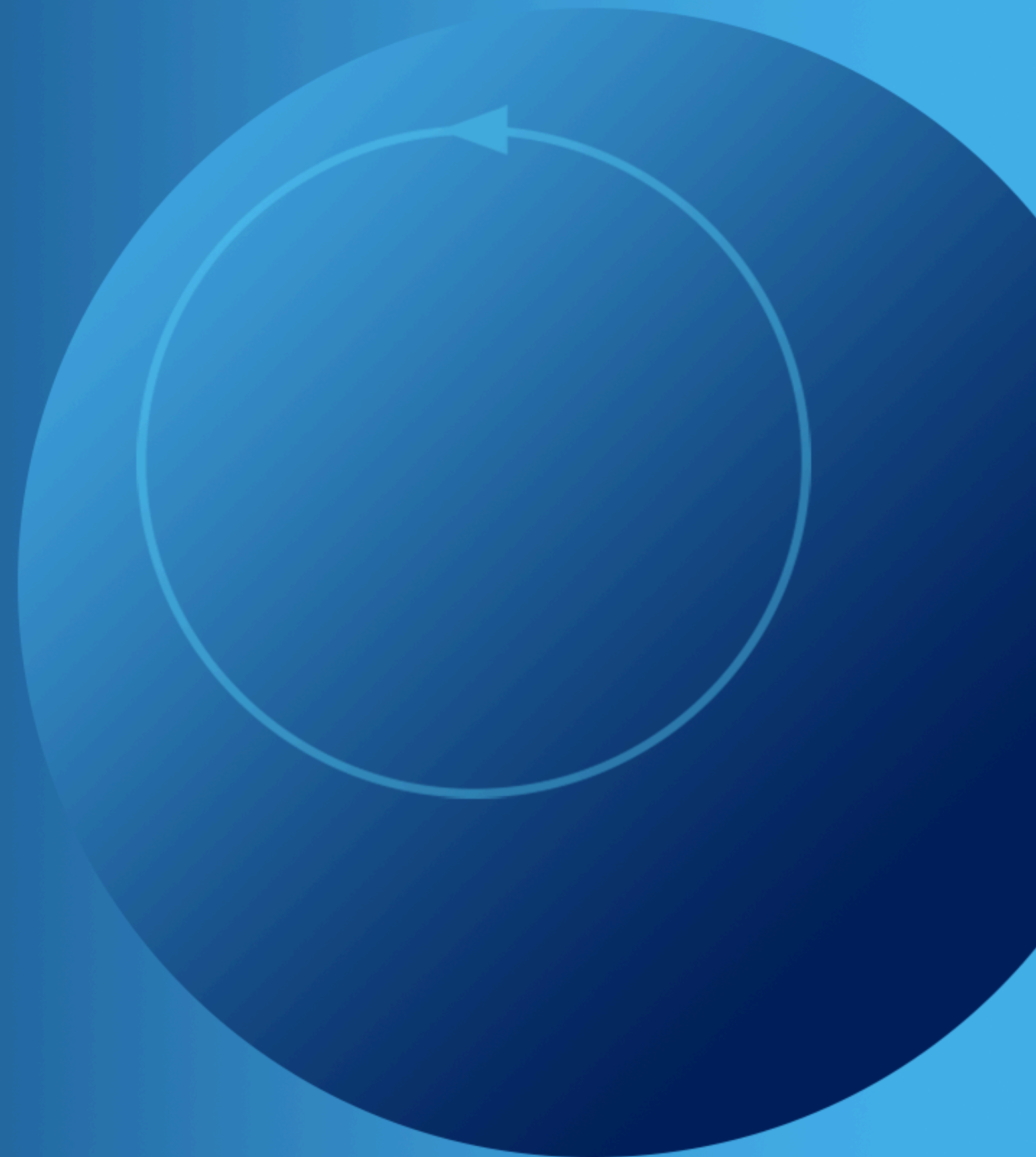


CUSTOMER WINBACK

BENCHMARK STUDY
2026



OVERVIEW

This study offers customer winback benchmarks, expert insights and case studies.

The study's core finding is that winback delivers significant revenue at a very low cost.

\$485k

SMB Winback Revenue

\$5k

SMB Campaign Cost

32X

Winback ROI



WHAT PERCENTAGE OF PAST CUSTOMERS TYPICALLY RETURN?

