



2026

LABOR
MARKET
REPORT

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WELCOME

TSP'S LABOR MARKET REPORT

EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF PERSONAL

The life sciences sector is a landscape of rapid innovation and intense competition for skilled talent. The regions known for their rich ecosystems of academia, industry, and investment are expanding their horizons, incorporating emerging markets brimming with potential.

“

Welcome to our comprehensive white paper, where we delve into the strategic imperatives for growth and talent acquisition within the life sciences sector. As President of TSP, I'm thrilled to present insights that encapsulate the transformative landscape of life sciences in 2026 and beyond. Our analysis hinges on the geographic distribution of talent pools, key market developments, and the shifts in hiring dynamics that are shaping the future of the industry.

Our report provides a roadmap for life sciences firms looking to navigate the complexities of an evolving job market, financial constraints, and regulatory landscapes and serves to our dedication to empowering life sciences companies with the foresight and strategic planning needed to thrive in a competitive global marketplace.

Mike Gamble

President of TSP



How Does Your Talent Strategy Compare?

Join our 2026 Benchmarking Study

As we enter a pivotal year for workforce strategy, the pressure on HR and business leaders is undeniable:

- Only 10% of organizations say they have a strong leadership bench¹
- 86% of HR leaders cite talent gaps as a top barrier to transformation²
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How is your organization preparing for growth, agility, and performance in 2026?

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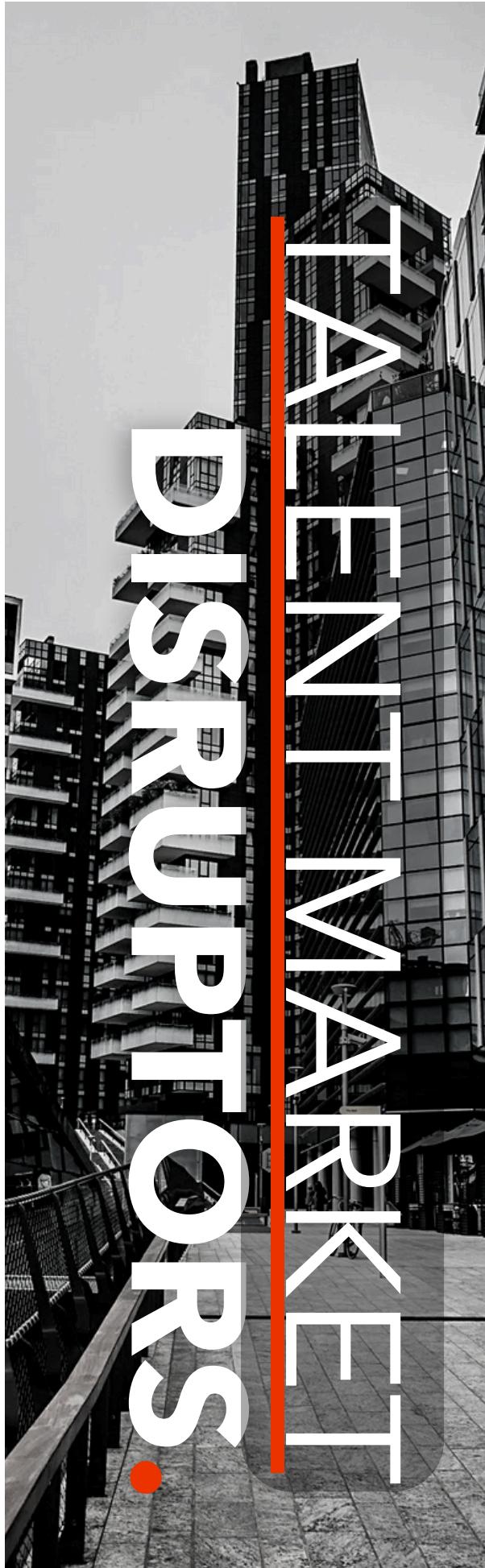
Why participate?

- Receive your own customized benchmark summary
- Gain early access to the full 2026 Talent Strategy Benchmark Report
- Help shape the data that leaders across industries will rely on this year

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EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

SELECTIVE GROWTH MEETS EXCEPTIONAL CANDIDATE COMPETITION



The life sciences sector enters 2026 in a uniquely complex position. Industry-wide employment remains near historic highs, yet the job market is simultaneously experiencing one of the most competitive periods for candidates in over a decade. Companies are hiring, but with unprecedented specificity. Job seekers are active in large numbers, but only those with precise, hybrid, cross-functional capabilities are consistently advancing in the process.

This paradox is rooted in the industry's capital cycle. Following years of aggressive investment (2020-2021) and sharp correction (2022-2024), organizations have shifted to strategic, value-linked hiring. Employers are prioritizing roles that directly impact regulatory progression, commercial readiness, AI-enabled operations, and manufacturing scalability. Meanwhile, job seekers face fewer open roles, increased layoffs in biotech, and a far higher bar for niche, technical, or interdisciplinary skillsets.

For employers, this environment creates a unique window: a moment to capture high-impact talent, often displaced from early-stage biotech, while competition for truly qualified specialists remains tight. Organizations that define capability needs precisely and anchor hiring to business strategy will be best positioned to outpace the next cycle of industry growth.

