



## 2026 Predictions from the IAM Core Members Management Board

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Building on the recalibration that marked 2025, the moving industry enters 2026 with a clearer but more demanding operating environment, driven by labor constraints, customer expectations, accelerating AI adoption, and the practical realities that continue to anchor the sector.

Insights gathered from the IAM Core Members Management Board (CMMB) during their session at the IAM Annual Meeting & Expo in New York point to five industry-shaping trends. Each trend reinforces a core principle: innovation must be grounded in operational realities, cost discipline, workforce constraints, and the proven practices that sustain industry stability.

This Global Pulse Report reflects that balance, offering a forward-looking assessment rooted in the day-to-day realities of the moving industry worldwide.

## **1. Rising Claims Challenges Will Require Better Solutions**

Across North America and Europe, the CMMB reported a significant increase in claims disputes driven by:

- Fabricated or altered receipts
- Customers using AI tools to challenge existing policy language
- Higher expectations for instant resolution

**Prediction:**

Claims management will become a top operational pressure point in 2026, forcing companies to strengthen documentation requirements, upgrade internal processes, and adopt AI-enabled claims assessment to keep pace with rising complexity.

## **2. Consolidation Will Accelerate**

Cost pressures, persistent staffing shortages, and the need for scalable operations are driving a new wave of consolidation across the industry.

**Prediction:**

2026 will see increased mergers, acquisitions, and strategic alliances, particularly among mid-sized companies seeking to compete on technology investment, compliance capabilities, and service quality.

## **3. Each Region Will Face Different Labor Conditions**

Labor pressures are no longer uniform across the moving industry. Each region is confronting a different reality, shaped by regulation, demographics, and economics:

- **Middle East:** A strong and reliable labor supply driven by expatriate workforces and government-supported mobility systems.
- **Africa:** Labor relies heavily on trust-based networks; business success often depends on long-standing community relationships and partner reliability.
- **North America:** Persistent and severe shortages in drivers and trucking labor, driven by aging workforces, high licensing barriers, and rising domestic logistics demand.
- **Oceania:** Stricter immigration rules continue to limit access to skilled labor, tightening capacity for moving and logistics operations.
- **Europe:** Complex compliance, licensing, and administrative requirements increase operational burden and intensify existing labor shortages.
- **South America:** Labor markets remain uneven; some countries have abundant labor but variable skill levels, while others struggle with workforce instability due to high turnover, safety concerns, and fluctuating economic conditions. Companies rely heavily on local expertise and adaptability to navigate these inconsistencies.

**Prediction:**

The industry will shift toward regionalized labor strategies, including cross-border recruitment, workforce development partnerships, and expanded training investments to offset shortages and turnover.

#### **4. Human Service and AI Will Evolve Together**

CMMB members were unanimous: AI will elevate operations, but cannot replace the human connection at the moving experience. At the same time, AI is rapidly becoming a core operational partner.

Current use cases include:

- Optimized routing and scheduling
- Automated documentation
- Predictive claims analysis
- Real-time customer communication support

**Prediction:**

The winning model in 2026 will be an AI-assisted, human-led service:



- AI handles routine, time-consuming tasks
- Humans provide trust, judgment, and relationship-building

By the end of 2026, AI will be viewed less as a tool and more as a colleague that enhances performance, allowing staff to focus on service excellence and complex exceptions.

## 5. "Trust" Becomes the Industry's Most Valuable Currency

Members voiced growing concern about misinformation, operators whose legitimacy cannot be confirmed, and inconsistent service quality across markets.

### **Prediction:**

2026 will reward companies that can demonstrate:

- Transparent compliance
- Verifiable ethical behavior
- Reliable business practices
- Consistent service quality

Trust marks, third-party validation, and transparent data will become key differentiators, especially for shippers overwhelmed by choice.

## The Path Forward for 2026

The survival of companies in the moving industry will depend on their ability to accept the natural changes of the market, which are arriving faster every day through technology and demanding full adaptation. Taking too long to accept these changes may be too late.