

AdForum's true value: Learning from visionaries, bringing home gold

From 5 to 9 November 2023, the bustling city of London will play host to agency CEOs who will present their strategy and vision to the world's leading search and management consultancies.



Source: © Chris Schippers [Pexels](#) From 5 to 9 November 2023, the bustling city of London will play host to the AdForum Worldwide Summit

Johanna McDowell, CEO of the Independent Agency Search & Selection Company (IAS) and Scopen partner will be one of them.

"The agenda for this year is truly spectacular with regards to the quality of the agencies and pitch consultancies attending," says McDowell.

"Importantly, this shows that the world's high-profile agencies recognise the importance of interacting with pitch consultants.

"About 30 of us from around the globe will be there, including the British pitch consultants who, despite the fact they know these agencies well, attend because of the value they get from being part of the consultant's group," she adds.

Even while the agencies engage with pitch consultants and discuss various trends and issues, McDowell says the consultants learning from each other is invaluable, sharing experiences they have with agencies from Australia, various parts of Europe and their home turf.

“In the years I have attended the AdForum Worldwide summit, I’ve never seen an agenda quite like this,” McDowell notes. “It’s always been held over two and a half days at most. The fact that this year it is being held over four days with many more agencies in attendance shows the growing significance agencies are finding in engaging with pitch consultants.”



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Johanna McDowell 27 Sep 2023



Live and written feedback

It is a testament to the relevance of the pitch consultancies and the return on investment of time and money for agencies to present to so many consultants at once, representing businesses from all over the world.

“What these agencies want from us is our feedback on how they come across in their presentation,” McDowell asserts.

“The key reasons for this are first that we know about them and their business and secondly, to not only get live feedback in the presentation room but also the full written report on how the agency was viewed by the consultants.

“Included in the report is how the agency was seen by the consultants; any key points we felt they missed out on; highlights, lowlights and compilation of all of our comments which amounts to extremely useful data for new business as well as the way they’re marketing their agencies.”

Apart from getting to know the pitch consultants and how they operate, McDowell says the value of the feedback is seen as vital for the agencies. The role of the pitch consultant has evolved over the years to where their experience becomes a part of the agency’s pitch strategy.



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AdForum Summit’s evolution

“The AdForum Summit meetings have always been very worthwhile, from the first one I attended in 2007, also in London. Most interesting for me is having watched how so many of the participating agencies have grown and evolved over these 16 years. When the IAS partnered with the AAR as specialists in developing marketing ecosystems that drive growth in the sector, they encouraged me to attend the AdForum Summits,” says McDowell.

“I’m grateful for them advocating for this,” she says, “because the quality of the learning from the event offers continual learning and development. It’s like gaining a Masters in pitch consulting, and many of the peers I met all those years ago stay in touch and share knowledge, which is immensely valuable to me and to the IAS team.”

With agencies like Deloitte Digital, MullenLowe Global and WPP in attendance as well as several high-profile independent agencies such as Pablo and Mother, McDowell says she is counting on another top-drawer experience and learnings unlikely to be found in any one place at one time.

“I look forward to the AdForum Worldwide Summit as an intense week of learning and, as always, bringing marketers, advertising agencies and pitch consultants closer on a creative and strategic partnership level,” McDowell says.

“While London is a magnificent city, I’ll be there to bring experiences and innovation home to South Africa.”

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