



The SMB advertiser report for media/publishing companies

 **inTandem**
by  **vcita**



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Intro

Local media and publishing companies have worked hard over the years to establish and assert their credibility and trusted reputation within the local business community, and it's worked.

With many local businesses seeking media and publishing partners to boost their digital brand awareness with services such as featured stories in the news, websites, ad placements, and paid social media, and enhance their business growth, media and publishing companies are obviously doing something right.

However, despite local businesses' success with their media/publishing partners, the business relationship is short-lived, which causes publishers and media partners to face high churn rates, leading to unpredictable revenue and challenges with growing their business.

In order to circumvent this issue, many media and publishing companies are desperately seeking to establish more sustainable and diverse recurring revenue streams, especially through implementing digital solutions.

This makes sense strategically, considering attracting new clients is significantly more time and resource intensive than cross & upselling to existing ones.

Given their standing in the local advertiser community, media and publishing companies are in a great position to attract and retain more local business clients.

In order to achieve this, these companies should think outside the box and implement non-traditional revenue streams.

Throughout 2025, it's become more and more clear that the traditional, one-time services that are currently being offered to local advertisers might no longer suffice for them or for the media and publishing companies that want to grow, especially with AI and DIY tools in the picture.

It's a different world we're living in. Media & publishing companies used to be gatekeepers of local advertising (creative, distribution, targeting, reporting). Today, AI and SaaS tools give SMBs direct, affordable, self-service access to the same capabilities, often at a fraction of the cost.





Local businesses can use tools available to them to do anything from ad copy and campaign management to market research and analytics, making it even more critical for media and publishing companies to expand their services beyond legacy ad sales.

Another shift we're seeing in 2025 is local advertisers' heightened expectations from their media and publishing partners, often demanding results within the first 3-6 months of the working relationship.

The good news is that they are willing to increase investments if their advertising partner demonstrates value quickly enough.

So how can media and publishing companies gain a stronger hold of the local business market and break free from the glass ceiling that comes with short-term business relationships?

We surveyed 500 US-based local advertisers about their expectations, goals, and needs from their media and publishing partners and compiled the insights into this report.

The suggestions in this report, based on the results from the survey, will help any media or publishing company looking to increase their non-traditional revenue streams make better-informed decisions about their local business strategy.



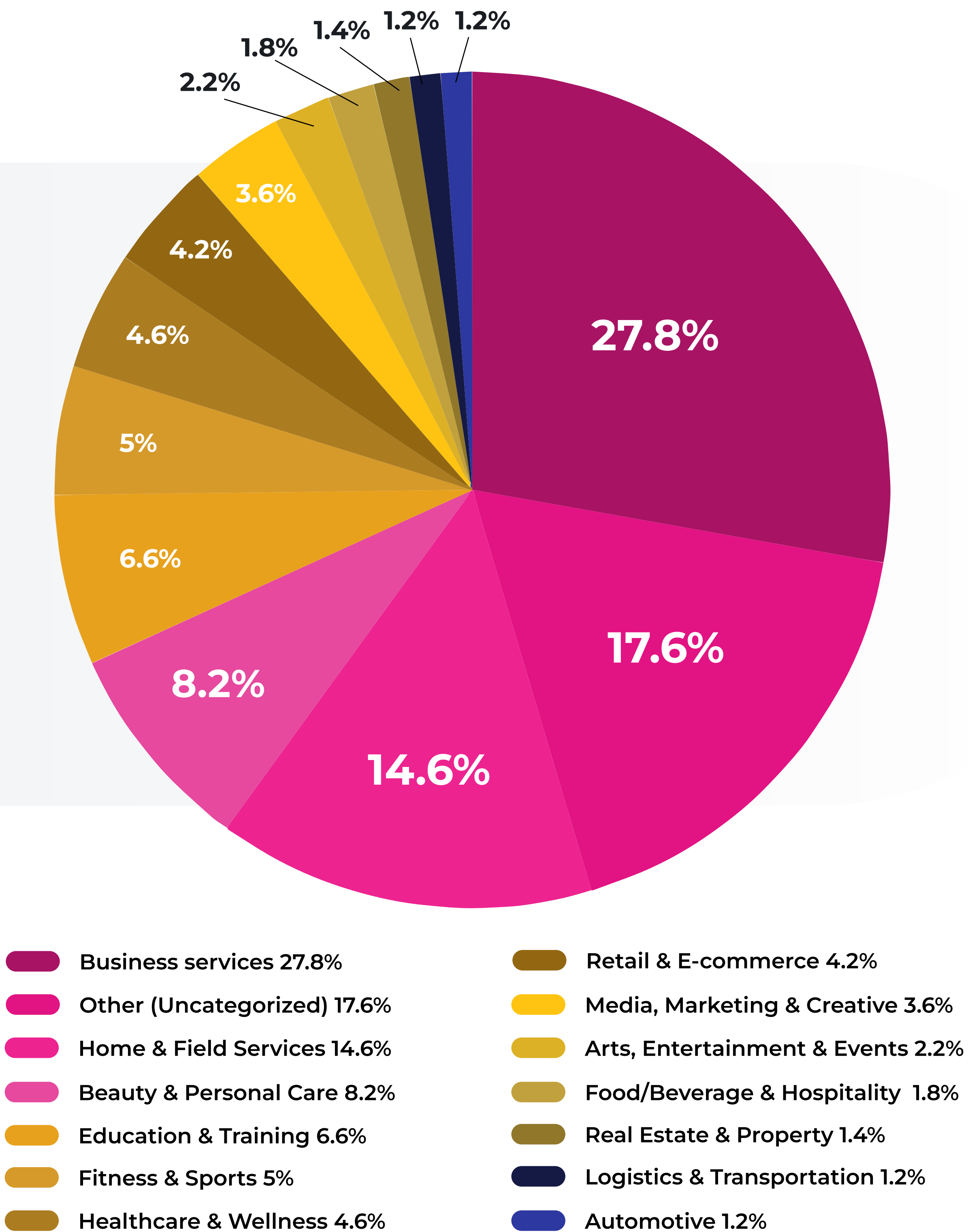
Methodology

The methodology

We surveyed 500 US-based local business owners in August 2025 about their current and expected relationships with their media and publishing partners.

