

PULSE

FOR AGENCIES 2022

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Welcome to Pulse.

"Vic, can you just do a round-up of 2021 for Pulse and some predictions for 2022 in about 1000 words?"

Most years I'd say no problem...not so much this year. How do you summarise 2021? I can give that a go but who wants to try and predict what's next? There are far cleverer people than me attempting just that and, from what I've read, it's anyone's guess. Some believing everything will go back to how it was pre-pandemic to nothing will ever be the same again. Mark Ritson articulates this quite succinctly:

"The only thing that is going to really change dramatically after coronavirus is the number of columns from hacks predicting everything is going to change."

Most marketing writers are arsehats. They love drama. They are addicted to the pornography of change. They adore making specious, rambling predictions about the future because, as the Ad Contrarian blogger Bob Hoffman drily but brilliantly observed, 'if you're a marketing genius with a terrible track record the future is a great place to hide.'"

I think I'll leave predictions, or at least trends and themes to consider, to our fortnightly Vantage newsletter. No pressure, Robin!

One thing that I do know with certainty is that 'exhausted' is the word most commonly used to sum up how our clients are feeling as 2021 draws to a close. It has been an unbelievably busy year for most businesses. For almost two years, we have just got on with and accepted what has been thrown at us as individuals and organisations. Human resilience has been tested and, overall, we've stepped up to the challenge. I guess we had no choice, but it's inspiring to reflect on how we have adapted and thrived.

Looking back on the last two years feels like a blur. Like we arrived here in a bit of trance and now that we are waking up and looking back, the adrenaline has stopped, and the exhaustion has set in. Especially for leaders of



In a world where people switch between the online and physical world seamlessly, the linear customer journey of the past is pretty much redundant.

Brands need to develop more bespoke and personalised experiences.



business. Facing into a real and problematic talent crunch seems to be the last straw.

Driving headlong into 2022

I hope you are reading this having properly re-charged over the festive break. We need the next burst of leadership energy to drive headlong into 2022 as we predict another busy year for new business and a continuation of the themes we've seen this year.

Reading back on our predictions for the year ahead at the end of 2020, we were pretty much on the money:

"From a new business perspective, we expect a busy year even if there is a slow start in Q1. Customer expectations have shifted, and the industry can't wait for the rollout of the vaccine to catch up. New capabilities are needed to compete, new marketing models need to be implemented and this will drive a need to find the right partners."

We've seen this play out with an anticipated 47% uplift on new business activity v 2020 and a return to 2019 levels. We've seen this with clients asking a broader range of questions about their marketing ecosystems. (By ecosystems, we simply mean the sum of their internal and external capabilities, and by capabilities we refer to people, processes, platforms and partners). The changes are driven by a need for customer centricity. In a world where people switch between the online and physical world seamlessly, the linear customer journey of the past is pretty much redundant. Brands need to develop more bespoke and personalised experiences. To achieve this, new operating models are needed with fundamentally new ways of working. ▶



Brand building

Younger businesses born in the digital world are structured for this already, offering a huge advantage. They can trade and scale to an impressive size before they hit a barrier. That barrier is over-optimisation. The only way to grow beyond that barrier is get under people's skins. To build a brand that means something, that differentiates you and that gives you the next unfair advantage to side-step the competition.

The challenge for all agencies and consultancies is filtering the opportunities that approach them directly. Overall, they have limited investment for marketing initially and want to prove the case before unlocking further investment. So, agencies effectively have to take a punt on them. The ask is not commensurate with the initial prize.

If you look at the VC model, they invest in ten businesses expecting eight to fail and two to succeed. They can't predict which from the outset. How can agencies afford this risk on their current commercial models and margins? We would love to hear your experiences in this area and the tactics you are deploying to help filter these opportunities. Maybe we should be trying to tackle this collectively as an industry?

The Power of Creativity

I'll forgive anyone for feeling a bit gloomy with everything we are facing into. The pandemic is far from over, there are enormous environmental challenges, progress on genuine inclusion is slow, and there's the widening wealth gap. Depressing, I know. However, we sit in the creative industry and what fuels my optimism is putting the power of Creativity to

work on tackling both business and societal problems.

At AAR, we define Creativity (with a capital 'C') as **the application of new perspectives and ideas to solve significant problems for a business and/or its customers.**

Whilst everyone can get lucky now and again, our four decades of experience working with marketing organisations and their external partners has taught us that Creativity doesn't happen by chance. **It is directly related to how much Creative Capital a company possesses.**

Creative Capital is what you accumulate when you engineer the right conditions across your marketing ecosystem to unlock greater creativity on a sustained basis.

We believe clients will continue to focus on how their operations are set up to drive to genuine customer centricity in 2022 and we at AAR are pushing for Creative Capital to be high up the agenda as they design the future. Ultimately, we believe Creativity has the power to transform human behaviour. More on Creative Capital to follow in the coming months.

We look forward to working with you in 2022 and, as ever, we'd love to hear from you on ways we can continue to support you further. ■

Victoria Fox
CEO, AAR

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NEWS.



Another busy people year at AAR

By Victoria Fox

We continued to welcome new capability and talent to the AAR family throughout 2021.

George Porteous

George joined AAR as Chief Strategy Officer in early 2021 to oversee all our consultancy output and to identify new areas in which we can support our agency and brand owner clients as the world continues to evolve.

Prior to AAR, George enjoyed over twenty years at leading agencies, brands and consultancies including St. Luke's, TBWA, Google, Sapient, Ladbrokes, Accenture and Tag. He's worked in a range of disciplines including advertising, marketing transformation, technology and content production for brands such as

BBC, Sky, Mars, Unilever and the Football Association. Along the way he's created several new marketing methodologies and agency offerings.

This gives him a great vantage point for designing marketing ecosystems; the sum of an organisation's internal and external capabilities.

He's already made a huge impact and we look forward to sharing a new proposition launch with you early in 2022. ▶



What I like about working with AAR is that their superpower is to understand our needs, then quickly focus our attention on agencies that are a match.

"I'm not sure we would have found the right agency partner for us without their support."

Emmi UK



Meg Colborne

Meg joined as a Junior Business Manager in February 2021 fresh from an MA in Contemporary Literature at King's College, London. She supports across a wide range of consulting projects and internal transformation projects, as well as writing the occasional blog and thought piece for us. She's a brilliant addition to the team, with fresh perspectives and a hugely positive, accommodating approach.

Meg is front and centre in our focus on reducing our carbon footprint at AAR and, as a digital native, she's adding to our understanding of emerging technologies.

Alex Steele

Alex is our most recent hire, joining in December 2021 as a Lead Consultant. There is a theme in our hiring policy: the squigglier your career has been, the more attractive you are to AAR!

Alex has worked both agency and client-side over the past 20 years and brings a proven track record of successfully embedding change programmes with the right amount of rigour, drive and pace.

He worked for 12 years in agencies across client service, international production and resource management roles before moving client-side, successfully setting up and leading an in-house agency for a FTSE 250 financial trading business for several years.

Alex will be working within our Drive practice, led by Vicky Gillan. He'll support clients in their marketing transformation; embedding change effectively and efficiently across people, process, partners and platforms. ■



A fond farewell to Market Place

By Victoria Fox

With all the new talent joining AAR, we needed a new home. After 35 years at 26 Market Place, making the call to move to new offices was an enormous decision. And saying goodbye to AAR Towers after hosting thousands of screening meetings, credentials sessions and pitch wash-ups, not to mention housing 34 Christmas Trees (we're not over COVID breaking that record!) will be an emotional moment for many of us.

The pandemic has forced all of us to reassess the way we work, and what we require from an office space in the future. Like many others, we

need a more flexible and collaborative working area, capable of offering private and communal space in a contemporary setting. A space that will complement our new cross-functional working methods as traditional siloes break down in a post-COVID world.

