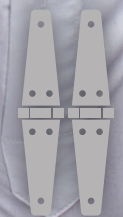


VISIBLE VALUE:

How Firms Benefit from Visible ExpertsSM



hinge

Visible Value: How Firms Benefit from Visible Experts™

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How do firms benefit from employing Visible ExpertsSM?

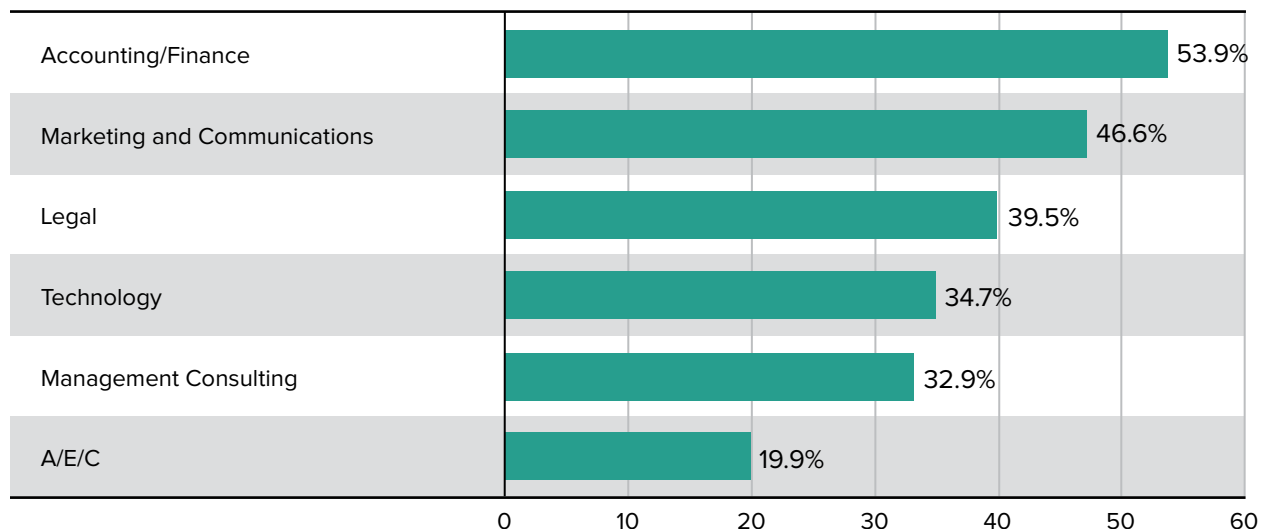
In our [previous research](#)¹, we've seen that professional services purchasers identify numerous benefits from engaging companies that employ high-profile experts in their industries.

We call these individuals Visible ExpertsSM, and we wanted to understand the benefits they deliver to their firms. How does hiring or cultivating an in-house Visible ExpertSM impact professional services providers today?

Purpose and Methodology

We surveyed 1,028 professional services purchasers who bought services in technology, accounting and finance, law, consulting, and architecture, engineering, and construction.

Figure 1. Types of Professional Services Purchased



¹ *Finding Experts: Why and How Clients Seek Visible ExpertsSM*

Additionally, we interviewed 130 Visible Experts™ in order to explore the experts' impact within their firms. These experts were ranked in five tiers:



Level 1: The Resident Expert

Recognized as an expert by clients, staff, and colleagues, these individuals are not well known outside of their firms.



Level 2: The Local Hero

Known in the local market, these individuals' expertise has started to move beyond the boundaries of the firm, occasionally drawing business based on their reputation.



Level 3: The Rising Star

Individuals whose reputations are moving onto the regional or even national stage, attracting better business at higher fees.



Level 4: The Industry Rock Star

Nationally recognized names within a given niche, attracting top-tier business opportunities and commanding premium fees for the individual and the firm.



Level 5: The Superstar

Individuals who have broken out of a particular niche and become synonymous with an entire area of expertise, with major firms seeking to associate themselves with them.

