

PITCH PROCESS & IT'S IMPORTANCE IN ADVERTISEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Advertising is a form of communication used to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to take some action with respect to products, ideas, or services. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behavior with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. Advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various media; including traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, outdoor or direct mail; or new media such as websites and text messages. Commercial advertisers often seek to generate increased consumption of their products or services through "branding," which involves the repetition of an image or product name in an effort to associate certain qualities with the brand in the minds of consumers. Non-commercial advertisers who spend money to advertise items other than a consumer product or service include political parties, interest groups, religious organizations and governmental agencies. Nonprofit organizations may rely on free modes of persuasion, such as a public service announcement. For advertisers, too, the pitch process has risen in importance. As advertising spreads into the digital realm - inundating the Internet and popping up on mobile phones - it has gained in complexity. Keeping track of developments in marketing, from television spots to direct marketing to in-store advertising, can be a bewildering task.

Key Words: *Branding, Non-commercial advertisers, bewildering*

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What does pitching means? :

Pitching is a process of competitive selection of advertising agencies by clients. When firms want to outsource their advertising duties to agencies, they call for pitching wherein all short listed agencies present their thoughts on how to take the brand forward. The most appealing presentation finally gets selected by the client to handle its brand communication duties

Reason why a client could be ready for a pitch:

They are expanding business with great plans and need a better partner to aid their growth they need a full-service communication partner and not just an advertising agency they want to be in the big league their current agency has out grown them and is looking for bigger billings

Fig: 1**Pitches can happen as follows:**

Proactive pitching

Reactive Pitching

Proactive pitching

When an agency takes the lead in contacting a prospect Reactive pitching: This is in response to the client contacting the agency

The Proactive Pitching Process:

Identifying the crack team

Generating leads

Finding the right contact

Establishing the contact

Opening the doors

First client meeting

Subsequent meetings

Research

Evolution of the agency and strategy brief

Briefing the relevant internal departments

Assimilating the output

Finalizing the presentation

Pitch presentation meeting

Follow up

The post -result period

Identifying the crack team:

The success & failure of an agency's new business initiative depends on the team they handpick. Different agencies apply different models for the same some agencies have a separate new business department. Some agencies assign teams by rotation some agencies identify a crack team from across their agency and normally make variations at the middle and junior level.

Generating leads:

This is the most important and toughest part of the entire process Getting to know which client could be pitch due requires huge networking Agencies are constantly devising new methods to get inside information about the key prospects All-in-all the key lies in identifying the correct prospect

Finding the right contact:

Once the agency has identified a prospect, it begins the exercise of finding the right person to contact. Getting information about key people is difficult. After identifying the right person its imperative to know his equation with the current agency (A close friend of the head, last person to lend you a sympathetic ear)

Establishing the contact:

Contacting a cold prospect requires tremendous dexterity and tact Ideally the cold call is made by someone in the higher echelons to lend a sense of importance and urgency to the call The attempt is to open a window of opportunity by extracting a meeting

Opening the doors:

Wooing process starts. Some agencies have been known to chase clients for years before extracting a meeting Approximately 80-90% cold calls fails generate a meeting Creative approaches starts (Sending extremely creative we want you desperately mailers to a desirable client for three months to break down client s resistance to their unwarranted pitch)

First client meeting:

Reaching this stage is half the battle won Agencies presents their credentials Attempts is to extract brief from the client or at least some of the issues client faces .This is the best time to ask as many questions as possible

Subsequent meetings:

Largely relationship building Seeking clarifications, sharing thoughts

Research:

This is the starting point or foundation of putting together a good pitch effort Client provides a broad perspective Agency conduct research Agencies employ all kind of research (Observation, Qualitative etc.)

Evolution of the agency strategy and brief:

This forms the basic backbone of the agency effort. The search is for the ideal and most creative approach to tackling the issue at hand Core groups get together to assimilate information and insights gathered in the research Evolve what is termed as strategy and from there the briefs.

