

PLAYDAWN

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Hiring growth and UA marketers for games in India, 2026

For studio heads, growth leads and HR

Summary

User acquisition (UA) and performance marketing was the largest group in our 2026 games candidate calls, at 45 people, and most came from outside games. That makes it a strong year to hire. "Performance marketer" covers very different skills, though, and a good e-commerce buyer and a good mobile game UA manager do different jobs. This paper uses our call data and recent industry reports to help studios hire well.

45

UA and performance marketing candidates we spoke to in 2026

21 of 45

worked outside games at the time of the call

45%

median hike asked at mid level

01

Who is on the market

From the 45 UA, performance marketing and ASO candidates we spoke to in 2026

Level	Median experience	Median current pay	Median ask	Median hike asked
Junior (15 candidates)	2 years	₹5.2 LPA	₹7.5 LPA	40%
Mid (26 candidates)	4 years	₹7.2 LPA	₹10.0 LPA	45%

Senior and lead candidates were too few to report.

Where they worked at the time of the call

- Outside games (e-commerce, edtech, consumer apps, B2B): 21
- Not working: 10
- Agencies and outsourcing firms: 9
- Game studios: 3
- Freelance: 1

Skills they brought, by mentions: Meta Ads 37, Google Ads 36, app store optimisation 17, Apple Search Ads 11, AppsFlyer 7, Snapchat Ads 7.

02

The market they are walking into

- Spend is large and led by creative. AppsFlyer puts global gaming UA spend at about $25 billion in 2025, up 3.8%. Advertisers spending under $500,000 a quarter raised creative production by 20 to 40% over the year.
- Tracking on iOS is partial. Since Apple's App Tracking Transparency, user-level iOS data is limited, and teams rely on SKAdNetwork, modelled attribution and incrementality tests.
- AI is part of the job. On our calls, UA candidates described using AI for creative variants, copy and reporting.

03

What transfers and what does not

Transfers well

- Campaign structure, bidding and budget pacing on Meta and Google
- A/B testing discipline
- Funnel thinking and reading cohorts
- Store page testing (ASO), for those who have done app work

Common gaps we saw

- No hands-on app install campaigns (web, lead generation or e-commerce only)
- Little work with ad networks used by games beyond Meta and Google
- Limited experience with game metrics: retention by day, LTV, payback period, return on ad spend by cohort
- Little iOS measurement experience
- Few have worked with Western audiences, which global studios often require

04

How candidates use AI (anonymised examples from our calls)

- Drafting app store descriptions and making icons
- Generating and testing ad copy
- AI voiceovers for campaign creatives
- Using an AI model with the Meta Ads API to analyse creative performance

- Automated workflows to create, test and pause ads
- Early return-on-ad-spend prediction to manage many titles with a small team

When you interview, ask how they use AI and where they still check the work by hand.

05

Volume is not quality

UA roles attract large, mixed pools of applicants. Screen early for app install experience, because many applicants come from web or e-commerce campaigns.

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A hiring kit for UA roles

Must-haves to write down, up to five

- App install campaigns run, with budget range
- Platforms: Meta, Google, Apple Search Ads, at least one game ad network
- Metrics owned: CPI, D1 and D7 retention, ROAS by cohort, payback
- Creative testing process
- iOS measurement approach

Structured interview questions

01	Tell us about a campaign where cost per install went up. How did you find the cause?
02	How do you decide which creatives to scale and which to stop?
03	Walk us through how you measure iOS results today.
04	What changes when a game moves from India only to a global launch?
05	How do you use AI in your weekly work, and where do you not trust it?

Work sample, under 2 hours: give a one-page brief with fake but realistic numbers for five creatives over 14 days. Ask which to kill, which to scale, what to test next, and why. Discuss it live for 20 minutes.

Pay guide from our data: junior UA candidates asked for about ₹7.5 LPA, and mid-level for about ₹10 LPA. Strong candidates with direct game UA experience and iOS skills will often price above

these medians.

Ramp-up plan for strong non-game marketers

- Weeks 1 and 2: game metrics, current dashboards, past campaign reviews
- Weeks 3 and 4: small tests on one channel with a mentor
- Month 2: own one channel and the creative test cadence

07

For candidates moving into game UA

- Lead with numbers you moved: cost per install, retention, payback
- Get hands-on with app install campaigns, even small ones
- Learn the game metrics vocabulary (D1, D7, LTV, ROAS)
- Show one creative test you designed and what you learned

Sources

- AppsFlyer, gaming app marketing report (2026), also reported by Mobile Marketing Reads.
- Playdawn data: 45 anonymised UA and performance marketing candidate calls, February to October 2026.

About Playdawn

Playdawn hires for games, interactive tech and robotics, and has done so since 2016. We find, assess and place specialists for studios in India and abroad.

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