



The Planning Problem Is Changing

2027 Edition: Signals from the Field for the Year Ahead

Technology leaders have always had to balance reliable operations today with the capabilities the organization may need next.

What is changing is the environment surrounding those decisions. New capabilities continue to emerge, business expectations continue to expand, and technology choices increasingly intersect across security, identity, cloud, infrastructure, applications, data, users, and operations.

This brief reflects TBL's perspective from participating in those decisions through planning, evaluation, architecture, implementation, and ongoing operations. The goal is not to predict what every organization should do. It is to surface the questions, tradeoffs, and planning considerations we believe are worth examining before decisions become commitments.

Why Planning Feels Different Today

Patrick Tredway - CEO, TBL Networks, Inc.

Technology is always changing. What feels different now is how much of that change has to be evaluated at the exact same time, while the environment still has to stay secure, reliable, and supportable. Over the years, we've seen plenty of decisions that looked good on paper but became harder once they had to be integrated, operated, supported, and adapted. The challenge is not simply choosing the right technology. It's making a decision the organization can live with, operate well, and continue getting value from as conditions change.

READING THIS BRIEF

OBSERVED

Directly grounded in TBL evidence or analysis.

SEEING

Recurring field patterns and questions TBL is hearing.

BELIEVES

TBL's interpretation and point of view.

APPLY

Practical questions to strengthen planning decisions.

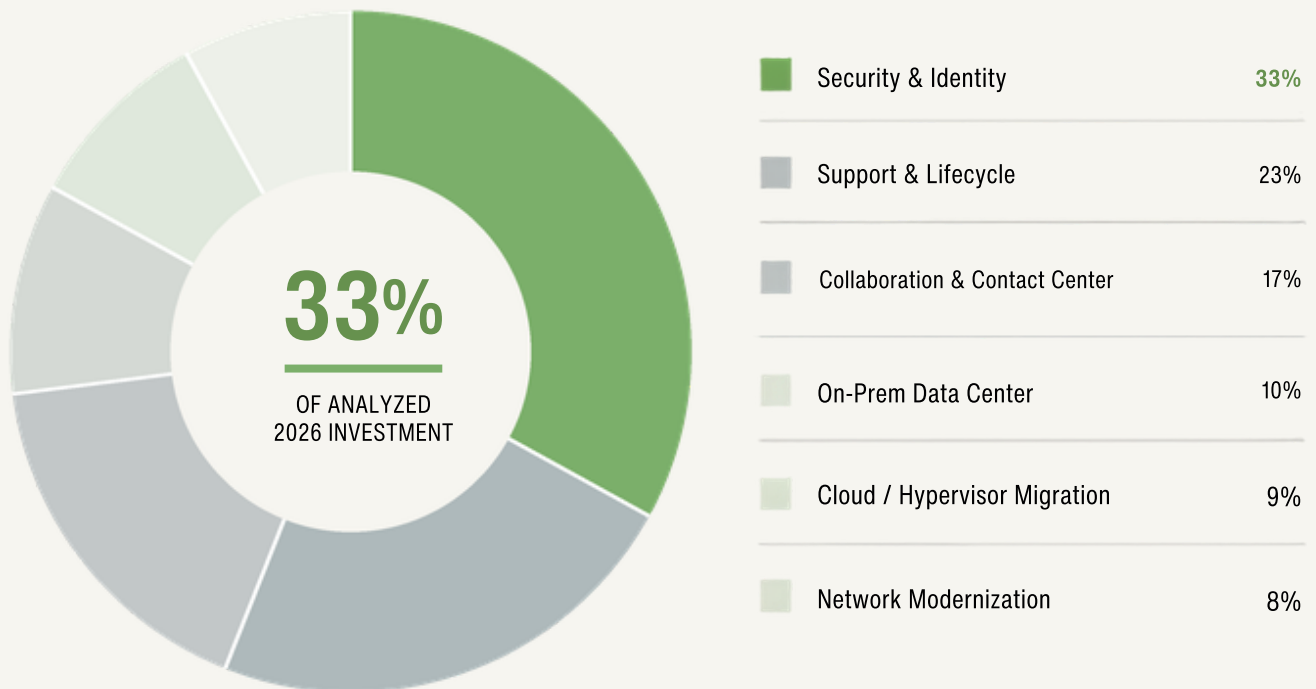


An Observed Investment Signal

2026 analyzed customer technology investment

OBSERVED

Security & Identity represented the largest single technology investment theme within TBL's analyzed 2026 customer activity.



CATEGORY

Security & Identity

WHAT IT MAY REFLECT

A visible share of investment moved toward confidence in identity, access control, and assurance.

PLANNING QUESTION

What capability or operating need is the investment intended to address?