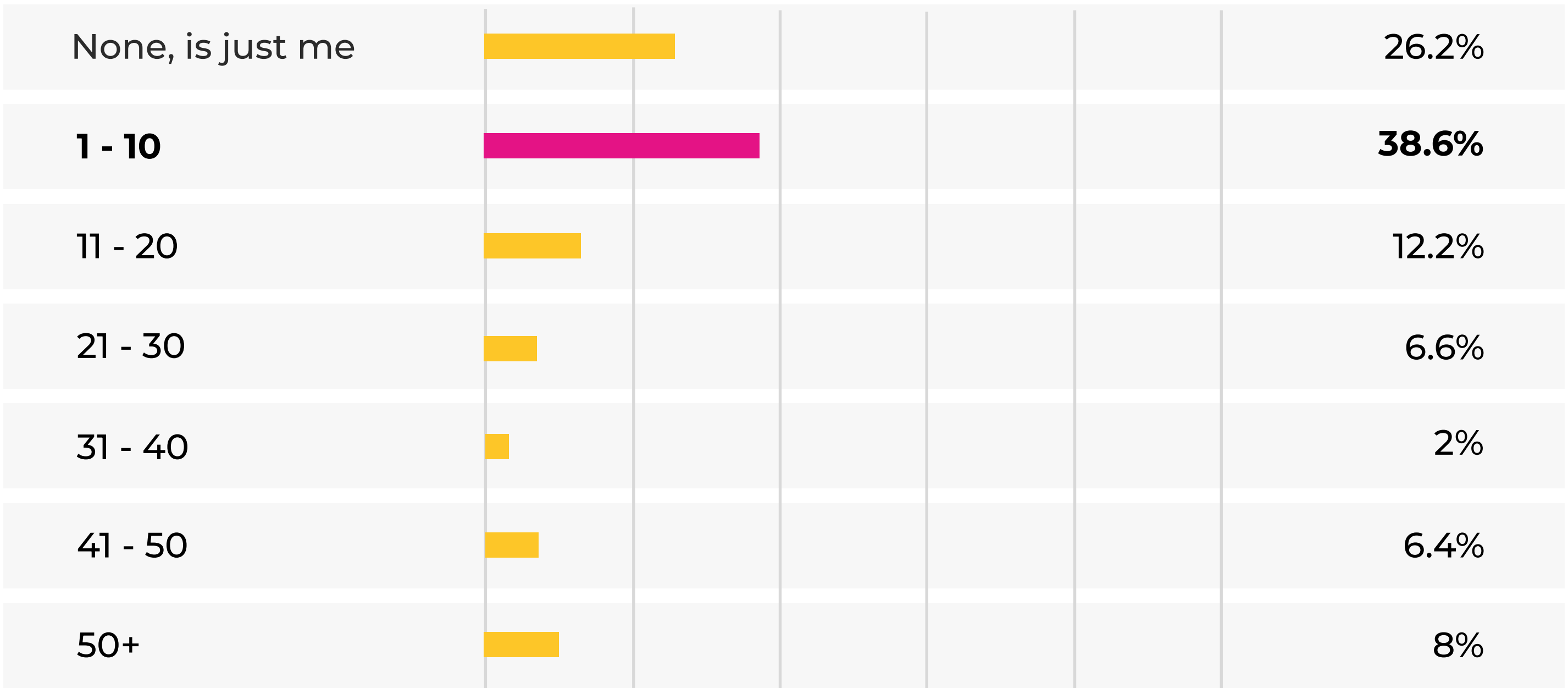
We launched the survey using a 3rd party survey platform that sourced the responses for us. Here’s what we found about the demographics of the respondents:

Survey respondents serve the following industries:

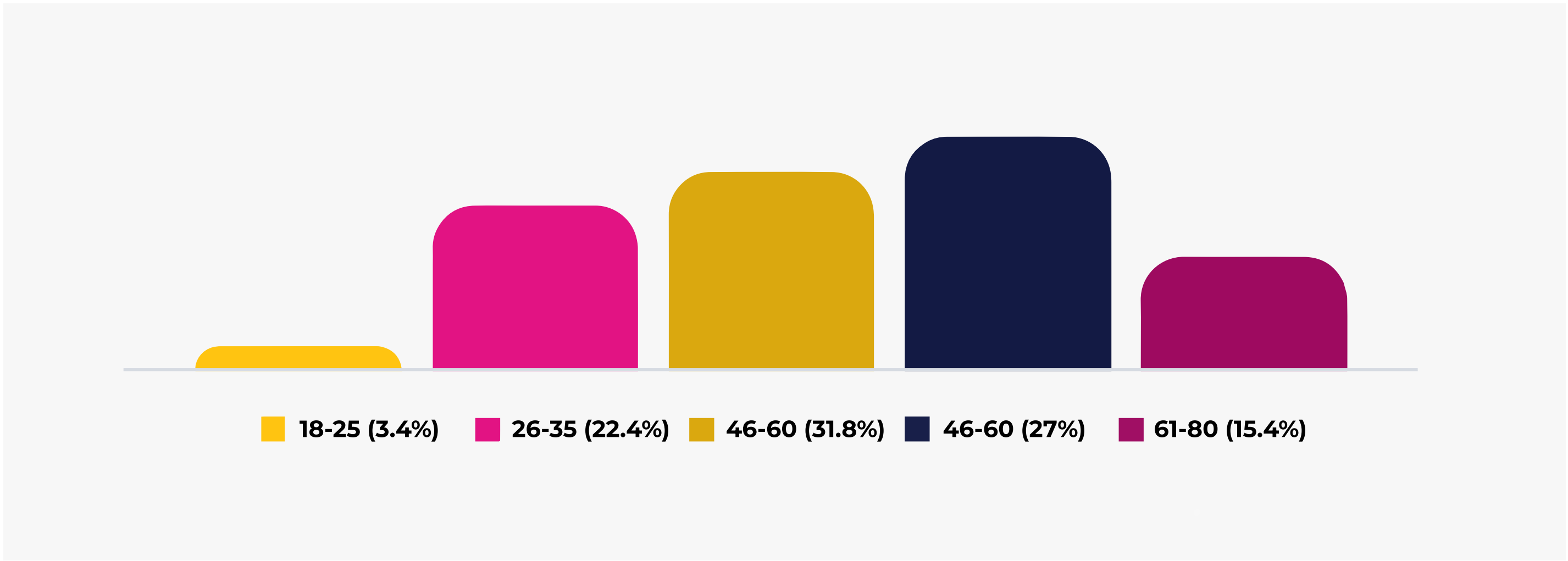


Most of the businesses are small

How many employees do you have?



Majority of the respondents are between 45-60 years old



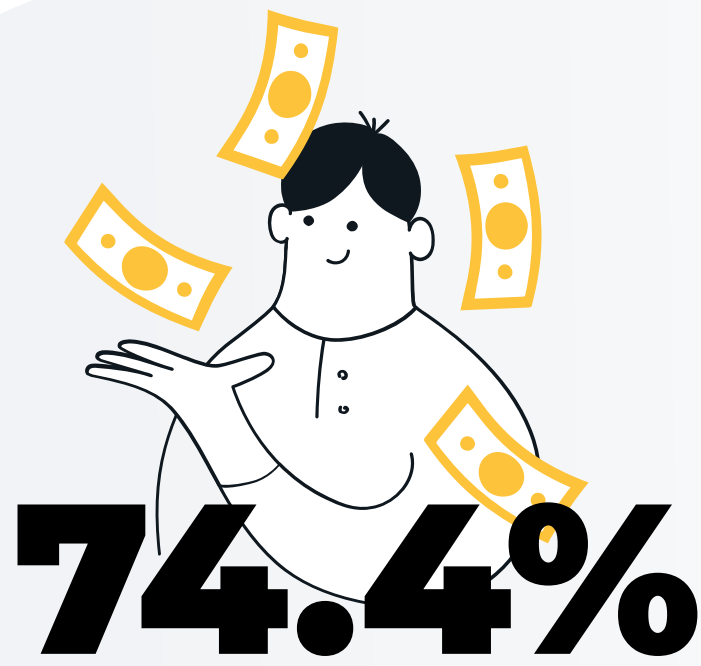
Almost a 50-50 split in gender



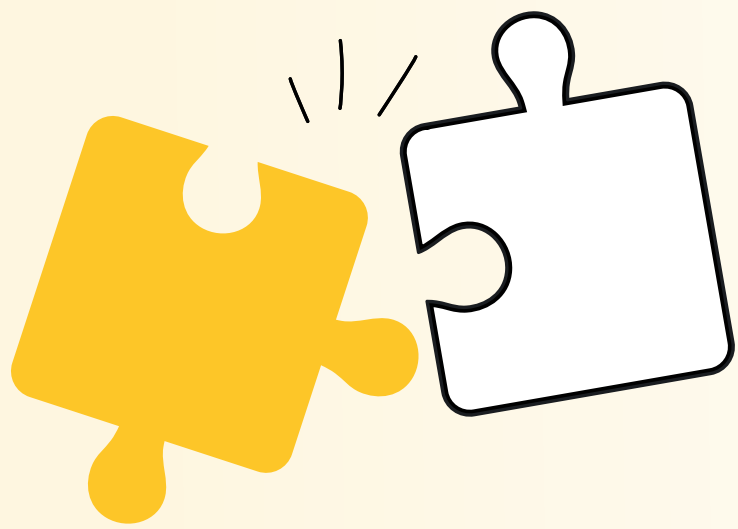


Key takeaways

Highlights from our survey results



of local businesses currently work with a media/publishing company, either actively or occasionally.