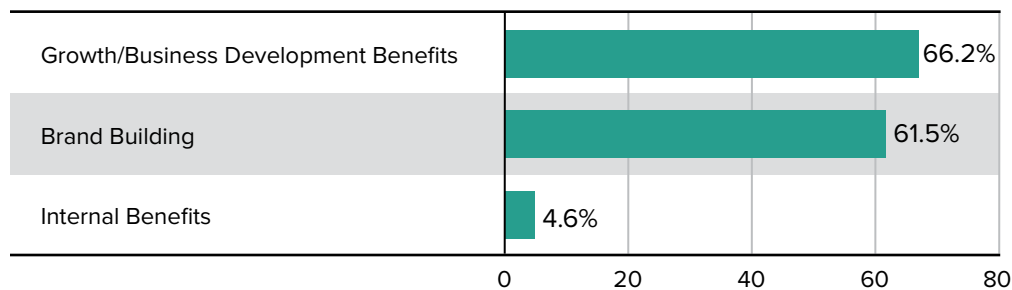
Our studies of both purchasers and experts are part of a larger original study on the Visible Expert™, to be published separately.

How Visible ExpertsSM Impact Firms

Visible ExpertsSM impact firms in many ways, with the specific impact depending on both the level of the expert and the size and structure of the firm. A low or mid-level Visible ExpertSM, for example, typically has comparatively less impact on a larger firm than a smaller one.

When we asked what effect Visible ExpertsSM had on their firms as a whole, our respondents reported three broad categories:

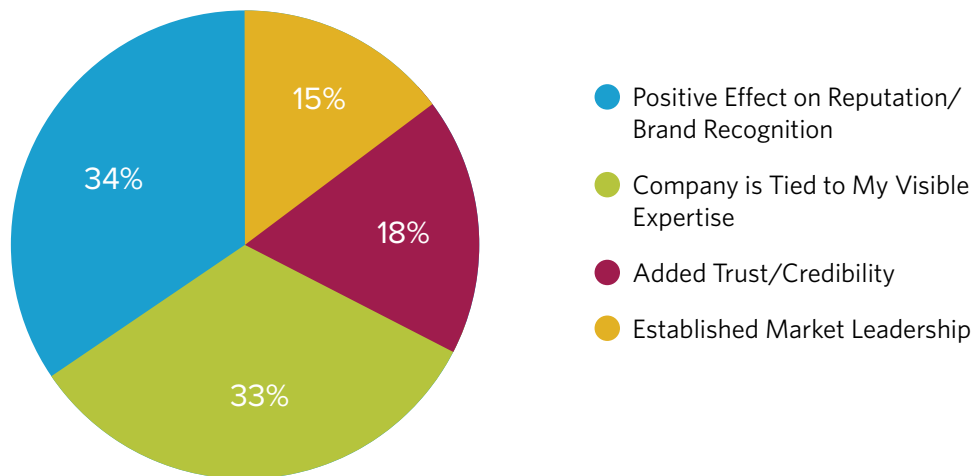
Figure 2. Impacts of Visible ExpertsSM on Firms



The top two effects — business development and brand-building — were each reported by over 60% of providers.

In Figure 3, we've broken down the specific brand-building impacts of Visible ExpertsSM:

