LEX GORDON EXECUTIVE

You're probably not in the club.

QUEENSLAND EXECUTIVE SALARY GUIDE

Most executive roles in Queensland are filled without an ad. This is what they pay, and how to get tapped.

LEX GORDON EXECUTIVE, A BLACKROC GROUP COMPANY · OCTOBER 2026 EDITION

BRISBANE, GOLD COAST, SUNSHINE COAST · $10M TO $500M TURNOVER



FOREWORD

Nine months in. I thought it was time to ruffle a few feathers.

Jason Roulston, Founder and Managing Director, Lex Gordon Executive and the BLACKROC Group of Companies

Lex Gordon Executive opened at the end of January 2026, and its big sister company, BLACKROC, has a salary guide that's been a hit for our markets for years, genuine advice on the technology, marketing and sales roles we recruit for. So now that the footy Grand Finals and the school holidays are over, it felt like the right time to do the same for the executive market. What I am seeing in remuneration, what markets are moving, how to get into the executive 'club', some of how to go about it, and some of how not to go about it.

I started in this industry at 23; I am 38 now. Some of the people I grew up with in the industry are the ones getting the C, G and D level roles today. I've been placing the odd CEO, CIO and CTO for more than four years now in Brisbane; however, this brand gives that work its own name, its own website and space for me to do more of what I love to do: create careers and recruit great humans.

Never have I been for everyone (I mean, who is), and I'm fine with that. However, here at Lex Gordon, we'll tell a client the truth about the market even if it's not what they want to hear, and we'll tell an executive the truth about a role before they take it, because no one likes doing replacements. We work odd hours, so if it takes a video call at 9 pm or a coffee on a Sunday to get an executive assignment moving, that's what happens. Then there's the part we get almost the most satisfaction from: after the executive appointment is made, we get to help them build out their team.

Jason Roulston

Most executive roles here are not advertised. The market is a club. If you know, you know, and we will put our hands up, we are one of the reasons.

80%+

of the Queensland executive appointments we see are made without a public process

7 in 10

boards have exhausted their own network before they call a search firm

400

applicants, from here to India and back via Sydney, the week an executive role goes on a job board

How the club works

People in the know know that executives here get hired from a tap on the shoulder. Which private school you went to, which university, who you played rugby with. The Brisbane establishment, the OGs, the family that owns this company and that one and that one. Nobody says it out loud. If you know, you know.

Why we rarely advertise

The people who brief us do not care how we find their person, as long as it is moral and ethical. Lex Gordon gets three to six roles a month. They go on our assignments page rather than SEEK. Put one on a job board and six or seven in ten applicants are not right for it, and our phones are unusable for a week. Shoulder tapping keeps the noise down.

We are not the first call

Seven times out of ten a board or an executive does not come to us first. They think about who they know. By the time they ring us, you can be close to certain they have exhausted their own network and everyone in it. That is the club, running out of members. It is also why the person they end up appointing is usually someone they had never heard of.

There are a lot of good executives on the market right now, and most of them are sending the same resume to every role.

What we tell an executive who has been out for eighteen months and wants to know why nobody is calling.

3.9%

Queensland unemployment, the lowest of any state. The executive market is small even when the wider one is strong.

ABS Labour Force, May 2026

8 in 10

executives who ask us why nobody is calling are using one resume for every role

Lex Gordon conversations, past twelve months

2½ years

How long many good Queensland executives have been between roles. Some are working on the side to get by.

Lex Gordon conversations, past twelve months

If you are the executive

There is no shortage of candidates

Put a CTO role up and you get hundreds of applications, and there are not a lot of decent $250,000-plus CTO roles to begin with. Many good people have now been between roles for more than two years. Some consult a day a week. Some are living off the equity in their homes. None of that is a verdict on them, it is the size of this market.

Fix the resume first

When a CTO who has been out eighteen months asks us why nobody is calling, we ask to see the resume. Eight times out of ten it is one resume for every CTO role that comes up. Every CTO role is different. Use a different resume for every one. That applies to every role in this guide.

