

Client Poaching: Take Care of Your Current Clients

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As leaders of [agencies](#), we find ourselves in a constant state of triage: take care of the team, watch the margins, keep the work going, keep the lights on, hunt the new business. It is day-to-day, moment-by-moment management, and it is required for the success of our business.

However, we may be overlooking the most significant part of our future business growth and development: the stability of our current clients and the relationships we have with them.

While we're doing everything in our power to stay afloat and move forward, there is a swarm of competitors forming, ready to start poaching our clients from us the moment the market begins to brighten up.

If some of your client relationships are wobbly, steady them up. If they are great, make them extraordinary. Here are some tips to restore and reinforce your value to your clients:

1) Keep working

Even if the budget has dried up, offer to keep the work going. Set the parameters with your client and, if you can't talk money now, set a firm date in the future (30-60 days) to have the conversation. You're showing true partnership. The client will appreciate the gesture even if they choose not to accept.

2) Bring the big

With your key clients (again, even if budgets are suspended) bring big ideas to them regularly. Assemble your smarties and generate some new stuff. Be bold. At a minimum you'll show you

are thinking about the client, and maybe a new work stream will emerge.

3) Full shift

If the work you typically do for your client has slowed or stopped, ask what challenges they are facing daily and offer to support and solve. Do they need some research? Do they need crisis comms, or internal messaging, or review/translation of materials coming from the top? Maybe just additional hands to pitch in? You have skills, they have needs. Shift and find where you can add value.

4) Star chamber

Most clients have multiple agencies supporting the business. And most of those agencies are freaking out, too. Take the lead and bring those groups together to talk about how you can best serve the client during this ridiculousness. Egos and silos get tossed. Rather, this is a time for honest, authentic discussion to help your client. And you serve as the aggregator.

5) Make the map

If you're not already doing so, begin creating the post-pandemic plan for you clients. Especially the clients who have gone dark. They may not have asked for it, but they will all need it. Guideposts and forecasts and scenarios don't have to be exact, but they will help your client think about what comes next, and their future partnership with you.

Staying close to your clients has never been more important. They are feeling the same pressures and uncertainties the rest of us are. And a horde of other agencies will be banging at their doors soon. Your offers of support, critical thinking, and compassion will go a long way in making sure your client relationships are strong and stable once we emerge from this

dark chapter.



About the Author: Britt Carter is an executive-level public relations and crisis counselor with more than 20 years of experience in brand-building, reputation management, and crisis communications. Britt's clients over the years include Fortune 500 companies, major health systems, and many public and private colleges and universities. Prior to TPC Growth, Britt was Sr. Partner and General Manager for Fleishman-Hillard's North Carolina Offices.