

# Crack the Client Happiness Code

HOW TO TRANSFORM THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE IN YOUR BUSINESS

YOUR EXPERIENCE  
What do your clients expect?

CLIENT HAPPINESS  
How can you delight them?



REASONS  
WHY YOUR  
CLIENTS  
DON'T  
REBOOK

*plus*

The best free tool to improve your client consultations

 **timely**

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# Introduction

Would you love to have ZERO client complaints? Are you forever trying to increase your client retention rate? Do you want your salon, barber shop or spa to be raved about?

If you can create an effortless, memorable experience for your clients, they'll keep coming back. Even better, they'll tell their friends. Your business will grow and your profit will skyrocket.

And, we are here to make that happen for you.

We've interviewed hundreds of beauty and hair clients from around the world to find out what they love about a salon, barber shop or spa experience - and what they hate.

We've got the insights and info you need to be able to exceed your client's expectations and ensure your calendar stays fill.

Are you ready to overhaul the client experience in your business? Let's get started!

# 1 / Why client experience matters

If you can make your clients feel valued, they'll keep coming back and they'll recommend you to their friends. Our research proves that client experience is the single most important part of your business.

## Treat 'em

Clients view beauty or hair services as a 'treat' and they expect the best, especially if they're paying a lot for their treatments or services. Nearly 50% of the people we interviewed only 'treat' themselves every two to six months, so it's important to make each visit count.

Want another reason? 60% of clients often or always will pay more for a better experience.

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE EACH VISIT COUNT



“It’s the little things. Walking in and having smiles greet you, your stylist knowing your regime, and a herbal tea to sip while your colour develops.

A hairdresser who’s confident about your session injects confidence into the outcome too - feeling like they know what they’re doing gives you rose-coloured glasses when you look in the mirror.”



## Keep 'em

Great service keeps your clients coming back - and client retention is the key to a thriving business. Just over 20% of survey respondents have been going to the same salon for 2-4 years, while 6.1% have been going to the same salon for more than a decade.

CLIENT RETENTION ISN'T EASY



## Referrals & reputation

The best gift a client can give you is referring their friends and family to your business. Our survey found that nearly 50% of people found their salon, barber shop or spa through a recommendation.

On the other hand, bad news can travel fast and clients can be pretty unforgiving! One bad review on social media can really damage your business's reputation. Our survey unearthed some shocking experiences - from blue hair to burnt scalps and everything in between.

A whopping 86% of those surveyed said a bad experience was enough to turn them off a business, while 89% said a bad 'do' or treatment would see them switch to another business.

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION



“Once I was at a salon for hours as the stylist completely ruined the color and spent ages trying to fix it. She still charged me full price despite the drama.”

## 2 / Six reasons why your clients don't rebook *(and how you can change their minds)*

Ever wondered why you never see some clients again? Our survey revealed some harsh home truths. If you're struggling to keep your clients, we've got some surefire ways to keep them coming back.

### 1. Botched services/treatments

We've all heard the horror stories! Clients ultimately judge an experience based on the quality of service/treatment delivered. The majority (62%) of people we surveyed won't go back to a business if they're unhappy with the treatment quality.



## How to turn botched services/ treatments around:

### DO THIS

- ✓ Be honest if you or one of your colleagues has made a mistake.
- ✓ Offer to fix the mistake free of charge and suggest a discount on their next service, too.
- ✓ Train your staff to manage client complaints. Have a clear escalation point in the business if things go wrong.
- ✓ Offer clients the opportunity to submit formal feedback (via a digital or paper survey).

### DON'T DO THIS

- ✗ Ask the client to pay for a botched treatment.
- ✗ Be surly or rude if something goes wrong. A sincere apology will go a long way.

“My hair turned blue, and the stylist blamed my hair. Not herself. I never went back. Left the salon in tears and refused to pay for it. It took a year before I went near a hairdresser again.”

## 2. Poor client experience

It's like the old adage says: 'people won't always remember what you said, but they'll remember how you made them feel'.

Clients are often nervous to try a new salon for the first time - and nearly 15% of survey respondents told us they won't rebook with a business if the client service is poor.

“If I don't feel valued or treated with respect (or I see/ hear others disrespected) I won't return. First impressions last!”

