

Report

The State of Marketing Operations Talent: 2022

Findings from the Highway Education x Demandbase Study



Demandbase™

Highway
EDUCATION



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Section 1:	
Marketing Operations: A Rapidly Expanding Marketing Function	4
Section 2:	
Industry Talent Dysfunction	9
Section 3:	
The Cost of Hiring and Training	14
Conclusion	18
Methodology	20
Expert Bios	21



What's the matter with MOPs?

Marketing operations leaders can feel it: MOPs is facing a talent crisis. It's hard to hire; it's hard to train; it's hard to keep people from burning out. To make matters worse, these challenges have intensified so swiftly that leaders have hardly had time to digest them, let alone mount a defense.

To better understand this fast-changing landscape, Highway Education and Demandbase set out to uncover what the MOPs industry is up against and to provide guidance to its leaders. The result was the State of MOPs Talent study.

We found that marketing ops is an industry growing fast—so fast, in fact, that the talent supply can't keep up with demand. The consequences of this gap crop up everywhere, in the form of burnout, turnover, and runaway compensation. And the steep costs of hiring and training make the problem far from simple to solve.

Read on for a closer look at the dynamics shaping our industry's biggest challenges.

About Us



Smarter GTM for B2B brands, helps marketing and sales teams spot the juiciest opportunities earlier and progress them faster.



Helps MOPs leaders overcome the industry talent crisis by providing job-ready junior MOPs talent for leaders to hire.



Marketing Operations: A Rapidly Expanding Marketing Function

Demand for MOPs talent is growing at an astounding rate.

Everywhere you look, companies are discovering something marketing ops pros have known for years: **Marketing operations is a crucial marketing function that's well worth a substantial investment.**

Today, funds flow toward tech and talent. Usage of B2B marketing ops software has jumped by nearly 2.5x in less than a decade, and hiring numbers aren't far behind. In companies large and small, the number of marketing ops pros have grown by two-thirds, with fastest growth rates occurring in organizations of 10,000 employees and below.

But finding new talent ready to hit the ground running can be tough and most employers find themselves needing to train junior hires themselves—or reposition existing ones. In fact, more than nine in ten MOPs professionals say they “fell into” their role and never had formal training.

“We all have found our way into MOPs some random way,” says Pierce Ujjainwalla, Co-Founder and CEO at Knak. “There aren't enough people learning it.”



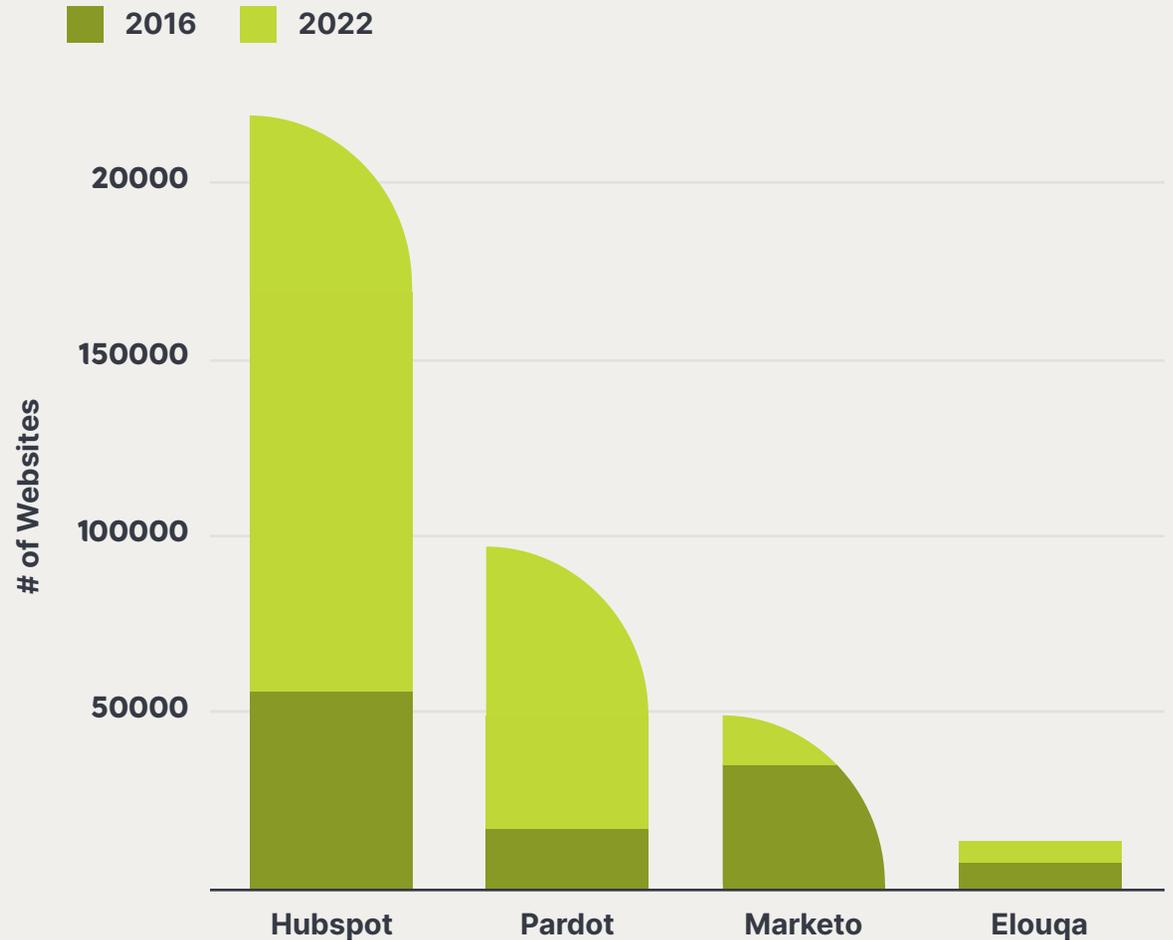
MOPs is an Essential Part of the Modern Marketing Machine

