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YOUR RELATIONSHIP ADVISOR FOR AGENTIC AI

MEERKAT REVENUE INTELLIGENCE · FOR B2B ENTERPRISE SELLERS

# Your Buyer Just Left the Building. So did your boss. Now what?

Four years of generative AI have put every buyer, boss and seller in motion. Here's how to future-proof your deals and your career.

**By Mary Shea, PhD · Co-Founder and Chief Growth Officer, Meerkat**

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**62%**

OF AEs IN SEAT TODAY STARTED IN THE ROLE IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS

**1 in 4**

DEPARTING AEs GO OVER THREE MONTHS WITHOUT A NEW JOB

**35%**

OF EXECUTIVE BUYERS LEAVE THEIR SEAT WITHIN TWO YEARS

**21x**

AS MANY GTM ENGINEERS GET HIRED COMPARED TO 2022

KEY TAKEAWAYS

# The seller seat survived AI. The quick rebound didn't.

Before generative AI hit the workplace, 81% of AEs who left a job started a new one within three months. Now it's 72-75%.

01

### The seat stayed. The person keeps changing

Sales held its share of US hiring. Yet 62% of sitting AEs and 76% of SDRs started their current role after generative AI hit the workplace.

02

### The next job takes longer

Before generative AI hit the workplace, 81% of AEs who left a company started somewhere new within three months. Since then, the figure is 72-75%. One in eight show no new role a year later.

03

### Everyone around you is moving

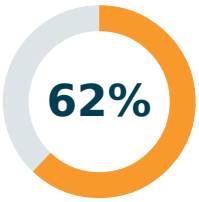
One in three executive buyers leave the role within 24 months, and three in four CROs are new since late 2022. Your deal and your sponsor both depend on people who are likely to leave.

## Why read this report

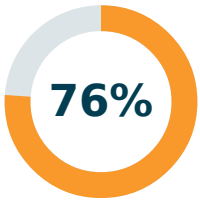
This report reads US career records from November 2022 to October 2026 to show what changed, what to expect in the next 6-12 months and what to do today. Each AI year in the report runs November to October.

## Everyone around the deal is in motion

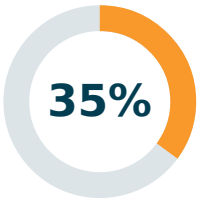
The seller, the leader and the buyer, in three numbers




**The seller** of AEs in seat today started in the role in the last four years




**The leader** of CROs in seat today started in the role in the last four years




**The buyer** of executive buyers leave their seat within two years

## How this report was made

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

**Mary Shea, PhD**, Co-Founder and Chief Growth Officer, Meerkat. Mary set the research questions, directed the analysis and is responsible for the conclusions.

DATA

**Meerkat's relationship graph**: 600 million professional profiles and 2.7 billion evidence-backed relationships, including about 112 million US profiles. Extracted November 16, 2026.

BUILT WITH CLAUDE OPUS

**Claude Opus** is an AI model from Anthropic. Under Mary's direction, Claude queried the graph, ran the calculations, drafted the text and produced the charts.

01

PART 01

# Four AI years.
# What changed.

THE FOUR AI YEARS

# What changed after November 2022

Four signals from the sales floor, year by year.

