LBD Studio
An award-winning creative practice.

Our take on ‘What Clients Think’

Think Tank™

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The 2025 ‘What Clients Think’ report is here.

Produced by Up to the Light, the report pulls back the curtain on client / agency relationships and how we work and grow together.

Alongside the full release today, we wanted to share 5 key takeaways along with our view on the stand-out revelations. Based on 680 client interviews, the report is an important industry health check.

The report, produced in partnership with the Design Business Association, ‘looks above the day-to-day concerns and into the shared pressures and challenges’. This year’s 11th edition covers clients’ thoughts on agency growth, remote working, relationships, confusing websites (still), ‘meh’ creative and much more. An impressive number of clients of every size, shape and hue were surveyed — from enterprises to SMEs to non-profits — B2B / B2C. It’s relevant to everyone.

So, what’s on clients’ minds?

1. Agency growth is often too fast, too soon
2. Remote working is only an issue when it impacts creativity
3. Poor client service kills relationships
4. Agency positioning is often confusing
5. Breaking boundaries and speaking up

The full report

Read the full 2025 report for more revelations on AI, costs, stakeholder engagement, strategy and more.

1. Agency growth is often too fast, too soon

Clients are concerned about agencies that grow too fast, too soon, which in turn dilutes standards.

When an agency does this, they often ‘lose what makes them special’.

The report found that almost 9 out of 10 clients (89%) think that way. They equate sharp growth with churn, absentee leadership, waning enthusiasm and overly rigid processes. The advice for small and medium sized agencies is don’t bite off more than you can chew. Focus on your strengths rather than growing into a full-service agency and overstretching.

Our take

We’ve grown year-on-year but at a slow, steady, sustainable pace.

We advise this for our clients. We value our identity and the elements that make us different. Lots of agencies proliferate and then turn into a churn house — we’ve seen it happen time and time again.

We’re small and efficient by design. We run a tight ship. We know what we’re good at. We don’t compromise on standards just to pay the bills.

‘90% of clients state that how their agency works in the agency’s business and would not try to dictate.’

What Clients Think 2025

2. Remote working is only an issue when it impacts creativity

The vast majority of clients (90%) have a laissez-faire approach to remote agency working.

Clients don’t feel it’s their place to be involved at that level. Most clients (81%) think in-person collaboration is part of the life force of creativity. How you work is only an issue for clients if it impacts that creativity.

More importantly, almost all (94%) of clients believe that the personal chemistry with the people at their agency is either ‘good’ or ‘very good’.’

Our take

We run a mainly remote model. We’re a senior team and we all understand our roles. We rely on each other. It works for our clients and it works for us. Happy people make good work.

‘94% of clients believe that the personal chemistry with the people at their agency is either ‘good’ or ‘very good’.’

What Clients Think 2025

3. Poor client service kills relationships

Clients pinpointed two areas where agencies are falling down. This one strings.

A lack of self-awareness

67% of clients want agencies to be more self-critical and open to feedback (not just positive). This openness creates a collaborative partnership.

Poor client service

We need to improve industry-wide client service, say 85% of clients.

Poor service is killing relationships – not the work. 45% of clients think their account management is too transactional and not experience-led. Doing ‘enough’ to meet expectations doesn’t cut it. Just 7% of clients say their agency regularly exceeds their expectations. Ouch.

Our take

We stand shoulder to shoulder with our clients. No quick ‘one and dones’.

We become part of the team and are invested in their long-term success. Client experience is one of the things we’re known for. It means we stay lean and avoid any additional layers that come between work and results.

We make ourselves indispensable and take pride in being a good agency to partner with.

‘85% of clients with weaker or more vulnerable agency relationships cited client service issues as the main reason.’

What Clients Think 2025

4. Agency positioning is often confusing

We talked about this recently in our ‘How to choose a design agency’ guide.

