TMSA
Transportation Marketing & Sales Association

TRANSPORTATION MARKETING
& SALES ASSOCIATION
BI-ANNUAL INDUSTRY BENCHMARK

SALES & MARKETING INDUSTRY RESEARCH

2026

Sales & Marketing Industry Benchmark

The industry is investing in growth faster than it is learning what drives it.

EDITION
Seventh Edition

PUBLISHED
September 2026

BASE
122 respondents

CONFIDENTIAL · TMSA MEMBERS ONLY

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS BY
PATH
GROW BOLDLY

TMSA.ORG
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01 Executive Summary

THE ONE TAKEAWAY FROM THE 2026 BENCHMARK

The Industry Is Investing in Growth Faster Than It Is Learning What Drives It

The 2026 benchmark points to a common challenge: **companies are investing aggressively in growth, but their ability to understand what's driving that growth isn't keeping pace.**

Why is this important? Growth isn't coming *only* from new business. In fact, existing customers account for a significant share of revenue, referrals are the largest source of new pipeline, and service remains the leading reason customers leave. Across sales, marketing, customer experience and technology, the data raises a similar question: **before adding more, do companies know what's already working?**

1. Companies are growing. Sales teams are still missing their targets.

Eighty-three percent of organizations reported revenue growth, yet 69% finished at or below 90% of quota. That raises a basic question: **Are the targets realistic?**

Before assuming missed quotas are a sales performance problem, companies need enough information to understand what's behind them. Only 21% publish win rates at the individual salesperson level. Without that information, it's difficult to know whether the problem is the salesperson, the sales process or simply a target that was too high.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TMSA MEMBERS:
With revenue growing while quota attainment lags, missed targets should not automatically be treated as a seller-performance issue. Company leaders need to test whether goals reflect market conditions and sales capacity, sales managers need visibility into conversion and win rates, and sellers need coaching tied to where opportunities are actually being lost.

2. The industry's biggest growth investment is new business, but much of its growth comes from current customers.

Hiring more “hunters” is the most common growth plan in this year's study. Sixty-three percent plan to increase the number of new-business salespeople, nearly double the 32% reported in 2024.

But it's worth looking at what that investment really costs. Organizations most commonly spend $150,000 to $199,999 per sales employee. Forty-four percent say it takes seven months or longer for a new salesperson to become fully productive, and 35% lose at least one in five salespeople voluntarily each year.

At the same time, nearly nine in ten organizations get at least 25% of their revenue from retaining and growing existing customers. Customer referrals are the largest source of new pipeline, and growth from existing accounts ranks third. Yet only 25% plan to add account managers.

There is another important signal in the data: **service quality remains the leading reason customers leave (39%), even as formal CX strategies have become much more common** - **59%** of companies have a 'formal and sophisticated' CX, up from 39% in 2024**.**

That raises a question the benchmark can't answer: are companies hearing from customers often enough to know what's working, what's not and which relationships may be at risk? Having a CX strategy is important, but knowing what customers are experiencing is what allows companies to protect and grow those relationships.

The takeaway isn't **"don't hire hunters."** The data simply gives leaders a reason to look at whether the money going toward winning new customers versus keeping and growing current ones matches where their growth comes from.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TMSA MEMBERS:
The data does not suggest companies should stop pursuing new business. However, it does suggest they should examine whether investment across acquisition, retention and account growth reflects how revenue is actually generated. That includes how marketing supports demand and referrals, how sales develops new and existing accounts, how customer experience protects relationships, and whether new hires receive the training needed to become productive.

3. The industry is still struggling to measure what works.

Measurement has been a persistent industry challenge throughout the history of this benchmarking study, and the 2024–2026 comparison shows little evidence of progress. Companies continue to invest in sales and marketing, but many still cannot clearly connect those investments to results.

Only 21% publish salesperson-level win rates. Just 37% have a documented agreement between sales and marketing, 47% define both marketing- and sales-qualified leads, and 76% are no better than "somewhat confident" in their ability to measure ROI from the beginning of the sales process through the sale.

Most importantly, **"we can't measure it" is not the same as "it isn't working."**

Trade shows are a good example. Among organizations investing in trade shows, 47% report positive results. Yet, 37% of organizations investing in trade shows don't measure the return at all. Without better measurement, companies risk making investment decisions based on what they can see rather than what's actually working.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TMSA MEMBERS:
Poor measurement affects more than reporting. It shapes which programs receive budget, how sales and marketing judge performance, and whether individuals can see how their work contributes to growth. Shared definitions, consistent handoffs and a manageable set of measures can help companies make better decisions without simply asking teams to produce more activity.

4. AI adoption has accelerated. Now the question is whether it's creating value.

The AI challenge has changed dramatically since 2024. Marketing use of AI has risen from 49% to 81%, and the industry's earlier restrictions on AI use have largely disappeared.

Now sales and marketing face different problems.

Sales teams aren't necessarily short on technology. They may have too much of it. Too many tools that don't work together is their top AI concern, cited by 51%. Marketing has almost the opposite problem: only 29% report that AI is well connected to the rest of their marketing technology.

Yet companies continue to add technology: 55% plan a CRM deployment within the next 12 months, while simplifying the technology they already have ranks near the bottom of their priorities at just 13%.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TMSA MEMBERS:
AI value will look different depending on the work it supports. Those approving investments need a clear business case; those managing teams need integration, governance and realistic measures of success; and those using the tools need training, guardrails and a way to flag where AI creates more work instead of less.

The Bigger Takeaway

Across all four findings, the message is similar: **more investment is not automatically more growth.**

More salespeople won't solve unrealistic targets. More focus on winning new business won't address service problems affecting current customers. More marketing activity won't help if companies can't tell what's working. Additionally, more AI won't create value simply because more tools are available.

The 2026 benchmark suggests the next growth opportunity may be less about **adding more,** and more about **understanding what works, protecting what you already have and putting investment behind the things that do.**

PUT THE BENCHMARK TO WORK

Examine: Whether quotas, hiring plans and technology investments reflect where growth is actually coming from.

Discuss: Whether the company is investing appropriately across winning, keeping, and growing customers.

Act: Choose one significant growth investment and determine whether the organization can clearly connect it to pipeline, revenue or retention.