

ORRJO.

The State of B2B Pipeline

2026 Edition

108 data points. 10,000+ meetings. 50+ clients. 15 countries.

The report your competitors don't want you to read.

Published by ORRJO | orrjo.com

Executive Summary

Five numbers that define B2B pipeline in 2026. Every VP Sales, CRO, and CEO should know these cold.

3.43%

Average cold email reply rate across all industries in 2026.

Top 10% hit 10%+. The gap between average and elite has never been wider.
Instantly Cold Email Benchmark Report 2026

87%

Of sales organisations now use AI in their workflow.

But human SDRs still generate 2.6x more pipeline revenue than AI SDRs.
Warmly 2026; AI Agenix Jan 2026

67%

Of B2B buyers prefer a completely rep-free experience.

Up from 61% in June 2025. But self-service produces 1.65x more purchase regret.
Gartner Sales Survey, March 2026

90%+

Meeting attendance when demand gen runs before outbound.

Industry average is 80%. Cold outbound alone: 52% show rate. The gap is massive.
ORRJO proprietary data, 10,000+ meetings

28%

Of sales reps hit annual quota. The lowest figure in six years.

69% of B2B reps are falling short. Average quota attainment across orgs: 43-47%.
Everstage / Sales Talent Inc 2026; Forrester / RepVue 2024-2025

The Core Finding

Companies that integrate brand awareness, demand generation, and outbound into a single coordinated motion consistently outperform those relying on any single channel. Cold outbound still works, but only when the ground has been prepared. This report shows exactly how much preparation matters and what happens when you skip it.

What follows is the most comprehensive set of pipeline benchmarks we have ever published. 108 data points drawn from ORRJO's proprietary data, Gartner, Forrester, Salesforce, HubSpot, and 20+ additional industry sources. Use it to benchmark your performance, justify your budget, and build the case for doing things differently.

How to read this report: Pages 3-7 cover the data by category. Pages 8-11 translate the data into actionable guidance for VP Sales, CMOs, and Founders respectively. Page 12 gives you the playbook.

Cold Email: The Numbers Don't Lie

3.43%

Average reply rate. Top performers exceed 10%.
Instantly 2026

44.2%

Average open rate (mean). Median: 38.6%. Top 25%: 55%+.
Instantly / ColdMailOpenRate 2026

287%

Higher engagement with multi-channel vs single-channel outreach.
MarketBetter 2026

58%

Of all replies come from step one. Follow-ups add 42%.
Instantly 2026

Performance by Industry

INDUSTRY	AVG REPLY RATE	NOTES
Legal Services	up to 10%	Highest across all verticals
Consulting	7.88%	Strong relationship-driven responses
C-Level Targets	6.4%	23% higher than non-C-suite (5.2%)
B2B Average	3.4-5.8%	3-5% realistic at scale; 10%+ is elite
Software / SaaS	<1%	Most saturated inbox in B2B

Sendral 2026; Cleverly 2026; Saleshandy 2026; Prospeo 2026

Email Length, Timing & Deliverability

Optimal Length

50-125 words for first email. Top performers keep it under 75 words. Shorter emails generate highest response rates.
Martal 2026; Snov.io 2026

Best Send Time

Wednesday, 7-11 AM for replies. Deliverability must stay above 95%. Bounce rate under 2%, ideally under 1%.
Instantly 2026

Google/Yahoo Sender Requirements (Feb 2024)

Bulk senders (5,000+ daily) now require **SPF, DKIM, DMARC authentication**. Spam rate must stay under 0.3%. Spam complaints below 0.1%. One-click unsubscribe mandatory. Non-compliance means your emails do not arrive.

