

# AAR PULSE

FOR AGENCIES 2020



The Experts in  
Client:Agency  
Relationships

[aargroup.co.uk](http://aargroup.co.uk)

**aa**

As our marketing had become more global in nature, we wanted a step change in our creative agency partnership that could match our ambition and service our future growth. All of which had to be realised in a new communications platform and creative idea that could be launched in a matter of months.

AAR created a programme that met the demanding timescales, gave confidence in our decision making and future-proofed our agency appointment.

**JUST EAT**



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# Foreword

*Uncertainty fuels indecision and uncertainty has ruled 2019, at least politically. However, for AAR, 2019 has been the polar opposite. A year of decisive change.*

We need inclusive leaders who recognise that diversity and inclusion is the answer to our business challenges.

A change in ownership structure to an EOT partnership allowing Kerry, Paul and Martin to bring me in alongside them to evolve and grow the brilliant business they have built and nurtured.

So I write this introduction through two quite different lenses.

I am writing this the weekend after the country voted in Boris Johnson. A simple reminder that while 'Get Brexit Done' became hugely repetitive and infantile to some, this simple, single minded message hit exactly the audience it was targeting. If nothing else, we go into 2020 with more clarity and an even bigger need to ensure the marketing community represents, reflects and truly understands the audiences with which we are trying to connect. We need inclusive leaders who recognise that diversity and inclusion is the answer to our business challenges.

Looking through my AAR lens, I have spent my first six months in deep listening mode, spending time with many of our clients. Working across a wide range of businesses from disruptors to heritage brands, we sit in a privileged position. A position that gives us perspective across different strategic approaches, but we can also see common themes emerging across the board.

Our clients are trying to put the customer into the driving seat. Customer

expectations and demands are increasing, and the disruptors have set new standards. Nick Tate, Head of 'Next' at GSK, articulated it brilliantly in his interview for our innovation podcast, 'Fightback', in which he said we are all competing with 'the speed of prime'. In order to compete, clients are making considerable investments in data and technology to consistently understand and enhance the customer experience across all channels.

AI is a common theme with 'next best action' marketing as a goal. This explains why 'agility' is the most common term used in our briefings. To really deliver competitive advantage and leverage these investments, marketing departments need to change structure, processes and behaviours. They need to change the rhythm of marketing.

What is so exciting about this future is that brands will be able to be truly useful to their customers, giving them an opportunity to help and delight.

However, without creativity there is a danger of digital sameness. The algorithms will drive us quickly to a level playing field and, at this point, what separates and differentiates is how the brand comes to life in these moments. How the uniqueness of the brand moves beyond functional experiences. This is where creative differentiation becomes the principle for growth.



It has felt like creativity has been left off the agenda in the last couple of years. Like it is a dirty word. I think there are two reasons for this:

**1** We have been in what I call a 'plumbing phase', where the focus has been on laying data and technology foundations to enable mass personalisation.

**2** Creativity needs a re-brand. When we think creativity, we need to think creativity with a big 'C'. Creativity to solve business challenges and to manifest beyond communications.

I strongly agree with Dave Trott when he said "Pure creativity would be what you find in art galleries; creativity for its own sake. Applied creativity would be what we (creative partners) do: creativity with a specific purpose".

This creativity needs to be applied to all marketing challenges, not just marketing communications.

As a collective, we need to champion

broader forms of creativity and re-imagine creativity in the new rhythm of marketing. The future marketing model has rightly been high up the agenda this year and that will continue into 2020 and beyond.

However, I am going to end on a statement that is bang on the money. Earlier this year, Campaign ran a breakfast briefing on the future model. It was Alex Grieve, Chief Creative Officer at AMV BBDO, who stood out for me when he said that surely the right marketing model has to be the one that liberates creativity across the board.

So, here's to 2020. A year of creativity and change fuelled by a celebration of difference in all its forms.

Victoria Fox, CEO, AAR  
vfox@aargroup.co.uk

To really deliver competitive advantage and leverage these investments, marketing departments need to change structure, processes and behaviours.

# News



# Victoria Fox joins AAR

**Victoria Fox joined AAR in May 2019 as our new CEO, taking over the leadership of the company from Kerry Glazer and setting the company direction into 2020.**

Victoria's 20 plus years in the industry have been predominantly agency-side. She has extensive senior management experience of working with brands, accelerating business change and digital transformation. Her expertise and vision will supercharge AAR's evolution into new and innovative areas of consultancy.