So, we've chosen a wonderful new space within walking distance of Oxford Circus, in Wimpole Street W1. We can't wait to welcome you into our new home from mid January 2022.

In the meantime, can the last person out of Market Place please turn the lights out. ■

The Next Round: Grab a cuppa and listen to Series 3 of our podcast

By Robin Charney

Series 3 of our marketing inspiration podcast, [The Next Round](#), launched in October with a great slate of interviews from some of our most beloved heritage brands.

I got the chance to sit down with Cadbury, BMW, John Lewis, The Army, McVitie's and Direct Line to hear first-hand how their marketing leaders are navigating their transformations. Every brand is going through it, and heritage brands have a context that I find fascinating.

In each episode, we talk about how that history and heritage helps them build back better and provide an (un)fair advantage against their competitive set. We also talk about how their agency partners build value for the brand, and how to get the best out of those critical relationships, the role of creativity and creating a culture of curiosity.

As agency leaders, I hope you enjoy listening to this series and find some valuable nuggets of insight to help you with your client relationships.

And, if you have a heritage brand you work with that you'd like to suggest for a future episode, just drop me an email at rcharney@aargroup.co.uk ■





Vantage: Our fortnightly newsletter

By Robin Charney

We hope you've been enjoying Vantage throughout 2021. It's our way of showcasing the best thinking we come across with our agency and client community. It started as a lockdown project to help keep us connected to clients, but quickly expanded to be a showcase for what our beloved industry can bring to the table when it comes to smart thinking, cut through work and useful strategic insights.

2021 has seen some recurring themes such as hybrid working and its impact, creativity in all its forms, marketing planning trends with moves towards greater agility and flexibility and finally, the metaverse.

If you're not currently receiving Vantage in your inbox every other Wednesday and would like to be added to the mailing list, be sure to email us at info@aargroup.co.uk ■

AAR hosts Accelerate Learning Labs session in 2022

By George Porteous

As part of our contribution to the wider marketing industry, AAR is partnering with The Marketing Society to help current and future marketing leaders develop their skills.

The Marketing Society's popular "Accelerate Learning Labs" series allows marketers to build various aspects of their capabilities, and we're delighted that our very own Vicky Gillan will be facilitating one of the Learning Lab sessions in 2022.

Focusing on how to work with your agency partners most effectively to get the best performance from them, the workshop is

aimed at marketers who want to go beyond the basics and are now looking to elevate their knowledge of how to get great work from their agency partners, consistently.

They will learn about the different agency models, what motivates agency teams (Clue: it's not all about the money) and practical things they can do to manage their agencies well. By the end of the workshop, they'll have reflected on their own agency relationships vs AAR's best practice principles and leave crystal clear as to what they can do to make a difference to the next project, campaign or programme. ■



We partnered with AAR to run a Creative and Media pitch in parallel and quite literally couldn't have done it without them. Their slick administration of the process, collaborative approach and wise counsel helped us efficiently appoint the perfect agencies for the job.

OVO Energy

Sustainability: A priority for action

By George Porteous

Green
Element

Hot on the heels of COP26, sustainability is high on the agenda for the CMO. Brands are increasingly responding to public, consumer and shareholder pressure to make real changes. At AAR, we've had many conversations with senior marketers over the last year around moving sustainability from being a 'nice to have' to a priority for action.

Many are looking for a clear plan to get to net zero emissions. They are, therefore, expecting plans and data on emissions from their agency partners, since they form part of their own supply chain. As AdGreen is helping to highlight, there are major opportunities to reduce emissions across the marketing supply chain including travel, office energy use, materials and energy use in production processes including film and still shoots, printing and POS materials, inks, plastics, shipping.

There's also a broader need for sustainability to become more central to marketing functions and marketing sustainability where they have often existed separately, and for brands to

realise the very real commercial opportunity to have sustainable innovations fuel their brand and communications strategies.

AAR wants to play its part in driving change and so we have three priorities in this area:

- 1 We have completed a carbon audit with Green Element, the sustainability consultancy, to measure our footprint and we will define our roadmap to net zero.
- 2 We will explore ways to help brand owners measure the sustainability of their agency partners as part of their selection process.
- 3 We will continue to offer up inspiration for agencies following the recent Town Hall where we invited John Grant, the green marketing expert, to talk about how sustainability can form part of agencies' business models. ■

AROUND THE INDUSTRY.



CAN: Ensuring the ethics catch up with the technology of modern advertising

By Martin Jones

We continue to support and be part of the [Conscious Advertising Network \(CAN\)](#), the voluntary coalition of over 150 organisations set up to ensure that industry ethics catches up with the technology of modern advertising. This initiative was most recently highlighted at the COP26 summit where CAN were [behind an open letter](#) calling on global leaders and technology platforms to take action on climate misinformation. This followed [a similar project](#) in the wake of the abuse received by England footballers after their penalty shoot-out loss at this summer's Euro tournament, where the major social networks were asked to do "more to make their platforms safe" by combatting online discrimination and racism.

For our own part, we clearly see that the competitive pitch represents a unique opportunity for clients and brand owners to reset their own internal processes and requirements. With this in mind, we're encouraging all clients to reference CAN as a key requirement in their pitch briefs. Further information on this important initiative can be found on the [CAN website](#). ■



Do what you can to support NABS

By Kerry Glazer

NABS has never been more important to our industry in the work it does to support the well-being of our agency talent.

The charity has taken a £1.6m hit to their income due to the pandemic at the same time as calls to their Advice Line from people in our business needing emotional and financial support to help them with their mental health, work pressures, low mood and confidence, redundancy and money worries have increased by nearly 50%. [NABS](#) has also seen a recent significant surge in the uptake of their masterclasses, particularly those which help with developing resilience and confidence, as people begin to return to the office after a tough 18 months. And NABS continues to play a critically important role in the management and support of the timeTo initiative to end sexual harassment in the advertising and marketing industry.

In-person fund raising events have only just begun to return with Ride Adland, Stranger Than Summer, the Manchester Fashion Show taking place this Autumn, and the team at AAR

are very hopeful that 2022 will see the return of the popular AAR Quiz for NABS; an important event in our calendar that the pandemic has ruled out over the past 18 months. But it's going to take a lot of fundraising and effort to put a dent in the £1.6m hole in NABS funds, so please do all that you can to help. They need our support as much as we need theirs.

If you, or anyone you know, needs any help with their worries or emotional health challenges, or is experiencing harassment in their working lives, please call the NABS Advice Line on 0800 707 6607 between 9am and 5.30pm or email support@nabs.org.uk. ■



timeTo: Helping to keep our industry safe from sexual harassment

By Kerry Glazer

AAR is proud to continue to be an active endorser of timeTo, the initiative to end sexual harassment in our industry.

We have been supporting timeTo since it was launched four years ago, embedding the Code of Conduct in our company policies and, this year, the whole AAR team participated in the timeTo Awareness Training workshop; a piece of training that we can't recommend highly enough. The two-hour interactive session gave us practical advice and guidance on behaviour that crosses the line, highlighting high-risk situations that can occur, what to do if you experience or witness sexual harassment, the law surrounding sexual harassment in the workplace, and the responsibilities company leaders have to their teams. It will undoubtedly help any team who takes the training to have a more open discussion about this topic, giving them the confidence to challenge unwanted and unacceptable harassment and support their colleagues.

With timeTo's latest research reporting that almost half (49%) of industry professionals believe that sexual harassment in the workplace will be more of a problem as businesses make a regular return to the office after such a long time working from home during the pandemic, it feels even more important to protect, support and reassure our teams that they can feel safe in the workplace.

If you are not already an endorser or have signed up but haven't yet booked the training workshop for your company, we really encourage you to do so. It's a game-changer and the most effective way to ensure that sexual harassment doesn't happen in our companies, on our watch.