PowerDMARC 2026; Litmus / Google 2024

What the Top 10% Do Differently

Multi-channel sequences (email + phone + LinkedIn) convert at 2-3x any single channel. LinkedIn outreach delivers **2x the response rate** of cold email alone. Follow-ups can increase reply rates by 50%+, yet 48% of reps never send a second message. Personalised cold emails deliver positive ROI for nearly 9 in 10 sales teams.
MarketBetter 2026; SoPro 2026; Martal 2026

The AI SDR Question

\$5.81B

AI SDR market size in 2026 (32% CAGR). \$17.58B projected by 2030.
Research and Markets 2026

87%

Of sales orgs now use AI for prospecting, forecasting, or drafting.
Warmly 2026

2.6x

More pipeline revenue from human SDRs than AI SDRs in 6-month study.
AI Agenix, Jan 2026 (38,000 outreach attempts)

117

Meetings/month for hybrid teams vs 56 human-only, 29 AI-only.
Martal 2026

Head-to-Head: AI vs Human SDR

METRIC	HUMAN SDR	AI SDR	DIFFERENCE
Meeting show rate	71%	52%	+19pts human
Revenue generated (6 mo)	\$147K	\$56K	2.6x human
Meeting-to-opportunity	25%	15%	+10pts human
Outreach volume	1x baseline	10-50x	AI wins on volume
Cost	1x baseline	20-60%	AI wins on cost

AI Agenix Jan 2026; DevCommX 2026; Salesmotion 2026

Where AI Wins

- **Research & enrichment** at scale
- **List building & scoring** across data sources
- **Initial qualification** and inbound triage
- **Sequence optimisation** (send time, subject lines)
- 10-50x outreach volume at 20-60% of cost

DevCommX 2026; Martal 2026

Where Humans Win

- **Complex deal navigation** with multiple stakeholders
- **Relationship and trust building**
- **Strategic conversations** requiring judgement
- **Meeting quality:** 71% vs 52% show rate
- Revenue per conversation: 2.6x higher

AI Agenix Jan 2026

Gartner Predictions

By 2028, **90% of B2B buying will be AI-agent intermediated**, pushing \$15T through AI agent exchanges. AI agents will outnumber human sellers by 10x, yet fewer than 40% will report improved productivity. By 2026, 40% of enterprise apps will include task-specific AI agents.

Gartner, Nov 2025; Gartner, Oct 2025

ORRJO's position: We use AI for the research. Humans for the conversation. Hybrid teams book 117 meetings/month. The companies getting the best results are not choosing between AI and humans. They are using AI to make their humans more effective.

The Buyer Has Changed. Have You?

67%

Prefer a rep-free buying experience. Up from 61% in June 2025.
Gartner Sales Survey, March 2026

73%

Use AI tools (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini) in purchase research.
Averi / PRNewswire, March 2026

13+

Internal stakeholders per B2B purchase, plus 9 external participants.
Forrester 2026

95%

Of B2B buyers are NOT in-market at any given time.
LinkedIn / Ehrenberg-Bass

AI in the Buying Process

68% of B2B buyers start research in AI tools before ever touching Google. AI search traffic converts at 14.2% vs Google organic's 2.8%. Yet only 22% of marketers track AI visibility, and just 25.7% plan to develop content for AI citations. If your brand does not show up in LLM answers, you are invisible during the most critical phase of evaluation.

Warmly 2026; Digital Bloom 2026; Averi 2026

The Buying Committee

Standard Purchase

13 internal + 9 external stakeholders. 94% of buyers with groups of 6+ report clear benefits. Procurement is a decision-maker in 53% of buying cycles.
Forrester 2026

GenAI Purchases

Buying group **doubles in size** compared to non-AI purchases. More evaluators, more scrutiny, longer cycles for AI-related spend.
Forrester 2026; Digital Commerce 360

The Buying Cycle

METRIC	DATA	SOURCE
Average buying cycle	10.1 months	CorporateVisions 2026 (down from 11.3)
B2B journey (Dreamdata)	272 days	Dreamdata 2026 (3.5M journeys)
Self-service regret	1.65x more	Gartner 2026 (vs guided buying)
High-quality deal likelihood	1.8x higher	Gartner 2026 (with rep + digital)
Pre-research before talking to rep	96%	HubSpot State of Sales 2025
Use trials to evaluate	60%+	Forrester 2026 (78% for \$10M+ deals)

Lead Qualification

13%

Average MQL-to-SQL rate. Top performers: 25-40%.
First Page Sage 2026

40%

SaaS MQL-to-SQL. Far above the 13% average.
Data-Mania 2026

53%

Conversion rate when following up within the first hour.
Landbase 2026

What this means: Your outbound needs to be smarter, not louder. Sellers are getting in 6-7 weeks sooner than before, with the first-contact point shifting from 69% to 61% of the buying journey. Economic pressure is pushing buyers to engage earlier. The window is there. But only for those who earn trust before the conversation.