Make the call before you apply

When you see a role, work out who you know in that organisation, or who knows you, and give them a quick informal heads-up that you are going to apply. That phone call does more than the application ever will.

If you are the board or founder hiring

There are more good executives available than you think

For most roles under $100 million there are more capable executives in Queensland than there are roles. The scarcity is at the top of the range rather than in it.

A gap on a resume is not a verdict on the person

Two years between roles here says more about the number of roles than the person. Ask what they did with the time. The good ones have an answer.

Nine times out of ten, the work you do is not going to be good enough. You have to be in the room.

What we tell executives who are not in the club yet, and the ones who were tapped for ten years and just got made redundant. It is not fair, but it is how it works.

01 Fix your LinkedIn before the resume

Recruiter licences, search tools and every scraper on the internet read what is on your profile, and nothing that is still in your head. If it is a title and three lines, you are hard to find. Make it a broad brush of the work you have done, packed with copy, and post something worth reading every week or two. Consistency beats cleverness.

02 One resume per role. Not fifty before lunch

Fifty applications on Monday morning with the same resume gets you a bad result in 2026, because that resume appeals to none of the fifty. Every one of those roles is different. Pick fewer, tailor each one.

03 Find out what you are worth, then act like it

Sit down with a recruiter who actually works your market and get the 411 on what your work is worth here. Then carry yourself that way. The desperate candidate who applies for anything is the one getting rejected by anything, and the people getting tapped do not look desperate, because they are not.

04 Small events, in person, for years

There is no single event in any city that matters. There are thousands of small ones on meetup.com, and some of the best are at the edge of your industry. Get there early, say g'day to a few people, stay late. Do not corner one person for an hour. Done monthly, for years, this is why the people in the club have something to fall back on when the redundancy lands. Done only when you need something, it looks like what it is.

05 Apply with eight out of ten, and ring someone first

Men apply with one to three of the ten criteria. Women wait until they have eight or nine. Women read the criteria as rules, men read them as a wish list, and both are wrong. If you have eight, apply, and before you do, work out who you know inside and give them a quick informal heads-up. That phone call does more than the application ever will.

06 Pick your companies and follow them

Choose the businesses you admire. Reach out to people inside them, turn up to their events, follow their news. Set your AI assistant to flag anything they announce. Familiarity with what a business is doing, and who is doing it, is how a stranger becomes a name they already know.

Brisbane executive pay has barely moved in five years. Brisbane house prices have gone up by around 80 per cent.

Five-year change, mid-2021 to mid-2026. The executive figure is a CFO in a $30 to 100 million business with 40 to 90 staff.



Cotality, ABS, Lex Gordon. Five-year change to mid-2026.

2.1x to 3.4x

The median Brisbane home as a multiple of a CFO's base salary, 2021 against 2026.

$260k

A $320,000 CFO salary today, in 2021 dollars. About ten per cent less than the $290,000 a CFO was paid in 2021.

3 to 5%

This year's movement in most executive ranges. The biggest in five years, and about level with inflation.

Should a Brisbane executive take a discount to live here? Yes. A small one.

The numbers on the left are real. Brisbane is the second most expensive capital in the country and executive pay here has barely moved in five years. We still think an executive moving here should expect to take a little less than Sydney, because Brisbane is worth it. It is calmer, quieter, and it still runs like a big country town. People come here for the lifestyle and they stay for it.

The gap is moving. Friends of ours in residential real estate on the north side are seeing houses take a 20 to 30 per cent haircut on prices achieved earlier in 2026. That is what we are hearing on the ground rather than a statistic. As we head towards 2032 we expect the gap to close again and Brisbane to sit pound for pound with Sydney and Melbourne.

So for a board. Price the role for Brisbane rather than Sydney, but do not insult the person. A modest discount with a real bonus and a real long-term incentive behind it gets a Sydney executive on a plane. A big discount gets a polite no.

Jason Roulston. The dwelling figures are public; the advice is a view.

The size of the business decides what a CEO is paid. From a $10 million business to a $500 million one, the CEO range roughly triples.

Base salary range for each role in three sizes of business, measured by annual turnover: $10 to 30 million, $30 to 100 million and $100 to 500 million. Excluding super.

