

SIGNAL PAPER · 01

# The Luxury Leak

*Why premium businesses lose clients  
between channels.*

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Malissa Thorpe · [malissathorpe.com](http://malissathorpe.com)

Malissa Thorpe

*Where your service becomes assets.*

## Something doesn't add up

I came across a luxury travel agency recently. Twenty-five years in the business. Corporate and executive clients. VIP service. They've built something real over a long time and their clients clearly trust them.

Their website can't take a booking.

Then there's a wellness retreat. Award-winning. Over two decades of operation. The kind of place guests describe in a hush. Their homepage says 'Private. Bespoke. Like no other.'

Their enquiry form has a CAPTCHA.

These aren't bad businesses. They're excellent businesses run by people who genuinely care about what they do. But something isn't adding up. The promise they're making and the experience their systems actually deliver are two different things. And the gap between those two is quietly costing them, in ways they probably haven't measured.

## Where the gap shows up

Picture this. A high-net-worth client emails your team on Monday about an upcoming trip. On Wednesday, they message your Instagram with a follow-up question. On Friday, they call your office to confirm details.

Three interactions. Three channels. In most premium businesses, three different people see those messages. And none of them know about the other two.

The client doesn't understand your internal setup. They just know they had to repeat themselves. And for someone paying a premium, someone who chose your business specifically because you promised personalised, anticipatory service, having to repeat themselves feels like you weren't listening.

That's the most obvious version of the problem, but it runs deeper than that.

When a staff member takes a call, do they know this person emailed yesterday? When someone leaves and a new hire starts, does the client relationship survive the handover? Because in most premium businesses, client knowledge lives in individual memories and inboxes. That's not a system. That's a liability.

Then there's what happens after the experience itself. A guest checks out of your retreat on Sunday and says 'that was incredible, I'll be back.' What happens on Monday? In most businesses: nothing. No personalised follow-up. No reference to what they actually enjoyed. No gentle nudge three months later. The warmth fades and the rebooking doesn't happen.

And then there's the front door. Your website says 'personalised service.' But a prospect fills in your contact form and gets a generic auto-reply. When they call, nobody knows they've already been in touch. The promise was premium. The first experience was generic.

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## WHY LUXURY IS DIFFERENT

### What the best texts on luxury tell us

There's a book that changed how I think about this. *The Luxury Strategy* by Kapferer and Bastien (the definitive text on luxury brand management) lays out what they call the 'anti-laws of marketing.' Rules that luxury brands need to follow precisely because they're the opposite of what mass-market businesses do.

#### **Protect clients from non-clients**

A luxury business should be able to treat a returning VIP differently from a first-time enquiry. Not because someone remembered and scrambled, but because the system knows and responds accordingly.

#### **Luxury must be earned**

The experience of becoming a client should feel curated. But that only works if you can actually track where someone is in the relationship (from first enquiry to loyal advocate) and treat each stage differently.

#### **It's not the price that makes luxury**

Luxury makes the price. What justifies a premium isn't the product alone. It's every touchpoint around the product. Every follow-up. Every moment where the client thinks 'they remembered.' That's what makes the price feel right.

None of that is possible when your client conversations are scattered across nine different platforms and nobody has the full picture.

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## WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

### What it looks like when it works

A prospective guest visits your website and fills in an enquiry form. Before they close their browser, they get a response that actually acknowledges what they asked about. Not a generic 'thanks for your enquiry!'

The next morning, a team member opens one screen and sees that enquiry alongside yesterday's Instagram DM from a returning guest and a WhatsApp message from a corporate client confirming dates. One view. Three conversations. Nothing lost.

When the new prospect calls two days later, whoever answers the phone already knows who they are, what they asked about, and how they prefer to be contacted. After their first stay, they get a follow-up that references their actual experience. Three months later, a gentle reminder. Six months later, something curated based on what they loved last time.

None of this requires more staff. None of it requires a six-month IT project. It requires connecting the tools you probably already have so they actually talk to each other.

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#### THE HARD TRUTH

## The gap you probably have

Most premium businesses have some version of a system. An email platform. A social media scheduler. A booking tool. Maybe a CRM someone set up three years ago that nobody's opened since.

The tools aren't the problem. The problem is the gaps between them. And in those gaps, clients fall through.

Here's the thing that surprised me when I started looking at luxury businesses specifically: the better the business, the bigger the gap tends to be. Because the team is so good at personal service that they've been covering for the lack of systems with sheer effort and memory. It works brilliantly, until someone goes on holiday. Or leaves. Or the business grows past the point where one person can hold it all in their head.

*The irony of luxury businesses is that the better the team, the longer the systems problem stays hidden.*

BECAUSE GOOD PEOPLE COMPENSATE. UNTIL THEY CAN'T.

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#### NEXT STEP

## What to do about it

You don't need to replace everything. You don't need a digital transformation. You need someone to look at what you've got, find where it's leaking, and show you what to fix first.

That's what a Second Opinion is.

It's a structured review of your marketing and communications setup. Not your strategy. Your plumbing. The channels, the connections between them, the follow-up systems, the consistency of how your brand communicates, the client journey from first contact through to loyal advocate.

You get a written report. Where you are now. What's leaking and where. Three things to fix first. And a clear next step if you want to go further.

It takes about 90 minutes of your time. You keep the report whether or not we work together.

Let me review your marketing setup.

You'll get a written report showing what's leaking and what to fix first.

From \$750. Yours to keep either way.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malissa Thorpe builds marketing systems for luxury and premium businesses. She connects every channel into one view, defines how brands communicate, and makes sure the infrastructure actually delivers on the promise. She has done this across multiple industries and markets for more than a decade.

malissathorpe.com · malissa@malissathorpe.com · Book a Second Opinion

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