FUNDING, DEALMAKING & MACRO FORCES

The labor landscape of 2026 reflects the full arc of the life sciences capital cycle:



Though more cautious, capital is still available, especially for platforms with clinical maturity, strong regulatory strategies, or AI-enabled discovery.

VC AND IPO CONDITIONS:

Overall Down, but Improving Selectively

Total funding remains lower year over year, but late 2025 brought early signs of stabilization - limited to mid- and late-stage companies.

Key Points

- VC funding in H1 2025 reached \$18B (-16% YoY)
- IPO proceeds remain limited (-58% YoY)
- Despite this, Q3/Q4 showed stronger activity for companies with strong clinical data or clear value pathways

Early-Stage Biotech Faces the Steepest Constraints

- Funding dropped from \$2.6B → \$900M in Q1-Q2 2025

This downturn has released thousands of strong candidates into the market, but not always with the hybrid, interdisciplinary capabilities employers now prioritize.

Selective M&A and High-Conviction Bets

- Fewer deals, but higher average upfront values
- Verdiva Bio's \$400M+ raise illustrates strong appetite for top-tier science

WHAT'S ACTUALLY IMPROVING

Investors are re-engaging selectively, backing differentiated, de-risked programs rather than the broader market. Larger late-stage financings and renewed interest from strategic and crossover investors signal returning confidence, but only in narrow segments.

Overall funding is still down, but capital is flowing again for high-quality, later-stage assets. Early-stage biotech continues to face the toughest environment.

1. Cushman & Wakefield. (2025, September). [Life sciences update](#).
2. Cushman & Wakefield. (2025, January 29). [Life sciences funding in view](#).
3. Gormley, B. (2023, April 19). [Venture interest slackens in once-hot biotech](#). The Wall Street Journal.
4. Biotechnology Innovation Organization. (2025, July 28). [The state of the emerging biotech market](#).

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EMPLOYMENT & HIRING TRENDS

STRUCTURALLY STRONG SECTOR, TACTICALLY DIFFICULT MARKET

Life sciences employment remains structurally strong, with the sector reaching 2.1 million workers in March 2025 before a slight correction driven by early-stage biotech challenges.

Yet the experience on the ground feels very different. Job seekers face one of the most competitive markets in years, as job postings decline, applications surge, and employers adopt more selective hiring practices. This dynamic creates a labor environment that is healthy at the macro level, but extremely tight at the tactical level, with strong talent supply but narrow opportunity windows.



MARKET TIGHTNESS: WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

- **Job postings ↓ ~20% YoY**
- **Applications ↑ 91% YoY**
- **BioSpace reports 28-29% fewer live jobs YoY**, with Q3 2025 showing the lowest volumes in nine quarters
- **Layoffs from early-stage biotech have created a surge of applicants**, many experienced, but not always aligned to current niche demands

"As a partner to life sciences companies navigating inflection points, I've seen firsthand how the race for top talent has intensified. Companies are no longer just hiring for capabilities or unique technical skills, they're also competing for culture fit and agility in a market that rewards speed and precision."

— Dr. Maya Garza, VP, Talent & Leadership Consulting

1. CBRE. (2025, June 16). [CBRE annual analysis of U.S. life sciences talent finds job growth tenuous amid constrained funding, fewer graduates](#) [Press release].

WHY THE MARKET FEELS SO COMPETITIVE

The competitiveness of the 2025-2026 job market is not due to a lack of talent, it is due to a mismatch between available talent, and the niche capabilities employers require.

Key Drivers of Competition

- Many applicants possess strong scientific backgrounds but lack cross-functional or hybrid skills
- Early-stage biotech experience often excludes exposure to:
 - AI/automation workflows
 - Later-stage development
 - Global regulatory complexity
- Employers increasingly require skills tied directly to:
 - **Speed** (development acceleration)
 - **Quality** (regulatory readiness, data integrity)
 - **Cost** (resource efficiency, operational redesign)
 - **Risk** (CMC robustness, compliance strength)
- Only a narrow subset of applicants meets these intersectional requirements

The bar for “qualified” has risen. The market is not short on candidates... it is short on candidates who match the modern definition of impact.



- 1.Graf, T. (2025, August 12). [Life science hiring trends in 2025](#). Hunter Recruiting.
- 2.BioSpace. (2025). [2025 Q3 job market report](#).

WHERE THE MARKET REMAINS STRONG

Although candidates feel the pressure, several parts of the sector continue to demonstrate resilience and even growth:

Stable or Growing Segments

- **Pharma:** steady hiring in regulatory, quality, and data-enabled R&D
- **Medtech:** consistent long-term job growth and salaries 49% above U.S. average
- **CDMOs and CROs:** increasing demand tied to outsourced R&D and manufacturing
- **Late-stage biotech:** targeted hiring to support regulatory filings and commercialization



Bottom line:

The sector is not shrinking...it is rebalancing toward roles with clearer pathways to value creation.

EMPLOYER ADVANTAGES IN THIS MARKET

Why This Is a Favorable Market for Employers

For employers, this environment offers strategic benefits not seen since before the 2020-2021 boom.

- Larger, more experienced applicant pools
- Ability to hire with greater selectivity without delaying timelines
- Access to niche expertise displaced from early-stage biotech restructuring
- Lower competition from peer employers moving more slowly or cautiously
- Opportunity to upgrade capability density at multiple levels of the organization

This is a rare moment for companies to strengthen their talent bench and align teams closer to strategic priorities, provided they are clear on the skills that truly drive value.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CANDIDATES

While the sector is healthy overall, the path to securing a role is narrower and more specialized.