**EACH NUMBER IS A COUNT OF PEOPLE IN US CAREER RECORDS**

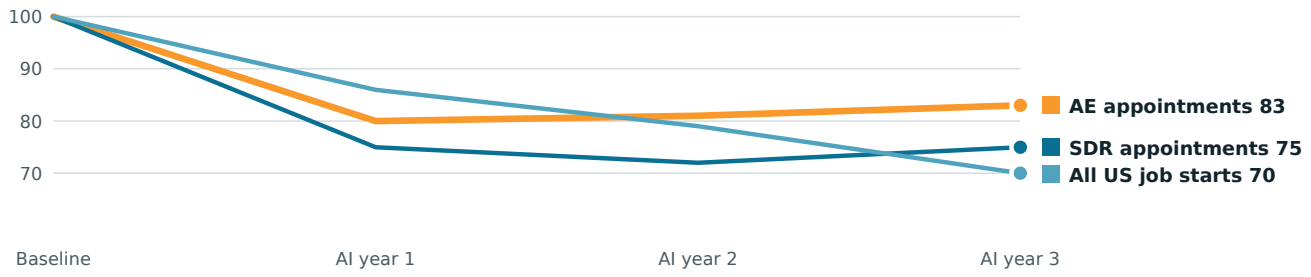
| | Baseline | AI year 1 | AI year 2 | AI year 3 | AI year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nov 2021-Oct 2022 | Nov 2022-Oct 2023 | Nov 2023-Oct 2024 | Nov 2024-Oct 2025 | Nov 2025-Oct 2026 |
| **AEs appointed** | **135,509** | **108,871** | **109,428** | **111,966** | **85,471*** |
| **SDRs appointed** | **50,240** | **37,783** | **36,010** | **37,530** | **28,074*** |
| **GTM engineers appointed** | **47** | **91** | **178** | **536** | **995*** |
| **Sellers earning AI credentials** | **305** | **2,212** | **5,125** | **8,164** | **7,603*** |

Generative AI hits the workplace, November 2022

*Year 4 is understated: career records fill in as people update their profiles.

## Sales hiring held up better than the market

Appointments on record, indexed to the baseline year = 100. As a share of all US job starts, AE appointments rose 17%.




**WHAT IT MEANS**

AI didn't empty the sales floor. Hiring slowed everywhere after 2022, and sales held up better than the market. What changed is how often the person in the seat changes, how long the next seat takes to find and what a seller is expected to know.

Job starts estimated from a 1% sample of US profiles. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

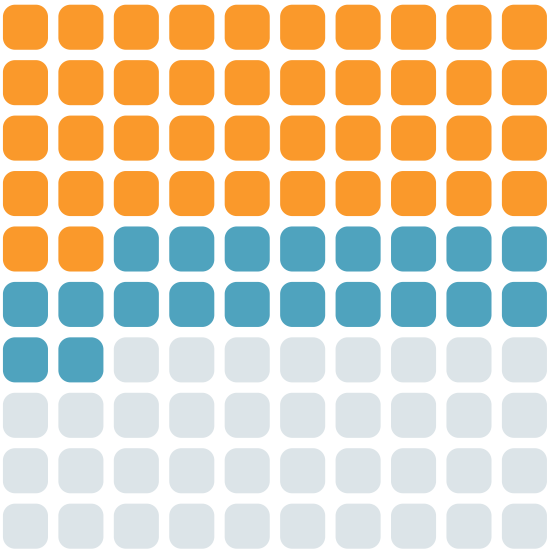
FINDING 01

# The seat survived. The person in it keeps changing.

Most sellers have held their current role for less time than generative AI has been in the workplace.

**Every 100 sitting US AEs**

357,987 people currently in an AE role

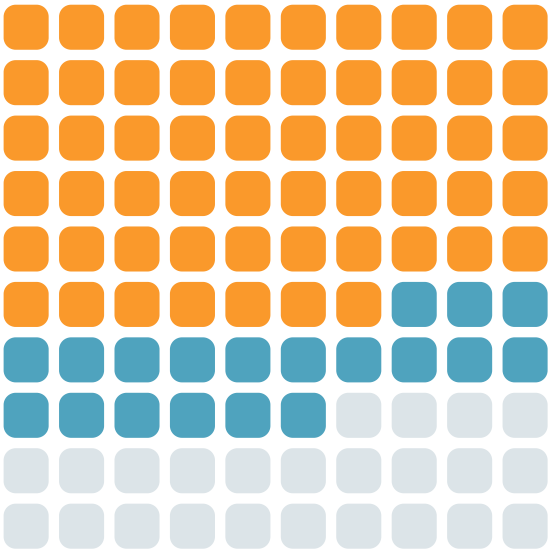


42 started in the last 24 months

20 more since November 2022

**Every 100 sitting US SDRs**

72,265 people currently in an SDR role



57 started in the last 24 months

19 more since November 2022

## 28%

Of AEs leave the role within 12 months of starting. The rate has held for seven years

## 50%

Of SDRs leave the role within 12 months of starting

## 25%

Of AEs who left the role in AI year 3 moved to a new role at the same company, down from 30% before generative AI

**WHAT IT MEANS**

Turnover in the seller seat was always high, and AI didn't slow it. What changed is where exits lead. Fewer end in a promotion or a move inside the company, and more end at the door.