Marketing automation is omnipresent and growing quickly.

228% increase

in the number of companies using marketing automation since 2016

B2B Marketing Automation Software Usage



Sources: BoldDigital [State of Marketing Automation, 2017](#); [SimilarTech](#)



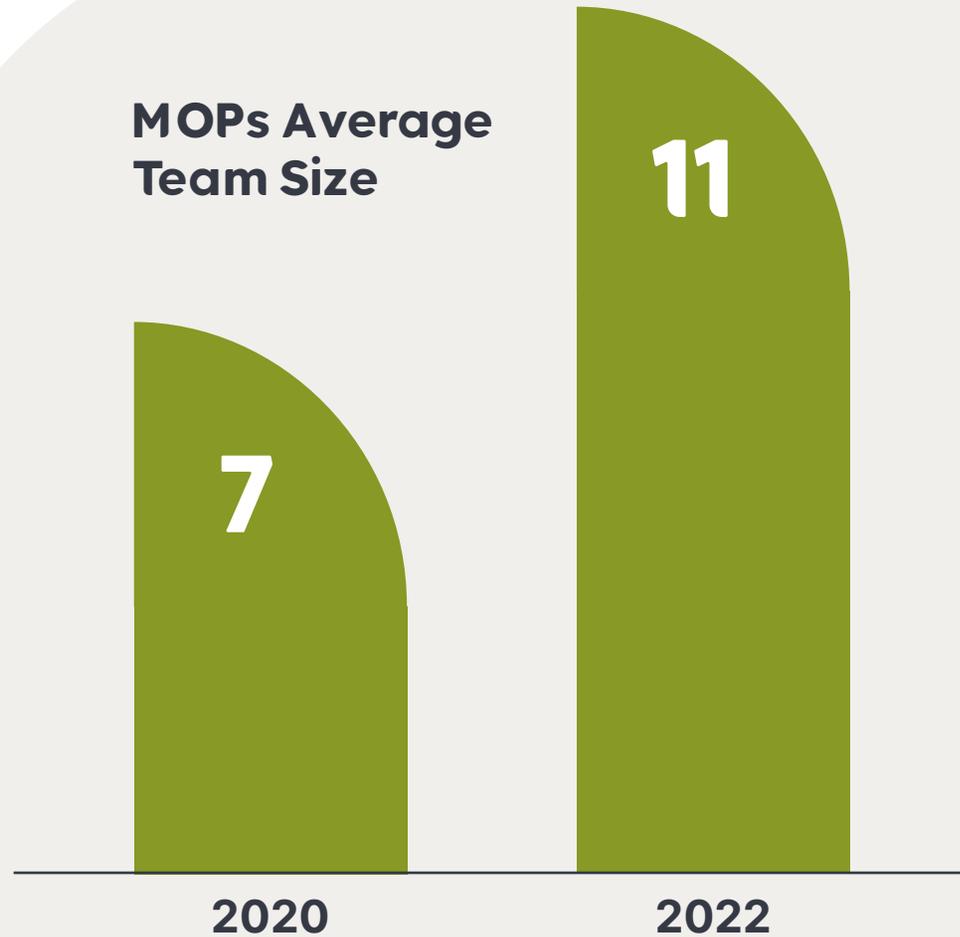
Marketing Operations Teams are Growing Fast

Team size has nearly doubled in just two years as companies funnel more resources toward this critical function.

