

Let's evaluate....evaluation

The importance of evaluation and measuring the effectiveness of advertising and communications work goes without saying. Measuring the effectiveness of the agencies that perform the work however is generally a less rigorous process.

Even if the relationship between Client and Agency is only that of a project relationship, the role of performance evaluation is invaluable.

Some multinational advertiser evaluation processes are so well established that they may well have gotten rusty in either design or use. While an agency evaluation tool itself is not a solution for a stronger client-agency relationship, how the tool is used and managed can be.

Particularly given agency evaluation frequently becomes a core compensation tool, it's imperative that it is done right, and done regularly, so that agencies are motivated, appreciated and compensated appropriately, and so that clients are rewarded through better performance as a result.

Step one is really the design of a useful agency evaluation process, step two is employing the process; both of which have some common guidelines that should be employed.

1. Be timely

Regardless of the depth of agency scope, an annual review, often in November or December each year, is a powerful opportunity to align results. For most retained relationships, a mid year review can also have a positive impact.

2. Be 360 degrees

The best reviews should also open each agency up to direct feedback about their own processes and people from their other working partners. Marketing department personnel should be equally evaluated by agency teams. In some scenarios, we have even seen marketing team compensation linked to the review their agency gave them – a sure sign of good alignment.

3. Be personal

Advertising is a people business – so reviews must be personal for the 'product' to be reviewed well, and work out what is required to adjust. Although it may sometimes be hard, naming names makes a huge difference – for both positive feedback as well as for areas for improvement.

4. Build benchmarks

For evaluation to be fair, benchmark data has an important role to play. There are tools available, including the bespoke designed R3 CAPE tool (Client Agency Performance Evaluation)– a mix of online and face-to-face 360’ evaluation, that cover benchmarks across hundreds of measures and dozens of sectors. These independent methodologies allow for aligned performance with independently assessed results.

Much of this evaluation advice is common sense, and much of it may already be ingrained in your working process. But it is important, and as agencies and clients strive for more and more efficiency in their communications work, the foundation for this is efficiency in their working relationships.