There are no ground rules for strategy evolution apart from doing intensive research work. The rest depends on the expertise of the core group

Briefing of the relevant internal departments:

Too many cooks spoil the broth Briefing to all the various departments and decisions should happen simultaneously. The briefing should be done in such a way that every member of the orchestra has understood the whole symphony and his role in the concert

Assimilating the output:

Ensure that all the team members are on track and are moving in the right direction. The process of assimilating the research, information, the strategy and the various discipline / department solutions should start well in time. The support teams should be given responsibility of putting together their pieces together in a certain form for integration and customization into the combined presentation

Finalizing the presentation:

The presentation plays a key role Agencies use their best presentation writers to craft a smart and intelligent presentation Technology is used widely Hectic preparations are frayed nerves are typical at this stage This is also the stage where the heads of the agency or the division in charge review and help improve the final output

Pitch presentation meeting:

Some agencies have been known to have a talent pool of the best presenters who are invoked at such crucial junctures Painstaking effort goes into planning the meeting from the venue to the people who attend from the agency , presenters , the chronology ,the seating order ,the experience etc. While planning creative attempts -the presentation is at a venue controlled by the agency. The creativity should not end up becoming a gimmick. The innovation is impact if there are no howlers

Follow-up:

Some times life gives you another chance. Follow up exercise could prove to be a new lease of life for an agency that may not be the top contender. Some agencies send across follow up documents, short snippets, etc...

The post result period:

Clients normally call up agencies in the fray to announce the final decision The agency that wins signs the contract The final work that sees the light of the day is vastly different from the pitch solutions

Reactive pitching:

The process normally starts with the client calling up the agency to come and pitch for their business

Reactive pitch process:

- Remembering the brief that came from the client
- Leaving a good impression
- Making the presentation interesting
- Keeping to the limit time
- Anticipating the clients' questions
- Treating the young people at the clients and equally well

Remembering the brief that came from the client:

Clients normally have a broad idea of the kind of agency they need. Some times it's easy to get influenced by the reputation of an agency in the market. Client-agency relationships are one of the most complexes in the business environment, requiring a substantial level of collaboration to be effective. Avoid the superior/subordinate relationship characterized by an atmosphere of mistrust, lack of respect for the agency's expertise, and undercurrents of

intimidation. These tactics have no place in a partnership. Using fear of dismissal to “deal with” an agency undermines trust and productivity.

The best advertising is only created in the absence of fear. A successful joint effort is achieved only through mutual respect of intelligence and expertise.

Leaving a good impression:

Agree on a clearly defined objective of the advertising you wish to create. Failure to define or agree upon the precise purpose of advertising dooms the creative process from the start. • Give the agency the opportunity to be totally absorbed in your product, people, and culture. Exposing agency people to client weaknesses and secrets costs more money (service time) and involves some level of risk. However, great clients totally immerse their agencies in their product. When an agency team thoroughly understands it’s client’s corporate culture, it will more likely create campaigns that endure.

Making the presentation interesting:

- Create an environment of experimentation and be prepared to pay for failure.
- Great clients want advertising that stands out. However, nothing predicts mediocrity in advertising so precisely as a risk-aversion environment. Although it’s natural to want to conform to rules and formulas in quest for a measure of certainty, elements of the development process are inherently uncertain. Trust that the outcome will be viable advertising.
- Be wary of change for change’s sake.
- The first purpose of advertising is to create a distinctive image for a client. Imitating a trend, by definition, fails to achieve distinction. We believe success in advertising is achieved by finding a long-term positioning and sticking with it.
- Treat the agency people well.
- Great clients know its human nature for people to work harder for their friends than for business acquaintances. Facilitate an environment of friendship and collaboration to get more out of the agency.
- • Keep approvals simple and disapprovals kind.