66%
growth

in the average MOPs team since 2020

MOPs Average Team Size



~996k

professionals are working in marketing operations today



Section 1

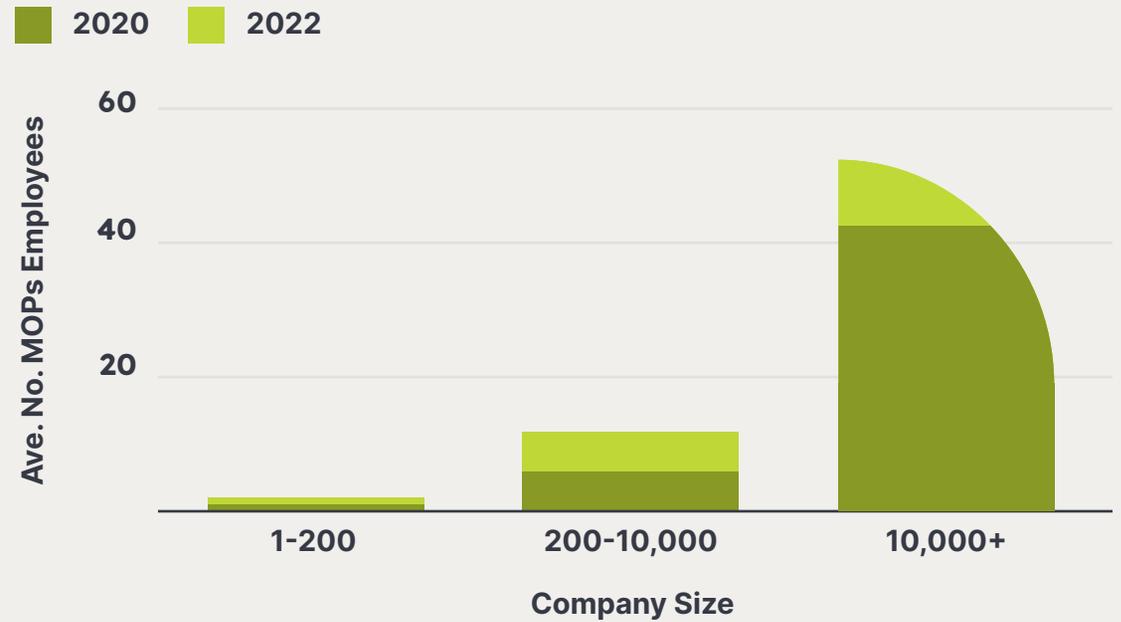
Increased Investment is Universal

Marketing operations teams have grown in organizations of every size.

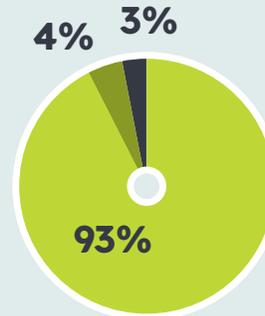
The MOPs Industry Lacks a Means of Generating New Talent

Despite growing demand for marketing automation pros, there is no systematic source for new talent supply.

Average Number of MOPs Growth



How MOPs Pros Learned Their Craft



- Learned on the job
- Formal training with employer
- Other

93%

of marketing operations professionals say they “fell into” their role and have had no formal training.



Marketing operations experts weigh in

How has marketing ops changed and where is new talent coming from?



Dr. Debbie Qaqish

“The change in marketing operations in the last decade has been almost indescribable. Today, marketing ops isn’t just a “thing,” it’s a *big* thing. The function has continued to get more sophisticated. In the last three years, the evolution has really accelerated and the need for talent has accelerated with it.”



Crissy Saunders

“Marketing ops isn’t taught in schools; it’s not something that people even know about until they’re in a marketing entry-level job. I always ask guests on my podcast how they got into operations, and everyone says something similar: They were an SDR manager and liked the process around CRM; they were a marketing intern or entry hire and found the opportunity because they picked up tech faster than others.”



Pierce Ujjainwalla

“I know hundreds of marketing operations professionals, and most of them stumbled into it in some random way. Some people started in sales, while others were simply the only person in their company who understood marketing technology and got ‘voluntold.’”



Darrell Alfonso

“There’s a disconnect between marketing strategy and the actual execution—what it takes to actually operationalize and bring a strategy to life. Leadership, especially the ‘old guard,’ will be more familiar with traditional methods like field marketing and commercials. But now, during the pandemic and post, there’s an entire digital world that needs to be managed by people who know what they’re doing.”



Industry Talent Dysfunction

A lack of talent supply has strained the MOPs industry.

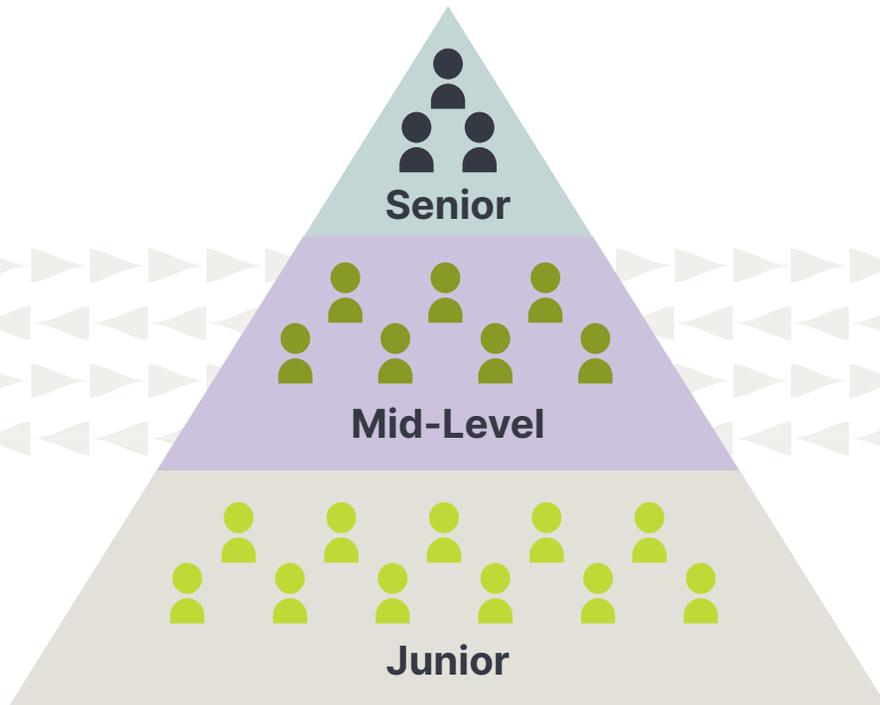
But where, exactly, are all these new professionals coming from? With demand skyrocketing, companies have found themselves up against a new dilemma: Just because there's a growing need for marketing operations professionals doesn't mean the talent pool is expanding at the same rate.