They also notice how you interact with your colleagues - survey respondents said that gossiping on the salon floor is a massive turn-off. Being welcoming and respectful will go a long way towards making them feel valued.

“I was ignored by staff completely whilst they talked obnoxiously about others. Totally unprofessional.”

# How to turn poor client experience around:

## DO THIS

- ✓ Make sure your staff are warm, approachable and professional at all times.
- ✓ Check in regularly with your staff. Make sure they get one-on-one time with you as a manager so they've got the chance to vent any frustrations in a more private setting.
- ✓ Get your staff to 'mystery shop' at competitor businesses to help them understand the importance of a positive attitude.

## DON'T DO THIS

- ✗ Allow your staff to gossip about other clients or colleagues - it's inappropriate and disrespectful, plus it kills the atmosphere of your business.
- ✗ Overwork your staff - they need breaks to be at their best.

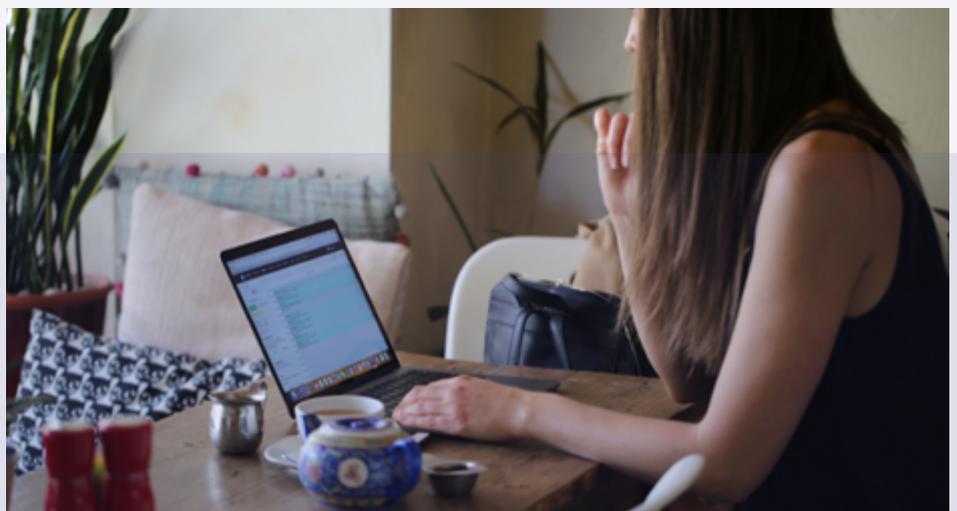
### 3. Booking woes

Your clients are busy people and they want convenience. More than 22% of respondents told us that ease of booking is a key reason for staying with a salon.

If it's difficult to make an appointment because you don't have an online booking option or your phone is always busy, they might give up and go elsewhere.



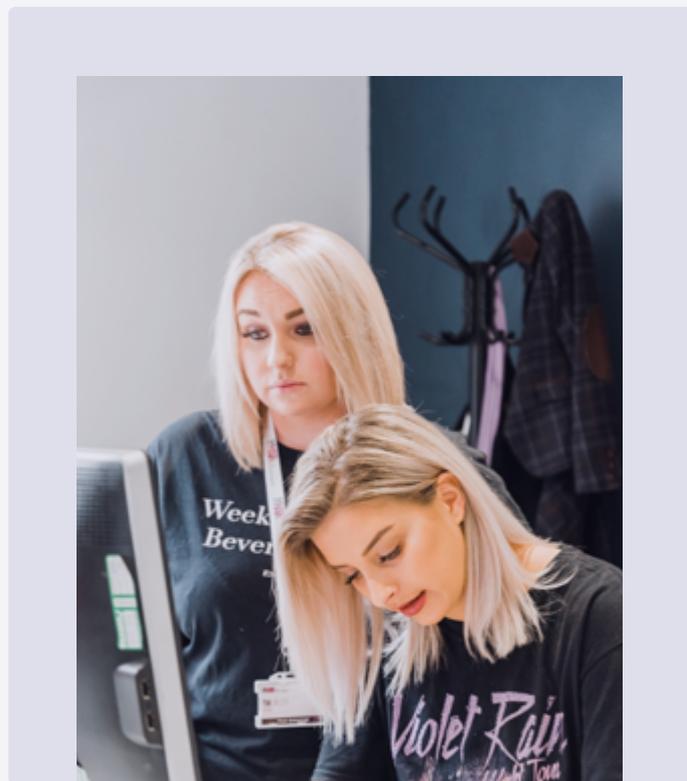
“Hard to book... starts the journey with a bad taste (and I always assume they're a bit old school when it's like that - not who I want doing my hair).”



