Marketing in an Uncertain Economy



Maintaining visibility and sales momentum through client focus

October 8, 2026 at 10:00 AM Central | Evidence reviewed September 16, 2026

Executive recommendation

Protect the activities that keep suitable buyers engaged: useful communication, credible proof and personal follow-up. Focus scarce time on the clients and opportunities the business can serve well and profitably. Use ABCI's sales process to distinguish an opportunity waiting for the right conditions from one that no longer fits.

The market signals are mixed

Small business uncertainty remains elevated

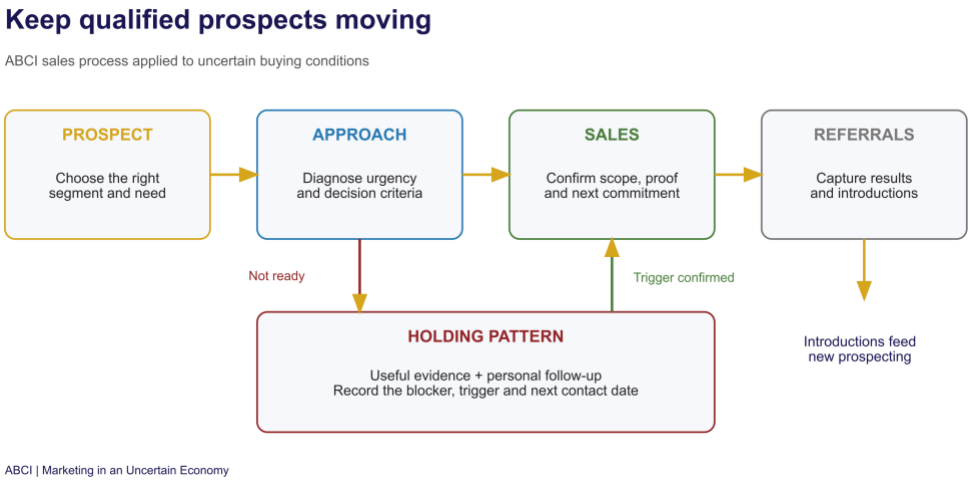
NFIB's September 8 release reports an August Uncertainty Index of 89, compared with a historical average of 68. Its Optimism Index was 98.7, just above the 52-year average of 98.0. These are index readings, not percentages. Respondents were drawn from NFIB members; the results are broader business context, not an aviation buyer survey. [1]
Marketing implication: ask which constraint is delaying each buyer. Budget, timing and confidence require different follow-up. Avoid assuming that everyone has stopped buying.

Aircraft demand differs by category

GAMA's September 3 report shows first-half 2026 business-jet shipments up 8.2% and turboprops up 7.8%, while piston airplane shipments fell 3.1%, compared with the first half of 2025. Airplane billings rose 15.5% to $14.3 billion. Shipments reflect deliveries, not new orders or demand for every aviation service. [2]
Marketing implication: review the aircraft types and customer missions behind the pipeline. A broad aviation headline is insufficient grounds to expand or cut a specific campaign.

Employment adds a further sign of uneven conditions

The September 4 BLS release reports 162,000 additional U.S. nonfarm payroll jobs in August and a 4.1% unemployment rate. These national figures provide context; they do not establish the health of a particular aviation market. [3]



The decision for this month

Select one priority customer segment and one useful offer. Protect a weekly relationship and follow-up routine. Review qualified conversations and stage movement alongside margin and sales.

Put uncertainty inside the sales process

ABCI's Prospect, Approach, Holding Pattern, Sales, and Referrals and Testimonials stages give the team a place to act when buyers hesitate. A longer buying timeline makes the Holding Pattern more consequential: maintain relevance and record what would change the decision. [4]

Figure 1. Buyers who are not ready remain in the Holding Pattern; a confirmed buying trigger reopens the sales conversation. Referrals replenish prospecting.