CorporateVisions 2026

Demand Gen: The Missing Layer

5:1

Average B2B marketing ROI across all channels (\$5 revenue per \$1).
Data-Mania 2026

748%

ROI from SEO. Highest of any B2B marketing channel.
Martal 2026

5-7x

Higher reply rates from signal-based outbound vs cold.
Landbase 2026

25-40%

Higher response when LinkedIn ads run before cold email.
ColdIQ 2026

ROI by Channel

CHANNEL	ROI / CPL	KEY INSIGHT
SEO	748% ROI	Highest return of any B2B channel
Email Marketing	261% ROI	Second highest; personalised drives 9/10 positive ROI
Webinars	213% ROI	73% of B2B attendees become leads; 56% avg conversion
Short-form Video	#1 format	Most used B2B content format; 104% more marketers cite it
LinkedIn Ads	\$75 avg CPL	\$5.50 CPC, \$33 CPM. Doc Ads: \$45-65 CPL via Lead Gen Forms
LinkedIn Organic	2.1% ER	Personal profiles: 3.85%. Document posts: 7.00% engagement

Martal 2026; HubSpot State of Marketing 2026; Dreamdata LinkedIn Ads 2026; Social Insider 2026; Stackmatix 2026

Budget Allocation (Industry Average)

36%

Lead generation

30%

Brand building

20%

Demand generation

Konabayev 2026

Signal-Based Selling

Signal-based outbound produces **5-7x higher reply rates** than cold outbound. Acting within 24 hours performs 3x better than waiting a week. Teams using intent-based programs report **93% conversion improvements and 220% higher CTRs**. The old spray-and-pray model is dying. Proactive outreach to likely buyers, timed with buying signals, has never been more effective.

Landbase 2026; Digital Sales Pro 2026; MarketBetter 2026; Colony Spark 2026

Webinars

35-45% of registrants attend, with 57% registration-to-attendance conversion. 73% of B2B webinar attendees become leads. Average webinar conversion rate: 56%. Two active CTAs yield 25% CTA conversion.

DemandSage / Cvent 2026; MarketingProfs 2025; Entrepreneurshq 2026

Why this matters for outbound: Brand warming before outbound produces 30-40% higher response rates (ORRJO data). 68% of B2B marketers say demand gen delivers higher quality leads than traditional acquisition. 87% say content created brand awareness. Running demand gen BEFORE outbound changes everything.

ColdIQ 2026; Specificity Inc 2026; CMI 2025

Pipeline Metrics That Matter

20-30%

Average B2B win rate. Best-in-class: 35-40%+. Median: ~21%.
First Page Sage / Data-Mania 2026

3-5x

Pipeline coverage required. SMB: 2.5-3x. Enterprise: 4-5x.
Outreach / Fullcast 2026

20%

Standard B2B meeting no-show rate. 15 booked = 12 held.
Only-B2B 2026

40-60%

CAC has risen since 2023. Lowest CAC: referrals at \$150.
GTM8020 2026

Cost Per Meeting

CHANNEL	CPM RANGE	NOTES
Cold Email	\$150-\$300	Most cost-effective channel at scale
Cold Calling	\$200-\$400	5.4% avg connect rate; top quartile: 13.3%
LinkedIn Outreach	\$250-\$500	2x response rate vs cold email alone
Paid Ads	\$400-\$800	Highest cost but scalable
Internal SDR	\$300-\$500	Fully loaded cost per meeting
Outsourced (PPM)	\$100-\$500+	Enterprise: up to \$1,500+

TalentBridge 2026; Cleverly 2026

Sales Cycles & Velocity

SEGMENT	AVG CYCLE	WIN RATE	AVG DEAL SIZE
SMB	30 days	26%	Varies
SaaS / Tech	67 days	22%	\$12,400
Enterprise	90 days	21%	Varies
Manufacturing	124 days	19%	\$47,800
\$1M-\$5M ARR	43 days	26%	--
\$25M-\$100M ARR	78 days	21%	--

Data-Mania 2026; First Page Sage 2026

Cold Calling in 2026

5.4%

Average connect rate. Top quartile: 13.3%.
Zoominfo / Gong 2026

~180

Average dials per booked meeting. Top: under 100.
Cleverly 2026

\$180K

Annual revenue uplift from improving attendance 65% to 80%.
Prospero 2026

Customer Acquisition Cost

Average B2B SaaS CAC: **\$1,200 per customer**. Self-serve: \$200-\$600. Enterprise sales-led: \$1,500-\$3,000. Median CAC payback: **8.6 months** (under 12 is healthy). Target LTV:CAC ratio: 3:1 minimum, ideally 4:1-7:1. Referrals deliver lowest CAC at \$150; outbound often reaches \$1,980.