At the time of her appointment, Kerry commented that Victoria's drive, talent and personal integrity was exactly what was needed to lead AAR through the next stage of its successful development.

Victoria has spent the first six months since her appointment in listening mode, talking to as many of AAR's clients as possible. All those Victoria has spoken to have been candid about how they are adapting to the changing marketing landscape.



Victoria Fox, CEO, AAR

There is an increasing role for highly experienced consultancies like AAR to support the design and shaping of these evolved partner landscapes.

As brands look to put the customer right at the heart of their businesses, they are clearly making significant financial and structural investments in data and technology across marketing and their organisations. To realise these investments, both the shape of their partner landscapes and the rhythm of marketing output are changing.

Fusing traditional and digital marketing techniques is clearly critical, and there is an increasing role for highly experienced consultancies like AAR to support the design and shaping of these evolved partner landscapes.

Under Victoria's leadership we are already in the process of expanding AAR's offering, adding new capabilities to the existing mix, but ever mindful that we are here to support our agency clients in this changing market. We will continue to offer valuable perspectives on what is on the minds of brand owners and in helping agencies to win and retain clients in a highly competitive market. ■

# AAR becomes employee-owned

In July 2019, nearly 45 years after AAR was founded by Lyndy Payne, the company became employee-owned. AAR's three owners, Kerry Glazer, Martin Jones and Paul Phillips, sold a majority proportion of their shareholding to create an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT).

An EOT is an indirect form of employee ownership in which a trust holds a controlling stake on behalf of all its employees. Companies that are an EOT tend to deliver superior business performance and be more innovative too, achieving this through sharing information and responsibility business-wide.

Establishing an EOT allows AAR to retain its independence, impartiality, integrity

and consistency in the way it operates as a business. It strengthens performance, entrepreneurialism and innovation, and makes it easier to pass on to the next generation of business leadership - heralded by new CEO, Victoria Fox - to incentivise the team and, over time, transition the business.

An EOT is an indirect form of employee ownership in which a trust holds a controlling stake in a company on behalf of all its employees.

This move is very much in keeping with the way in which AAR has always managed itself, ensuring both the succession and legacy of a brand that Kerry, Paul and Martin care so much about.

They retain both their involvement and a minority stake in the business, as Kerry moves to the position of Chair of AAR, Paul remains Managing Director, and Martin, Senior Managing Partner. Other minority share holders include members of staff who have exercised their share options and the company has created a growth share scheme. Hannah Brown and Nick Horswell have joined the AAR Board as Trustees of the EOT and Non-Executive Directors alongside Kerry, Victoria, Paul, Martin and Maria Farrell. ■

# Lend us your ears for Fightback

You know it's not like us to talk about ourselves but forgive us as we crow a bit about our new podcast – Fightback.

## ANOTHER PODCAST ON TOP OF THE ONES I ALREADY DON'T LISTEN TO?

We know. We know. We've all got a long list of things we want to listen to. And we understand that we'd be way down the list after the football podcast and the trash talk podcast. But when you're ready for something useful and interesting, give us a listen.

We launched Fightback because we thought there was a story going untold and we wanted to tell it. If you want to hear how to build a start-up or scale up, there are hundreds of podcasts. If you are a change agent inside a long established brand - somewhere most of us have heard of - there was no-one shining a light on those stories.

And let's face it, most of us work in, or with, those brands.

We were also a little tired of start-ups getting all the attention. It's not surprising that they get to be innovative - no legacy systems, oodles of funding and no silos. There are probably lots of podcasts about their stories. But not one, until Fightback, about UK heritage brands and their stories.

## WHY HERITAGE BRANDS?

The harder (and to our mind) more interesting job is transforming heritage businesses from the inside. How our most loved heritage brands are fighting back against disruption is a fascinating journey into cultural change, business model evolution and marketing transformation and their stories are what Fightback is all about.

There's six episodes in the first series; each is a chat with a leading heritage brand whose market is being disrupted. We hear



from Boots, NatWest, GSK, Homeserve, Avios and Sainsbury's.

