



# Avoiding the 'Race to the Bottom'

How to win more contracts without  
dropping your prices

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## Key takeaways



### **MOST CLIENTS HAVE HEALTHY BUDGETS**

9 in 10 companies expect to maintain or increase their fire and security budgets next year – don't undercut yourself unnecessarily.



### **SERVICE QUALITY IS ESSENTIAL**

55% of respondents rank it as a top consideration when choosing a maintenance provider compared to 41% who prioritise price. To maintain margins, focus on delivering top-quality service.



### **PRIORITISE FAST QUOTES**

4 out of 5 clients expect service quotes within two business days. Turning quotes around quickly can help you secure business before competitors have a chance to respond.



### **YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO ADD VALUE**

Many clients said they would be willing to pay more for additional services such as combined fire and security maintenance, out-of-hours support, and training.



### **TECH TOOLS CAN OPEN DOORS**

Using technology to improve your processes, customer service, and response times can be an effective way of increasing the value you offer customers.



### **SUSTAINABILITY IS A PRIORITY**

80% of businesses rank it as a top or high priority for next year. Providers who improve and highlight their sustainability offering will be well-placed to win more business.



### **REPUTATION MATTERS**

More than half of potential clients rely on recommendations and review sites like Trustpilot when searching for providers. Prioritise customer satisfaction to build and maintain a strong reputation.

# Introduction

In the fire and security industry, many maintenance providers find themselves trapped in a cycle of competing on price.

The result? A 'race to the bottom', where firms keep undercutting the incumbent because they think it's the only way to secure the deal.

The problem is, each time this happens, you're setting an even lower baseline for future negotiations. This doesn't just reduce wider industry prices; it also undervalues your services.

At Uptick, we believe there's another way. We know from our experiences working with hundreds of leading fire and security companies that closing deals doesn't have to mean destroying your margins.

But we wanted to go a step further and prove it with industry data. So, we surveyed hundreds of facilities managers – the ones holding the purse strings – to discover what they really need from their suppliers.

And guess what? Our research revealed that there are *plenty* of ways to win business without resorting to being the lowest-priced option.

Here's what we found.

## Methodology

To understand what facilities managers value in fire and security services, we surveyed **500 individuals** responsible for managing fire protection and security systems.

- Participants had an average fire/security budget of £98,246/year.
- All respondents were UK residents.
- The survey was carried out between the 19th and 26th of March 2024



**500**

individuals



**£98,246**

average fire/security budget



**2024**

19th - 26th March



**UK**

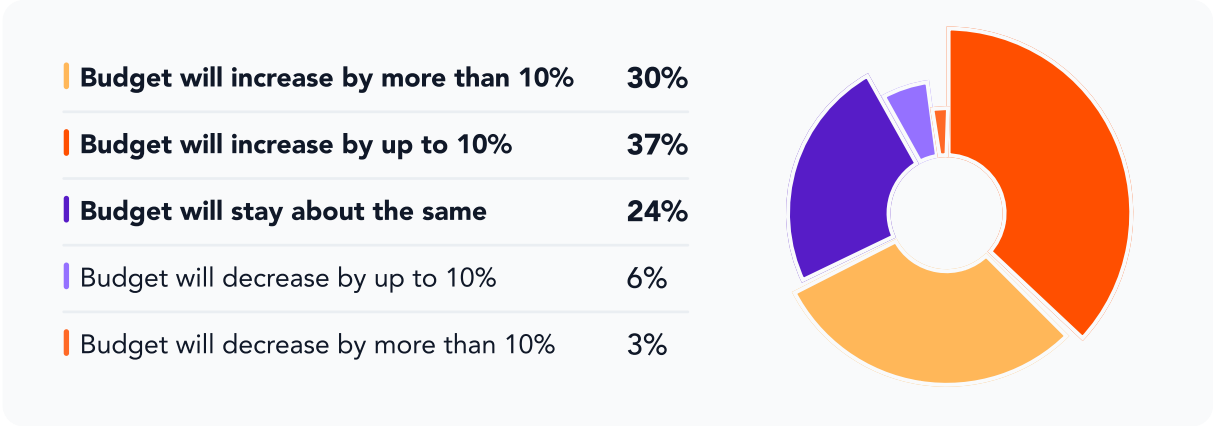
residents



# Key findings

## 1. Fire and security budgets remain strong

Do you expect [your] budget to change for the next financial year?



The data suggests that budget cuts aren't a key concern. There's no need to lower your prices unnecessarily – the money is there, especially among bigger spenders.

