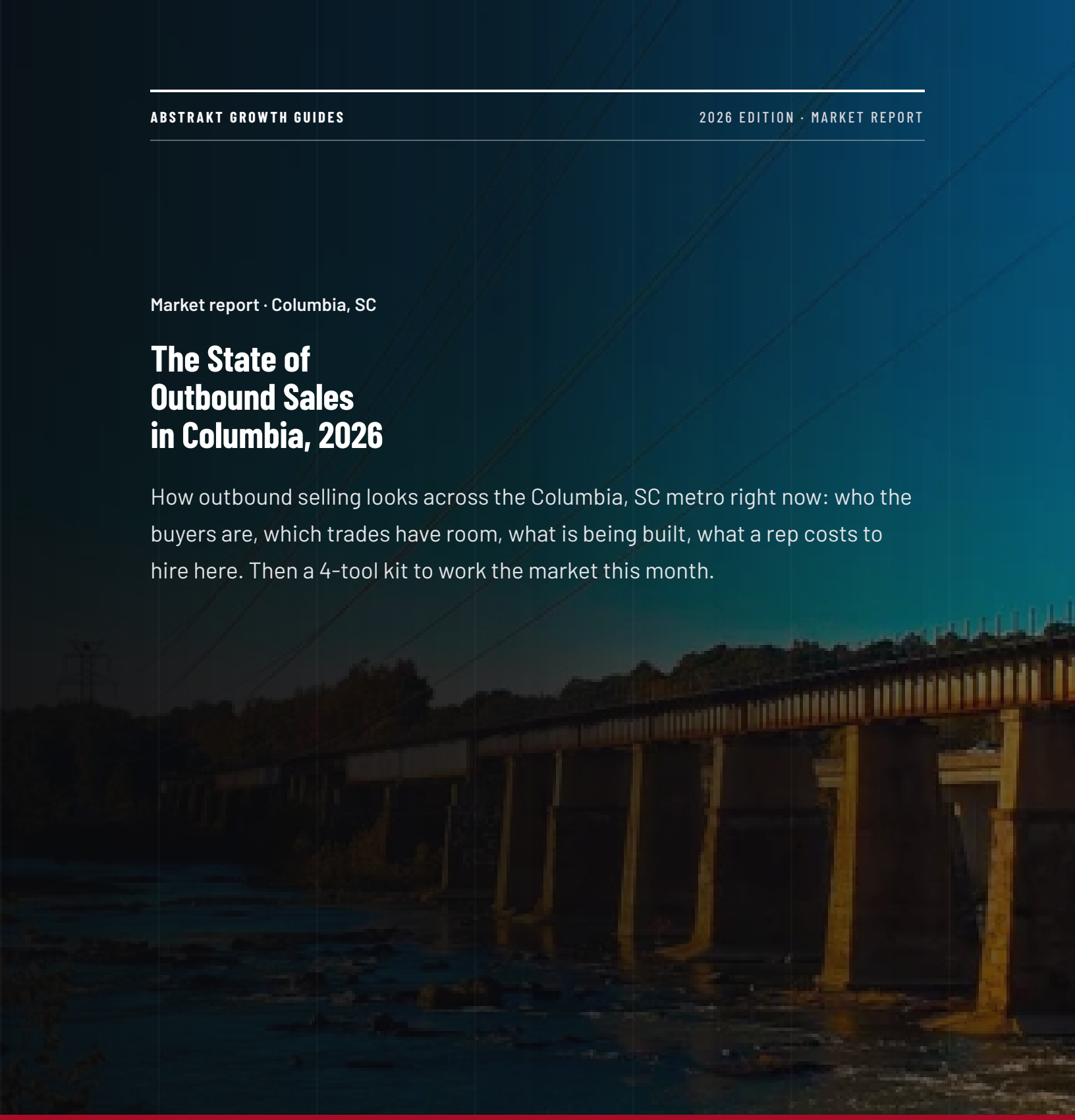
Market report · Columbia, SC

The State of Outbound Sales in Columbia, 2026

How outbound selling looks across the Columbia, SC metro right now: who the buyers are, which trades have room, what is being built, what a rep costs to hire here. Then a 4-tool kit to work the market this month.