## IS THERE MORE?

Yes! Series 2 is in the works and we'd love your help. If you've got a brand you think would fit nicely into Fightback please let us know.

Fightback: An Innovation Podcast is available on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#). Happy listening! ■

# AAR Quiz for N A B S

## What a night!

On a cold evening in mid-March last year, 60 fiercely competitive agency teams gathered at Facebook's Rathbone Square offices for the annual AAR Quiz.

Five rounds of 15 questions, more beer, wine, pizza and chocolate than you could shake a stick at, and the AAR Quiz Champions Cup at stake.

But this year was different: we decided to use the Quiz to raise some much-needed funds for NABS, who take care of the wellbeing of everyone in our industry. And you all stepped up brilliantly.

More than 400 of you helped us raise £20,000 for NABS.

We had fantastic help from Facebook who not only provided the venue - one of the only places in London with a room big enough to accommodate so many teams - they also donated a huge supply of wine, refreshments and helpers to make the event go smoothly. Orion kindly donated the beers and Mars, the chocolate.



It was enormous fun, even with the very long queue to get into the venue as everyone was signed in and their identity documents checked (thank you so much for your patience!). There were some monstrously tricky questions, one major challenge for the adjudicator during the photo round, and endless demands for a recount of points at every turn, such was the ferocity of the competition.

Above+Beyond's 'Collective Wisdom' team were the eventual victors with a 77-point haul, narrowly beating Bartle Bogle Hegarty's 'Black Sheep' and Mullen Lowe's 'Old Street Greg and the Beefstacks'.



A great time was had by all AND we raised important funds for our beloved NABS. So we're doing it all again this year!

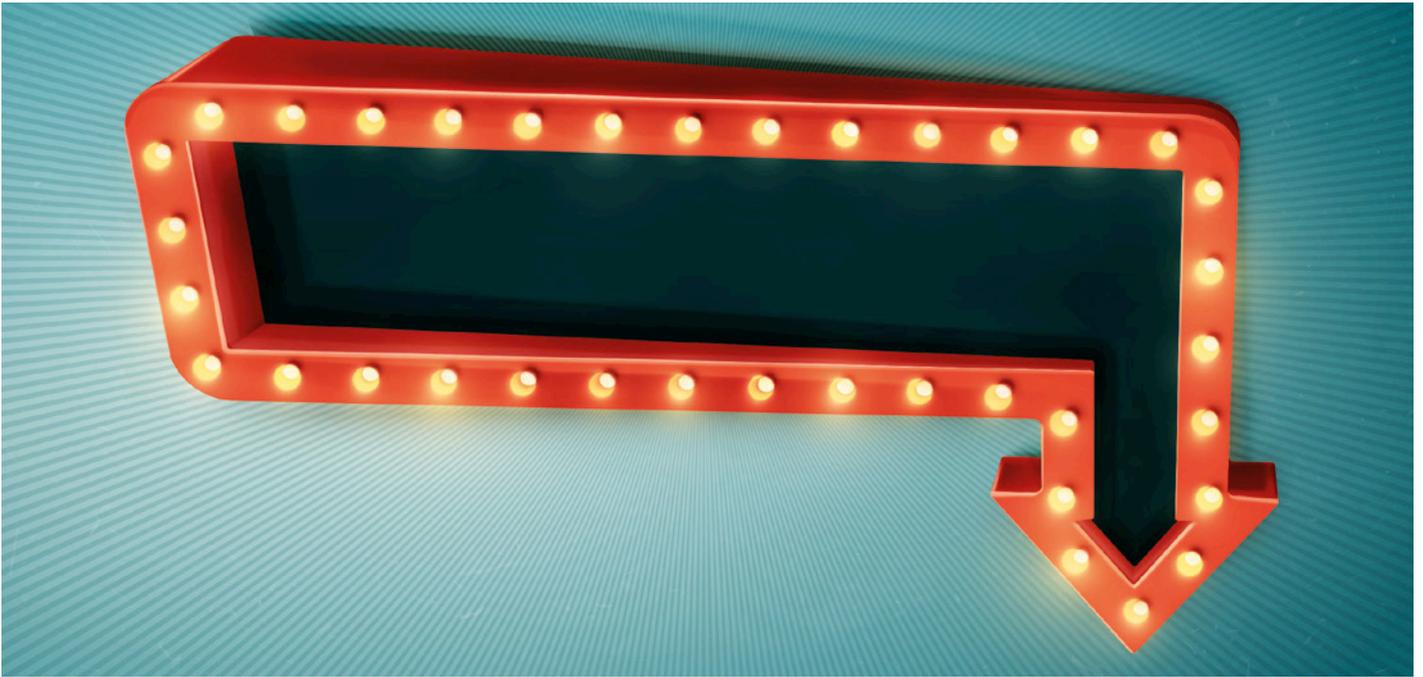
This year's AAR Quiz for NABS is on Thursday, 26 March 2020, once again at Facebook's offices in Rathbone Square. Tables have already gone on sale at £350 each so, if you haven't yet booked your place and want to wrestle that cup out of Above+Beyond's hands, please use this Eventbrite link ([www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/aar-quiz-for-nabs-2020-tickets-75732428733](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/aar-quiz-for-nabs-2020-tickets-75732428733)) to secure a table.