If you need more details, please take a look at the [timeTo website](#) for the timeTo Code of Conduct, toolkit and all the details about the training programme. Here's a quick link to [book the training](#) in case this has inspired you to do so. ■



We thoroughly enjoyed working with AAR and the whole process was seamless from start to finish. AAR completely understood our brief and they used their wealth of experience in the industry to find us the perfect creative partner.

Thanks to the partnership with AAR we are confident that we have found an agency that will help elevate our brand in the UK.

Taco Bell / Yum!



Is creativity in crisis?

By Tony Spong

Chair of the DMA Creative Committee

The column inches seem to be racking up of late claiming that we are in a creativity crisis of our own making. One where it has been marginalised to the sprinkling of fairy dust rather than as the driving force to solving problems, not to mention our urgent need to address issues of DE&I.

For all the good the digital revolution has provided we do seem to have become slaves to the 'greed of optimisation' over the 'spark of curiosity'. As one creative put it beautifully, 'are we optimising our way out of interesting?'

At the DMA, we understand the power of data to both inspire ideas and drive effectiveness. Disturbingly, not only do many feel we have reached a point where all the algorithms have

led to the blandest of level playing fields, but also many are discriminatory in how they perform. Is this the moment when creativity is needed in its widest sense; is the 'tech stack showing just a bit too much' in how we go about marketing today?

We probably have more questions than answers and that's why the DMA Creative Committee are reaching out to brands, agencies, the grey hairs and the spotty youth of our industry to discuss these themes, share our thinking and create an agenda for the DMA Creative Committee to move the key priorities forward on your behalf.

If you'd like to get involved, please [drop me a line.](#) ■

INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES.



New Business Market 2021

By Martin Jones and Rebecca Nunneley

Although we'll have to wait until later this month to collate full data on the new business market in 2021, we wanted to share a few observations on what we've witnessed in the last twelve months with you now, in this edition of Pulse.

1 The overall new business market

After a year of almost total lockdown, it shouldn't have come as a major surprise to anyone that the new business market kicked back into action in 2021.

Many marketers had retrenched in 2020, worrying about their own families, their own businesses and customers rather than their external agency relationships. 'If it ain't broke, don't try and fix it' was probably the viewpoint of most brand owners in 2020; particularly when they knew that they probably wouldn't get the opportunity to press the flesh with any new prospective agency partners.

However, as the chimes of Big Ben (if there were any!) closed off the year, it felt as though there was a renewed momentum in the new business market, and January seemed awash with announcements of agency reviews.

Whilst this volume never abated in the world of media (see point two), it did calm down somewhat in other disciplines, particularly creative, and we are predicting that by the time that we compile the final figures for 2021, the overall new business market (for any discipline) will have seen a 47% year on year increase and be back to (if not slightly up on) 2019 levels. So please keep your ears and eyes open for our annual new business Pulse report, which will be published later this month.

2 The explosion in number of media reviews

You would have to be living on a different planet (or at least not working in a media agency) to have missed the huge number of ▶

media pitches and appointments that were announced in 2021.

Coming out of total lockdown in 2020, and a huge period of economic uncertainty in the run up to the US election, it is perhaps unsurprising that brands and advertisers started to see light at the end of the tunnel in 2021; putting their heads above the parapets through reviewing (and often consolidating) their media agency arrangements, which is invariably the most expensive line in their annual communications budget.

Initial data would suggest that there was a 50% increase in the number of media reviews and appointments in 2021 versus 2020 across national, international and global requirements. These included many of the big tech brands such as Google and Facebook/Meta, global advertisers such as Anheuser-Busch, Coca-Cola and Unilever, together with major UK advertisers Comparethemarket, Lloyds Banking Group and Zoopla Property Group.

This avalanche of media reviews resulted in many media agencies being more selective than ever about which opportunities they accepted, and which they (often reluctantly) walked away from.

Which pitches you accept is clearly a judgment call (and a mixture of experience and instinct) but it is definitely the case that those media agencies that were more selective – and didn't over extend themselves – were more likely to be successful than those that took a decision to play a percentage game and go for anything that moved.

3 The number of appointments where there was no incumbent agency

Historically, the majority of creative reviews and appointments have occurred because of a breakdown in an existing relationship. In the last twelve months, the market has almost been turned on its head with 47% of appointments being "new" where there was no existing AOR relationship in place. These fresh appointments principally fell into two categories:

Scale ups

These tended to be start-up businesses who had previously relied on performance marketing or word of mouth to increase purchases or engagement but were now at the stage where they needed to "become a brand". Examples of such businesses included Beavertown, Decathlon, Getir, M&M Direct, Motorway, MyTutor and Waze.

Existing brands

These could be brands who had previously worked with an agency, where the relationship was dormant, and they now felt the need to "re-engage" with consumers. Examples of these would be Gu and Hofmeister.

There were also examples of brands who were coming to the UK for the first time, including QSR heavyweights Taco Bell and Wendy's.

It is likely that both trends will continue in 2022, leading to a reinvigorated marketplace, once "normality" returns.

4 The surprising lack of major creative reviews

Whilst the total "pitching" market saw a major volume increase, there were comparatively



few "major" creative reviews in 2021. Since January '21, there have been eight creative appointments made by brands and businesses who were investing more than £20 million in their "traditional" advertising comms in the UK market. This was marginally up on 2020, when there was a total of six such appointments; equating to a 25% year on year increase against a market uplift that is likely to be in the late forty per cents.

These were Asda, BA, Betfair, DFS, JustEat, MoneySuperMarket, TfL and Virgin (Holidays and Airline).

Some of these reviews were statutory in nature, whilst others were often precipitated by a change in client CEO or, in the case of JustEat, the merger of two businesses.

5 Traditional sectors are the most likely to review

With virtually every sector of industry either disrupting themselves or being disrupted, there were no great surprises in the sectors that had called reviews or made new appointments in the last twelve months, with the top ten opportunities for agencies (in terms of volume) coming from:

- Finance
- Retail (both online and bricks & mortar)
- Travel
- Food
- Motoring
- Charities
- Alcoholic Drinks
- B2B
- Non-Alcoholic beverages
- Entertainment

6 New business crystal ball gazing

The extent to which the volume of pitches in 2021 was simply a result of the comparative inertia of 2020 is difficult to call.

We are sure that there will continue to be new entrants to individual markets that will be looking to appoint new agencies whilst many other brand owners with existing relationships will be looking to consolidate rather than add to their agency ecosystem. The new business market is definitely not going anywhere, but it will be fascinating to see what shape it takes.

How "normal" 2022 will prove to be is currently an unanswerable question but hopefully most, if not all, of it will be spent in the real rather than virtual world. ■



A year like no other for media pitches

By Paul Phillips

In 2021 I was faced with a new challenge for the first time in the 24 years that I've been a consultant.

Instead of media agencies raising their hand to any and every new business opportunity, I found myself having to pitch AAR media opportunities against those of other consultants, as well as CMO's and their procurement colleagues going to market without any external support.

As we all know, the market was awash with media new business opportunities from the start of January without let up through to the

end of the year. At face value this appeared to be good news for agencies and, where appropriate, their holding company owners.

But against the unprecedented (there's that word again) backdrop of a disrupted (and that one) marketplace what have we learnt that will result in long-term media pitch behaviour change? (Bingo!)

The catch-all answer is that I think some things will change for good and others will stay the same (what else is there?). So, here's what I think will change for good:

1 Agency leadership will continue to put their people first, turning down opportunities that place unnecessary or unrealistic expectations on their teams (unless the request comes from HQ; see point 2 in what will stay the same section below). After all, a principle isn't a principle until it costs you, and in 2021 it has proven to be a price agency leaders think was definitely worth paying.