Candidate Realities

Generic or single-discipline profiles struggle to stand out

Hybrid talent (science + digital + regulatory + operations) is consistently prioritized

Demonstrating measurable impact on speed, quality, cost, or risk is essential

Networking, referrals, and targeted applications outperform general online applying

Experience alone is no longer the differentiator...relevance is.

The 2025-2026 employment landscape is best understood as structurally strong but tactically constrained. The sector maintains long-term vitality, yet opportunities are more concentrated, and expectations for talent have elevated significantly. For employers, this represents a strategic opening to secure specialized talent. For candidates, it requires sharper positioning, broader skillsets, and clearer demonstrations of impact.



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The Secret Sauce:

Why Great Recruiting Will Always Be a Human-Driven Business

By Keiko Berg

Technology is evolving at a relentless pace, transforming industries and redefining how we work. Artificial intelligence, automation, and data analytics have revolutionized the recruiting landscape, making the process faster, more efficient, and, at times, seemingly impersonal. But while technology plays a critical role, the secret sauce in any organization remains the same: hiring great people. No matter how advanced our tools become, the best recruiting is—and always will be—deeply human.

The Challenge: Thriving in a Tech-Dominated World While Keeping People at the Center

Recruiters and talent acquisition professionals find themselves at an interesting crossroads. Their roles are centered on human relationships—networking, building trust, and understanding what motivates candidates—yet they must operate in an environment where technology not only dictates the rules of engagement but also the pace at which we move to compete for talent.

So, how do we navigate this paradox? How do we embrace the digital transformation without losing the essence of what makes recruiting such a powerful, people-driven profession?



The Fundamentals of Great Recruiting Haven't Changed

Despite the influx of tech tools, the best recruiters have always excelled in the fundamentals:

- Networking and Relationship Building - The ability to connect with people and foster trust will never go out of style.
- Communication Skills - Clear, authentic, and empathetic conversations set top recruiters apart.
- Work Ethic - Hustle, persistence, and a commitment to delivering results remain invaluable traits.

These are the qualities that will continue to define great recruiters, regardless of how advanced technology becomes. However, the modern recruiter must also ask themselves: How can I leverage technology to make my day more productive, easier, and faster?



Intellectual Curiosity: The Key to Staying Ahead

Technology is not the enemy—it's an enabler. The best recruiters are those who embrace a growth mindset, continuously looking for ways to improve themselves and their craft.

The reality is, just because we've done something one way for years doesn't mean it's the best way. A willingness to adapt and evolve is essential. The recruiters who thrive in this era are the ones who actively seek knowledge, explore new tools, and use technology to enhance—not replace—their expertise.

Microlearning: Small Steps, Big Impact

Learning doesn't have to be daunting. It doesn't require a formal training course or an expensive certification. Some of the best professional development comes in small, digestible pieces—a concept called microlearning:

- Watching a quick video to solve an Excel formula problem.
- Using AI-powered tools like Co-Pilot to streamline workflows.
- Identifying a skill gap and seeking out a colleague for mentorship.
- Listening to an industry podcast on your morning commute.
- Taking advantage of free company-provided training resources.

When you make learning a daily habit, even in small ways, you gain a competitive edge that compounds over time.



Hiring Passionate People

One of the most important lessons I've learned is that great recruiters aren't just good at finding people—they're passionate about it. The best hires I've ever made were individuals who were intrinsically motivated to grow, to learn, and to continuously refine their skills.

This is why mindset matters. I would rather hire a recruiter with six months of experience who is hungry to learn and develop than someone with years in the industry but no drive to improve. You can teach recruiting skills, but you can't teach curiosity and ambition.

Blending Old-School Recruiting with Modern Tools

There's a common misconception that technology and traditional recruiting methods are at odds with one another. I believe the ideal state is when recruiters use both traditional and modern methods as complements to each other. These critical components work together to achieve positive outcomes, such as uncovering talent that advances an organization's mission and vision and providing career advancement opportunities for top talent in the marketplace. Old-school principles—relationship-building, hustle, and executive networking—are timeless. They are the foundation of great recruiting.

At the same time, recruiters must operate in the world we live in today. AI and automation are here to stay, and they bring undeniable benefits:

- **Creating efficiencies** – AI can automate repetitive tasks, freeing recruiters to focus on what they do best: building relationships.
- **Speeding up processes** – Technology can streamline sourcing, screening, and outreach, reducing time-to-hire.
- **Providing deeper insights** – Data-driven recruiting allows for better decision-making and more strategic hiring.

The best recruiters don't resist these advancements; they harness them to elevate their craft.

The Growth Mindset: Essential for Success

Recruiting is not static. The industry is evolving, and we should evolve with it. The best recruiters are eternal optimists—always looking for ways to improve, adapt, and stay ahead of the curve.

Technology will continue to change, and the pace of innovation will only accelerate. But at the core of every great recruiting strategy is one simple truth: people hire people. And the recruiters who thrive in this new era will be those who embrace both the human and the digital sides of business.

So, the question isn't whether technology will take over recruiting. The real question is: Are you ready to evolve with it?