Looking forward to seeing you there! ■



Here's why we think you'll get to a better place with AAR's support. They have a skill in crystallising and simplifying the challenge. Then they make sure you stay focused on meeting that challenge across all areas of their counsel. They'll help you make better decisions that will deliver better results. And it will be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

**Airbnb**



## AAR contributes to Promote UK

**In 2019, we were delighted to continue to be part of the working party behind Promote UK.**

Chaired by Janet Hull, Promote UK is an initiative created by the IPA, Advertising Association and Department of International Trade to support the international growth of UK advertising and marketing services companies and to build on the UK's position as a centre of excellence and a global hub. Some of you may have seen the 'Creativity is GREAT' campaign that was featured at the Cannes Festival in June, which was a key part of the Promote UK programme.

Our specific role was to provide data,

This initiative can only benefit UK agencies and we will continue to try and play our part in encouraging more brand owners to come to the UK to work with some of the best agencies in the world.

measurement tools, general advice and a mechanism by which any interested CMO's can engage with UK agencies. Brexit or no Brexit, this initiative can only

benefit UK agencies and we will continue to try and play our part in encouraging more brand owners to come to the UK to work with some of the best agencies in the world.

In 2020, we'll also be supporting this initiative through the launch of the UK Advertising Export Group. This is an industry partnership with UK Government backed by a £1 million annual promotional budget aimed at generating opportunities for UK agencies in key markets including China, Japan, South Korea and North America. If anyone wants further information about how they can get involved, please don't hesitate to get in touch. ■

## What is creativity for in the UK today?

**Throughout history, creativity has been one of Britain's most valuable resources, industries and exports. Just think of our inventors, inventions, and, indeed, the revolutions we've started – and the new global markets opened up by them.**

And yet the irony is that many believe that in business today, creativity is valued less than ever by company and government decision-makers. Certainly, if the headlines are to be believed, it's seeing more redundancies, less training

and lower investment than technology or data.

Our own Tony Spong sits on the Creative Committee at the DMA, which is made up of professionals at all levels from the industry who are helping to formulate an answer to this question.

### **#CREATEBRITAIN2020: THE BOOK**

The first initiative has been to invite the creative doers, makers, thinkers and leaders to submit a thought-piece,

micro-reaction or statement on their view of the value of creativity to Britain in 2020. The DMA wanted to reach out to those leaders from all walks of life and industry who are making great waves in creativity from a business, art, humanities or social sense, and paint a picture about a moment in time, encapsulating the importance creativity plays in society in Britain 2020.

They're now sifting through the responses and aim to have the book published in March 2020. Something to look out for! ■

# Insights and perspectives

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# New business market 2019

by Martin Jones

The shape of the new business market is what is most interesting, with the biggest drop in 'Integrated' pitches and the biggest rise in CRM/Performance pitches.

Figures collated from AAR's newbizmoves database have revealed that the total number of appointments made in 2019 showed an overall decrease of 12.2% versus 2018. This compared with a decrease of 0.5% in 2018 versus 2017.

It should be noted that the figures only cover appointments and, consequently, any pitches that took place in 2019 where an appointment has been put off until the new year have not been included in the final figures.