ABCI stage	Action for uncertain conditions	Evidence of progress
Prospect	Choose a segment with a relevant problem and a credible reason to consider us.	Named accounts and a documented fit rationale.
Approach	Ask about the operational problem, decision participants, budget and timing.	A buyer-confirmed need and an agreed next step.
Holding Pattern	Record the blocker; send useful evidence and agree when to reconnect.	Two-way engagement, a next contact date and a monitored trigger.
Sales	Resolve the remaining concern with proof, clear scope and a feasible first commitment.	A decision meeting or accepted commercial commitment.
Referrals and Testimonials	After delivering value, request permission for a result story or a specific introduction.	Approved proof and introductions to suitable buyers.

Use the Aviation Trust Stack to diagnose a stalled opportunity

Visibility asks whether buyers know us. Relevance asks whether they recognize their problem in our offer. Competence needs evidence that we can deliver. Trust needs reliable behavior and fulfilled commitments. Decision requires acceptable risk and a workable path forward. Identify the missing layer before adding another campaign. [4]

Illustrative MRO example: a fleet operator delays an avionics project until its next maintenance window. Record that window and the decision team, share a verified planning checklist, and offer a readiness conversation when scheduling begins. Do not treat a newsletter open as purchase intent.

Make the labs and habits reinforce each other

Marketing Lab combines Tools, Skills and Networking. For this theme, use Tools to maintain the pipeline and proof library; Skills to practice discovery and buyer-specific messaging; and Networking to hear changing needs and make relevant introductions. Strategy selects the work, execution delivers it, and relationships supply context. [4]

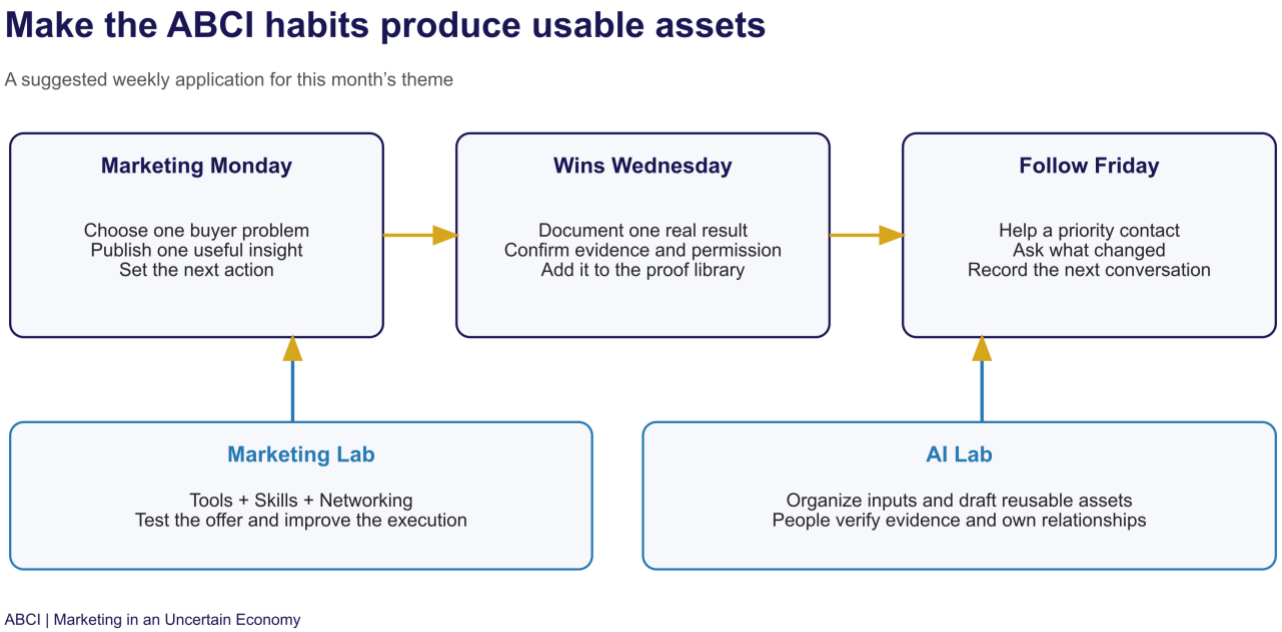


Figure 2. Suggested October applications of ABCI's habits. The labs support a repeatable weekly routine with tangible outputs.