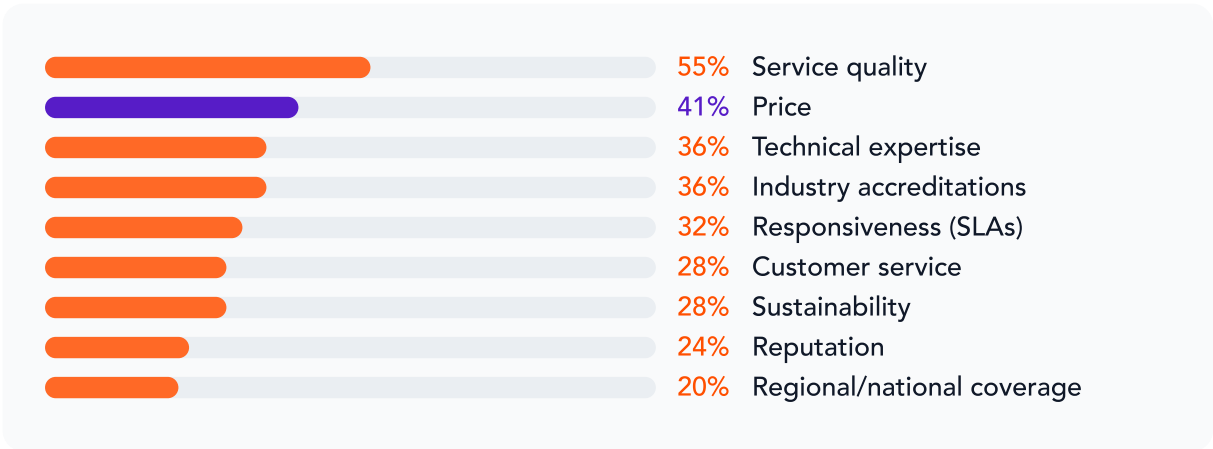
Fewer than 10% of those surveyed plan to reduce their budgets next financial year.

In fact, **over two-thirds** intend to increase spending, with **30%** expecting to boost their budgets by more than 10%. The gap between fire and security spending is minimal, with **72%** of fire budgets and **68%** of security budgets on the rise.

This trend is even more pronounced in companies with larger budgets. **73%** of companies spending over £100k annually on fire and security plan to increase their spending, compared to **65%** of those with budgets up to £50k.

## 2. Service quality outweighs price

What are the most important factors you consider when selecting a fire/security maintenance company?



When it comes to choosing a provider, it's clear: quality is more important than price.

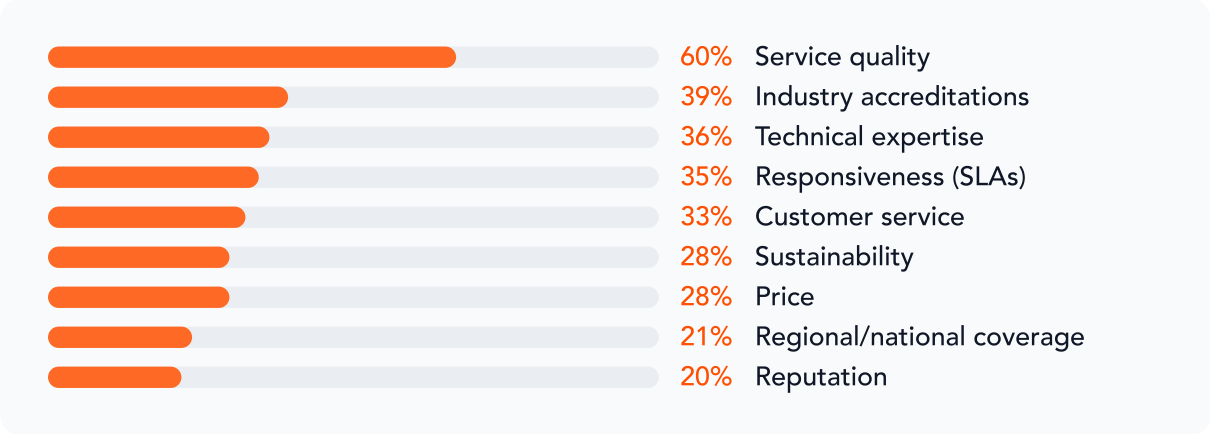
55% of respondents put service quality at the top of their list. At the end of the day, what clients care about most is your ability to do the job to a high standard.