In 2024, clients said they struggled to understand what an agency ‘does best’ from their website. 59% were worried about this at the time. The number has increased this year to 61%. There’s still work to do.

Shockingly, 76% of clients fail to recall the names of more than five design agencies, over and above their incumbent agencies.

What can we learn from this?

Clearer agency website

Make it clear who your ideal client is. Show work that they will like. Tailor your approach to them.

Robust case studies

More focus on the business problem and impact — 66% of clients say a lack of focus on the business problem is one of the reasons they struggle to get what they need from a study. Meanwhile, 65% would like a better understanding of the impact of the creative change.

Clients would also like to see more video content (63%).

Our take

We practice what we preach. We’ve worked hard to stand out by being unapologetically helpful and showing the human side of the design industry. From weekly Studio Session interviews to Think Tank articles (like this one) that tackle our industry and clients’ pain points.

Be memorable and challenge the status quo.

5. Breaking boundaries and speaking up

Clients are getting bolder and four in ten don’t want to settle for work that is ‘meh’.

They want their agencies to stretch themselves and break boundaries.

Again, a similar number (45%) prefer to be challenged and told when they’re doing it wrong. Nobody likes a ‘yes’ person. Only 58% of clients view their agency as a ‘partner’.

Our take

We shake the tree and ask difficult questions because we know that to get to the heart of a brief, you need to do the heavy excavation work. It’s what’s needed to build a memorable brand.

In our industry, we’re drowning in content. An increasing amount of the strategies we read are based on intuition or assumptions. We want the best for our clients, and we think that shows in our work.

‘30% of clients wish their agency would ask more questions and dig deeper.’

What Clients Think 2025

So... where do you go from here?

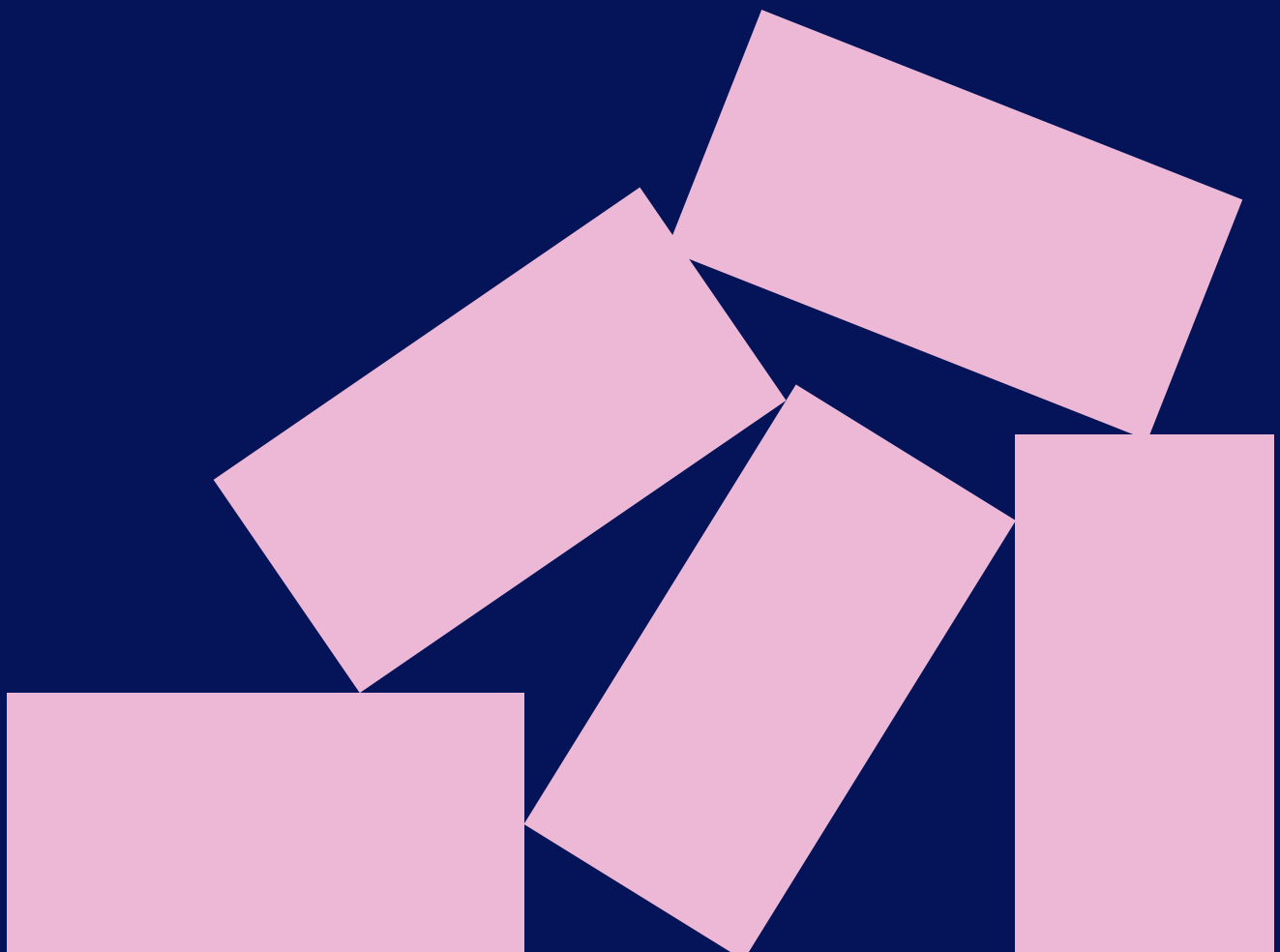
Brand building can be a painful process without proper advice and guidance. And it’s very hard to find good people that really ‘get it’.

