

Finding the balance when managing a pitch process effectively

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Now more than ever, due to the increasingly complex marketing ecosystem, marketers are seeing the use of intermediaries becoming more important in the daily scope of their operations and what they hope to achieve with their potential agencies during a pitch process.



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The scene for marketers all around, is that there is now an intrinsic need for results driven marketing solutions. Many key players in the industry now agree that using an intermediary can ensure a smoother and more efficiently managed pitch process.

However, the other side of the coin shows that marketers may find that using an intermediary can go against the grain of procurement by inviting an outsider to participate in such an internal affair.

When putting an advertising account or campaign out to pitch, the most important thing that needs to be addressed in the process is ensuring that the need to protect the brand/company's reputation is applied effectively. Also, the marketer needs to have a clear understanding that all the costs are relevant and to achieve real value for money.

Many marketers are unaware that there is professional help out there – a neutral intermediary which has the skills to make life extremely easy for companies who commission them to run a search and selection process whether hiring a new long term agency partner or to fix a failing relationship, be it for creative, media, digital or any other discipline.

How intermediaries can bring the balance

An intermediary provides marketers with insight and makes it their business to research and understand the strengths of the agencies they put forward.

Intermediaries are valuable to marketers because they do most of the leg work. Having a process that is fair to all parties, results driven and robust, is a key ingredient for any marketer when engaging in outsourcing pitch consulting.

Furthermore, procurement should be involved in the intermediary decision from the start. However, procurement and marketing professionals may not always see eye to eye, and this can be an issue.

Experts whom I have had the pleasure of conversing with in the procurement space say that in order to get proven results, marketers should involve procurement staff when developing agency relationships.

What we all forget is that procurement professionals consider the three most important metrics to be cost reduction, risk mitigation and cost avoidance, while marketers see sales and market share increases, marketing ROI and brand health metrics as the best yardsticks for effective purchasing, this is why an intermediary is so useful – they unite these opposing forces in an amiable and balanced way.

The decision to outsource the pitch process should not be made lightly. Weighing the pros and cons, as well as considering factors other than cost savings, helps determine whether outsourcing is the right option.

Let the intermediary help you (the marketer and the procurement team) structure and formalise the agency relationship in areas such as KPIs, performance reviews, pricing and getting a robust contract in place.

ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen Africa, with a background that includes being on both the agency and the client side of the fence, Johanna McDowell is well-placed to offer commentary on marketing and advertising in the South African and international contexts. She built her career in marketing and advertising since 1974, holding directorship in both SA and British advertising agencies. She was MD of Grey Phillips Advertising in 1988.

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