“The state of hiring in MOPs is different than other traditional jobs,” says Crissy Saunders, CEO and co-founder of CS2, a marketing operations consulting agency. “It’s very competitive—it feels like we’re all swimming in a very small pool going after the same talent.”

Lacking a reliable stream of new talent, most organizations are left top-heavy, with experienced MOPs pros outnumbering more junior staffers who would otherwise be there to manage program execution. As a result, many veterans are left shouldering work below their pay grade instead of prioritizing more strategic projects.



Should we be surprised, then, that burnout and turnover rates are staggering, or that the price of hiring new talent continues to grow?

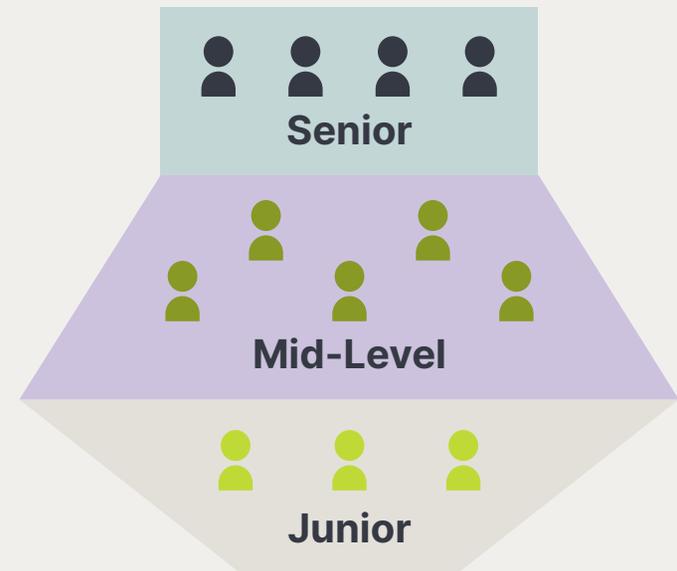


Without a Source of New Talent, MOPs Teams are Becoming Top-Heavy

The ideal MOPs teams is structured like a pyramid:

A concentrated number of experienced practitioners focus on strategic initiatives and are supported by more junior team members who are responsible for day-to-day operations and execution.

Number of Employees at Each Experience Level



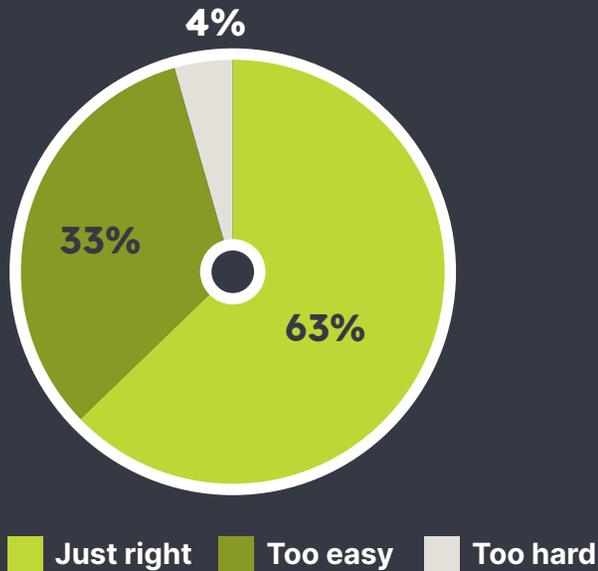
But we found that junior-level employees are outnumbered in the average MOPs team, leaving higher-level team members to pick up the slack.



With More Top-Heavy Teams, Veterans are Stuck Doing Low-Level Work

While the majority of MOPs professionals are appropriately challenged by their work, **more than 30% feel that they would benefit from being able to delegate in order to focus on more strategic projects.**

MOPs Pros' Thoughts on Work Difficulty Level

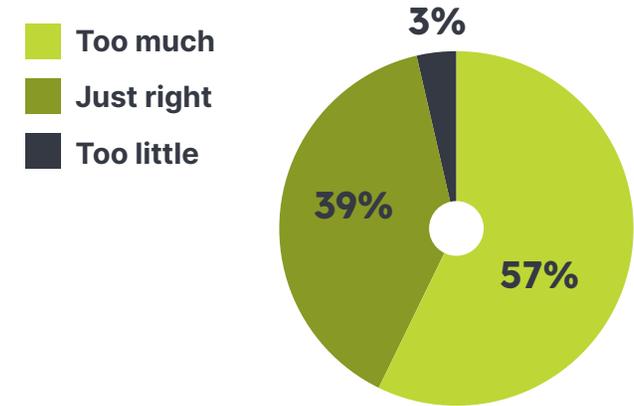


MOPs Pros are Burned Out and Turning Over

With many MOPs pros facing burnout, it's no surprise that nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ change their job every two years.

