Chief Marketing Officer: Salary, Job Description, and Requirements

March 5, 2025



Chief marketing officers (CMOs) are the lead strategists behind their organizations' marketing efforts. In an increasingly competitive corporate landscape, finding ways to reach potential customers is only one part of the job.

According to the 33rd edition of The CMO Survey, a survey of marketing leaders conducted by researchers in the private and academic sectors, 58 percent of respondents said a dramatic increase in rivalry from competitors was one of the biggest threats to their organizations. Lost revenue, profit decreases, and lower employee morale were the most commonly reported outcomes of this and other challenges.

To mitigate or prevent these repercussions, CMOs must be resourceful, creative leaders. They must be able to leverage data to gain an edge, keep their teams motivated, and identify markets where their organizations can thrive and expand.

Because of these dynamic duties, a chief marketing officer's salary can be high. For professionals interested in this path, here is what CMOs do to earn their executive-level pay and how an Executive MBA program can help them prepare.

Chief Marketing Officer Job Description

A CMO is typically the highest-level administrator within a marketing department. While managers, copywriters, researchers, and other specialists contribute their own talents, CMOs are responsible for bringing their work together into cohesive promotional campaigns.

A CMO's duties typically include the following:

- Brainstorming with other marketing professionals and approving different ideas
- Ensuring that all marketing efforts are consistent with the organization's brand voice and identity
- Exploring multiple media (television ads, social media, etc.) and determining the best combination of strategies
- Conducting and analyzing research about the target consumer base, new strategies, and related topics
- Allocating the organization's marketing budget
- Working with leaders in other departments to determine and meet customer needs
- Collaborating and sharing information with other executives

CMOs can work for organizations in any sector, but they often work for large companies that require a complex, multifaceted marketing strategy. However, they also can work for government agencies, nonprofits, universities, and other service-oriented organizations.

How to Become a CMO

Becoming a CMO requires a deep understanding of marketing principles and organizational leadership. Professionals with both experience and education often

hold the position. To become a competitive candidate for CMO positions, many professionals pursue an MBA at some point in their careers.

Step 1: Earn a Bachelor's Degree

Students who want to become CMOs can study any number of subjects at the bachelor's degree level. Some study graphic design, data science, and other subjects that prepare them for specific marketing-related jobs. Others major in business management, marketing, and similar subjects.

Majoring in broader topics, such as psychology or sociology, also can be helpful for a future marketing executive. Many students minor in these topics while majoring in something more closely related to their career role, or vice versa.

Step 2: Gain Experience in Marketing Roles

Once a student has earned a bachelor's degree, they are eligible for many entry-level marketing positions at organizations of all kinds. In some cases, a new graduate's job prospects are determined by what they studied, but many early-career marketing positions can be held without a specialty degree.

Early in their careers, future CMOs often work as:

- Data, consumer, or marketing analysts
- Marketing coordinators
- Sales representatives
- Social media specialists
- Copywriters
- Public relations associates
- Media assistants
- Search engine optimization specialists

After serving in one of these positions for a few years, professionals can gain leadership experience by taking on roles such as project manager or marketing manager. The exact duties vary, but these roles typically involve leading small teams, setting goals, and coordinating with managers in other departments.

Step 3: Pursue an MBA

After gaining valuable skills in mid-level marketing management roles, professionals can prepare to become CMOs by earning an MBA. These programs help students develop the leadership skills they need to manage entire departments or organizations.

Each MBA program has its own curriculum, but they typically offer classes on:

- Ethics and legalities of business administration
- Financial and managerial accounting
- Strategic long-term decision-making
- Change and innovation management
- Performance and personnel management
- Business analytics

In addition to the core curriculum, students can choose electives, including classes on marketing management, that are more specific to their goals. MBA programs may include networking and experiential learning opportunities, so students can meet professionals in their industries and practice their new skills in real-world settings.

Program Options: Standard MBA vs. Executive MBA

Standard MBA programs take about two years to complete. They are generally for students who can commit to a full-time class schedule. While some students work part time, others dedicate all their time and efforts to earning their MBA.

Alternatively, Executive MBA programs take about a 1 1/2 years to complete and are designed for experienced working professionals. Classes are typically offered in the evenings, on the weekends, and during summer and winter, so they do not interfere with students' busy work schedules. Because of their experience, Executive MBA students usually take classes on high-level leadership skills.

Step 4: Pursue Senior-Level Marketing Roles

After earning an MBA, professionals may be able to transition directly into a CMO position at their organization or find one at another organization. However, because most companies only have one CMO, it may take some time to find an opportunity.

During this time, MBA program graduates can take on other administrative roles that have similar responsibilities and salaries to chief marketing officer positions. This

can include roles such as brand manager, communications manager, and vice president of marketing.

Chief Marketing Officer Salary and Job Outlook

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that the median annual salary for chief executives, including the chief marketing officer salary, was $206,680 as of May 2023. Factors such as job location, industry, years of experience, and level of education may influence the exact salary that CMO may earn.

Between 2023 and 2033, the bureau projects CMO jobs to increase by 6 percent — the equivalent of 343,800 new job openings each year. In the same time frame, jobs for advertising, promotions, and marketing managers are projected to increase by 8 percent, equivalent to an average of 36,600 job openings each year.

The BLS expects demand for all types of workers to increase by 4 percent between 2023 and 2033. The higher-than-average growth rate for both executives and marketing managers suggests that those seeking marketing executive positions may have plenty of opportunities in the coming years.

Pursue an Executive MBA Program That Fits Your Career

Whether you are preparing for a promotion to a CMO position or want to explore opportunities in other organizations, earning an MBA can be the first step. Through the Executive MBA program at the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University, you can take that step without rearranging your professional life.

Over the course of 17 months, Executive MBA students in Tulane's business school take classes on the high-level leadership skills that mid-career professionals need to become CMOs and other impactful administrators. While classes are held two weekends a month, students still get the opportunity to collaborate with their peers, build their professional networks, and hone their new skills.

To find out more about the curriculum and how to apply, attend an in-person or a virtual admissions event or reach out to the admissions team.

Sources:

- Indeed, Learn About Being a Chief Marketing Officer
- Indeed, 10 Entry-Level Marketing Jobs to Jump-Start Your Career
- Payscale, Average Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Salary
- The CMO Survey, Managing the Challenges of Marketing Technology, Privacy, and Marketplace Threats
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Advertising, Promotions, and Marketing Managers
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Top Executives