to the light

Client Surveys

Getting closer to your clients

An introduction to our approach

'We value the collaborative approach Jonathan takes to working with us. The client listening interviews Jonathan undertakes provide an invaluable, independent perspective on our performance and on what our clients expect of us. Jonathan takes the time to understand our firm, our work and our clients and this deep knowledge enables him to have informed and engaged conversations with our clients and provide detailed and insightful feedback.'

GUY HIMSWORTH

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, CARPMAELS & RANSFORD
(LEADING EUROPEAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FIRM)

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01 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Listening to clients and developing a better understanding of their needs is an important platform for business improvement. In reality, however, human nature entails that most firms find it easier to accept clients' praise than ask for constructive criticism.

Up to the Light is the leading provider of client surveys to UK professional services firms. We ask your clients the tough questions from an independent perspective and report back with a rigorous and objective research debrief. For over ten years we have been perfecting the questions that extract the richest client feedback, conducting client surveys for many organisations, from large to small and across every field.

Given that we conduct over 650 client interviews on behalf of professional services firms each year, we are able to compare your client feedback with industry benchmarks and give a real sense of perspective. This document looks at the benefits of an Up to the Light client survey and the process involved.

'The annual client survey conducted by Up to the Light is a very effective way of gauging client perceptions. The independent nature of this exercise, together with Jonathan's experience at conducting these interviews, ensures that we get valuable insights. As well as providing informative feedback, he is particularly good at seeing across the interviews and relating them to our overall business.'

David Wright
Marketing Director, Dalziel & Pow
(Leading branding agency)

02 ACTIONABLE EVIDENCE

Actionable evidence

All our client surveys are based on interviews, either virtually or in person. We've found that online surveys fail to give anywhere near the richness of real interviews. Clients also tend to see online questionnaires as a chore.

Over the years we have developed an unrivalled set of core questions. These are then refined so that question sets are always bespoke, not generic. They are developed following conversations with you about your particular clients and issues. Huge effort goes into developing question sets that are highly effective at probing issues and eliciting the most valuable and useful information.

Interviews are both qualitative and quantitative. There will be rich feedback in terms of client views, feelings and perceptions. Much of this richness comes not just from the question set but in the ability of our interviewers to probe and explore. This is about knowing when to say, 'Can you give me an example of that?' or 'What would make the difference?' or 'Is there anything you'd be doing if you were in their position?' There will also be scores and statistics generated so that the firm's 'performance' can be meaningfully assessed and then monitored over time. These are compared to industry averages.

We provide a 'hard edge' debrief presentation, not just verbatim feedback. Our presentations pinpoint the most consistent issues and offer practical recommendations.

Over the last ten years we have seen a growth in client surveys fuelled by increasing competition and a desire to get closer to client needs. Arguably, the biggest variable between firms lies not so much in the quality of their advice but in the quality of their business relationships. Monitoring these relationships and understanding how they can be strengthened is the key to client retention and development.

'This year is our 4th Client Survey in a row and the data has become an integral part of setting our priorities. Whilst the purpose was primarily to get an honest read from our clients as to how we are perceived by them, a hugely beneficial by product has been when clients nudge us to move into certain new areas of opportunity. The process has helped us be better consultants through using the constructive feedback to co-conspire more effectively with our clients.'

Trevor O'Reilly
Partner, PA Consulting
(Global management consultancy)

Areas that we explore

Our interviews typically explore:

- **Your perceived strengths and weaknesses**
- **Any perceived gaps or question marks about your services**
- **How you rate versus competitors**
- **Personal chemistry**
- **Accessibility and responsiveness of key people**
- **Effective listening**
- **Understanding the client and their commercial realities**
- **Meeting timelines and budgets**
- **Value for money**
- **Costs versus competitors**
- **Reactivity versus proactivity**
- **Client development opportunities**
- **Client challenges, what's on the horizon, implications for the firm**
- **Quality of legal advice**
- **Quality of client service**
- **Quality of strategic advice**
- **Ability to add value**
- **Views on your website, communications and social media**
- **Future needs and how the relationship can evolve**
- **Main expectations of the firm and how far these are being met**

As well as sharing each individual interview with you, we pull our findings into a comprehensive executive summary. This highlights quick wins, medium term actions and longer-term considerations.

'Up to the Light's independent interviews have helped to reveal clients' real views and concerns, giving important pointers as to how we can fine tune our approach. I can thoroughly recommend their expertise at extracting client issues and drawing conclusions that lead to practical benefits for our business.'