1,939

business sites with 20+ people across the categories trades sell to, #68 of our 100 metros

4.1

buyer sites per commercial landscaping contractor, #35 of 100 markets: the best rank of any trade here

Sites: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023; rank among the 100 metros on our market pages. Room: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023 sites per contractor in U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, private ownership, 2026 Q1, among markets with at least 10 contractors.

Executive summary Read this if nothing else

5 things to know about outbound sales in Columbia

1

Biggest buyer pool

Restaurants: 627 sites

with 20 or more people, the largest buyer category in Columbia, ahead of retail stores (431).

2

Where the metro leans

Hospitals: 1.77x the U.S. mix

Also over-represented: retail stores (1.43x) and auto dealerships (1.39x). Trades that serve these buyers have more of them here than the national average suggests.

3

Most room

Commercial Landscaping: #35 of 100 markets

4.1 buyer sites with 20+ people for each of 241 local commercial landscaping contractors. The most crowded is commercial HVAC & mechanical, #93 of 100.

4

Biggest reason to call

Scout Motors Production Center and Supplier Park, $2 billion

Under construction. One of 8 named, sourced projects in this report.

5

Hiring locally

$124,700 for an in-house SDR's first year (illustrative)

At a $55,000 base salary, once commission, payroll taxes and benefits, tools, recruiting and training, turnover and manager time are added, before ramp time.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, private ownership, 2026 Q1; project

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sources as of 2026-09; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2025. Full list at the end.

01

Chapter 01 The market

Who buys in Columbia

1,939 business sites in Columbia have 20 or more people on site in the categories commercial trades sell to. That ranks #68 of the 100 metros we publish. Here is what those buyers are and where they sit.

The largest buyer categories

Sites with 20 or more people are the ones worth an SDR's time: big enough to have a facility lead, a service budget and a contract that comes up for renewal. The "vs. U.S. mix" column compares each category's share of local employment with its national share (1.00x is the U.S. average).

Business sites with 20+ people in Columbia, top 10 categories

CATEGORY	SITES WITH 20+	ALL SITES	VS. U.S. MIX	1-YR CHANGE
Restaurants LARGEST POOL	**627**	1,596	1.25x	+1
Retail stores	**431**	2,776	1.43x	-82
Manufacturing plants	**192**	469	1.10x	-11
Medical, dental and outpatient offices	**181**	1,403	0.90x	+3
Wholesale distributors	**159**	744	0.83x	-50
Grocery stores	**89**	393	1.38x	-15
Churches and religious organizations	**71**	713	0.25x	+1
Senior living and nursing	**70**	249	1.21x	-7
Trucking companies	**51**	369	1.04x	-75
Auto dealerships	**45**	123	1.39x	-3

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023 (sites by size); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, private ownership, 2026 Q1 (concentration and one-year change in establishments). Suppressed size classes count as zero.

Columbia leans toward hospitals (1.77x), retail stores (1.43x) and auto dealerships (1.39x). A trade that already sells to those buyers elsewhere has a deeper pool here than the national numbers suggest, and a case study from one of them travels well on the phone.

It is thinner than the U.S. mix in churches and religious organizations (0.25x). A program built around those buyers runs out of fresh accounts sooner here.

Growing fastest over the past year, by establishment count: hospitals (+5), medical, dental and outpatient offices (+3) and restaurants (+1). New sites have no incumbent vendor yet.

The metro

Columbia, SC: 6 counties in this report's counts.

Richland County, Lexington County and Kershaw County hold 94% of the larger business sites, so most programs start there.

Where the sites are

Business sites with 20+ people, by county, Columbia

COUNTY	SITES WITH 20+	SHARE OF METRO
Richland County START HERE	**977**	50%
Lexington County	**747**	39%
Kershaw County	**96**	5%
Fairfield County	**15**	1%
Calhoun County	**8**	0%
Saluda County	**4**	0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023, summed across the buyer categories above. Census withholds some county-level size counts, so 92 of the metro's 1,939 sites are not assigned to a county.

