



RESEARCH, EXPLANATION, AND EVIDENCE

BETTER SALES RESULTS FOR MSPs

Why winning business is difficult.
What buyers need to believe.
What makes growth valuable.

A connected review of published research on acquisition,
buyer decisions, contract profit, and retention.

A THREATCAPTAIN RESEARCH WHITE PAPER

OCTOBER 10, 2026 | RESEARCH WHITE PAPER

EXECUTIVE SYNTHESIS

The sales problem reaches beyond finding more leads

Why can winning customers feel difficult even when businesses need outside technology help? Why can two providers add similar numbers of contracts and earn different amounts of profit? And why might a customer trust a provider while considering a change? These are the questions that connect this review.

The evidence points to several different pressures. MSPs report acquisition difficulties; security buyers describe gaps they want a provider to fill; financial comparisons show that a win has more than one economic outcome. Customer research adds another question: whether a provider can meet tomorrow's needs as well as today's. [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

What the report examines

This white paper examines customer acquisition, buyer confidence, contract profit, and retention. It explores the explanations supported by published research and the questions that the available data leaves unanswered.

The question	Where to read
Why is new business difficult to win?	Pages 4-7
What makes a buyer confident enough to decide?	Pages 8-13
What makes a contract commercially valuable?	Pages 14-16
Why can a positive relationship still be at risk?	Pages 17-19
What can the evidence explain together?	Pages 20-22

25 pages including the cover. Published October 10, 2026. Research review and synthesis by ThreatCaptain; the underlying surveys were conducted by the cited third parties. Methods: page 3. Sources: pages 23-25.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach and limitations

ThreatCaptain reviewed selected MSP, channel, buyer, financial, and academic research. This is a focused review of accessible evidence, not an exhaustive search or a survey conducted by ThreatCaptain.

Findings, reported reasons, and interpretation

Findings describe what a source measured. Reported reasons describe respondents' explanations without proving cause. Interpretations connect separate findings or explain the financial arithmetic. Where the studies did not test a connection, the report identifies it as an interpretation.

A provider survey can identify a problem, while a buyer survey sheds light on what customers want. Reading them together can sharpen an explanation. It cannot show that the buyers surveyed caused the providers' results: the studies did not follow the same transactions or firms. [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

How to judge relevance

MSP respondents, security buyers at organizations with 50-2,000 employees, general B2B buyers, and software resellers are different populations. Broader studies are labeled as context. We do not combine their percentages into an MSP average or use them to rank small, owner-led, large, or enterprise MSPs.

Several sources are vendor-sponsored. Some offer full reports; others offer public summaries or article previews. Source notes identify access and sample limits. Citations sit beside factual claims, and tables name their source. Repeated references to one study are not independent confirmation.

ACQUISITION PRESSURE

A shared challenge can have different causes

Kaseya's 2026 public survey summary reports that 71% identify acquiring customers as their biggest challenge. It describes more than 1,000 MSP respondents worldwide. That finding establishes the prominence of the problem within the reported sample. [\[1, section 1\]](#)

Canalys / N-able separately identifies acquisition and staff upskilling as leading growth challenges. Its 451 channel-partner responses were collected in October-November 2024; 89% identified as MSPs. We use this as channel context, rather than a representative MSP benchmark. [\[10, pp. 20-22, 71\]](#)

What lies inside the word acquisition?

An acquisition problem can begin before a first conversation, during a buying decision, or in the economics of serving a new customer. The surveys do not locate every respondent's difficulty along that path. A firm with too few suitable prospects and a firm losing well-qualified opportunities could both select the same broad challenge.

Interpretation: the useful conclusion is that acquisition deserves closer explanation, not that every MSP needs more leads. Later sections examine three distinct parts of that explanation: limited marketing resources, difficulty demonstrating value, and the difference between contract volume and contract profit. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[4\]](#)

A missing connection

Neither survey links each respondent's reported challenge to a consistently defined lead count, decided-opportunity win rate, and acquisition expense. Without that connection, we cannot say which constraint accounts for the largest share of the problem.

The studies ask about challenges in different periods and populations. Agreement on a broad topic does not make their percentages directly comparable or prove a particular explanation.