The study reported that on average, 26% of past customers returned as the result of winback campaigns.

The majority of study participants reacquired between 20% and 35% of their past customers and a study conducted by Marketing Metrics / Ipsos Loyalty had similar results. They reported the probability of winning back a past customer at 20% - 40%.

2X
CUSTOMER
LIFETIME
VALUE

WHAT'S THE VALUE OF A RETURNING CUSTOMER?

Most study participants reported that after a customer was reacquired, lifetime value doubled or more.

The study found that:

- 49% of returning customers generated about the same revenue after they were won back as they did during their "first lifetime",
- 4% generated less and
- 47% generated more revenue the second time around.

A winback study featured in the Harvard Business Review (March 2016) corroborates these findings. It found lifetime value more than doubling.

"Second-time customers in the study had an average lifetime value of \$1,410, versus just \$1,262 during their initial run with the service."

WHAT WAS THE COST OF WINNING BACK PAST CUSTOMERS?

Winback campaigns fell into three cost categories.



NO HARD COSTS

OVER \$5K

UNDER \$5K

1 - No Hard Costs

Over half of the study participants (53%) reported no hard costs as winback was done by email and phone with existing staff.

2 - Low Hard Costs (Under \$5K)

About a third employed low cost outreach vehicles such as direct mail and campaign costs for this group totaled less than \$5K.

3 - High Hard Costs (Over \$5K)

The remaining 13% had significant hard costs which came in the form of additional staff, meals, entertainment and travel.

\$242K
YEAR ONE SALES

\$485K
TOTAL CAMPAIGN SALES

HOW MUCH REVENUE DID THE AVERAGE CAMPAIGN GENERATE?

The average winback campaign generated \$242,700 in the first year for small and medium size businesses (SMBs). Reacquired customers stayed for an average of two years which put total campaign revenues at \$485,400.

Larger organizations generated winback sales in the millions.

Note: This study focused on winback for companies with two hundred or fewer employees, but a small number of larger organizations also participated in the study.

WHAT'S THE ROI OF A WINBACK CAMPAIGN?

32X

HARD COSTS OVER \$5K

182X

HARD COSTS UNDER \$5K

EXTREME

NO HARD COSTS

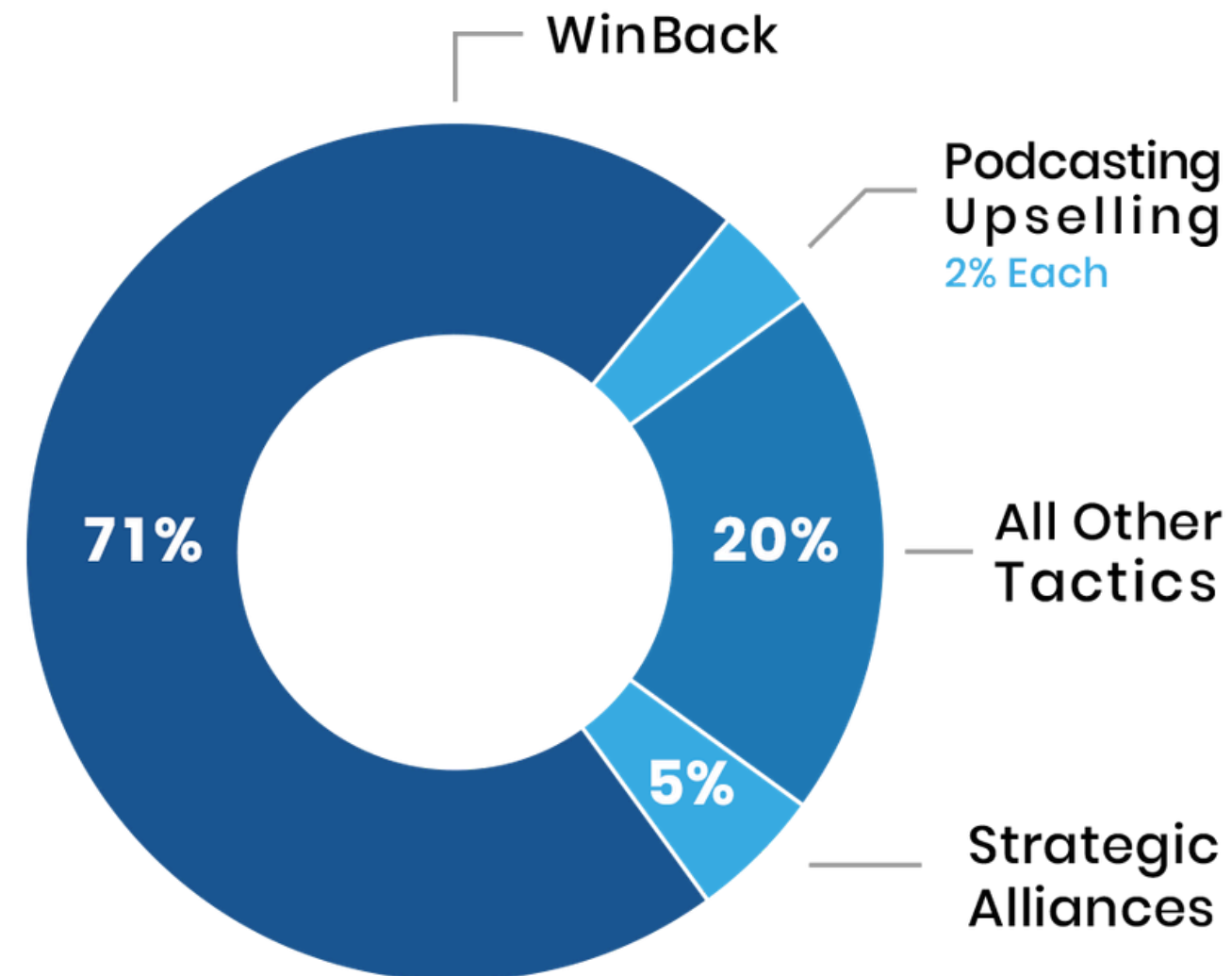
The typical campaign delivered a high ROI due to the combination of low campaign costs and significant revenue generation.