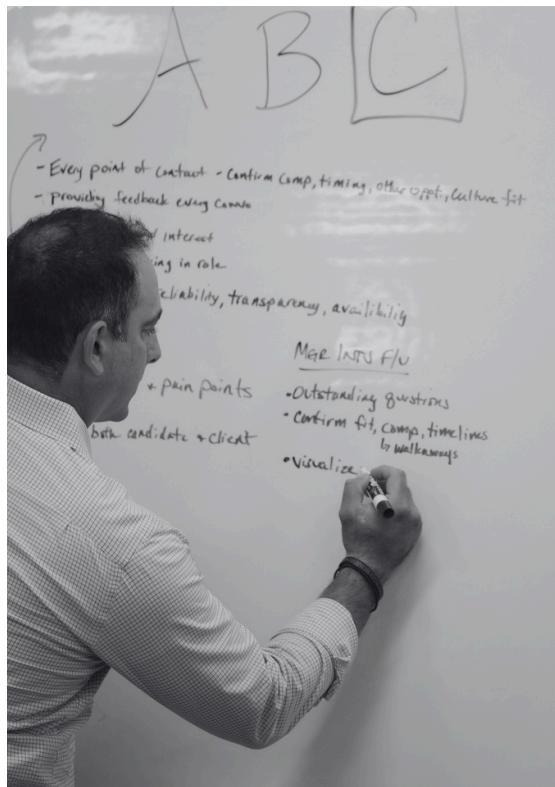
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CROSS-SECTOR TALENT PATTERNS



TSP POV

Relevance, not tenure, is now the key hiring filter. Employers who define capability needs clearly and assess for cross-functional fluency consistently outperform peer organizations.

"I see a lot of delays in hiring often stem from vague role definitions and misalignment across stakeholders. This is why our work focuses on up-front clarity—building consensus on what 'great' looks like—so the rest of the process accelerates with confidence."

— Dr. Maya Garza, VP, Talent & Leadership Consulting

Hybrid, Niche, Cross-Functional Skills Define Competitiveness

Life sciences employers across pharma, biotech, and medtech are aligned on one point: the skills that matter most in 2026 sit at the intersection of **science + digital + regulatory + operations**.

Capabilities in Structural, Persistent Demand

- AI/ML, computational biology, bioinformatics
- Advanced bioprocessing, CGT & biologics engineering
- Regulatory affairs (global, CMC, emerging modalities)
- Digital clinical operations, trial optimization, data science

Why Hybrid Skills Are Hard to Find

- Academic pathways lag behind industry needs
- AI adoption is accelerating faster than workforce upskilling
- CGT and biologics require hands-on experience not easily built outside industry
- Global regulatory sophistication narrows qualification pools
- Many applicants have depth OR breadth, but few have both

Generalist scientific talent is abundant; hybrid scientific-technical-regulatory talent is not. These niche skills drive competitive differentiation and determine who is employable in 2026.

1. CBRE. (2026). [U.S. life sciences outlook 2025: Five positive forces unfolding in 2025](#).

2. GMDP Academy Editorial Board. (2025, June 10). [Navigating the life sciences job market in 2025: Skills, shifts, and strategic adaptation](#). GMDP Academy.

3. Intuition Labs. (2025). [The life sciences job market in 2025: Trends, opportunities, and career paths](#) [White paper].



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LAYOFFS & RESTRUCTURING

Challenging for Candidates, Strategic for Employers

Life sciences restructuring, particularly in early-stage biotech, has intensified over the past two years.

Layoff Landscape

- **187** layoffs reported in 2023 → **192** in 2024
- Q3 2025 saw **~24,000** employees affected or projected to be affected
- **26+** companies announced mid-year reductions in 2025

But More Candidates ≠ Easier Hiring

1

Many displaced candidates come from platform- or discovery-heavy environments

2

Employers increasingly need later-stage, regulatory, automation, or commercial competencies

3

Hiring teams now expect proof of impact, not potential

4

Niche capabilities remain stubbornly scarce despite workforce reductions

Employer Opportunity

Ability to secure talent unavailable during 2020-2021

Strong candidates open to broader roles and more flexible compensation structures

Opportunity to raise team capability density and accelerate critical functions

This is a difficult market for candidates, but not an easy one for employers either. The volume of applicants has risen, yet the number of truly qualified specialists remains limited.

1. Dunleavy, K. (2024). *Fierce Biotech layoff tracker 2024*. Fierce Biotech.

2. Rapid Trials. (2025). *Biopharma layoffs in 2025: An overview of industry challenges and workforce shifts*.

3. BioSpace. (2025). *2025 Q3 job market report*.

SKILLS IN DEMAND

THE NARROW COMPETENCIES THAT WILL SHAPE 2026-2028

Certain high-impact skills will define the future workforce. They are niche, cross-functional, and difficult to train internally.

TOP CAPABILITIES FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

- AI/ML, computational biology, bioinformatics
- Advanced bioprocessing & CGT engineering
- Regulatory strategy, CMC, quality science
- Digital clinical operations & trial optimization
- Hybrid scientific + technical + regulatory profiles

WHY THESE SKILLS WILL CONTINUE TO RISE IN VALUE

- AI-driven R&D is now table stakes for pipeline acceleration
- Emerging modalities require sophisticated engineering
- Global regulatory complexity is increasing
- Real-world evidence and digital endpoints shift expectations for clinical roles

1. Intuition Labs. (2025). [The life sciences job market in 2025: Trends, opportunities, and career paths \[White paper\]](#).