A sitting AE has a current AE role with no end date. Internal moves from a 10% sample of AEs. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

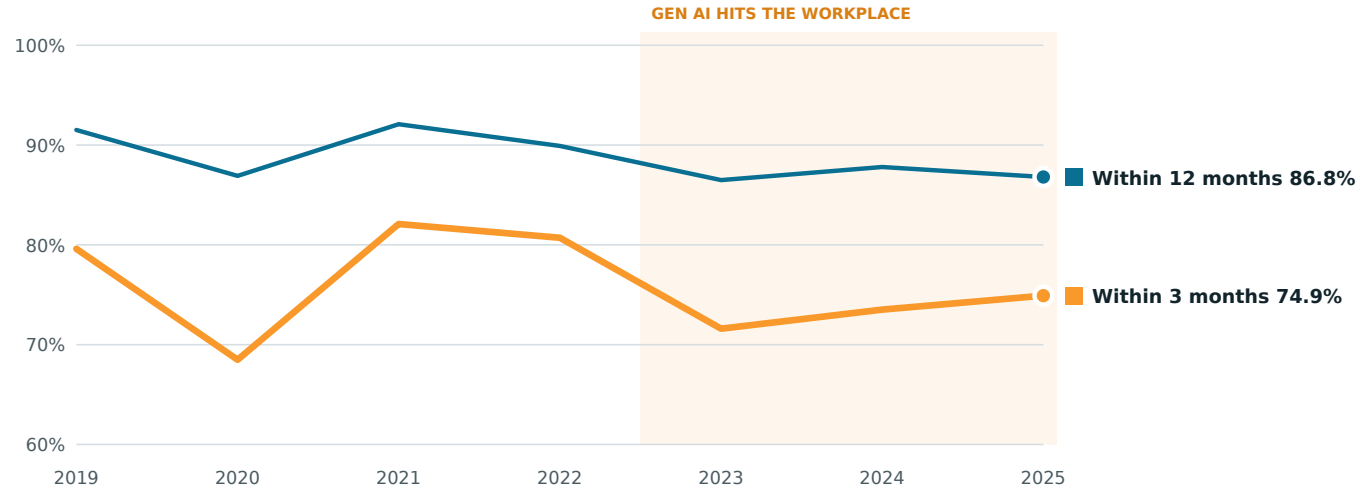
FINDING 02

# Landing the next seat got harder

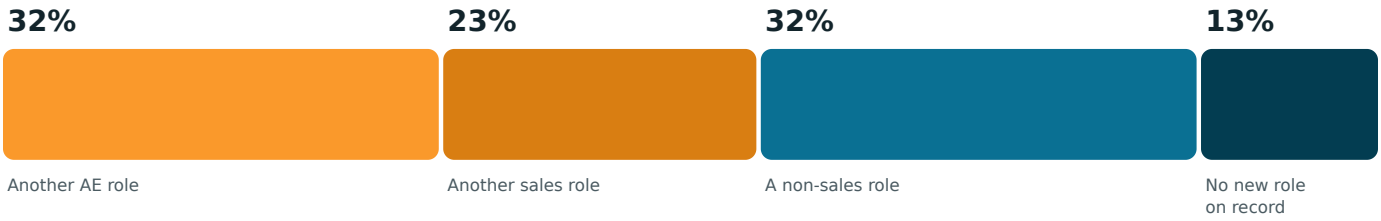
AEs who leave a company take longer to start somewhere new than they did before generative AI hit the workplace.

### AEs who left a company: share who started a role somewhere new

By the year the AE role ended; years run November to October




### Every 100 AEs who left a company in AI year 3, one year later




**WHAT IT MEANS**

The three-month landing rate since late 2022 sits close to the pandemic year of 2020, without a pandemic. One in four AEs who leave now go more than three months without a new job, and one in three who land take a non-sales role. Treat the next search as a matter of when, and start it before you need it.