Companies with higher campaign costs (over \$5K) averaged a 32X ROI and those with lower costs (under \$5K) averaged a 182X ROI.

Companies without hard costs generated an extremely high ROI. It can't be quantified since the investment side of the ROI equation is zero, but clearly it's much higher than the 182X ROI reported by the "Low Cost" group.

Note: ROI was calculated on first year sales only. Also, even though many participants reported "No Hard Costs" there was an opportunity cost, e.g. staff could've been selling to new prospects, and that has an impact on ROI.

HOW DID WINBACK ROI RANK AGAINST OTHER MARKETING STRATEGIES?



Over 71% of study participants reported that winback delivered the best ROI of any marketing tactic they'd implemented.

Strategic alliances came in second at 5% with podcasting and upselling each garnering under 2% of the votes.

Note: All participants did winback campaigns but may not have used all the other tactics, so the data could be slightly skewed in favor of winback.

HOW LONG ARE SALES CYCLES?

On average, study participants reported sales cycles as 70.4% shorter when selling to past customers vs when selling to new prospects.

In other words, they closed about 3 winback customers in the time it took to win one new customer.

Some of the reasons given for the shorter sales cycles include: time is saved because prospects already know you, so relationships don't need to be built, they just need to be rekindled. And you don't need to spend a lot of time educating prospects on your product since they've already used it.

Note: Most study participants were SMBs so this benchmark doesn't shed light on sales cycle lengths for larger organizations..

70%
SHORTER SALES CYCLE

INSIGHTS

Three of the exceptional sales / marketing leaders interviewed for this study offered insights into these core winback questions.

WHY DOES WINBACK WORK?

**HOW DO WE FULLY MONETIZE
CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS?**

**HOW DO WE OPTIMIZE WINBACK FOR
DIFFERENT TYPES OF CUSTOMERS?**

INSIGHTS

Andrew Loos

Andrew offers us insights into why winback works in terms of human psychology. He currently runs two companies, Honor & Impact and Transcend, and has helped create marketing programs for clients such as Kellogg's, Pepsi and LYFT. Andrew is also the co-author of several John Wiley & Sons textbooks including "Applied Marketing".

Jon LoDuca

Jon brings a unique perspective to winback and its role in fully monetizing client relationships. For two decades Jon has helped optimize growth for 400 of the top 1% income-earning entrepreneurs.

Bryan Mattimore

Bryan gives us a window into how client reactivation works in the gig economy. He's one of America's top experts in applied creativity and his innovation projects have led to over \$4 billion in new sales.

HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND WINBACK

"I often draw a parallel between a business relationship and that of a personal relationship, I honestly don't think they're as different as people see them."



Andrew Loos

Managing Partner at
Honor & Impact

As humans we're naturally attracted to the new, and often a client is lost for no other reason than they'd like to experience a new vendor. At the other end of the spectrum, a client could leave because of a negative experience.

In both cases the key to winning them back is the same ... wait a few months and then reach out. By simply letting time pass, human psychology steps in and helps us in two ways:

1. The new vendor loses their aura of "new and better."
2. With the passage of time negative feelings soften, and oftentimes even heal.

There's another big benefit to giving a lost client space. They'll see if the new vendor can actually deliver the goods.

HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND WINBACK

Andrew Loos checks in after 4 to 6 months because for his business, that gives the client enough time to know if they are truly happy with the new vendor.

"A lot of times, this benefits us greatly. We'll discover after checking that past clients are, in fact, not satisfied with their new partner and now see the value we brought to the table in much better focus."

Andrew went on to say "We also found that most past clients aren't necessarily going to pick up the phone, call us and say they want to come back. We have to check in with them."



Andrew Loos

Managing Partner at
Honor & Impact

FULLY MONETIZING CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

“If you want to grow 10% you actually need to do 14% because while you're busy growing, you're going to lose 4% out the back door.”



Jon LoDuca

Founder at PlaybookBuilder

These days companies need to run really hard just to generate net new business. Why? Because they not only need to find new clients, they also have to beat the attrition rate.

Combating the problem starts with fully monetizing existing client relationships.

That means more than upselling and cross-selling. You need to reduce attrition by creating truly great customer experiences and you also need processes to win past clients back.

But many people believe that when a client leaves, they're gone for good and there's no point in trying to get them back. But the fact of the matter is that many will return if approached well and that alone will take you a big step closer to full client monetization.

CLIENT REACTIVATION IN THE GIG ECONOMY

"Gig oriented firms reactivate clients while companies with longer term relationships win clients back, and that difference impacts how you approach past clients."



Bryan Mattimore

Co-Founder, Growth Engine
the Innovation Agency

The way to leverage existing client relationships in the gig economy is similar to the way that you do it for companies that have ongoing client relationships. They both require strategies for re-engaging and reactivating past clients, but there are also significant differences.

For businesses with ongoing relationships the name of the game is to win back those who went to a competitor. In the gig economy, the client wasn't lost, the job was simply completed. So one strategy to reacquire past clients is to offer a new product or service.

This means you need to create especially powerful re-engagement messaging because you not only need to sell a brand-new service, you also need to demonstrate that it's in your wheelhouse.

CLIENT REACTIVATION IN THE GIG ECONOMY

Businesses with ongoing client relationships don't have these issues because they're selling the same service again and again.

Having an existing relationship makes account access easier and since you've seen inside these companies you can usually find viable opportunities to sell other services. But it's also challenging because clients tend to think of you for just one thing.

Study participants told us that in the gig economy, successful client reacquisition campaigns depend heavily on very personalized and highly relevant messaging. The messaging was often centered around a specific client pain point and delivered insights into solving the issue that, like breadcrumbs, led back to the new service being offered.



Bryan Mattimore

Co-Founder, Growth Engine
the Innovation Agency

CLIENT REACTIVATION IN THE GIG ECONOMY

The messaging also included a high level of personalization and Bryan Mattimore took it one step further, he made the messaging hyper-relevant by going beyond the general needs of the company.

“The CEO, the CMO, the brand manager and so on, they all have different responsibilities within the firm and your message needs to be aligned with the needs and interests of their title and areas of responsibility.”

Creating highly customized messaging requires considerable time and effort, but it delivers results. Bryan sent a mailing out to 40 past clients just before our interview and in very short order he received 16 responses and booked six meetings.

Note: Gig and longer-term businesses leverage client relationships differently in a number of other ways and future articles will address this topic in depth.



Bryan Mattimore

Co-Founder, Growth Engine
the Innovation Agency

ABOUT THE STUDY

The data and insights presented in this study are based on survey results and interviews with founders, CEOs, CROs and others responsible for revenue who've done customer winback campaigns.

The study focused on SaaS, consulting, sales and training organizations with two hundred or fewer employees.

The author of this study is Dan Pfister, the founder of WinBack Labs, a research and advisory firm specializing in customer winback.