

OUR 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REPORT



# WHAT CLIENTS THINK 2018

A report based on 500 client  
interviews conducted on  
behalf of design agencies.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

dba

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# INTRODUCTION



**Jonathan Kirk**  
Founder of Up to the Light

This is our fifth 'What Clients Think' report and we are delighted that the report has steadily enjoyed increased profile and influence over that time. This year's report is based on our highest number of interviews so far.

It is important to say that all interviews were paid for by individual design agencies commissioning Up to the Light to provide an independent Client Survey for their agency. In this sense, readers can be reassured that the information in this report is the result of lengthy interviews with interested clients who are talking about the relationship with their incumbent agency. This is infinitely preferable to an online survey where the information gleaned is nowhere near as rich.

Names of the individual agencies and clients involved are confidential. However, we can share some very revealing statistics when looking across all 500 interviews. As in previous years, it is an illuminating snapshot of the client viewpoint and provides important pointers for how agencies can strengthen their client relationships.

The report is divided into 3 sections. Firstly, 'Client World' looks at bigger picture client concerns and issues. Secondly, 'Winning Clients' looks at agency new business activity and pitching. Thirdly, 'Retaining & Growing Clients' covers client service and client development issues.

## About the agencies

**All the design agencies commissioned Up to the Light to conduct a Client Survey with their key clients. The purpose was to monitor the health of their most important client/agency relationships.**

Specifically:

- Understand current perceptions of the agency's strengths and weaknesses.
- Understand which boxes clients are putting them in, whether fairly or unfairly.
- Provide a better understanding of client needs and concerns.
- Identify client development opportunities.
- Highlight client service measures that can improve the relationship.
- Spot any problems early so that they can be dealt with proactively.
- Understand how they are compared to competitor agencies.
- Provide an assessment of client perceptions across areas such as creativity, value for money, ability to add value, proactivity, effective listening and commercial awareness.
- Understand how clients see the market more generally – trends and concerns.
- Assess the levels of client loyalty.

The design agencies cover every discipline and range in size from 5 employees to over 100.

## About the clients

**The 500 interviews are across a very broad range of clients – different industries, UK and international, business to business, business to consumer, not for profit.**

Different areas represented include:

- Food and drink manufacturers
- Fashion retailers
- Other high street retailers
- Supermarkets
- Department stores
- Government
- Higher education
- Financial services
- Pharmaceuticals
- Health care
- Charities
- Automotive
- Professional services
- Hi tech/software

Job titles of people interviewed range from Chief Executives and Board Directors of major organisations to Brand Managers. However, they all have responsibility for buying design and have a relationship with a design agency. Most interviewees are responsible for day to day dealings with the design agency, whilst some have a more senior overseeing or ultimate responsibility role.

## About the interviews

All the interviewees were first asked by their design agency for permission to be interviewed by Up to the Light on their behalf. Many clients are now used to taking part in such an exercise and are impressed that their agency is taking the trouble to conduct an independent Client Survey. All 500 interviews were conducted on the telephone and clients take time to give considered answers. Most interviews last 30-45 minutes and some are considerably longer.

500 interviews  
that lift the  
lid on what  
clients are really  
thinking. A  
unique spotlight  
on the client  
viewpoint.



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# CLIENT WORLD



## 1.1 Wider issues

Clients were asked key questions about their wider concerns and pressures, beyond the immediate client/agency relationship.

73%

OF CLIENTS ARE **'VERY CONCERNED'** ABOUT THE CURRENT BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Uncertainty and confusion surrounding Brexit, a struggling UK high street and downward pressure on budgets are all contributing to a slightly nervous atmosphere. The obvious danger for agencies is that this lack of confidence can put a brake on client spending and major, brand directional projects are put on hold.

62%

OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THERE IS **TOO MUCH SHORT-TERMISM** IN BUSINESS

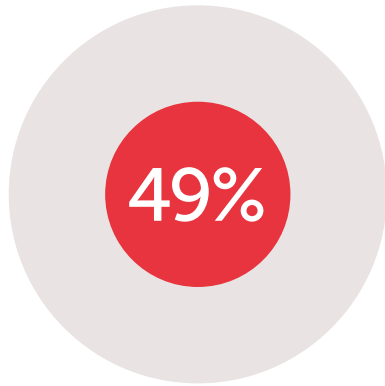
There seems to be increasing pressure from the very top for faster progress, quicker wins, more immediate results. This can be in conflict with longer term brand building.

71%

OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT **DIGITAL IS NOT FULLY INTEGRATED** INTO THEIR BUSINESS

Many clients felt that they are still on this journey and there is a lot more work to do. Digital is too often viewed as a separate business unit. For the purposes of this statistic we have taken digital only businesses out of the equation.





OF CLIENTS BELIEVE  
THAT 'DIGITAL' IS NOT  
**FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND**  
SUPPORTED AT BOARD  
LEVEL

A similar figure to last year's report. Many marketers are still frustrated by a perceived lack of digital understanding at the most senior level in their organisation.