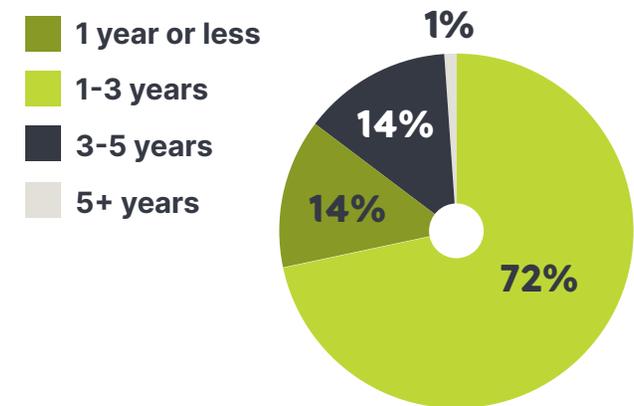
57%
of MOPs pros struggle with burnout

MOPs Pros' Thoughts on Workload



72%
of MOPs pros leave their company in less than 3 years

Average MOPs Company Tenure



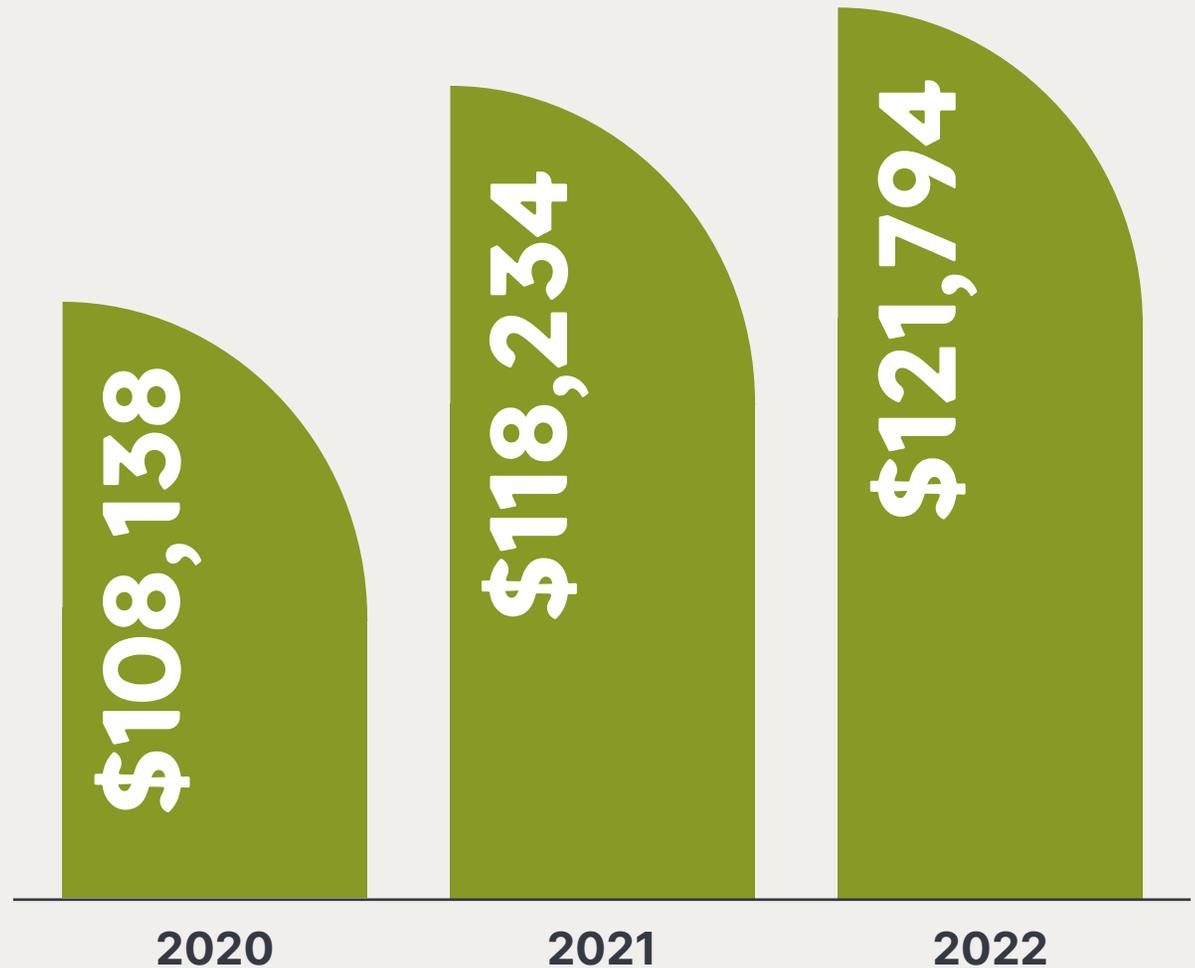
Section 2

MOPs salaries are growing at 2X the annual inflation rate

Escalating demand relative to supply drives up pay rates.