By the end of the third quarter, the hope and expectation was that the new business market would end up at similar levels to the previous year but, for various reasons, the final quarter of the year turned out to be quieter than might have been anticipated, leading to an overall year on year shortfall.

The comparative health of the specific communications disciplines in 2019 (versus 2018) in terms of volume of appointments were as follows:

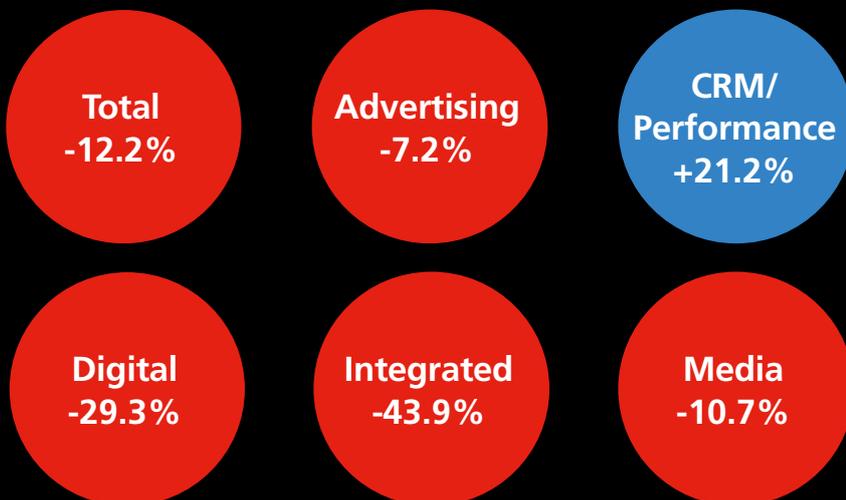
The number of advertising appointments reported decreased by 7.2% compared with 2018. This volume decrease was, however, not directly mirrored in value terms with ten brands with media budgets in excess of £20 million making appointments (Barclays, BT, CCS (Brexit), Dreams, GoCompare, Ladbrokes Coral, NatWest, Virgin Media, Wickes and William Hill). Of the ten brands appointing in 2019, only six held competitive reviews while the remaining four (BT, CCS (Brexit), NatWest and Wickes) appointed without a pitch, either from within their own roster or through a prior relationship.

Whilst not necessarily a reflection on the health of the sector, the fact that some of the country's largest advertising spenders are putting their heads above the parapet will hopefully signal an increase in overall confidence. As we approach the new year, we are still awaiting a result on the B&Q review, and agencies are preparing themselves for the final stages of the highly prized Transport for London account.

