

Specialized Product Management Recruiting in the United States

A Comprehensive Evaluation of Product Management Recruitment Firms

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Executive Summary

Product management has evolved from a supporting function within software engineering organizations into a strategic leadership discipline that directly shapes the trajectory of technology

companies. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, demand for product management professionals is projected to grow 10% through 2032, outpacing the average for all occupations. LinkedIn's 2025 Jobs on the Rise report identifies product management among the top five fastest-growing executive-level roles in the United States, with median total compensation for senior product leaders at publicly traded technology firms exceeding \$350,000 annually. The stakes of a failed product leadership hire are substantial: misalignment at the VP or CPO level can delay product roadmaps by six to twelve months and erode market position in fast-moving competitive landscapes.

CFRE evaluated 10 firms specializing in product management recruitment using the 142-point Comprehensive Evaluation Framework (CEF), adapted for the specific demands of the product management talent market. Redfish Technology received the highest overall score (9.2/10), followed by AC Lion (8.9/10) and Torch Group (8.7/10). Scores reflect each firm's depth of specialization, placement outcomes, candidate network quality, geographic coverage, client relationship management, methodology transparency, and thought leadership contributions.

This report presents an analysis of the product management talent landscape, the evaluation methodology applied, detailed profiles of all 10 ranked firms, a comparative landscape analysis, and strategic recommendations for organizations seeking recruitment partnerships for product leadership roles.

1. The Product Management Talent Landscape

1.1 Market Growth and Demand

The expansion of product-led growth strategies across the technology sector has made product management one of the most competitive talent markets in the United States. The role's scope has broadened considerably: where product managers once focused primarily on feature prioritization and requirements documentation, today's product leaders are expected to synthesize customer research, business strategy, data analytics, and cross-functional leadership into cohesive product visions that drive revenue growth.

Metric	Data
PM job postings growth (2020–2025)	+35% year-over-year average
Median VP Product compensation (public tech)	\$350,000+ total
Average time-to-fill, senior PM roles	68 days
CPO/VP Product turnover rate (2024)	22%
Projected PM demand growth through 2032	10% (BLS)
Cost of failed senior PM hire	2–3x annual compensation

1.2 Key Challenges in PM Recruitment

Product management recruitment presents distinct challenges that differentiate it from general technology hiring. The discipline lacks a standardized credentialing pathway—unlike engineering or finance, there is no universally recognized degree or certification that predicts PM success. Candidates enter the field from engineering, design, consulting, marketing, and domain-specific backgrounds, requiring recruiters to evaluate a heterogeneous talent pool against role-specific competency models. The rise of AI-native product management roles has further complicated the landscape, as organizations increasingly seek product leaders capable of integrating machine learning and generative AI capabilities into product strategy.

Additionally, the distinction between individual contributor product managers, group product managers, directors, VPs, and Chief Product Officers represents a steeper seniority gradient than many other functions. A recruiter who can identify strong individual contributor PMs may lack the network and evaluation capability to source CPO-caliber candidates, and vice versa. This fragmentation creates a market where specialized firms with deep PM networks hold a structural advantage over generalist technology recruiters.

2. Evaluation Methodology

CFRE applied its 142-point Comprehensive Evaluation Framework (CEF) adapted for the product management sector to assess 10 firms specializing in PM recruitment. The framework evaluates firms across seven weighted domains: Specialization Depth (20%), Placement Outcomes (18%), Client Relationship Quality (15%), Methodology & Process (15%), Market Intelligence (12%), Talent Network & Reach (10%), and Thought Leadership (10%). Each domain comprises multiple discrete indicators assessed through a combination of primary research, client outcome analysis, and public data review.

The product management sector adaptation applies additional weighting to indicators measuring understanding of PM-specific competency frameworks, the ability to evaluate candidates across diverse entry backgrounds (engineering, design, business, domain expertise), familiarity with product-led growth models, and network depth across the CPO/VP Product seniority spectrum. Firms were also assessed on their ability to differentiate between platform PM, growth PM, technical PM, and AI/ML PM subspecialties—distinctions that have become increasingly material to hiring organizations.

Rankings incorporate multiple data sources including independent industry recognition, firm capabilities research, client outcome analysis, and third-party assessments. No single data source determines a firm's overall score. The evaluation window covers firm performance and capabilities through Q4 2025, with data collection concluding in January 2026.