## TOP 3 CLIENT CONCERNS

What are clients' biggest concerns?

### Uncertain business environment

This is the biggest issue for more senior clients who are worried about the lack of consumer confidence. When market growth is limited there tends to be more consolidation and a focus on stealing share from competitors.

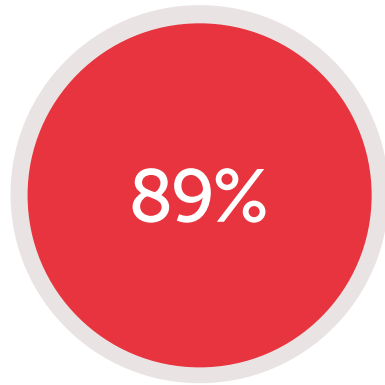
### Changing consumers

Consumers are becoming savvier, more price sensitive, shifting from buying products to buying experiences, migrating online. They are generally less loyal and have a more limited attention span. You name it. But in every market the 'changing consumer' is a constant concern.

### Pressure on budgets

The need to do more with less is an ever-present theme in our interviews.

## 1.2 The reputation of design



OF CLIENTS VIEW '**GOOD DESIGN**' AS A VERY IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTOR TO BRAND SUCCESS

The commercial value of design is well understood by most clients.



OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT DESIGN EFFECTIVENESS CAN BE **DIFFICULT TO MEASURE**

While the role of design seems well appreciated, most clients feel that it can be difficult, though not impossible, to measure its effectiveness versus some other disciplines.

VERY SENIOR CLIENTS ARE DIFFICULT TO REACH

7%

OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THEIR DESIGN AGENCY IS 'IN THE BOARDROOM'

While many design agencies enjoy good relationships with selected key individuals at Board level, the phrase 'in the Boardroom' is slightly different. This is about easy access at that level, being a respected voice and having a reputation at the client organisation that goes beyond certain business functions like Marketing. This is a rarer achievement for design agencies.

## 1.3 Interaction with agencies



45%

OF CLIENTS WOULD LIKE  
TO WORK WITH SLIGHTLY  
**FEWER AGENCIES**

The desire to work with fewer agencies is driven by the need to ensure that all activity is better unified and co-ordinated, coupled with potential cost advantages. No clients said that they would like to work with more agencies.



64%

OF CLIENTS **CANNOT**  
**NAME** 3 OTHER DESIGN  
AGENCIES

Apart from their incumbent agency, can clients name 3 other design agencies? Many struggle with this, reflecting the fragmented nature of the industry. We also probably overestimate the amount of time that clients spend on design.

VERY SENIOR CLIENTS  
SPEND LESS THAN

5%

OF THEIR TIME  
INTERACTING WITH  
AGENCIES

These were Chief Executives at major brands. 'Agencies' includes every discipline, not just design.

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# WINNING CLIENTS



## 2.1 New business activity

'If a new agency had 30 seconds to say something to you, what would be most likely to get your interest?'

The top 3 answers:

### Help solve our particular challenge

How can the agency help answer the big strategic questions that the client is facing? Fundamentally, clients come to design agencies seeking the answer to a strategic question, not just a desire to see some great creative work and meet good people.

### Evidence of effectiveness

Commercial results, sales increases, measurable impact. The agency's ability to talk about its work within a business context.

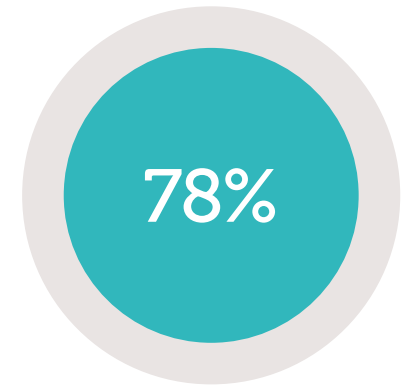
### Show something definitive and relevant

Do you have a 'game changing' case study? Something that disrupted a market, created a watershed, led the way? If so, how is it relevant to the client you are talking to?

2

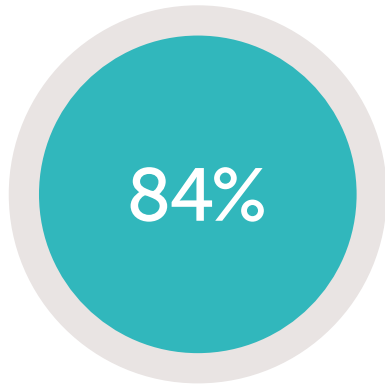
1

3



OF CLIENTS LIKE TO  
'DISCOVER' A NEW AGENCY  
RATHER THAN FEEL  
'SOLD TO'

A very similar figure to last year's report. This is an endorsement of a more modern approach to business development that moves away from conventional notions of 'selling' to greater knowledge sharing.



