

MAKING MORE OF MEDIA

We all know the story – despite the separation of media and creative agencies, marketers are still not investing the time they need to in the media briefing, planning and buying process.

It's either too complicated, masked in too much confusion, or not as 'sexy' as spending the day 'shooting the breeze' with the creative agency. Meantime, some marketers such as P&G, Unilever and JNJ, have built huge strategic advantages by training their people, investing in better talent and engaging their media agencies more effectively. So what are they doing that the rest of the region's marketers could learn from?

1. It all starts with you

Media agencies are awash with research data and insights, yet few marketers leverage this effectively, because the brief is not strong enough from the beginning. Believe it or not, too many media briefs are still either too loose (a budget and a timetable) or too tight (specific markets and media weights – this is the job of the agency, not the marketer). They leave out the depth of sales knowledge and trends, purchase consumption patterns (which have a huge impact on media cycles) and often the qualitative insights they have been working on with their creative agencies. Most media agencies still never seen any advertising material when they start work on a plan – which defies the basis of integration and communications planning. A good brief will always generate a more insightful and professional response.

2. Test and Learn

It's no longer news that one or two media in isolation will not deliver a complete result – where there is still a gap is how effective the various media are working together and in different combinations. This is where P&G have built a huge advantage in 'test and learn' in key markets – building a knowledge bank of consumer and sales response based on various media mixes. It's remarkable that in so many diverse cities in a plan, the media mix tends to plain vanilla – when it's the flavorings and mixes that can make all the difference

3. Create collaboration

This is not purely collaboration between the creative and media agency (unfortunately today, the marketer has to insist and drive this, or it won't happen) but also between the marketer, the agency and the media. Working together, the three sides can achieve much more than working apart. The weight of having a senior marketer openly partnering with a media owner still commands huge sway and better return on investment .

4. Set targets

Nothing can move unless it is measured – and we believe it needs to be independently measured, not done by the same people that set the targets. An independent verification of performance not only rewards an agency for achievement, but also addresses internal stakeholders in the finance and procurement teams that their marketing vendors are driving value and results. In a recent project across six markets, we helped show just how well the media agency was performing by looking not only at cost reduction, but also value creation. The outcome was a far stronger client-agency bond at multiple levels.

5. Pay for Results

Media agency services have been too easily commoditized by their own pricing and by clients forcing down fees. Some agencies now are still even charging zero percent commission for their services. We know from experience a contrary approach works best– find the best possible talent and motivate the agency with incentives based on quantitative and qualitative measures to drive real results and outcomes. Human beings always perform better for rewards.

With an economic downturn, there's going to be more focus than ever on media ROI. Clients that put in place the right steps now will drive the right outcomes for the future.

Greg Paull is Principal of R3 (www.rthree.com) a consultancy specializing in marketing efficiency and effectiveness.