Local businesses rank their satisfaction with media and publishing companies at an 8 out of 10.



of local advertisers churn, with a much of the churn (43%) happening within 6-12 months.



The most popular services local advertisers consume from media/publishing companies are website building (46%), ad space (35%), and paid social media ads (34%).



Top services local advertisers wished media/publishing companies also offered are payment collection tools (48%), small business consulting/coaching (30%), and AI tools (29.6%).



The top challenge local businesses face when working with a media/publishing company is high costs for limited results.





Chapter 1: The state of local business engagement with media and publishing companies



Media companies are evidently a pillar of authority and trust in the local business market.

After years of working with their communities, they are able to better understand the landscape and advise on best practices for local advertiser growth.

This understanding has also fueled their ability to successfully curate content for local communities, deeming them as an authentic, trustworthy, and credible source of information and advertising.

That’s why it wasn’t surprising to learn that nearly 75% of local businesses are currently working with a media or publishing company either occasionally or full time, while an additional 25% have previously worked with a media or publishing partner.

The appeal is clear: local advertisers who want to reach their local audience would be better off with a knowledgeable local media or publishing company than at a larger company that offers enterprise-level services, for example.

Not only do local advertisers want the help and expertise they receive from media and publishing companies, but they are also quite satisfied with their results.

Not only do local advertisers want the help and expertise they receive from media and publishing companies, but they are also quite satisfied with their results. In fact, just under 63% of respondents ranked their satisfaction with their current or previous media or publishing company at an 8 or higher (out of 10).

It seems media and publishing companies are meeting the current demands of their local advertisers.

59% admitted that their current or previous media or publishing company managed to increase the exposure of their brand successfully and 41.4% reported seeing ROI within the first 3-6 months of the relationship.

So why, then, are the relationships between local advertisers and their media and publishing partners so short lived?

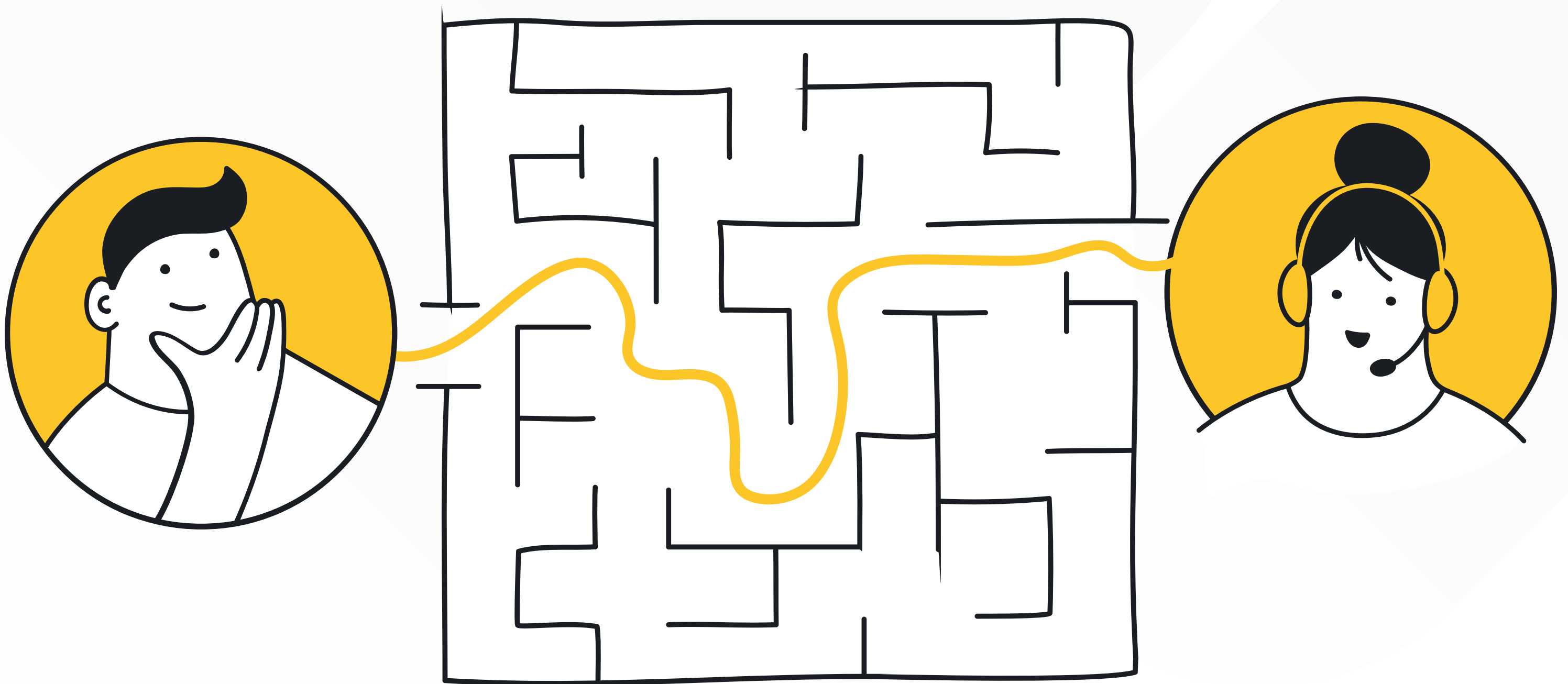
About 40% (of the total 75%) work with media and publishing partners only occasionally, and 41.2% said they left their previous partner within the past 1-2 years, mostly within 6-12 months, showing how hard these companies struggle to keep local business customers for the long term.