Use the weekly habits to produce one connected example

Marketing Monday: choose a buyer question about planning work under uncertain demand. Publish an answer supported by a verified source and a clear invitation to talk. Wins Wednesday: capture a real customer outcome that answers the same concern. Follow Friday: share it personally with a relevant contact and ask what has changed. ABCI describes these habits as learning and action, evidence capture, and relationship development. [5]

Apply the October AI Lab modules

October's AI Marketing Lab gives members three focused ways to support ABCI's sales process during uncertain conditions. Choose the module that addresses your most immediate need. Each starts with one real situation and produces something you can review and use.

Beginner — Useful Follow-Up

Draft a helpful message for one prospect in the Holding Pattern. Give AI the buyer's stated reason for waiting, context from your last conversation, and a relevant resource you can share. Review the draft, personalize it, and use Follow Friday to reconnect. Record what you learn and the next contact date.

Intermediate — Customer Proof

Turn one documented customer win into a short case example. Use Wins Wednesday to gather the problem, the work performed, and the verified result. AI helps organize that evidence into a clear story that supports the Competence layer of ABCI's Aviation Trust Stack. Confirm accuracy and permission before adding it to your proof library.

Advanced — Next Best Action

Examine one stalled opportunity through the Aviation Trust Stack: Visibility, Relevance, Competence, Trust, and Decision. Ask AI to

distinguish evidence from assumptions, identify missing information, and recommend one useful next action. Use Marketing Monday to select the opportunity, then confirm the recommendation with the person who owns the relationship.
Together, these modules support ABCI's progression from a simple prompt to a practical project and, with repeated use, a dependable system. [5] Follow-up keeps relationships active, customer proof builds confidence, and a well-chosen next action helps a suitable buyer move forward.



Use information authorized for your AI system, verify factual claims, and keep people responsible for communication and relationship decisions. Bring your draft message, case example, or opportunity analysis to a Marketing Lab discussion or office hours for feedback.

Find all three October modules in ABCI Insiders under AI Lab & Tools.

Use client focus to build relationship capital

Mike Michalowicz's The Pumpkin Plan emphasizes concentrating on the clients and work with the strongest potential. [6] For ABCI, that focus can guide prospect selection and where to invest personal attention. Relationship capital is earned through useful work, reliability and trust, then extended through advocacy, referrals and repeat business. [4]