02

Chapter 02 The competition

Which trades have the most room in Columbia

Buyer sites per contractor is a rough read on how crowded a trade is: more sites for each local competitor means more doors nobody else is knocking on. Each trade's Columbia figure is ranked against the other markets we track.

How Columbia ranks for each trade, by buyer sites per contractor (longer bar = more room)

TRADE	RANK AMONG MARKETS	SITES PER CONTRACTOR	CONTRACTORS	1-YR CHANGE
Commercial Landscaping MOST ROOM	**#35 of 100**	4.1	241	-12
Managed Service Providers	**#58 of 100**	2.5	389	-46
Paving & Asphalt	**#55 of 94**	39	25	0
Commercial Roofing	**#53 of 89**	60	16	-3
Commercial Construction	**#64 of 100**	3.8	140	-2
Commercial Electrical	**#68 of 100**	9.1	89	+2
Commercial Painting & Coatings	**#68 of 86**	51	19	-4
Fire Protection	**#76 of 96**	31	36	-2
Commercial Cleaning & Janitorial	**#87 of 100**	2.8	237	-15
Commercial HVAC & Mechanical	**#93 of 100**	6.0	96	-6

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023 (each trade's own buyer categories, 20+ people); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, private ownership, 2026 Q1 (contractor establishments and one-year change). Each trade counts different buyers, so compare ranks across trades, not the raw ratios. Ranked among markets with at least 10 contractors in the trade.

Commercial landscaping (#35), managed service providers (#58) and paving & asphalt (#55) rank best in Columbia. For those trades a program can work longer before it calls the same building twice, and fewer competitors have already pitched each owner.

Commercial HVAC & mechanical is the most crowded trade here, #93 of 100: 6.0 buyer sites for each of 96 local mechanical contractors. Winning there takes a sharper reason to switch than a lower price.

Managed service providers (-46) and commercial cleaning & janitorial (-15) lost contractor establishments over the past year, so the same buildings are split among fewer firms than a year ago. Commercial electrical (+2) and commercial flooring (+1) added them.

Not ranked here: commercial flooring (9 contractors). With fewer than 10 local contractors the ratio is noise, though a thin field is itself a sign of open ground.

Open programs

Our availability workbook does not cover Columbia yet. We take one client per trade per territory, so ask before you plan around it.

Check whether your trade is open

03

Chapter 03 The projects

What is being built, and who owns the buildings

8 named, sourced projects and 7 anchor owners in Columbia. Each one is a reason to call that has nothing to do with your company and everything to do with the buyer's building.

The projects

01 · $2 billion

Scout Motors Production Center and Supplier Park

Under construction

An electric and hybrid vehicle plant in Blythewood, Richland County, built to produce up to 200,000 vehicles a year, with a separate $300 million supplier park on a site of more than 1,100 acres.

> The plant is in equipment testing while supplier park roads, parking lots and rail lines go in, so paving and electrical work continue through 2026, and a 4,000-job campus creates large ongoing cleaning and facility maintenance demand.

electrical · HVAC · paving · cleaning · fire protection

Scout Motors, 2026-09-20

02 · $225 million

ōLiv Columbia apartment tower

Under construction

A 26-story tower at 1421 Main Street in downtown Columbia with more than 2,000 beds for students and other renters, 2,140 square feet of retail and a 1,600-stall parking garage.

> A high-rise residential tower is a long run of mechanical, electrical and fire sprinkler work floor by floor, followed by flooring and painting in thousands of beds and garage maintenance after opening.

HVAC · electrical · fire protection · flooring · painting

The Post and Courier, 2026-05-06

03 · $69 million

AMAROK headquarters at BullStreet

Construction beginning 2026

A 125,000-square-foot headquarters at Boyce and Freed streets in Columbia's BullStreet District for more than 500 employees, with completion expected in 2028.

> A 2026 start and 2028 finish give mechanical, electrical and roofing work in 2027 and interior finishes after that, then a 500-person office for janitorial contracts.

HVAC · electrical · roofing · flooring · cleaning

SC Biz News, 2026-03-24

04 · $1.7 billion

Carolina Crossroads (I-20/I-26/I-126 corridor)

Under construction

The multi-phase rebuild of the Malfunction Junction interchange area in Lexington and Richland counties, with Phase 3A frontage road and utility work and Phase 3C I-20 widening and bridge replacement starting in 2026.