MARKETING CAPACITY

Limited resources help explain the pressure, but not every lost sale

The ConnectWise / ChannelPro marketing report adds detail about the resources behind acquisition. It reports annual marketing spend below \$10,000 for 51% of respondents and zero or limited marketing experience for 57%. It also reports that 46% are not confident or only slightly confident their marketing delivers results. [\[2, p. 5\]](#)

This is a mixed provider and reseller sample, predominantly US-based and small in employee count. The published report omits the sample count and field dates. Its resource findings describe that sample; they do not establish an appropriate spending level for an individual MSP. [\[2, p. 22\]](#)

Capacity and certainty are separate issues

Interpretation: limited resources and uncertainty about results can make the same growth decision difficult for different reasons. One business may lack time or money to run a campaign. Another may have funds but insufficient evidence to decide where to invest them. The reported budget and confidence answers make both questions relevant; they do not reveal how often those conditions occur in the same firm. [\[2\]](#)

A budget total also leaves important questions unanswered. It does not describe the owner's unpaid time, the quality of follow-up, or the profit from clients attributed to that spend. More expenditure could expand useful activity or simply expand its cost. The report does not test that trade-off.

Why this changes the reading of acquisition pressure

Limited marketing resources may contribute to acquisition difficulties. The surveys leave open how much of the problem comes from finding prospects, converting opportunities, matching services to buyers, or earning enough profit from the work. They do not establish that increasing advertising would resolve it. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

Resource levels, confidence, and commercial returns are distinct measures. No causal return from higher marketing spend is estimated here.

VALUE IN THE SALES PROCESS

The difficulty may be making the difference clear

Kaseya reports difficulty showing value early in the sales process at 19%, compared with 10% in an earlier survey. The summary also reports a fall in the share describing customer spending above \$25,000 per year, from 75% to 41%. These are comparisons between surveys, not a record of changes in the same customers' contracts. [\[1, sections 1-2\]](#)

Why these findings belong together

Interpretation: explaining value and describing deal size address different sides of a sale. The first concerns the buyer's reason to choose; the second concerns the amount purchased. Together they raise a more useful question than whether prospecting activity is high enough: what business is being won, on what terms, and how clearly does the buyer understand it? [\[1\]](#)

There are competing explanations for the spending comparison. A different respondent mix, a different customer mix, or changes in service scope could alter the result. The reviewed summary does not separate them. It therefore cannot establish that an individual MSP's customers cut their budgets or that the whole market is moving toward smaller contracts.

A buyer-side question follows

If a provider finds value hard to show, what does the buyer need to understand? Security-buyer research offers one concrete angle: respondents describe problems with resources, strategy, and around-the-clock capacity. Those are desired capabilities, rather than a list of products. We examine that evidence on pages 8-10. [\[3\]](#)

The connection is an interpretation across separate studies. It suggests where an explanation might be found; it does not prove that a change in sales language caused a change in contract value.

Kaseya's recommendations are publisher commentary, not tested remedies. This paper uses the reported results without adopting claims that a specific tactic closes deals faster.

REFERRALS AND CHANNELS

A source of business is not yet a source of comparative profit

ConnectWise / ChannelPro reports that 72% describe referrals as a key driver of business and 43% have a formal referral program. Among program users, one in three attribute more than half of total revenue to referrals. Those answers describe reported contribution, not the increase caused by starting a program. [\[2, p. 8\]](#)

The unanswered question is economic

A channel can account for a large share of revenue without having the lowest acquisition cost or the highest retained profit. A share tells us where revenue was attributed. It does not include the expense of winning that business, the time spent serving it, or how long those customers stayed.

Interpretation: referrals connect naturally to the acquisition question because they are a prominent reported source. They do not settle the investment question. To compare channels, the missing link is from an introduction to a customer decision and then to the value of the agreement over time. The financial comparison later in the paper shows why contract count alone is insufficient. [\[2\]](#) [\[4\]](#)

Why a universal ranking would be misleading

A referral program may be part of a successful business rather than the reason for its success. The survey does not compare otherwise similar firms before and after a program began. It also does not show whether customers arriving through different channels bought comparable services.

The evidence supports discussing referrals as part of the current provider landscape. It leaves open whether another channel would perform better for a particular business, customer segment, or offer. That is a research gap, not a reason to assume the answer.

No channel is declared the cheapest or most profitable. The marketing figures above and on page 5 come from the same report.