Nearly 75% of local businesses are actively working with a media company/publisher



41.4 % of local businesses report seeing ROI from their media/publishing partner within the first 3-6 months



The survey results show two major issues for media and publishing companies targeting local advertisers:

1. Short-lived client relationships:

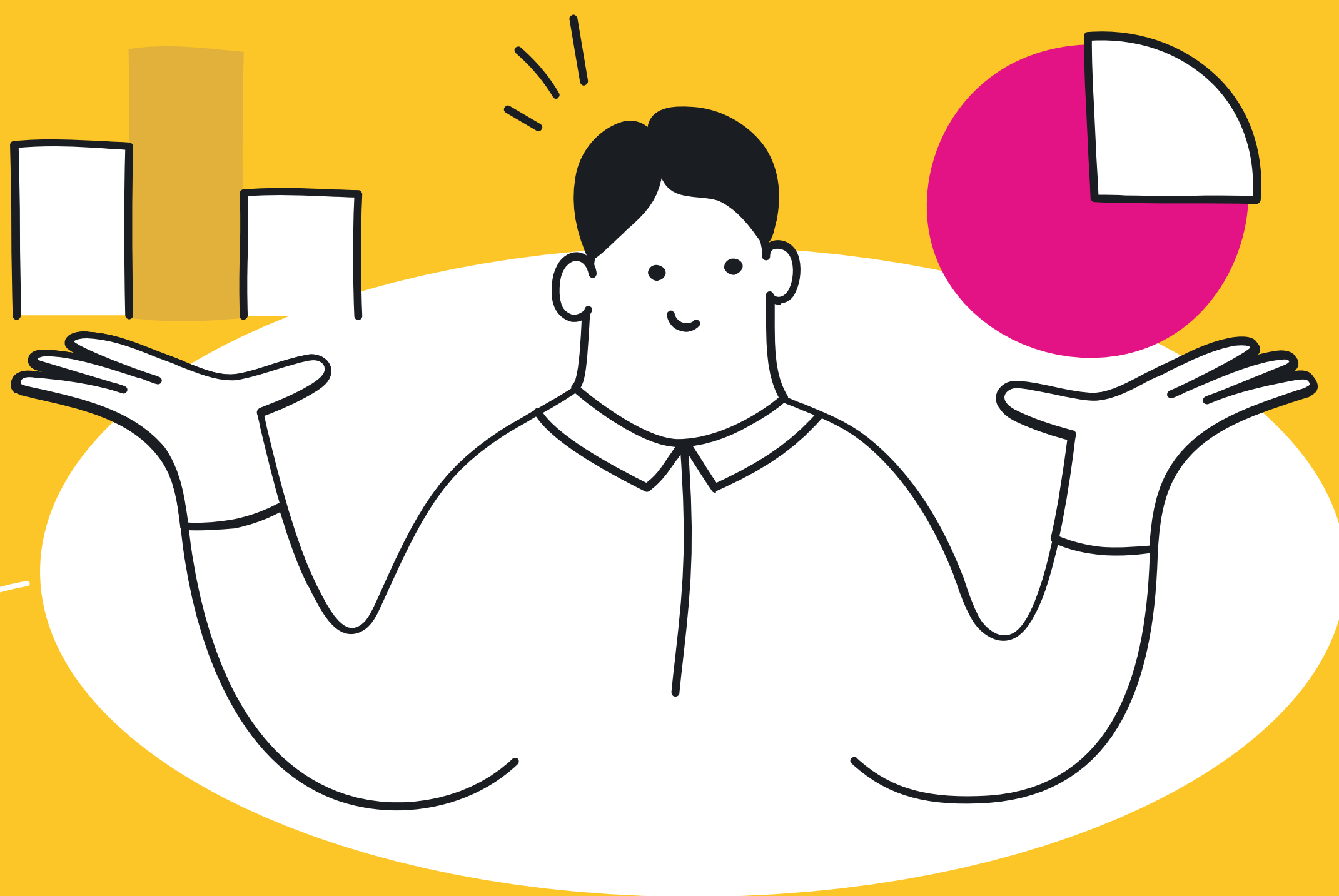
Local business engagement with their services is fragmented, with clients executing short-term projects like websites, ad space, and paid social media campaigns, but not remaining loyal to one media/publishing company.

2. Implementing value-adding services:

Media and publishing companies have not yet leveraged their strong reputations to become indispensable partners to their local business clients, resulting from lack of ROI proof and leading to high churn rates.

This shows major untapped potential. If media and publishing companies serving local businesses can find a way to instantly showcase tangible value while also increasing the benefits they provide to these clients, this pattern of short-term loyalty can turn into regular recurring revenue opportunities.





Chapter 2: Local businesses' expectations from their media & publishing partners

Local advertisers look to media and publishing companies for help with a major business need: growth.

Local business owners are swamped with servicing and responding to clients, collecting and chasing down payments, organizing their administrative processes and tasks, all while marketing and growing their business.

It’s a heavy load to carry and they need the expertise and reach provided by their media and publishing partners.

When asked about their top goal for working with media or publishing partners, 49.8% of local advertisers responded with “new clients/leads”. Knowing that, the results showing the top 3 services they currently consume from their media and publishing partners align perfectly:

Website building (46%) - as the main source of information & a strong channel for branding for the company, it makes sense that local businesses would trust media and publishing companies with this service, though it puts them more in the category of an agency/tech provider rather than a traditional publisher, showing the interest in innovation and straying away from

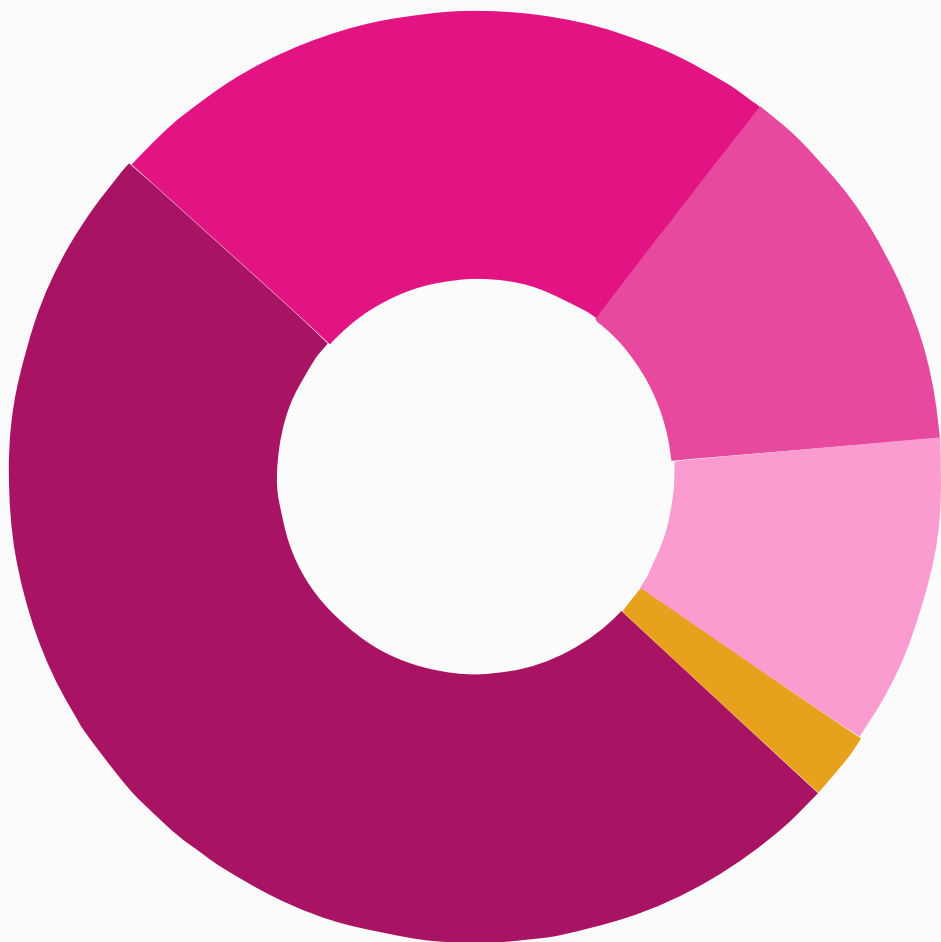
“traditional” practices. The caveat is that website building is often a one-time project that rarely has much follow up after, stunting the media or publishing company’s growth and recurring revenue.