EXECUTIVE BASE SALARY

	$10 TO 30M	$30 TO 100M	$100 TO 500M
Chief Executive Officer	$250k to $350k	$350k to $500k	$500k to $800k+
Chief Financial Officer	$220k to $280k	$280k to $380k	$380k to $520k
Chief Operating Officer	$220k to $280k	$280k to $370k	$370k to $500k
Chief Information Officer	$240k to $300k	$300k to $390k	$390k to $500k
Chief Technology Officer	$230k to $280k	$280k to $360k	$360k to $460k
Head of AI	$220k to $280k	$280k to $360k	$350k to $450k+

Base salary excluding super. Lex Gordon data, past twelve months.

EXECUTIVE BASE SALARY

	$10 TO 30M	$30 TO 100M	$100 TO 500M
Head of Sales	$200k to $260k	$260k to $340k	$340k to $450k
General Manager	$200k to $260k	$250k to $330k	$320k to $450k
Chief Product Officer	$230k to $290k	$280k to $350k	$350k to $450k
Chief Marketing Officer	$200k to $260k	$260k to $330k	$330k to $420k
Chief People Officer	$200k to $250k	$250k to $320k	$320k to $400k
Head of Engineering	$220k to $270k	$260k to $330k	$320k to $420k

Base salary excluding super. Lex Gordon data, past twelve months.

This is the page that has largely prevented us from ever releasing this report.

These roles vary greatly from business to business, so bear with us, and remember this is our point of view.

	$10 TO 30M	$30 TO 100M	$100 TO 500
Chief Commercial Officer	$220k to $280k	$280k to $360k	$360k to $470
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$30k to $60k	$60k to $120k	$100k to $250
Chief Customer Officer	$200k to $250k	$250k to $320k	$320k to $420
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$20k to $40k	$40k to $70k	$70k to $140
Chief Strategy Officer	–	$250k to $320k	$320k to $430
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	–	$40k to $70k	$70k to $150
General Counsel / Company Secretary	–	–	$300k to $400
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	–	–	$50k to $110
Chief of Staff	$150k to $190k	$180k to $240k	$230k to $300
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$10k to $20k	$20k to $40k	$30k to $60

First-pass ranges. Base excluding super.

HEAD OF AND GENERAL MANAGER ROLES

	$10 TO 30M	$30 TO 100M	$100 TO 500
Head of Operations	$170k to $220k	$210k to $270k	$260k to $340
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$15k to $30k	$25k to $50k	$40k to $80
Head of Technology / IT Manager	$160k to $200k	$190k to $240k	$230k to $300
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$10k to $20k	$20k to $35k	$30k to $60
Head of Data and Analytics	$170k to $220k	$210k to $270k	$260k to $330
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$15k to $25k	$20k to $40k	$40k to $70
Head of Product	$180k to $230k	$220k to $280k	$270k to $350
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$15k to $30k	$25k to $50k	$40k to $80
Head of Marketing	$150k to $190k	$180k to $230k	$220k to $290
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$10k to $20k	$20k to $40k	$30k to $60

First-pass ranges. Base excluding super.

	$10 TO 30M	$30 TO 100M	$100 TO 500
Head of People and Culture	$150k to $190k	$180k to $230k	$220k to $290
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$10k to $20k	$15k to $35k	$30k to $60
Head of Digital	$160k to $200k	$190k to $240k	$230k to $300
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$10k to $25k	$20k to $40k	$30k to $60
Head of Security	$170k to $210k	$200k to $250k	$240k to $310
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$10k to $25k	$20k to $40k	$30k to $60
Head of Transformation / PMO	–	$200k to $260k	$250k to $330
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	–	$25k to $50k	$40k to $80
General Manager, Operations	$180k to $230k	$220k to $290k	$280k to $380
BONUS IF TARGETS ARE MET	$20k to $40k	$40k to $80k	$70k to $160

First-pass ranges. Base excluding super.

Nine times out of ten, a search for a $300k role in Brisbane goes wrong for one reason. The client does not know what they want.