Price is obviously important, but it's not the only thing at play. The majority of clients want value – quality service at a fair price.

### 3. Larger clients have different priorities

○ What are the most important factors you consider when selecting a fire/security maintenance company?\*

*\*Filtered by those who currently spend more than £100k on fire and/or security maintenance annually*



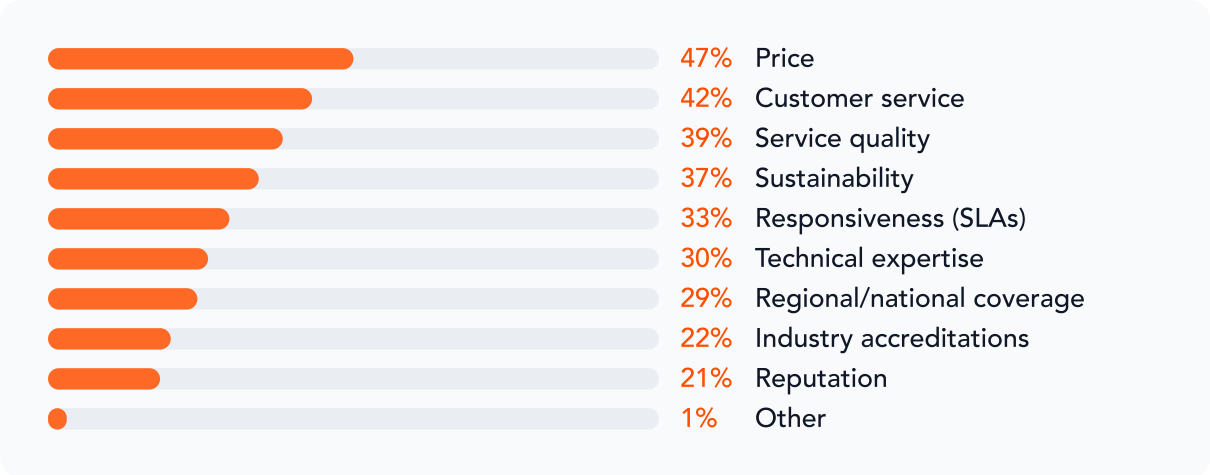
Even more interesting is how priorities change among the businesses offering the biggest contracts.

Among those spending over £100k annually, 60% value service quality, whereas just 28% think of price as one of the most important factors when evaluating potential suppliers.

Industry accreditations (39%), technical expertise (36%), and responsiveness (35%) all rank above cost.

### 4. Don't fall into the price trap

○ What are the main areas where your current provider(s) could improve?



Let's be real: every business is cost-conscious.

Even among those who rate their provider's value as good or excellent, **45%** still see room for improvement in pricing. But reducing prices isn't everything. Clients appreciate lower costs, but not if it means compromising on other areas.

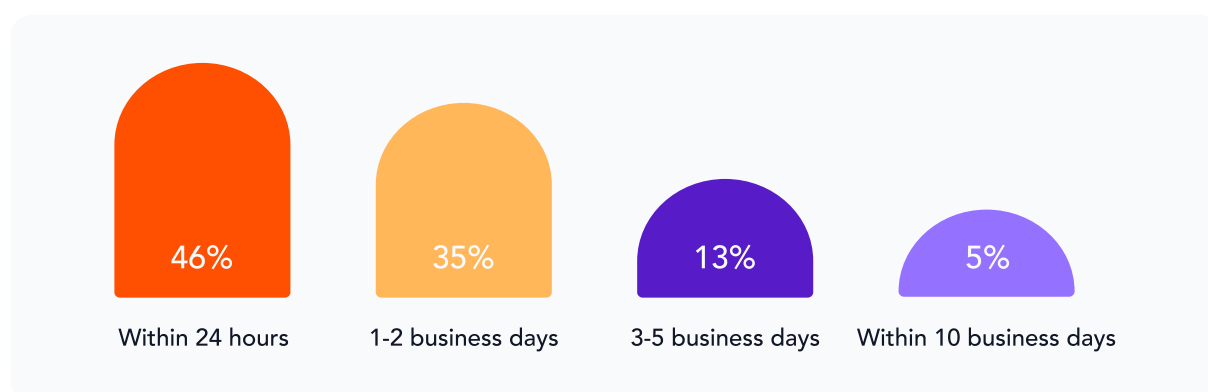
Beyond cost, clients see customer service (**42%**), service quality (**39%**), and responsiveness (**33%**) as key areas where their suppliers can do better, all of which are well within reach for most companies.

