Symbioss
Transforming relationships, unlocking growth

Your own client lead is leaving. What now?

Eight findings on what goes when a client lead leaves, and four conclusions worth acting on.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

01 A quarter of agency staff leave each year

In UK creative and media agencies, staff turnover was 24.8% in the 12 months to September 2025.

02 Leavers' clients spent 13 to 18% less

When a sales rep left one US distributor, their clients spent 13.2 to 17.6% less over the next year.

03 Senior departures put clients at risk

In advertising agencies in North America and Europe, each extra one in ten executives leaving in a year made clients about 4 to 5% more likely to leave.

04 About a third of clients follow leavers

Partners moving between US law practices expect about 57% of their clients to follow them. On checking, it's nearer 35%.

05 Nearly half refill roles without a review

In a 2026 survey of 1,014 senior UK HR people, 46% said their organisation tends to replace leavers without reviewing what it needs now or in future.

06 Clients trust the organisation too

Clients trust the person and the organisation behind them. Trust in the organisation shapes whether they expect to keep working with you.

07 More trust goes with more loyalty

Among 881 business buyers in the UK, France and Hungary, the more they trusted the supplier, the more loyal they were.

08 Typical buying decisions involve 22 people

That's 13 people inside the client organisation and nine outside it. Procurement is a decision-maker in 53% of cases.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

01 Review who holds each key relationship, and bolster it while it's strong

For each client you can't afford to lose, who at your end do they actually deal with? If it's one person, add a second client-facing expert now, not once the lead has resigned. Introduced early, it looks like better service. Drawn from findings 2, 4 and 6.

02 Put a succession plan in place for client-facing roles

Name a successor for every client-facing role and review it twice a year. If someone has already resigned, move fast: tell the client yourself, introduce the successor in person and record what the leaver knows. Drawn from findings 1, 3, 4 and 5.

03 Make your marketing work for the relationship

Your marketing reaches people your client lead never meets. Make sure it gives the whole client organisation a reason to trust you: useful insight, briefings and events, not just news about yourselves. Drawn from findings 6 and 7.

04 Connect more of your people with more of theirs

With 13 people involved on the client's side, one relationship can't reach them all. Match more of your people to more of theirs, at every level, so no single departure takes the client with it. Drawn from findings 3 and 8.

UK evidence on client loss when people leave is thin, so we've used the strongest international studies and said where each comes from. Sources by finding 01 IPA, Agency Census 2025 (2026) · 02 Shi et al., Journal of Marketing (2017) · 03 Rogan, Academy of Management Journal (2014), Symbioss calculation · 04 Decipher, lateral partner client portability (2024) · 05 CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report (2026) · 06 Doney & Cannon, Journal of Marketing (1997) · 07 Paparoidamis et al., Industrial Marketing Management (2019) · 08 Forrester, State of Business Buying (2026). October 2026

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