# How to turn your booking woes around:

## DO THIS

- ✓ Offer seamless online booking. With online booking, your clients can book, rebook, and edit their appointments themselves - at a time that suits them. Timely's online booking integrates with your Facebook, Instagram or your website.
  
- ✓ Be flexible. Send an SMS to your clients (Timely has a built-in SMS service) when last minute cancellations crop up. This means your salon stays full and your clients feel loved.



## DON'T DO THIS

- ✗ Be too rigid with your appointment times. Survey your clients to understand popular booking times and adjust your staff rosters accordingly.

## 4. Rush, rush, rush!

It's totally obvious to clients when you and your staff are overwhelmed. The quality of service slips, appointments run behind and clients feel rushed and undervalued. One survey respondent described their least favourite salon visit as being "a conveyor belt experience".

No one likes to be 'handed off' to a list of different stylists, especially if it seems that none of them have the time to complete their task properly or really care about the outcome. Your clients deserve better.

“It's nice to not feel rushed at the end - to have a couple of minutes between appointments, so the stylist doesn't feel pressured to get you out of the chair, and the person at the front counter has time for a little chat, and so on.”

## How to turn looking rushed around:

### DO THIS

- ✓ Get full visibility of your schedule and spot opportunities to gain time efficiencies - with Timely's calendar management software, it's never been so easy to get a handle on your schedule.
- ✓ Plan ahead for busy periods and reorganise your rosters accordingly. Your clients and your staff will thank you!



### DON'T DO THIS

- ✗ Forget that your clients come to you to unwind and relax. Rushing them through their treatment will leave them feeling undervalued and stressed.



## 5. This place is a mess!

No one likes mess, unpleasant smells or grime, especially when they're treating themselves to a salon visit. Your business should be an oasis of cleanliness and calm that clients look forward to visiting (and feel sad to leave).

Cleanliness is crucial in the hair and beauty industry, but our survey found that some salons fall well short. An overwhelming amount of survey respondents noticed when their stylist/therapist had snuck out for a smoke. No one likes cigarette breath!

“Barber smelt like cigarettes, the salon was untidy with the hair of previous clients still everywhere.”

# How to turn a messy looking business around:

## DO THIS

- ✓ Remind your staff that clean nails, hands, and hair are non-negotiable. Always have mints and perfume on hand for them (and encourage smokers to give fags the flick!)
- ✓ Put together a cleaning checklist to tick off at various points during the day and set up a roster to make sure things are being done.

