

## **TALENT MATTERS**

Does the ad industry need a bit of Hollywood?

Or NASA?

We think a bit of both would help

Every agency we've met ultimately attributes their success or lack of it to People.

Every client recognizes that how happy they are with the agency comes down to the People running the business. The opposite is also true with agencies blaming a large part of their unhappiness or non-profitability on the Client!

So it's no surprise that a lot of the failed or troubled marriages we see boils down to the caliber of the People. Now why does the advertising and the larger marketing community suffer from this inability to attract and retain good talent? The answer is pretty obvious. We don't practice what we preach!

Our fascination with renegades is either hereditary or sheer vanity. It is perhaps over-glamourising something that is not unique to the ad trade. After all, Bill Gates was also a high school drop out and Li Ka Shing doesn't have an MBA. We've all heard of school drop outs and dishwashers making their ways to agency boards and who's who in the industry, but we keep hush about top brains joining the trade. So it's no wonder the industry is generally considered a "flaky" bunch against the other professionals. The point here is that the industry can't rely on accidents to attract good people, it needs strategy and planning.

Here are just some ideas that seem to have worked for others...

### **1. Get 'em young**

Most Fortune 500 companies have a strategy in place for attracting the best MBA talent to their companies. Undergrads and post graduates are accosted by senior management, invited to company meetings as observers, and wooed by Dom Perignon and stock options. Agencies can start by having a booth at career fairs. Or send your HR directors to hijack some talents from television stations

### **2. Lifelong training**

We are notorious for high turnover and people jumping for a \$100 raise. And we're sorry have to say agencies have themselves to blame for that. It is no coincidence that most successful businesses have low staff turnover. We were heartened to find

evidence of that within our trade.. At one agency in India, new employees enroll in a *ten year* training program – yes, the syllabus is spelt out to them for the next decade. They are, of course, a top 3 agency.

### **3. Cross Fertilisation**

Most motivated employees like to know where they can be in 5 years. Most employees also prefer not to have to leave the company to enrich their experience. But more often than not, we hear about clients moving within their organization, as opposed to agencies. Some agencies that transfer people have such a bureaucratic process it is more frustrating than motivating.

### **4. Hire your client**

Some agencies swap senior management seats for publicity stunts, we think that only makes good headlines. But more than that, we think hiring marketers to play leading roles in agencies not just fosters mutual respect and appreciation, but more importantly sends a signal out to the business community that we are serious about talking business, and not just fluff. Clients like Coca-cola have long been hiring agency people to be Chief Creative Officers and Presidents. Yet agencies are generally not successful in attracting top clients. We believe it has more to do with tradition and an inward looking mindset than capability. Y&R defied convention to fish Ann Fudge from Kraft, let's wait to see who will be next.

### **5. It pays to Advertise**

Bizarrely, agencies spend less as a percentage on marketing than any of their clients do – even their B2B clients that like agencies, consult. Some pay lip service to running ads within the trade, usually for awards, but few venture out beyond the community. Ogilvy is perhaps the only company that have tried to raise its profile in a bigger way, through the Global Brand Forum.

Perhaps this is the perfect mission for the local industry bodies to get together and raise funds for raising the profile of the ad and marketing trade.

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