TRIDENT SEARCH

2025 Market Guide

Exclusive insights into the early-stage, US cyber vendor market

Trident Search

Trident Search builds early and growth-stage cyber security vendors by placing the very best GTM and R&D professionals across North America and EMEA. With a track record of over 1,000 searches completed, we have become a trusted partner to 180+ organizations within the industry, supporting them to build high-performing teams.

As a data-driven hub of cyber security recruitment, we ensure we are always aware of the latest frameworks, methodologies, products, threat actors and tools; in such a fast-paced industry, staying at the forefront of change is vital if we are to offer genuine career advice.

How will this report help you

Clients
We have two key aims when supporting our clients: attracting and retaining talent. The purpose of this report is to highlight key trends around the hiring market to establish how your business compares to others across the industry. Our previous guides have gone a long way in aiding clients to build industry-leading teams and implement policies to withstand market challenges.

Candidates
If you are a candidate looking for a role within cyber sales and marketing, or R&D, this report will help you understand the true state of the market and how your salary compares to competitors in the industry. This knowledge will help to map out your career trajectory and allow you to make an informed decision on your next move.

Venture Capital Firms
For the VC's in-house talent directors, market insights are essential to build an understanding of hiring trends and salary benchmarks. Our aim is to support you to better leverage people strategy in portfolio companies to accelerate growth and maximise return on investment.

Executive Summary

As we progress through 2025, venture-backed cyber security vendors in the US continues to navigate a demanding yet opportunity-rich environment. Market pressures are prompting investors and founding teams to focus on efficiency, ROI and profitability, often with leaner, more agile teams. This has made the competition for top-tier talent even fiercer, with growing emphasis on strategic hiring and technology-driven operations.

The cyber skills gap remains a major concern, with two thirds of organizations facing moderate to critical shortages. In response, forward-thinking startups are reevaluating their hiring strategies, investing in training, and offering stronger compensation to attract and retain talent. As a result, salaries, particularly in sales and go-to-market roles, have seen a marked increase over the past year as employers compete for the best professionals.

At Trident Search, our industry-wide view - shaped by deep partnerships with early-stage vendors - has given us unique insight into how hiring trends are shifting. As confidence returns to the market, we're seeing hiring activity accelerate and teams scaling at pace. With over 1,000 successful searches under our belt and ongoing partnerships with some of the industry's most ambitious companies, we're proud to share our 2025 salary benchmarks.

We're on a mission to remove some of the confusion around cyber security pay, educate organizations on the best hiring strategies and ensure people know their true worth. **Whether you're a GTM or R&D candidate evaluating your next move, or a founder looking to build a competitive team in a crowded market, this report is for you.**

Josh Keeley
CEO, Trident Search

Salaries

Industry research shows that over 60% of cyber security professionals are considering changing role this year, most often due to the belief that they are not being compensated fairly. For candidates evaluating opportunities with early-stage vendors, it's crucial to understand the full picture of the market in order to make an informed choice and negotiate your value effectively.

While these salary benchmarks are data-backed and reflect trends specifically within the US startup ecosystem, actual compensation can vary based on several factors, including:

- Your previous experience
- The compensation package and OTE offered alongside base salary
- The growth stage and funding maturity of the organization
- Whether the role is remote, hybrid or fully office-based

Go-to-Market (GTM)

Job Title	Years of Experience	Base Salary
Pre-Sales	5 - 8	$130k - $150k
	8+	$170k - $190k
Post-Sales	3 - 5	$120k - $140k
	5 - 8	$140k - $165k
	8+	$165k - $190k
Sales Development Representatives	0 - 3	$55k - $75k
New Business Direct Sales (Account Executive)	0 - 3	$75k - $100k
	3 - 5	$100k - $135k
	5 - 8	$135k - $150k
	8+	$150k - $175k
New Business Channel Sales	0 - 3	$110k - $130k
	3 - 5	$130k - $150k
	5 - 8	$150k - $170k
	8+	$190k - $210k
Product Marketers	0 - 3	$150k - $160k
	3 - 5	$165k - $185k
	5 - 8	$190k - $220k
Head of Marketing	8+	$180k - $200k
Sales Directors	8+	$200k+

Research and Development (R&D)