Additionally, **over a third** of clients see room for improvement in their provider's sustainability efforts, a topic we'll explore later.

In short, price shouldn't be the sole priority. There's a broader picture to consider.

## 5. Customers want quotes quickly

- What are your expectations regarding response times for providing service, remedial and installation quotes?



Speed matters, especially when it comes to quotes.

Nearly half (**46%**) of the customers we surveyed expect fire and security providers to deliver service, remedial, and installation quotes in less than 24 hours.

**4 out of 5 customers** want quotes turned around within two business days. This shows that being quick to respond can be a major competitive edge, enabling you to capture and convert opportunities before competitors have made their move.

## 6. There are more ways to add value than you might think

Our survey revealed a strong demand for a range of additional services, from out-of-hours support to training.

Most importantly, clients aren't expecting these additional services for free. The data showed that many would also be willing to pay more for them.

Ranking top was the ability to provide both fire and security maintenance. Out-of-hours support was high up the list as well, as were strong sustainability credentials. Again, more to come on that later.

The results also showed that offering more tech-based services can be an effective way of offering additional value to customers, with demand for an online customer portal, digital asset register, online customer service, and online booking for maintenance/installation.

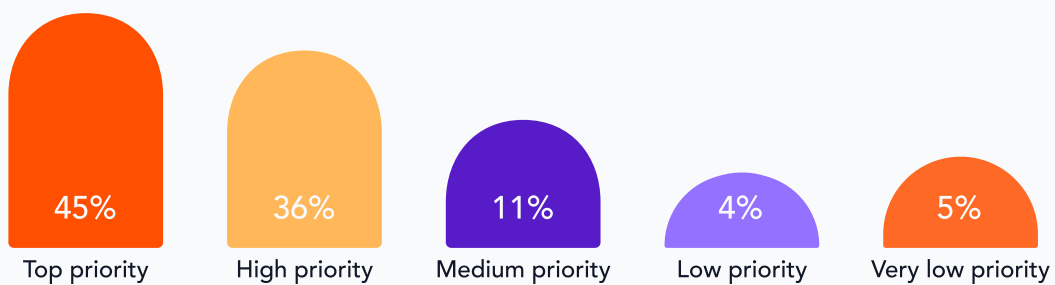
○ To what extent would you consider paying higher fees for the following products/services?



## 7. Sustainability is becoming a much bigger priority

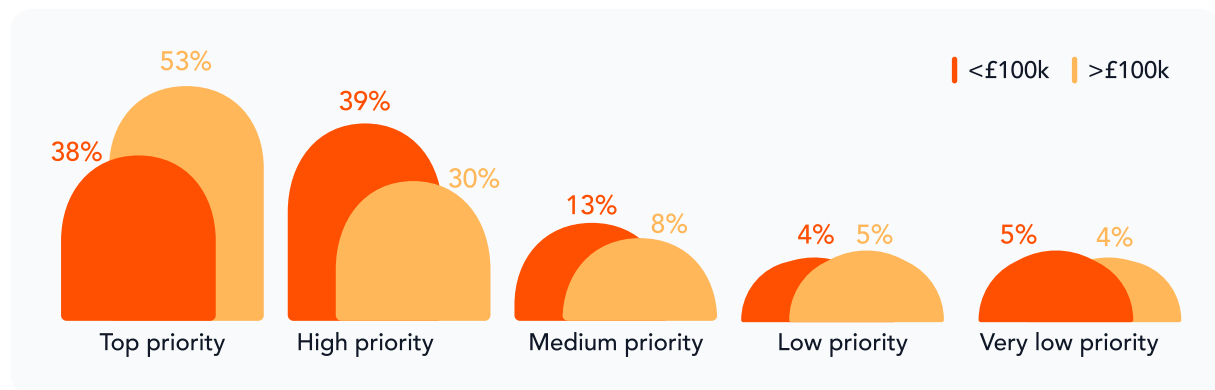
○ How much of a priority will sustainability be for your department over the next 3-5 years?

*\*All budgets*



## ○ How much of a priority will sustainability be for your department over the next 3-5 years?

Less than £100k vs over £100k annual spend



One of the standout findings from the survey was how important sustainability is to clients.

