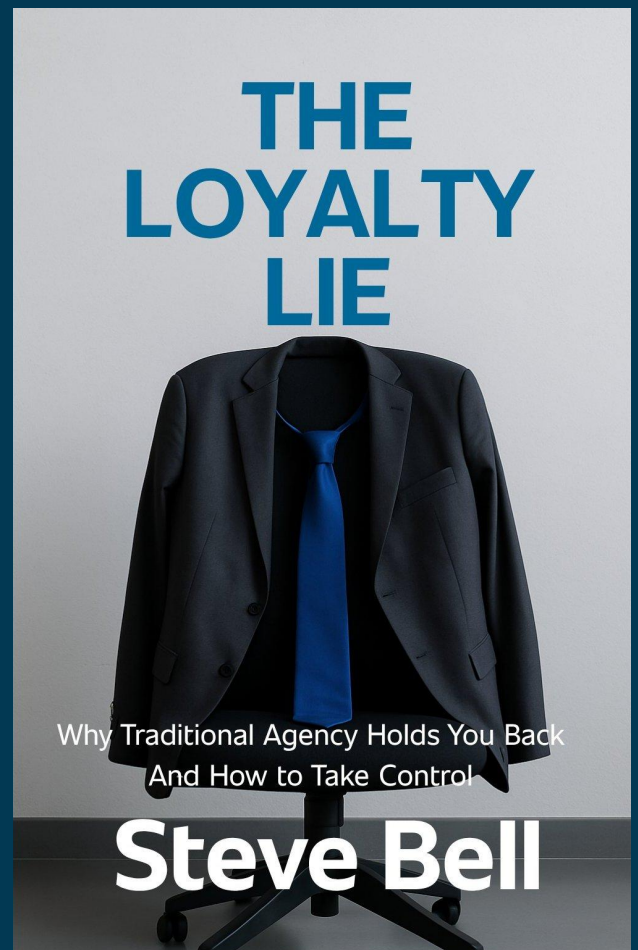


The Loyalty Lie

Why Traditional Agency Holds You Back

And How to Take Control

Steve Bell



The Loyalty Lie

Why Traditional Agency Holds You Back

And How to Take Control

Steve Bell



I Wrote This Book For You

If you're reading this, something's bothering you.

It might be a quiet frustration, the kind that creeps in during your commute or hits you in those rare moments when your phone stops ringing and you have a second to think.

Maybe you're one of the top performers in your office, the one who's always relied on to pull a deal over the line. The one with the highest fees, the strongest relationships, the cleanest pipeline. And yet, you're still stuck living paycheck to paycheck.

Or maybe it's the constant pressure. Not the useful kind that drives performance, but the arbitrary, shifting targets handed down from someone who hasn't listed a property in ten years. The kind of pressure that has nothing to do with results, and everything to do with protecting someone else's position.

Or maybe it's worse than that. Maybe you've realised that despite working your arse off — being the person who others come to for advice, who trains the juniors, who turns chaos into completions — you're still being managed like a trainee who can't be trusted to send an email without sign-off.

And you've started to wonder: Is this really it?

I get it. I've been there.

A few years back, I made what I thought was a clever move. I left one of the big national corporates to join a mid-sized regional firm. On paper, it ticked all the boxes. Smaller team, less red tape, more visibility, more voice. The classic "big fish in a small pond" move. I thought I'd finally get the recognition, the flexibility, and the reward I'd earned.

What I actually got was a front-row seat to how broken the system really is.

I was part of a commercial agency team of six. Over the course of the year, I billed more than double the rest of the team combined. Let that sink in. Not more than any one person — more than everyone else added together.

The system isn't broken. It's working exactly the way it was designed to. Just not for me.

My salary didn't move. My commission structure didn't improve. I wasn't treated like the rainmaker — just the reliable one. The one they could lean on to get the numbers up, but still micromanage when it came to what I posted online or how I ran my diary.

I was asked to sit in pointless meetings. To do admin that served no commercial value whatsoever, except to make the boss look busy in front of the board. And that's when it hit me. The system isn't broken. It's working exactly the way it was designed to. Just not for me.

This book is for people who've had that realisation. It's for the agents who are starting to see the cracks. The ones who feel undervalued, overmanaged, and increasingly unmotivated. The ones who have outgrown their job, but aren't sure what the next step looks like.

Because here's the harsh truth: the system won't change. It's not designed to evolve. It's designed to extract. But you can change. And this book is here to show you how.

What you will find is a straight-talking, unfiltered breakdown of how the commercial agency model really works. Where it traps people. Where it limits growth. And how you can step out of it, without burning everything down behind you.

By the end, you'll either feel confident that where you are is still right for you, or you'll have the clarity and tools to do something different.

Because here's what I know for sure: you're not stuck. You're not powerless. And you're definitely not alone.

Let's get into it.

The Truth No One Tells You

When you started in this industry, someone probably told you this:

“Work hard, be consistent, and you’ll do well here.”

“Stick with us, and the rewards will come.”

“Put in the hours, follow the process, and your time will come.”

Sound familiar? It’s the industry’s origin myth. A promise dressed up as a principle.

But here’s the thing: you **have** worked hard. You have shown up day after day, taken the calls, booked the viewings, managed the chaos, stayed late, and gone the extra mile more times than you can count.