QUALIFICATION

This figure reflects investment patterns among the organizations included in TBL's analysis. It is not an industry-wide spending measure, market-share estimate, or statistically representative benchmark.

TBL PERSPECTIVE

Security and identity should increasingly be evaluated as an interconnected operating challenge—not simply a collection of individual controls. The question is how identity, access, protection and visibility work together to reduce risk while enabling the business.

Questions Customers Are Asking

Different technologies. Similar leadership tensions.

Recurring field questions we are *seeing* beneath technology categories.

QUESTION	TENSION	WHAT WE'RE LEARNING
01 How can we improve identity protection without frustrating our employees?	Security ↔ Friction	Identity has become an operational discipline, not just a security control. Leaders want stronger protection <i>and</i> a better employee experience.
02 How do we modernize without increasing our operational burden?	Capability ↔ Manageability	Modernization is increasingly measured by operational efficiency and business outcomes, not by how many new platforms get deployed.
03 Where can AI create practical value without introducing meaningful risk?	Business Value ↔ Confidence	Interest has shifted from experimentation to specific use cases that must be deployed and governed responsibly.
04 How do we keep operations simple as environments become more complex?	Growing Complexity ↔ Operational Simplicity	Complexity is becoming the new baseline. Organizations are prioritizing visibility, governance, and operational consistency to keep environments manageable.
05 How do we ensure technology investments remain meaningful over time?	Immediate Needs ↔ Future Readiness	Organizations increasingly values platforms that can adapt to changing priorities rather than simply solving today's problem.

Technology evolves. Business tradeoffs endure. Leaders find balance within the tension.

What TBL Believes

BETTER TECHNOLOGY DECISIONS ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN TECHNICAL CAPABILITY.

The strongest decisions connect what the organization needs to accomplish with what it can successfully operate. They are ultimately measured by whether the value they create can endure as conditions evolve.



CAPABILITY
What the decision makes possible



OPERATIONAL REALITY
How it holds up in the real world



SUSTAINED VALUE
What it delivers over time

1 OUTCOMES DEFINE CAPABILITY REQUIREMENTS

SIGNAL

A business or operational need creates a reason to change.

MEANING

Start with what the organization needs to become better able to do, not simply which technology to deploy.

QUESTION

What capability must this decision make possible?

2 OPERATIONAL REALITY SHAPES EVERY DECISION

SIGNAL

Every new capability creates operating requirements and responsibilities.

MEANING

Operational simplicity must be designed into successful environments. It's rarely achieved after the fact.

QUESTION

Can we operate this reliably, securely, and at scale?

3 TEST FOR ENDURING VALUE & PRESERVE ROOM TO ADAPT

SIGNAL

Requirements, people, systems, and operating conditions continue to change after implementation.

MEANING

The measure of a decision isn't implementation, it's how a decision continues to create value as business priorities evolve.

QUESTION

Will this continue creating value as conditions change?

TRUST EVOLUTION WORKSHOP

The Trust Evolution Workshop is a collaborative 90-minute planning session that helps leadership teams evaluate technology initiatives through the lens of business priorities, operational readiness, and long-term strategy.

TOGETHER, WE'LL:

- Review your current technology priorities
- Explore dependencies and planning considerations
- Identify capabilities needed to support future investments

OUTCOME

A shared understanding that helps your organization prioritize technology investments, reduce complexity, and build a foundation for future initiatives.

Good technology decisions connect business intent, capability, technical judgment, and operational reality.



From Signals to Decisions

Applying today's observations for stronger planning choices

Better planning doesn't eliminate uncertainty. It improves the quality of decisions made in spite of it.

Decision Checkpoints

BUSINESS CAPABILITY

What does the business need technology to make possible over the next 12-24 months?

PRIORITY NOW

Which opportunities deserve attention now? And where might "not yet" be as valuable as "yes?"

OPERATIONAL CONSEQUENCE

What will this decision require after implementation and who owns responsibility for what follows?

VALIDATION NEED

Which decisions deserve deeper technical or operational validation before commitment?

ENDURING VALUE

Which choices are likely to remain useful, supportable and adaptable as requirements change?

EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Where would another experienced perspective improve the quality of the decision?

Bring business intent, operational reality, and validation into decisions early and often.

Better decisions begin by clarifying what the organization is trying to accomplish, bringing operational realities forward, and identifying what deserves validation before commitment.

ABOUT TBL

TBL works alongside technology leaders from planning and evaluation through implementation and ongoing operations. That perspective comes from helping customers make technology decisions, and remaining engaged as those decisions become part of the operating environment.

Peers, Pints & Planning

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

HARDYWOOD PARK CRAFT BREWERY - WEST CREEK

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM



CONTINUE THE PLANNING
CONVERSATION WITH YOUR PEERS

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Have a decision worth another perspective? Start the conversation with TBL.