OF CLIENTS PREFER TO MEET THE PEOPLE WHO WILL BE **WORKING ON THEIR BUSINESS**, RATHER THAN SALES PEOPLE

Clients are generally wary of sales 'gloss' and like to get a better feel for what the agency is like to work with.



OF CLIENTS STATE THAT POSTED COLD NEW BUSINESS APPROACHES NOW HAVE **MORE IMPACT THAN EMAILS**

The old-fashioned new business letter has a renewed power.

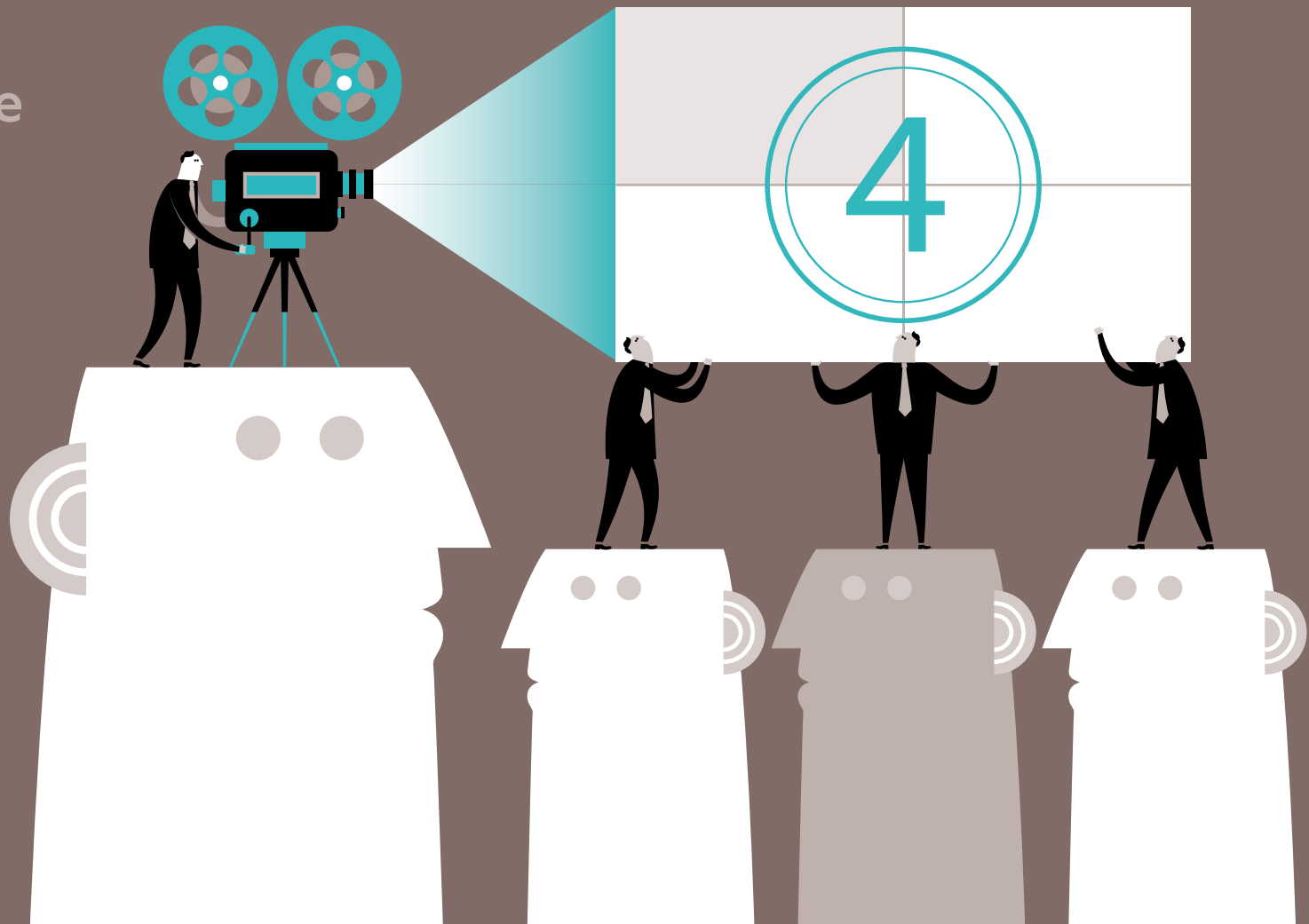
17

NEW BUSINESS APPROACHES **EVERY DAY**

The same figure as last year. This is the average number of new business approaches that clients are fielding each day from agencies of different disciplines.

## 2.1 New business activity

The new business battlefield is as competitive as ever but conventional notions of 'selling' are changing.





## Main client irritations about agency new business presentations:

### **'We know more about your brand than you do'**

There is a fine line between sharing thoughts and opinions and appearing arrogant. Don't pretend to know more about the brand than the client.