10% sample of AEs; 8,063 leavers in AI year 3. Some people with no new role on record haven't updated their profiles, so recent years are understated. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

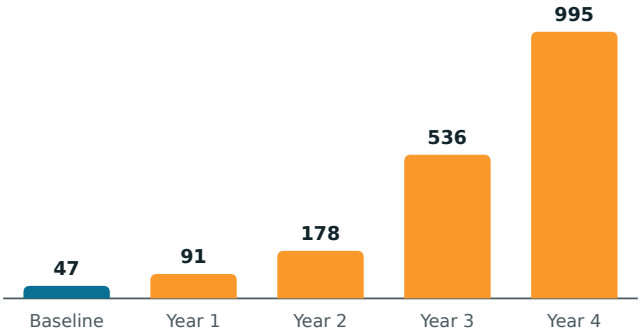
FINDING 03

# AI is rewriting the roles and the résumé

New titles and new credentials are spreading fast, from a very small base.

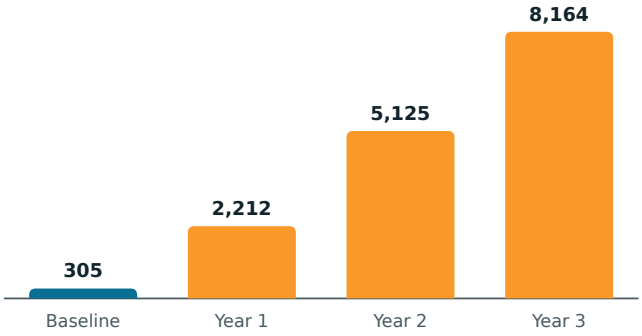
### GTM engineers appointed

US, by AI year; year 4 still reporting

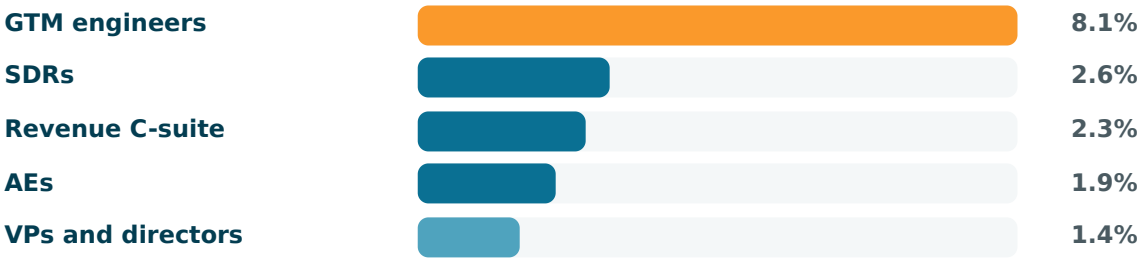



### Sellers earning an AI credential

People in current US sales roles




### Share with an AI credential earned since late 2022, by current role




**1 in 3**

GTM engineers previously held a sales role, most often SDR, AE or revenue operations

**34%**

Of GTM engineers appointed in AI year 3 left the role within 12 months

**98%**

Of AEs show no AI credential earned since late 2022

**WHAT IT MEANS**

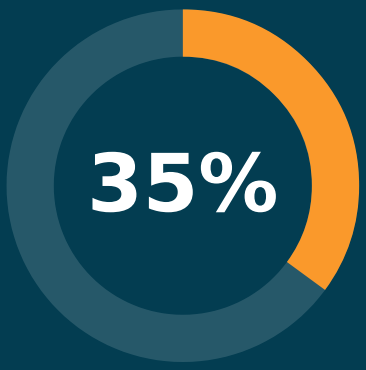
The fastest-growing role in sales is being filled by former sellers who learned to build with AI, and it's also the least stable. Almost none of your peers can show AI skill on the record yet. That gap is the easiest edge available to you this year.

AI credentials: certifications naming AI, generative AI, machine learning, prompt engineering, Copilot or similar. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

FINDING 04

# Your buyer has moved, or will soon

The executive who signed last year is often somewhere new this year.




Of VP-and-above executives appointed at US organizations in AI year 2 left the role within 24 months.