TSP POV:

Organizations that build, buy, or develop hybrid talent will accelerate timelines, reduce costs, and increase regulatory success rates.

“With our customers, every role filled is a lever for growth. The scarcity of specialized talent isn’t just a hiring challenge, it’s a strategic risk. That’s why we help clients not just hire the best, but also think ahead to evaluate internal readiness and build succession and development plans before the need becomes urgent.”

– Dr. Maya Garza, VP, Talent & Leadership Consulting

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Developing Teams:

Enhancing Leadership Impact Through High Impact Communication- Coaching and Feedback

By Stefan Werdegar

There's a noticeable shift happening in organizations today. The leaders who once relied on process, direction, and oversight are realizing those tools alone no longer work. Teams expect something more: a leader who listens, empowers, and challenges them to grow. True success as a leader depends on helping those around you grow and in building trust.

Retention, engagement, and development have become inseparable. A recent LinkedIn Global Talent Trends report found that 83% of organizations cite developing leaders who can coach effectively as their top workforce priority. In other words, the future of leadership depends on a leader's ability to engage their team members, better communicate and foster growth.

There are a lot of blurred lines among leaders and in organizations about communicating through feedback and coaching. Sometimes those words are used interchangeably but they really shouldn't, and each has its place in the toolbelt of the leader.

When a leader provides feedback, they direct communication.



Coaching brings its own dynamic and has its right fit. It requires a bidirectional relationship. The goal for coaching is to gain ownership from the individual in impacting their development. The goal is to help them see new approaches to solve challenges. To guide them in their own process of achieving a goal and navigating an obstacle. The role of the leader is different than in feedback and is more centered on questions and supporting the individual to unlock their potential and find new ways to solve challenges.



A true coaching culture shifts a leader's mindset from "How do I get my team to deliver?" to "How do I help my team grow so they want to deliver?" "How can I remove obstacles and help my team be all they can be". That subtle difference creates stronger performance, greater accountability, and longer retention.

Leaders who coach do three things consistently:

- They ask, rather than tell. Instead of prescribing solutions, they spark discovery.
- They connect the dots. They link daily tasks to long-term purpose.
- They build confidence. They help people see what they're capable of—often before the individual sees it themselves.

When that kind of leadership takes hold, people don't just show up for the work...they show up for the leader.

Understanding What Drives Your Team

Engaging teams as leaders requires curiosity. Every person on your team is motivated by something different - autonomy, recognition, challenge, collaboration. Leaders who take the time to understand those motivations create trust and engagement, create a higher performing culture.

Diagnostic tools like can help uncover these drivers. But it's the follow-through and 1:1 engagement that matters most: using that insight to tailor how you communicate to bring the most out of your direct reports. When people feel understood, they become more open to feedback—and feedback becomes growth.



Small Steps That Lead to Big Change

Behavioral change doesn't happen in workshops; it happens in moments. The way you respond in a meeting, how you deliver feedback, how you model vulnerability and build a connection. All of it signals to your team what kind of leader you are.

Try starting small:

- Schedule short "development check-ins" with your team once a month.
- Begin team meetings with one learning or win from the week.
- Ask open-ended questions like, "What would success look like for you in this project?"
- Reflect weekly: "How did I help someone grow this week?"

These small steps add up. Over time, they transform not only your team's performance but their belief in themselves.



If you are exploring effective ways to unlock the potential of your team, and enhancing your leadership effectiveness, I would love to hear from you. I would be happy to schedule a complimentary 30-minute call to learn more about your goals and share insights.

Stefan Werdegar

Director, Client Solutions - Talent &
Leadership Consulting
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COMPENSATION & TOTAL REWARDS TRENDS



Compensation Is Rising in 2025, But in Targeted, Capability-Driven Ways

The 2025 BioSpace U.S. Life Sciences Salary Report shows that compensation continues to rise, even in one of the most competitive job markets in recent years. But the reasons behind this growth are very different from prior cycles. Employers are not raising pay to attract mass hiring, they are increasing compensation selectively, to secure the high-impact, niche talent required to support pipeline progression and organizational efficiency.

The data paints a clear picture: 2025 compensation growth is driven by specialization, seniority, and role complexity – not broad market expansion.

KEY 2025 COMPENSATION SHIFTS

1. Total compensation rose across nearly all categories

Base salary, bonus, and total compensation all increased in 2025, despite layoffs and lower job postings. This reinforces the theme of a market that is hiring fewer people but paying more for the right talent.

2. Seniority and role scope are driving pay growth

The report shows a noticeable concentration of respondents in more advanced roles compared to previous years. This follows 2024-2025 restructuring patterns, where junior roles were reduced and mid-level and senior professionals absorbed expanded responsibilities.

Interpretation:

When teams run leaner, the employees who remain are expected to deliver more, and are compensated accordingly.

3. Bonus patterns reflect caution, not contraction

While total compensation grew, bonuses in 2025 show signs of stabilization rather than expansion. Employers appear to be using bonuses more strategically, rewarding direct contribution to speed, quality, cost efficiency, and risk mitigation.

2025 WORKFORCE MOBILITY & EXPECTATIONS

1. Fewer employees plan to change jobs in 2025

The report shows a decline in job-switching intent, with more professionals prioritizing stability amid layoffs and fewer open roles.