2 Brands wanting to pitch their media will need to come to market in a professional manner and well thought through approach. If agencies don't have clarity on the reasons for the pitch, the selection programme, the role and involvement of decision makers, the schedule and the size of the prize being relative to the ask and what it will take to win, domestic brands (and quite possibly some international opportunities) will find themselves being rejected by agencies in which

they are interested, as I know to have been the case several times in 2021.

3 An unexpected consequence of remote working and video calls becoming standard practice has been the willingness of brand teams to be more accessible than ever before to agencies during a pitch. So, as well as the set-piece check in sessions, work in progress meetings and technical surgeries, marketers have made time for an impromptu Zoom (with camera on) to give agencies every opportunity to shine in their response to the pitch brief. All from the comfort of everyone's home with children, partners and pets in the background (and occasionally, front and centre of the screen), adding a welcome touch of humanity that, in former times, was less evident as we all walked into the designated meeting room. ▶

Then there are some aspects of pitching that remain unaffected by all that has been going on around us. Here are three constants that I predict, with confidence, will remain so:

1 We are a people business (still playing buzzword bingo?) and it's the team of people that is an agency's most potent and persuasive pitch winner. Of course, any successful agency must have a threshold level of hygiene and capability across data, tech, platform integration, audience insight, MMM, cost and quality buying, operational excellence, MI reporting and more, to compete effectively. But these soon become table stakes and are rarely the difference between success and failure, certainly at the sharp end of the pitch. What sets agencies apart and sets the CMO and their teams hearts beating a little faster is an agency's smarts, the strategic Jedi knight who, in lockstep with the rest of the team, tells a story and sells a vision of the future that excites, inspires, and ultimately persuades the client team to want to work with that agency.

2 Sometimes saying no is not an option (see point 1 in the 'what will change' section above). The super-tanker global brands are on a never-ending journey of bedding in, working with or exiting media agency arrangements. Every year, depending on their governance lifecycle, there will be businesses that dock their accounts in a pitch port for what is never less than six months, and often much longer, before setting on their way with an evolved or completely new set of media agency partners. In 2021 AB InBev, Bayer, Chanel, Ferrero Rocher, Google, Kering Group, Meta, Sanofi and Unilever all reviewed, re-arranging their media agency deckchairs to varying degrees (too many nautical analogies?).

And when the call comes from HQ in New York, London, Paris, or Tokyo to defend or attack the gazillion dollar opportunity, domestic offices have no say in the matter, regardless of how knackered or stressed their people feel. But what's the alternative? For the 2022 supertanker opportunities, I suggest looking at the brands that haven't reviewed since between 2017 and 2019 as three to five years appears to be a predominant timescale. Indeed, literally as I am writing this, VW has announced a review to kick off this year. Step forward any network that doesn't have a global automotive account.

3 For all the good intentions over the years to modernise and update the pitch process, I think the basic recipe and constituent elements of a media pitch will remain more similar than different. Not a fashionable view amongst all, perhaps, but one that I believe for two primary reasons. Because pitching is an insurance policy for which brands have become accustomed to requesting fully comprehensive cover at no perceived cost to them, and in response agencies have been (in the main) willing to do whatever it takes to win. What's the downside for a brand to have a bunch of super-smart people thinking about their business, marketing, communications and media challenges? All, more often than not, for free! This consensual behaviour simply perpetuates the arms race that pitching has become, with no-one willing or wanting to take a stand against it.

The second reason is more visceral. A well-run pitch that puts the best talent that the market has to offer in competition with each other is universally described by agencies as a moment in time when they are operating at their best.

There's an individual and personal desire to demonstrate market beating strategy, creativity, execution and delivery that is backed by a corporate (little c or big C) ambition and imperative to grow.

'We're at our best when we're firing on all cylinders in a pitch. No-one can beat us.'

This sums up numerous comments over the years from media agencies of all persuasion. Winning pitches delivers the highest of highs as well as the wind-inducing emptiness that a punch to the stomach engenders in the unwelcome words 'We're going with another agency'.

When it came to media pitches, 2021 was a year like no other and there are positive lessons learnt that we will take forward, of which the industry should be proud, and rightly so.

At the same time plus ça change and the thrill of the pitch, with all the demands it asks of agencies, will continue to be pursued and participated in willingly by the marketplace. Because when agencies get it right, and win, nothing beats it! ■



The best leaders listen first

By Tony Spong



As marketers, we know the importance of listening to customers and knowing what problems we solve for them. So, when clients tell us that agencies aren't listening, one must be more than just a little concerned.

Who should do the listening and what should they be listening for?

We've spoken at length and delivered many seminars over recent years focussed on helping agencies to re-invent the client lead role and we are seeing signs that change is taking shape, but there is some way still to go if we are honest.

It's certainly not been easy during a pandemic, and now a talent crunch, but out of adversity the road sometimes becomes easier to travel down.

Broken talent models

One of the first things you learn at AAR is that clients buy teams of people backed by an agency, not an agency full of teams of people. So, what we are really dealing with now is less about broken agency models but much more about broken 'talent' models, and its these that haven't kept pace with how marketing has and is changing.

There is, of course, no silver bullet but clients are struggling to access the breadth of skills, experience and diversity of thinking needed to survive and thrive in today's challenging world.

The CMO and agency client lead face the same challenges but the fundamentals still apply. Their focus is building teams that have the collective insight, strategic mindset, commercial knowledge and technical expertise centred around a customer-centric growth agenda.

Ability to build a team

The ability to build a team is a foundation stone of any leader. But where do we learn these skills?

In restaurants, for example, the team is known as a 'Chef's brigade', but in an industry where talent is primarily judged on cooking ability and promotions are usually based on knife skills rather than management or business acumen, it can be hard for chefs to make the jump to becoming a head chef and being a leader.

Indeed, owing to limited management training opportunities offered to chefs, more often than not they are forced to simply learn on the job, inevitably making mistakes along the way. What's more, when young chefs are suddenly promoted to a position where they are expected to lead a brigade, they usually end up replicating the examples set by their mentors. This sounds terribly familiar and I'm sure

something that many of us can relate to. A team leader has a huge responsibility to set the tone for his or her team and needs to be able to communicate a clear philosophy to team members.

Jurgen Klopp, the Liverpool FC manager, believes in *"a playing philosophy that is very emotional, very fast and very strong. My teams must play at full throttle and take it to the limit every single game. It is important to have a playing philosophy that reflects your own mentality, reflects the club and gives you a clear direction to follow."*

For these leaders it's about the team, not about them doing the work itself. Making sure the team stays healthy and strong is what they do. That's not an easy skill. We go to restaurants and we watch our favourite sport teams because these leaders have achieved something special. ▶



So it is with brands and agencies. There are those golden periods where the team clicks under a leader who has built a great team. Sometimes it can be relatively short lived, but others are masters at regenerating their teams as the problems change and they enjoy long term relationships as a result.

Struggling to adapt talent pools

In the past the problems to be solved were simpler and more straight forward and so the whole agency could be set up in such a way as to make that a repeatable process. Today, however, in an always on customer-centric world, brands and their agency partners are struggling to find ways to adapt their talent pools.

We need to free our client leads to be master team builders and support them with the right talent mix for them to be the Michelin Star Chef on this or that piece of business.

When you listen to clients, you hear that they need help to:

- Achieve a better balance between the hamster wheel of short termism and a longer-term strategic view
- Help them feel less overwhelmed and under resourced by helping everyone focus on what will make a difference to the client's business
- Bring in the right expertise to use the mountain of data now being created to identify why things are happening rather than what to speed up decision making
- Remind everyone that marketing is more than just comms but about connecting a brand to its customers across all elements of the mix

As well as many others.