Figure 3. Visible ExpertsSM Impact on Firms' Brand-Building Capabilities



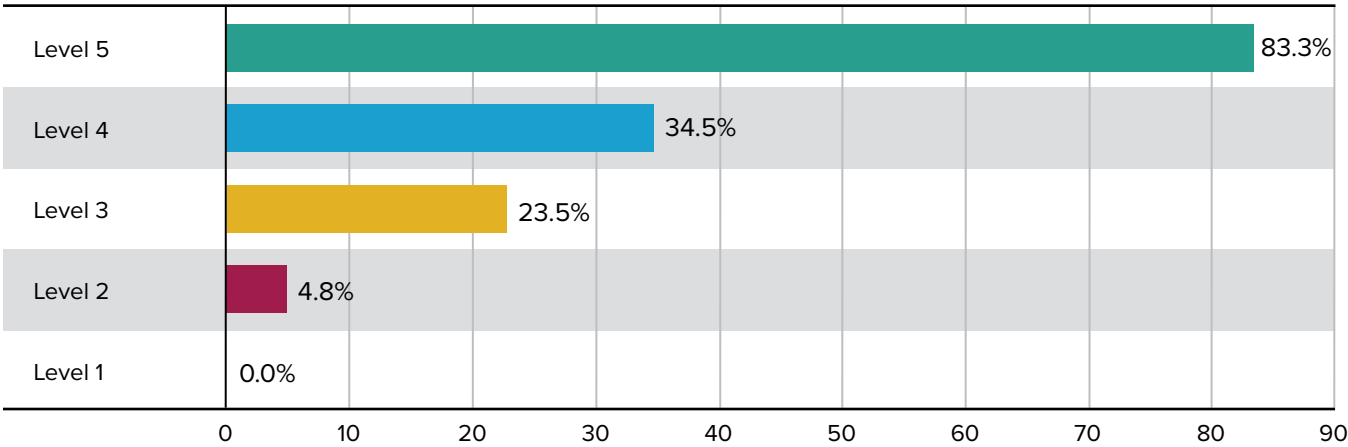
A firm's brand is the product of its reputation and visibility. Our respondents indicated that Visible ExpertsSM bolstered these qualities across the board, establishing both market leadership and credibility and positively affecting brand recognition. Furthermore, 33% of purchasers reported that the company itself was tied to an individual's expertise — these experts typically boost their entire firm with expertise tied closely to the firm's positioning.

A firm's brand is the product of it's reputation and visibility.



The connection between individual experts and firms as a whole is echoed in our research on Visible Experts™ themselves. When we asked whether their companies were tied to their expertise, our respondents answered as follows:

Figure 4. Effect of Visible Experts™ on Firm Visibility

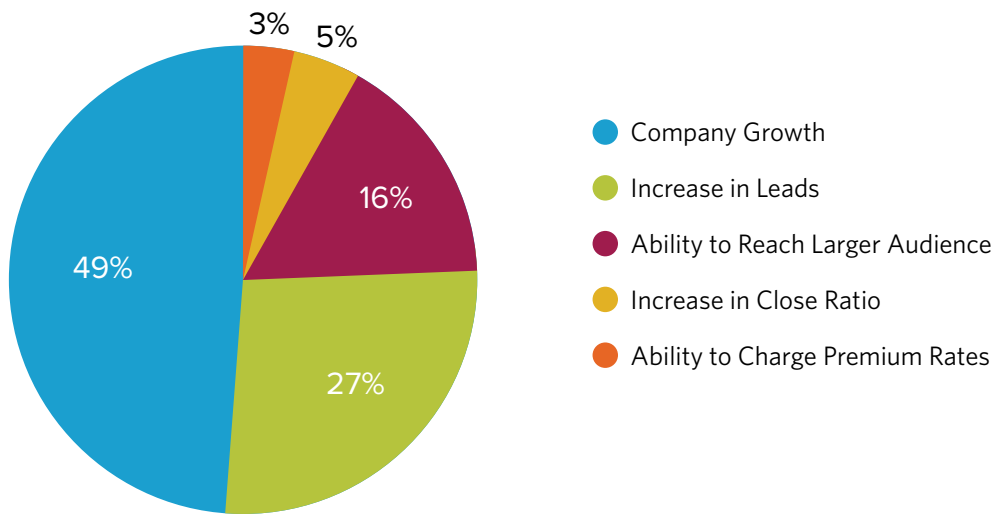


As their level of visible expertise rises, experts find an increasingly strong association between their expertise and their firm's success.