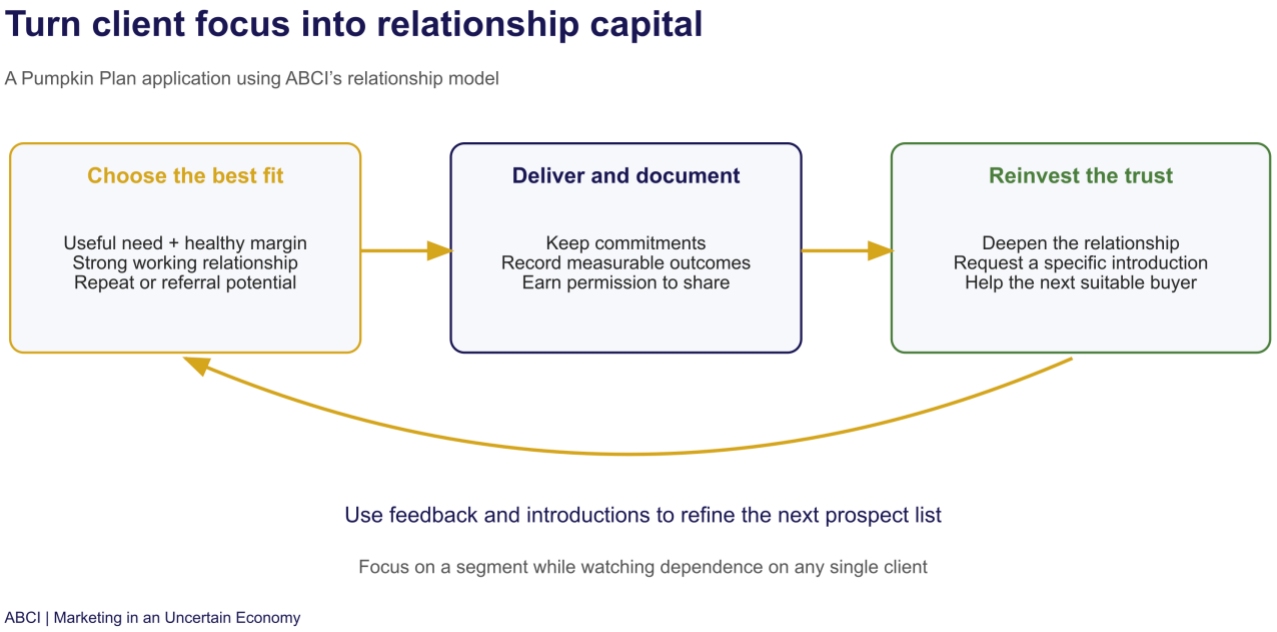
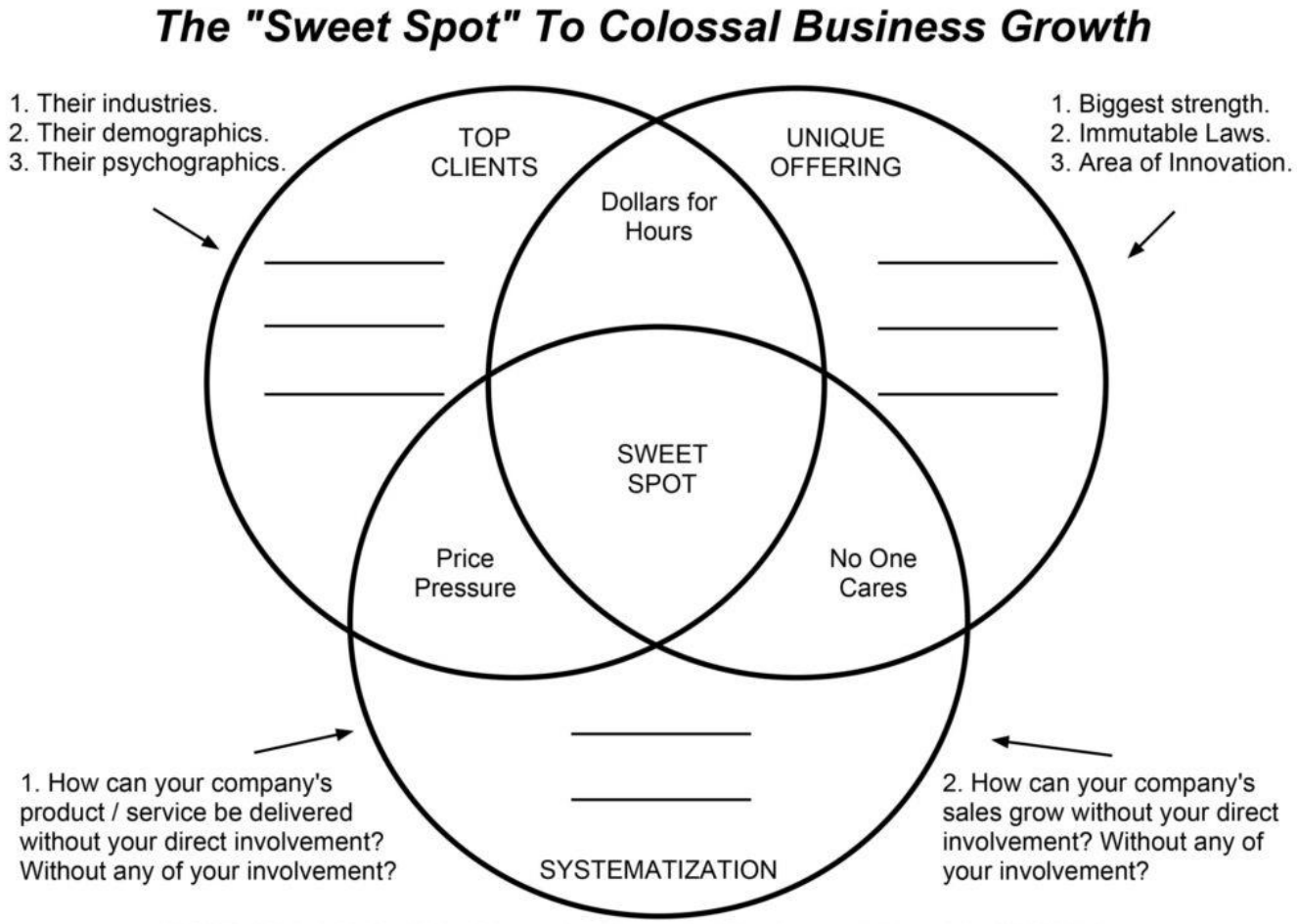


