

## **How the agency commercial model is being disrupted, and what the evidence says about outreach, differentiation, and client retention.**

A consolidation of published behavioural research, sector benchmarks,  
and deployment data for digital agency leader.

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## AiSC Executive Summary for Agency Leaders

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This summary covers three things: how to re-engage lapsed clients with something worth saying, how post-launch silence is costing agencies revenue they have already earned, and why the capability to address both has not been available to commercial teams before now. It is written for agency founders, CEOs, and commercial directors. Reading time is 3 mins.

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## The Report. AiSC, The Agency Opportunity.

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The following pages set out the evidence behind the three revenue opportunities this summary describes. Each section explains what AiSC achieves and why, grounded in published behavioural research, independent sector data, and documented deployment findings. For agency leaders who want to understand the mechanics before committing to a conversation, the full picture and ALL (38) cited sources are here. Reading time is 19 mins.

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## AiSC Executive Summary for Agency Leaders

### Two changes. Measurable outcomes. One 15-minute conversation to qualify both.

Supporting evidence: 20-page research paper · 38 cited sources · AAAnow.ai · 2026 For agency founders, MDs, and commercial directors · Reading time: 3 minutes

### Start here. The claims sound too good to be true.

The full research paper documents three outcomes from AiSC. If you're reading this sceptically, that's probably the right starting point.

So set aside the 21% pitch win figure entirely. Do not factor it in. Do not include it in any ROI calculation. Ignore it completely. Focus only on what two much smaller, quieter, more immediately verifiable things can do for your revenue.

Every agency has experienced what it means to go into a conversation fully prepared, with something specific, current and independently generated about that prospect or client. It lands differently. The problem was never the value of doing it. It was that the cost and resource meant it could only happen selectively, for the opportunities that justified it.

**AiSC makes that the standard for every contact.** For outreach and new business, generating the insight to make first contact worthwhile **costs nothing**. Once a **client relationship is in place**, monitoring and maintaining that evidence across an entire client base it's **£100 per month**. There is no point in the client relationship where the cost of being prepared is now a reason not to be.

**58%**

**Being Heard**

AiSC campaigns: 41-74% actual results

**21%**

**Pitch Win Rate Uplift**

Evidence-led pitches

**17%**

**Revenue Increase**

Post-launch oversight

## 1 The two things.

### 1.1 Lapsed clients: a reason to be heard again

Every agency has a list of clients who went quiet. The project ended, the retainer lapsed, the contact moved on. Most of those relationships did not end badly. They just stopped.

The obstacle isn't price. It isn't history. It's having something worth saying. A call with nothing new to offer is, from the client's side, just another agency chasing work. Those don't get returned.

AiSC generates a Scorecard of a lapsed client's current website position: where it sits against sector benchmarks, what's changed since you last worked together, where new risk or value gaps have appeared. Send that. It's not a pitch. It's proof you were paying attention when most agencies weren't.

The lapsed client already knows you. The trust baseline exists. The switching cost to go elsewhere is real. You do not need to win them back. You need a reason to restart the conversation. The Scorecard is that reason.

*You do not need to win them back. You need a reason to restart the conversation.*

*In practice: a lost client, a \$40,000 recovery.*

*A high street retailer left after 3 years. 30 days later the dashboard flagged load times at 9 seconds, bounce rates up to 61%. The original agency returned with waterfall data and a fixed-price remedy plan. Engagement: \$40,000. Bounce rates fell to 11%. Estimated lifetime value recovered: \$765,000.*

## 1.2 Post-launch revenue: the money already leaving your clients

After a website goes live, most agencies go quiet. Not deliberately. There's no process, so there's no contact. We asked 104 agencies about their post-launch client engagement approach. 76% didn't have a formalized one.

That figure is not a failure of intent. The capability to generate commercially usable insight from a client's website has not been available to agency commercial teams before. What existed was a mix of home-grown tools, 3rd party products, and free tools. Making use of the results required six skill disciplines and around 11 days of interpretation, at a cost of £5,500+ per client (inc. lic). At that cost and time, it was out of reach for routine use.

*Post-launch engagement went dark because the economics made it impractical. AiSC is the first time this capability sits directly with commercial teams, at a cost and speed that makes it viable across the full client lifecycle.*

That silence creates a gap. Diagnostic tool vendors identified it years ago. Combined, Sitemorse, Siteimprove, Monsido, Silktide, and Crownpeak (diagnostic tool vendors operating directly inside agency client accounts) are estimated to generate \$213m annually (AAAnow.ai 2026). That money came from client budgets agencies were managing.

Sitemorse, which is part of the group behind AiSC, is one of those vendors. We're not inferring this from outside the industry. We built part of it. That's not a comfortable thing to say in a paper like this, but it's the most honest framing we have.

34% of agencies are already doing this inadvertently, introducing competition through the diagnostic tools they bring to client accounts (AiSC internal observations, 2025).

*In practice: Neoshields. 250+ client domains, one hour of admin a month. A 14-person Paris agency monitors its full client base via ACTIVE Scorecards. Alerts become review call talking points. Trends become billable investigations; that's the whole model. One hour of admin per month.*

# \$213m

Annual revenue of diagnostic  
vendors inside agency client accounts

AAAnow.ai · 2026

## 2 The market context.

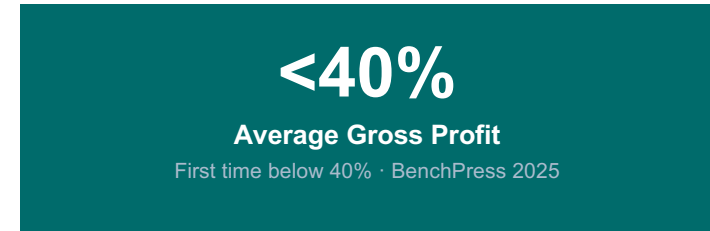
The budget pressure argument gets raised a lot. It doesn't hold up. When a client is not commissioning new projects, the website they already have becomes their primary digital asset. The pressure to make it perform, stay compliant, and not create risk increases. That work is still being done. The question is who is capturing the budget.