Average Salary by Year



Source: Sarah McNamara, [Marketing Operations Salary Survey](#)



Marketing operations experts weigh in

What forces are driving the marketing ops talent gap and what impact does it have on MOPs pros?



Sara McNamara

“Without enough junior recruits, senior people get stuck in triage. They want to do strategic work and progress in their careers, but instead, they continue to get hit with requests while being under-resourced. It’s very demoralizing in the long-term.”



Crissy Saunders

“We overwhelm the people who are coming into organizations with high expectations and don’t set them up for success. It’s not just burnout—it’s languishing, which means people aren’t able to actually *finish* projects. A lot of people won’t stay in a job if it doesn’t meet their expectations, because they know other companies are looking for their skill set.”



Pierce Ujjainwalla

“When you consider how few really great marketing operations people are out there, they’re a rare and valuable asset. Companies should make it their job to determine how they can use those people most strategically. Unfortunately, so many times we see these talented people stuck trying to get campaigns out the door, cleaning up data—doing low-value tasks.”



Darrell Alfonso

“The best marketing ops people have their pick of jobs. They can switch every year for increases in salary, and I don’t blame them. It’s a candidate’s market right now when it comes to marketing ops.”



The High Cost of Hiring & Training Exacerbates the Talent Crunch

Finding, hiring, and training new talent leaves MOPs teams stuck in a dysfunctional cycle.

What to do with an imbalanced team and a drastic need for more marketing operations support? Hire, of course! But with the rising price of new talent and a limited pool to choose from, many marketing organizations have discovered that finding and landing the right team members doesn't happen overnight.

And once teams are lucky enough to find the right fit, they've only just begun. Training new hires drains bandwidth from already-overtaxed teams, **nearly 70% of which will invest five or more hours per week over six months to get new hires up to speed.**

When considered in the context of turnover rates, it's clear that many organizations regularly find themselves in drawn-out, costly hiring and training cycles as they struggle to keep up with the needs of their marketing operations mandate.



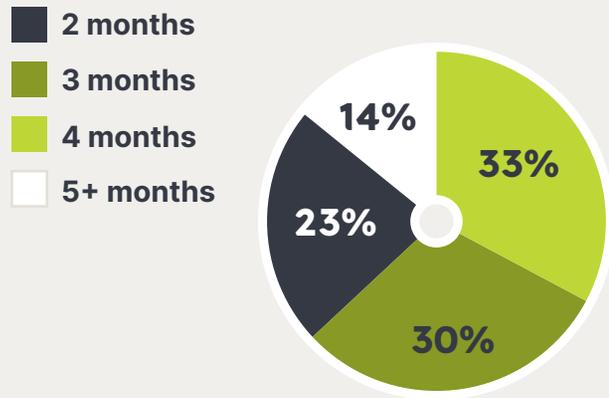
70%

of Marketing Operations teams will invest 5+ hours per week over 6 months to get new hires up to speed

With a Small Pool of Qualified Talent, Hiring Takes Time

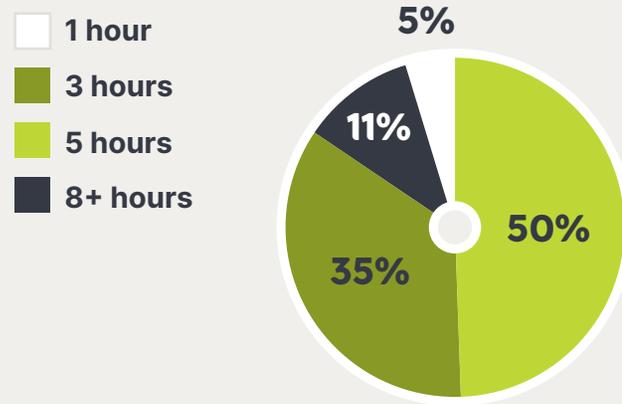
For most teams, the MOPs hiring process burns through hours of staff's time across multiple months.

Duration of MOPs Hiring Process



Nearly half of new MOPs roles take 4+ months to recruit and hire.

Time Per Week Spent By Hiring Team



While hiring new MOPs roles, 60% of hiring teams devote at least 5 hrs/week to the process, and 96% spend at least 3.

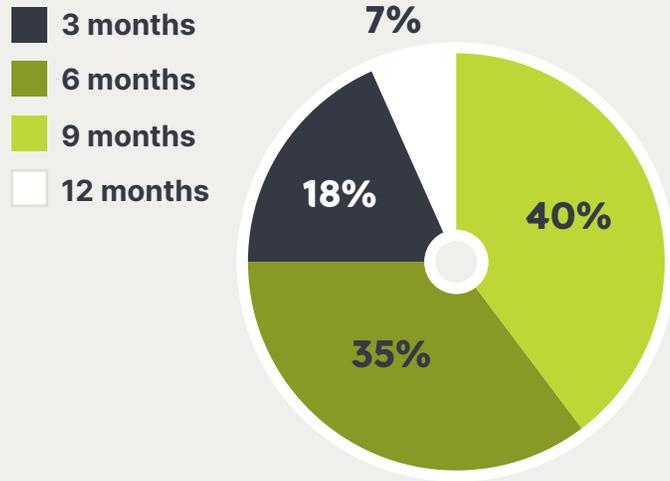
On average, companies spend **\$22,696** on hiring new MOPs pros.