Figure 3. A suggested connection between Pumpkin Plan client selection and ABCI's relationship capital model. This is a practical application, not a prediction of results.

The best way to a resilient business - identify the best clients, define the distinctive offering they value, and build a repeatable way to deliver it.



(c) 2012 Mike Michalowicz, The Pumpkin Plan. This may not be copied or reproduced without the expressed written permission of Mike Michalowicz

Distinguish poor fit from delayed timing

Score existing clients for contribution after delivery effort, strategic fit, working relationship, repeat potential and referral relevance. Look for a shared problem among the strongest accounts. A profitable, suitable client waiting for a budget decision belongs in the Holding Pattern. Repeatedly unprofitable or unsuitable work may need a different scope, price or referral to another provider.

Turn a win into the next qualified conversation

After delivery, document what changed and the evidence behind it. Ask permission to share the result. Then make a specific referral request: “Which operator facing this same scheduling problem would benefit from a conversation?” Offer introductions and useful information in return where appropriate. Trust grows through ongoing service, not a sequence of requests.

Protect capacity without making the business fragile

Reallocate time from ineffective channels and poorly scoped work to the chosen segment. Preserve existing commitments and monitor reliance on any single customer. Segment focus should improve repeatability while retaining a sensible spread of accounts.

Bring a concrete decision to the Pumpkin Plan session

For October 27 at 10:00 AM Central, bring a ranked client list, one example of avoidable delivery effort, and one opportunity to serve a strong client better. Decide which offer to strengthen and which activity to reduce. The session date and time come from the October Marketing Lab calendar. [7]

Run a focused thirty day test

Period	Owner and action	Reviewable output
Week 1	Leader and sales: choose the segment; classify open opportunities by ABCI stage.	Client ranking, one offer and a baseline pipeline.
Week 2	Marketing: publish one useful insight and assemble verified proof.	Buyer-specific content and an approved result story.
Week 3	Sales and account owners: follow up on priority relationships and stalled decisions.	Updated blockers, buying triggers and next contact dates.
Week 4	Leader and team: review the pipeline and effort required; choose what to continue.	A recorded decision to continue, revise or stop each test.

Measure movement and relationship quality

Review qualified conversations, opportunities advancing a stage, days in stage, overdue follow-ups, introductions and repeat business. Define a qualified conversation as one where fit and need are confirmed and timing or a decision path is discussed. Compare wins with decided opportunities, and track no-decision outcomes separately. Use your baseline to set targets; this brief does not assume a universal conversion benchmark.

If activity rises without suitable conversations, revisit targeting and the offer. If conversations rise but decisions stall, inspect the Trust Stack and blockers. If sales increase while delivery effort erodes margin, revisit client fit and scope before increasing promotion.

Sources and framework references

[1] NFIB, August 2026 Small Business Optimism and Uncertainty; September 8, 2026. Read source
[2] GAMA, Second Quarter 2026 Aircraft Shipment and Billing Report; September 3, 2026. First-half comparison. Read source
[3] BLS, The Employment Situation, August 2026; September 4, 2026. Payroll estimates are subject to revision. Read source
[4] ABCI supplied diagrams: Marketing Lab model; sales cycle; Connected System; Holding Pattern; Relationship Capital Flywheel; Aviation Trust Stack.
[5] ABCI, AI Marketing Lab: Practical AI for Aviation Marketing; August 2026. Read source
[6] Mike Michalowicz, The Pumpkin Plan, author overview. Read source
[7] ABCI, 2026 Marketing Lab Calendar, October events; supplied PDF.