### 2.1 The numbers. Conservative.

Two scenarios. No pitch win assumptions. No optimistic projections. Lapsed clients and post-launch oversight only.

Re-engage 3 lapsed clients at a modest retainer value. No new pitch. No acquisition cost. A Scorecard with something real to say: evidence of attentiveness during a period when most agencies went silent.

Analysis across 10 major agency clients identified ~£400,000 in billable work unaddressed post-launch (AiSC internal, 2025). Internal data: 17% average revenue increase from existing clients where proactive oversight was introduced.



### 3 A Capability That Has Not Been Available to Agencies Before

Every agency has experienced what good preparation does to a client conversation. Going in with something specific, current, and independently generated about that prospect's position changes the dynamic. The problem was never whether that approach worked. It was whether it was viable for every contact, not just the ones that justified the resource.

What existed was a combination of home-grown tools, 3rd party products, and free tools. The challenge was not running them. It was making the results usable. Turning diagnostic output into something a BDM could use in a cold outreach, or an account manager could take into a lapsed client conversation, required six disciplines: SEO, UX, development, compliance, marketing, and project management. Around 11 days of interpretation per client. Cost upwards of £5,500. For routine commercial use, across every contact, that was not viable.

Agency leaders will recognise something else. When they asked internally about a client's position, they got an answer. What was harder to know was how complete that picture was. Internal teams work through their own lens, focused on what their tools are built to find. A comprehensive, independent view that a commercial team could carry into a conversation with confidence was rarely available.

AiSC is the first time that has changed. For outreach and new business, generating the insight to make first contact worthwhile costs nothing. Once a client relationship is in place, monitoring across an entire client base costs £100 per month. What previously required 11 days and £5,500+ now takes 10 minutes, in the hands of business development, account management, and client services, at every stage of the relationship.

Every cold outreach. Every lapsed client contact. Every pitch. Every account review. Every time.

### The Compound Effect: Retention, Upsell, and Referral Together

The 17% revenue figure isn't one thing. Retainer renewal, upsell from visible performance gaps, referral from clients who are actively engaged: those three run simultaneously adding value (agency revenue, client confidence).

Each of them is worth having on its own. Together they compound, and remember the 17% just what is being left on the table, available to others – not the ongoing value of the ability to grow the account.



### 3.1 On the 21% pitch win figure.

The research is there if you want it.

TrinityP3 reviewed 1,000+ credentials presentations and found clients couldn't name most of the agencies after a day of pitches. Corporate Visions ran 400 B2B executives through pitch scenarios. Craven's trust data shows most agencies build their entire pitch around Fame, which is 2% of what actually drives a buying decision. Reliability, Reciprocity and Aligned Interests are 68%. That's where the gap is.

The Day One shortlist forms before any pitch begins. 90% of buyers choose from it (HBR, ~1,200 buyers). 95% of B2B purchases go to a vendor already in the buyer's mental shortlist (6sense, 2025). A Scorecard sent before a formal process starts is not a sales tactic. It is how you get on that list before it exists.

When you are ready to test it, the evidence is there. For now, two smaller things are more than enough reason to have a conversation.

Those two together (nothing else) are associated with an 8 - 11x ROI.

Yes, that's a big number. The 20 pages behind this summary show how. A 15-minute demo works out whether it applies to your agency or not.

## **The Report. AiSC, The Agency Opportunity.**

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The three revenue opportunities described in the summary are grounded in 38 cited sources, documented agency deployments, and published behavioural research covering how buyers make decisions, what builds and erodes trust, and why websites lose commercial value without active oversight.

Each section covers one opportunity in full: the evidence for why it works, the research that explains the mechanism, and the data that supports the outcome. For agency leaders making a considered decision about where to focus commercial effort, this is the detail that earns that confidence.

Reading time: 19 minutes.

#### 4 Purpose and scope.

This paper consolidates external research, published behavioural science, and internal Sitemorse performance data to provide an evidential basis for three specific commercial outcomes that AiSC delivers for digital agencies:

- i) The 58% improvement in being heard through sector-specific, personalised outreach (41% to 74% open rates over 3 years)
- ii) A 21% increase in pitch win rates through evidence-led differentiation,
- iii) 17% increase in revenue from existing clients through proactive, insight-driven engagement.

It is written for agency leaders (founders, managing directors, and commercial directors) who want to understand not just what AiSC achieves but why, grounded in sources they can verify independently.

This paper doesn't attempt a comprehensive review of agency marketing, email strategy, or sales methodology (there are better places for that). It focuses on three specific mechanisms: outreach personalisation using independently generated sector benchmarks and company-level signals; pitch differentiation through unconsidered need framing, trust-building, and evidence delivered before any formal process begins; and client revenue protection through ongoing insight-led engagement that surfaces risk and opportunity without waiting to be asked.

Operational implementation, pricing, and onboarding are outside its scope.

The market context this paper addresses is not hypothetical. Independent research from GYDA (January-February 2026), drawing on findings from Harvard Business Review, Rand Fishkin, and Marketreach, confirms that the agency sector has undergone a structural shift: buyers form shortlists before any formal process begins, generic positioning no longer differentiates, and client relationships deteriorate faster post-delivery than the industry has previously acknowledged.