Advertising space (34.8%) - a strong channel for brand awareness, ad space is media and publishing companies’ bread and butter. When paired with what was mentioned about the trust and credibility from before, this service is much more likely to produce results. However, we’re seeing that local advertisers are not as interested in just creating awareness, they’re more invested in lead generation.

Paid social media ads (34.4%) - ads that are associated with a local media brand or publisher have more credibility than DIY Facebook ads (“As seen in [Local News Site]” adds authority). In addition, the specialized insight, expertise, and access to the local community that media and publishing companies have ensure optimized success. And though this wasn’t always the case being that media/publishing companies used to be a bit intimidated by platforms like Meta or Google stealing ad spend, it shows their willingness to adapt as today, they have expanded their services to include social media in their campaigns.

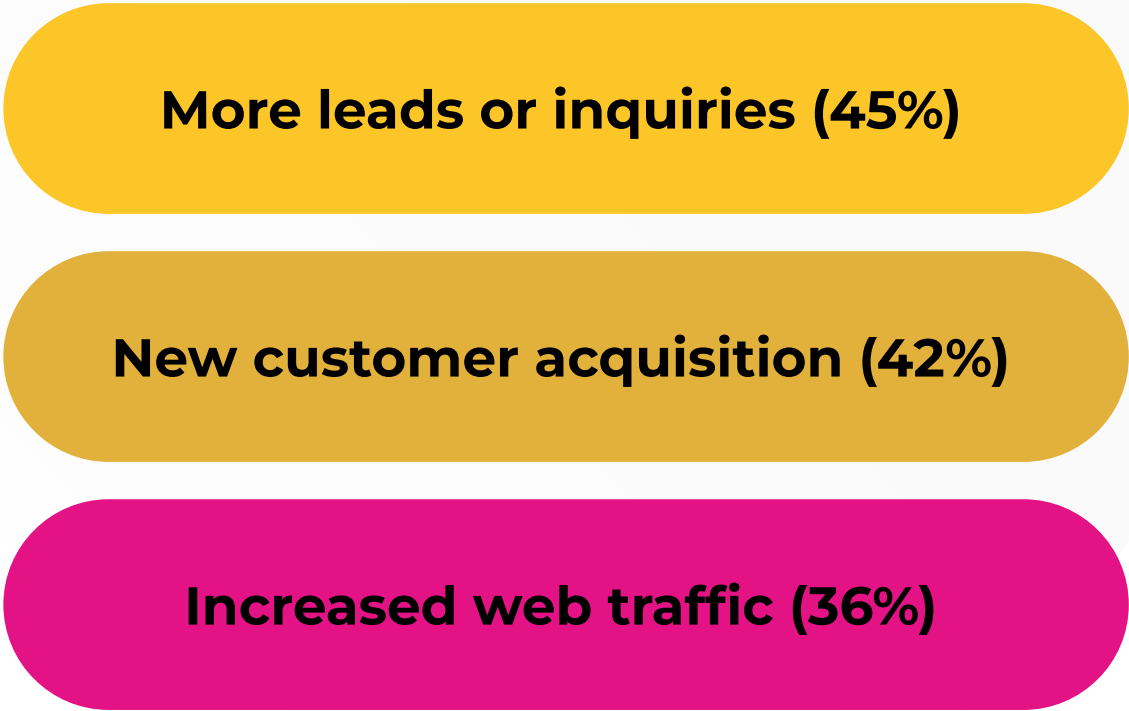
Top goals for local advertisers working with media/publishing companies:

- New clients/leads (49.8%)
- Brand awareness (28.8%)
- Trust & credibility (13.2%)
- Expansion into new markets (10.8%)
- Other (2.4%)



It's worth noting that, although these are services where media and publishing companies currently excel, local advertisers' expectations are rising as they demand more value in a short time.

Local advertisers' top expectations from media/publishing partners in the first 3 months



Our survey revealed that they're measuring media and publishing partners' success using metrics like number of leads (37%), engagement rates (31%), and conversion rates (29%), but they're not very lenient on time-to-value, expecting more leads or inquiries (45%), new customer acquisition (42%), and increased web traffic (36%) within the first 3 months.

And it's not just the short window to prove value that media and publishing companies should be weary of. They need to provide it all at a reasonable price.

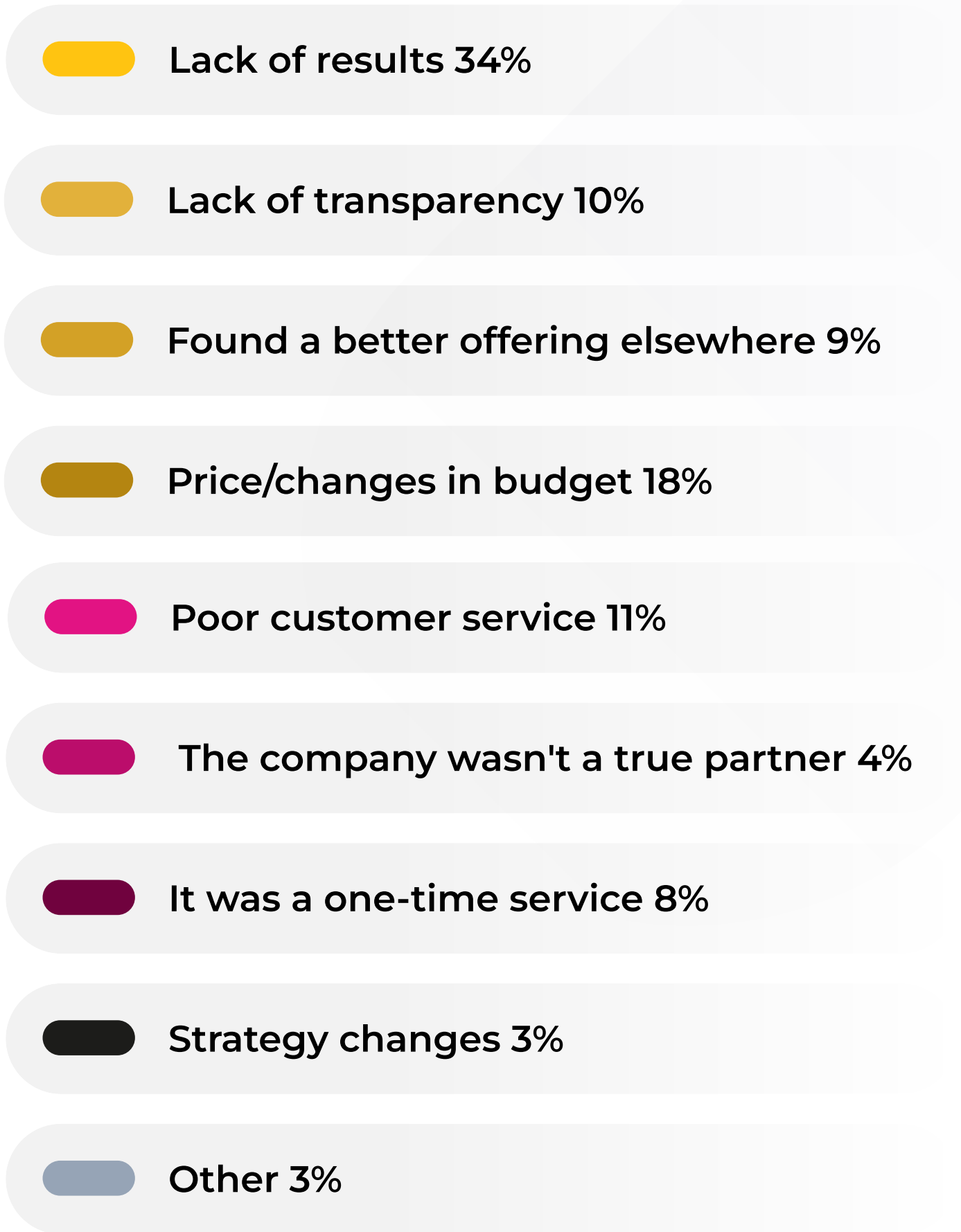
Price is the top consideration for local advertisers when choosing a media/publishing partner

