[MARKET REPORT · 2026 EDITION]

The Producer Ledger

Annual compensation intelligence for ocean and air freight forwarding commercial roles, United States.

What the U.S. market actually paid this year

The figures in this report are drawn from offers written, accepted and declined across our search practice over the trailing twelve months, together with plan documents shared with us in confidence by candidates. Nothing here is survey data. Everything here is an offer somebody made.

Base salary by profile

Role	Low	Median	High
Business Development Executive	$95K	$128K	$165K
Senior Producer ($1M+ GP)	$150K	$172K	$205K
Trade-lane / Vertical Lead	$160K	$186K	$228K
Sales Manager (carrying a number)	$155K	$180K	$215K
Branch Manager (P&L)	$175K	$205K	$255K
VP Sales, regional	$200K	$238K	$300K

Commission structures in circulation

Structure	Frequency	What to watch
% of GP from dollar one	Rising	The cleanest plan; confirm GP definition
Threshold then %	Most common	Threshold resets annually — model year two
Tiered accelerator	Common	Tiers often reset each quarter, not each year
Draw against commission	Declining	Recoverable draws are debt, not income
Vertical or team override	Niche	Best long-run economics for lane builders

Median commission on new business sat at eight to twelve percent of gross profit where no threshold applied, and fifteen to twenty-five percent above threshold where one did. The two are not comparable without modelling a full year.

> *A plan with a threshold and a 20% rate paid less, in eleven of the twelve books we modelled, than a clean 10% from dollar one.*

Where premiums were paid

- **Ex-Asia air** — 12% to 18% above the equivalent ocean role.
- **LATAM consolidation** — persistent shortage; premiums held all year.
- **Cold-chain and pharma** — highest base premiums observed, up to 22%.
- **Entertainment and touring freight** — small market, almost no qualified supply.
- **Customs brokerage leadership** — licensed leadership repriced sharply.

Movement and retention

Metric	Observed
Median base uplift on a completed move	21%
Producers who accepted a counter-offer	34%
Of those, gone within 18 months	Over half
Median time from first call to offer	9 weeks
Offers lost over commission plan detail	Roughly 1 in 4

The last line is the one forwarders should read twice. A quarter of failed offers in our practice failed on plan mechanics, not on money. Producers do not decline the number. They decline the parts of the plan nobody explained.

Method and confidentiality

Figures are rounded and aggregated. No company, plan or individual is identifiable. Compensation depends on location, verified production and the book a candidate brings; treat these ranges as a market read, not a quotation.