As for business impact, providers indicated a range of positive effects on growth and business development:

Figure 5. Visible Experts[™] Impact on Firms' Growth and Business Development

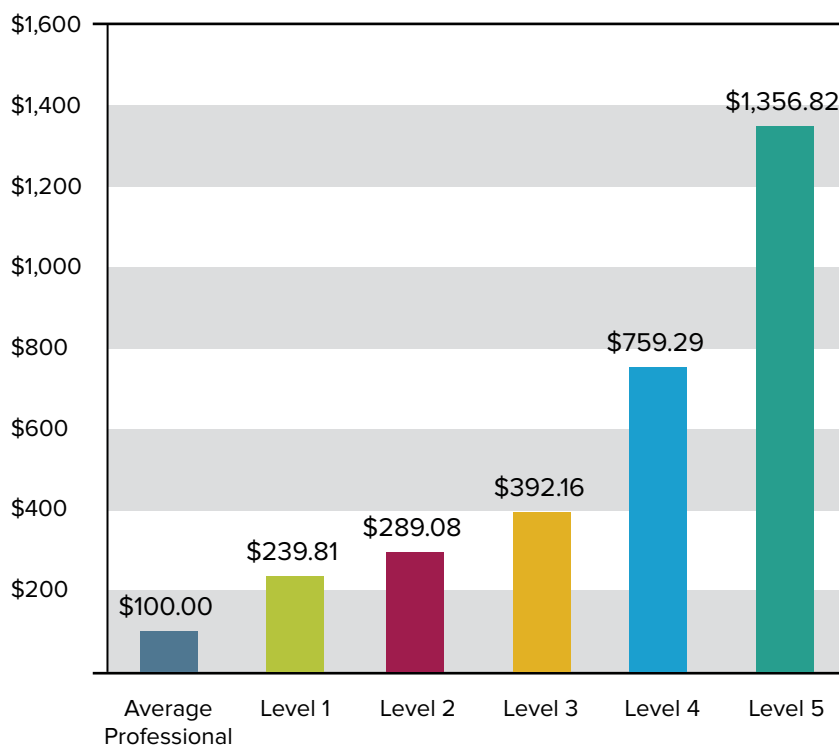


Respondents indicated a tremendous impact on company growth. Top business development benefits included increases in firm growth, lead generation, and audience reach.

How Visible ExpertsSM Impact Billing Rates

How much are professional services purchasers willing to pay to engage a Visible ExpertSM? We baselined an average professional at an hourly rate of \$100, asking buyers how much they would be willing to pay for each level of visible expertise relative to this baseline. The chart below presents the averages reported by our respondents:

Figure 6. Hourly Rates Buyers Will Pay for Visible ExpertsSM by Level of Visibility



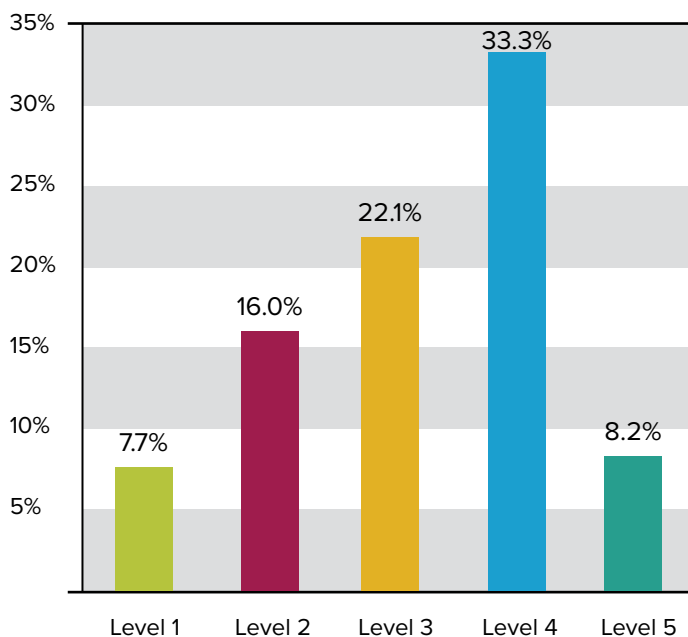
Buyers are willing to pay over 13 times more for a Level 5 Visible ExpertSM than an average professional.