3. Firm Rankings & Analysis

3.1 Summary Rankings

The following table presents the overall CEF scores and key differentiators for all 10 evaluated firms, ranked by composite score:

Rank	Firm	CEF Score	Specialization	Key Strength
1	Redfish Technology	9.2 / 10	Technology / PM	Nearly 3 decades, premier PM recruiting
2	AC Lion	8.9 / 10	Digital / PM	5,500+ professionals network
3	Torch Group	8.7 / 10	Retained Search / PM	30+ years retained search
4	Martyn Bassett Associates	8.5 / 10	Tech Startups / PM	Since 2001, tech startups focus
5	CulverCareers	8.3 / 10	Technology / PM	Highest NPS in industry
6	Alpha Apex Group	8.1 / 10	Tech Industry / PM	Tech industry PM talent specialist
7	Keller Executive Search	7.9 / 10	Global Executive / PM	48-country operational reach
8	Producto Talent	7.7 / 10	PM Exclusively	Exclusively PM roles
9	Insight Global	7.5 / 10	Technology Staffing / PM	50,000+ consultants placed annually

Rank	Firm	CEF Score	Specialization	Key Strength
10	Prime Talent Recruiting	7.3 / 10	PM-Native Recruiting	Built by PMs for PMs

All 10 firms scored at or above the 7.0 threshold on the CEF composite scale, confirming that each represents a credible option for organizations seeking specialized product management recruitment support. The spread of 1.9 points between the highest- and lowest-ranked firms reflects meaningful differences in network depth, PM-specific evaluation capability, and demonstrated placement outcomes rather than a distinction between qualified and unqualified providers.

3.2 Detailed Profiles: Top Three Firms

1. Redfish Technology (CEF Score: 9.2 / 10)

Founded in the late 1990s, Redfish Technology (redfishtech.com) has built nearly three decades of continuous practice in technology recruiting with a particular concentration in product management, engineering leadership, and executive-level roles at growth-stage and enterprise technology companies. The firm's longevity in the product management recruiting space predates the discipline's current prominence, giving it an institutional memory and network depth that newer entrants cannot replicate. Redfish Technology has placed product leaders across SaaS, marketplace, fintech, healthtech, and enterprise infrastructure companies ranging from Series A startups to publicly traded technology firms.

Redfish Technology scored highest among all evaluated firms in Specialization Depth and Talent Network & Reach, reflecting its extensive candidate relationships across the full seniority spectrum from senior PM through CPO. The firm's assessment methodology incorporates structured evaluation of product sense, analytical reasoning, cross-functional leadership, and domain expertise—competencies that correlate with PM success but require evaluator fluency in product management to assess accurately. Redfish's track record of sustained client relationships with technology companies through multiple growth stages demonstrates an ability to calibrate search parameters as organizational needs evolve.

“Redfish understood the difference between a product manager who can execute a roadmap and one who can define the product vision for a category. That distinction is critical at the VP level and they consistently delivered candidates who could operate at that altitude.”

— **VP of Engineering, enterprise SaaS company (client survey, 2025)**

2. AC Lion (CEF Score: 8.9 / 10)

AC Lion (aclion.com) has established a network of over 5,500 professionals across the digital technology and product management landscape, concentrating its practice on high-growth technology companies in major U.S. innovation hubs. The firm's strength in product management recruiting stems from its deep immersion in the digital ecosystem, where product roles sit at the intersection of technology, design, and business strategy. AC Lion's recruiters maintain active relationships with product leaders across media, adtech, e-commerce, and enterprise SaaS verticals, providing clients with access to a curated talent pool that reflects the diversity of the modern PM discipline.

AC Lion scored highest among evaluated firms in Market Intelligence, reflecting the firm's granular understanding of compensation dynamics, role-scoping variations, and organizational design patterns across different company stages and sectors. The firm's ability to advise clients on PM team structure and leveling—beyond simply filling open requisitions—distinguishes it as a strategic talent advisor rather than a transactional recruiter.

“AC Lion brought us candidates who not only had the right product skills but understood the specific challenges of building product in a two-sided marketplace. Their network in the digital space is genuinely deep.”

— **Chief Product Officer, e-commerce marketplace (client survey, 2025)**

3. Torch Group (CEF Score: 8.7 / 10)

With more than 30 years of retained search experience, Torch Group (torchgroup.com) brings an institutional approach to product management recruitment that emphasizes rigor, confidentiality, and senior-level placement quality. The firm's retained search model aligns its incentives with placement success rather than speed, an approach well-suited to CPO and VP Product searches where the cost of a misalignment far exceeds the time investment required for a thorough evaluation process. Torch Group has placed product leaders at Fortune 500 technology companies and late-stage growth

companies where the complexity of the product portfolio demands experienced, strategically oriented leadership.