## DON'T DO THIS

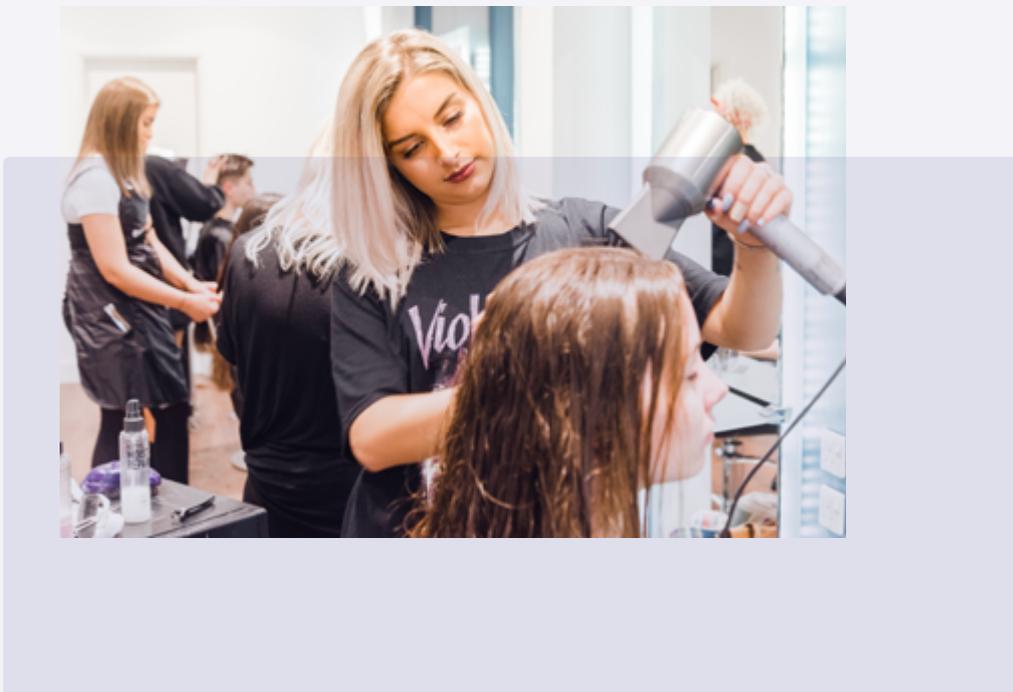
- ✗ Neglect to check-in with staff on the floor regularly to ensure that their workspaces are clean and tidy.
- ✗ Forget to look after the basics: sweep up hair, collect up used towels, empty bins. Remind your staff that if they've got time to lean, they've got time to clean!

## 6. Unclear pricing and services

No one likes a nasty surprise, especially when it comes to money. Nearly 49.8% of people surveyed told us that affordability was one of their top priorities when it came to hair and beauty treatments.



“I like to be aware of an approximate cost prior to treatment, instead of an unexpected bill after!”



## How to turn unclear pricing and services around:

### DO THIS

- ✓ Review your service/treatment menu and make sure prices are clear.
- ✓ Train your staff to discuss potential costs with clients and ensure that they're happy before the treatment starts.

### DON'T DO THIS

- ✗ Forget the importance of pre-service consultations, especially if it's the client's first time at your salon, or they're embarking on a major new treatment (more on this later!)

Add hidden costs to the bill at the end - if you charge extra for a blow dry after a cut, then make sure this is spelled out to the client when they make their booking.

## 3 / What your clients expect from their salon visit (*and how you can make it happen*)

Do you know what your clients want, what they really, really want? We do - here's what they told us they expect from your business.

### 1. Seamless online booking

Nearly 50% of survey respondents told us they prefer online booking and many said clunky booking systems or painful phone calls are a turn off.

“An online booking system would be great! My current hair stylist has too many clients, so I need to book my appointments for the year to make sure I get one at a suitable time.”

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Start the experience off on the front foot, with seamless online booking (we reckon our online booking option is pretty slick). Bonus points for automated appointment reminders!

## 2. Consultation & personalisation

Every client wants to feel special - they want you to know their individual needs and tailor your services accordingly.

“The fact that they read my notes to see how I’ve been progressing my style or colour and asking how it feels for me is nice. I am currently growing out my colour to grey. There are no questions why, just advice on the best way to style and products to use.”

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

You already have the tools and knowledge to customise services for each client - but you can take it a step further by suggesting special add-on treatments to take their experience to the next level. Keep detailed client notes (Timely’s client management features make this easy) that you can reference at their next appointment.

### 3. A relationship based on trust

More than 60% of those surveyed listed ‘a good relationship with my stylist/therapist’ as the top reason why they returned to a salon.



“A hairdresser who’s confident about your session injects confidence into the outcome too. Being able to walk in, relax, and have my trusty hairdresser just take care of things is why it would be extremely hard to move me away.”

#### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Good relationships are based on trust and transparency - be honest with your client during the consultation about how much the recommended services will cost and how long they will take. This stops clients from being surprised by a large bill.

If a client’s requested look isn’t achievable in one session, make sure to manage their expectations. Remind them that going from brunette to ash blonde in one go isn’t possible, but explain how you’ll eventually get her the outcome she’s after.



## 4. Savvy social skills

Each client has unique needs and expectations. Communication skills are super important when it comes to the client experience.

“The hairdresser made me feel comfortable. That was very important to me because I’m quite an awkward person. She gauged how much conversation I wanted.”