BUYER PRIORITIES

Technology is purchased inside a wider business decision

GTIA's SMB research summary names customer acquisition or new-market entry, more efficient systems, and hiring skilled workers as leading business priorities. It reports regular or occasional IT outsourcing at 61%. The full survey methods were not verified for this review. [7]

What this adds to the provider perspective

Interpretation: a provider's sales goal and a buyer's business goal are different starting points. The MSP wants a new agreement; the buyer is considering technology alongside other demands on its business. GTIA helps explain why a discussion limited to service availability may leave the purchase rationale incomplete. That is an interpretation of the buyer priorities, not a measured penalty for a technical presentation. [7]

The outsourcing figure also prevents a simplistic reading of acquisition difficulty. Reported use of outside IT services and provider difficulty winning new business can coexist. Demand for help does not establish that a particular provider will be selected, that a purchase will happen now, or that the agreement will be profitable. [1] [7]

Buying software is a different transaction

GTIA's supplier-channel question explicitly excludes managed-service contracts, consulting, and projects. Its hardware and software purchasing answers cannot identify where buyers select their ongoing MSP. That distinction matters when using adjacent technology research to explain service sales. [7]

The report therefore keeps the buyer's broad business priorities in view without treating retail or marketplace purchases as substitutes for an MSP contract. The following pages narrow the lens to security support, where the published buyer questions are more specific.

Audience: SMBs in GTIA's publisher summary, not an MSP respondent survey. Broader buyer priorities provide context; they do not test a sales method.

SECURITY NEEDS

Buyers describe capacity gaps, not just missing products

Barracuda / Vanson Bourne surveyed 2,000 security decision-makers at organizations with 50-2,000 employees in April-May 2025. Respondents named internal resource and strategy gaps among reasons for outsourcing security support. [3, pp. 3, 6-7]

Selected reason for outsourcing security	Share
Resources to manage growing numbers of tools	52%
Understanding how to update strategy as the business grows	51%
Capacity for around-the-clock monitoring and protection	48%

Source: Barracuda / Vanson Bourne [3], Figure 2, labeled n=2,000. Wording shortened for display.

What the reasons explain

Interpretation: the common element is the ability to operate security, not simply access a tool. That gives the acquisition discussion more substance: at least within this population, buyers report wanting help with work their organization struggles to carry out. A service description and evidence of the ability to deliver it address different parts of that need. [3]

The finding does not show that every respondent has the same problem. Resource capacity, strategic understanding, and monitoring coverage are separate needs, and respondents could identify more than one reason. Adding the percentages would not produce a meaningful combined demand figure.

This audience begins at 50 employees. The report cannot establish the priorities of microbusinesses or all customers of small MSPs. The useful contribution is a set of buyer-reported reasons within a defined market, rather than a universal security sales message.

The next page examines the same survey's evidence about confidence in a provider. It is an additional question, not independent confirmation.

BUYER CONFIDENCE

An offer and proof of delivery answer different questions

In Barracuda's hypothetical switching question, 45% identify missing evidence of security expertise and 24/7 support as a reason to consider another MSP. This concerns proof of capability, not documented service failure or a measured cancellation. [\[3, Figure 5, p. 11\]](#)

From a need to a choice

Interpretation: the resource gaps on the previous page explain why outside help may be attractive. The capability question adds a second step: confidence that a particular provider can supply that help. A buyer may recognize a need while remaining uncertain about the seller. The survey asks about both topics but does not follow individual purchases from first interest to a signed agreement. [\[3\]](#)

This distinction gives the value problem more depth. Describing a service tells the buyer what is offered. Demonstrating capability addresses whether the promise is credible. The evidence makes that distinction relevant; it does not establish which proof format works best or how much conversion improves when it is supplied. [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

Where the explanation stops

The survey does not compare testimonials, technical demonstrations, certifications, service reports, or proposal designs against one another. Treating any one of those as the proven answer would go beyond the study. It also does not show that providers who lack visible proof lack the underlying skills.

The question for further research is therefore specific: when buyers are already considering a provider, what uncertainty remains, what evidence addresses it, and does addressing it change the decision? That is different from assuming that a longer list of capabilities is enough.

Audience: security decision-makers at 50-2,000 employee organizations. The reported reason concerns consideration of switching, not an observed win-rate effect.