> New phases starting in 2026 keep paving, roadway lighting and landscaping restoration work going for the rest of the decade.

paving · electrical · landscaping

The Post and Courier, 2025-12-24

05

The Commons at Carolina residence hall and Honors College wing

Demolition and utility work underway; opening fall 2028

A new University of South Carolina residence hall on Sumter Street, paired with a new Honors College residence wing, that together add more than 1,000 beds in the heart of the Columbia campus.

> More than 1,000 beds is a long run of sprinkler, flooring and painting work through 2028, followed by custodial and turnover cleaning every semester.

construction · fire protection · flooring · painting · cleaning

University of South Carolina, 2026-07-22

06 · $300 million

USC School of Medicine, Health Sciences Campus at BullStreet

Topped out December 2025; opening anticipated August 2027

A 330,000-square-foot medical school and research building on USC's new Health Sciences Campus in Columbia's BullStreet District, built by Gilbane, with up to four more buildings planned on the 16-acre site.

> With the steel frame up, fire protection rough-in and interior flooring and painting run through 2027, and a medical school with labs and simulation spaces needs specialized cleaning after opening.

construction · fire protection · flooring · painting · cleaning

Post and Courier, 2025-12-22

07

Grand Willow hotel, BullStreet District

Announced November 2025; completion set for late 2027

A seven-story, 136-room Hilton Collection hotel at 1571 Freed Street in Columbia's BullStreet District next to Segra Park, with 5,000 square feet of meeting space, a pool area and a seventh-floor restaurant.

> A seven-story hotel means sprinkler and finish work through 2027, then guest-room flooring and recurring cleaning contracts once it opens.

construction · fire protection · flooring · painting · cleaning

The State via Hotel Online, 2025-11-05

08 · $41,400,000

New Dutch Fork Elementary School (Lexington-Richland School District Five)

Procurement and design

A new elementary school of under 90,000 square feet for about 550 students on Hollingshed Road in Irmo, with 160 visitor parking spaces, funded by the district's $240 million 2024 bond.

> A new school on a wooded site means general contractor, roofing and site paving bids once design wraps, then flooring and finish work ahead of opening.

construction · roofing · flooring · paving

Lexington County Chronicle, 2026-02-17

Projects current as of 2026-09; each source is linked on its card. Values are as reported by the source.

The anchor owners

Health systems, campuses, large employers and industrial parks hold the biggest concentrations of commercial buildings in Columbia. One relationship with a facilities team here can cover many buildings.

Health system · West Columbia, Lexington County

Lexington Medical Center

Lexington Health is home to a 607-bed hospital and lists 9,000+ health care professionals.

> A hospital campus plus community medical centers and physician practices across the Midlands.

Campus · Columbia, Richland County

University of South Carolina

Overall student enrollment at USC Columbia exceeded 40,000 students in fall 2025, according to preliminary figures.

> The flagship campus in downtown Columbia, with academic buildings, residence halls, athletic venues and parking.

HVAC · cleaning · fire protection · electrical

Lexington Health

HVAC · cleaning · roofing · landscaping · painting

University of South Carolina

Airport · West Columbia, Lexington County

Columbia Metropolitan Airport (CAE)

CAE welcomed 1,371,977 travelers in 2025, breaking the record set in 2024.

> A passenger terminal, parking facilities and airfield pavement serving the Midlands.

paving · cleaning · HVAC · electrical

Columbia Metropolitan Airport

Public owner · Columbia, Richland County

Fort Jackson

Fort Jackson encompasses approximately 51,316 acres, including 100 ranges and field training sites and more than 1,000 buildings.

> The Army's largest initial entry training center, with barracks, dining facilities, classrooms and ranges.

HVAC · roofing · paving · construction

U.S. Army Fort Jackson

Industrial park · Cayce area, Lexington County

Saxe Gotha Industrial Park

Lexington County lists Saxe Gotha Industrial Park at 714 total acres on the I-26/I-77 corridor.

