

# Putting our people first

 By [Nicky James](#)

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Most private sector organisations - including PR agencies - will tell industry, their employees and potential hires that 'people are our most valuable asset' and 'our people come first'. Strange then that we have lost track of the number of candidates we've interviewed who want to move agencies because they say they are completely burnt out, feel exploited, and have absolutely no work/life balance.

Sometimes it's so obvious that they don't even need to tell us: they sit across the table, punch-drunk and exhausted by endless cycles of late-night sessions and early morning meetings, all the while pressured by family, partners or friends until eventually they realise there is more to life than being an agency stooge.

I believe that there is more to life than regularly working 10- to 18-hour days, and I believe that agencies enabling this as a rule rather than as a rare exception are exploiting their staff with scant regard for anything, but excessive bottom lines and profits. There is more to life than winning the imaginary 'I'm the busiest person alive' competitions that I frequently see playing out among industry colleagues on social media.

An agency is not winning at anything if its over-stressed people are overstretched trying to deliver on over-stated promises to clients, made in the hope of achieving over-extended revenue targets. The agencies that do this are more likely to lose in the long term - failing due to a negative reputation within our own industry, loss of clients tired of sub-standard work from exhausted consultants, and institutional knowledge and consultant expertise lost due to staff turnover.



Image via [123RF](#)

High staff turnover is more than an irritation that incurs repeat bills from recruitment agents; it speaks volumes about the culture of an organisation. Clients may be impressed initially that their team works all hours to produce the goods, but will they still be so impressed when they are introduced to their fourth account manager in a year?

We run our timesheets as a business information resource, and not just a billing mechanism. Any overtime logged shows us that we're either over-servicing our clients, or that we don't have sufficient staffing capacity on the accounts. Once we identify the underlying issue, we rectify and resolve it - by either hiring or managing the over-servicing proactively.

We have stuck to our 'people first' policy since we opened Tribeca's doors in 2006. We haven't grown as quickly as other agencies, but we have grown sustainably, building long-term relationships with our employees and our clients. What's more, we're most proud of the fact that we as owners, and our staff, are able to switch off at the end of the day and spend time with our families and friends.

In the fast-paced lives we lead, we remain committed to ensuring everyone who joins us does so understanding that while we work really hard, achieving work-life balance is a reality here. We challenge the industry to strive for the same.

*Last year Tribeca won a Silver Prism Award for Launch of a new service, product or category. This year it won gold in this category.*

## ABOUT NICKY JAMES

Co-owner and Senior Consultant, Tribeca Public Relations  
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