Said with love, to the people who pay us. The rare exception is the recruiter not qualifying the role properly.

21 business days

Brief to offer when a search is run well. The search on the next page did it in twenty.

8 to 13 weeks

The norm for these roles here. Most of the extra time is the client deciding rather than the market.

9 in 10

Offers that wobble, wobble on the LTI rather than the base. The one base that does fail is the one pitched low to leave room.

Know what you want before you call us

More than a good CFO. Be ready to tell us what hours the role really needs (at this level the normal rules do not apply, and odd hours are part of it), whether industry experience matters, which results on a resume you actually care about, and what sort of person will fit the exec team you already have. The client who says thanks for those, who else have you got, usually skipped this step, and is now using thirty interviews over three months to work it out.

The money has to add up

A founder with a $40 million business asked us for a CFO who had done $150 million, with $300,000 to spend. It is a little light, but in this market you can find that person for it, as long as the package is stacked with a real short-term incentive and a long-term incentive that means something. Half a per cent is a start. A real hitter will want more.

Wash the LTI through the board before the offer

The base is rarely the issue, unless it was pitched at the bottom of the range to leave room, which gets a polite no. The STI is usually thereabouts, and in a PE-backed business a $300k base with around $100k STI is common. The LTI is where offers fall over, because it has not been agreed with the rest of the board and lands as a lowball. Typical here is 0.1 to 1 per cent, two at a push.

One that worked this year

A Chief People Officer role. CPOs are not usually known for a commercial bent, and this one needed it. We went to market, the right person approached us, we had a coffee, we went through everything we knew about the opportunity, and within two or three meetings the appointment was made. Start to finish, about six weeks. Simple and straightforward, because the brief was clear and the board moved.

Where offers fall over

Equity nobody can value. Notice periods nobody mentioned. Late references that turn up something the offer should have covered. A partner who was never part of the relocation conversation. An offer pitched at the bottom of the range to leave room to negotiate. The good ones read that as a verdict and decline.

One search, start to finish. A technology executive for a business north of $100 million, in twenty business days.

Anonymised, deliberately. The numbers are real. This is what it looks like when the client knows what they want and decides at pace.

18

spoken to and met. One appointed.

20

business days, brief to offer. Then a three-month notice period.

$310k

base, up from a $280k budget. $150k STI.

1.8%

LTI, effective from the start date, with limited hurdles. Up from the 0.5 to 1.5 per cent in the brief.

The brief

Founder-led, PE-backed, north of $100 million revenue. A client we had known a while rang to say it was time to hire a senior technology executive. Budget was $280k plus super, with an LTI somewhere between 0.5 and 1.5 per cent, left open on purpose until they knew who the person was.

Going to market

Posted on LinkedIn and on the Lex Gordon site. No paid campaign. One email to our network, which is what found the candidate. Someone forwarded it, and they rang us that evening.

The first call

They asked a couple of good questions, not a lot, worked out quickly that they were interested, then asked what we needed to know. What they had done, why they were looking. They had not been looking long. Their domain, their brand and how they operated fitted.

Day two

Application in front of the CEO. He came back that night. Coffee booked for the following week.

Weeks two to four

Casual coffee with the CEO, then back and forth on the specifics of the role and where the business was heading. A ninety-minute panel with the founders and two board members. The week after, the chairman.

Day twenty

Offer. They negotiated the LTI up and changed some of the terms. Three-month notice period, then they started. We are now helping them build out their team.

Lex Gordon Executive placement, 2026. Sector, company and candidate withheld by agreement. Package figures are as signed.

How to negotiate equity plans.

When a founder says one per cent, our answer is one per cent of what, valued when, and what is the hurdle. In 2025 one of these took us six or seven hours of calls with lawyers to nail down. This is how the plans here actually work, referenced against the average of several PE management equity plans.

01 What you are actually given

In a PE-backed business here it is usually loan-funded shares. You buy shares at today's value, the company lends you the money at no interest, and you only repay from what the shares sell for. You own shares on paper, but your upside is the growth above the price you paid, so they behave like options. Founder-led businesses more often use growth shares, options or a cash phantom plan, where you own nothing.