> A county industrial park with manufacturing, pharmaceutical and distribution tenants, plus parcels for new buildings.

construction · paving · electrical · landscaping

Lexington County

Major employer · Saxe Gotha Industrial Park, Lexington County

Nephron Pharmaceuticals

Nephron is located on a 60-acre parcel in Saxe Gotha Industrial Park and has created more than 2,000 jobs since moving its headquarters to Lexington County.

> A pharmaceutical headquarters and manufacturing campus, plus a separate nitrile glove plant in the same park.

HVAC · electrical · cleaning · fire protection

Lexington County

Logistics hub · Saxe Gotha Industrial Park, Lexington County

Amazon fulfillment center, Saxe Gotha

Amazon's 1.25-million-square-foot fulfillment center in the park opened in 2012.

> A large distribution building with truck courts and parking lots; Amazon also runs a second facility in the same park.

paving · electrical · fire protection · roofing

Lexington County

Anchor facts checked 2026-10; each source is linked on its card.

Which trades the work touches

Projects and anchor owners in this report that buy each trade, Columbia

TRADE	PROJECTS AND OWNERS	
Commercial Electrical		9
Commercial Cleaning & Janitorial		9
Fire Protection		8
Commercial HVAC & Mechanical		8
Paving & Asphalt		7
Commercial Construction		6
Commercial Flooring		6
Commercial Roofing		5
Commercial Painting & Coatings		5
Commercial Landscaping		3

Count of the projects and anchor owners above whose scope includes the trade, from the sourced descriptions.

04

Chapter 04 The calendar

The Columbia selling calendar

Outbound runs every month, but the weather changes what a buyer wants to hear. These are the NOAA records for the Columbia metro's counties, month by month.

Columbia by month: storm reports, degree days and average highs

MEASURE	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Hail and damaging wind reports total, 2015 to 2024	16	25	40	102	165	264	227	108	61	3	1	15
Cooling degree days average month	8	4	26	47	201	386	501	456	278	75	7	5
Heating degree days average month	631	475	338	107	21	0	0	0	1	115	354	561
Average high (°F) average month	56	60	68	76	83	89	92	90	85	76	66	58

Sources: NOAA NCEI Storm Events Database, 2015 to 2024: reports of hail 1 inch or larger and thunderstorm wind of 58 mph or more, by month, across the market counties. NOAA NCEI nClimDiv county monthly series, 1991-2020 averages. Degree days count how far the daily average sits above (cooling) or below (heating) 65°F, summed over the month.

NOAA logged 82 hail reports of 1 inch or larger and 945 damaging wind reports across the metro's counties from 2015 to 2024: #44 of 100 markets for hail and #11 for wind. May, June and July carried 64% of the reports. Storm calls are a real door-opener here, and the contractor who is already known before the season gets the inspection.

The metro averages 1,992 cooling degree days a year (#22 of 97 markets) and 2,604 heating degree days (#75 of 97). Cooling load peaks in June, July, August and September; heating in January, February, March, November and December. Peak months are when HVAC calls lead with service and response times; the rest of the year they lead with planned work and budgets.

Trades with no weather season

Cleaning, construction, electrical, flooring and fire protection sell on contract end dates, budgets and inspection cycles. Learn each account's date on the first call and come back before it.

10 months average a high of 60°F or more (February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October and November). That is when exterior painting, paving and landscaping crews are busiest, so in-season calls catch owners while they can see the work that needs doing. The contracts themselves are bid on each property's own dates, so the selling runs all year.

> "HVAC outbound runs every month of the year, and the season changes the message, not the effort. In peak months calls lead with service: which units struggled, how fast the current contractor responded, and when the agreement renews. The rest of the year they lead with planned work, budgets and equipment past mid-life."
>
> — How HVAC timing works, from our HVAC talk track

05

Chapter 05 The numbers

What one meeting takes, trade by trade

What booking a meeting has taken on our own calling floor for the trades we run in Columbia, next to the records we can prospect here. The sales center figures are national; it does not break them out by city yet.

