

Ep 76: 4 Business-Limiting Mistakes Agencies Make - The Insider Edition

Bringing awareness to key factors outside of the work



- Undermining their client partner.
 - Nothing leads to dysfunctionality faster than going over the head of your client partner. We talk alot about the importance of growing a highly-functioning team in order to consistently deliver quality work. You can't do this if there is a lack of respect and trust with your client partner.
 - There are some rationals for why agencies circumvent and the actual reality of the situation:
 - The agency wants to develop a relationship with senior management to set themselves up for a strong performance review and/or to get more work. Reality: It isn't generally senior management who writes your performance reviews. You better be creating relationships with the people who do. It is the people doing the work that will advocate agencies to their colleagues who are also doing the work. This is generally the point-of-entry for agencies.
 - Agencies want senior management to overrule decisions being made at the team level. Reality: In most cases, senior managers defer to the teams in the work to make decisions. So, trying to undo a decision already made by going to senior management just creates drama that oftentimes reflects poorly on the agency. This also generally results in a ton of confusion and usually wasted time and money. Keep in mind, the senior manager is only seeing a slice which oftentimes they will renege upon when given more data.
 - Agencies want senior management to "manage" their client partner. Reality: blaming or somehow making your client partner look bad in from of their manager puts your client partner into a CYA mode. With trust and respect broken, your client partner will likely throw you under the bus to keep them from being thrown.
 - Agencies want senior management to see ALL the work, not just what the client partner wants to show them. Reality: your client partner knows management better than you do. If your client partner says the work isn't ready for management review, listen. Not showing the work to your client partner first because you are afraid they will rule out ideas you are championing. Many assume that if they could just get to senior management then the work would go through. Pushing past your client partner means your client lead can not advocate for you.
- Fail to learn the client's business.
 - The best agencies work as an extension of myself meaning they understand the business to the extent that they can proactively work within it. This includes being a student of the industry, understanding market dynamics, knowing how the business makes money and being clear on the challenges.
 - Understand your client partner in much of the same way so that you can proactively and without direction be of service to them. This means understanding their motivations, how they get rewarded, the way they like to work, what keeps them up at night, etc.
 - This is what defines a partnership versus a transactional relationship of deliverables for money. When you operate as a partner, you are more valuable because you have developed that emotional connection that creates necessity for YOU and not just any agency.
 - Don't go overboard on the on-boarding. It should be appropriate for the size and scope. Be intentional in the info you ask for and the people you want to engage with. This goes for on-boarding and continued updating.
- Don't work well with other agencies.
 - Even if you are the AOR, failure to recognize the value of other agencies who are also on the business creates a lot of drama internally for your client partner. Don't make them waste their time trying to manage agency dynamics. If they felt one agency was capable of doing all the work, they would have hired one agency to do it.
 - Working well with other agencies no only demonstrates you are collaborative, but it also demonstrates that you have the best interests of the business in mind. It is important to build rapport with other agencies to get to a place where you can collaborate in a productive way. Be inclusive, give credit where due, and be the steward of a process that generates the best work.
 - Creative agencies leave out PR. Because they see things from an earned/pull lens, they can add insight to strengthen or push creative and make the campaign bigger.
- Take feedback too personally.
 - You want agencies to be invested in the work, but they need to be detached enough to accept feedback about the work without it feeling like a reflection on them.
 - How to manage feedback in a collaborative way:
 - Expect there will be feedback. Expect that not all work will be well received. It shouldn't be if you are pushing the boundaries of conventional thinking.
 - Share your 'why' without being defensive. Sometimes the clients just need to see it through a different lens. Use the consumer/customer/target as the basis for why you think the work will resonate.
 - Use the brief to guide the conversation so it is more objective than subjective. Ask thoughtful questions based on the brief.
 - Call out the client on their inconsistencies.
 - You are being hired by the client to deliver work. It is their call so don't ignore feedback. But you have every right to ask for clarity and to call a 'time-out' when the ask is straying too far from the brief.

Areas to address immediately are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Action Plan:

Action	Timing	Progress	Complete