### **Generic case studies**

Case studies that are not fully relevant to the client and their situation. The feeling that exactly the same stories are being told to lots of other clients.

### **Case studies lack business context**

Not enough information about the business challenges that were being met.

### **Not doing enough homework**

An ill-informed comment about the brand's audiences, market or offer that destroys credibility. This can be something quite basic that can be gleaned from publicly available information. This tends to happen when agencies are very busy and simply turning up, rather than putting in the homework.



87%

OF CLIENTS SAY THEY ARE  
**'TOO BUSY'** TO SEE  
SPECULATIVE AGENCY  
'CREDENTIALS  
PRESENTATIONS'

A higher figure than last year's report, confirming once again that clients are generally too busy to window shop. Presentations have to impart knowledge or offer a point of view because today's clients want to know what an agency thinks, not just what it's done.

## 2.2 The agency website

Clients rarely seem to visit their incumbent agency's website. We asked clients when they last visited their incumbent design agency's website and why.

88%

OF CLIENTS CLAIMED **NOT**  
**TO HAVE VISITED THEIR**  
INCUMBENT AGENCY'S  
WEBSITE 'IN THE LAST FEW  
MONTHS'

Many said they could not remember visiting the site at all or that they had looked at it when selecting the agency (this could be years) but not since.

Most common reasons for clients visiting their incumbent agency's website:

**To look something up**

This is generally something very routine like an address, phone number or the name of a person.

**To look at their own company's case study**

A visit driven by self-interest.

**To show a colleague**

The agency website is a client development tool when your client is recommending you to a colleague.

Other types of website visit such as checking their agency's new projects are rarer. The top 3 reasons are fairly mundane but reflect the fact that existing clients need to be given a reason to visit their agency's website. They are unlikely to visit otherwise. It should be noted that some clients can forget to mention visits to the website that are links from a newsletter.

44%

OF CLIENTS BELIEVE  
THEIR INCUMBENT  
AGENCY'S WEBSITE '**FAILS**  
**TO COMMUNICATE THE**  
AGENCY I KNOW'

In interviews clients often look at their agency's website for the first time in a long while. They sometimes comment that the website fails to reflect what they consider to be distinctive and special about the agency. In other words, the website does not capture their actual experience of the agency.

Clients visiting design agency websites for new business purposes is another story. This research shows that clients do not generally spend a long time looking at an agency's website. For new business purposes, they want to speedily extract useful information.



93%

OF CLIENTS WANT A  
WEBSITE TO **QUICKLY SHOW**  
THEM WHAT THE AGENCY IS  
BEST AT



In our interviews clients tend to talk about agencies in terms of core competencies – ‘They’re weaker strategically, they excel at digital, we go to them when we need real creativity’. In the same way, they prefer agency websites that lead them very quickly to what the agency is best at. This may be a particular service or discipline but it could also be an overarching approach. However one defines it, the agency has to stand for something.

Some often-mentioned client pet hates about agency websites:

**Over claim and hype**

Clients generally prefer things to be direct, straightforward and honest. They have a finely tuned gauge for anything that smacks of hype.

**Out-of-date blogs and news sections**

Not being able to keep your own website up to date is not a good sign.

**Client logos than cannot be clicked on**

Showing client logos without a corresponding click through to a project example can just be an irritation.

**Named processes with little substance**

Clients are wary of fancy names given to things that often turn out to be generic ways of getting from A to B. They always require explanation and depth.

**No before and afters**

Many clients express frustration at not being able to see the ‘before’ version of what has been designed.

**Lacking results**

Not enough concentration on the outcome of the work – commercial impact.



52%

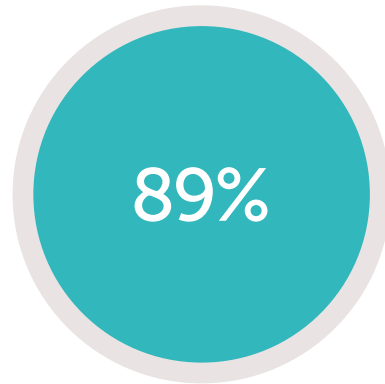
OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
MOST AGENCY WEBSITES  
**FAIL TO COMMUNICATE**  
THE AGENCY’S DIFFERENCE



An improvement on last year’s figure but this is still a message for design agencies that we are not terribly good at doing for ourselves what we do for our clients.

## 2.3 Social media

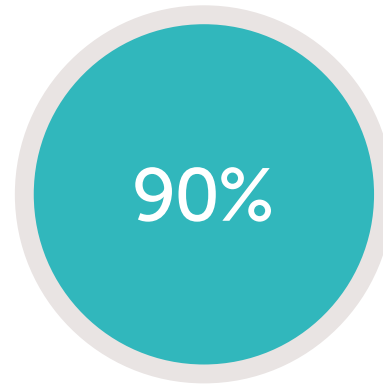
Once again, our interviews reveal that social media activity on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram is generally not being seen by clients. LinkedIn is a different matter.