Dials per booked appointment, by trade (lower is faster), national

TRADE	DIALS PER APPOINTMENT	REACHED PROPOSAL	PROPOSALS WON	DIALS FOR 10 MEETINGS
Fire Protection FASTEST TO BOOK	**78**	21.6%	13.2%	about 780
Paving & Asphalt	**86**	32.2%	7.4%	about 860
Commercial Landscaping	**88**	18.8%	12.7%	about 880
Commercial Electrical	**96**	14.6%	21.1%	about 960
Commercial HVAC & Mechanical	**98**	16.6%	24.9%	about 980
Commercial Painting & Coatings	**115**	31.2%	14.4%	about 1,150
Commercial Flooring	**122**	30.8%	9.8%	about 1,220
Commercial Roofing	**140**	25.9%	16.1%	about 1,400
Commercial Cleaning & Janitorial	**142**	23.9%	21.7%	about 1,420
Managed Service Providers	**162**	10.0%	20.5%	about 1,620

All of these trades together: 122 dials per appointment

Source: Abstrakt sales center, Performance Intelligence, national, as of October 2026. Dials per appointment = prospecting calls divided by appointments set. History, not a promise. Full benchmarks and method.

The records behind a Columbia program

Before a program starts we size the list: the decision-maker records Abstrakt can prospect for each trade in the Columbia-Orangeburg-Newberry territory.

2,019
Commercial Roofing

2,019
Commercial Construction

702
Commercial HVAC & Mechanical

516
Commercial Cleaning & Janitorial

Source: Abstrakt territory record counts, as of October 2026: estimated decision-maker records Abstrakt can prospect for each program in the territory. Shown for the programs the count covers.

Read it this way

Divide the records by the dials one meeting takes and you see how long a list lasts before it repeats. A thin list means a program has to work every record well, not just call more.

06

Chapter 06 Build or buy

What an in-house SDR costs in Columbia

Before you hire a sales development rep in Columbia, price the whole job, not just the salary.

The salary is the smallest part of the decision. About 3,400 people hold the role in the Columbia, SC metro, and every one of their employers is competing for the same hires.

An in-house SDR's first year, at a $55,000 base salary (illustrative model)

COST	YEAR ONE
Base salary	$55,000
Commission and bonus	$15,000
Payroll taxes and benefits (25% of pay)	$17,500
Tools and data ($550 a month)	$6,600
Recruiting and training	$7,000
Turnover (35% a year, rehiring)	$2,450
Manager and QA time (5 hours a week) and admin (4 hours a month)	$21,150
Total, before ramp time	**$124,700**

Headcount: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2025. Sales representatives of services, except advertising, insurance, financial services and travel (SOC 41-3091). The cost lines are the starting values of our SDR cost calculator: $15,000 commission, 25% payroll taxes and benefits, $550 a month in tools, $7,000 recruiting and training, 35% yearly turnover, and manager, QA and admin time. Change any of them there.

$124,700

for one in-house SDR's first year at a $55,000 base salary.

That buys one rep. It does not buy the list, the manager's coaching system or cover when the rep leaves.

Ask us what a program would cost for the same work

Part two Apply this

The Columbia market toolkit

4 working tools built from the chapters above. Tick the boxes as you go (they stay ticked in this browser), copy the scripts into your CRM, or save the whole guide as a PDF and print this part as a worksheet.

01

Account scorecard

Score an account before anyone dials it.

02

Discovery question bank

The questions that qualify a meeting.

03

Trigger watchlist

The changes that make a buyer take the call.

04

30-day action plan

Four weeks of steps you can start Monday.

TOOL 01

Account scorecard

Before an account goes on the call list, check every line that fits. Call the accounts with the most ticks first, and leave the ones with none for later.

- [ ] **It sits in Richland County, Lexington County and Kershaw County**
  94% of the metro's larger business sites are in these counties.
- [ ] **It has 20 or more people on site**
  One of the 1,939 sites this report counts. At that size a facility lead usually owns the building decisions.
- [ ] **It is in a category Columbia over-indexes on**
  hospitals (1.77x the U.S. mix), retail stores (1.43x the U.S. mix) and auto dealerships (1.39x the U.S. mix).
- [ ] **It belongs to an anchor owner or a named project**
  Lexington Medical Center, University of South Carolina, Columbia Metropolitan Airport (CAE) and Fort Jackson.
- [ ] **You can name the person who signs**
  A name and a title before the first dial, not just the main line.
- [ ] **You are calling a business line**
  A business line, not a personal phone. Look up the calling laws for South Carolina before you dial.