	\$16,907	recruiters and ads
	+ \$4,743	employee time
	<hr/>	
	\$22,696	



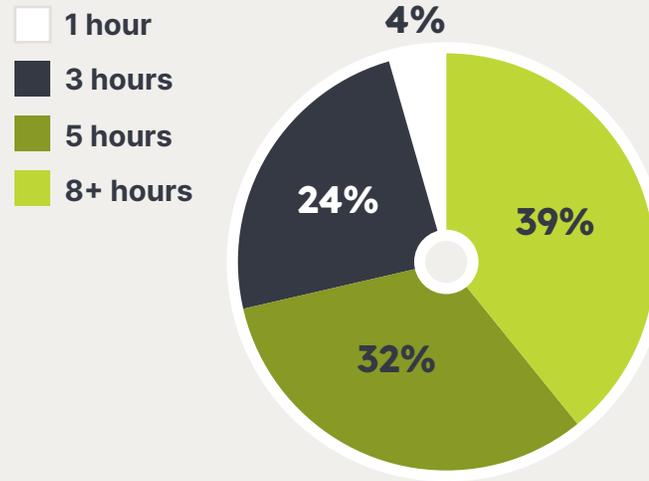
Time to Competency for New Hires is Significant

Ramp Duration for New MOPs Hires



82% new MOPs hires aren't fully ramped for at least 6 months.

Team Time Spent Supporting New Jr. Hire



Supporting a new junior MOPs hire saps at least 5 hours per week from 68% of teams.

On average,
a new junior-level hire costs

\$10,414
+ **\$25,846**

\$36,260

employee time supporting new hire

wages+benefits for new hire

over the first 7 months until fully productive



Marketing operations experts weigh in

Why do organizations struggle to find and train people, and how can they build better teams?



Sara McNamara

“When you build a team, I always recommend throwing some use-cases against it so you can ensure it will work in reality. Sometimes we visualize a pretty picture, but it’s not what the marketing organization or the MOPs team actually needs.”



Crissy Saunders

“Think through how you can make training other team members part of your culture: How can you set up direct lines of reporting and make it part of the manager’s job to train? Training should happen at all levels because of the speed at which our industry moves. We need to stay up-to-date and share best practices across the team.”



Pierce Ujjainwalla

“When I look at the marketing operations job boards, so many listings require candidates to know HTML and CSS. Why are we still expecting people to know these skills in 2022? I’d rather hire a great marketer who knows how to do demand gen; who knows how to test and optimize; who’s a great writer—those are the skills that really move the needle. If you eliminate unnecessary requirements, you can open up the job to so many more people.”



Dr. Debbie Qaqish

“Finding someone with the skills required to work in marketing ops is almost like trying to find a purple unicorn. You have to be technical; you have to be analytical; you have to understand business; you have to understand marketing; you have to be an extraordinary collaborator. Just like marketing has had to grow up in its use of technology, in being an owner of customer experience, and driving revenue, it needs to grow up and realize that great marketing operations doesn’t happen by magic. You need training, support, and consistent methodologies to be successful.”



The Takeaway: The Talent Gap

B2B marketing teams need marketing operations professionals, but current conditions point to a unsustainable talent gap. In the absence of a reliable funnel of qualified junior talent, companies will continue to sacrifice valuable resources and employee time, not only on hiring and training, but also on filling the gaps left by top-heavy org structures and high rates of both turnover and burnout.

In order for companies to see the full potential of marketing operations, the industry must find new sources of talent, streamline training, and empower more experienced practitioners to guide strategic initiatives that drives the marketing operations performance for which their companies are desperate.



Marketing operations experts weigh in

How can marketing operations organizations build for the future?



Sara McNamara

“ I think the desired end state is to have some part of marketing operations compensation tied to revenue. But until then, all of us in marketing operations need to be more vocal. We deserve credit, and we should do what needs to be done to get that recognition. Executives also need to listen. If you’re at the executive level and you’re not talking to anyone in marketing ops as you try to build a team, it’s not going to go well.”



Dr. Debbie Qaqish

“ It’s such an exciting time to be in marketing ops. Its role continues to evolve and will look different in every organization. As companies recognize the strategic need for dedicated marketing operations, they’ll continue to invest in talent and will need to design talent plans: Who do we hire? Do we outsource training or do it in-house? The talent gap is not going away, so we’ll increasingly see third-party training resources. I’d go so far as to say that the marketing organization today that does not have marketing ops will fail in a customer-centric, revenue-driven economy, while those organizations that have dedicated and strategic marketing ops will succeed.”



Pierce Ujjainwalla

“ We’re going to need to find more areas within marketing operations that we can free up. Technologies will allow people to be more efficient, marketplaces will become more abundant, and artificial intelligence will allow us to automate more of what marketers traditionally did. Ultimately, the companies that really embrace creativity and humans are the ones that are going to win the future.”