OF CLIENTS CLAIM **NOT TO FOLLOW** THEIR INCUMBENT AGENCY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

(NOT INCLUDING LINKEDIN)

A slight improvement on last year but clients are still saying they are 'too busy' to follow their agency on social media. Clients most likely to follow agencies on social media are design-specific roles – Design Manager, Head of Design etc.



OF CLIENTS CLAIM NOT TO FOLLOW **ANY DESIGN AGENCY** ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Is it time for agencies to re-assess how much time and effort they spend on these platforms?



OF CLIENTS CLAIM TO BE **ON LINKEDIN** AND TO USE THIS PLATFORM

LinkedIn is by far the most useful platform for business development purposes.

The huge level  
of digital 'noise'  
is making it  
difficult for  
agencies to  
cut through.



## 2.4 Pitching



OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
A PITCH IS **GOOD BUSINESS  
PRACTICE** FOR HIGH VALUE  
PROJECTS



It is now a professional embarrassment for a client not to pitch out a high value project. A pitch is seen as a matter of straightforward 'due diligence'.

### The top 3 reasons for winning a pitch:

#### 'They are a strong team that we can work well with'

Put simply, the client and agency hit it off. The agency was well prepared and showed themselves to be a cohesive team.

#### 'They really understood us'

The agency interpreted the brief rather than just replaying it. They understood the brand, audiences and market, but also identified the client's anxiety points.

#### 'We had confidence that they can deliver'

Project delivery and client service approach are vital for the client. Failing to cover this area in enough detail is always a mistake.

### The top 3 client criticisms of pitch presentations:

#### Too much playing back

Too much regurgitation of the brief and telling the client what they already know. Also, taking too long to get to the most interesting part of the presentation where the agency shares its thinking.

#### Too generic

Not bespoke enough. A feeling that the agency could equally be talking about another brand. Sections of the presentation that are obviously used for other pitches.

#### Not cohesive enough

It felt disjointed. One person dominated, or one person did not contribute much. Different disciplines felt separated. Strategic thinking and creative work felt like two unrelated presentations.

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76%

OF CLIENTS STATE THAT  
AGENCIES GENERALLY  
**SPEND TOO LONG** TALKING  
ABOUT THEMSELVES IN  
PITCH PRESENTATIONS

In post-pitch interviews clients very rarely talk about how great the 'About us' and case studies sections were. There is a general impatience for agencies to talk about the client, not the agency.



64%

OF **LOSING PITCH**  
PRESENTATIONS LACKED  
A CONSISTENT AND  
MEMORABLE 'ARGUMENT'

A pitch is part of a new business process and it is important to be memorable. When the client has seen several presentations, they need to be able to say, 'They were the ones who said...'



68%

OF WINNING PITCH  
PRESENTATIONS WENT  
**AGAINST THE BRIEF** IN  
SOME WAY

Perhaps this is proof that many clients don't really know what they want until they see it. Going against a requirement of the brief, however large or small, in order to reveal a better path, is a frequent contributor to a winning pitch.

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# RETAINING & GROWING CLIENTS





## 3.1 Client expectations

Clients were asked for the main expectations of their design agency. These are this year's top 3:

### 'On time and on budget'

Clients' top expectation last year and still extremely important. Failing to deliver on time and on budget is a professional embarrassment for the client and has the potential to make life really awkward for them internally. Most clients can recall an agency's failure to deliver on time or on budget, and are extremely wary about it happening again.

2

### 'Quality creative output'

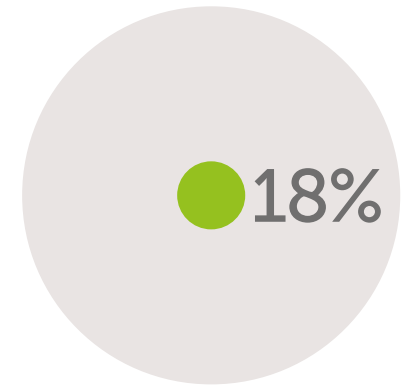
Of course, clients want creativity and that is exactly what a design agency is supposed to deliver. No surprise there. However, clients stress the importance of consistency and the potential to not just answer the brief but exceed it. Clients often talk about the 'wow' factor and how regularly or seldom they see it.

1

### 'Be proactive'

Proactivity is the magic ingredient that helps transform a client/supplier relationship into a true partnership - being the client's eyes and ears, coming up with ideas, showing interest in the client's business beyond the project in hand.