The evidence base draws on research published between 2013 and early 2026, including primary findings from Gartner, 6sense, Edelman-LinkedIn, Corporate Visions, and Sitemorse's own analysis of 119 million websites over 26 months to January 2026. All sources are cited and listed in full at the end of this paper.

*The figures cited in this paper (58%, 21%, and 17%) represent measured outcomes from AiSC deployments, not modelled projections. The research reviewed here explains the mechanisms that produce them. Where internal data is used, it is identified explicitly as such.*

## 5 Summary,

Most agencies are good at what they do. That's no longer the problem. The problem is that the way buyers make decisions has shifted, and the tools agencies use to reach them, pitch to them, and keep them haven't.

The financial data confirms the scale of pressure. BenchPress 2025, drawing on 677 UK agencies with fee income above £1m, found that 46% of agency owners now cite winning new business as their number one challenge, the highest figure in 13 years of benchmarking, up from 27% two years ago. Average Gross Profit has dropped below 40% for the first time. One in three agencies made redundancies in 2024. And 58% of agency owners now say selling the business is their primary goal. Two years ago that was 44%. The market is not going through a difficult period, this isn't a cycle. It has reset.

AiSC supports a fundamentally different approach. It uses sector-level research and company-specific signals, drawn from Sitemorse's analysis of 119 million websites over 26 months, to strengthen outreach, sharpen pitch differentiation, and maintain ongoing client engagement through evidence-led contact.

This paper consolidates external research and behavioural science explaining why these mechanisms work. Where stated, it includes internal performance benchmarks. Each section is evidence-led. The purpose is to document what can be achieved and why, using published research, validated behavioural findings, and internal benchmarks where explicitly stated. A full reference list is provided.

**46%**

**cite winning new business  
as #1 challenge**

BenchPress 2025

**58%**

**of agency owners want  
to sell the business**

Up from 44% two years ago

**1 in 3**

**UK agencies made  
redundancies in 2024**

BenchPress 2025

## 6 Being Heard: 58% Uplift in Email Open Rates.

Getting a response at all is the first problem. Decision-makers are receiving more than they can process, most of it generic, most of it about the agency sending it rather than the person receiving it. It gets deleted. Outreach that arrives with something specifically relevant (a sector benchmark, a finding about the recipient's own position) gets a different reaction. That distinction is the whole game at this stage.

### 6.1 Internal Performance Data

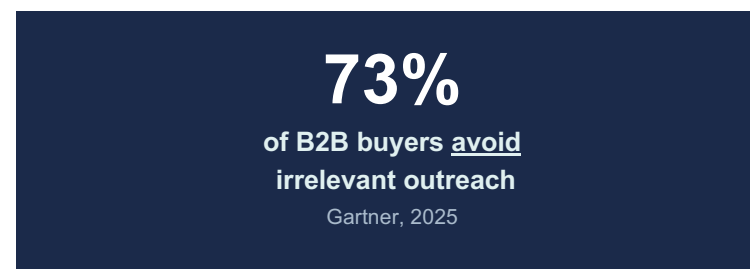
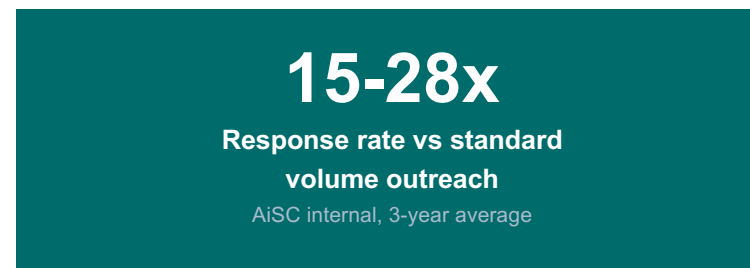
Over 3 years, AiSC campaigns using sector-specific research as the opening contact have achieved email open rates of 41% to 74%. The 58% figure is the midpoint of that range. Standard volume outreach with no personalisation typically achieves a 2 - 3% response rate. AiSC-supported outreach runs at 15 to 28 times that figure.

The difference is not the email It is what the email contains.

### 6.2 Why Being Heard Matters More Than Volume

The reason AiSC-supported outreach achieves many times the response rate of standard volume email is not the volume. It is what the email contains. Three bodies of research explain why.

**73% of B2B buyers actively avoid suppliers who send irrelevant outreach** (Gartner, 2025). The same buyers who filter out generic contact are receptive to outreach that demonstrates genuine understanding of their situation. **Getting into that second category is the entire purpose of the AiSC Scorecard as the opening contact.**



*In practice: Neoshields, Paris "We're not just sending a message, we're giving them immediate, relevant, and credible insight. That opens doors. Whether it's a university, ministry, or listed group, the scorecard makes contact feel urgent and personalised, not just promotional." Head of Growth, Neoshields (AiSC case study, 2025).*

### 6.3 Problem is time

The evidence is consistent: personalisation works, and the more specific it is to the recipient's situation, the more it works. The problem for most agencies is time. Properly researching and personalising a single outreach takes around 2.3 hours per contact, (7 in 10 agencies we spoke to). The sector benchmarks and company-specific signals are generated by AiSC, not manually researched.

The time cost drops to a fraction. The quality of the personalisation can deliver rapid growth when it is genuine, linked to actual results, to CRM, and scaling outreach. Use with caution, focus and avoid spray and pray; or results will be undermined – be ready for the response, ensure evidence is clear to validate message.

## 7 The Behavioural Science Behind Being Heard

Three well-established behavioural mechanisms explain why sector-specific, company-relevant outreach generates consistently higher engagement than generic alternatives.