- Nothing saps an agency's energy more than presenting the same work over and over at succeeding layers of the client organization.
- Be honest. If you don't like something, say so. Be specific. Don't ask for a new execution simply because this one "doesn't do it for me". Be kind. Think of the commentary as if you are evaluating the person.
- Make the agency responsible for the advertising and give them the authority it needs to do it.
- Too much involvement consistently denies the agency the ability to realize its vision. Some clients use lack of involvement to avoid sharing responsibility for a poor end result.
- Great clients state precisely why they disagree, then challenge the agency to find a solution both parties can agree upon.
- Make sure the agency makes a fair profit.
- If an account is unprofitable to an agency, that account will be less important to the agency.
- Perform evaluations of each other at least annually, and even more often in the beginning of the relationship.
- A good agency wants to know if there is a major problem before reading about it in the trade press. Great clients draw up the terms of evaluation in the initial agency partnership process.

Keeping to the limit time:

The timing of the presentation should be set to allow the agency to present the requested work, and the other participants to attend, ask questions and discuss the presentations. If the agency has been given a specific amount of time for their presentation, the client will expect them to have rehearsed appropriately, and stick to it. In cases where a member of the client team has decided to take some time with introductions or scene-setting, this should not be subtracted from the agency's time. Equally an agency should not be penalised if there is a delay for a technical problem. It would not serve the client's own interests to curtail the agency's presentation.

Generally, however, an agency should not be allowed to overrun their time, unless questions or interruptions from the client side have caused it. Any extra time spent with one agency should be allowed to all in the interests of fairness.

Anticipating the clients' questions:

Clients want to know that the agency they select is a leader and not a follower. They want to make sure that it is at least constantly keeping abreast of current trends if not predicting what the next one will be. In addition, clients are interested in knowing how you are leveraging them to give your clients competitive advantage. Depending on the type of agency, the question can vary from broader consumer trends to specific category or vertical developments. What value does your agency bring to the relationship and how will what you offer help them compete more effectively and win. It's not about a laundry list of capabilities – as every agency claims to have every capability. Take the time to ask yourselves not only what you do well, but also what it is about what you do that makes you measurably better than the competition. Remember that you cannot be all things to everyone.

Treating the young people at the clients end equally well:

- * To attract, develop and retain the best people is the objective of most successful organisations.
- * Listen equally. Communication between people is paramount when it comes to treating people equally.
- * Show people consideration no matter if they are young, old, poor or disabled. A bit of common courtesy goes a long way.
- * Scrutinize rules. Although rules were theoretically created to treat everyone equally, they may be impractical -- or even wrong -- in some instances.
- * Offer people what is appropriate for them as an individual.
- * Know individuals before you form an opinion about them. Avoid making snap judgments about people.
- * Act differently toward people in certain situations; you need to be practical about treating people equally.

THE 20 KEY PRINCIPLES

Here are the 20 key principles which should guide the organization and execution of a competitive pitch.

1. Always try to make the relationship work before resorting to a pitch
2. Make a priority of dealing fairly with the incumbent agency
3. If at all possible, avoid full creative pitch, which can be costly and time consuming for both parties.
5. Use additional consultation if there is no internal pitching experience
6. Before calling a pitch, be very clear on your communications objectives, to enable you to specify the agency's role, scope and budget
7. Establish a firm and realistic timetable
8. Be clear about policy on communicating with the press and internally Briefing and selection
9. Write a clear, concise and well thought out brief
10. Ensure that the criteria for evaluation/decision-making at each stage of the process is clear and agreed by all parties in advance, to take you from consideration list, to long list, to short list
11. Be disciplined about RFI's (Request for Information) and RFP's, (Request for Proposal) if used Managing the pitch process
12. Be open about the issue of pitch fees and expenses; always respect national rules & agreements
13. Use "chemistry" meetings to get to know agencies
14. Creative pitches; use "tissue meetings" – if there is time – to help the creative development process
15. Be formal about scoring and evaluating the pitches
16. Conduct pro forma contract discussions to manage expectations, and avoid embarrassment after the Pitches
17. Offer the losing agencies a debrief Post-pitch
18. Manage the pitches sensitively, and treat documents with respect and absolute confidentiality
19. Be scrupulous on intellectual property issue
20. Manage the transition and hand-over process with ca

Conclusion:

Competition is healthy, in that it stimulates growth, promotes creativity, & encourages training, However it is important that the competitiveness be directed to constructive development and not lead to "unwarranted disruption of productive agency-client relationships,

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