3



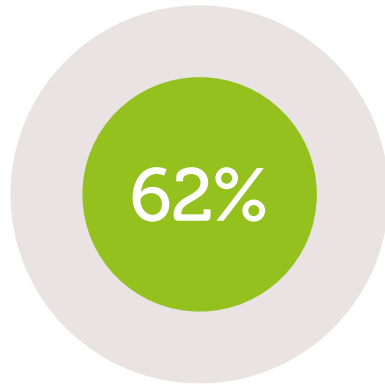
OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
THEIR DESIGN AGENCY  
**'REGULARLY EXCEEDS'** THEIR  
EXPECTATIONS

A slight increase on last year's figure. Whilst 'regularly exceeds' is a low percentage, it is important to note that their expectations can be quite broad ranging and encompass different aspects of the relationship. If their expectations only referred to quality of creative work, then this figure would be significantly higher.

For clients to view their agency as a true partner, the agency has to do more than simply answer the brief.

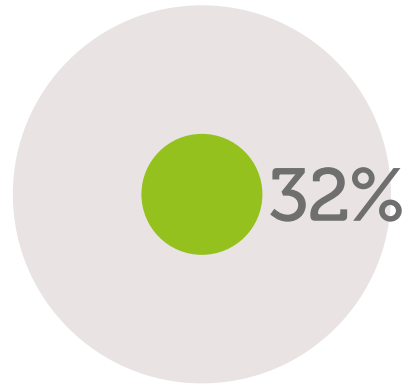


## 3.2 Costs



OF CLIENTS CONSIDER  
THEIR DESIGN AGENCY  
TO BE **'GOOD VALUE FOR  
MONEY'**

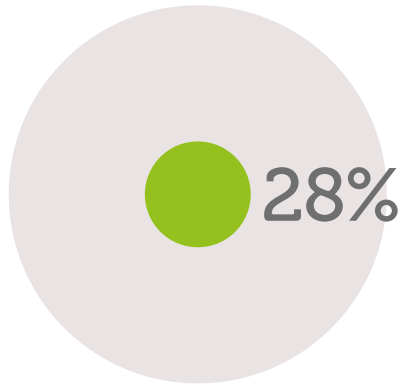
An increase on last year's figure, perhaps reflecting the fact that agencies are generally bending over backwards to accommodate clients with tight budgets. Many clients also comment on the fact that their agency is not a clock watcher and tends to invest the time required to do a really good job. Design agencies are generally very committed to doing their best for clients.



OF CLIENTS CONSIDER  
THEIR DESIGN AGENCY  
TO BE **GOOD VALUE FOR  
MONEY 'IN PART'**

There are a range of ways in which these clients qualify their answers.

- It can be difficult to quantify value for money where design is concerned.
- It may be slightly too early in the relationship to judge value for money.
- A particular service seems disproportionately expensive or implementation work seems to be similarly priced to design concept work.
- A general lack of agency flexibility in their approach to fees.
- Competitors are perceived as being cheaper.
- An agency's weaker account management means that the client is having to devote a disproportionate amount of time to the relationship.
- An agency is struggling to fully understand or crack a particular challenge, requiring re-briefings and extra time.



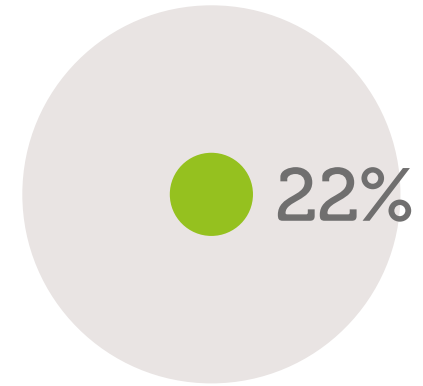
OF CLIENTS STATED THAT  
THEIR BUDGETS ARE  
**TIGHTER** THAN LAST YEAR

There is an ever-present pressure on the marketing budget to deliver tangible, measurable results.



OF CLIENTS STATED THAT  
MARKETING SPEND ON  
DIGITAL ACTIVITY IS EITHER  
**INCREASING OR SET TO  
INCREASE**

Digital budgets are seeing the most healthy growth rates.



OF CLIENTS STATED  
THAT THEY SOMETIMES  
**STRUGGLED TO  
UNDERSTAND DESIGN  
AGENCY COSTS**

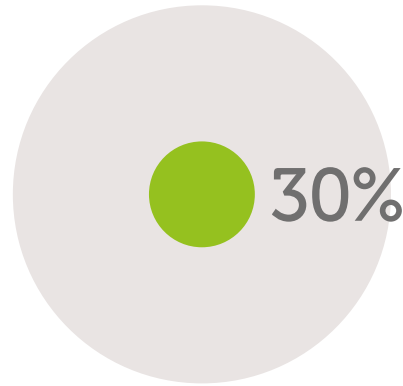
These clients point to a lack of transparency about the actual work involved on one task versus another. Clients also complain about implementation work that seems to be charged at the same rate as conceptual thinking.

## 3.3 Client service



OF CLIENTS SEE THEIR  
DESIGN AGENCY AS A  
'**PARTNER**' RATHER THAN  
A SUPPLIER

The rest see their agency as either a supplier or part supplier, part partner. To be considered a full partner is perhaps more difficult than some agencies realise.