SaaS Hero 2026; GTM8020 2026; Proven SaaS 2026

The Integrated Model: ORRJO's Data

The ORRJO thesis: Run brand awareness and demand generation before outbound begins. Not instead of outbound. Before it. The data across 50+ clients, 10,000+ meetings, and 15 countries confirms this produces fundamentally different results.

How Brand + Demand + Outbound Compounds

Metric	Cold Outbound Only	ORRJO Integrated	Improvement
Reply rate	3.4%	18%	5.3x
Meeting attendance	52%	90%+	+38pts
No-show rate	20%	≤10%	Half
Time to first meeting	14-21 days	3-5 days	4x faster

ORRJO Benchmarks

10,000+

Meetings booked across 50+ clients in 15 countries.

£250M+

Pipeline value generated for ORRJO clients to date.

Client Results

Aveni

500+ meetings booked. 98% attendance rate. 1,000 webinar sign-ups. From referral-only to scalable outbound engine across financial services.

Jua

384 meetings in 12 months. Entered enterprise weather intelligence with zero brand recognition. ORRJO built brand, demand gen, and outbound simultaneously.

Clear Talents

97% attendance over 12 months. HR tech targeting large employers. Consistent C-suite meetings across NHS, higher education, and FTSE 250.

Why Single-Channel Agencies Fail

Outbound-Only Agencies

Send cold emails to people who have never heard of the brand. No context, no trust, no reason to respond. The email gets deleted. Average: 3.4% reply rate, 52% attendance.

Demand-Gen-Only Agencies

Produce content and run ads but never convert awareness into conversations. The prospect knows the brand exists but nobody asks for the meeting. Awareness without activation.

The integrated model solves both problems. Brand and demand gen build recognition and trust. Outbound arrives at the right moment to convert awareness into a real conversation. Each channel makes the others more effective. Multi-channel outreach increases response rates by 287%. Signal-based outbound produces 5-7x higher reply rates. The data is clear.

MarketBetter 2026; Landbase 2026

Your Pipeline Playbook

Pipeline Velocity Formula

Pipeline Velocity = (# Qualified Opps x Average Deal Size x Win Rate) / Sales Cycle Length

Median velocity: \$743/day (Marketing & Advertising) to \$2,456/day (Real Estate & Construction). Companies tracking velocity weekly **grow 34% faster**.

First Page Sage 2026

The Benchmarks You Should Be Hitting

METRIC	AVERAGE	TARGET
Win rate	20-30%	35-40%+
Pipeline coverage	3x	4-5x (enterprise)
Quota attainment	43-47%	65%+ (outside sales benchmark)
Meeting no-show rate	20%	<10%
MQL-to-SQL conversion	13%	25-40%
Speed to lead (follow-up)	Hours/days	<1 hour (53% conversion)
Multi-channel sequences	1-2 channels	3+ channels (287% lift)

First Page Sage 2026; Everstage 2026; Spotio 2026; Landbase 2026; MarketBetter 2026

When to Invest in Outbound vs Demand Gen

Invest in Outbound When...

You have a clear ICP. Your product/market fit is proven. You need meetings with specific accounts or titles. You have a defined territory to cover. Your average deal size justifies the cost per meeting (\$150-\$800 range).

Invest in Demand Gen When...

95% of your market is not in-market right now. You need to build category awareness. Your brand is unknown in target segments. You want to reduce no-show rates (warming = 30-40% higher response). You need lower long-term CAC.

