

Clients must orchestrate the integration process

In the last 12 months, there have been more holding company acquisitions than there were in the past three years, with WPP adding another two below-the-line agencies to its portfolio, and many more acquisitions of digital agencies to come.

Ultimately, what does this mean for clients? Should they expect more integration? Better quality? Better value? Does it make their job of working with multiple parties any easier?

We have sat through perhaps too many credentials presentations at which agencies flog their slew of marketing services to clients as an integrated offering unique to their company.

It is also every client's dream to work with that elusive integrated agency which can think and execute through-the-line and be accountable for it.

The truth is that it remains a dream for most clients, rather than a reality. The truth is that everything looks compelling and amazing on a Powerpoint, but making it happen is another thing altogether.

In Korea, one of our clients, had to work with 14 different agencies to execute a truly best-in-class integrated campaign that was both award-winning and effective.

Of course, spending all the money on



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TV is much easier, but marketers worth their salt have wised up to the realities of media fragmentation and mass communications overload. Integration is no longer a nice-to-have but a must-have for maximum ROI.

Clients have to orchestrate the integration process the way conductors do, whether or not they are working with an ensemble of related agencies.

Much like a conductor, whose job is to conceive the most compelling way to perform a piece, to select the team of musicians and to lead the team through rehearsals to perfect and bring that interpretation to life to the audience.

Marketing directors are the orchestra conductors who lead a team of ideas people, whether they are from creative agencies, media agencies or events agencies.

Being able to run an efficient and well-organised extended marketing team is almost a given. In our opinion, to get to the big 'I' of integrated communications, a marketing director needs to possess the 3Is.

The first 'I' is intelligence.

We're not suggesting that what is required is a Mensa type of intelligence, but a balance of left and right brain, and a mind open to new ideas. Clients need to escape meetings sometimes and get

involved in what is happening in the world of communications.

The second 'I' is imagination.

Clients need to realise they are the custodian of creativity; they are the ones who approve the final product before the consumers see it.

Too many clients shift the blame to agencies when they are unhappy with the creative product when, in reality, they are equally responsible for not choosing the right musicians or not being clear in their direction.

Often, taking a big leap forward requires faith and imagination, much more than intelligence.

The third 'I' is most rare, but an absolute gem when you find it. Inspiration. Think Steve Jobs, Sergio Zyman, Phil Knight... they are all inspiring leaders, first and foremost. Each one has both a clear vision and conviction about what they want – and they know how to get it.

Like conductors, most of what marketing directors do is invisible to the public eye, managing rehearsals and musicians. It is perhaps time to change that and recognise the role they play in raising the bar.

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