**81%** of all respondents marked it as a top or high priority for their departments over the next three to five years.

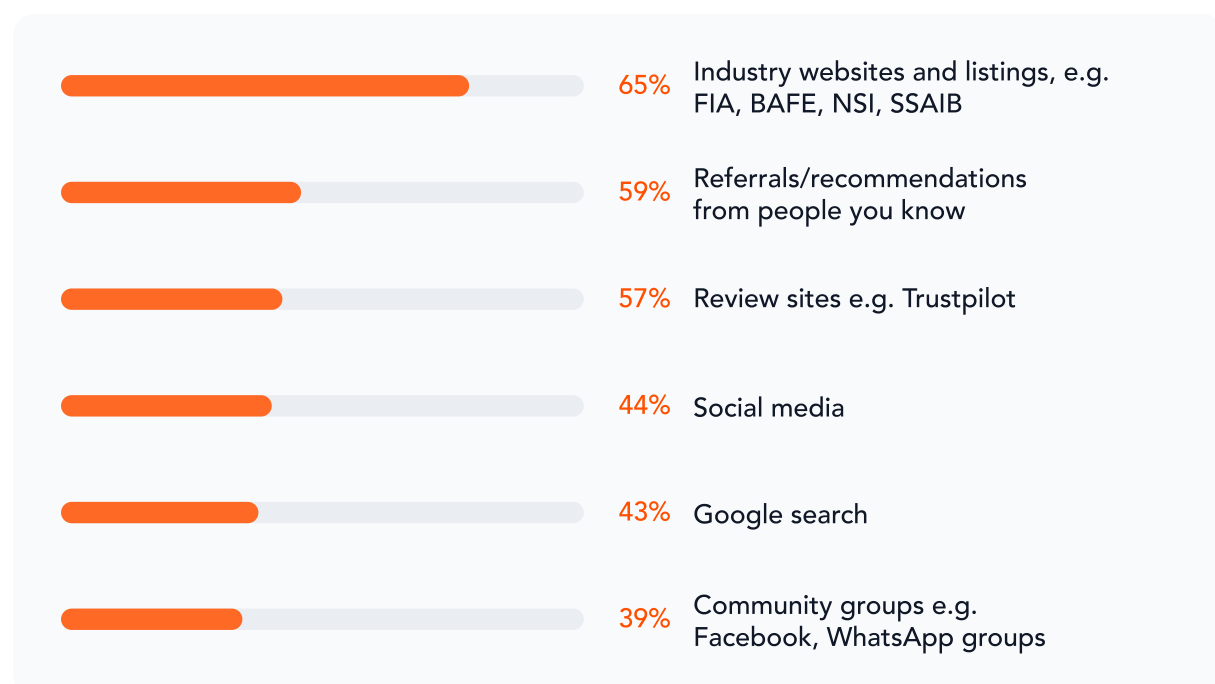
This is particularly true for companies with larger contracts. Over **50%** of those with current budgets exceeding £100k highlighted sustainability as a top priority.

Customers will increasingly expect their own supply chains to support their sustainability commitments and show how they are taking action in areas like carbon reduction, water conservation, and eliminating single-use plastics.

Having strong sustainability credentials might just be one of the best ways to gain a competitive advantage in 2024 and beyond

## 8. A strong online presence is essential

### ○ If you needed to find a new fire/security maintenance provider, how likely are you to use the following in your search?



A large part of winning contracts relies on being seen in the right place at the right times.

Respondents told us that they usually look for new providers on industry websites and listings (**65%**), through referrals (**59%**), and on review sites like Trustpilot (**57%**).

This shows how important it is to maintain a strong brand in the industry. Clients attach a lot of value to good reputation and reviews; if your customers know that you're worth working with, they'll be more likely to pay the going rate.

# 6 ways to win more contracts without dropping prices

## 1. Build your business around service quality

Quality is crucial for clients; **81%** who value it highly rate their providers as offering good or excellent value. So how do you stand out?

○	Invest in hiring, training, and upskilling the best engineers you can afford.
○	Providers we collaborate with who offer top-notch service quality conduct regular account reviews. They come to meetings equipped with performance stats and comprehensive reports of the work they've done.
○	Another thing customers particularly appreciate is transparency. Using software with in-built client portals, like Uptick, can be a game-changer from this point of view. You'll have instant access to your clients' service information at any time and from anywhere, and your clients will be able to monitor your performance in real time and ensure compliance across their portfolio.

## 2. Focus on customer satisfaction

With **42%** of clients renewing their fire and/or security contracts annually, being visible in the right places is crucial for drumming up new business.

A significant **65%** of potential customers check review sites like Trustpilot, and **59%** rely on word-of-mouth recommendations. This shows just how important it is to focus on excellent customer satisfaction.