Richard Carpenter
Managing Partner, Brunswick Group
(Global financial advisory firm)

Deliverables

- **Each interview is written up in a consistent format**
  - Perceived strengths
  - Qualities they most value
  - Perceived weaknesses/areas for improvement
  - Their key challenges
  - Future – how the relationship might evolve and how the firm could add more value
  - Comparisons with competitors
  - Main expectations of the firm and to what extent these are being met
  - Perceptions of fees and value for money
  - Scores across different categories such as quality of legal knowledge & advice, quality of strategic commercial knowledge & advice, level of technical knowledge, collaboration, quality of client service, as a firm overall
  - Their one piece of advice for the firm
  - Conclusions and summary of the main issues

- **Executive summary**
  - Scores across all interviews and comparisons with benchmark average scores across 650+ client interviews that we conduct each year
  - Results of key 'barometer questions' and comparisons with benchmark average scores
  - Highlight main consistent strengths across all interviews
  - Highlight main consistent weaknesses and areas for improvement across all interviews
  - Conclusions regarding value for money, comparisons with competitors, clients' future needs
  - Recommendations for next steps

'Up to the Light's ability to get clients to open up and be totally honest about their relationship is impressive, and the way they communicate this information back to you is eye-opening, to say the least. We found the feedback incredibly valuable and led to significant internal change and wide-ranging client service improvements. Real, unbiased and direct feedback from your clients – it's gold dust!'

Gideon Wilkinson
Co-Founder & Managing Director,
Endpoint (Wayfinding & built environment agency)

03 OPTIONS

There are 3 main options:

01

Spot Interviews

Selected interviews with one or more key clients (under 10 interviews). These can be used to monitor specific high value client relationships.

02

Pilot Survey

10 interviews can be used as a pilot before moving to a client survey. At 10 interviews we can begin to draw meaningful conclusions across a client base. We can differentiate consistent issues versus client specific ones.

03

Client Survey

These are client surveys covering from 11 interviews up to 50 and more. They can also involve a market research element that explores client and market issues, above and beyond questions about the client/firm relationship.

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Whether Spot Interviews, a Pilot Survey or a Client Survey, the essential process is the same:

01
Define

Select clients to be interviewed. Meet Up to the Light to discuss the client backgrounds and the issues to be covered in the question set. Agree objectives and agree the final question set.

02
Consult

Send interview requests to clients. Once permissions have been given, Up to the Light will make contact with clients directly and diarise interviews. Conduct all the interviews.

03
Deliver

Up to the Light will prepare a presentation with feedback for each interview and an executive summary that highlights consistent issues and give recommendations. Full debrief presentation with recommendations.

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04 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Benefits of an independent Client Survey

- **Unbiased, 'from the horse's mouth' evidence**
    - **The Client Survey is a catalyst for action.** Instead of debate going round within the firm, you can say, 'Look at the Client Survey – we know what our clients are saying so we need to take the following steps.'
- **Develop better client development plans**
    - **The Client Survey can reveal areas for improvement.** Some examples might include: Opportunities to be more proactive and develop stronger partnerships, levels of responsiveness, opportunities to plug gaps in clients' knowledge of your services and relevant experience, fine tune administrative and billing issues, opportunities to change team structures to better suit client needs, opportunities to improve aspects of client service, opportunities to improve knowledge of the firm over and above relationships with key individuals. Knowledge of client's real views will allow you to develop targeted and relevant plans to address the issues.
- **Spot opportunities**
    - **Our Client Surveys can help firms to make positive changes in direction.** A Client Survey can help inform the launch of a new service, stimulate a change in branding and messaging, improve the quality and relevance of the firm's added value communications in blogs, publications and events.
- Helps to unite the firm
    - Client relationships within law firms can be closely guarded. Different partners can have different approaches, and it can be challenging for a firm to act in consistent ways. An independent Client Survey is **an opportunity to look across different clients and practice areas, and address issues in a joined-up way.**
- **Keep improving**
    - **Improvement is not possible unless quantified.** Annual Client Surveys allow you to benchmark and measure improvements.
- **Kudos with clients**
    - **Clients are generally impressed** that the firm is consulting them in this way. It is a tangible sign that the firm really values the relationship and is investing in it.

'We knew we were in expert hands. Up to the Light took time to understand our clients before interviewing them and reassured us that the questions they would be asking our clients were pertinent and probing. The result was more than simple client feedback. It was a detailed research debrief presentation which has been incredibly useful in helping us to understand client needs and continue to improve our approach.'