And what have you got to show for it? A pat on the back from your manager? A small bump in commission, still capped by a structure that punishes success more than it rewards it? A vague nod toward a promotion that never quite makes it to paper?

Let’s be honest: you’re not in control of your career. You might be brilliant at the job. You might even be the top biller in your office. But that doesn’t mean freedom. It doesn’t mean leverage. It doesn’t even mean security.

In the traditional commercial agency model, it means one thing: **you’re valuable enough to keep, but not valuable enough to back.**

Your base salary is just low enough to keep the pressure on. Your commission is just high enough to keep you chasing. Your praise is just rationed enough to keep you hoping. And the carrot that keeps you going? A promotion or profit share or title or slice of the business that’s always just out of reach.

You’re the engine of the business, but you don’t drive the direction.

This is the trap. You’re the engine of the business, but you don’t drive the direction. You’re bringing in fees that pay for the roof over everyone’s head, but you’re still being asked to justify your value in quarterly reviews.

The moment you start asking questions — why am I only getting 10%? Why can’t I make decisions on my own patch? Why am I still reporting to someone who hasn’t done a deal in years? — that’s the moment you become a threat to the system.

Because here's the uncomfortable truth: the system isn't built for you. It's built for the owners. The shareholders. The managers who don't list anymore. The ones who benefit most when people like you keep producing, without ever questioning who's really profiting.

And the cleverest part? Most agents never question it. They normalise it. They joke about it in WhatsApp groups. They nod along in Monday meetings and say things like, "That's the game, isn't it?" But what if it's not?

Because here's the truth no one tells you: the traditional commercial agency model is brilliant — but only if you're the one who owns it. It's brilliant for building a brand, a pipeline, a legacy, off the back of other people's time, talent, and energy. But for you? It's a ceiling.

A system that caps your income, your autonomy, and your growth — the moment you start to realise what you're truly capable of.

And here's what happens when you hit that ceiling: you either shrink yourself to fit it... or you smash your way through it. **This book is about that second option.**

Because once you've seen the trap, you can't unsee it. And once you realise you're the one bringing in the value, the only logical next step is to start building something that gives you your fair share of it.

Let's get to work.

The Industry's Dirty Little Secret

Let's pull back the curtain.

Most commercial agents walk around thinking they're in business for themselves. They say it proudly. "I run my own desk." "I'm in charge of my clients." "I build my own pipeline."

But let's be honest: they're not in business for themselves. They're in business for someone else, and most of them don't even realise it.

Because here's the dirty little secret that hardly anyone in the industry is willing to say out loud:

The traditional agency model isn't built to reward performance. It's built to protect margin.

That's the truth. You bring in a deal. You're the one out there doing the hard miles: conducting the viewings, handling the negotiations, calming the nerves of clients, dealing with time-wasting buyers, keeping solicitors from dragging their feet, taking "urgent" calls when you're supposed to be at home with your kids.

The deal completes. The business gets paid. The invoice is big. Everyone's happy. Except you, because what do you get?

- 5%, if you're lucky.
- 10% if you've made yourself indispensable.
- 15% if you've somehow beaten the system and the MD owes you a favour.

And the rest? It disappears upstairs. Quietly. Automatically. Into a pot you don't control and bonuses you'll never see.

You're not being paid in proportion to the value you create.

That's the model. And for the people at the top, it's genius. It's low-risk, high-margin. They don't need to win clients, negotiate deals, or hold the line when things get tough. They just need people like you to keep producing, without asking too many questions.

Because you're not being paid in proportion to the value you create. You're being paid in proportion to how cheap it is to keep you there.

I know this because I've lived it.

In my last employed role, I asked for a promotion. Not a handout. Not a favour. Just the next logical step for someone who was consistently outperforming expectations. I was told, “Invoice £X and we’ll talk.” So I did. I hit the target, and then some.

Their response? They asked me to head up the commercial agency team. Said I’d be made Head of Commercial Agency. So I took it on. I led the team. I delivered again. But the title? Never appeared. The pay rise? Didn’t happen. The promotion? Still “in discussion.”

I wasn’t being rewarded. I was being used. Why? Because I was easy to keep. I was loyal. Committed. I cared about the business. And that made me the ideal person to overpromise to, because I wouldn’t walk away straight away.

That’s how the model works. The moment you start to realise your own value — the moment you stop just being “grateful” and start asking for a fair return — that’s when you become dangerous.

And the response? Flattery. You’ll be told you’re a “core part of the business.” That there are “big plans” for you. But what they really mean is: *“Don’t leave. We haven’t finished profiting from your effort yet.”*

This isn’t just about money. It’s about ownership. Recognition. Respect. And the traditional model is designed to give you just enough of each to keep you loyal, without ever giving you control.

Because the moment you take control — start asking for more, building your own brand, pushing for autonomy — the model stops working for them. You might realise clients come to you, not the logo. You might start thinking about how much more you’d earn if you cut out the middlemen.

And that’s a problem. For them. Because now you’re not just an agent. You’re a flight risk.

That’s why so many businesses spend more time managing people than leading them. Why they create layers of reporting, KPIs, pointless meetings, and rigid processes that stifle initiative. It’s not about productivity. It’s about containment.

They know what you’re worth. They’re just hoping you never figure it out.