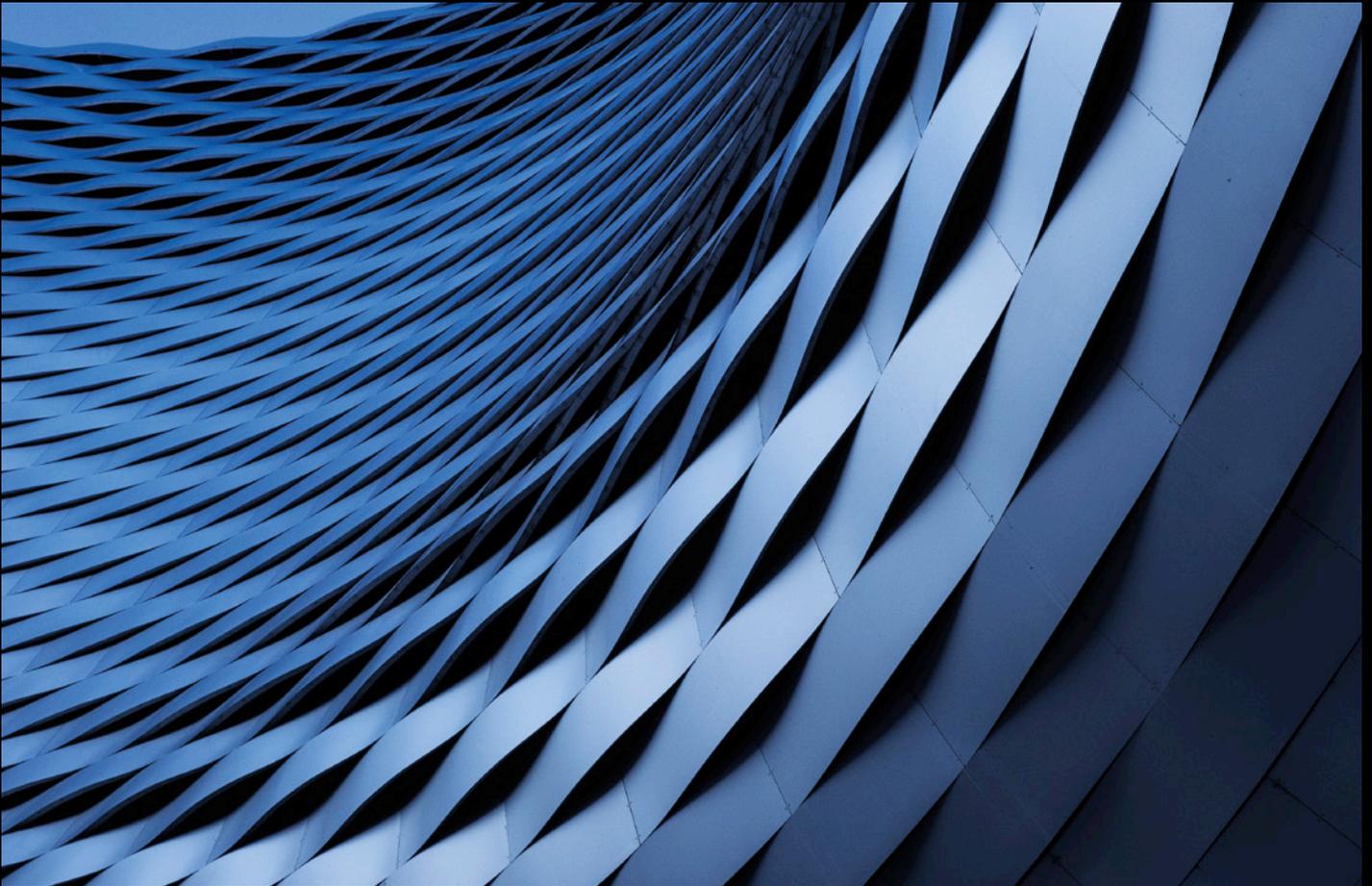
Media agency wins are down by 10.7% versus 2018 but do include a number of major UK and global brands including Ebay, Ferrero Rocher, JustEat, L'Oreal, Stars Group, Three, TSB, Vodafone and William Hill.

In terms of the types of brands that had appointed agencies in the first three quarters of the year, both the advertising and media new business communities gained through new brands coming into the market for the first time including Bloom & Wild,

## DISCIPLINE % DIFFERENCE 2019 V 2018



Source: AARnewbizmoves



Cazoo, Good Hemp, Karma Cola, Klarna, Pip & Nut and PitPat.

The volume of CRM/Performance appointments increased by 21.2% compared with 2018; a trend that was also reflected in the quality of the opportunities for agencies with major brands including Comparethemarket, Dixons Carphone, HSBC, Lloyds, Macmillan, Three and Toyota all appointing new partners.

Stand-alone digital appointments continued to decline (down 29.3% year on year) although the focus of these reviews continues to evolve. Digital comms pitches remained a rarity, but there has been a rise in the number of brands looking to appoint a specialist social agency.

Integrated agency appointments (involving three or more disciplines) were down by almost 44% year on year. The majority of the reviews were modest in terms of budget, the exceptions being the Open University integrated tender and a number of Government framework pitches.

### CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

The shape of the new business market is what is most interesting, with the biggest drop in 'Integrated' pitches and the biggest rise in CRM/Performance pitches. In our view, this is the new 'integration' with brand owners looking holistically at their data driven marketing and breaking down these silos as they put the customer firmly into the driving seat. This focus on customer centricity is also seeing more capabilities being bought in-house and will account for the substantial drop in digital pitches year on year.

### LOOKING AHEAD TO 2020

Despite the downturn in the final quarter of 2019, we anticipate that new business will not decrease into 2020 as marketers have no choice but to keep up with changing customer demands. How the shape of new business activity develops is fascinating. Brand owners will need to continue adding capabilities to their marketing mix (by in-housing and adding external partners to their rosters) as this is not seen as a nice to have but, instead, a necessity to

keep up in an increasingly competitive market.