Every level of visible expertise commands a premium rate, starting at over 200% of the baseline for a Level 1 Visible ExpertSM. As an individual's level of expertise increased, the rate they may command rises dramatically. Buyers are willing to pay over 13 times more for a Level 5 Visible ExpertSM than an average professional.

Buyers' Demand for Visible ExpertsSM

Our previous research has found a generalized demand for high-profile expertise among professional services buyers. We wanted to expand on this finding by measuring the demand for Visible ExpertsSM by level of expertise. We asked purchasers whether they required the services of each level of Visible ExpertSM.

Figure 7. Buyer Demand for Visible ExpertsSM by Level



Demand rises according to expertise level — then decreases abruptly at Level 5.

Demand rises according to expertise level — then decreases abruptly at Level 5. Why? This drop-off is likely because relatively few issues truly call for world-class experts. Purchasers are realistic about the scale of their needs. It is also notable that Level 5 experts command considerably higher fees, nearly doubling the hourly rate of a Level 4 expert.

What does this mean for providers? These results provide strong justification for developing internal talent into Level 4 Visible ExpertsSM. At Level 5, the benefits to a provider are based less on immediate client needs and more on the expert's relationship to their firm's brand.

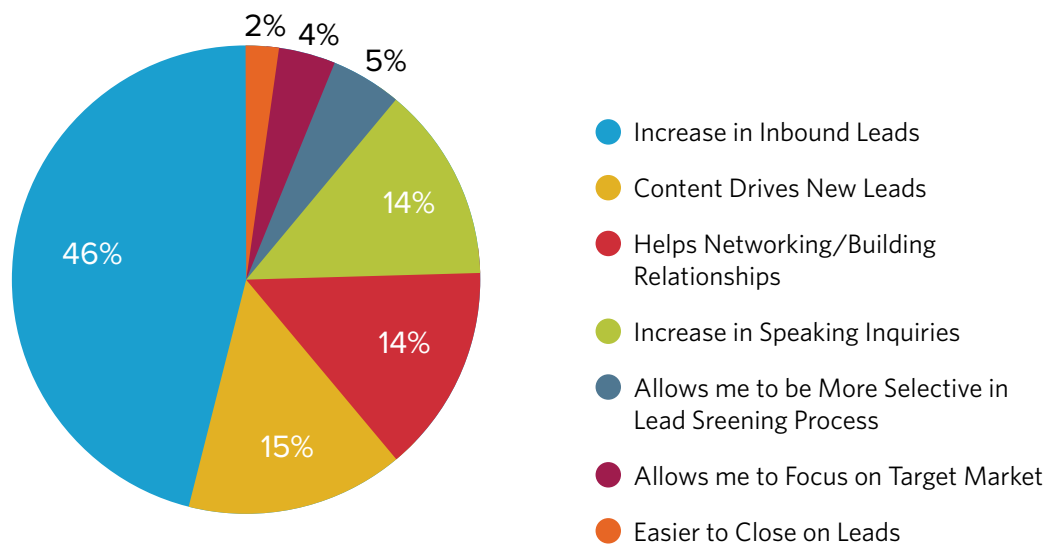


These results provide strong justification for developing internal talent into Level 4 Visible ExpertsSM.

Visible Experts'SM Impact on Lead Generation

In Figure 5, we saw that Visible ExpertsSM reported a significant impact on firms' lead generation. What do these lead generation benefits look like in more detail?