5 Questions to Ask Any Agency

- 1 What is your average meeting attendance rate? (If they do not track it, walk away. Benchmark: 80%+ is good, 90%+ is excellent.)
- 2 Do you run brand/demand gen before outbound, or just send cold emails? (Single-channel outbound agencies systematically underperform.)
- 3 How do you measure meeting quality, not just quantity? (ICP fit, seniority match, deal progression within 30 days.)
- 4 What is your approach to AI vs human SDRs? (Hybrid is optimal: 117 meetings/month vs 56 human-only.)
- 5 Can you show pipeline attribution data, not just meetings booked? (Revenue generated, not vanity metrics.)

Red Flags in Agency Pitches

Guaranteed meetings with no quality criteria. **Meetings-only pricing** with no attendance guarantees. **No brand or demand gen capability**. Reliance on **AI-only outreach** (52% show rate vs 71% human). Claims of **massive email volumes** without deliverability data. No case studies with verifiable attendance or pipeline data.

Prove Marketing’s Revenue Contribution

Attribution Is Broken. Here’s What to Measure Instead.

Traditional attribution models undercount marketing’s impact. When 68% of buyers start in AI tools, 96% research before talking to a rep, and buying committees include 13+ stakeholders, last-touch attribution captures a fraction of the real story. Instead, measure these:

METRIC	WHAT IT MEASURES	BENCHMARK
Pipeline influenced by marketing	Total pipeline where marketing touched an account	50-70% of pipeline
Branded search growth	People actively looking for your company	10-20% QoQ growth
AI visibility / citations	How often LLMs mention your brand	Only 22% track this today
MQL-to-SQL rate	Lead quality, not just volume	13% avg, 40% SaaS
Content-influenced pipeline	Deals where content played a role	74% say content generates demand
Meeting attendance uplift	Impact of warming before outbound	30-40% higher with warming

Averi 2026; First Page Sage 2026; Data-Mania 2026; CMI 2025; ColdIQ 2026

MQL Quality Benchmarks

Industry Average
MQL-to-SQL: 13%. That means 87% of marketing leads never become real opportunities. Behavioural scoring boosts conversion by up to 40%.
First Page Sage 2026; Landbase 2026

SaaS Benchmark
MQL-to-SQL: 40%. Far above average. Companies with strong ICP definition and intent signals close the quality gap significantly.
Data-Mania 2026

Budget Allocation: What the Data Says

Average B2B splits: **36% lead generation, 30% brand building, 20% demand generation**. 68% of marketers credit demand gen with higher quality leads. 47% plan to expand AI use in strategies. The highest ROI channels: SEO (748%), email marketing (261%), webinars (213%), short-form video (#1 format by volume). LinkedIn ads deliver 4.1-8.3x ROAS; 72% say LinkedIn delivers highest quality leads vs other social.

Konabayev 2026; Specificity Inc 2026; Data-Mania 2026; Martal 2026; Stackmatix 2026

Brand’s Measurable Impact on Pipeline

30-40%
Higher response rates when brand awareness runs before outreach.
ORRJO data, ColdIQ 2026

90%+
Meeting attendance in ORRJO’s integrated model (vs 52% cold).
ORRJO proprietary data

87%
Of B2B marketers say content helped create brand awareness.
CMI 2025

14.2%
AI search conversion rate vs 2.8% Google organic.
Digital Bloom 2026

How to prove it: Track pipeline influenced (not just sourced). Measure branded search volume and AI citations. Show meeting attendance rates before and after demand gen. Compare win rates on brand-warmed vs cold opportunities. The data exists to make marketing’s revenue case. Use it.

The CEO’s Guide to Pipeline Investment

When Is the Right Time to Invest in Outbound?

You are ready for outbound when you have: a clear ICP (you know exactly who buys and why), product/market fit (existing customers are renewing and expanding), a story that resonates (you can articulate value in 30 seconds), and the capacity to handle meetings (if outbound generates 15-40 meetings/month, your team needs to be ready). If you are pre-PMF, invest in demand gen and content first. Build the brand before you build the pipeline.

How Much Should You Spend?