02 A percentage of what

Of the equity. That is what is left after the bank is repaid, after the fund's loan notes and their interest are repaid, and after the costs of the sale. One per cent of the company and one per cent of what is left are very different numbers. The example below shows how different.

03 Who gets paid before you

The bank. Then the fund, which gets its money back plus interest, typically 8 to 12 per cent a year, compounding. Then everyone holding ordinary shares, you included. Some plans give management a bigger share once the fund has made two or three times its money. That is a ratchet. Ask for one.

04 When it becomes yours

On a sale, and only if the hurdles are met. The usual hurdles are the fund's return, measured two ways, a money multiple (say three times) and an annual return (say 30 per cent), plus you still being employed. The board decides whether the hurdles were met and the plan will say you cannot dispute it. No sale within about seven years and the board can usually buy you out.

05 What happens when you leave

Good leaver means death, illness or redundancy, or the board agreeing in writing. Everything else, resigning included, is bad leaver by default. A bad leaver gets the lower of what they paid and what they owe on the loan, which is nothing. A good leaver keeps what has vested at fair value, and if you cannot agree the value, the board sets it. Read this clause first. The LTI does not count towards notice or severance either.

The order the money comes out on a sale

BANK DEBT

Repaid first, in full.

FUND LOAN NOTES PLUS INTEREST

The fund's money back, plus 8 to 12 per cent a year compounding.

HURDLE

What the fund must earn before management's shares are worth anything.

ORDINARY EQUITY

The fund's stake and the management pool. Your one per cent is a share of this slice only.

The proportions change with every deal.

The same one per cent, three very different cheques

$1.0m

One per cent of the company

A founder-led business sells for $100 million. A one per cent growth share or phantom grant, fully vested, is worth about $1 million before tax.

$120k

One per cent of the ordinary equity, behind the fund

A PE fund bought the same business four years ago with $60 million of loan notes at 10 per cent. It is owed about $88 million before anyone else sees a dollar. That leaves $12 million of ordinary equity. One per cent is $120,000.

The same one per cent, three very different cheques, continued

$620k

The same grant at a $150 million sale

The fund is still owed $88 million. The ordinary equity is now $62 million, so one per cent is $620,000. A bigger sale makes management's share jump. A smaller one can wipe it out. Ask what your grant is worth if the sale comes in under plan.

Arithmetic rather than a real deal, with no bank debt in it to keep it simple.

The Team.



Jason Roulston

Managing Director
17 years experience



Eloise Reich

Consultant
7 years experience



Jordan Ricketts

Partner, Technology Markets

15 years experience



Caitlin Skinn

Client Operations Manager

15 years experience

What we actually do

Exclusive, or not at all

If you want to run us alongside another search firm, we will say no, which is why we put our best foot forward when we pitch. Most of the clients we work with we have known for years, so it rarely comes up.

We educate. We do not condition

You see the approaches, the market feedback, and the objections people have about your brand, your role or your package. No sugar-coating and no keeping you in the dark. There is no black magic in this. It is trust, knowledge, brand and hard work.

Everyone who interviews gets feedback

If you interview through us, you hear how it went. What landed, what did not, and why the decision went the way it did. The actual reasons, the same ones we give the client. Most people in this industry do not bother. We think it is the least you are owed for your time.

Please do not blow up our inboxes.

What to do with this guide, and what not to.

Do not send us your resume and ask what roles we have

Any recruiter who says they will keep an eye out for you is lying. Nobody has forty thousand pairs of eyes. What you will get back is a polite thanks and all the best.

Introduce yourself and build the connection

Comment on the odd post. Do not be annoying, do not misread the room. Keep an eye on events we are hosting or going to and say hello in person. It is keeping in touch, with something relevant to say, over months, rather than one email, one call or one text.

Not everyone is for you

And you are not for everyone. That is fine, that is how it is meant to be. Do it with us, with other recruiters, with the businesses you want to work for. You will find your person and you will find your role, and you will be surprised at the inroads it makes.

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THE GUIDE, BOTH EDITIONS

lexgordonexecutive.com.au/guide