We need to start developing this sort of talent now otherwise we run the risk of losing an entire generation who have built their muscle memory in execution. Both sides need to create the environment for new leaders to learn (again) how to engage with the 'why' and the 'how', not just the 'what'. ■

The weird and wonderful world of 'hybrid' pitching

By Rebecca Nunneley



Nothing beats the feeling of face-to-face pitches being back in the diary.

It's been a long 18 months since we were all sitting round one table with senior marketers and agency folk and, at AAR, we've missed it.

But there are definitely some parts of lockdown pitching we don't want to lose. Some things we were forced to adopt have actually improved the experience for all parties.

We expect the future of AAR selection processes to include some combination of virtual and IRL, and so we enter into this weird and wonderful world called 'hybrid' pitching.

Lockdown learnings

Virtual all-agency briefings, Q&A's and check-ins have been a game-changer, allowing agencies greater access to clients and their wider teams, particularly those based overseas.

We've been able to open up the invite to virtual briefings so that larger pitch teams can attend.

Recording all sessions means clients can re-watch meetings to make sure that feedback is thorough, and agencies can re-visit these as many times as they want throughout the process.

Check-in sessions are much simpler with no meeting rooms to organise, and no travel limitations. Clients can make themselves available anytime throughout the week for quick 30-min check-ins, in addition to the more formal tissue meetings. The frequency and relative informality of these sessions helps to create a more collaborative and discursive process, helping to replicate what it would really be like to work as partners.

Pitch theatre has been stripped right back, levelling the playing field between agencies of all sizes, and putting a greater emphasis on the team, the thinking and the work.

What we've missed

For all the positives that virtual pitching has brought, there's no substitute for face-to-face interaction when gauging chemistry between potential partners, or that sense of anticipation

and excitement on pitch day. There's no greater anti-climax than smashing a pitch meeting and logging off Zoom to an empty spare room.

And we mustn't underestimate the importance of body language and being able to read the room, allowing real-time, instant feedback that's lost on screen.

Approximately three quarters of AAR's clients are now asking for face-to-face chemistry and pitch meetings, and we only see this number increasing as we move into 2022.

Some things to remember

Whatever plan you make, you need to be ready to change it overnight. With the number of COVID-19 cases all over the place, the situation is changing on a daily basis. At AAR, we will continue to agree a preferred approach with clients on a case-by-case basis, and are constantly re-evaluating this as we move through the process.

IRL pitching is a muscle and it's not been used for a long time. Hybrid presenting is even more difficult – what you might do on Zoom doesn't

always land IRL and vice versa. Trial and error will be key.

Lockdown made agencies a lot more decisive about which opportunities to pursue. This can only be a good thing for our industry and this behaviour needs to stay. Know what you're right for and importantly what you're wrong for, and then stick to that.

Meeting with potential agency and brand partners from our kitchens, bedrooms, lofts and garden sheds has exposed us all in a way normally only our families and friends might see. It's opened a window into each of our lives and created a wonderful, curious vulnerability we've not experienced before.

It's humanised each of us and that openness, humility and humanity is something we'd all do well to keep going with as we try to navigate our way back to a new version of normal. Except for the awkward and inevitable 'do we shake hands or do we elbow bump?' moment. That can go. ■

Ban the SLA (Just for the first six months)

By Vicky Gillan

The first few days and weeks of a new agency/client relationship are crucial. There's so much to learn, set up and kick off, with oodles of passion, excitement, and expectation about what can be delivered, and by when. Both parties are stepping into the unknown, and whilst having a Service Level Agreement in place from the word 'go' can feel like a safety net to ensure the right progress, our advice is don't.

There's just no way you'll have enough insight into the relationship to put together an effective SLA. At least not to start with. And there's certainly not a 'one size fits all' solution. There are too many variables to simply cobble together an SLA and assume it will solve all the inevitable challenges that need to be addressed (and oh boy, are there lots of those) for a few key reasons:

1 It's just too soon

We'll kick off with the biggest issue: the reality is that in the initial weeks and months of a new working relationship, everyone is feeling their way. Both the agency and the client will be brimming with assumptions, expectations and preconceptions about how things should work.

Facilitating success in these early stages is about reconciling these three things with the reality of what will work best. There'll be some idea of what's expected from the pitch process, but now it's time to get specific about language, communication, process and working cultures to pin down and agree exactly how things will work best on a personal and practical level.

These things take time, and whilst much can be pre-discussed and a working hypothesis kicked off, some actual rubber (and real work/

projects) needs to hit the road to identify what will truly work best. Relationships need to be nurtured and nourished for all to deliver their best – after all, we're only human. And that takes a little time.

There is an inevitable period of embedding, but an SLA works on the basis that all these practicalities have already been worked out: all black and white, and definitely no grey. The reality is that until you've built that mutual, common understanding, an SLA just assumes too much about what will be effective. This makes it more of a tick box exercise than a useful piece of work to drive efficient delivery of agreed outcomes. Making these presumptions can also lead to a couple of other pitfalls posed by hasty SLAs...

2 SLAs need to be mutual to be effective

Many of the most valuable business principles are rooted in mutuality, and the idea that working collaboratively is better than working in silos. Take something like 'great work starts with a great brief'. It's undoubtedly true, and it's based on a crucial factor: someone needs to provide a great brief for someone else to do great work. Input (the brief), and output (the work). Mutuality.

This is another area in which SLAs fall down – particularly if they're put in place rapidly, before either party really has their head around how things will work. They're great at setting out the stall for what an agency will provide, or how they'll behave and work – but they rarely, if ever, establish the same kinds of "input" expectation and, therefore, framework for the client.

A one-sided SLA is already unbalanced when it comes to establishing what a great working relationship will look like. It hardly screams or re-enforces collaboration. To ensure an SLA is mutual, you need to factor in time to really allow the working dynamic between the parties to be tested and where the pressure points are.

3 SLAs are best suited to 'things'

The final problem is a broader one, which just makes things worse if the SLA has been "set-up" too quickly. If, for instance, you're a paperclip supplier, then an SLA from the start is an easier job and an essential task. It will outline precisely how many paperclips you will supply, on what date, and what size they will be. Excellent! But if you're a creative partner (and I use the term creative in its widest sense) then the same rules don't apply.

Yes, you can define things like deliverables and turnaround times. Yes, you can guarantee a status report within X number of hours and response times to a query. But aren't these great examples of measuring and defining what we can, rather than measuring what actually matters?

Of course, KPIs need to be agreed at the start – that's at the heart of the commercial construct and contract – but in the context of an agency relationship, how the teams deliver the output is actually creative in itself. It involves creative people, creative mindsets, and original thinking to consider – and therein lies the problem. SLAs are brilliant at helping to define 'things', but they aren't well-suited, if bluntly crafted, to quantifying strategy, creativity, problem-solving, collaboration – and this is where the real magic happens. ▶

The alternative: Channel all that energy...

So, the big question: what's the alternative? Throughout the first few weeks and months, both the client and agency will need to be nimble, flexible, and proactive when it comes to tracking how things are going.

Setting an initial roadmap of deliverables and milestones will provide the basis for the 'core ingredients' of your SLA – the scope, scale, and pace of the relationship and the output – but it's up to both parties to be reflective in how these things are working, and then use this reflection to make positive, iterative and continuous evolutions. For example:

- Is work falling within the agreed scope?
- Is the sign off process agile enough?
- Are briefs fit for purpose?
- Is there clarity on what percentage of the work should be ground breaking innovation (requiring more resources), and how much will fall under ongoing 'drumbeat' output?
- Are things taking as long as predicted, and if not, what's getting in the way?

As work is delivered, the specific "core ingredients" or topics for the SLA will become obvious, especially if they are flagged and captured through regular client/agency check-ins and wash up meetings.