### **Information Gap Theory (Loewenstein, 1994)**

*Loewenstein's research on curiosity is straightforward: people are driven to close gaps in their knowledge, and that drive is strongest when the gap is personally relevant. Where does my sector rank? How does my site compare? The moment a recipient realises the email contains an answer to that question, they're already reading it.*

### **Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954)**

*People have a fundamental drive to evaluate themselves relative to relevant others. Sector benchmarking directly activates this. Where data shows the recipient's position is stronger than expected, it reinforces their interest in protecting that position. Where it reveals a gap, it triggers motivation to address it. Either way, the email generates engagement because it contains something the recipient cares about in relation to themselves.*

### **Reciprocity (Cialdini, 1984)**

*Give something useful before asking for anything. Cialdini's reciprocity research has been replicated across enough contexts to be treated as reliable: the DAV charity experiment found that personalised address labels in a mailing lifted response from 18% to 35%, just because something of genuine use was given first, unsolicited. An email leading with a real sector finding, freely shared, works the same way. The effect is strongest when the value is specific and wasn't expected.*

## 7.1 What Happens When Results Are Unexpected

Sector results frequently surface a position the recipient did not expect, and that surprise matters commercially. Research shows 83% of agency commercial staff have no visibility of their clients' website position (AiSC internal observations, 104 agencies, 2025).

When the opening insight reveals a position, better or worse than assumed, the natural response is to want to understand more. The follow-up offer to share the full detail becomes a high-value proposition rather than a sales move.

*The 2025 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Report (3,500 decision-makers) found that 75% consider thought leadership more trustworthy than marketing materials. 86% are more likely to invite an organisation to tender when it produces relevant insight. 60% will pay more to work with organisations they've found genuinely useful.*

## 8 Differentiating the Pitch: 21% Increase in Win Rates.

Getting heard is one thing. Winning the pitch is another. The challenge isn't new. Agencies have always had to differentiate. But research from 2025 and 2026 by people working directly inside the sector suggests the window for doing so is narrowing faster than most agencies realise.

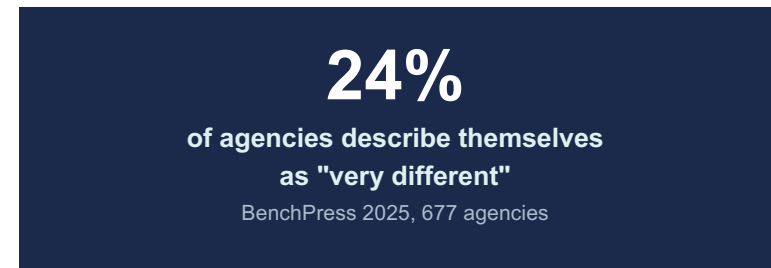
BenchPress 2025 asked 677 UK agencies how different they are. Only 24% said "very" (meaning a genuine specialism or niche). That group was twice as likely to achieve fast growth and strong profitability compared to the rest. 76% of the market is competing without it, and paying for that in measurable revenue and margin terms. The differentiation gap is not a perception problem. It has direct, measurable consequences.

### 8.1 What Agency Leaders Are Saying Now

Robert Craven runs GYDA (Grow Your Digital Agency) and has worked with over 1,000 agencies across global markets, including through Google Partners coaching programmes. He's one of the few people writing on this topic who has actually sat inside the client conversations, not just surveyed them.

Writing in January 2026, Craven described clients who are more sophisticated than they were 5 years ago: sceptical of big promises, vanity metrics, and one-size-fits-all solutions, and increasingly capable of recognising when they are paying agency prices for work a freelancer or a piece of software could do.

The agencies that are growing, in his observation, tend to have three things in common: a clear position in the market, a consultative rather than executional relationship with clients, and a habit of talking about outcomes rather than deliverables. Not groundbreaking. But most agencies still don't do all three.



*"Most agencies sound or feel the same with one or two shades of difference. Saying so much without saying anything is the symptom of not having anything concrete to say." Paul Marobella, agency pitch research, LinkedIn*

February 2026 research breaks trust into eight measurable components, drawing on Marketreach data. Worth reading in full. The short version:

Weight	Trust Pillar	Addressed by AiSC pitch?
35%	Reliability: do what you say, every time	Yes: evidence of consistent monitoring and delivery
19%	Reciprocity: make clients feel trusted	Yes: Scorecard given before any ask is made
14%	Aligned Interests: demonstrate skin in the game	Yes: investment protection framing
9%	Stake: willingness to share risk	Partial: ongoing accountability structure
9%	Familiarity: be visible and recognisable	Yes: sustained presence through insight
2%	Fame: awards, testimonials, case studies	This is where most pitches focus
2%	Frequency of Communication	Yes: proactive contact model
1%	Tenure: longevity	Supported over time

Robert Craven / GYDA / Feb 2026

*Most agencies build their pitch around Fame. That's 2% of the trust equation. The three factors that actually move the number (Reliability, Reciprocity, and Aligned Interests) account for 68% between them.*

Robert Craven, GYDA, February 2026 (Marketreach research)

An agency that arrives at a pitch with a prepared, independently generated Scorecard of the prospect's digital position has already demonstrated Reliability, Reciprocity, and Aligned Interests before anyone has said a word. 68% of the trust equation, addressed before the meeting starts.

## 9 The pitch they've already heard.

TrinityP3 has reviewed over 1,000 credentials presentations across 20 years. What they found (and it's uncomfortable reading if you've spent time on credentials decks) is that after a full day of pitches, clients could name fewer than 10 agencies. The rest were recalled only by incidental detail: the person with the unusual glasses, the agency with the expensive flowers in reception.