OF CLIENTS FELT THEIR  
AGENCY IS **TOO PASSIVE**

Some clients comment that their design agency is answering the brief but not going beyond this. This situation can occur over time, especially when things get busy. Qualities such as being strategic, proactive and challenging are often present at the beginning of the relationship but can easily fade away unless the agency makes a concerted effort to maintain them.



OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
THEIR DESIGN AGENCY  
SHOULD **ASK MORE  
QUESTIONS**

Asking questions is a good habit. Agencies frequently ask lots of questions at the beginning of a relationship but this is sometimes not sustained. Continued questions show interest and enthusiasm. The knowledge gained can also stimulate proactive ideas and effective client development.



OF CLIENTS WHO HAD A  
**WEAKER RELATIONSHIP**  
WITH THEIR AGENCY CITED  
CLIENT SERVICE ISSUES AS  
THE MAIN REASON

A slight increase year on year. Some of these issues can be relatively minor niggles but, if not recognised and dealt with, they become evidence that the agency is 'not listening'.

Examples include:

**Budget management**

Failing to flag things up early.

**Too slow to reveal problems or attempting to 'hide' a problem**

**Haphazard**

No contact reports, client has to chase, 'last minute' feeling, poor communications.

**Too passive**

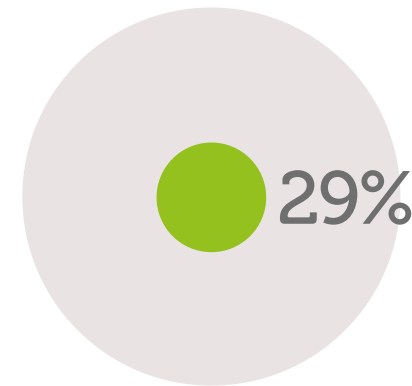
Not driving things, supplier not partner mentality.

**Making it hard work**

Choosing the wrong battles, overly defensive, stubborn.

**A clash of personalities/styles**

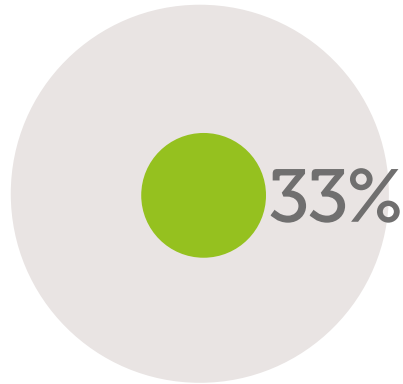
These examples are often viewed as a deterioration from an earlier point in the relationship when agency keenness and commitment were deemed to be higher.



OF CLIENTS REFERRED TO  
AN AGENCY '**MISTAKE**' THAT  
HAPPENED OVER A  
YEAR AGO

As in previous reports, clients have a long memory for mistakes and shorter memories for great creative work. Most 'mistakes' concern client service and production issues.

## 3.3 Client service



OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
GETTING AGENCIES TO WORK  
TOGETHER EFFECTIVELY IS  
**CHALLENGING**

This issue was not included in last year's report but was in 2016. The 2016 percentage was significantly higher. Design agencies are getting better at working more closely with other agencies and enjoying a better dialogue. It has been driven by a client demand for this to happen more effectively.

Several obstacles are cited:

**Several agencies believing that they are the lead agency**

By definition, there can only be one lead agency.

**Competition getting in the way**

Teamwork can suffer when there is too much competition between agencies whose skills overlap.

**Personality clashes and clashes of ego between agencies**

**Agencies wanting too much client input rather than sorting out some issues themselves**



OF CLIENTS WOULD LIKE  
**MORE REGULAR** PROGRESS  
REPORTS

Clients appreciate regular, simple updates on progress. Many say that this doesn't need to be a long email but just something that quickly tells them what has happened, what is happening, what's going to happen and by when.



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41%

OF CLIENTS WOULD LIKE  
AGENCY CONTACT REPORTS  
AND UPDATES TO BE  
**SHORTER AND SHARPER**

Clients tend to value conciseness in written communications. Clients are continually saying that they do not have time to read longer communications.

89%

OF CLIENTS '**LOOK  
FORWARD** TO MEETINGS'  
WITH THEIR DESIGN  
AGENCY

A meeting with the design agency really is a fun part of the week.

93%

OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
THE '**PERSONAL CHEMISTRY**'  
WITH THE PEOPLE AT THEIR  
AGENCY IS EITHER 'GOOD'  
OR 'VERY GOOD'

Design agency cultures tend to be relaxed and informal. The vast majority of design agencies are personable and easy to get on with.

## 3.3 Client service



Great  
communication,  
accuracy,  
reliability,  
empathy,  
understanding,  
proactivity...



44%

OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
DESIGN AGENCIES **SUFFER**  
**FROM A HIGH RATE OF**  
ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT  
CHURN

Account management changes can be very inconvenient for clients. Most clients appreciate that people move on but the way in which it is handled is key. If changes in personnel are not communicated well to the client, then this can strengthen a feeling that account management staff are coming and going.