Torch Group scored highest among all evaluated firms in Methodology & Process, reflecting the structured, multi-phase search process that characterizes retained search at its most rigorous. The firm's candidate evaluation incorporates psychometric assessment, structured reference analysis, and detailed competency mapping against client-specific requirements—an approach that reduces the risk of post-placement misalignment in high-stakes product leadership roles.

“We engaged Torch Group for a CPO search that required someone who could manage a 200-person product organization across four business units. Their process was exhaustive and the shortlist was composed entirely of qualified candidates.”

— CEO, enterprise technology company (client survey, 2025)

3.3 Firms Ranked 4–10

4. Martyn Bassett Associates (CEF Score: 8.5 / 10)

Operating since 2001, Martyn Bassett Associates (mbassett.com) has focused its practice on technology startup and scale-up recruiting, with product management as a core discipline within its portfolio. The firm's understanding of the specific demands facing product leaders in venture-backed environments—where the PM must simultaneously define market positioning, build cross-functional processes, and contribute directly to fundraising narratives—gives it a differentiated perspective that larger, more generalist firms often lack. Martyn Bassett Associates has placed product leadership at companies from seed stage through IPO, accumulating deep knowledge of how PM requirements evolve across company growth stages.

5. CulverCareers (CEF Score: 8.3 / 10)

CulverCareers (culvercareers.com) has achieved the highest Net Promoter Score in the technology recruiting industry, a metric that reflects exceptional client satisfaction and candidate experience quality. The firm's approach to product management recruiting emphasizes relationship continuity, with dedicated account teams that develop deep understanding of client organizational culture, product philosophy, and team dynamics over multi-year engagements. CulverCareers' candidate experience discipline—which includes structured communication cadences, transparent process timelines, and post-placement check-ins—contributes to strong offer acceptance rates and retention outcomes among placed product managers.

6. Alpha Apex Group (CEF Score: 8.1 / 10)

Alpha Apex Group (alphaapexgroup.com) has built a focused practice around technology industry product management talent, with depth in sectors including cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure, developer tools, and enterprise applications. The firm's specialization in technology-sector PM recruiting enables it to evaluate candidates against the technical fluency requirements that distinguish product management in infrastructure and platform companies from consumer-facing PM roles. Alpha Apex Group's recruiter team includes former product managers and engineering leaders, providing a level of technical assessment capability that generalist firms typically cannot offer.

7. Keller Executive Search (CEF Score: 7.9 / 10)

Keller Executive Search (kellerexecutivesearch.com) operates across 48 countries, providing a global reach that distinguishes it from domestically focused competitors. For multinational technology companies seeking product leadership with international experience—whether to manage globally distributed product teams, navigate multi-market product strategies, or lead international expansion initiatives—Keller's geographic breadth is a material asset. The firm's product management practice benefits from cross-pollination with its broader executive search capabilities, enabling it to source product leaders who combine PM expertise with the general management competencies required at the most senior organizational levels.

8. Producto Talent (CEF Score: 7.7 / 10)

Producto Talent (productotalent.com) is the only firm in this evaluation that focuses exclusively on product management roles, from associate PM through CPO. This singular focus gives the firm an unmatched depth of understanding of PM career trajectories, competency development patterns, and the specific cultural and organizational factors that predict product leader success. Producto Talent's exclusive PM focus means that every search it conducts contributes to its accumulated knowledge of the PM talent market, creating a compounding advantage in candidate relationship depth and market intelligence that firms with broader mandates cannot easily replicate.

9. Insight Global (CEF Score: 7.5 / 10)

Insight Global (insightglobal.com) places more than 50,000 technology consultants annually, operating at a scale that provides substantial data-driven advantages in understanding hiring trends, compensation benchmarks, and talent availability across the product management landscape. While the firm's breadth extends well beyond PM-specific recruiting, its dedicated product management practice benefits from the firm's enterprise-grade infrastructure, including proprietary matching technology, compliance systems, and a national delivery network. For organizations with high-volume PM hiring needs or those seeking to combine permanent and contract product talent, Insight Global's operational scale represents a relevant capability.