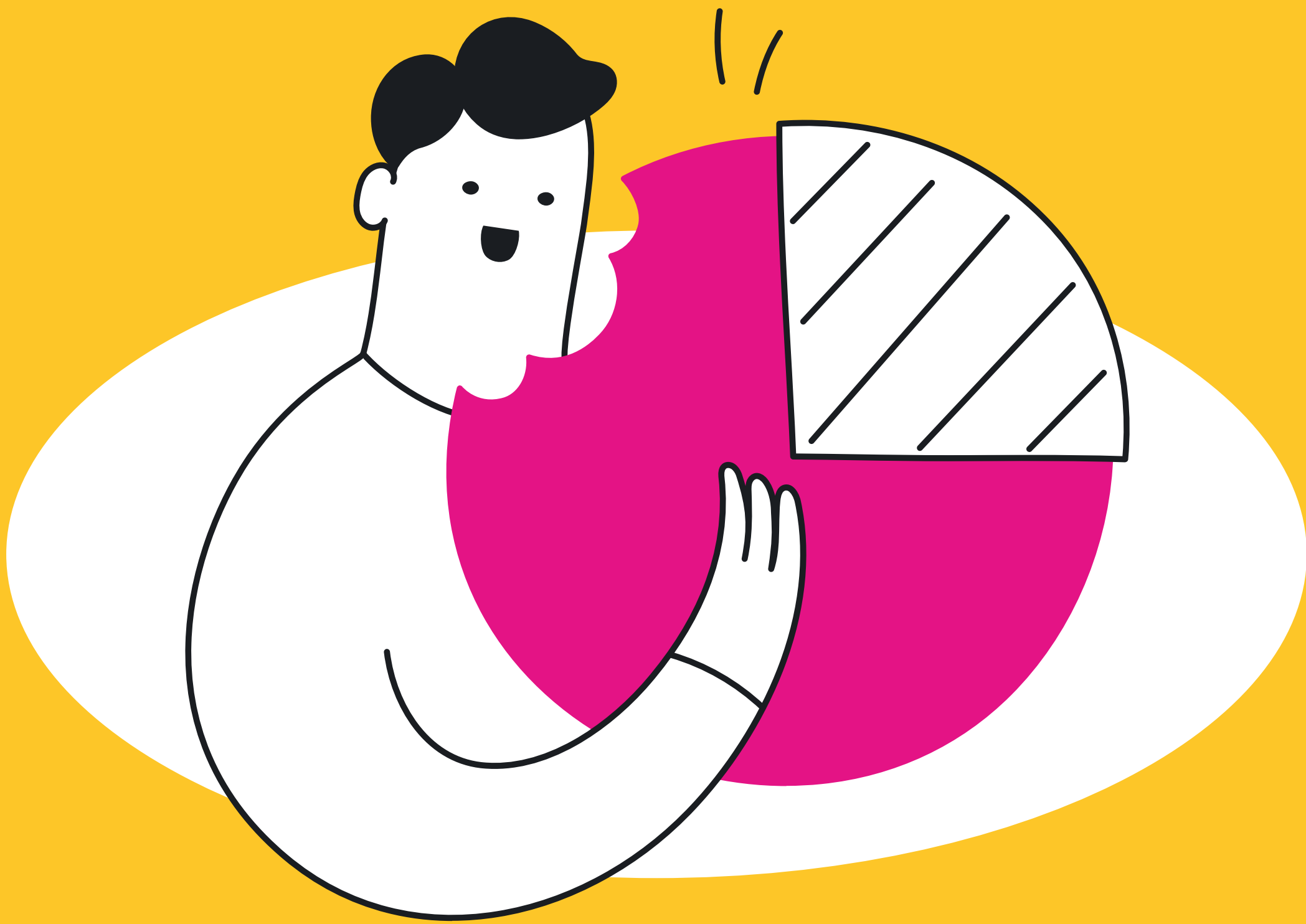
Price (29%) was local advertisers' top consideration for choosing a media or publishing partner, over reach (24%) and reputation (23%), and the top challenge with these partners was high costs for limited results, meaning media and publishing companies need to provide maximal value at minimal prices that fit within local advertising budgets (covered more in Chapter 4).

Companies that are unable to balance value, timing, and price risk losing out on a large portion of the market.

34% of local businesses switched or stopped working with their media or publishing partners because they weren't seeing results and 43% churned within 6-12 months, which are percentages of the market these companies can't afford to miss.

Top reasons for local advertiser churn





Chapter 3: The bottleneck for media and publishing companies' growth

It's clear that media and publishing companies are good at what they do. They're trusted, understand the local market, and tend to receive a high satisfaction rating from our survey respondents. However, with the one-time nature of their services, like running a one-off ad, or building a website, many media and publishing companies are not taking full advantage of the opportunities out there, and are now looking for "non-traditional" sources of revenue, expanding their services to even include event & travel planning.

These media and publishing companies are missing out on a more natural enhancement to their existing lead delivery services, though. Their new, non-traditional sources of revenue don't need to be completely different from their current strengths. They can be connected to what the partner is already doing well, allowing them to dig deeper, encouraging more engagement from the local advertiser and cementing their value to the local business.

Interestingly, 55% of local advertisers revealed they receive leads from their media or publishing partners via email. One would think that with such a high expectation for new leads and inquiries, lead delivery (and conversion) would be a top priority for media and publishing companies. However, with this type of reporting, it's difficult for the local business to convert those leads and answer those inquiries in a timely manner.

Those leads often get lost in their inbox, and cannot be immediately handled, leading to lost opportunities and a not-so-accurate reflection of the media or publishing partner's efforts. A plumber that doesn't instantly receive a lead or inquiry to their phone because they're under a sink, for example, will lose that lead to the next listing on Google.

Local businesses need a better, more real-time way to track and manage (and today, with AI, even answer) leads and inquiries. Implementing options like dashboards or push notifications to deliver leads, which 36% of local advertisers prefer, empowers them to take quick action and increase their conversions.

Missed leads for the local advertiser result in lack of ROI perception from the media or publishing partner, leading to churn. In order to enhance their services and maintain a stronger connection with their local advertisers, media and publishing companies must find a way to deliver the leads more effectively, as well as help their clients manage and convert those leads further down the funnel.