BROADER B2B BUYING CONTEXT

Independent research does not remove the need for confidence

Gartner's public release describes 645 B2B buyers surveyed in August-September 2025. It reports that 67% prefer a sales-rep-free experience, while 69% prefer to validate AI-generated information with a salesperson. These are general B2B preferences, not MSP-specific outcomes. [\[12\]](#)

Why these answers are not a contradiction

Interpretation: gathering information independently and asking a person to check its meaning are different tasks. A buyer can want control over research while also wanting help at a consequential decision. The aggregate preferences make it unsafe to interpret digital buying as a simple choice between having sellers and removing them. [\[12\]](#)

For the explanation of acquisition difficulty, this adds a useful question: does the buyer need more information, or help deciding whether the information applies? The survey does not test that question in MSP sales, but it gives context for why access to information alone may not settle a purchase. [\[12\]](#)

Convenience is another part of the decision

Deloitte Digital / Lawless Research reports ease of use as a purchasing-channel consideration for 65% of its buyers. Those respondents worked at large US companies and had participated in purchases worth at least \$100,000. Their experience is enterprise context, not a description of a small business buying managed IT. [\[14, pp. 5, 11\]](#)

Together, the broader studies help separate information access, confidence, and convenience. They do not establish a preferred sales channel for MSPs. Their role is to widen the explanation without disguising a change in audience.

General B2B and enterprise buyer context. Full questionnaires and detailed Gartner sample comparisons were not reviewed.

SOFTWARE RESELLER CONTEXT

Specialization may clarify fit; it is not a proven shortcut

IDC's Sage-sponsored survey covers 2,009 software resellers in eight countries. Industry-niche offerings appear at 69% of high-growth partners, compared with 47% across the sample. High growth means revenue growth of at least 20% in each of the previous two fiscal years. [\[11, pp. 24, 40-42\]](#)

What the comparison contributes

Interpretation: specialization is relevant to the question of showing value because it concerns who the offer is built for. A narrowly defined customer problem could make relevance easier to explain. The comparison gives a reason to investigate that possibility; it does not show that clearer explanation is the mechanism behind the growth difference. [\[11\]](#)

Other explanations remain possible. High-growth firms could have more resources to develop niche offerings, or both could reflect a different customer mix. The published comparison does not isolate those alternatives. Changing a website to name an industry is also different from building an offer around that industry's needs.

Why this is context, not an MSP prescription

All surveyed firms had at least 10 employees, and 67% had 100 or more. They were software resellers with varied business models. Their revenue growth is not the win rate, gross profit, or retention of a small owner-led MSP. [\[11\]](#)

The broader contribution is a more precise question about fit: does a provider's focus change the kinds of opportunities it attracts, the cost of delivering its promises, or both? The reviewed study does not answer that for MSPs. It belongs beside the provider and buyer evidence as a possible explanation to test.

Software reseller context. Survey fieldwork: June-August 2025. Specialization and growth are associated; a causal benefit is not established.

SALES CONVERSATIONS

Listening and adaptation offer support, not a winning script

Academic research supplies a different kind of evidence. A 2025 review covers 188 articles on adaptive selling across 27 journals. It finds mixed, often positive relationships with performance. A separate synthesis of 24 studies examines listening, customer relationships, and sales results. Neither is an MSP sales-program trial. [\[6\]](#) [\[8\]](#)

Why this belongs in the explanation

Interpretation: buyer needs and uncertainty vary, so research about responding to a situation is relevant to how those needs are understood. The academic studies support examining the conversation itself rather than assuming that the same information has the same effect on every buyer. They do not quantify the return from a particular MSP discovery exercise. [\[6\]](#) [\[8\]](#)

A study of 226 B2B salespeople separately examines benefits, discounts, features, and value as communication themes. Its exploratory, self-reported results do not establish one universally successful message. This matters because the phrase "sell value" can otherwise sound like a tested formula when it is only a broad description. [\[9\]](#)

Behavior is not the same as a template

A script records words. Listening concerns how the seller understands what is said. Adaptation concerns how behavior changes in response to the situation. The research does not make those three things interchangeable, nor does it establish an ideal number or sequence of questions. [\[6\]](#) [\[8\]](#) [\[9\]](#)

The evidence therefore adds depth to the value discussion while keeping the conclusion narrow: the way a conversation responds to a buyer deserves attention. A claim that a specific assessment, proposal, or coaching package improves MSP results needs separate evidence.

Cross-industry sales research. Reviews may include overlapping prior studies; they are not counted as independent MSP confirmations.