2. Raises are increasingly tied to merit and expanded responsibility

Employee expectations have shifted:

- Fewer respondents changed employers to earn a raise
- More raises came from internal performance
- Professionals require a meaningful increase (often double-digit) to consider making a move

2025 candidates are cautious, selective, and less likely to move without compelling incentives, particularly those in mid-to-late career stages.

2025 PAY EQUITY: PROGRESS BUT PERSISTENT GAPS

The 2025 data highlights ongoing disparities in compensation across demographic groups.

Gender

- Women remain below men in total compensation
- Gaps persist across salary, bonus, and equity value

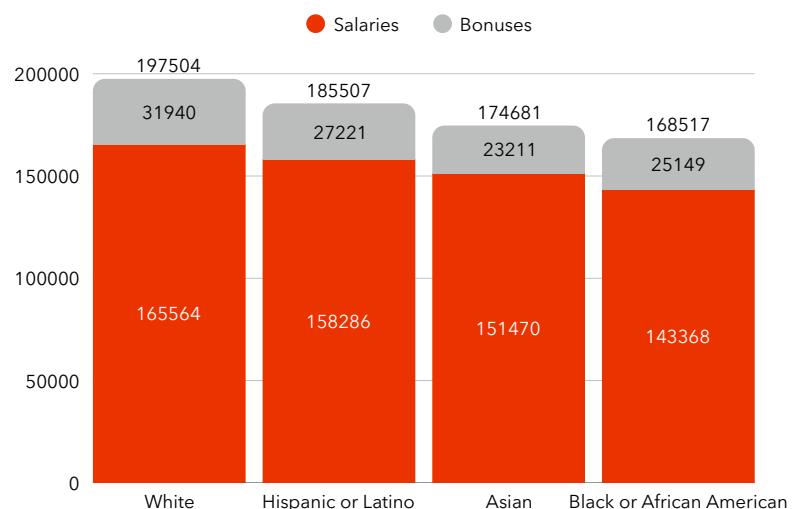
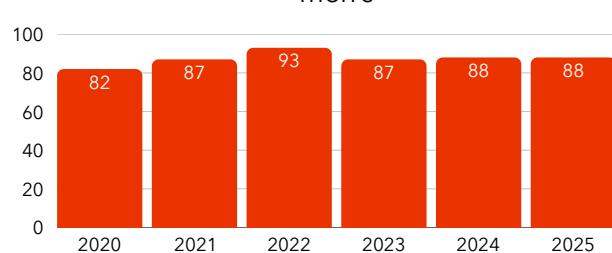
Race & Ethnicity

- Total compensation gaps continue across racial groups
- Some groups saw notable gains in 2025, but disparities remain

Employer Implication:

Pay transparency and structured compensation frameworks will continue to be differentiators in a selective hiring environment.

Women's earnings as a percentage of men's



1.BioSpace. (2025, March). [2025 03 - Salary report](#).

2025 BENEFITS & TOTAL REWARDS: STABILITY, FLEXIBILITY, AND SECURITY

The report confirms that benefits play an outsized role in candidate decision-making in 2025.

Most Valued Benefits

- Health insurance (top priority)
- PTO and company-wide shutdown periods
- Remote or hybrid work options
- Flexible work schedules

In a year defined by layoffs and reduced openings, candidates, especially high performers, prioritize stability, wellbeing, and flexibility as much as salary.

How 2025 Compensation Trends Reinforce the Broader Labor Market Story

1

Employers are hiring less but paying more for precision. Compensation increases in 2025 reflect the premium placed on highly specialized, cross-functional talent, not broad salary inflation.

2

Candidates face fewer opportunities but higher expectations. Those with niche capabilities see strong compensation momentum; generalists face difficulty competing.

3

Internal equity, benefits, and retention strategies matter more. As mobility declines and job searches lengthen, employees expect their current employers to invest in long-term stability and career growth.

4

The compensation landscape aligns with the "structurally strong, tactically constrained" narrative. The ecosystem is healthy, but employers and candidates experience it very differently, and compensation trends capture that divide clearly.

The 2025 compensation landscape reflects a market hiring fewer people but paying more for the right ones. Total compensation increased in 2025, driven by specialization, seniority, and expanded responsibilities, not broad expansion. Pay gaps remain, bonuses have stabilized, and benefits continue to play a key role in candidate decisions. These trends reinforce a labor market that is structurally strong but tactically difficult, where compensation becomes a strategic tool for securing high-impact talent.

Going Global:

A "Three-V" Framework for Biopharma Market Expansion

Introduction

Global expansion remains one of the most powerful ways for biopharma companies to unlock asset value and reach the widest possible patient populations. Yet success across major regions such as the United States, Europe and Asia Pacific depends on navigating an intricate mix of regulatory, operational and cultural factors. Scaling beyond a home market requires foresight, coordination and an understanding of how market dynamics differ by region. This article explores the key strategic considerations for leaders pursuing global growth, highlighting how to anticipate common challenges and adapt commercialization approaches to local realities.

