

Economy prompts clients to quit longstanding service relationships

By Laura Petrecca, USA Today

Joanne Paholak agonized for months.

This decision would save time and money. But it could also hurt the feelings – as well as affect the income – of someone she cared about.

Finally last spring, she did it. Paholak broke ties with the hairstylist she'd seen for about 25 years.

She now visits the Great Clips chain near her Southfield, Mich., home to get her close-cropped hair cut. The price is about 80 percent less. And since no appointment is required, she can stop in whenever she has a free moment.

Parting ways “was very, very hard to do,” she said. “It had become quite a close relationship as a hairdresser and client.”

But as her stylist upgraded to increasingly chic salons, her prices kept rising. And Paholak, who is 68 and retired, realized she was spending way too much on the trims she received about every five weeks.

Faced with a volatile stock market, reduced home values and shrinking incomes, many folks are making the often-awkward decision to leave long-standing hairdressers, fitness trainers, housekeepers and other personal service providers.

A quarter of respondents have left one or more service providers to save money, according to a September BIGinsight poll conducted for *USA Today*.

Slightly more than half now do the tasks themselves; 26 percent found a less-expensive provider; 23 percent decided they no longer needed the service.

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