Tracey Westgate
Client Services Director, Luminous
(Leading communications agency)

Clients interviewed by Up to the Light

Financial
Abbey Autoline
ABN AMRO
AIB
Aldermore
Alpha Group Plc
Bank of England
Barclaycard
Barclays
BAWAG B.S.K.
Benfield Group
Blackstone Group
CitiFinancial
Columbia Threadneedle Investments
CYBG
DBS Bank
Euromoney
Experian
Goshawk Asset Management
HSBC
IIGCC
Impax Asset Management
Investec
Invest Europe
Lloyds Banking Group
Lloyd's of London
LSEG
Nationwide
NatWest
Novia Financial
Oakley Capital
Octaura
Phoenix Group
Prima Insurance
Prudential
Raiffeisen Bank
RBS
Rockpool Investments
SS&C Intralinks
TSB
UBS
United Overseas Bank
Visa

Professional services
Amica Law
Arup
BakerHostetler
Bozicevic, Field & Francis
Bristows
Durkan Group
EY
Fenwick & West
IMG
Informa
Intertek
JTC Group
Lando & Anastasi
McKinsey
McNeill Baur
Morrison Foerster
RDJ
Sage
Sheppard Mullin
Steptoe
Sterne Kessler
Tomkins
Troutman Pepper Locke
Wicker Park Group
Wilson Sonsini
Wolf Greenfield

FMCG & Household
Addis
Argent Group
Bacardi
Barilla
Bord Bia
BWG
C&C Group
Carlsberg
Cereal Partners Worldwide
Constellation Europe
Dale Farm
Danone
Davidoff
Diageo
English Tea Shop
Fever Tree
Glenisk
Highland Spring
Imperial Tobacco
Innocent
Japan Tobacco International
Jordans Cereals
Kerry Foods
Kimberly-Clark
Mars
Molson Coors
Nestle
Nu Skin
P&G
Palmer & Harvey
Philip Morris
Philips
Pukka Herbs
Twinings
Unilever
Versuni
Weetabix
Wisdom

Property
Berkeley Group
Cala Homes
CLS Holdings
Crown Estate
Cushman & Wakefield
Europa Capital
Galliford Try
Graham
Grosvenor Estates
Hammerson
Hamptons
Hines
Intu
Jones Lang LaSalle
Knight Frank
Land Securities
McLaughlin & Harvey
Mears Group
Morgan Sindall

Retail
Adidas
Ahold
Aldi
Al Maya Group
Amazon
Ardene
Argos
Asda
B&Q
Boots
Boux Avenue
Burton
Calvin Klein
Christian Laboutin
Converse
Curry's
Diesel
Dunhill
eBay
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Footlocker
Forever 21
Fred Perry
Henri-Lloyd
Homebase
James Retail
Jigsaw
John Lewis
Jones Bootmaker
Joules
Kappahl
Lakeland
Levi's
Lipsy London
Loaf
Luxottica
Marks & Spencer
Matalan
Maxeda
Maxol Group
Meny
Monica Vinader
Monsoon
Moss Bros
Mothercare
Mr Price Group
Musgrave Group
New Look
Next
Nike
Nisa
Notcutts Garden Centres
Oakley
Oasis
Ocado
One Stop
Orsay
Primark
Reitmans
Sainsbury's
Skechers
Spar
Superdrug
Swatch Group
Tesco
The Body Shop
The White Company
Timberland
Topshop
Travis Perkins
Umbro
VF Corporation
Waitrose
WH Smith
Wickes

Manufacturing
AEG
Anglo American
Aurobay
BASF
Breedon Group
Chevron
Delmec
Dormakaba Group
Echion Technologies
Element Six
Eurasian Resources Group

Clients interviewed by Up to the Light

Filtrona
First Quantum Minerals
Garrett Motion
Gates Corporation
Genus
Henkel
Hutchison
INEOS
Interface Flooring
Invista
Klockner Pentaplast
Magnomatics
Nexeon
Olam Agri
Polaroid
Renesas Electronics
Republic Technologies
Rondo Energy
RTX Corporation
Securistyle
Shell
Signify
Smiths Group
Solvay
Spirax Sarco
Sun Chemical
Syngenta
The Lubrizol Corporation
Tri-star
Trivium
Vesuvius

Automotive

Aston Martin
Belron
BMW
Breast Cancer Care
Honda Europe
IMI
Mahindra Group
Mercedes-Benz
Michelin
Vauxhall

Not for profit

British Army
CAFRE
Cardiff University
Consumer Council
CSIRO
Department for Business and Trade
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
DVLA
GDS
Glasgow Housing Association
Guys & St Thomas'
Historic Royal Palaces
Home Office
International Olympic Committee
London Fire Brigade
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Met Office
Ministry of Defence
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Ministry of Justice
NHS England
Ofcom
Ofgem
Queen's University
Skills for Care
The National Trust
The Royal Navy
The Salvation Army
Tusla
UNESCO
UNHCR
UNICEF
University College London
University of Bedfordshire
University of Westminster
University of West of England
University of York
Versus Arthritis
WWF
York Museums Trust
YouGov

