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ANA Financial Conference: Day 2



ShuFen Goh, principal at R3, travels to the Arizona Desert, USA, to attend the annual American Association of Advertisers (ANA) Financial Conference. Here is her account of the second day.



ShuFen Goh (R3)

Well, 500 of us all went our own ways after the first day to reflect on paying agencies on value – and today we met Kate Short, Strategic Sourcing Manager of Intel to learn that it's time to de-couple from agencies. Up until 2008, Intel worked with one holding company for all its needs, before appointing OMD for media globally and a new retail marketing partner. And last year, they launched an "Open Source" model, using Venables Bell for creative and production house TAG for distribution. The room was lapping up the stats of 12-20% cost savings, combined with 30% time improvement. And wait – the Intel work actually won an Effie Award, surely a first for this kind of structure. Who will be next to experiment with the agency model to find greater value?

Last year at this event, a shocking survey on the perception of sourcing professionals was released – with massive image problems for the group with agencies, and mixed reviews with marketers. So, for the last twelve months, it's been Extreme Makeover, Procurement Edition. Three task forces were set up – one to mentor younger procurement people on how marketing and agencies work, one for PR for the industry (yes, I said PR) and one for education. Leaders from JNJ, American Express and A-B InBev shared the progress, and believe it or not, they may be onto something. Certainly, the sharing of case studies of how to more professionally search, audit and pay agencies is a great leap forward.

After a smart lunch where we learnt that Click Fraud is almost as common in the US as in China, we joined a session "Audit Your Agencies and Have Them Thank You for It" (imagine that?) – with pharma leader Allergan onstage with their auditor, and finance heads of two of their agencies. Allergan make, among other things, Botox, but it seemed they weren't stretching things too far in this case when they talked about the importance of a fair and transparent audit. The group also handed out a new Best Practice process, which we sure hope Asian marketers will embrace too.

And at the main dinner tonight, just picture 500 procurement people letting their hair down and hitting the dance floor – "it's just a step to the left..."

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