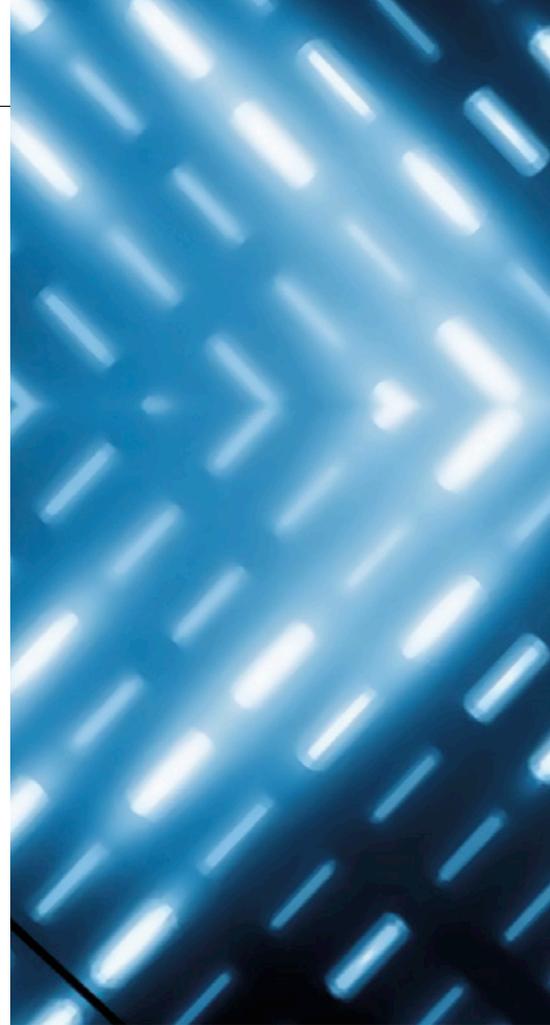
In terms of the industry sectors that were most active in 2019, they are relatively similar to 2018 with first time advertisers often driving market growth. ■

Rank 2019	Industry
1	Retail
2	Financial
3	Food
4	Travel
5	Alcoholic drinks
6	Charities
7	Government
8	Gambling
9	Motoring
10	Telecommunications

Source: AARnewbizmoves

# In. Out. Is it time to shake it all about?

by Kerry Glazer



Many brands need an immense volume of content produced to service their customer touchpoints and the speed to market has to be rapid.

## **In-housing has never been a hotter topic.**

Despite the sense of recency as a trend, with debate in the trade press, at conferences, and in many conversations involving agencies, in-housing has been around for years in one form or another. Brands have routinely explored different in-house options as part of their ongoing challenge to define the right model for their budget, scope of work, culture and future needs.

But it is still not a 'one way only' trend.

The research company, Gartner, reported in 2018 that most marketers 'expected to retain or expand their use of (external) agencies between now and 2020'. Research carried out by AAR in 2016 suggested that there were as many brands doing less in house as there were brands doing more, suggesting that the rate that brands move to in-housing tends to be cyclical.

That said, brand marketers are having to work harder to deliver consistently across all of their customer touchpoints. The growing focus on models, increased complexity in business operations, issues with transparency and trust, rise of CX and ownership of data, agility and

necessity of speed to market, pressure on costs and ROI, pressure on agency business models and relentless disruptive change has led to the cycle accelerating over the last three years.

The models we observe commonly split into three types:

■ **30% in house, 70% via external partners** – by far the most common split

■ **50% in house, 50% via external partners**

■ **70% in house, 30% via external partners** – the least common

Many brands need an immense volume of content produced to service their customer touchpoints and the speed to market has to be rapid. To cope with this tsunami of need, more clients are bringing parts of their marketing output in-house.

As a consequence, the agency community is expressing anxiety over what it sees as a trend in agencies losing business and important margin and tasks to in-house teams that would previously have been handled by an external agency partner.

At an AAR breakfast for agency CEO's on evolving client:agency models, in-housing

was raised as a topic that agencies would most like AAR to look into. So we did.

### AAR INSIGHT RESEARCH

In order to get some granular insight on brands' viewpoints on in-housing and how it actually works in practice, we undertook a series of in-depth interviews with 10 different national and international brands in Autumn 2019.