55%

**of local advertisers
receive leads via email**



36%

**of local advertisers prefer
to receive leads via
dashboards & push
notifications**



Chapter 4: The local business playbook for media & publishing companies

So, with the knowledge that media/publishing companies are trusted, their relationships with local businesses are short, and results are expected immediately and for a reasonable price, how can these companies change the current landscape to one that encourages long-term engagement and maximizes revenue from their existing customer base?

Instantly showcase the value of their services

As mentioned, local business advertisers want results fast, and their media or publishing partners need to do more to help them achieve their main goal of attaining new clients/leads.

The interesting thing is, this survey indicated that local businesses feel an average confidence level of 8 out of 10 in converting the leads they receive from their media/publishing partners, yet, according to a **previous survey** we ran, their top marketing challenge was converting leads into paying customers.

The bottom line is that local businesses are quite confident in their ability to convert leads, they're just not reaching them in time. Responding to leads and inquiries quickly and efficiently is their biggest bottleneck, which media and publishing partners are perfectly poised to help solve.

It's obvious that email isn't cutting it anymore. Considering the high rates of churn, along with the critical window to prove ROI, media and publishing companies need to instantly notify the local business about incoming leads from various channels, as they come in, so that they can respond faster and work their conversion magic, resulting in a more positive value proposition for the media/publishing partner.

Expand their services to meet local advertisers' needs

Another way for media and publishing companies to grow beyond their one-off services and foster long-term relationships with local advertisers is to expand their services into areas that local businesses desperately need.

This would be a natural transition for local advertisers, considering they already put their trust in their media and publishing partners.

We asked survey respondents to tell us about the services they wished their media or publishing partners would also offer, and surprisingly, their responses had little to do with lead delivery.

Many small businesses have a growing appetite for non-marketing related business tools and services, for example, 48% want payment collection tools, 30% want small business consulting/coaching services, and 29.6% want AI tools that help with business operations.



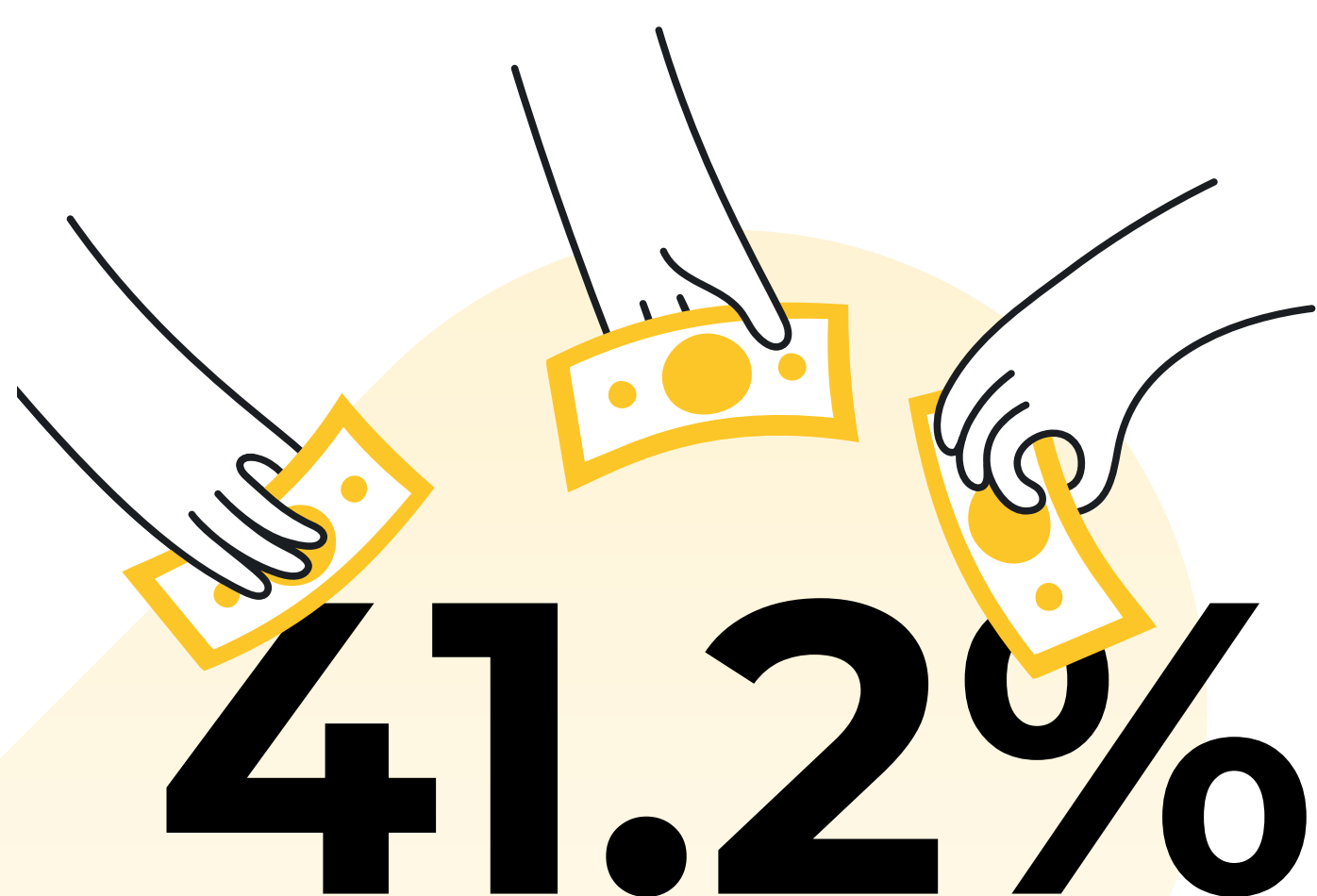
Top services local advertiser are also looking to purchase:

- 48% Lack of transparency
- 30% small business consulting/coaching
- 29.6% Price/changes in budget

This shows that local advertisers are willing to expand their consumption of complementary services if they add enough value. Local businesses want to get paid faster, automate their business, and gain insights from their media/publishing partners, and will purchase such tools anyway. This begs the question: why not purchase those highly sought after tools from their media or publishing partners?

This approach enables media and publishing companies to create new, predictable revenue streams, but that's not it. By offering more value-added services they can also increase LTV as their clients stay engaged for longer.

Currently, **60% of local businesses spend less than \$1,000 a month on media/publishing services**, however, 41.2% say their budget for services will likely increase in the next 12 months. By offering a complete solution that's less fragmented and provides the local business with solutions to their needs (converting leads faster, collecting payments, automations, etc.), media and publishing partners can keep more of their clients' budget in their pocket since SaaS solutions often have higher margins than standalone services.



of local advertisers plan to raise their budgets in the next 12 months

Become indispensable to their local advertisers' business operations

14% don't trust any AI tools, and only 25% said they are comfortable embedding AI tools into automated workflows.

This lack of trust shows a need for more handholding and guidance from agencies. Any media or publishing company looking to increase loyalty and recurring revenue from their local business clients must diversify its services and create a unique and competitive solution that becomes ingrained in the local business' daily operations.

Combine the aforementioned additional services local advertisers are highly interested in with the fact that nearly 42% ranked tools like CRM, email & SMS, dashboards, etc., as very valuable to their business, the solution becomes a no-brainer for media and publishing companies.

42% of local businesses rank CRMs, email & SMS, and dashboards as very valuable tools

By implementing tools that SMBs use on a daily basis, such as a CRM that helps them manage and track leads and customers throughout their lifecycle, payment collection tools that reduce the chase after payments, and AI automations that smartly lessen the admin load, media/publishing companies can become an inseparable part of the local business' operations, growth, and success.