Wash ups are an essential part of the embedding phase to reflect on what's working well, and address things that could be improved – for both parties. How often these take place will vary depending on the pace of the client's

business and complexity of scope – typically there will be more in the initial stages.

What's crucial is to ensure these sessions are 'essential to attend' by senior and day to day teams alike, and not as 'nice to attend if there's time'. Use hindsight questions to ensure the focus is always on looking ahead – and definitely don't look back in anger. Blame is such a waste of energy, resource and time. Revisit the roadmap, celebrate your wins so far, and then work out what actions you can take to address live issues and fast track progress. Work closely with your Procurement colleagues throughout to link to the commercial contract and construct.

Crucially none of what we have been advocating requires an SLA. Instead, when concluding the embedding phase, we suggest you collate all the different topics into a master SLA "menu". With this, you'll have an informed place from which to consider, prioritise and set clear targets against – and even better, you can be fully confident that when the master SLA is communicated, the teams will just 'get it', as they have effectively "created" it in the first place.

So please, forget the SLA to begin with. Focus on finding out the things that matter, make positive, iterative changes along the way to test the boundaries of what's possible, and identify the real barriers to delivering the pitch intent and ambition. Once you have this in the bag, a mutual, meaningful and measurable SLA will practically write itself. ■





Creativity with a Capital C – a superpower for business

By Victoria Fox

Introduction

Creativity has been high up the agenda this year in our consultancy with clients. We even undertook some research with brands to understand how creativity is viewed within the organisation and the importance it plays in driving growth. What was evident in the research is, while highly valued, how to create the right conditions for creativity to flourish on a sustained basis is rarely a focus within organisations.

There's much brands can learn from agencies and how they are set up in terms of people and processes to deliver creative solutions to business problems. In 2022, we are going to be focusing on what we call 'Creative Capital'.

While everyone can get lucky now and again, our four decades of experience working with

marketing organisations and their external partners has taught us that Creativity doesn't happen by chance. It is directly related to how much Creative Capital a company possesses.

Creative Capital is what you accumulate when you engineer the right conditions across your marketing ecosystem to unlock greater creativity on a sustained basis. We would love to hear from you about this topic and ways you are investing in Creative Capital within your agencies that might be transferable to client organisations.

While this article is written with a client lens, we thought it would be useful to share here as it garnered a lot of interest from the client community. We hope you enjoy reading it! ▶

The world of marketing is going through a significant period of upheaval and brands in every industry are undergoing (or have undergone) extensive digital transformations in order to remain competitive. This is a hugely complex task. Ensuring good data-driven digital marketing is essential but it's a demanding, highly operational challenge.

If businesses are going to innovate and grow successfully in this highly competitive and changing market, it's crucial that they don't forget the value of creativity; not in terms of their marketing output and comms, but in terms of their operations, culture and attitudes across the entire marketing mix, and beyond. This kind of creativity, with a 'capital C', is the key to unlocking true innovation and transformation, increasing share price and connecting with customers in a meaningful way. Creativity should be seen as a superpower for solving business problems.

What we mean by creativity

It's important, initially, to make the distinction between 'creative' being about pictures and words in communications, and creative capital. The conflation of marketing and marcomms has been a disaster for marketing. Of course, creative communications and outputs will be a core part of any marketing function and, while this is crucial, even the most inspired campaigns aren't likely to have a transformative impact in terms of wider business goals, nor will they necessarily open the door to future innovation.

When we say creativity, we mean developing a creative culture and mindset across every element of a marketing ecosystem; thinking outside of the box, looking at challenges



from all different angles and giving people permission to try and fail, then try again and succeed in everything from comms to product development. Permission to fail is key to unlocking a creative mindset in teams.

Embracing creativity as an attitude and culture, rather than simply a measurable output, is where true innovation originates; brands that have exhibited exceptional leaps in their success in marketing usually have this kind of culture – of embracing creativity in the way they approach everything from their platforms to their partners – at the root of their success.

Why this kind of creativity is essential

If the focus of the marketing effort is placed entirely on KPIs and deliverables, and these are

perceived as the most important result of work undertaken, then naturally people will make these goals the primary focus of their effort. This can lead to great results on a project basis, but that's where the buck stops unless brands look to find ways to elevate their teams' thinking and empower their people to find those opportunities for excellence that will side-step the competition and drive exponential growth.

That's not to say KPIs and data-driven marketing aren't important or beneficial. It's simply that focussing on these aspects without questioning how they could work differently, or could be approached from a different angle, means any results (while potentially successful) aren't likely to break boundaries.

Instead, opportunities for exceptional, ground-breaking innovation open up when all the elements of the mix – including data, KPIs, people, processes, platforms and partners – are approached creatively. Unless brands can create environments in which people aren't afraid to suggest or try new things, make mistakes and explore the unusual or unique, their output won't ever push past the work of their competitors.

This is where the real opportunity lies but is often something that can be overlooked in the race to deliver or to improve efficiency and output. ▶

What creativity can look like

By adopting a holistically creative attitude towards marketing functions, countless innovations can be developed. It's important to ensure this potential is extended to the wider business function, which could include bringing parts of the business which traditionally wouldn't fall under marketing into the mix, such as product and proposition development.

As a standout example of how this can work, one need look no further than KFC and their new vegan burgers. Despite being arguably antithetical to the USP of the brand, this new product – developed as a result of careful attention to audience demands – broadens their potential customer base in an innovative, creative and original way. Crucially though, it isn't just the marketing of the product that exhibits true creativity: it's the product development itself.

This is far from a 'one-hit-wonder' for KFC, too. As a heritage brand, KFC has embraced creativity wholeheartedly in their marketing – monitoring and combining customer experience, product innovation, and marketing collaboratively and open-mindedly to instil a culture of exploration and original thinking across the entire mix. By bringing all of these core pillars under the remit of marketing, the brand has been able to scale and grow directly as a result of this way of thinking.

AAR's Robin Charney spoke to Ira Dubinsky, Director of Innovation and Customer Experience at KFC, for The Next Round (AAR's marketing inspiration podcast), about how KFC has fostered this kind of creative culture. You can listen to [the full episode here](#).

Creativity and data: not mutually exclusive

Marketing may be a traditionally creative endeavour, but with digital transformation becoming more of a necessity, the opportunities for analytical and data-driven marketing are expanding exponentially. Significantly, though, these two aspects of marketing – the creative and the analytical – are far from mutually exclusive, and it's absolutely possible to be creative and original within a data-focussed model.

Regardless of the output, there are still plenty of ways to develop cultures which allow people to explore new concepts and ideas. This applies to everything from your planning cycle to how insights and data are gathered in the first place; by seeing every element of the mix as an opportunity for innovation, brands can instigate highly impactful change, and gain that genuinely competitive edge.

A few things you need to ask

Embedding this kind of creativity at a systemic level can seem like a lofty ambition, but in practice there are questions to ask within all of the core aspects of your marketing, the answers to which can inform simple but highly effective changes that can be made.

Significantly, these questions apply to the '4 Ps' that AAR regularly focusses on: people, partners, processes, and platforms. Each of these areas need to be considered and reflected upon in order to unlock the greatest potential for innovation across the entire mix.

In terms of processes, while organising ways to move things from a-z are essential, it's

also vital to ensure you have processes in place designed specifically to facilitate and encourage creativity. Do your processes focus solely on short-term deliverables and metrics, and could these be expanded to more actively explore testing and failing?

Are your teams given the stimuli and the space to innovate and think laterally? Does this mean carving out time and even physical space for teams to collaborate, sit together and discuss ideas? Are you injecting effective stimuli, such as organising inspiring activities like talks or cultural visits, outside of the office?

Even the very people in an organisation (and the processes of hiring them) can, and should, be approached creatively. Are your hiring practices geared towards nurturing a creative mindset, in every part of the business? Do your job descriptions open the floor to opportunity or hem potential originality within the confines of pure processes and deliverables?