0 of 6 checked

TOOL 02

Discovery question bank

Ask fewer, better questions. Pick three or four for the call and save the rest for the meeting. Each one comes with the reason it earns its place.

Restaurants: 627 sites here

From our fire protection talk track. Staying open and passing inspection. Multi-unit operators are worth more than single locations.

1. **When was your hood suppression system last inspected, and when is the next one due?**
   Due dates tell you when to call and what to offer.
2. **Have you had a failed inspection or a citation recently?**
   Failed inspections threaten the ability to stay open and create urgency.
3. **How many locations do you operate, and does each one use a different vendor?**
   Multi-unit operators are more valuable and often want one vendor across locations.

Retail stores: 431 sites here

From our paving talk track. First impressions and liability. Many stores lease, so confirm who controls the lot before pitching.

1. **Does the store control the parking lot, or does the landlord or shopping center manage it?**
   This is the first qualifying question, since many retail lots belong to the landlord.
2. **Are there potholes, cracks or faded striping customers have complained about?**
   Visible problems in front of customers drive action and point to a first job.
3. **Is a remodel or refresh planned for this location?**
   Remodels are when lot work often gets funded and scheduled.

Manufacturing plants: 192 sites here

From our MSP talk track. Downtime that stops shipments. Ask what happens to production and shipping if the server or network is down for a day.

1. **If the server or network went down for a day, what would happen to production and shipping?**
   Downtime that stops shipments puts a dollar figure on IT in the owner's own words, which justifies backup and recovery work.

Any first meeting

Plain practice that works in every market.

1. **How are you handling this today, and what would you change about it?**
   The gap between today and what they want is the whole reason to meet.
2. **What happens if nothing changes this year?**
   Tells you whether there is a cost to waiting, or only curiosity.

2. **Do you supply parts or services to the Department of Defense or its prime contractors?**
   Defense contracts that involve controlled information now carry CMMC requirements, so a supplier needs a certification level to win and keep that work, which is a scoped, deadline-driven project.
3. **Which ERP do you run, and is an upgrade or replacement coming?**
   ERP projects touch servers, networks and security, and the provider who supports the migration usually stays.
3. **Who else would need to agree before anything moves?**
   Names the people who can stall the deal, while you can still invite them.
4. **When does the current contract or budget come up for review?**
   Gives you the date to plan around, even when the answer today is no.
5. **What would make a first meeting worth your time?**
   Lets the buyer set the agenda, which is the agenda they will show up for.

TOOL 03

Trigger watchlist

Each of these changes gives a buyer a reason to take the call this month instead of next year. Tick the ones you will track, and set a news alert or CRM field for each so you hear about it first.

- [ ] **Scout Motors Production Center and Supplier Park**
  Under construction. The plant is in equipment testing while supplier park roads, parking lots and rail lines go in, so paving and electrical work continue through 2026, and a 4,000-job campus creates large ongoing cleaning and facility maintenance demand.
- [ ] **AMAROK headquarters at BullStreet**
  Construction beginning 2026. A 2026 start and 2028 finish give mechanical, electrical and roofing work in 2027 and interior finishes after that, then a 500-person office for janitorial contracts.
- [ ] **ōLiv Columbia apartment tower**
  Under construction. A high-rise residential tower is a long run of mechanical, electrical and fire sprinkler work floor by floor, followed by flooring and painting in thousands of beds and garage maintenance after opening.
- [ ] **Carolina Crossroads (I-20/I-26/I-126 corridor)**
  Under construction. New phases starting in 2026 keep paving, roadway lighting and landscaping restoration work going for the rest of the decade.

- [ ] **The Commons at Carolina residence hall and Honors College wing**

  Demolition and utility work underway; opening fall 2028. More than 1,000 beds is a long run of sprinkler, flooring and painting work through 2028, followed by custodial and turnover cleaning every semester.