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Read your client - know when they’re keen for a chat, and when they’d prefer to have quiet time. Respect their boundaries, and don’t probe for personal details.

## 5. Quality treatments/services, every time.

This is a no-brainer - nearly 70% of survey respondents say quality treatments are their top reason for rebooking.

“The best experience is when I come out feeling well, confident and happy with my hair, and this feeling lasts. This has not happened often - usually I’m in a rush to get home to wash out whatever goop has been applied. The very best experience was when the hair stylist listened to me about my hair, didn’t try anything fancy, but used his knowledge and skill to manage my curls. I looked - and felt - great for weeks!”

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

There’s no better feeling than seeing a client confident, glowing and over the moon with their refreshed hair or skin. Make sure your staff are constantly trained and up to date with new techniques, so they can deliver the best possible results for your clients.

## 6. Great salon atmosphere and ambience

For a lot of your clients, the salon is an escape from the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives. People want new experiences and sensations.

“I love when it’s a calm space - not too noisy, not too quiet - and it feels like everyone is one of your ‘girls’.

When the space creates that kind of comfort then it’s a good experience.”

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Look at your salon through fresh eyes and evaluate everything from the décor and the drinks to what your staff wear to work and how they answer the phone. Why go through the trouble? Because it means clients almost ALWAYS get a delightful experience.

## 7. Recognition of their loyalty

More than 70% of survey respondents told us they'd never visited a salon with a loyalty programme, which is a massive missed business opportunity.



“I think offer some loyalty or package discount for whatever you get regularly. Even if just around birthdays etc. It's bloody expensive and I would happily go more often if it was more affordable.”

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Keep your clients coming back with a points system, loyalty card, birthday discounts, product discounts or a 'refer a friend' incentive. Tailor your programme to your clients and your business - offer unique rewards that reflect what you do.

Luckily for you, we've whipped up a [list of loyalty program ideas](#) to get you started - check it out!

## 4 / Meet the game-changing tool that can transform your business

So, do you want your clients to feel loved and listened to?

Do you want to stay on top of the services they receive when they're with you?

If the answers to both those questions is YES (and we hope it is!), then you need to get a genuine consultation programme working in your business.

Just over 60% of people surveyed told us they were familiar with pre-service consultations, but they had mixed feelings about their worth.



“(The consultation) made me feel really confident that I could get the long term outcome I desired. It gave me much more realistic expectations of how quickly I could get what I desired and the stages and time frames I should expect to get there.”



Done well, a consultation will lead to a better outcome for all - the client will feel valued and they'll get a great result from their treatment. If you do them half-heartedly, your clients feel like you're going through the motions or being pushy about products.

Here's how to make great consultations part of the service at your place.

## Why are consultations so important?

Consultations allow you to gather information from your client, understand their goals and recommend the right products or treatments.

The key to a great consultation is understanding the client's needs and expectations, which are then recorded and signed off by the client and the stylist or therapist. That way, you can move forward together and you are both accountable for the end results.

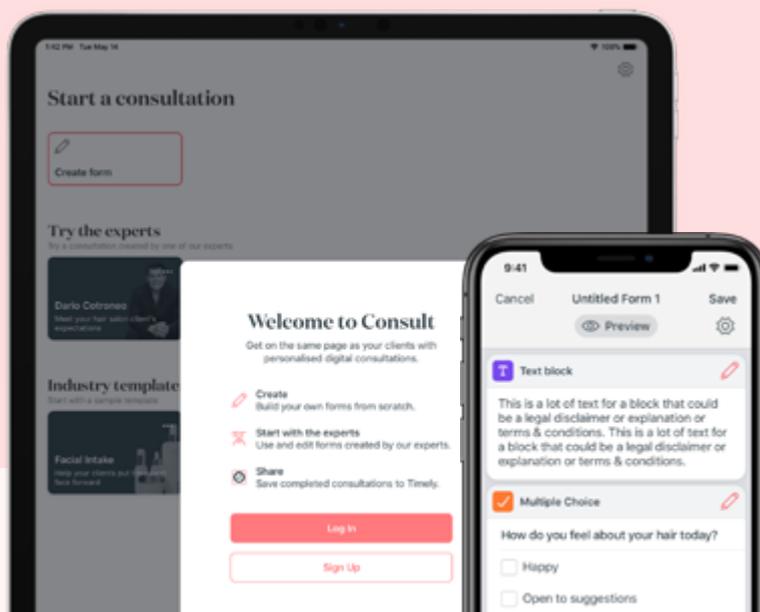
Timely's clever Consult App helps you stay on track with consultations and results, and you can tailor it to suit your business. You can use Consult for client intake forms, consultations, client waivers, consent, patch testing, and more.