Job Title	Years of Experience	Base Salary
Software Engineers	0 - 3	$75k - $100k
	3 - 5	$100k - $125k
	5 - 8	$125k - $175k
Data Engineers	0 - 3	$90k - $110k
	3 - 5	$120k - $140k
	5 - 8	$150k - $170k
Data Scientists	0 - 3	$100k - $120k
	3 - 5	$140k - $160k
	5 - 8	$180k - $200k
Product Managers	0 - 3	$90k - $110k
	3 - 5	$120k - $150k
	5 - 8	$160k - $180k

Leadership

Job Title	Years of Experience	Base Salary
VP Sales	10+	$225k - $250k
VP Engineering	10+	$225k - $275k
VP Marketing	10+	$220k - $250k
CMO	12+	$250k - $300k
CFO	12+	$250k - $300k
CRO	12+	$250k - $300k
CTO	12+	$300k - $400k
CEO*	12+	$350k - $400k

*In most early-stage vendors, the CEO position would usually be filled by a founder. The salary rate above would be for any hires you may look to make to replace that individual.

The Market at a Glance

The cyber security industry isn't slowing down, in fact, it's booming. In 2024 alone, over $16.1 billion was invested across 400+ funding rounds, fuelling innovation and growth in a market now home to more than 5,800 early-stage vendors globally. As cyber threats evolve, so too does the race to build smarter, faster and more resilient security solutions. With increased investment, heightened competition and demand for top talent at an all-time high, understanding how to hire - and get hired - has never been more critical.
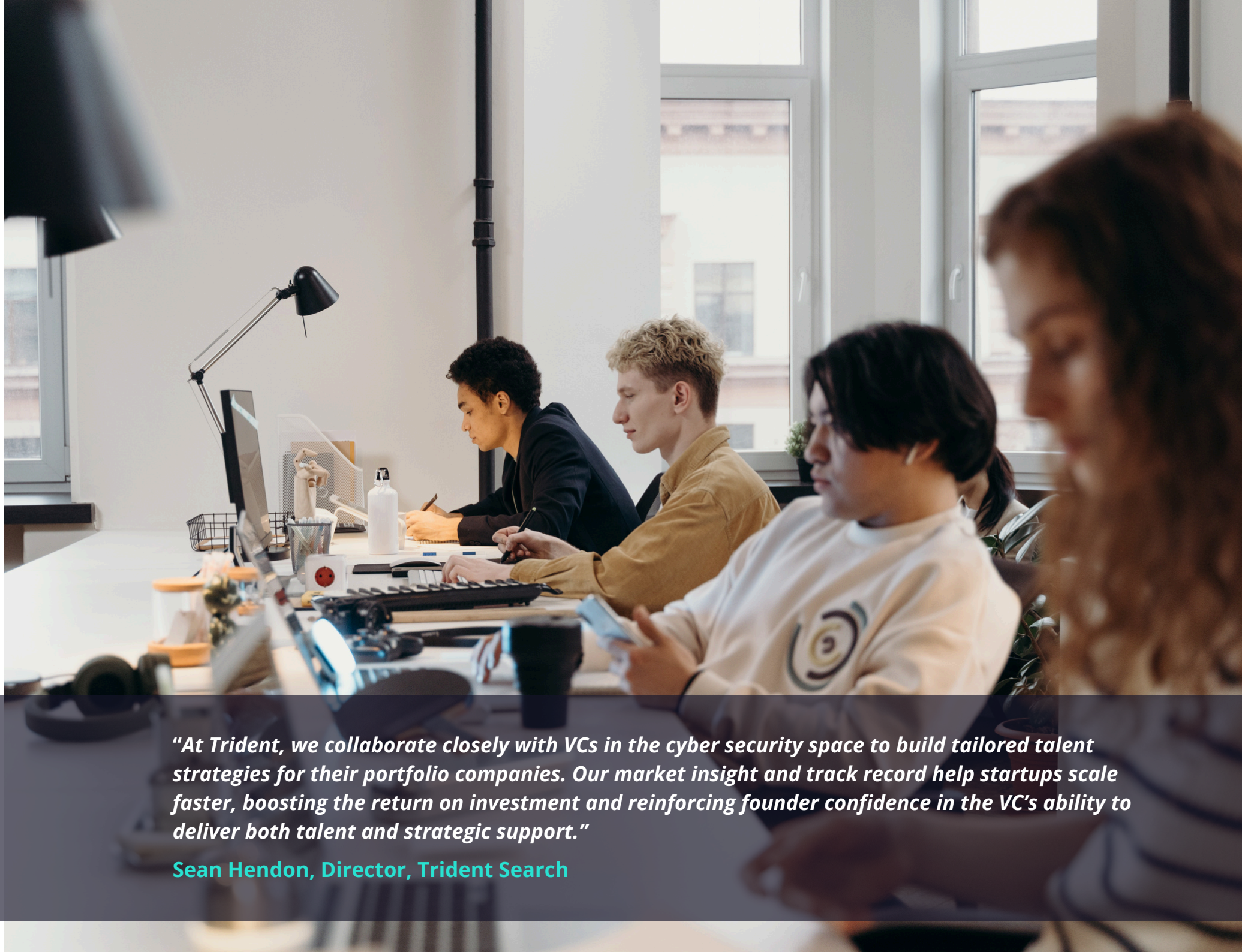
What buyers want in 2025

