



## GENERATING AGENCY ROI WITH RESEARCH

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think again.

  
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**If you think research is just a drain on your client's budget,  
think again.**

Agencies often wonder whether research projects are worth the cost and effort and whether there's any hope for ROI from research. The answer is YES! Whether used for client work or for agency thought leadership and business development, research is one of the best ways to generate revenue and ROI for your agency.

## Client Research Projects

Incorporating original research into client projects can create many opportunities and benefits for your agency beyond just marking up the work.

- **Competitive Advantage in RFPs and Pitches**

Incorporating custom research into RFP responses or pitches will set your agency apart from others — especially if you're a small- to mid-sized agency. Few agencies offer such research, because they don't have internal expertise or a relationship with an affordable research partner. And the more unique and reliable the research, the more it will set you apart from your competitors.

- **Research Coordination**

Even with an experienced research partner on board, any custom research will require activity on the part of your agency. Agencies can and should incorporate these activities in client budget planning.

- Developing research strategy;
- Participating in discussions about survey content, qualitative discussion guides or interview guides;
- Coordinating reviews, approvals and deadlines between the client and your research partner;
- Reviewing results;
- Developing post-research recommendations.

- **Driving Efficiencies in Client Work**

Many agency initiatives that are resource-intensive can be made much more efficient with reliable research data. The more efficient you are at conducting these activities, the more of your fees you can take to the bottom line.

- Persona development;
- Content strategy;
- Content development;
- Jobs To Be Done.

- **Project Bundling**

Incorporating research in a larger initiative such as a brand refresh, website redevelopment or content strategy can encourage clients to sign on for related work and provide an opportunity for a more profitable set of activities.

- **Identifying Better Budget Allocations**

Research can help you identify cost-saving opportunities in your client's marketing efforts, freeing up funds that can better be used on other activities. Media strategy, social media planning, sponsorships and event participation can all be optimized to focus your client's budget on the most effective places to put their content and messaging to reach their ideal audiences.

- **Driving New Projects**

Research can often reveal opportunities for new or expanded initiatives that clients will need your agency's help to develop, including:

- Segmentation research may reveal the need for
- Persona development;
- Internal communications pieces;
- Sales or customer service scripts;
- Multiple email newsletters for different audience segments;
- New website and content development;
- New product or service development.

- **Developing and Managing Client Research Panels**

Participants in client research can be asked to volunteer for further feedback opportunities, generating a proprietary panel of target audience members who are highly engaged with your client's brand. Such programs typically require agency expertise and management.

- Insight into key questions through monthly polls;
- Feedback on planned initiatives and creative executions
- Brand advocacy generating word of mouth, testimonials and case studies.

- **Bolstering Your Agency's Expertise About Your Clients' Audiences**

An agency that demonstrates a command of the needs, desires and resources of a client's best audiences will often see the client staying with them longer, trusting them more, and working closely with the agency as a result of the client's improved ROI on their marketing spend.

# Agency Thought Leadership Research

When conducted for the agency's own benefit, original research can provide multiple opportunities for increased revenue.

- **Better Understanding of Ideal Prospects and Clients**

Wasting money on courting prospective clients who aren't a good fit becomes a thing of the past. Research into your own contacts and target industries can provide extremely helpful insights allowing your agency to better anticipate the needs, attitudes, buying behavior and barriers to purchase for the prospects you most want to convert.

- **More Efficient Marketing and Business Development Efforts**

Your agency can refine its own marketing, messaging, content and business development efforts to reach your best audiences based on research. Research can tell you:

- The resources your ideal prospects use for marketing advice and support;
- The sources they most trust for information about agencies;
- Their greatest challenges with respect to marketing, finding and working with agencies;
- The content they find most compelling when considering an agency.

- **New Opportunities Through Research Partners**

When conducting proprietary research into a particular audience for your own benefit, your agency can partner with organizations who also serve those buyers — trade organizations or media, companies providing complementary services, etc. — and are interested in insight into the audience for their own purposes. Co-sponsors can share research costs and also provide new opportunities to collaborate on content efforts, webinars and other research sharing initiatives, speaking opportunities, etc. Each organization gains in partnership with the other.

- Professional associations and trade organizations;
- Media outlets;
- Organizations providing other services to your ideal prospects;
- Content providers.

- **Increased Visibility with Target Client and Prospect Audiences**

Thought leadership is a valuable asset for any agency, and having original research is an incredibly powerful way for your agency to differentiate itself in the eyes of your ideal audiences.

- Secure speaking opportunities at major conferences where your ideal prospects are gathering (often even before the research results are available);
- Participate in press and podcast interviews;
- Deliver webinars reviewing your research results and recommendations;
- Create downloadable whitepapers, infographics and reports;
- Provide interactive data visualizations embedded on your website;
- Secure senior-level meetings with your B2B prospects or potential partners based on the promise of insight into your proprietary research findings.

- **Improved Acquisition, Retention and Referral Rates**

Especially for small- to mid-sized agencies, offering original research conducted by the agency in proposals to prospective clients can set an agency apart from its competition and dramatically increase close rates. The agency demonstrates its investment in understanding the prospective client's target customers, and also has proprietary insights it can bring to bear on the client's behalf.

Research has documented the power of a thought-leadership position for B2B service providers. [A recent study](#) found that:

- **91% of business thought leadership followers have recommended a thought leader to a colleague.**
- **62% say that a provider's thought leadership position would have a greater impact on choosing them than the provider's advertising.**
- **59% would be more likely to continue working with a provider recognized as a thought leader.**
- **62% say they are more likely to recommend a service provider who is also a recognized thought leader.**

**Want to learn more about building your agency's ROI with original research? Visit [audienceaudit.com](https://audienceaudit.com) for examples, resources and support.**