,550 – 17,325			
Performance /SEO		6,930 – 11,550	11,550 – 17,325		
Social Media Expert		6,930 – 11,550			

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist i.e. no Head of Marketing with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

FINANCE

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Chief Financial Officer					46,200 – 69,300
VP/Head of Finance				28,875 – 40,425	
Financial Controller			17,325 – 23,100		
Junior Accountant	3,000 - 4,000	4,000 - 5,500			
Accounts Executive	2,700 - 3,800	3,800 - 5,000	5,000 - 6,500		
Junior Financial Analyst	2,900 - 3,500	3,500 - 4,500			
Financial Analyst		4,000 - 5,500	5,500 - 7,000		
Accounts Payable Specialist	3,000 - 4,100	4,100 - 5,000	5,000 - 6,000		

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist i.e. no Chief Finance Officer with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

FINANCE

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Accounts Receivable Specialist	3,000 - 4,100	4,100 - 5,000	5,000 - 6,000		
Tax Assistant / Junior Tax Accountant	2,900 - 3,800	3,800 - 5,000			
Tax Accountant		4,300 - 5,500	5,500 - 7,500		
Senior Accountant		4,500 - 5,800	5,800 - 7,500		
FP&A Analyst		4,500 - 6,000	6,000 - 8,500		
Finance Executive	3,200 - 4,500	4,500 - 6,000	6,000 - 8,000		
Treasury Analyst		4,000 - 5,500	5,500 - 7,500		
Cost Accountant	3,500 - 4,500	4,500 - 6,000	6,000 - 8,000		
Finance Manager			8,000 - 12,000		



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

HUMAN RESOURCES

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Head of People/CHRO					34,650 – 57,750
TA Manager				17,325 – 23,100	23,100 – 34,650
HR Manager/HRBP			13,860 – 20,790	20,790 – 28,875	
HR Executive		5,775 – 9,240	11,550 – 17,325		
Talent Acquisition		5,775 – 9,240			

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist i.e. no Head of People with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

MARTECH

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
MarTech Operations		6,300 – 11,550	11,550 – 15,225	15,225 – 18,900	18,900 – 26,250
MarTech Consultant		6,930 – 11,550	11,550 – 15,225	15,225 – 18,900	18,900 – 26,250
Lead Generation/ Field Marketing		6,300 – 9,975	9,975 – 12,600	12,600 – 16,275	16,275 – 23,625

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SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

COMMERCIAL

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
General Manager				40,425 – 51,975	57,750 – 80,850
Head of Partnerships				28,875 – 34,650	40,425 – 51,975
Business Developer		6,930 – 11,550	11,550 – 17,325		
Strategic Analyst		11,550 – 17,325	17,325 – 23,100		

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist
i.e. no General Manager with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

INFRASTRUCTURE

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Chief Security Officer					40,425 – 51,975
Head of Security				23,100 – 28,875	28,875 – 34,650
DevOps Engineer		6,930 – 11,550	11,550 – 17,325	17,325 – 23,100	
DevSecOps Engineer		11,550 – 17,325	17,325 – 23,100	17,325 – 23,100	

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist i.e. no Chief Security Officer with 0-3 years of working experience*



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

BUSINESS CHANGE ROLES

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Business Analyst		5,775 – 9,240	9,240 – 13,860	13,860 – 20,790	
Project Manager		5,775 – 9,240	9,240 – 13,860	13,860 – 20,790	
Scrum Master		6,930 – 11,550			



SALARY DATA BY SECTOR

PRODUCT & DESIGN

Years of experience
Currency (RM) / monthly

	0-3	3-5	5-8	10-12	12+
Chief Product Officer					40,425 – 51,975
Head of Product				28,875 – 34,650	
Product Manager		11,550 – 17,325	17,325 – 23,100		
UX/UI Designer		6,930 – 11,550	11,550 – 17,325		
Visual/Graphic Designer		6,930 – 11,550			

**Blank columns are seen as irrelevant data points as the years of experience vs jobs do not exist i.e. no Chief Product Officer with 0-3 years of working experience*