As we move further into 2025, the cyber security industry faces a complex landscape filled with plenty of challenges and opportunities. AI continues to dominate the conversation: vendors are embedding it into products to boost speed, scalability and differentiation, while threat actors use it to create more advanced, automated attacks. The ability to showcase real AI capability (beyond buzzwords) is becoming a competitive edge, and the AI arms race is pushing cyber professionals to sharpen their AI literacy.

Elsewhere, we've seen that buyers remain focussed on identity-first security, zero trust architecture and supply chain resilience, especially as hybrid environments become the norm. CTI vendors are adapting to increasingly complex nation-state threats and APT activity, while DevSecOps continues to gain traction as security shifts left.

To stay relevant, vendors must address fast-changing threat landscapes while aligning to buyer priorities around automation, speed and resilience. CISOs and security leaders are looking for solutions that simplify their architecture but also deliver proactive, integrated security solutions.

"At Trident, we collaborate closely with VCs in the cyber security space to build tailored talent strategies for their portfolio companies. Our market insight and track record help startups scale faster, boosting the return on investment and reinforcing founder confidence in the VC's ability to deliver both talent and strategic support."

Sean Hendon, Director, Trident Search

The evolving tech landscape

2025 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for cyber technology, with innovation being driven by both threat actors and defenders. Agentic AI is quickly moving from concept to deployment, empowering security teams to automate analysis and response with greater autonomy. This promises to reduce analyst fatigue and free up human capacity for more strategic tasks but also requires a rethink of trust boundaries and oversight in SOC environments.

We're also seeing increased adoption of AI-driven deception technologies, autonomous threat hunting and real-time risk scoring at the edge. The expectation is that quantum technologies will explode this year, but the market is still cautious when it comes to this tech and most products are still in pilot stage.

Hiring trends

The industry is leaning into skills-first hiring, valuing hands-on experience, certifications and practical knowledge. As competition for top talent intensifies, companies that streamline their interview processes and commit quickly to offers will have a competitive edge.

With a constant demand to attract and retain top talent and provide high performers with a career path, competitive compensation plans are now critical to retain top sales performers who can demand strong OTE elsewhere.

The skills most in demand by employers have evolved with wider market trends, and now include:

- **Cloud Security**
- **AI and Machine Learning**
- **Identity & Access Management (IAM)**
- **Zero Trust Architecture**
- **DevSecOps**
- **Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC)**
- **Digital Forensics**

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Organizations report having a moderate-to-critical skills gap in their cyber teams

Investment Trends

Cyber security startups continue to be a magnet for investment, underpinned by strong ARR growth, predictable revenue models and the persistent rise of cyber threats. Some of the key themes we're seeing in the space include:

- **Investor appetite remaining strong:** Cyber vendors remain a magnet for investment thanks to consistent performance and resilience, offering stability in an otherwise volatile market.
- **Unicorn growth:** The number of unicorns in the sector more than doubled in 2024, with momentum continuing into 2025.
- **Favourable valuations:** Pitchbook is predicting a demand-supply ratio of 1.4x for late-stage companies and 1.2x for venture-growth-stage firms this year - highlighting sustained investor interest.