- [ ] **USC School of Medicine, Health Sciences Campus at BullStreet**

  Topped out December 2025; opening anticipated August 2027. With the steel frame up, fire protection rough-in and interior flooring and painting run through 2027, and a medical school with labs and simulation spaces needs specialized cleaning after opening.

- [ ] **Storm season: May, June and July**

  64% of the 1,027 large-hail and damaging-wind reports NOAA logged across the metro, 2015 to 2024, fell in these months. Owners want an inspection after an event; call the ones you already know first.

- [ ] **Cooling season: June, July, August and September**

  The months with the most cooling load here. Units that struggle now give a facility lead a reason to take a second contractor's call.

- [ ] **New sites: hospitals**

  QCEW counted 5 more hospitals in Columbia than a year earlier. Every new site has to choose its service vendors; call before the choice settles.

- [ ] **New sites: medical, dental and outpatient offices**

  QCEW counted 3 more medical, dental and outpatient offices in Columbia than a year earlier. Every new site has to choose its service vendors; call before the choice settles.

0 of 10 on your watchlist

TOOL 04

30-day action plan

4 weeks, 15 steps, nothing you need to buy. Tick each one off as you finish it; your progress stays in this browser.

Week 1

Draw the territory

- [ ] Start in Richland County, Lexington County and Kershaw County, which hold 94% of the larger business sites.
- [ ] Pull the sites with 20 or more people in restaurants, retail stores and manufacturing plants.
- [ ] Score every account with the scorecard above and sort the list by score.
- [ ] Put the accounts tied to Lexington Medical Center and University of South Carolina at the top.

Week 2

Check the rules, then write the talk track

- [ ] Look up the calling laws for South Carolina and every state you call into, and confirm them with your own counsel before the first dial.
- [ ] Pick four questions from the question bank for every call and print them next to the phone.
- [ ] Write one opening line per account type that names something local: a project, an owner or the season.

Week 3

Make the calls

- [ ] Call business lines during business hours, 8am to 5pm in the buyer's local time, in the same blocked hours every day.
- [ ] Log every dial, every conversation and every meeting set, so you know your own numbers.
- [ ] Open with the trigger when you know it: scout Motors Production Center and Supplier Park.
- [ ] Close every good conversation with two specific meeting times.

Week 4

Measure and decide

- [ ] Divide your dials by meetings set and compare it with the 78 dials per appointment our sales center averaged on fire protection calls (national, as of October 2026).
- [ ] Put a return date on every "not now", tied to the contract or budget date they gave you.
- [ ] Before you hire, price an in-house rep with the Columbia pay figures in this report.
- [ ] Keep what worked, rewrite the line that drew the most pushback, and run the next 30 days.

0 of 15 steps done

Sources and notes

- U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2023: business sites by category, size and county, Columbia, SC.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, private ownership, 2026 Q1: contractor establishments, one-year change and concentration (location quotient).
- Projects: named public sources linked on each card, current as of 2026-09.
- Anchor owners: sources linked on each card, checked 2026-10.
- NOAA NCEI Storm Events Database, 2015 to 2024: hail and damaging wind reports by month across the metro's counties.
- NOAA NCEI nClimDiv county monthly series, 1991-2020 averages: degree days and average highs by month.
- Abstrakt sales center, Performance Intelligence, national, as of October 2026: dials, appointments, proposals and wins by trade. Method.
- Abstrakt territory record counts, as of October 2026: decision-maker records per program in the Columbia-Orangeburg-Newberry territory.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2025: Sales representatives of services, except advertising, insurance, financial services and travel (SOC 41-3091).
- Cover photo: Railroad trestle over the river at Riverfront Park, Columbia, South Carolina, by Kevin Dunlap on Unsplash, Unsplash License.
- The toolkit's discovery questions come from our trade talk tracks; the plan and checklists are sales practice, not data.

Keep reading

Market page
Appointment setting in Columbia

Territory
Check whether your trade is open in Columbia

Benchmarks
The full sales center benchmarks and method

Calculator
Run the in-house SDR numbers yourself

Nearby market
The State of Outbound Sales in Charleston

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