The reason is structural, not a failure of individual agencies. Most credentials presentations follow the same architecture (who we are, what we have done, how we work, why you should choose us) and because the architecture is the same, the language is interchangeable. Buyers cannot differentiate even when they want to.

The typical agency pitch (*and if you've sat through a few of these from the client side, you'll recognise this immediately*) goes something like:

1. *We are a strategic partner.*
2. *We are passionate about what we do.*
3. *We take an integrated, data-driven approach.*
4. *We have an experienced team and award-winning work.*
5. *We have worked with brands like yours.*
6. *We put clients first.*
7. *We would love to be an extension of your team.*
8. *We are not your average agency.*

*These phrases appear, with minor variation, in most credentials decks (review of 81 completed – related to new, or replacement website project, 5-9 month project timeline, \$45-\$370k forecast budget). Buyers hear them multiple times in the same day. (Clients we've spoken to can often finish the sentences before the agency does.).*

The typical agency pitch – this is what is seen from the outside, prospects are looking for what makes you different, what are YOU going to do for me and how, do you understand my pain?



(above) The Day One List  
Craven's Day One List research (January 2026, citing HBR data from around 1,200 buyers) puts a number on how late most agencies enter the conversation

**Two independent bodies of research, same finding:**  
*the pitch isn't usually where the decision gets made. It's where a preference that already formed gets confirmed or doesn't.*

"You don't lose deals because your sales team underperformed. You lose them because you were never considered."

## 10 Putting yourself in the prospective-client shoes.

Buyers of agency services have a need that is rarely articulated in a brief but is almost universally present: **they want assurance that their website investment will be protected** over time, there is also a benefit in not having to manage additional third-party relationships to achieve that.

Research consistently shows buyers actively seek to simplify their vendor landscape. 77% of B2B buyers report their most recent purchase was complex or difficult (Gartner). Anything that removes complexity from the relationship is perceived as higher value.

AiSC handles all three (performance, compliance, accountability) without the client having to manage an additional vendor relationship. The agency stays the single point of contact.

**That matters more to buyers than most agencies think it does.**

The scale of what is being transferred is not hypothetical. Combined revenues across Sitemorse, Siteimprove, Monsido, Silktide, and Crownpeak (DQM, Audit, Diagnostic tool vendors operating directly inside agency client accounts – respective <sup>TM</sup> belong to their companies.) are estimated at \$213m (AAAnow.ai 2026). That revenue did not come from nowhere.

It came from client budgets that agencies were managing. The vendors identified the post-launch silence, filled it, and built businesses on it. The agency kept the relationship in name. The vendor took the commercial authority, the recurring budget, and the position of trusted digital expert.

Sitemorse, which is part of the group behind AiSC, is one of those vendors. **We're not inferring this from outside the industry. We know what clients pay, what they complain about, and how the agency relationship shifts once a tool like ours is in the account.** This isn't a risk to prepare for. It's happening now, in accounts your competitors are running.

Internal observations (May-December 2025) indicate that 34% of agencies are inadvertently introducing competition through the diagnostic tools they bring to client accounts. The intention is to add value. The outcome is a competitor with a direct client relationship, a separate budget, and a reason to keep returning.

77%

of B2B buyers say their last purchase was complex or difficult

Gartner

34%

of agencies inadvertently introducing competition via diagnostic tools

AiSC internal observations, 2025

*The agency kept the relationship in name. The vendor took the commercial authority, the recurring budget, and the position of trusted digital expert.*

## 11 The Decision Science: Why This Moves the Decision

### 11.1 Loss Aversion (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979, Nobel Prize 2002)

*The psychological pain of a loss is approximately twice as powerful as the pleasure of an equivalent gain. Framing the absence of post-launch oversight as a concrete risk (performance degradation, unaddressed compliance exposure, value erosion) is more motivating to a buyer than promising equivalent gains.*

*Buyers are 2 to 3 times more likely to act to avoid a loss than to pursue an equivalent gain.*

### 11.2 Status Quo Bias (Samuelson and Zeckhauser, 1988)

*In a pitch where all agencies appear similar, the safest option is to change nothing. An agency that breaks this deadlock by introducing a genuinely differentiated offer disrupts the status quo preference and creates a specific reason to choose. Research found that sellers and buyers misalign on the core problem to be solved in 54.5% of cases (Emblaze, 2024).*

### 11.3 Personal Risk Reduction (Google/CEB)

*B2B buyers perceiving personal value in a purchase, including protection of their own professional credibility, are 8 times more likely to pay a premium. The decision-maker who chooses an agency bears personal accountability if that agency fails to protect the client's investment.*

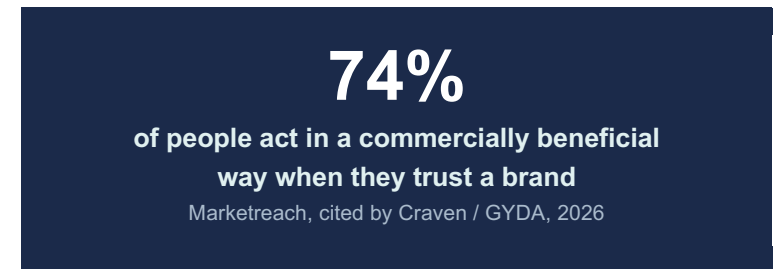
*An agency that makes explicit provision for post-launch performance, compliance, and risk oversight removes a personal career risk that is rarely spoken about but always present.*

### 11.4 Confidence and Decision Momentum

*When sellers align with buyers on problem definition, win rates improve by 38% (Emblaze, 2024). An agency that identifies and addresses the post-launch oversight need, which is typically absent from competitor pitches, provides the buyer with a clear basis for differentiation that can be communicated internally to a buying group averaging 8.2 stakeholders (Sopro, 2025).*

### The Trust Economics of Acting Now

Craven's research makes a direct commercial argument for not deferring adoption of a differentiated approach. In a market where generic agencies are struggling and the shift from doer to trusted advisor is the defining characteristic of agencies that are growing, the capacity to demonstrate investment protection through independently generated evidence is not a competitive advantage that waits.