CONTRACT ECONOMICS

Similar numbers of wins can produce different profit

Service Leadership's comparison places similar quarterly managed-services contract additions alongside different recurring revenue and gross profit per agreement. The figures below exclude acquisitions, products, and projects. [\[4, Figure 6\]](#)

Measure	Bottom 25%	Median	Best in class
Contracts added per quarter	4.2	4.3	4.3
Recurring revenue per contract, per quarter	\$6,805	\$8,740	\$10,406
Gross profit per contract over three years	\$33,596	\$47,977	\$65,486

Source: Service Leadership / ConnectWise [\[4\]](#), citing the 2025 industry profitability report. Revenue is quarterly, not monthly. Gross profit is after direct delivery costs and before overhead.

Why the comparison matters

The count of agreements is nearly the same across these groups, while their economic value differs. This directly challenges the idea that contract count alone describes commercial success. It does not show that the same seller would achieve the higher result by changing one practice. [\[4\]](#)

Interpretation: acquisition has both a quantity question and a value question. A discussion about finding more customers is incomplete without asking what those customers buy and what delivering the agreement costs. Those questions connect the acquisition findings with the economics of growth. [\[1\]](#) [\[4\]](#)

The public article does not fully describe the benchmark sample or isolate customer mix, scope, pricing, and delivery costs. Its recommendations about targeting therefore remain publisher interpretation rather than a controlled explanation of the difference. The next page separates the arithmetic from the unanswered causal question.

The article also discusses a separate informal exercise about useful metrics. That exercise is not the sampling method for this financial comparison.

EXPLAINING THE PROFIT GAP

Revenue and delivery cost change the meaning of a win

The contract comparison raises a practical analytical question: where can a gross-profit difference come from? By definition, gross profit is contract revenue less direct delivery cost. That separates the amount sold from the resources required to fulfill the agreement. [4]

The arithmetic is clear; the causes are not

A higher revenue figure can reflect price, scope, customer size, or a different service mix. A delivery-cost difference can reflect the work required and the cost of supplying it. These are possible explanations, not findings that the comparison tested. A single group-level profit number cannot choose among them.

Interpretation: it is possible to improve the count of wins without improving profit in proportion. It is also possible for fewer, more valuable agreements to produce a different commercial result. These statements follow from the distinction between count and value; they are not measured outcomes of a recommended targeting strategy. [4]

Why this links back to acquisition

An acquisition channel influences which opportunities arrive, while a service offer defines what can be sold. The studies reviewed here do not jointly track channel, buyer fit, scope, and gross profit. That missing connection is why reported channel popularity cannot settle the question of where the next marketing dollar will earn the best return. [2] [4]

The same issue limits the use of an industry average. Two firms can have different customer needs and delivery models even when their headline contract counts look alike. The research makes the difference visible but does not supply enough information to normalize it for every MSP.

Possible explanations for the profit gap; the financial comparison does not establish which caused it.

PRICING AND ADDED VALUE

Paying for more and paying more are different decisions

Barracuda reports that 92% are prepared to pay more for security-tool integration support. In a different question, 38% say a security-service price increase could lead them to consider switching. Both findings come from the same security-buyer survey. [\[3, pp. 9-11\]](#)

Why the answers can coexist

Interpretation: the first question adds a defined capability; the second increases the cost of a service. Treating them as the same proposition hides the change in what the buyer receives. The distinction helps explain why a broad willingness-to-pay figure cannot be used as permission for a general price rise. [\[3\]](#)

It also connects the buyer and profit discussions. A capability that buyers value could require additional delivery work. Stated interest does not establish the price accepted, the expense of supplying it, or the resulting gross profit. Revenue potential and contract economics are separate questions. [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#)

A purchase has several stages

An attractive idea, an approved budget, an accepted proposal, and revenue actually earned are different events. A survey answer does not follow that whole sequence. The study leaves open what buyers would select when faced with a specific price, service definition, and competing alternative.

The aggregate results also do not show exactly which respondents gave both answers. We can explain why the questions differ without inventing a profile of the customer who wants more capability but resists a higher bill. That profile would require respondent-level comparisons or transaction evidence.

Security-buyer intentions, not measured price elasticity or an achievable premium. No forecast revenue or profit is inferred.

