Symbioss
Transforming relationships, unlocking growth

Where profitable growth comes from

Eight findings on growth economics, and four conclusions worth acting on.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

01 80% of growth comes from the core business

In the most successful growth organisations studied, 80% of the value created came from the core business, most of it new revenue from existing clients.

02 One lost client can take three to replace

Replacing one lost client can take three new ones.

03 Reichheld: referrals bring 80% of growth

Reichheld's view, from a 2025 interview: around 20% of new clients arrive by referral, yet they generate closer to 80% of profitable growth.

04 Referred clients stay and pay more

Referred clients at a German bank were 18% less likely to leave over 33 months and worth about 16% more over six years.

05 SAMA: strategic accounts grow twice as fast

SAMA, the trade body, says strategic accounts grow at twice the rate of the rest and mature programmes earn 10% higher margins than newer ones.

06 Key account discipline pays, slowly

In 209 key account programmes, over half of them UK, deeper embedding went with all nine effectiveness measures. Profit arrived last.

07 Advisers overrate how much clients refer

Advisers relied on referrals. Their own clients said they weren't motivated to refer.

08 62.6% of media spend goes on acquisition

Winning attention and converting it took 62.6% of total media spend among the 401 marketing leaders Gartner surveyed in 2026.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

01 Your growth is already inside your clients

New business is the visible half of growth and the expensive half. The money you would spend winning a stranger, spent instead on the clients who already know you, buys more revenue and buys it sooner. Before signing off the next acquisition budget, run both options side by side. Drawn from findings 1, 2 and 3.

02 Concentrate investment in your key clients

Most organisations spread senior attention evenly and then wonder why their largest clients feel neglected. Name the clients your future actually depends on, fund their management properly and accept that the rest get a lighter service. Both halves of that decision matter. Drawn from findings 5 and 6.

03 Ask for referrals instead of waiting

Referrals arrive by accident in most organisations, which means nobody is accountable for the most profitable source of new work you have. Decide who owns it, when in the work the request is made and what makes it easy for the client to say yes. Drawn from findings 3, 4 and 7.

04 Check the split between winning and keeping

Split your own business development spend two ways: what is aimed at people who don't know you, and what is aimed at people who already pay you. Drawn from findings 2 and 8.

Sources by finding 01 and 02 McKinsey, Experience-led growth (2023) · 03 Reichheld, 2025 interview, stated view · 04 Schmitt, Skiera & Van den Bulte, Journal of Marketing (2011) · 05 SAMA, its own claims · 06 Davies & Ryals, Industrial Marketing Management (2014) · 07 Grierson & Brennan (2017) · 08 Gartner, CMO Spend Survey (2026). July 2026

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