Darrell Alfonso

“ I believe we’re headed in the right direction, because the best marketing operations people are going to end up being the leaders of the top companies and start their own businesses. I think they’re going to be the people who make the most impact throughout organizations. Once that happens, these people who recognize the value of operational excellence will set up their organizations as such.”



Our Study

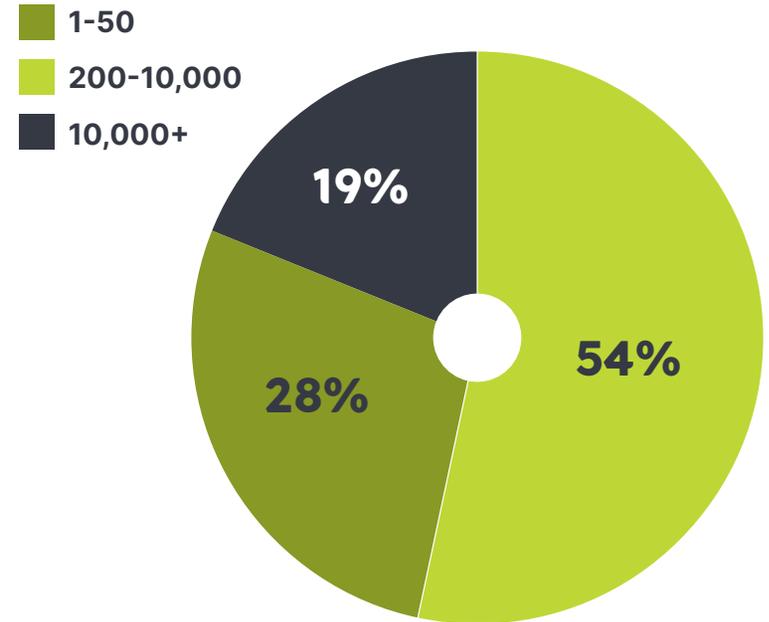
The majority of our findings come from our 2022 State of Marketing Operations Talent study, conducted by Highway Education and Demandbase, which surveyed more than 800 marketing operations professionals. Only data submitted by those who provided a professional email address was considered. Respondents spanned organizational size, with the more than half coming from mid-sized enterprises.

We also drew from external sources:

In calculating costs of recruiting, hiring, and training, we pulled salary information from [Sara McNamara's ongoing collection](#) of salary insights from marketing operations pros.

For data on use of marketing operations software, we looked to [Bold Digital Architects](#), [Enlyft](#), and [SimlarTech](#).

Respondent Company Size



Full, detailed calculations can be viewed [here](#).



Expert Bios



Darrell Alfonso

Darrell writes about marketing and how to improve your work and your life. Darrell was named one of the “Top Martech Marketers to Follow” 2020 by Martech Alliance and was the keynote speaker for the Martech Conference and the Get Stacked B2B Marketing Conference 2021. Darrell works in Marketing Operations at Amazon.

Learn more about [Darrell here.](#)



Sara McNamara

Sara is an award-winning marketing and sales operations professional whose work has been recognized by the likes of Salesforce (Pardot), Adobe (Marketo), Drift, and LeanData. She is passionate about leveraging technology and processes to improve the experiences of marketers, sales professionals, and prospects alike — and to grow businesses! Sara works in Marketing Operations at Salesforce.

Learn more about [Sara here.](#)



Dr. Debbie Qaqish

A nationally recognized thought leader and innovator in Revenue Marketing, Dr. Debbie Qaqish has dedicated her career to helping marketers answer the burning question of what to do about revenue. Debbie is the Chief Strategy Officer of The Pedowitz Group. The Pedowitz Group helps organizations accelerate the journey to revenue marketing and achieve RPS — repeatable, predictable, sustainable revenue growth.

Learn more about [Debbie here](#) and [The Pedowitz Group here.](#)



Crissy Saunders

Crissy is the Founder and CEO of CS2. CS2 is a marketing operations consulting agency for high-growth b2b tech companies. Their awesome clients include: Coursera, Gong.io, Sendoso, Salesloft, Coupa, Hyland, Skedulo, ModelN, Eightfold.ai, Vast Data, and more.

Learn more about [Crissy here](#) and about [CS2 here.](#)



Pierce Ujjainwalla

Pierce helps marketers as the CEO and Co-Founder of Knak and the President and Founder of Revenue Pulse (RevOps Consulting). Knak is the world’s first email and landing page creation platform built for enterprise marketing teams. Its no-code, drag and drop builder is designed to empower marketing teams to create, collaborate, and approve beautiful, on-brand emails and landing pages, and get them to market quickly.

Learn more about [Pierce here](#) and about [Knak here.](#)



Highway is the source for junior-level marketing operations talent. Highway is solving the industry talent crisis by providing employers a pool of candidates who have completed our unique full-time, four-month MOPs training program. The result is job-ready, affordable and values-aligned MOPs talent. To learn more visit www.highwayed.com.



Demandbase is Smarter GTM™ for B2B brands. We help marketing and sales teams spot the juiciest opportunities earlier and progress them faster by injecting Account Intelligence into every step of the buyer journey and orchestrating every action. For more information about Demandbase, visit www.demandbase.com.