RELATIONSHIP RISK

Trust and commitment are not the same measurement

Corsica / Censuswide reports that 95.8% trust their provider to act in their interests, while 65% are considering switching within twelve months. The survey covered 600 IT and security decision-makers at US-headquartered MSP or security-provider customers in May 2026. Corsica describes the audience as midmarket. [\[5\]](#)

What the apparent tension reveals

Interpretation: confidence in a provider's intentions and a decision about a future relationship are different judgments. A favorable answer to one need not settle the other. The headline figures make that distinction visible, without establishing why any particular respondent is considering a change. [\[5\]](#)

The publisher names limited AI or automation support, reactive service, and missing strategic guidance among reasons for switching interest. We report those themes without their percentages because the public material does not clearly state the response base for the reasons question. [\[5\]](#)

Why this belongs in a sales report

The next agreement is not the only commercial decision a provider faces. Existing customers can also be reconsidering what they need from a provider. Reading retention as a future choice creates a connection with acquisition: capability and relevance can matter to both a prospect and an existing account. This is a synthesis, not a tested common causal model. [\[3\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

The study does not establish that dissatisfaction is absent, and consideration is not a cancellation. Its contribution is to show that favorable sentiment is an incomplete description of the future customer relationship.

Midmarket customer research, not a cancellation forecast. Full questions and respondent-level comparisons were not reviewed.

BROADER B2B RELATIONSHIP CONTEXT

Switching can involve how the supplier works, as well as what it offers

McKinsey's 2026 Global B2B Pulse research draws on nearly 4,000 decision-makers across 13 countries. Its public article identifies inconsistent information across teams and difficulty reaching knowledgeable representatives as leading reported reasons for supplier switching. This is broader B2B research, not MSP churn data. [\[13\]](#)

Another angle on the why

Interpretation: a buyer can evaluate both the service and the experience of working with the supplier. The Corsica themes concern future capability and the nature of support. McKinsey adds information consistency and access to expertise. Those are different findings from different populations, but they help frame the range of issues a relationship measure could miss. [\[5\]](#) [\[13\]](#)

It would be a mistake to add the reported reasons together or say which is most important for MSP customers. The studies do not offer a common questionnaire, sample, or measurement period. They supply complementary questions, rather than a combined league table of causes.

Why a positive score can leave uncertainty

A general opinion can compress several experiences into one answer. It may not reveal whether the customer sees a gap in expertise, a future capability, or a particular interaction. The reviewed evidence supports investigating those distinctions; it does not validate a new score that predicts who will leave. [\[5\]](#) [\[13\]](#)

These studies raise questions about expertise, changing needs, and the experience of working with a supplier. They do not measure how common each issue is among MSP customers. [\[5\]](#) [\[13\]](#)

No claim is made that these reasons predict MSP cancellations or that changing one interaction produces a measured retention improvement.

RETENTION AND MEASUREMENT

A customer count cannot tell the whole revenue story

Service Leadership's article distinguishes customer retention from revenue retention, and gross revenue retention from net revenue retention. The latter includes expansion as well as lost business. These are measurement definitions, not evidence that introducing a particular dashboard improves results. [\[4\]](#)

Why the distinctions change the explanation

The loss of one customer and the loss of several customers can remove the same amount of recurring revenue. A stable customer count can also coexist with changes in the services those customers buy. It follows that a count, a revenue total, and a sentiment measure answer different questions. [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

Interpretation: the retention question is not simply whether customers stay. It is also what recurring business remains, what expands, and what costs are associated with delivery. That connects the end of the customer relationship with the contract economics at its beginning. The sources do not track that full path for the same firms. [\[4\]](#)

A defined period is essential

The reviewed evidence does not establish a reliable annual MSP cancellation rate. A customer-loss figure without a stated period cannot serve as an annual benchmark.

A credible future comparison needs the same starting customer group and a defined time window. Customer departures, reductions in retained accounts, expansion, and newly acquired business must remain distinguishable. Otherwise, growth can conceal losses and different definitions can create apparent differences between firms. This is measurement logic, not an empirical performance claim.