- **Early-stage strength in Israel:** Israeli cyber startups continue to thrive, with notable seed rounds including Orion Security ($6M) and Sola Security ($30M), reinforcing the region's focus on tech innovation.
- **Strategic consolidation on the rise:** M&A activity is being driven by the need to integrate capabilities, expand platforms and achieve economies of scale, so we'd expect to see a lot of consolidation plays.
- **Platform plays and differentiation:** Larger vendors are acquiring niche players to build end-to-end security offerings across identity, endpoint, cloud and data protection.
- **Increased competition fuelling deals:** The crowded vendor landscape is prompting strategic acquisitions to gain market share and improve competitiveness.

$16.1B

Invested into the cyber security industry in 2024

Salary Trends

The talent market in the early-stage vendor space remains highly competitive, with continued demand across GTM and R&D functions, particularly in product, engineering, sales and marketing roles. Salaries for roles such as Product Managers, Security Sales Engineers and Growth Marketing Leads are on the rise, particularly in venture-backed startups and high-growth scale-ups. R&D salaries remain highest in companies with strong ARR growth or late-stage funding, where innovation is directly tied to valuation.

Location continues to influence salary bands, but remote and hybrid models have narrowed the gap. GTM professionals based in major tech hubs like London, New York and San Francisco typically earn 15–25% more than counterparts in smaller cities. However, many companies are now offering location-adjusted pay to attract top talent beyond traditional markets.

Equity remains a key part of compensation strategy, especially in startups, where base salaries may be modest, but stock options offer a long-term upside. GTM leaders in particular are seeing performance-linked bonuses and equity awards tied to revenue milestones, customer acquisition or market expansion.

For candidates, negotiating compensation in 2025 means looking beyond base salary. Top performers are leveraging competing offers, researching company valuations and negotiating across multiple components - bonuses, equity, flexibility and perks. Total compensation is increasingly tailored, and candidates with a proven track record in growing ARR or leading product launches are in a strong position to command premium packages.

Leadership Considerations

In the cyber security industry, particularly for investor-backed vendors as they progress through funding rounds, appointing the right business leaders at right stage is crucial. As founders navigate rapid expansion, the C-Suite lay the foundation for sustainable growth by building robust frameworks, making operational efficiencies and ensuring products scale with the business.

Executive roles are becoming more interconnected, with leaders expected to blend commercial acumen, technical literacy and risk oversight. Today's CROs, CEOs, CTOs and CPOs must work collaboratively with the founding team – and the most impactful leaders are those who can bridge disciplines, embedding security into GTM strategies and playing a key role in shaping product roadmaps.

At Pre-Seed to Series A - and often well beyond - the executive team plays a critical role not just in building product and generating revenue, but also in attracting and managing investment. In the cyber security space, where technical complexity and market differentiation are key, founders and senior leaders must clearly articulate their value proposition, market potential and growth trajectory to win investor confidence.

As cyber threats become a business risk, not just a technical one, executives who can articulate security's value to boards, investors and customers are setting themselves apart.

53%
Of security leaders are looking to move roles in 2025

How to Compete at the Peak

Competition at the top of the market is rife – with an imbalance of supply and demand, we've got a bottleneck of leadership positions that means you need to fight harder for your spot at the table.

- **Demonstrate cross-functional leadership:** Showcase your ability to work across product, engineering, risk and commercial teams - executives who can align cyber security with broader business goals are in high demand.

- **Position yourself as an innovator:** Highlight experience adopting or championing emerging technologies like AI, machine learning or threat automation, showing you can future-proof security posture.

- **Build and retain high-performing teams:** Talent leadership is critical. Emphasise your track record in hiring, mentoring and retaining top talent, especially in competitive or high-growth environments.

- **Showcase regulatory acumen:** Executives who can navigate evolving regulatory landscapes (e.g., DORA, NIS2, SEC cyber rules) and translate compliance into business value are especially attractive to boards and investors.

- **Quantify impact:** Bring metrics to the table - whether it's risk reduction, revenue protection, or accelerated product delivery, leaders who can tie security to measurable business outcomes will stand out.

TRIDENT SEARCH

Whether you are a candidate or employer, get in touch for more information on anything covered in this report, as well as additional insights into the markets we recruit for.

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