**How inTandem
helps media and
publishing
companies do it all**

inTandem by vcita allows its media and publishing partners to find a non-traditional source of recurring revenue that is an enhancement to their existing lead delivery services.

Through implementing inTandem, media and publishing companies can instantly showcase tangible value to their local advertisers, reducing churn and fostering long-term relationships that scale.

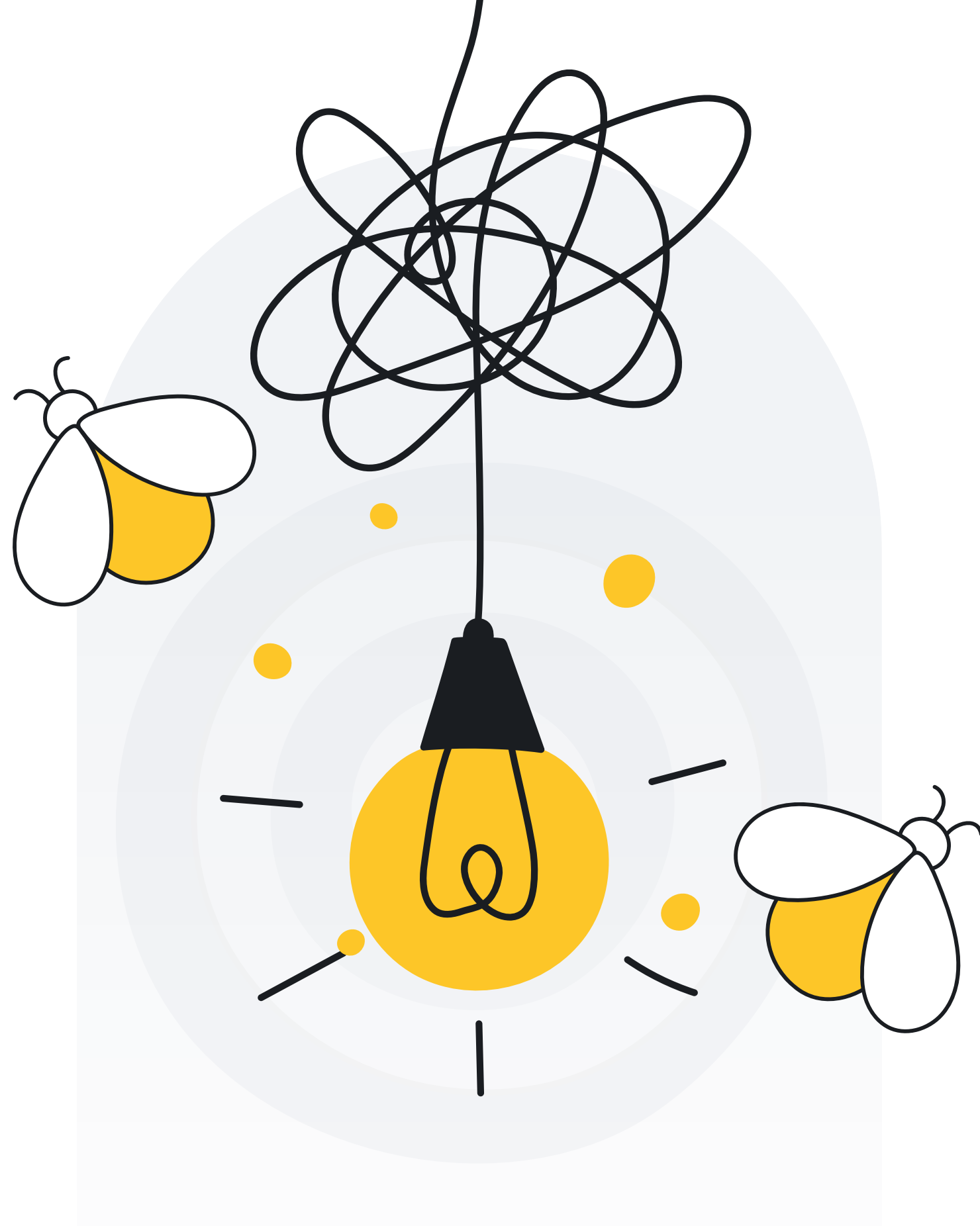
Our lead management solution, known as inTandem Connect, is like a mini CRM that hosts all leads collected from various channels (website, social media, ads, etc.) and notifies the local business about incoming leads in real time so they can respond instantly through one unified inbox.

This proposition allows local advertisers to track and manage leads all from one place so they can respond faster and get better results.

By centralizing all leads, media and publishing partners can be sure to showcase their value with better lead attribution, all within the local business' allotted timeframe.

But that's only the beginning. Partners also have the option of expanding into **inTandem's full business management solution** that integrates their existing services and pushes the local business to unlock more business tools and consume all services in one place. It's a fully digital solution that converts the media/publishing partner into an inseparable part of their local business clients' daily operations.

From a powerful CRM and invoicing, billing, and payment collection tools, to smart



scheduling and agentic AI that assists with answering calls, responding to messages, generating estimates, scheduling and more, our media and publishing partners add their brand front and center, integrate their existing services, and become to go-to for all their local advertisers' critical business needs.

The inTandem partnership program opens media and publishing companies up to various new recurring revenue streams. They'll enjoy effective cross-sell and upsell opportunities through a fully integrated solution where advertisers can seek, discover, and self-serve additional services, rev share on external apps, payment processing margins, and usage-based pricing for add-ons (SMS credits, staff accounts, etc.).

The best part is that both the solution and the partnership are customizable to the media or publishing partner's needs. They can opt into any of the solutions we offer, as well as all of the support we provide to partners who need it.

[Get an inTandem pilot! Contact us.](#)



**Conclusion: A
bright future for
media/publishing
companies and
their local business
clients**

Media and publishing companies have long since established themselves as trusted and credible sources of information and advertising, and local advertisers have taken note.

Many local businesses seek out the services of these media and publishing partners, however they come with high expectations.

Local advertisers want to see value and results, and they want to see it fast. Working with the goal of attracting new leads and clients, they're eager to increase their budgets for services that prove themselves worthy, but expect to see significant results within the first 3 months of their relationships with their media/publishing partners.

With the short-term nature of these relationships with local advertisers, it's time for media and publishing companies to use their strong reputations to go beyond ad sales and boost loyalty while creating new recurring revenue streams that propel growth.

Providing local advertisers with highly sought after business services and tools (such as CRM, email & SMS, and dashboards), expanding their digital offering to one that helps their clients get paid faster, grow their business, and automate tedious admin, cements the media/publishing partner's value, increases their recurring revenue, and helps them gain more local business clients.





About us

About us

vcita is an SMB tech company dedicated to helping small and medium businesses organize and grow by providing them with AI-driven tools such as a CRM, billing & invoicing, payment collection, scheduling, and much more.

inTandem by vcita is a partner program designed to serve SMB service providers such as media and publishing companies through a customizable, white-label, AI

platform that allows organizations to deliver their clients all the essential tools under their own brand.

inTandem enables media and publishing companies to enhance their lead delivery services, but also, to go beyond that and create a completely customized solution that their clients would use daily and be less likely to switch from, significantly increasing their recurring revenue streams through a non-traditional digital solution.

Find out more about inTandem [here](#).



[Get an inTandem pilot! Click here](#)



**Thanks for
reading!**