About 239,000 VP-and-above appointments landed at US organizations with 200 or more people in AI year 3 alone.

**13%**
Leave the role within the first 12 months

**50%**
Of new executive buyers come from another organization

**76%**
Of executives who move between mapped organizations stay in their sector

**WHAT SELLERS TELL US**

**89%** of sales professionals have reached someone otherwise unreachable through a relationship. Yet **half** say most of their outreach is still cold.

Meerkat, The State of Relationship Capital 2026, survey of 69 professionals; sales figures use the 28 respondents in sales or business development

**WHAT IT MEANS**

A deal with one champion is a deal with a 35% chance of losing that champion inside two years. The same move opens a door: three in four executives who change companies stay in the sector you already sell to.

Origin and sector movement from a 10% sample of 2025 appointees (23,160 people). Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

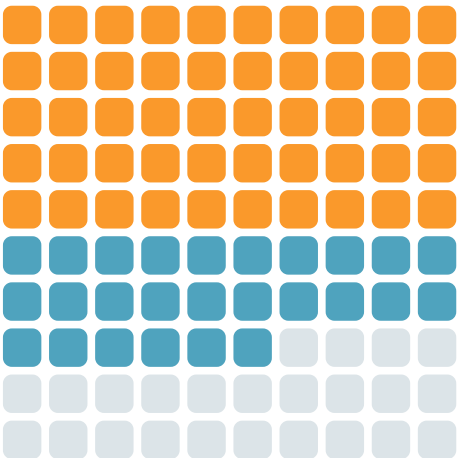
FINDING 05

# The leaders above you are turning over too

The person who hired you, knows your work and would promote you is unlikely to stay.

**Every 100 sitting US CROs**

11,919 people currently in a CRO role



50 took the seat in the last 24 months

26 more since November 2022

**Share of sitting leaders who started the role after generative AI hit the workplace**




One in six new CROs are out of the role within a year, and 43% of those appointed in 2023 were gone within 24 months. Each change at the top brings new territories, new comp plans and new priorities.

**25%**

Of CRO seats changed hands in the last 12 months

**17%**

Of new CROs are out of the role within their first year

**55%**

Of VPs of Sales in seat today started in the role in the last four years

**WHAT IT MEANS**

Sponsorship resets with every leadership change. A career that depends on one manager's good opinion is exposed. Build relationships two levels up, across functions and outside the company, so your reputation outlasts any one boss.

A sitting leader has a current role with no end date. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

02

PART 02

# Future-proof your deals.

PART 02 · YOUR DEALS

02

# Five moves to protect a deal

Each move answers a number in this report.

## 1 Never run a deal on one champion

Build at least three relationships in every active deal, across levels and functions. When one leaves, the deal still has a sponsor.

**35%**
of executive buyers leave within 24 months

## 2 Map before you prospect

Before the first cold email, check who you, your team and your former colleagues know at the account. A warm path beats a sequence.

**240**
people one introduction from a typical AE

## 3 Follow your buyers when they move

Three in four executives who change companies stay in their sector. Congratulate them, then ask about the new priorities.

**76%**
of movers stay in their sector

## 4 Meet the new executive in the first 30 days

Half of new executive buyers come from outside and review what they inherited. Find a mutual connection and get there early.

**50%**
of new buyers come from another organization

## 5 Put your account relationships where your team can see them

When you or your manager moves on, the deal shouldn't restart from cold.

**62%**
of AEs are new to the seat since late 2022

One introduction away from a sample of 710 current AEs, excluding connectors with more than 250 relationships. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

03

PART 03

# Future-proof your career.

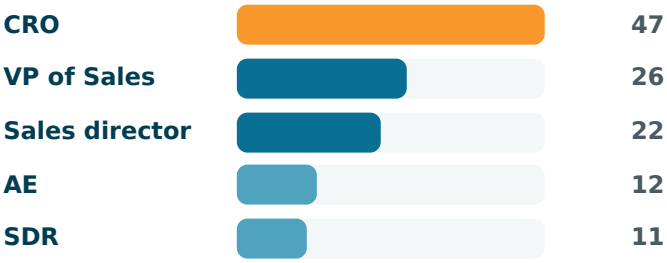
03

# Relationships grow with every step up, and matter more

Verified relationships by title, and what they're worth when a role ends.

