

COCA-COLA CHINA'S APPROACH LEADS THE WORLD

I believe it was Bill Bernbach who was the first to have this crazy idea of having copywriters and art directors work together. Prior to this, American agencies kept them both on separate floors, only allowing them to meet at the odd Christmas party, with copy taking the lead and then a team of designers putting some pictures to the words.

Today, the industry has changed somewhat – no more so than in China. Now every campaign is now ‘through-the-line’, ‘media neutral’, ‘360 degrees’, ‘holistic’ or some other yet to be invented phrase (it is said Eskimos have 23 words for “snow” – the industry is creating just as many words for “integrated marketing”). Yet despite these changes, most of the creative development process and hierarchies are still linear as they were fifty years ago.

Right now in China, the scarcest commodity is time (well...that and talent...). Yet in some of our consulting work, campaigns are taking up to nine months to move from brief, through concept, revised concept, final revised concept, copy testing, final final revised concept, etc. etc. etc. In nine months, Shanghai probably launches twenty new property deals and a bunch of new Bund restaurants.

The reason is because now, unlike in Mr Bernbach's day, time now costs money. The agency compensation model is continuing to migrate from commission to fee. In the US now, 87% of their marketers work with their agencies this way – and at least the same percent of the top multinationals in Asia have the same structure now. And when time costs money, both parties need to connect to use it efficiently.

Coca-Cola China have taken all this on board and created something completely new for the Olympics. “The Red Lounge” is a totally new agency, made up of five different partners – Leo Burnett for advertising, Starcom for media planning, WWWINS for interactive, Heartland for outdoor and Momentum for activation. The five partners work in one open office, with one common mission – help make Coke's Olympic marketing the world's best. One team, with no politics, no agendas and one focus. No wonder Coke is leading the way in independent

Olympic research to date.

From a process point of view, the brief then becomes a collaboration – between the client and all the five disciplines. And the disciplines are then all engaged throughout the process. It's the only agency of its kind in China, potentially the world

Getting great work done is hard enough. But the marketers and their agencies that find new ways to beat the clock will win in a number of ways – not the least of which is a more collaborative and powerful relationship. And since China is always in a hurry, what better place on earth to take the lead.

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