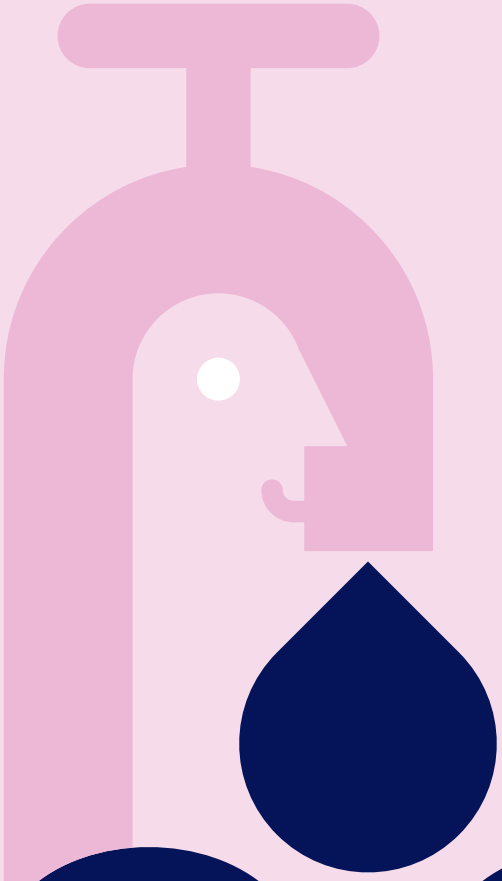
We do. We built LBD Studio to do things differently.

No cookie-cutter creative that your customers or clients barely notice. We work with marketing and comms leads to build brands and experiences that are creatively unique, strategically sound and technically robust.

We could carry on and tell you how brilliant we are. But we’re on your journey. Not ours. Let’s schedule some time together.

Let’s get building!





LBD Studio

We are an award-winning design agency based in Edinburgh, UK. Our work connects business strategy with award-winning creative storytelling to build confidence throughout your brand.

Contact: **Liam Bonar**, Creative Director
liam@lbd.studio or 0131 235 1055.

www.lbd.studio

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