

Why choosing an agency for your brand is like dating

 By Dawn Rowlands

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Choosing an agency is in many cases is like trying to choose a date or the best possible financial investment for your lump sum of cash. Do you choose a 90-day call account? Do you look at a long-term five-year investment with market related annual increases? Do you check to see if there is an annual cash back bonus? How do you know that the investment will work for me? Or do you just go to the local casino and put all my money on either red or black or do you spread your chips across the table and hope that in this process you strike it lucky? These are difficult questions and even harder one's to answer. Who knows what tomorrow or next month will bring in the world of advertising and media?



As someone who has been in the industry for almost 25 years, I have certainly seen my fair share of both long-term investments and short-term gambles, some have reaped huge dividends and some have seen money just been scooped away by the dealer.

Through all my dealings with brands, clients and agencies over this time, I have learnt one fundamental thing. Chase the relationship and the rest will come. I have learnt that understanding your clients' needs and ultimate business goals (both short and long-term) is the key to building a relationship.

Often we as industry players get caught up the "adrenaline rush" to get the pitch, we drop everything we are doing and we plough hours and hours into getting the perfect pitch in place. What I would like to see however, is that we before we even agree to pitch, let's do a quick chemistry test - just like our friends who try get us to go on a blind date, we all do a quick background check and see if there is common ground - if not, do you really feel that going ahead and pitching for the business is worth it?

All on the same playing field

What does that other person want in a "dating partner"? Often the brief that you are giving does not carry enough information, so I would like to see brands/clients being much more specific and open about what their business goals are, from here we can see if we can work together and if we have the same thinking and business ethics to work together. Yes we are all creative, but does the best creative pitch necessarily translate into your client achieving its ultimate goals?

Often in the pitch process we come up with great strategic ideas that the client/brand do not currently have and then during the pitch process we are knocked out of the running, but our ideas are taken and then used by the client and the agency they appoint. I think that we as an industry need to be more aware of the pitch process and to whom the intellectual property of ideas/concepts belong. This way we are all on the same playing field.

In many instances the client/brand wanting to embark on a relationship with an agency are themselves unclear about what they want or need. They may be with an existing agency, but do not feel that the relationship is working out and are unsure of how to change this or make the difficult decision to change agencies. They are often worried that this may leak out into the industry and create negative publicity within the industry/market about their brand, so they do nothing and stay in a relationship that does not work.

Next digibate

I could continue at length about so many factors that both clients/brands and agencies need to look at before embarking or ending a relationship with an agency, but this would just be my personal opinion.

Instead what I have done is open the invitation to both brands/clients and other agencies to join me in a public debate on this topic. This way we have a number of key industry opinions for all to share in.

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