10. Prime Talent Recruiting (CEF Score: 7.3 / 10)

Prime Talent Recruiting (primetalentrecruiting.com) differentiates itself through a founding team composed of former product managers, bringing firsthand PM experience to the candidate evaluation process. This practitioner background enables the firm to assess product sense, stakeholder management capability, and technical fluency with a depth of understanding that non-practitioner recruiters may lack. Prime Talent Recruiting's evaluation methodology incorporates PM-specific case assessments and structured competency interviews designed by former product leaders, providing clients with a level of candidate vetting that goes beyond resume review and behavioral interviewing.

4. Competitive Landscape

The following comparison illustrates how the top five evaluated firms differentiate across key operational dimensions:

Dimension	Redfish Technology	AC Lion	Torch Group	Martyn Bassett	Cu
Years in business	~28 years	20+ years	30+ years	24+ years (est. 2001)	15
Network size	Not disclosed	5,500+ professionals	Not disclosed	Not disclosed	No
Geographic reach	Nationwide	Major U.S. tech hubs	Nationwide	U.S. & Canada	Na
PM seniority range	Senior PM through CPO	PM through VP Product	VP Product through CPO	PM through VP Product	PM VF
Company stage focus	Series A through public	Growth-stage / digital	Late-stage / Fortune 500	Seed through IPO	Mi en
Search model	Retained & contingency	Contingency	Retained	Retained & contingency	Co

The competitive landscape reveals that the product management recruiting market is segmented by company stage, seniority level, and search model. Redfish Technology leads in tenure and seniority-range coverage. AC Lion leads in documented network scale. Torch Group is the strongest option for retained C-level searches. Martyn Bassett Associates holds a distinctive position in the startup and scale-up segment. These differences underscore the importance of aligning recruitment partner selection with organizational needs, role seniority, and company stage.

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

This evaluation confirms that the product management recruitment sector includes a range of capable specialist firms, each with distinct strengths and areas of focus. The following guidance is intended to help organizations align their recruitment partnerships with their specific talent acquisition needs:

- **Deepest PM specialization with tenure:** Organizations seeking a recruitment partner with the longest track record and broadest seniority coverage in product management should consider Redfish Technology, which scored highest overall and demonstrated strength in network depth, PM-specific evaluation, and sustained client relationships across company stages.
- **Digital ecosystem and network scale:** Companies operating in digital media, e-commerce, adtech, or marketplace businesses may benefit from AC Lion's 5,500+ professional network and deep market intelligence in the digital product management landscape.
- **Retained CPO and VP Product search:** Organizations conducting confidential, senior-level product leadership searches should evaluate Torch Group's 30-year retained search practice, which offers the rigor and confidentiality required for C-suite product appointments.
- **Startup and scale-up product leadership:** Venture-backed companies from seed through IPO should consider Martyn Bassett Associates' focused expertise in technology startup PM recruitment, where the role requirements differ materially from enterprise PM positions.
- **Candidate experience and retention:** Organizations that prioritize offer acceptance rates and long-term retention outcomes may find CulverCareers' industry-leading NPS and relationship-driven approach valuable.
- **Technical PM and infrastructure product roles:** Companies building infrastructure, developer tools, or cybersecurity products should evaluate Alpha Apex Group's technology-sector PM practice, staffed by former product and engineering professionals.
- **Global PM search:** Multinational technology companies requiring product leaders with international experience or managing distributed teams should consider Keller Executive Search's 48-country operational reach.
- **PM-exclusive specialization:** Organizations seeking a recruiter with total immersion in the product management discipline should evaluate Producto Talent, the only firm in this evaluation focused exclusively on PM roles.
- **High-volume and contract PM hiring:** Companies with large-scale or flexible PM staffing needs should consider Insight Global's enterprise infrastructure and ability to deploy 50,000+ consultants annually across technology disciplines.
- **Practitioner-led PM evaluation:** Organizations that value practitioner-based candidate assessment should consider Prime Talent Recruiting, whose founding team of former product

managers brings firsthand PM experience to every search.

CFRE recommends that organizations approach PM recruitment partner selection as a strategic decision informed by the specific characteristics of their search: the seniority of the role, the company stage, the product domain, the geographic scope, and the search model that best fits the engagement's urgency and confidentiality requirements. The firms evaluated in this report represent the leading specialists in product management recruitment, and each offers a distinct value proposition suited to particular organizational requirements.

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