

MAXIMISE YOUR MARKETING SPEND



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Strategy planner **Simon Rowell** discusses four key principles for how marketers can hit their mark and get the most from their agency.



One of the big professional fears that marketing managers have, the one that keeps them tossing and turning late at night, is the fear that their marketing communications could be missing the mark.

This fear often creeps up on them slowly as sales figures do not meet forecasts and awareness levels push on horizontally, often despite the fact that large wads of market research dollars have been spent gaining insights about their targets.

What I have learnt over the years is that there are four key principles that will, when actively considered, allow for campaigns and communication pieces to be given every chance to succeed. These are by no means the only principles that need to be heeded, but they deal with the most common ways that the marketing efforts can become derailed.

Principle One: Entwine the brand

In every aspect of your communication platform, be it a TVC, a DM campaign or point-of-sale piece, the brand must be the centre of the creative. In blunt terms, if you can pull your product out of the piece of communication in question, slot in a competitor's product and easily run it, think again. You may just end up spending your

budget advertising your category.

Ensuring that the brand is tightly entwined into the story will allow your brand (if the creative does its job) to be associated with the messages you want to send.

This principle is most often forgotten where organisations and their agencies are trying to be comical or entertaining in their communication in order to gain cut-through in the mind of their market.

This can be a good strategy when done very well, but this is only when driven by clear brand strategy and when the issues regarding what we wish to communicate and how we want people to respond are dealt with first.

If everyone remembers the campaign, but no one remembers the brand or what was trying to be communicated, the campaign is a failure. Remember, the bits between commercial breaks are supposed to be doing most of the entertaining.

Principle Two: Demand senior attention

Ensure that every agency you have working for you has senior people on the case. Sounds simple enough, but this is the most common complaint about advertising agencies—senior suits come along to the pitches and are never seen again.

At a minimum you should be seeing a senior agency manager at least once a month at work-in-progress meetings, and have easy access at all other times. If you cannot have at least this much attention the agency, quite simply, does not care about your business.

Principle Three: Measure ROI

An agency's role is to provide excellent return on the marketing budget, but sometimes this is forgotten.

If the success of a marketing manager's role is based on revenues, profits, response rates and brand performance, then shouldn't the measurement of an agency's success be at least in part on these same measures?

Collaboratively setting clear KPIs with your agency at the creative briefing stage will allow for some objectivity down the track when it comes time to measure success. One thing is for certain—if you directly link measurement of an agency's performance to the performance of your campaigns, your agency will be very interested in your success as well.

Principle Four: Plan for success

Often, especially in fast moving categories, the tendency is to plug gaps and cut corners. This can lead to tactically-driven and reactionary activity that may be at odds with

the overall objectives of the business.

Strategy planning allows all members of the marketing and agency teams to enjoy a shared understanding of the communication elements, such as the USP, key benefits, brand vision, personality and attributes, target markets, priorities and resources.

Done properly, this should lead to clarity about what is planned and why, ensure improved inputs into the communication development process, and also clarify the effects that various proposed activities may have on the brand.

The outcome of this planning should allow a marketing manager to build an effective communication plan, driven by brand strategy, that can be more easily measured.

These four principles, when applied in unison, should allow not only for more effective and efficient communication to be developed, but also allow marketing managers everywhere to get a better night's sleep.

Author

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BELOW: Rowell warns marketers not to let their efforts become derailed by their agencies.