Getting Real About Globalization

Sponsors are always under intense pressure to get their first launch in the market of entry right, while at the same time preparing for rapid global expansion into the broadest, highest value addressable markets to drive positive return on investment. But achieving speed on the road to expansion must account for multiple challenges that can make or break success. These include:

- **Resource constraints.** Operational limitations can slow market activation, even when the pressure to move quickly is high.
- **Risk exposure.** Insufficient investment flexibility and optionality can constrain future choices, limiting agility and elevating exposure to risk.
- **Complexity.** Uncharted territory makes it difficult to know where to start, what to prioritize and what comes next.
- **Nonalignment.** The scope of decision-making needed for market expansion requires continuing alignment across siloed and divergent stakeholders

At Its Core, Commercialization Success is a Function of Price Multiplied by Volume

Global expansion seeks to maximize both—but doing so requires nuanced, market-specific strategies. Companies must assess whether unmet needs, value perceptions and access pathways align across borders. Success requires regional alignment combined with deep local execution.

A Closer Look

Entering new markets is fraught with risk and uncertainty; common pitfalls include:

- Underestimating the cost and time of pre-launch preparation
- Overgeneralizing unmet need, customer experience or demand signals across regions
- Misjudging how labor laws and hiring practices influence team structure and scalability
- Under-appreciating impact of unique cultural differences on stakeholder engagement and marketing strategy
- Treating regulatory approval as the finish line rather than a midpoint

Avoiding these pitfalls in the lead-up to globalization requires:

- A clear understanding of how local decisions impact global asset value
- Integrated cross-functional planning early in development—ideally by phase II or III of clinical trials—not post-approval
- Flexible operational models that adapt to market feedback and local business operating requirements without compromising asset control
- The ability to tap regional centers of excellence and insights hubs that help inform global strategy with local intelligence

Here we take a closer look at the distinct market dynamics shaping commercialization strategies across the US, Europe, Japan and China—each demanding tailored approaches informed by local systems, stakeholder behaviors and regulatory frameworks.

In the US: Empowered Patients, Multiple Pathways

For companies preparing to enter the US market, key challenges include navigating complex payer dynamics, engaging an empowered and information-savvy patient population and leveraging specific data to inform targeting and communication strategies.



The US healthcare landscape is highly heterogeneous, shaped by four critical factors:

- **Diverse access channels.** The rise of digital health and wearables—like Apple Watch—and new players like Amazon (via One Medical) have shifted care delivery closer to consumers, decentralizing traditional access points.
- **Consumer empowerment.** US patients and caregivers are active participants in their care journey, using multiple channels to seek information and make decisions. Success requires sophisticated omnichannel strategies that reach them with relevant content at the right time.
- **Patient advocacy influence.** US advocacy groups are highly organized and diverse in mission-spanning education, research and policy—and can influence everything from awareness to regulatory outcomes. Partnering with the right organizations early is often pivotal.
- **Centers of excellence.** Drug sponsors should identify both geographic and therapeutic centers of excellence. These hubs concentrate talent and investment and often drive innovation and adoption, especially in rare disease markets. To succeed in the US, drug sponsors must ground their strategies in a rigorous landscape assessment that maps the full range of patient experiences and the many pathways patients follow to reach healthcare providers and points of care.

In Europe: One Region, Many Realities

For drug sponsors expanding into Europe, success depends on carefully navigating a fragmented regulatory, pricing and reimbursement environment while also making foundational decisions about corporate structure, launch sequencing and operational risk.

- **Location of the corporate entity is a strategic starting point.** Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland are frequently selected for their tax advantages, established biopharma talent and operational efficiency. These choices also impact flexibility in holding marketing authorizations across EU and UK markets—particularly important post-Brexit.
- **Market sequencing requires strategic nuance.** Germany is often the first country of launch due to its free pricing period following European Medicines Agency approval. Country-specific pricing and reimbursement frameworks—often influenced by reference pricing—require sponsors to carefully weigh launch order to preserve value across the region.
- **A layered regulatory landscape demands proactive compliance planning.** Local labor laws can introduce considerable downside risk in the event of restructuring, especially in markets like France and Germany.

- **A layered regulatory landscape demands proactive compliance planning.** Local labor laws can introduce considerable downside risk in the event of restructuring, especially in markets like France and Germany.
- **Strict privacy and opt-in requirements.** Marketing strategies must also comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This requires explicit consent for most forms of physician outreach. This permission-based framework adds complexity to omnichannel engagement and must be factored into early planning.
- **Localized treatment ecosystems.** Academic and institutional centers of excellence—particularly in rare diseases—serve as influential hubs for care, advocacy and innovation, making them important partners for launch and uptake strategies.

In Japan: Precision, Partnership and Cultural Insight

Market entry into Japan requires a precise, locally informed strategy—one that aligns with the country's structured regulatory environment, nuanced cultural expectations and employee protections that influence operational flexibility.

1

Precise value alignment. Japan's unique drug pricing framework makes it essential to understand where premium pricing is possible—and where it is not. One must understand what the available "leverage" within the pricing system is to propose the rightful value of its pharma products to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW).

2

Preference for in-person engagement. Cultural nuances play a critical role in Japan, where pharma marketing remains relationship-driven, with a strong preference for in-person engagement through medical representatives over digital channels. Preparing sales reps and medical science liaisons with training and development on the right marketing messages and medical questions is critically important in this market.

3

Strict labor protections. To become a Marketing Authorization Holder (MAH), companies must establish a legal entity and hire key in-country roles for regulatory, quality and safety oversight—adding both compliance complexity and recruitment challenges. Strict labor protections make hiring decisions high stakes. One must have a clear strategy to create an effective management and commercial organization that enables speedy promotion activity while flexibly adjusting the need to further scale up or down due to future pipelines.