PUTTING THE EVIDENCE TOGETHER

The connection is fit, confidence, and economic value

Read together, the sources describe several decisions along a customer relationship. The provider must reach a possible buyer. The buyer must see a relevant need and confidence in a supplier. An agreement must have economic value. The relationship must remain suitable as needs change. The studies measure separate parts of this sequence. [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

A connected explanation, with clear boundaries

Interpretation: three questions organize the evidence. **Fit:** is the offer relevant to the buyer's problem? **Confidence:** does the buyer believe the provider can deliver? **Economic value:** what does the agreement contribute after delivery costs? These are an editorial framework for reading the research, not a validated performance model. [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[7\]](#)

This framework explains why the headline acquisition challenge does not point to one remedy. It could reflect difficulty reaching the right firms, uncertainty during selection, or the economics of the business being won. The reviewed sources do not quantify how much each explanation contributes.

Where the wider research helps

Gartner adds the distinction between independent research and human validation. IDC adds an association between specialization and reseller growth. McKinsey adds supplier-interaction reasons for switching. Each sharpens a question about the relationship, while retaining its own audience and limits. [\[11\]](#) [\[12\]](#) [\[13\]](#)

A provider may reach suitable prospects yet struggle to establish confidence, or win contracts that contribute too little profit. Distinguishing these problems requires evidence that follows opportunities through the sale and the resulting customer relationship. The reviewed studies do not track that full sequence. [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

Cross-source synthesis. No respondents, percentages, or effect estimates are pooled. The framework does not rank firms or predict outcomes.

THE NEXT RESEARCH QUESTION

The missing evidence is the connection between practice and outcome

The review provides reported challenges, buyer reasons, preferences, and financial comparisons. It does not establish which changes improve an individual MSP's win rate, acquisition cost, or retained profit. The missing evidence is not another broad percentage; it is a connection between consistently defined practices and outcomes. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#)

What would distinguish competing explanations?

To examine acquisition pressure, research needs to distinguish first meetings, qualified opportunities, wins, competitive losses, and no-decision outcomes. To examine channel economics, it needs an explicit expense basis and the value of business won. These definitions would help separate a lack of opportunity from a difficulty converting it.

To examine retention, the opening customer group and measurement window must be clear. Customer departures and revenue changes need separate treatment. To compare provider models, research also needs enough observations in each group to avoid treating a handful of firms as a reliable segment result.

What our next study can realistically contribute

ThreatCaptain is preparing to collect firsthand descriptions of MSP sales practices and results. Consistent questions can make those descriptions more comparable. The survey currently remains in private test mode; its test responses are excluded from published findings.

A voluntary survey would still face self-selection, recall errors, estimates, and uneven record quality. It could identify patterns worth investigating. It would not by itself prove that a practice causes improvement. Establishing that would require stronger designs, such as repeated observations or a suitable comparison when a practice changes.

Proposed research approach, not results or a promise of causal evidence. No new ThreatCaptain respondent findings are included in this white paper.

CONCLUSIONS

Acquisition, profit, and retention belong together

The central lesson is that the sale cannot be explained by one number. The acquisition headline describes a problem. Buyer reasons help explain what a provider is being asked to solve. Contract economics show why winning an agreement is not the same as earning a given amount of profit. Relationship research adds the question of continued fit. [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

What the review supports

The evidence supports examining acquisition, buyer confidence, profitability, and retention together while keeping their measures distinct. It also supports a more careful use of wider research: general B2B and reseller studies can illuminate a question without becoming MSP benchmarks. [\[11\]](#) [\[12\]](#) [\[13\]](#) [\[14\]](#)

What remains an explanation to test

Limited marketing capacity, difficulty establishing value, uncertainty about delivery, and changing customer requirements are possible explanations for the challenges described. The reviewed sources do not establish how much each contributes to MSP performance. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[5\]](#)

The remaining questions concern which sales practices go with better results, what winning a customer costs, and what profit remains as that relationship develops. Answering them requires consistent definitions and evidence that connects practices with outcomes.

The following pages provide direct source links, methods notes, and the basis for each reference. Cite the original study when using an individual finding, and ThreatCaptain when describing this synthesis.

SOURCES AND REVIEW NOTES

MSP, provider, and customer sources

[1] Kaseya

Publisher summary, May 11, 2026. More than 1,000 MSPs worldwide. Sections 1-2: acquisition, demonstrating value, and reported customer-spending bands. Full questionnaire, item bases, respondent continuity, and survey weighting were not reviewed. The publisher's tactical recommendations are not treated as tested findings.

