

Marketing directors want authenticity from agencies

Despite 'the pitch' being often regarded as the necessary evil of the industry, it is too vital for haphazard attention-especially when specific tools and skills are available from seasoned pitch specialists to guide agencies in sharpening their credentials for a pitch-perfect win...

Utilising such tools to enhance an agency's presentation is the fine-tuning that separates the pitch winner from the 88 losers, as explained by one of the most experienced advisers to leading agencies worldwide, Johanna McDowell, founder of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS).



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"Marketing directors are intelligent people; they can easily spot inauthenticity," says McDowell. She advises her IAS subscribers not to morph their style to suit the style of a prospective client, "Forty years in this industry has taught me that what marketing directors want most from agencies is authenticity."

Therefore, she advises agencies to ensure they know who they are and what their personality is. "The name and logo of an agency tell a story about how it started; what vision it had at that time-and for marketers, this is very revealing about what an agency really is."

In addition, marketers want to ascertain an agency's ability to demonstrate a measurable report of return on investment-because this is the main, if not the only reason they seek agency expertise.

"What works for a client is the work," emphasising how important it is that agencies display the creative and strategic thinking behind their campaigns rather than the shiny accolades won for such campaigns.

IAS subscribers are often counselled against the use of a generic portfolio for the credentials presentation, though it may be a safer bet, Do the homework and invest in a good, six-minute 'talking head show reel' video through which the agency should strive to present itself, rather than its craft.

A useful service offered to IAS subscribers is a post-pitch critique, from which many have benefited and, by amending the credentials presentation accordingly, have gone on to win subsequent clients.

In addition, for the first time in South Africa, selected IAS subscribers will be attending a 'Speed Dating' event, placing agencies in the same room of marketing directors. Agencies will have ten minutes to showcase their credential. Only ten agency spots are available for each exclusive event in Johannesburg and Cape Town, so it is advised to contact IAS before all seats are filled.

"Practice makes perfect, almost perfect. That's why agencies need to practise and sharpen their credentials presentation. Agencies should know themselves well and merely 'be' who they are because that's chiefly what marketers care about," concludes MacDowell.

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