4

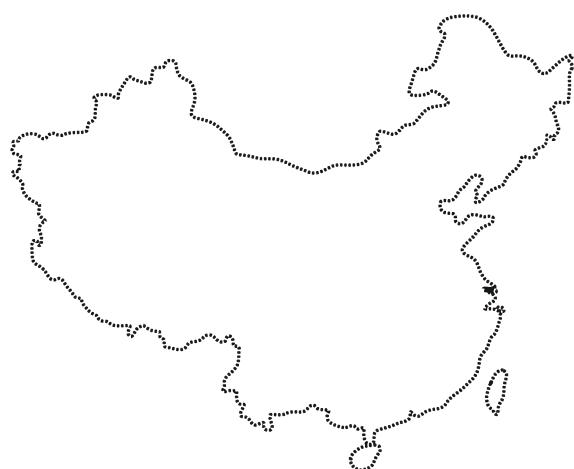
Consensus-oriented decision-making. Additionally, companies must tailor messaging to align precisely with the expectations of Japanese healthcare professionals and patients—recognizing that decision-making is conservative, consensus-oriented and shaped by deeply embedded norms of professionalism and trust.

In China: Centralized Policy, Local Nuances

For companies seeking entry into China, navigating the single-payer system, provincial disparities and cultural complexity is essential to building a viable market strategy.

- **Centralized reimbursement.** Nearly the entire population is covered by basic government-sponsored insurance, including expanded coverage and support for high-cost treatments. Innovative therapies (e.g., CAR-T) are increasingly accessible through Provincial Critical Illness Insurance and “Huimin Bao” programs. Additionally, in July 2025, the National Healthcare Security Administration (NHSA) introduced a new catalog of innovative drugs to serve as a reference for commercial medical insurers and other stakeholders within China’s multi-level medical insurance system, in an effort to better meet patients’ diversified medication needs.
- **Regional diversity.** Despite the central system, China is far from monolithic. Regional economic differences, linguistic diversity and care pathways—including the widespread use of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)—require hyper-localized strategies. According to a 2021 National Healthcare Improvement Evaluation Survey, 84.27% of HCPs have integrated TCM and Western medicine in their clinical practice.³ Family members are often central to treatment decisions, making patient and family education critical.
- **Cultural nuances.** Sponsors must also navigate restrictions on direct-to-consumer advertising and adopt compliant, culturally nuanced approaches to engagement. In the Chinese market, both domestic and foreign pharmaceutical enterprises can win trust through legitimate competition and excellent performance. In real-world medical practice in China, physicians make prescription decisions by comprehensively considering multiple factors, including efficacy, safety and accessibility (which includes affordability).

Ultimately, success in China depends on deep local insight, credible education strategies and a willingness to adapt to unique dynamics across this vast, multifaceted market.





Charting a Course for Global Expansion: The Three “Vs”

When it comes to accelerating global expansion and preserving go-to-market optionality, it helps to think of the journey ahead as a simplified construct of Vision–Venture–Voyage.



Vision. This is about uncovering unmet needs and opportunities to advance the standard of care, and understanding the competitive advantage.



Venture. This is foremost about an asset/brand’s core value proposition and creating a forecasting model that encompasses the most important value drivers. It is about generating the insights and proof sources that underpin why the proposed venture is viable. Investors have to believe in the asset and the team that is curating the asset opportunity



Voyage. This building block is about the detailed planning and executional excellence that mitigates risk and optimizes outcome, for example:

- Assume self-commercialization as a probable scenario.
- Assume partnership or sale of asset as possible scenarios.
- Develop a credible commercialization plan.
- Identify and mitigate risks.
- Raise enough funding to fail successfully.

Conclusion

Successful globalization demands a clear understanding of how healthcare is accessed, financed and delivered in each market—paired with the strategic discipline to construct tailored pathways reflecting those realities. Companies must align their commercialization efforts to deeply localized patient journeys, health system structures and regulatory frameworks. Doing so often means challenging assumptions, adapting go-to-market models and investing selectively in local expertise and partnerships. Ultimately, successful globalization requires organizations to strike a deliberate balance between a consistent global strategy and responsiveness to local dynamics.

Underpinned by market-leading Commercial capabilities and by Kinetic™, our commercial platform that streamlines and optimizes commercialization activities, Full-Service Commercialization from Syneos Health enables biopharmaceutical companies to leverage our vast experience, predictive insights, capabilities, global infrastructure and deep local market expertise, with the goal of scaling-up, reducing risk and accelerating the path to full market potential.

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CLOSING PERSPECTIVE

A DIFFICULT JOB MARKET AND A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYERS

The 2026 labor market presents a dual reality:

- For candidates: It is exceptionally difficult, with fewer openings, more competition, and higher expectations for niche expertise.
- For employers: It is an opportunity to build teams with deeper capability, stronger cross-functional fluency, and greater long-term value.

Companies that succeed in this cycle will:

- Hire with precision
- Invest in capability, not headcount
- Anchor talent strategy to business outcomes
- Leverage hybrid work thoughtfully
- Build leadership depth and cross-functional literacy

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TSP advances life science through our innovative talent solutions for growing organizations throughout North America, Europe, and Japan. Our clients trust us to find the right teammates—and build the right teams—to help them achieve their talent acquisition goals.

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