[Open the original source](#)

[2] ConnectWise / ChannelPro

Full 22-page report reviewed. Resource figures p. 5; referrals p. 8; respondent profile p. 22. Mixed MSP, security-provider, and reseller sample: 98% US-based, 85% with 50 or fewer employees. Exact sample size and field dates are not stated. Confidence, spending, and channel contribution are self-reported.

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[3] Barracuda / Vanson Bourne

Full 14-page report reviewed. Methods p. 3; outsourcing reasons Figure 2, pp. 6-7; added-service pricing pp. 9-10; hypothetical switching Figure 5, p. 11. 2,000 security decision-makers, organizations with 50-2,000 employees, April-May 2025, US/Europe/Asia-Pacific. Intentions are not completed purchases or cancellations.

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[4] Service Leadership / ConnectWise

Public article, December 19, 2025. Figure 6 cites the 2025 Annual IT Solution Provider Industry Profitability Report; it does not fully disclose the benchmark sampling. Financial figures were checked against the figure. The separate informal metric-selection exercise is not the benchmark method. Also consulted: retention definitions in Outcomes 3-4.

[Open the original source](#)

[5] Corsica Technologies / Censuswide

The MSP Trust Gap Report. August 2026; public findings and methods. Survey of 600 IT/security decision-makers at US-headquartered MSP or security-service customers, May 8-21, 2026. Sponsor describes the audience as midmarket. Full questions and cross-comparisons were not reviewed; the switching-reasons question base is not stated, so those percentages are omitted.

[Open the original source](#)

SOURCES AND REVIEW NOTES

Sales research, SMB buyers, and channel context

[6] Chaker et al.

The past, present, and future of adaptive selling: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 53, 1572-1599 (2025); published March 28. Review of 188 articles across 27 journals, covering 1981-2024. See Findings / Salesperson impact. Covers sales in different industries; does not test an MSP sales program.

[Open the original source](#)

[7] GTIA

SMB Technology and Buying Trends 2025: publisher findings. July 29, 2025. We reviewed the publisher's summary, including business priorities and definitions of technology purchases. We could not verify the full survey methods or judge how well the findings represent all small and midsize businesses.

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[8] Itani, Goad & Jaramillo

Building customer relationships while achieving sales performance results: Is listening the holy grail of sales?. *Journal of Business Research* 102, 120-130 (2019). DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.04.048. We reviewed the abstract, introduction, and publisher previews. The paper combines findings from 24 studies; it does not test an MSP program.

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[9] Klarmann & Wouters

Benefits, discounts, features, and value as communication foci in selling: Exploring concepts, drivers, and outcomes. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 43(1), 46-64 (2023); online June 2022. DOI: 10.1080/08853134.2022.2082451. We reviewed the author repository summary and available publisher text. Survey of 226 business-to-business salespeople, who rated their own performance. The analysis explores possible links between messaging and results.

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[10] Canalys / N-able

MSP Horizons 2025. N-able-associated research; 451 channel partners, October-November 2024; 89% MSPs. Full report: growth challenges pp. 20-22; methods p. 71. Includes larger providers; forecasts are not realized outcomes.

[Open the original source](#)

SOURCES AND REVIEW NOTES

Software reseller and broader B2B context

[11] IDC / Sage

High Performance Unlocked. Sage-sponsored IDC survey: 2,009 software resellers, eight countries, June-August 2025. All had 10+ employees; 67% had 100+. Specialization p. 24; methods pp. 40-42. Self-reported associations, not causal MSP findings.

[Open the original source](#)

[12] Gartner

B2B buyers validate AI-generated insights with sales reps. May 20, 2026 public release: 645 B2B buyers surveyed August-September 2025. General buyer preferences; full questionnaire and detailed sample breakdown not reviewed. Not an MSP survey.

[Open the original source](#)

[13] McKinsey

B2B buyers reset the bar: Global B2B Pulse 2026. 2026 Global B2B Pulse: nearly 4,000 B2B decision-makers across 13 countries and multiple industries. Public research article reviewed; switching reasons section. General B2B findings, not MSP churn benchmarks.

[Open the original source](#)

[14] Deloitte Digital / Lawless Research

Accelerating sales growth through B2B digital commerce. January 2026 report; 530 buyers and 530 suppliers, August-September 2025. US firms: 1,000+ employees, \$100M+ revenue. Buyer purchases: \$100,000+. Ease of use p. 5; methods p. 11. Enterprise context only.

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