COMPANY STAGE	SALES CYCLE	TYPICAL INVESTMENT	EXPECTED OUTPUT
\$1M-\$5M ARR	43 days	\$5K-\$15K/mo	15-30 meetings/month
\$5M-\$25M ARR	55-67 days	\$10K-\$30K/mo	25-60 meetings/month
\$25M-\$100M ARR	78 days	\$20K-\$60K/mo	40-100+ meetings/month

Data-Mania 2026; ORRJO benchmarks

In-House vs Outsourced: The Real Cost Comparison

FACTOR	IN-HOUSE SDR TEAM	OUTSOURCED (INTEGRATED AGENCY)
Avg cost per meeting	\$300-\$500	\$150-\$300
Time to ramp	3-6 months	30-60 days
Avg SDR tenure	14-18 months	N/A (agency continuity)
Hiring + onboarding cost	\$15K-\$25K per SDR	\$0
Brand + demand gen	Separate team/budget	Integrated
Multi-channel capability	Varies	Built-in
Meeting attendance	~80% (well-run)	90%+ (ORRJO data)

Cleverly 2026; TalentBridge 2026; ORRJO benchmarks

The 90-Day Test

You do not need to commit to a 12-month contract to evaluate outbound. Here is a 90-day framework:

Days 1-30
Setup: ICP definition, messaging, list building, brand warming begins (LinkedIn ads to target accounts). First emails at day 15-21.

Days 31-60
Validate: First meetings booked. Measure reply rates, attendance, ICP fit. Iterate messaging based on data. Signal-based targeting refines lists.

Days 61-90
Decide: You should have 15-30+ meetings and enough data to calculate cost per meeting, attendance rate, and pipeline value. If the unit economics work, scale. If not, you saved 9 months.

Burn Rate Math: Pipeline ROI Timeline

Average B2B SaaS CAC: **\$1,200**. Median CAC payback: **8.6 months**. Target LTV:CAC of 3:1 minimum. At \$10K/month investment generating 20 meetings at a 25% win rate with \$15K ACV, you produce \$75K in new ARR per month. That is 7.5x return on investment. Businesses using AI-augmented sales report **317% annual ROI** with a 5.2-month payback period.

SaaS Hero 2026; Proven SaaS 2026; Warmly 2026

What to Do Now

Seven tactical recommendations based on 108 data points and 10,000+ meetings.

- 01 Warm the Market Before You Call It**
Run 2-4 weeks of targeted LinkedIn ads, content, and event presence before the first email. Brand warming produces 30-40% higher response rates. Multi-channel outreach increases engagement by 287%. Do not skip this step.
- 02 Build Signal-Based Target Lists**
Use intent data, hiring patterns, funding events, and tech stack changes. Signal-based outbound produces 5-7x higher reply rates. Acting within 24 hours performs 3x better than waiting a week. Teams doing this book 15+ meetings/month.
- 03 Run Multi-Channel Sequences**
Email + LinkedIn + phone. Single-channel is leaving pipeline on the table. Multi-touch converts at 2-3x any single channel. Keep emails under 75 words. Send on Wednesday 7-11 AM. Never skip follow-ups (they contribute 42% of replies).
- 04 Use AI for Research, Humans for Conversations**
Hybrid teams book 117 meetings/month. AI SDRs deliver volume (10-50x) at lower cost, but humans generate 2.6x more revenue and show 71% meeting rate vs 52%. Let AI handle enrichment, scoring, and sequencing. Keep humans in the conversation.
- 05 Optimise for AI Visibility**
73% of buyers use AI tools in research. 68% start in AI before Google. AI search converts at 14.2% vs Google's 2.8%. Yet only 22% of marketers track AI visibility. Invest in structured content, authoritative thought leadership, and consistent digital presence.
- 06 Fix Your Follow-Up Speed**
Following up within the first hour increases conversion rates to 53%. Behavioural scoring boosts conversion by 40%. Your no-show rate should be under 10% (industry average: 20%). Improving attendance from 65% to 80% adds \$180K/year in revenue without booking more meetings.
- 07 Track Pipeline Velocity Weekly**
Companies that track pipeline velocity weekly grow 34% faster. Measure qualified opportunities, average deal size, win rate, and cycle length. Benchmark against your segment. If your coverage is below 3x, your pipeline is at risk.

If you do one thing: warm the market before you call it. Every data point in this report points to the same conclusion. The companies winning pipeline in 2026 are not sending more emails. They are building recognition before the first message lands.

Ready to build your pipeline?

Book a strategy call. We will show you exactly how the integrated model works for your market.

[Book a Call →](#)

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