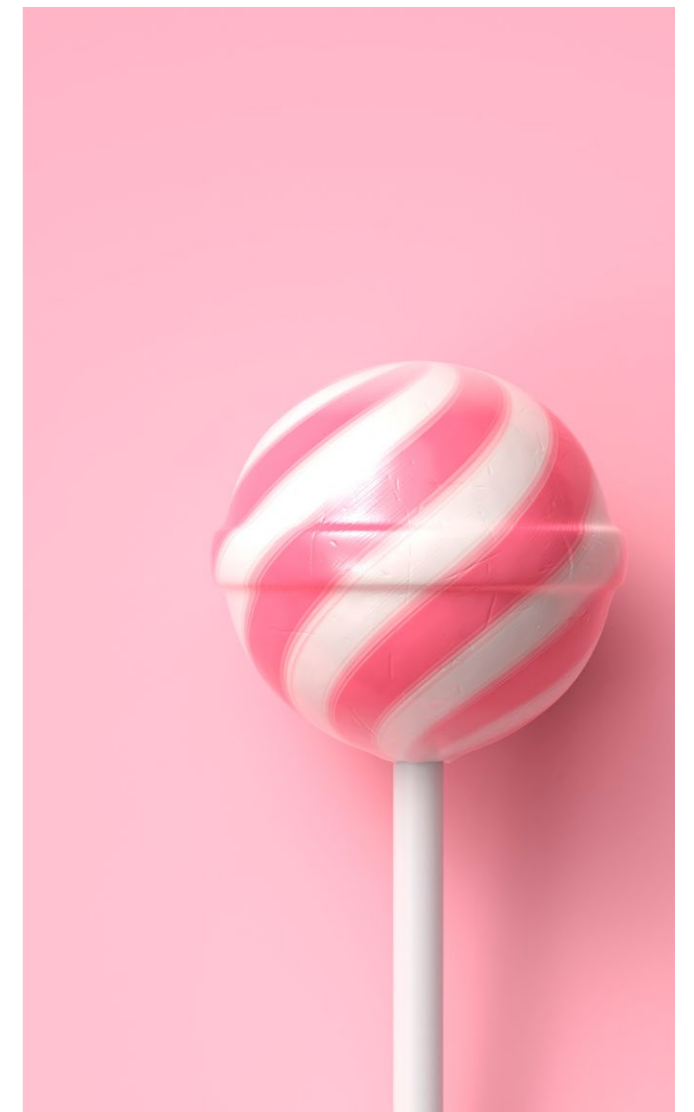
This doesn't just apply internally, too. Agencies can offer some of the most potent routes into embedding this type of creativity at the organisational level, given the space to do so. Are your partners given enough access to the whole mix, and are you 'letting them in' to help embed this mindset and practice of 'outside the box' thinking?

Begin at the top

At the heart of all of this lies a crucial factor: leadership. If there's one thing that any brand needs to instil it's an open-minded, creative and lateral approach not just to marketing but across the entire organisation. It needs buy-in at the highest level.

Business leaders need to truly accept and embrace the potential of lateral thinking and creativity with a 'big C' if brands are going to instigate effective change.

By recognising the benefits of providing time and space to allow people to explore how or what things could be done to innovate; by nurturing a culture which allows people to test and fail, then test again and succeed; by ensuring this doesn't stop at CMO level but expands across wider departments. This is how brands can transform their marketing, their share price, their impact and connection with their customers. ■





AAR Subscription: Helping your business grow

By Paul Phillips

AAR subscription provides a range of support for consultancies and agencies to improve your overall business performance across new opportunities, as well as with existing clients. There are four aspects to us working together:

1 Context

As AAR sits at the crossroads of where brands and agencies meet, this affords us a rich perspective and insight. We're always close to what's on the mind of CMO's, we have full visibility of the agency landscape and subtle differences in each agency's proposition and we understand the pinch-points that can occur in established relationships between a brand and agency team. All of this can be leveraged to increase your agency's chances of competing more effectively.

2 New Business

It's a core element of our consultancy and all our practice leads can support your team in the pursuit of new business. Be it training, coaching, storytelling, access to our research and databases, you should consider where our support will be most helpful and effective as you develop the agency's new business strategies for the forthcoming year.

3 Organic retention and growth

Recognised as being just as important as the thrill of the chase for new business, a well-executed, successful retention strategy can contribute to top and bottom-line growth. Our support can provide the right MI to identify your agency's perceived strengths amongst your client base and act as an early indicator of a less than fully satisfied customer.

4 Community

The last 18 months have reminded us that, however competitive, we are all part of the same community and we should take advantage of all that collectively we have to offer. Our seminar programme, Town Halls and the very welcome return of our festive drinks all offer an opportunity for learning, sharing and enjoying each other's company.

More details on our how we help agencies win and retain business can be found on our [website](#) and, if there's anything you want to discuss, please do get in touch with us. ■

AAR in 2022.

Your Seminar Programme for 2022

By Tony Spong



First of all, my continued thanks to the speakers, the attendees and our very own Katrina Law for switching so seamlessly to virtual seminars. We have gained more than we have lost judging by the feedback; more people can attend overall and more from each agency, which means learnings can be enjoyed, discussed and deployed more readily when it's a shared experience. Yes, interactions are different, but we are all adapting well and finding ways to make it work.

We have five new seminars lined up for 2022, together with our most popular regulars, all aiming to tackle the main issues of the day affecting performance, as well as those around developing core skills and introducing new ones to keep your teams running to the maximum of their potential.

We're kicking off with probably the biggest topic of all in January, and that is DE&I. Our industry, perhaps more than any other, is in a unique position to play a leadership role not only by embracing diversity, creating equity and demonstrating the value of inclusion through the way we behave individually and collectively, but also through the work we deliver for our clients. I'm really pleased to introduce UNLRN, who will show us how to create and execute more inclusive work for our clients.

Another hot topic of discussion has been the impact of hybrid working on agency culture, which lies at the foundation of agency brands. Chris West of Verbal Identity will explore how you can capture culture through language and drive a distinctive narrative style for your agency.

Clients continue to challenge agencies to listen and not just hear what they are saying. Active listening is a fundamental tool in the client service team's armoury and one which Lizzie Palmer will take us through in her seminar. As is that of leadership especially in these changing and uncertain times. Carole and Emma will be your hosts for this one.

We have regular spots for Tessa and Paul on 'Presenting in hybrid times' and 'Curiosity at the heart of Account management' respectively, while we hope to have Gareth Turner return to provide his typically provocative client-side view on how to build strong relationships, and the indefatigable Anthony 'Tas' Tasgal to exercise our minds to stimulate a culture of creativity in your teams.

The phrase 'we like to work for brave and ambitious clients' is trotted out by many

agencies, but how good are you at unlocking resistance to change? Andrew Waddell's new seminar will help you get inside your client's mind to do just that.

Latest details of our 2022 programme can be found to follow and we will continue to run them over zoom and offer each agency up to five places per seminar.

It always helps to plan ahead, think of who would benefit the most from each seminar and pencil that in their diaries now. We open up bookings roughly three weeks before each seminar, so be sure to look out for bookings opening for those you're especially interested in. As an added bonus, they all come with IPA and IDM CPD accreditation to boot!