**What counts as a verified relationship.** A tie Meerkat can evidence from records: two people worked at the same company in the same period long enough to know each other, served on the same board, or one recommended the other. The count shows relationships on record, not everyone a person knows.

### Median verified relationships, by current title




### AEs who started in 2015-2016, by where they got to

STAYED BELOW DIRECTOR

**21**

Median relationships. 36% have a recommendation.

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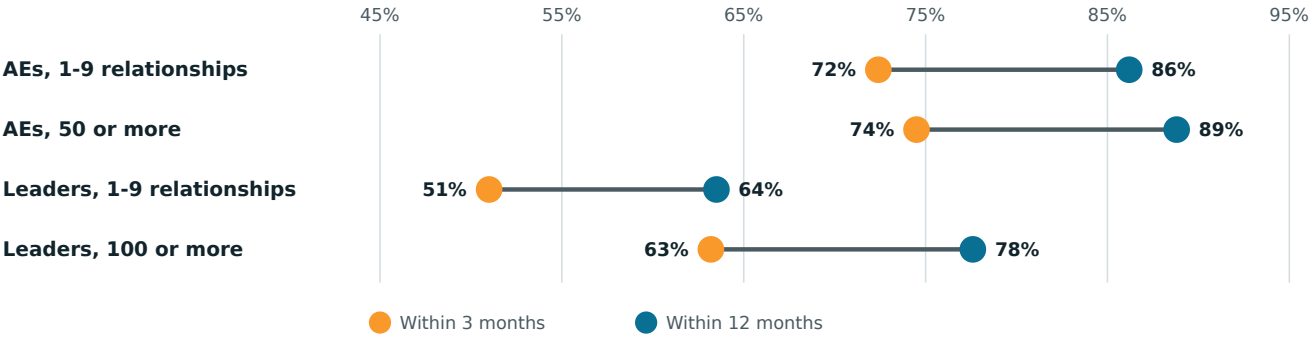
WENT ON TO LEAD

**33**

Median relationships. 57% have a recommendation.

### Landed a role at a new organization after leaving, by network size

Roles that ended in AI years 1-3




**WHAT IT MEANS**

At the AE level, a bigger network lifts the odds of landing by a few points. At the VP and CRO level, the lift is 12 points. The higher you climb, the more your next job depends on who knows you, so the time to build is now, while the stakes are lower.

Leaders: CROs and VPs of Sales. Samples of 39,000 current sellers, 17,026 AEs from 2015-2016, 19,324 AE exits and 18,926 leader exits. People with fuller profiles show both more relationships and more roles, which accounts for part of the gap. Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

03

# Six habits of sellers who stay employable

Network while you're employed. The numbers say putting it off costs you.

## 1 Keep a search warm at all times

One in four AEs who leave go more than three months without a new job. Hold two conversations a month with people outside your company.

**25%**
of AE leavers take over three months to land

## 2 Stay close to former colleagues

Career overlaps are the most common verified tie, and former teammates are the ones who hire you next.

**12**
median relationships of a sitting AE

## 3 Earn recommendations

Sellers who went on to lead were far more likely to have one on record. Ask your best customers and managers this quarter.

**57%**
of AEs who went on to lead have one

## 4 Build relationships above your boss

Three in four CROs are new since late 2022. Make sure more than one leader knows your work.

**76%**
of CROs are new since late 2022

## 5 Put your AI fluency on the record

Earn a credential and show one workflow you built. Almost none of your peers have.

**1.9%**
of AEs hold an AI credential

## 6 Keep your customers as your network

Buyers move and stay in the sector. A customer who trusts you is a reference, a referral and a future employer.

**76%**
of executive movers stay in their sector

Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

04

PART 04

# What comes next.

04

# Predictions for the next 6 and 12 months

Each projection extends the four-year trend in the data. None is a forecast for a single company.

## In 6 months

BY MAY 2027

**One in nine AEs and one in six SDRs are in a new seat.**

Basis: 22% of sitting AEs and 34% of sitting SDRs started in the last 12 months.