Getting your happy customers to review their experience online can really boost your reputation. High levels of customer satisfaction help protect your profits by showcasing the value you provide, which helps justify your prices.

- If customers see the worth in what you do, they're more likely to agree to your rates without haggling.

### 3. Invest in sustainability

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Sustainability is quickly becoming a key factor for clients, especially the larger ones, when picking a fire/security maintenance provider.

Those who aim to improve and highlight their sustainability credentials are in a strong position to secure more contracts in the next five years, giving them an edge in competitive bids.

It's a good idea to start by identifying any sustainability quick wins, then outline a longer-term strategy to minimise your environmental impact. Here are some practical steps you might want to consider:

#### **Go digital**

Cut down on paper by digitising your operations. It's not just eco-friendly; it's also quicker and more efficient.

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#### **Switch to low-emission vehicles**

Moving to electric vehicles lowers emissions and shows your commitment to sustainability publicly.

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#### **Manage waste better**

Adopt better waste management practices to reduce emissions and natural resource consumption. Remember, even items like fire extinguishers can be recycled.

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#### **Choose greener equipment**

Opt for less harmful options, such as low-fluorine fire extinguishers, ones with water mist solutions, or clean agent fire extinguishers that leave no residue.

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#### **Audit your supply chain**

Encourage your suppliers to become more sustainable, or switch to more eco-friendly companies.

### 4. Embrace technology

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- **Modern technology is a game-changer for making your operations smoother and adding value to customers.**
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Indeed, we've seen that many clients would be interested in and would be willing to pay more for tech-based services. These include online customer portals, digital asset registers, online customer service, and online booking for maintenance or installation work.



We also saw that **81%** of clients expect providers to deliver service, remedial, and installation quotes in under two business days.

This is where modern cloud-based software, like Uptick, comes into play.

For instance, our platform streamlines the quote creation process, making it quicker, clearer, and more accurate.

Engineers can input details directly into the system, cutting down on the need for constant back-and-forth communication and allowing quotes to be issued swiftly.

Uptick also tackles the challenge of keeping up with changing industry standards, ensuring that the latest information is always available on the platform.

This not only speeds up your response times but also positions you ahead of the competition. You can capture and convert opportunities faster, impressing clients and winning more business, all without the need to lower your prices.

## 5. Build your brand

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A well-maintained brand can go a long way in strengthening your negotiating power.

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- **With 65% of clients looking for new fire and security maintenance providers via industry websites and listings, it's a smart move to list your company on websites such as BAFE and NSI.**
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These sites not only increase your visibility but also help connect you with businesses looking for local providers, supporting a more sustainable service approach.

Improving your online presence is another key step. Start by polishing your profiles on professional networks such as LinkedIn and then consider working on your website's local search engine optimisation (SEO). Effective SEO helps potential clients discover you more easily when they're searching for services like yours online.

These improvements will make you more discoverable and attractive to potential clients.

## 6. Broaden your service offer

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Diversifying your services to meet more client needs can significantly boost your value proposition.

Our survey revealed a strong demand for various additional services, such as after-hours support, online customer service, and specialised training. Many providers are already broadening their service offerings, understanding the high value customers place on comprehensive, all-in-one solutions.

As such, it's worth reviewing your current services and thinking about how minor adjustments to your operations could help you develop and promote new services to potential clients.

This might include exploring further training for teams or trialling new tools that could improve service delivery.

For example, **64%** of customers indicated they would pay more for access to an online portal that consolidates property details, compliance information, quotes, and reports – just like the one we've built at Uptick.

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- Using and applying these insights not only allows you to maintain your pricing, but could also create opportunities to increase it. It shows clients, especially those with big projects, that you understand and can meet their needs beyond just offering a competitive price.
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## About Uptick

**Modern job  
management software  
purpose-built for the  
fire & security industry.**

We are passionate about improving the safety of the buildings we all live and work in, and we believe that there is a better way to maintain building safety.

This belief drives our development of a modern, cloud-based solution that focuses on intelligent digitised job management for building maintenance and compliance:

✓	Get more jobs done.
✓	Send service reports instantly.
✓	Turn quotes around in 24hrs.
✓	Win more business.

By providing innovative solutions to our customers' problems, we're helping them to excel within their businesses every day. This ultimately leads to safer buildings across the world.

Trusted by hundreds of fire & security businesses across the world, our customers collectively maintain more than one million buildings across three continents.

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**UPTICK**