Figure 8. Impact of Visible Experts'SM on Firms' Lead Generation Capabilities



The top lead generation benefit is a straightforward increase in inbound leads. Through which channels do these leads arrive? In naming their lead sources, Visible ExpertsSM identified two visibility-dependent channels, search engines and speaking engagements, at the following rates:

Figure 9. Visible ExpertsSM Identifying Speaking Engagements as a Lead Source

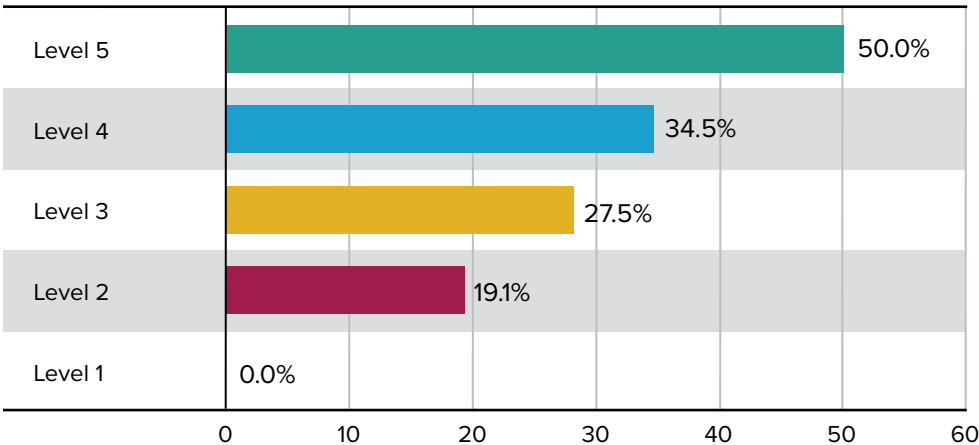
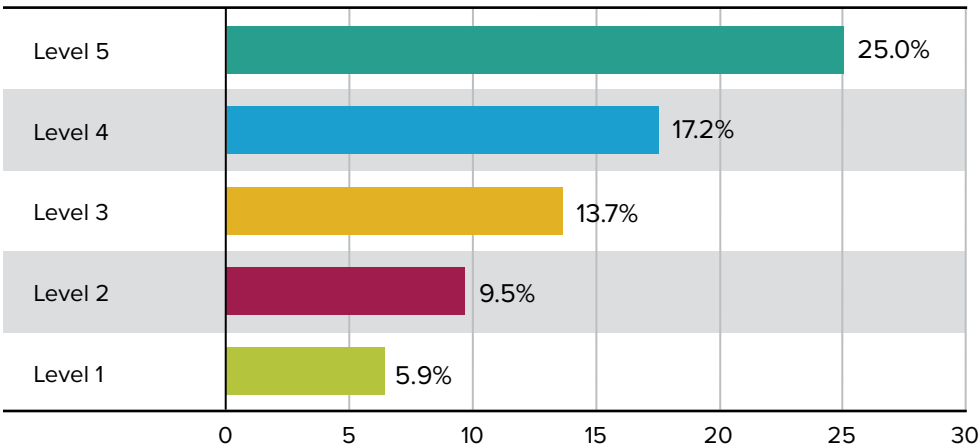