51%

OF CLIENTS HAVE  
EXPERIENCED A **POOR**  
**HANDOVER** WHEN THERE IS  
A CHANGE OF STAFF AT AN  
AGENCY

Clients are very sensitive about how this is handled and, in any case, they generally don't like spending their time to get a new person up to speed. It needs early and proactive communication by the agency to keep the client happy.

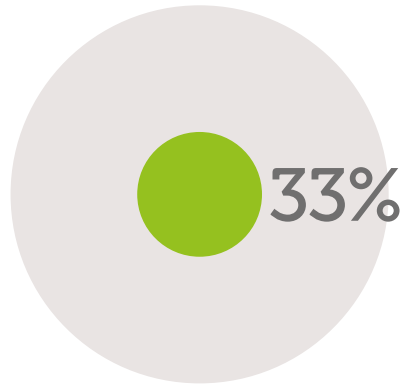


67%

OF CLIENTS WOULD LIKE  
THEIR AGENCY TO HAVE  
**MORE COMMERCIAL**  
**UNDERSTANDING**

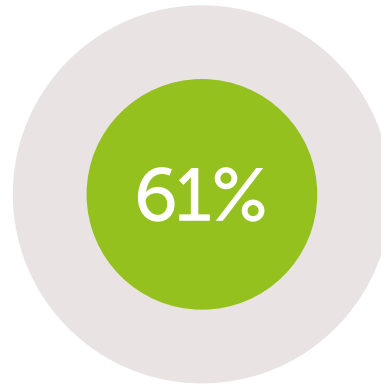
Better commercial understanding means more empathy and understanding of the client's world. It also allows the agency to construct a better case for a particular design route.

## 3.4 Client development



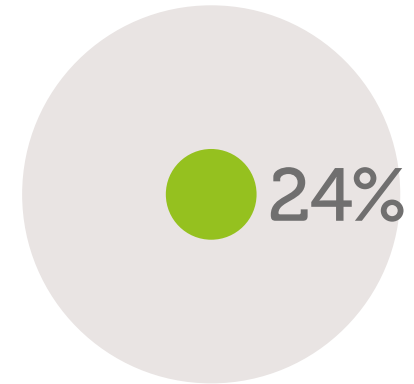
OF CLIENTS WISH THEIR  
DESIGN AGENCY **OFFERED  
MORE SERVICES**

Once a good relationship develops with real trust, there is an advantage to the client in going to the agency for other services. Some of these services are not realistic for the design agency to offer, but others are. In other words, there are opportunities for agencies, if they want, to think more entrepreneurially and offer closely related services to existing clients rather than always ploughing the same furrow.



OF CLIENTS PREFER THEIR  
AGENCY TO BE **AMBITIOUS  
FOR MORE BUSINESS**

Agency ambition signifies a certain cultural dynamism, a get up and go mentality. While most clients react badly to pushy, 'selling' activity, they still like to feel that their agency is keen to grow more business. Clients are quick to point out when an agency feels a touch sleepy or passive in this regard. It can suggest a deeper malaise.



OF CLIENTS BELIEVE THAT  
LONDON AGENCIES NEED  
TO SPEND MORE TIME  
**OUTSIDE THE M25**

It is easy to visit the flagship London store but what about visiting the 'difficult' smaller stores in far flung provincial towns? Agencies can sometimes be seen as inhabiting a trendy, London cosmopolitan bubble. Are agencies in tune with the world of normal, everyday consumers?



OF CLIENTS RARELY OR  
**NEVER READ** THE AGENCY  
NEWSLETTER OR CLAIM  
NOT TO RECEIVE IT

A 10% increase on last year. The agency newsletter is generally failing to win client attention.



OF CLIENTS **PREFER A  
PRINTED PIECE TO AN  
ONLINE NEWSLETTER**

Clients often comment that it has greater longevity and can be tucked away in a bag to read on a train or flight. Like the conventional new business letter, printed pieces are gaining renewed impact.



OF CLIENTS BELIEVE  
THAT THEIR DESIGN  
AGENCY COULD PROVIDE  
**MORE ADDED VALUE  
COMMUNICATION**

A similar percentage to last year's report. Many agencies are good at talking about their own success but less good at sharing knowledge. However, the right type of added value communication is key. Clients prefer quick, useful nuggets of information to long white papers. They also seem to prefer narrower subject fields as opposed to general trends pieces.

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# About Up to the Light

Up to the Light is the leading provider of client surveys to the UK design industry. We offer expert, objective and experienced advice for marketing services agencies and professional services firms. Our approach is to challenge ingrained assumptions and offer more effective, insight-led thinking.

**Services include:**

- Client surveys
- Business development strategy
- Pitching advice
- Business differentiation
- Training & workshops
- Brand strategy for clients in partnership with agencies

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