Travel & Tourism

Belleair Holidays
Bristol Airport
Butlins
Carnival Cruises
Dublin Bus
Failte Ireland
Great Rail Journeys
Leger Holidays
Madame Tussauds
Olympic Holidays
Original Travel
Saga
Titan Travel

Tech

ADT
Airtel Africa
Arcus Global
Atlantic Technologies
Beyerdynamic
Blue Prism
Bowers & Wilkins
BT
Cricut
Dell
Edgescan
Fujifilm
giffgaff
HTC
Iris Group
Logitech
Marex
Microsoft
NEC
Openet
Oracle Corporation
Orange
Orgvue
Samsung
Sequel Group
Vodafone
Xiatech

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

Abbott
Allergan
Atlas Genetics
Boehringer Ingelheim
Boston Scientific BUPA
CliniMed
Codexis
Convatec Group
Cosmed
DePuy Synthes
Gilead Sciences
Guardant Health
HUB Organoids
Hubrecht Institute
Ibis Biosciences
Incyte
Ionic Pharmaceuticals
Johnson & Johnson
KalVista
Life Technologies
Lloyds Pharmacy
Mallinckrodt
Merck
Monte Rosa
Novartis
Novocure
Olympus
Regeneron
Sanofi
SingHealth
Spire Healthcare
Takeda
Teleflex
Teva Pharmaceuticals
Ventac Partners
Vertex Pharmaceuticals

Entertainment & Arts

BAFTA
BBC
Disney
Electronic Arts
Estate of Michael Jackson
Flutter
Freeview
Ladbrokes
Mecca Bingo
Penguin Random House
Riot Games
Royal Opera House The National Gallery
Turner Entertainment
Wanda
Warner Bros

Hospitality

Burger King
Busaba Eathai
KFC
Pizza Hut
PPHE Hotel Group
Starbucks
Whitbread

Utilities

EIT InnoEnergy
Energia
Ervia
National Grid
Severn Trent

Other

Bear Grylls Ventures
Berlitz
Biffa
EIT InnoEnergy
Energia
ExCeL
Hyve Group
Landbell Group
Reach PLC
Reed Exhibitions
Rentokil Initial
Rolex
Royal Mail
Trustpilot
Yodel

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05 ABOUT US

About Up to the Light

The consultancy offers experienced, expert and bespoke advice for professional services firms and marketing services agencies. We challenge ingrained assumptions and offer more effective, insight-led advice.

Our services include:

- **Client surveys**
- **Business development strategy**
- **Pitching advice and post-pitch client interviews**
- **Training and workshops**
- **Business differentiation**
- **Miscellaneous business issues**

Our very first client interviews were conducted with a view to helping a firm to define its point of competitive difference. What better way to start than by interviewing selected clients? Over the years our approach became more sophisticated. We developed a core question set that was highly effective at eliciting richer information, with both qualitative and quantitative sections. We then started to be commissioned by large firms to annually monitor the health of their high value relationships. Many of these are multi million-pound global client relationships.

Today, Up to the light conducts many hundreds of client interviews each year. These are with a full range of client type and span the globe.

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Jonathan Kirk

Jonathan Kirk is the founder of Up to the Light and advises a significant proportion of the UK's top 100 agencies across a wide range of issues concerned with business growth and improvement.

As well as advising agencies, Up to the Light is also a brand consultancy that provides brand positioning and strategy for clients. So many consultants become theorists and teachers, slightly removed from reality, but Jonathan is continually involved at the sharp end presenting, pitching and delivering high profile strategic work for brands. This is of huge benefit to his clients.

His 30-year career has included senior positions as a Director of agencies within both the WPP and Havas global networks. Before founding Up to the Light, he was a Director of Fitch, the global branding group (now Landor). He is a regular trade press contributor and conference speaker, delivering speeches, workshops and seminars for organisations including the Design Business Association, British Institute of Interior Design, Agency Hackers, the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland (IAPI), Design Skillnet (Ireland) and HURA (The Croatian Association of Communications Agencies). He is a founder member of the DBA's Experts Register.

As the author of the influential 'What Clients Think' report, published annually, he is a widely acknowledged authority on business to business relationships.

Adrian Dent

After graduating from Cambridge University, Adrian began his career in advertising, working for agencies including Grey and Delaney Fletcher. He was responsible for planning the highly successful launch of Mars Ice Creams across Europe during a two-year stint in Paris, helped launch Chrysler Jeep into the UK and was part of the team which came up with the idea for Macleans Milk Teeth.

He also gained experience on the client side, managing a multi million-pound advertising budget for Manweb. Since then, Adrian has helped a wide variety of organisations with many aspects of branding and marketing. Research is an integral part of Adrian's work and he is highly experienced in conducting research to unlock key strategic issues.

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