## Customisable client forms. Free to everyone.

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 App Store



## How do we make them worthwhile?

Make sure all your staff know how to deliver a thorough and genuine consultation. Not sure where to start? We've got a fab free template on the Consult app you can use as a starting point when designing one to suit your business and your clients.



## 5 / Surefire ways to surprise and delight your clients

Want to know how to keep your clients happy? Our survey respondents gave us inside info into what they love about their favourite salons. Everyone's different, but the businesses that go the extra distance really get noticed.

Check out this list for some inspiration:

“The haircut is always great but it's the other stuff they do that makes me come back.”



## When they book

- ✓ Make booking easy! Online booking is brilliant for you and your clients, especially if you use a system like Timely that also sends them automated appointment reminders.
- ✓ If they prefer booking by phone or email, make sure your systems are integrated so everyone's on the same page.
- ✓ How's your social media presence? Do your accounts reflect your salon and the values of your business? Do they invite potential clients to book, or to call in for a consult? With Timely, you can even add a booking button directly to your Instagram and Facebook account. Clients will get inspiration from your posts and book straight away!

## When they arrive

- ✓ Parking can be tricky at busy city salons. Help your clients out by offering special parking rates if you can.
- ✓ Love free wifi? So do your clients. Make sure they know how to access your network from the moment they walk in the door.
- ✓ Don't forget the basics - take their coats and bags, offer them a drink and a comfortable seat. Make them feel valued from the moment they arrive.

## During the treatment/service

- ✓ Being pampered can be hungry and thirsty work, especially if you're skipping lunch to get your hair done. Offer a range of food and drink options - some salons get kudos for their home baking, others charm their clients by providing freshly squeezed OJ, craft beer and wine.
- ✓ Life is busy and lots of your clients might be squeezing in their appointment during working hours. They'll love it if you can find a space where they can get through their emails while their colour develops. Bonus points if they can plug into a charging dock while they wait too!
- ✓ That said, not everyone wants to be plugged into their laptop while they're having their hair done. Make sure you've got a range of reading material for them to choose from that reflects the look and feel of your salon.
- ✓ Don't ever skimp on head massages! An overwhelming majority of survey respondents said that head massages were a gamechanger - and what keeps em' coming back!
- ✓ Take your time at the end of the service and offer tips on how they can style and dry their hair at home.

## When they leave

- ✓ Keep a stash of inexpensive umbrellas at reception to offer clients when it's pouring. There's nothing worse than rain ruining your new 'do!
- ✓ Did you recommend a product they can use at home? Give them a free sample so they can test it out in their own time. Make a note of it so you can follow up at their next appointment.



## After-care

- ✓ Make clients feel cared about by dropping them a line in the week after their visit to make sure they're happy. Timely allows for custom SMS marketing and email messages to be sent whenever you like. Just set and forget!
- ✓ If you haven't seen a client for a while, a friendly follow-up SMS offering a special deal or promotion could be the key to getting them back through the door.

Keeping your clients happy is the key to great business success. If your clients feel valued, they'll look forward to their treatments and they'll be more likely to recommend your services to their friends.

We hope the insights we've provided inspire you to make changes in your business, because if you treat your clients well, you'll see real rewards. It's a win-win - and we love that.

# Are you ready to lift your client experience?

Do you want an appointment booking software with built-in features that help you lift the client experience? Why not give our software a spin? Whether it's seamless online booking, or automated appointment reminders, Timely has all the tools to make delivering an exceptional experience, effortless.

[Start free trial now](#)

NO CREDIT CARD REQUIRED.  
NO CONTRACTS, AND TRANSPARENT PRICING.



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