### The Post-Pitch Window

Pitch decisions are rarely made at the pitch table. An AiSC-equipped agency can send a prospect their own Scorecard in the weeks following the pitch. This is not a follow-up email. It is evidence. Research on anchoring (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974) shows that the first tangible reference point in a decision materially shapes the outcome.

### The RFP Advantage

75% of B2B technology buyers are required by their procurement function to go through a formal RFP process (Inbox Insight, 2025). An agency that has already had a substantive conversation about post-launch performance, SEO continuity, compliance, and value protection is better placed to shape how those questions are framed in the brief.

## 12 Ongoing Value Delivery: 17% Increase in Client Revenue.

Winning the client is not the end of the commercial challenge. It's where the quieter, harder one starts. The period after delivery is where most agency relationships begin to drift. Contact goes reactive. The agency waits to be asked. The client, meanwhile, is asking themselves a different question: what am I actually paying for?

Internal observations across agency discussions conducted between May and December 2025 found that 76% of agencies have no defined process for post-launch client engagement. The silence is not a choice. It's absence of a system. 62% of the same sample cited challenging client discussions that had undermined their credibility and damaged confidence in the relationship.

AiSC addresses this directly. By providing agencies with continuous, independently generated insight into how a client's website is performing, across SEO, compliance, performance, and risk, it gives the agency something substantive to communicate on an ongoing basis.

*The conversation does not have to wait for a problem to surface. The insight is the reason to engage, and each time it arrives it reinforces the case that the retainer is earning its place.*

Internal data shows this approach is associated with a 17% revenue increase from existing clients, they also benefited from strengthened retainer justification, and the ongoing building of value, and upsell opportunities.

**5%**

**retention increase**

→ 25-95% profit uplift (Bain / HBR)

**60-70%**

**probability of sale to existing client**

vs 5 - 20% for new prospect

### 13 The Economics of Retention Versus Acquisition

The retention economics are not complicated and they are not new, which makes it all the more striking that most agencies still underinvest in it.

- A. 5% retention increase produces 25 - 95% profit uplift (Reichheld, Bain & Company / HBR).
- B. 60 - 70% probability of sale to an existing client, versus 5 - 20% for a new prospect (Marketing Metrics; IndustrySelect, 2024).
- C. 5 - 25x cost multiplier to acquire a new client versus retaining an existing one (Harvard Business School; Totango, 2025).
- D. 67% more spend from existing clients in months 31 - 36 versus months 0 - 6 (Bain & Company).

Even agencies reporting growth still describe new client acquisition as their primary commercial challenge (AgencyAnalytics, 2024).

The harder, more expensive problem gets the attention. The easier, more profitable one (retention and re-engagement) gets the leftover budget, if it gets anything at all.

It's one of the more persistent habits in the sector and nobody seems entirely sure why.

### The Compound Effect: Retention, Upsell, and Referral Together

The 17% revenue figure isn't one thing. Retainer renewal, upsell from visible performance gaps, referral from clients who are actively engaged: those three run simultaneously, each adding value to agency revenue and client confidence.

Each of them is worth having on its own. Together they compound. And remember, the 17% is what is being left on the table, available to others. It does not reflect the ongoing value of the ability to grow the account..



## 14 The true cost of going quiet.

Craven's trust work is worth reading alongside the retention data. When trust breaks in an agency relationship, it's rarely one thing. 60% of people stop buying after one broken trust experience (Marketreach, cited by Craven / GYDA, February 2026). 37% cite poor customer service as the primary reason for losing trust in a supplier.

In an agency context, poor service is often just silence. The client can't see what's being done or what their money is producing. The only contact is an invoice or a problem. Craven makes the point directly: agencies tend to assume they lost on price. More often it was a trust objection that never got voiced.

The counter-argument that gets raised most often is that budget pressure makes all of this moot. If clients aren't commissioning anyway, what's the point? It doesn't hold up. When a client is not commissioning new projects, the website they already have becomes their primary digital asset. The pressure to make it perform, stay compliant, and not create risk increases, not decreases.

There is a harder version of this that agencies rarely say aloud. A retainer that is not delivering visible, evidence-led value is not just at risk. The relationship has already started to erode, whether or not the agency knows it. The client has begun forming a view, quietly and without confrontation, that the retained fee is a legacy line item rather than an active investment.

AiSC-enabled proactive contact addresses this directly. Each Scorecard delivered, each sector finding shared, each risk flagged before it becomes a problem, activates the Reliability and Frequency of Communication pillars that together account for 37% of the trust equation. These are not expensive interventions. They are what trust is actually built from.

**37%**

**cite poor customer service as  
primary reason for losing trust**

Marketreach 2026

**60%**

**stop buying after one  
broken trust experience**

Marketreach / Craven GYDA, 2026

*Agencies tend to assume they lost on price. More often it was a trust objection that never got voiced. Robert Craven, GYDA*

## 15 Why Relationships Go Silent and What It Costs.

Most agency churn is not about poor work. Clients leave because they stopped feeling the value of the relationship. Communication becomes reactive, reports contain data that means nothing to them, and gradually the agency shifts from being an asset to being a cost.

