

PIPELINE IS UP PERFORMANCE ISN'T

WHAT'S THE *Deal with Deals* IN 2026?

Sales leaders are constantly rallying for growth at the top of the funnel. After all, more pipeline means more revenue. But RAIN Group's recent survey of 250+ sales managers, leaders, and enablement professionals tells a different story: pipeline growth doesn't automatically translate into stronger results.

PERFORMANCE SIGNALS *Are Mixed*

The data tells the story. Nearly half of orgs are seeing pipeline growth, but fewer are seeing improvement in opportunities won and quota attainment.

THOSE SURVEYED REPORTING AN INCREASE IN:

47%

QUALIFIED PIPELINE

40%

OPPORTUNITIES WON

37%

QUOTA ATTAINMENT

DEALS ARE *Getting Stuck*

The drag shows up downstream, where deals slow, stall, or end in no-decision. Buying decisions face greater scrutiny, with more stakeholders and tighter budgets, making deals harder to advance.

VERY/SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING:

83% LONGER SALES CYCLES

82% NO-DECISION LOSSES

80% DIFFICULT COMPETITORS

80% LARGER BUYING COMMITTEES

79% QUALIFIED SALES-READY OPPORTUNITIES

48%

REPORT AN INCREASE IN SALES CYCLE TIME

With sales cycles stretching longer, the window for deals to stall or lose momentum only widens.

HOW DO YOU *Fix It?*

Not all performance problems look the same, and treating them the same is where many orgs go wrong. The right fix depends on whether the issue is pipeline, conversion, execution, or pipeline risk. The research mapped organizations into four distinct performance profiles based on changes in pipeline and quota attainment. Which one sounds like you?

QUOTA ATTAINMENT

Not Up

Up

QUALIFIED PIPELINE

Up

19%

CONVERSION CONSTRAINED

Where is conversion breaking down?

Not Up

43%

STALLED PERFORMERS

Where are pipeline and execution breaking down?

29%

GROWTH LEADERS

What is driving performance?

8%

LEAN PERFORMERS

What pipeline risk needs attention?

LEADERS ARE TARGETING *Conversion Friction*

When asked to rate their priorities, leaders flagged nearly everything as important. But when forced to choose their top three, the list narrowed considerably. The priorities that rose to the top are all tied to one thing: whether opportunities convert, stall, or are lost.

TOP FORCED-CHOICE PRIORITIES:

44%

Win More AGAINST DIFFICULT COMPETITORS

40%

Improve RETENTION / RENEWALS

41%

Reduce SALES LOST TO NO DECISION

30%

Improve VALUE COMMUNICATION

SELLERS HAVE BLIND SPOTS THAT ARE *Costing Deals*

Some of the capabilities most tied to winning deals aren't the ones getting the most attention. Orgs often underinvest in skills that don't rank as widespread problems, but that have an outsized impact on whether opportunities advance.

DISCOVERY QUALITY:

1.9X
more likely

to be rated very challenging at orgs where wins didn't improve

VALUE COMMUNICATION:

2.3X
more likely

to be not at all challenging at orgs where wins improved

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

2X
more likely

to be a challenge at orgs where wins didn't improve

The Game-Changer: MANAGER-REINFORCED BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Sellers can learn new skills, but without managers reinforcing those behaviors in the flow of real deals, change doesn't stick. Frontline managers are the key to converting capabilities into consistent execution, yet developing them and sustaining behavior change remains two of the biggest challenges orgs face.

VERY/SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING:

80% DEVELOPING SALES MANAGERS

73% COACHING THE SALES FORCE EFFECTIVELY

72% SUSTAINING BEHAVIOR CHANGE

SO WHAT'S *Your Deal* WITH DEALS?

When revenue stalls, the instinct is to do more—more prospecting, more training, more pipeline generation. But more of the wrong thing won't fix the right problem. Start by asking these four questions and begin to visualize your path to improvement.

WHICH PATTERN ARE WE SEEING?	WHERE IS PERFORMANCE BREAKING DOWN?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?	WHICH OUTCOME SHOULD IMPROVE?	SKILLS NEEDED
☐ Pipeline problem ☒ Conversion problem ☐ Execution problem ☐ Pipeline risk	☐ Creation ☐ Qualification ☐ Value ☒ Stakeholders ☒ Velocity ☐ Retention ☐ Expansion	☒ Seller behaviors ☒ Manager coaching ☐ Process discipline ☐ Accountability	☒ Quota ☒ Wins ☐ Cycle time ☐ No-decision losses ☐ Pipeline quality ☐ Retention	* Communicating value * Navigating buying committees * Coaching for deal progression * Sales training * Coaching training

TURN PIPELINE INTO *Performance*

Diagnosing where your organization is constrained is only the first step. RAIN Group works with sales teams to close conversion gaps, develop frontline managers, and build the execution discipline that turns pipeline into consistent results.

LEARN MORE

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1. 2026 B2B Sales Challenges Report, RAIN Group
2. The 2026 Leadership Execution Gap, Alchemist Learning & Development