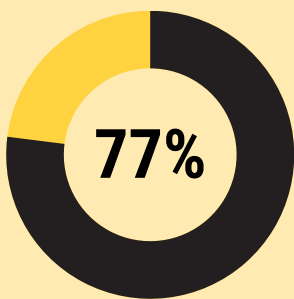


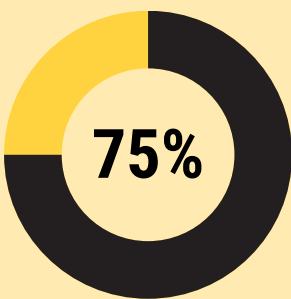
## KEY OPERATIONAL PRESSURES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2026

### Operational Pressures Shaping Decisions in 2026

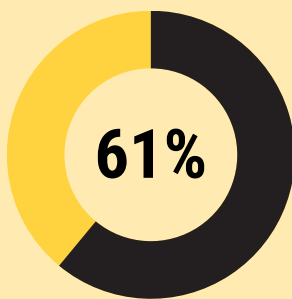
% of business owners reporting these pressures



**Costs increased** over the last 12 months



Still impacted by **supply base issues**



Experiencing **labor shortages**

#### What This Means for Small Businesses

Operational pressures continue to shape how small businesses plan for the year ahead. Rising costs are compressing margins, supply chain instability is affecting timelines and customer delivery, and labor shortages continue to challenge productivity.

Owners are responding by reviewing expenses more closely, refining pricing strategies, diversifying suppliers and adopting workflow improvements to reduce strain on existing teams.

#### Why This Matters for 2026

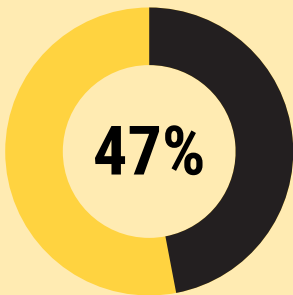
Businesses that actively monitor these pressures and make early adjustments are better positioned to protect margins, manage risk and stay lender ready in a shifting economic environment.

That level of discipline often leads to stronger margins, healthier cash flow and more predictable financial performance throughout the year.

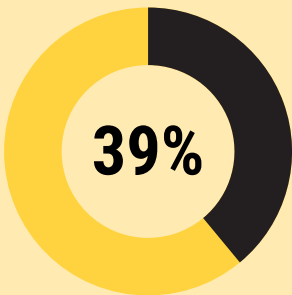


## Strategic Priorities Guiding Growth through 2030

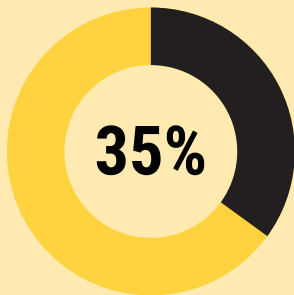
% of business owners planning these key strategic moves



**Expand Customer Base**



**Expand Products and Services**



**Explore New Marketing Tactics**

How Owners Are Planning for Growth	Preparing for Your Next Stage of Growth
<p>Business owners are looking ahead with a clearer focus on long term growth. Many are expanding their customer base, broadening their offerings and rethinking their marketing to reach new audiences. These moves reflect a desire for stronger revenue resilience and deeper market presence.</p> <p>Marketing innovation is emerging as a key priority, with more owners strengthening digital engagement, improving content strategies and finding modern ways to reach their ideal customers.</p>	<p>Clarify your top growth priorities, strengthen your marketing strategy and align your operations and financials with your long term goals.</p> <p>Intentional planning today sets the foundation for stronger performance and bankability in the years ahead.</p>

### Let’s Strengthen Your Next Stage of Growth

Preparing for 2026 requires clear strategy and strong financial readiness. We help business owners stay lender ready, improve operational stability and position their companies for sustainable growth.

If you are planning your next stage of growth, let’s connect. | [info@strategicthinktank.com](mailto:info@strategicthinktank.com) | 248.553.8250