Post-launch silence: 2-4 month revenue gap between losing a client and replacing that revenue, during which fixed costs continue (Swydo, 2025).

High churn rate: agencies at 20%+ churn require constant acquisition simply to maintain revenue. Healthy benchmark: below 5% annually (Swydo, 2025).

Then there are the lapsed clients: the ones who haven't ended anything formally, they've just gone quiet. These are probably the most undervalued revenue opportunity in most agencies' books. The relationship exists. The trust was established. The client would have to start from scratch elsewhere, and most of them know it.

An AiSC Scorecard sent to a lapsed client showing what has changed in their sector or on their website (performance shifts, new risk areas, competitive movement) creates a specific, factual reason to re-engage. It is not a sales call. It is evidence of attentiveness during a period when most agencies go quiet.

**\$40,000**

**Value in losing the pitch**

AiSC Use case

**\$765,000**

**Estimated lifetime value  
of the recovered relationship**

AiSC Use case

*A high street retailer left after 3 years. When the new agency's rebuild failed, page load times hit 9 seconds, bounce rates climbed to 61%.*

*The original agency returned with waterfall data, a fixed-price remedy plan, and a 50% performance improvement guarantee within 90 days. Engagement: \$40,000. Bounce rates fell to 11%. Estimated lifetime value of the recovered relationship: \$765,000.*

*The agency did not make a sales call. The dashboard made the introduction. The evidence closed the engagement.*

Use case:

[aisc.aanow.ai/posts/how-losing-the-pitch-is-worth-more-30-days-40-000](https://aisc.aanow.ai/posts/how-losing-the-pitch-is-worth-more-30-days-40-000)

## 16 The Behavioural Science of Ongoing Value and Loyalty.

### 16.1 Sunk Cost and Switching Inertia

*A client who has spent real money and time getting an agency up to speed (briefing them, building context, going through the inevitable early friction) doesn't walk away easily. They'd have to do all of that again somewhere else.*

*An agency that keeps demonstrating value makes that calculation even less attractive.*

### 16.2 Reciprocity and the Ongoing Gift (Cialdini, 1984)

*Reciprocity does not only apply in new business outreach. When an agency consistently provides insight that the client did not ask for, a finding about their website, a sector development, a risk flagged before it became a problem, they activate a durable sense of obligation and trust.*

*The client perceives the agency as giving more than it is required to give, which increases loyalty, reduces price sensitivity, and creates openness to additional service recommendations.*

### 16.3 Confirmation Bias and Value Anchoring

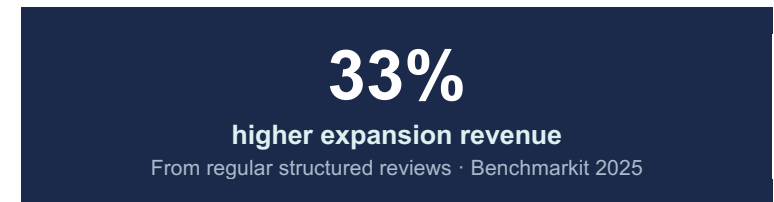
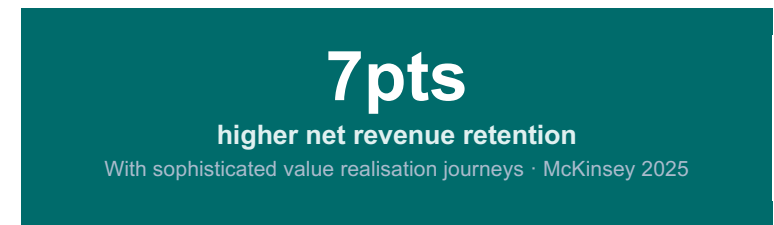
*Once a client has decided that an agency is valuable, they tend to interpret subsequent interactions through that lens. Conversely, once doubt sets in, often quietly through a period of silence or unclear value, subsequent interactions are scrutinised more critically. AiSC-enabled proactive contact keeps the positive anchor active.*

*Each piece of insight delivered is further evidence that the client's original decision was correct.*

## Value Visibility and the Upsell Pathway

The delivery is often excellent. The communication of what was delivered is where it falls apart. Clients who can't articulate what the agency has done for them (to their own stakeholders, in a budget review meeting) are the ones most likely to leave, regardless of the quality of the underlying work (AgencyAnalytics, 2025).

AiSC Scorecards translate the technical output into business language: SEO trajectory, compliance status, performance trends, risk exposure. The kind of thing a FD or CEO can actually point too.



## 17 The Website Investment Protection Argument.

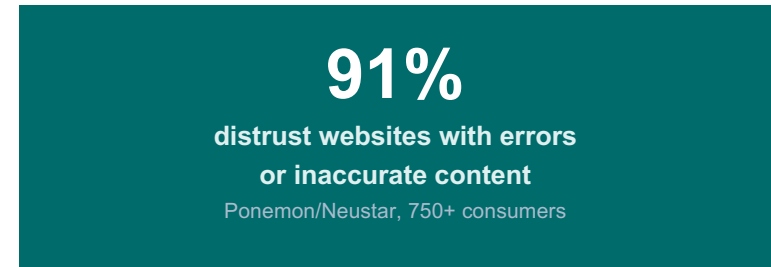
One framing that tends to land well with clients is investment protection. Analysis of 119 million websites over 26 months (AiSC, 2026) shows that website performance, SEO position, and compliance standards deteriorate over time without active monitoring. Content decays as competitors update and search intent shifts. Technical issues accumulate. Accessibility standards change.