**About 120,000 new VP-and-above buyers take seats at US organizations.**

Basis: about 239,000 appointments a year, flat for three years.

**One in eight CRO seats change hands, and territories and comp plans change with them.**

Basis: 25% of sitting CROs took the seat in the last 12 months.

**GTM engineer appointments pass a 1,500-a-year pace.**

Basis: 178, 536, then 995 with year 4 still reporting.

**One in ten AEs hired today is out of the role before six months are up.**

Basis: a six-month exit rate of 9-10% in every year since 2019.

## In 12 months

BY NOVEMBER 2027

**More than one in five AEs change seats, and one in four who leave a company go over three months without a new job.**

Basis: three-month landing rates of 72-75% in every AI year.

**One in eight AE leavers show no new role a year out, and one in three who land leave sales.**

Basis: 13% with no new role; 36% of next roles have non-sales titles.

**Fewer than one in four AE exits are moves within the same company.**

Basis: 30%, 27%, 26%, 25% over the last four years.

**More than 10,000 sellers earn an AI credential in the year, and fewer than 3% of AEs hold one.**

Basis: 8,164 in AI year 3; 1.9% of AEs hold one today.

**One in three executive buyers appointed two years ago have left the seat.**

Basis: 35% of each recent class leaves within 24 months.

Source: Meerkat relationship graph, US career records (about 112 million US professional profiles), extracted November 16, 2026.

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YOUR RELATIONSHIP ADVISOR FOR AGENTIC AI

# Buyers and bosses move on. Your relationships are the asset that stays with you.

Six in ten AEs are new to the seat in the last four years, and one in three executive buyers leaves within two. The data in this report shows what lasts through that turnover: sellers who go on to lead carry more relationships, and a bigger network helps when a role ends. The same relationships are the warm paths back into an account when a buyer moves.

### ABOUT MEERKAT

Meerkat is your relationship advisor built for agentic AI. We provide clients with rich relationship graphs and enriched contact data so they can quickly find and act on warm-path introductions. At Meerkat, we believe that as AI commoditizes outreach and access, earned trust is your most important asset.

## Give us your toughest account,
## and we'll show you who opens the door.

**Request a demo** | **trymeerkat.ai**

AI does the work. Meerkat knows who opens the door.

ABOUT THE DATA

# How this report was built

Every count comes from Meerkat's relationship graph unless marked as survey data.

## Who built this report

Research and analysis by Mary Shea, PhD, Co-Founder and Chief Growth Officer of Meerkat, who set the research questions, directed the analysis and is responsible for the conclusions. Built with Claude Opus, an AI model from Anthropic, which queried the graph, ran the calculations, drafted the text and produced the charts under her direction.

## Source

This report is built on Meerkat's relationship graph: 600 million professional profiles connected by 2.7 billion evidence-backed relationships, built from licensed and public sources. The graph includes about 112 million professional profiles in the United States. Data extracted November 16, 2026.

## AI years

Each AI year runs November to October, beginning November 2022. The baseline year is November 2021 to October 2022. Charts labeled 2019 to 2025 use the same November-to-October years.

## Appointments and exits

An appointment is a person starting a role with a matching title. An exit is a role with an end date. Leaving a role includes promotions and moves within a company unless stated.

## Share of job starts

Hiring on record fell across the US after 2022, and recent months are incomplete. To separate sales trends from both effects, we compare sales appointments with all US job starts, estimated from a 1% sample of US profiles.

## Landing a new role

A role at a different organization that starts up to one month before an exit or within the stated window after. People who haven't updated their profiles appear as having no new role, so landing rates are conservative.

## Verified relationships

Two people who worked at the same company in the same period with enough time together to know each other, served on the same board, or where one recommended the other.

## Predictions

Projections extend recent trends in the data. They describe the US market as a whole.

## Survey data

Callouts marked "What sellers tell us" come from The State of Relationship Capital 2026, a Meerkat survey of 69 professionals fielded in late summer and early fall 2026. Sales figures use the 28 respondents in sales or business development.

## Coverage

The graph reflects relationships we can evidence from our sources. Some of the strongest relationships may not appear in any source.