Our full seminar programme can also be viewed on our [website](#). ■

Core Seminar Programme 2022

Weds 26 th January	UNLRN	Turn your growing DEI understanding into positive action
Weds 23 rd February	Chris West	You're talking, but how do you make sure clients are listening?
Weds 23 rd March	Tessa Morton	Presenting with impact in 'hybrid' times
Weds 20 th April	Lizzie Palmer	Dynamic listening
Weds 18 th May	Paul Burns	Curiosity at the heart of account management
Weds 22 th June	Andrew Waddell	Inside the Client mind: Unlocking resistance to change
Weds 21 st September	Anthony Tasgal	Building a stimulating culture of creativity
Weds 19 th October	Gareth Turner	Transforming account management from a cost to an asset
Weds 23 rd November	Carole Lowe and Emma Shelton-Smith	How to lead through extreme uncertainty

Top Seminar Attenders in 2022

KARMARAMA

+ WUNDERMAN
THOMPSON

IRIS

450 DELEGATES ATTENDED OUR 2021 PROGRAMME:
AN AVERAGE OF 50 PER SESSION

Positive feedback scores (out of 5)

4.53

Relevance

4.45

Content

4.47

Presenter

4.53

Questions
answered

4.67

Would attend another
AAR seminar

Business Development Apprenticeship

By Martin Jones

The world of "pitching" is certainly one of the most thrilling parts of agency life. A chance to pit your wits against your competitors, often with a winner-takes-all prize at the end. As with the sporting world, there are no prizes for coming second! New business can bring out the very best in agencies, and remind us what an exciting industry we are part of.

It's often said that new business is the lifeblood of any agency, and there are numerous examples of many of today's agency leaders cutting their teeth in this specialist discipline before taking on the CEO role, or even founding their own start-ups.

For an area that's so integral to an agency's success, it surprised us how little specialist training there was for people starting out and so, in 2013, we launched our Business Development Apprenticeship.

Aimed at participants who are new to the world of new business, the five-week course offers a foundational introduction to the various elements of agency business development through a mixture of theoretical tips and practical feedback.

In 2021, both the Spring and Autumn Business Development Apprenticeships remained virtual, making the course more accessible and

inclusive for agencies based outside of London. We're currently exploring options for continued remote learning versus a partial return to the physical for 2022.

For the duration of the course, the Apprentices are divided into teams, invited to create their own agency name and positioning, respond to a Request for Information and participate in a live Chemistry Meeting. With sustainability high on everyone's agenda, we used two clients for the "exam questions" in 2021: Smart Energy GB and OVO Energy. We were fortunate enough to be able to persuade their current or recent Marketing Directors, Gavin Sheppard and Sophie Muller, to role play the clients in the Chemistry Meetings. As always, the standard was reassuringly high; particularly when this was the first time that many of them had been permitted to perform in front of real clients!

We're also extremely grateful to Tracey Barber of Havas for sharing her invaluable insights into life in the new business fast-lane with our Apprentices.

Unsurprisingly, the biggest debates amongst the teams surrounded the naming of the agencies, and in 2021 we had an eclectic choice of agency brand names including:



The course was brilliant – combining visual and explanatory learning with a role-playing environment.

It opened my eyes up further to the best practices for RFI responses and chemistry meetings. I wholeheartedly recommend this course.

2021 Delegate

- Alchemy
- Citizen
- Compass
- Full House
- Noughts & Crosses
- The New
- Yours Truly

We'll be holding two Business Development Apprentices in 2022, with the first currently scheduled to start on 1 March and run through to 29 March, from 9.00am to 10.30am each Tuesday morning. More information on format and possible venue will follow closer to the time.

Meanwhile, if you have any budding stars that you feel would benefit from a crash-course in the art of new business, please do let us know. We can't wait to meet the next generation of new business specialists when the BDA rolls into town again next Spring.

Full details can be viewed on [our website](#). ■

ABOUT US.



Who we are

AAR: Experts in Marketing Ecosystems

AAR specialises in developing marketing ecosystems that drive growth in the modern marketing age. With over 45 years of experience, AAR works with brands to design marketing ecosystems, build inspiring partnerships and drive commercial performance.

In an age of complexity and disruption, businesses that can explore both challenges and innovative solutions to their marketing operations with a creative mindset will be better equipped to successfully meet the future.

Our purpose is to engineer Creative Capital as an asset throughout the entire ecosystem; across people, partners, platforms and processes, building a culture and an environment that allows creativity to flourish. ■



Meet the team



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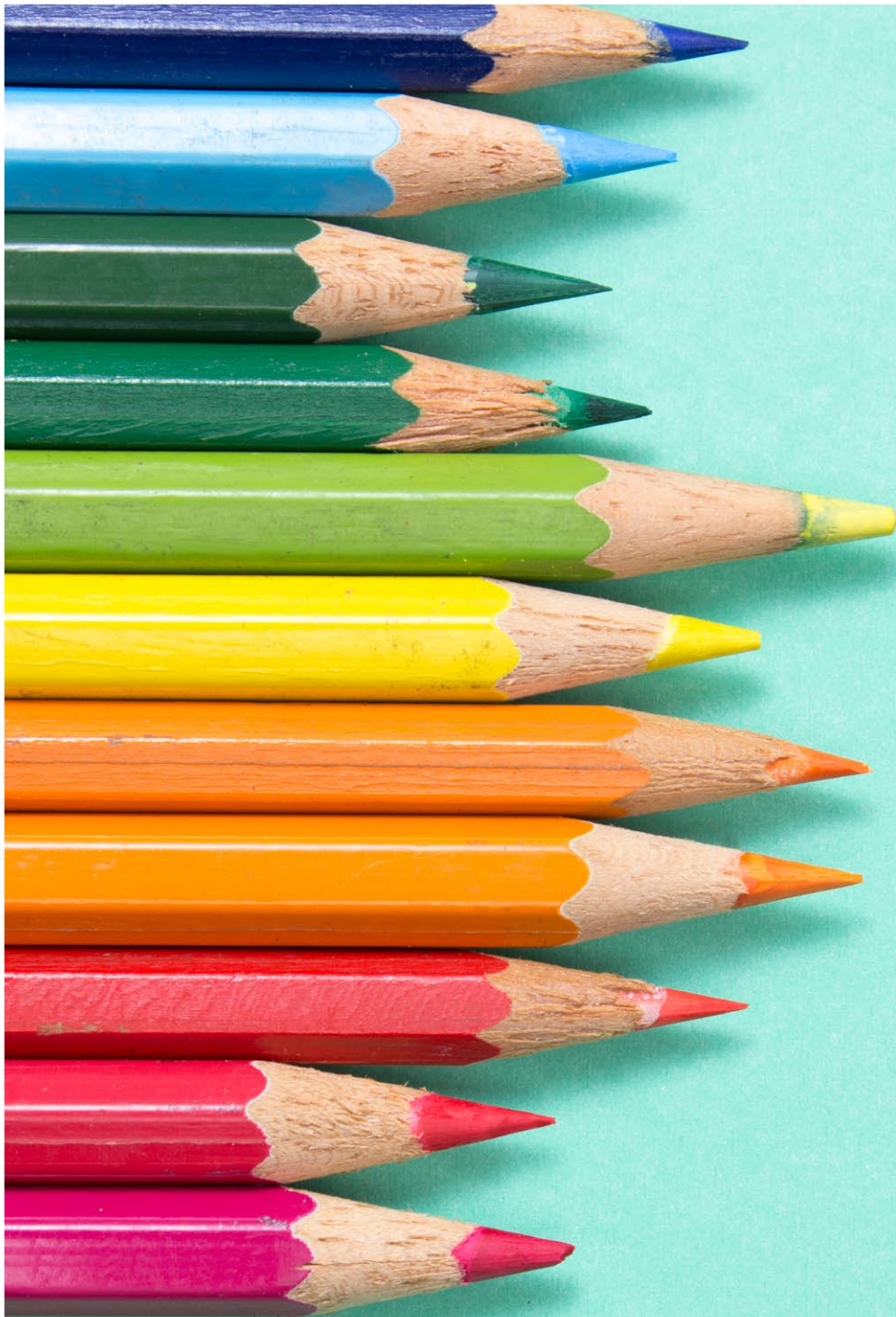
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