A site that performed well at launch can be materially underperforming within 12 to 18 months without anyone noticing, because no one is watching. And we mean that literally. Across 119 million websites analysed, the pattern is consistent regardless of sector or agency size. For a client who has invested tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds in a website, this is a material business risk.

Ponemon Institute research (Neustar, 2015) asked over 750 consumers what erodes their trust in a brand online. 91% distrust websites that contain errors or inaccurate content; 88% distrust sites that go down frequently; and 67% lose trust when pages load too slowly. A website that was built well and then left unmonitored does not just underperform commercially. It actively damages the client's brand with their own customers.

An agency that surfaces this, with independent generated evidence of current performance against benchmarks, is doing the thing that justifies an ongoing fee. The framing isn't "here's what we can sell you next." It's "here's what we found while looking after what you've already built." That lands differently. Most clients respond to it better than agencies expect.

To put a figure on what this conversation is worth: analysis across a sample of 10 major agency clients, using internal audit data, identified approximately £400,000 in billable work left unaddressed post-launch, representing £2.5m in potential revenue where proactive oversight could have opened the discussion. These figures are illustrative, drawn from a specific client set, and should not be treated as universal benchmarks. But they indicate the order of magnitude of commercial opportunity that post-launch silence routinely leaves on the table (AiSC internal analysis, 2025).



*In practice: Neoshields. 250+ client domains, one hour of admin a month. The same agency runs ACTIVE Scorecards across their full client base.*

*Monthly automated updates flag compliance shifts, accessibility changes, and performance movements. Alerts become talking points in review calls. Trends become billable investigations. "It's like a radar. It shows us where to act and when to get in touch."*

*Operational cost: one hour of admin per month.*

## 18 Capability, Insight -> revenue growth throughout the client lifecycle

Every agency has experienced what good preparation does to a client conversation. Going in with something specific, current, and independently generated about that prospect's position changes the dynamic. Evidence of genuine attention, before a word has been said about what the agency can do. The problem was never whether that approach worked. It was whether it was viable for every contact, not just the ones that justified the resource.

What existed to make it possible was a combination of home-grown tools, 3rd party products, and free tools. The challenge was not running them. It was making the results usable. Turning diagnostic output into something a BDM could take into a cold outreach, or an account manager could use to re-engage a lapsed client, required six disciplines working across the findings: SEO, UX, development, compliance, marketing, and project management. Around 11 days of interpretation per client. Cost upwards of £5,500. For routine commercial use, across every contact, that was not viable.

There is a further dimension that agency leaders will recognise. When they asked internally about a client's website position, they got an answer. What was harder to know was how complete that picture was. Internal teams work with their own tools, through their own lens, focused on what those tools are built to find. *That is entirely appropriate for what those tools are designed to do.*

But a comprehensive, independent view that a commercial team could carry into a client conversation with confidence was a different thing entirely. It required breadth across disciplines, independence from the relationship, and output that a non-technical person could act on immediately. That combination was not available. Not at any cost that made routine use realistic.

The consequence was that the level of preparation an agency could bring to its most important opportunities stayed exactly that: reserved for the most important opportunities. Every cold outreach, every lapsed client contact, every pitch, every account review deserved the same quality of evidence. The economics meant that standard was simply not achievable. Agencies did what they could with what was available, and the gaps that created are documented throughout this paper.



AiSC is the first time that has changed. For outreach and new business, generating the insight to make first contact worthwhile costs nothing. Once a client relationship is in place, monitoring and maintaining that evidence across an entire client base costs £100 per month. What previously required 11 days and £5,500+ per client now takes 10 minutes. The capability is in the hands of the people who need it: business development, account management, client services, at every stage of the relationship.

The shift is not just in cost or speed. It is in what is now possible as a standard, rather than an exception. Every cold outreach carrying something worth reading. Every lapsed client contact opening with evidence of what has changed. Every pitch grounded in independently generated insight about that specific prospect. Every account review demonstrating ongoing attention rather than reactive response. That is what changes when the capability moves from a resource-intensive specialist activity into the daily rhythm of a commercial team.

### **Sector Benchmark 'Rankings'**

*"Scorecards are ideal for sector communications, evergreen PR that keeps giving.*

*Rank peers, share headline results, run a webinar.*

*Everyone creates a natural reason for a follow-up: let me share your findings with you privately."*

## 19 Conclusion.

The market has moved. Not temporarily. Structurally. Clients are harder to reach, more sceptical in the room, and faster to drift once the project ends. Generic positioning stopped being differentiation a while ago.

Trust gets built or lost in operational detail, not in credentials decks. The shortlist that matters is formed before any formal process starts. And 60% of people stop buying after a single broken trust experience, which most agencies never find out happened.

The 58%, 21%, and 17% are not projections or modelled estimates. They are what happens when the approach described in this paper gets applied consistently. The research explains the mechanism. These numbers are the result.

AiSC is what makes that shift executable, not after a planning cycle or a new-year strategy review, but in the next campaign, the next pitch, the next client meeting. The research here answers whether it works. The only open question is when.

### The only remaining question is when.

*Every month spent waiting is a month in which a competitor with the same tool is already on the Day One list. We've seen this happen in more than twenty separate agency contexts in the last year alone.*

*"You don't lose deals because your sales team underperformed. You lose them because you were never considered." Robert Craven, GYDA, 'If You're Not on the Day One List, You're Already Out', January 2026*

**8-11x**

**ROI from lapsed client re-engagement  
and post-launch oversight only**

AiSC internal, 2025

**58%**

**Being heard**

AiSC campaigns: 41-74% actual results

**21%**

**Pitch win rate uplift**

Evidence-led pitches

**17%**

**Client revenue increase**

Post-launch oversight

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