Figure 10. Visible ExpertsSM Identifying Search Engines as a Lead Source



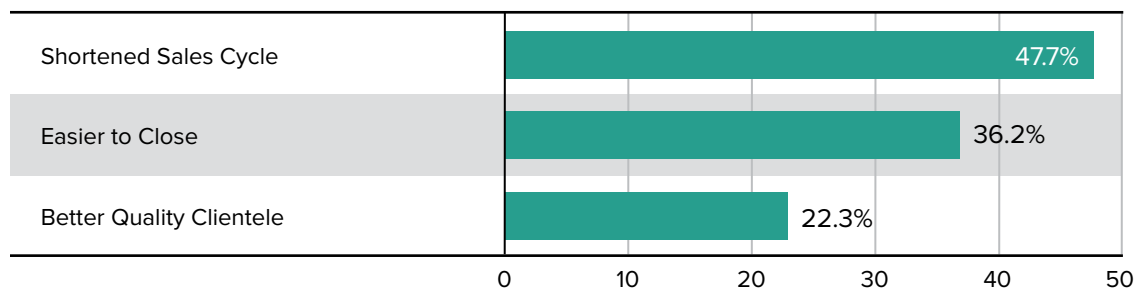
In both cases, the lead generating effectiveness of these channels rises with level of expertise. We will explore this dynamic further in subsequent reports.

Visible ExpertsSM lead generation impacts were not limited to a straightforward rise in inbound leads. Our respondents also reported a notable impact on networking and speaking inquiries, demonstrating how high-profile authorities foster connections in the industry. Similarly, we found that content produced by Visible ExpertsSM may bolster the credibility of a firm, engage audiences, and result in leads.

How Visible ExpertsSM Help Close the Sale

Providers identified three major impacts of in-house Visible ExpertsSM on the firm's ability to close sales.

Figure 11. Visible ExpertsSM Impact on Firms' Ability to Close Sales



The top sales-closing benefit cited by providers, reported by 47% of respondents, was a shortened sales cycle. This is related to the second most common benefit: sales are easier to close. The third significant result was higher quality clientele — new clients whose needs were a better match for providers' services.

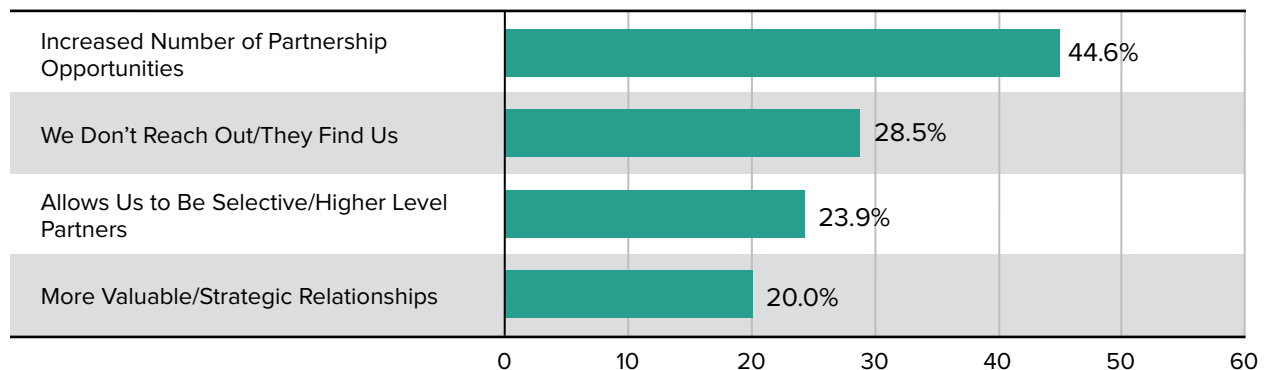
These effects may be attributed to providers' audiences familiarity with the Visible ExpertSM, often through channels such as online educational content or speaking engagements. Visible ExpertsSM establish credibility early in the buying process so that sales become easier to close. Furthermore, the high visibility of experts' area of expertise helps the right clients connect more successfully with providers.

Visible ExpertsSM establish credibility early in the buying process so that sales become easier to close.

How Visible ExpertsSM Impact Professional Partnerships

What effect do in-house Visible ExpertsSM have on the development of professional partnerships between their firms and other organizations? Respondents indicated four major effects:

Figure 12. Visible ExpertsSM Impact on Firms' Professional Partnerships



The top impact, reported by 44.62% of providers, was an increase in the number of partnership opportunities.

Similarly, respondents found that partners came to them rather than the other way around, and that they could be more selective about the partners they chose. With more and higher-quality partnerships, it isn't surprising that many respondents found more value in their strategic partnerships.

As with the buying process, Visible ExpertsSM essentially streamlined the development of partner relationships by helping to establish the firm's credibility up-front. This foundation of authority afforded firms greater influence in their organizational relationships, increasing both the quantity and quality of partnership opportunities.



Conclusion

The impact of Visible Experts™ on professional services providers is both widespread and pervasive. These high-profile professionals help shape businesses in a powerful way, guiding the development of brands, driving growth, and making it easier to close sales.

From prospects to professional partners, service providers' audiences develop a sense of the firm's credibility through the reputations of its experts. The higher the level of those individuals' expertise, the greater an impact they make on their firms. Indeed, a high-level Visible Expert™ can “make” a firm, transforming its brand and propelling it to new heights of success.

The higher the level of expertise, the greater an impact they make on their firms.





About the Hinge Research Institute

The Hinge Research Institute is the part of Hinge that is dedicated to monitoring, analyzing and reporting on high-growth professional services firms and their clients. We have identified firms that grow 9X faster and are 50% more profitable, yet spend less than average to get new business.

Our goal at the Hinge Research Institute is to show you how they do it.

We publish revealing and informative studies on high-growth firms and the people that do business with them. We invite you to check out our full library of research reports, books and other publications here: www.hingemarketing.com/library

For more information about the Hinge Research Institute, please contact:

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How Hinge Can Help You

At Hinge, we specialize in branding and marketing for professional services firms. We are a leader in rebranding firms like yours to help them grow faster and maximize value. Our comprehensive offerings include research and strategy, brand development, award-winning creative, high-performance websites and marketing outsourcing.

Like to keep it simple? Many of our clients choose to enjoy the cost benefit and ease of engaging with one of our multiple programs:

- Online Marketing Programs
- Branding Program
- High Performance Websites
- Visible Expert™ Program

To find out how Hinge can help your professional services firm experience faster growth, contact us!

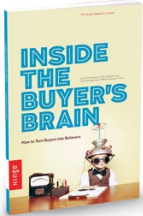
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Additional Resources

Books:



Inside the Buyer's Brain: How to Turn Buyers into Believers

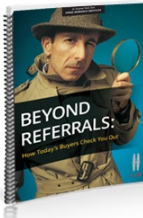
www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/book-inside-the-buyers-brain



Online Marketing for Professional Services

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Executive Guides:



Beyond Referrals: How Today's Buyers Check You Out

www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/beyond-referrals-how-todays-buyers-check-you-out



Finding Experts: Why and How Clients Seek Visible ExpertsSM

www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/finding-experts-why-and-how-clients-seek-visible-experts



Becoming a Visible ExpertSM: A Guide for Professional Services Executives

www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/becoming_a_visible_expert_a_guide_for_professional_services_executives

Ask About Our Programs



Visible ExpertSM Program

Designed to help individuals cultivate an authoritative online presence in their area of expertise, the Visible ExpertSM Program delivers the tools and strategy required to build personal reputation and visibility in the marketplace. Based on extensive research, the Visible ExpertSM Program helps exceptional individuals become recognized industry leaders.

Online Marketing Program

Designed to deliver higher visibility, boosted traffic, and more qualified leads, the Online Marketing Program leverages your firm's expertise to draw the right audience of potential buyers to your website — and keep them coming back for more. Our content-based offer strategy helps you nurture qualified traffic into clients the right way.

High Performance Website Program

Bundling a beautiful new site with a powerful suite of online tools, the High Performance Website Program turns your website into a lead-generating machine. Fine-tuned to attract the right visitors from search engines, a high performance site engages and converts qualified leads with finely crafted content strategy, optimizing your online presence increased new traffic and leads.

For more information, call 703.391.8870 or email us at info@hingemarketing.com.