All those we interviewed have, or have had, in-house *creative* resource in their UK office. The in-house departments' size varied from less than five people in total to more than 200. We spoke to both leaders of in-house agencies and marketers who work alongside them.

Those with in-house media services were *not* explored during this project: that's an investigation we're planning for 2020. We'll be sure to keep you posted on that.

The brands were from a spectrum of categories: retail (bricks and mortar and online), FMCG, entertainment, financial services, and charity sectors. These were brands that represented, conservatively, in excess of £12bn of UK marketing spend.

In some cases, the brands' in-house resource had been established for more than three decades; for others, only a

couple of years. The list also included two brands who had managed up to 30% of their marketing output via their in-house agency - for ten years and three years respectively - but had subsequently both elected to close these resources down and outsource everything to their external agencies.

There were some common themes that covered both the successes and the rarely acknowledged complexities of in-housing, and some useful tips for those external agencies who are - or will soon be - working with brands that have dedicated in-house resource.

The key themes that emerged are grouped under the following headlines:

- There is always going to be a role for external agency partners.
- Creating and running in-house resource is not a walk in the park.
- The third year of operation of in-house creative resource is like the difficult 'second album'.
- There are clear 'X factors' that define success.
- The growth in popularity of in-sourcing.

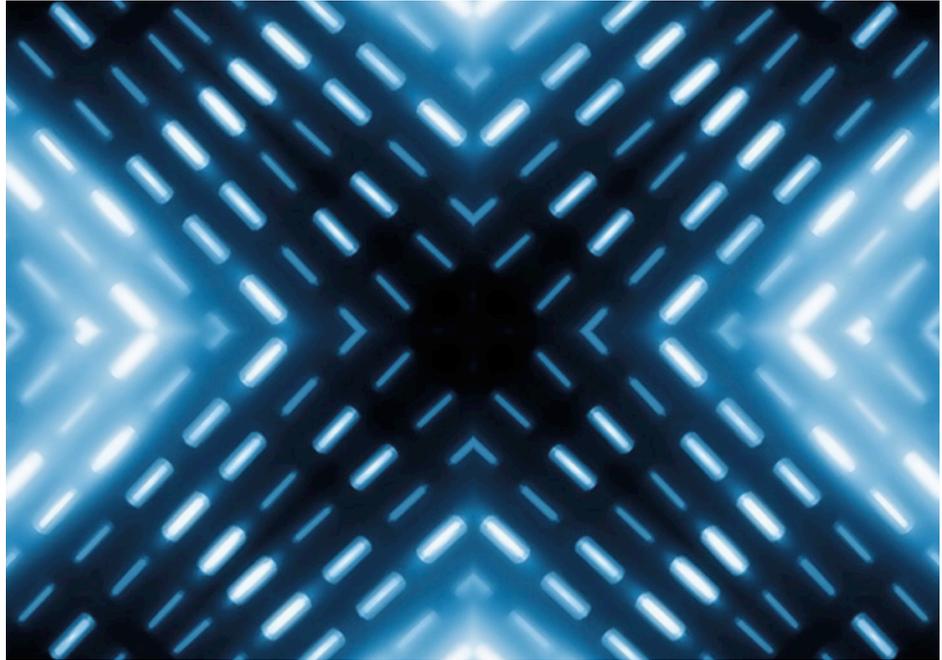
The agency community is expressing anxiety over what it sees as a trend in agencies losing business and important margin and tasks to in-house teams.

- When it goes wrong, it goes wrong toxically.
- Cross-charging internally for in-house services is a double-edged sword and doesn't necessarily lead to the cost neutrality Nirvana hoped for.
- The 10 best pieces of advice that we can give to the external agency community.

The following is a summary of some of the things we learned during these conversations that are particularly relevant for creative agencies. The other themes will be published via other AAR think pieces or events in the coming months. ▶

**THERE IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE A ROLE FOR EXTERNAL AGENCY PARTNERS**

The most reassuring prediction that we can make for anxious agencies in the creative space is that hell will most likely freeze over before all brands decide they no longer need the strategic and creative IP, perspective and platforms that their relationships with external agencies deliver.



We value our external partners highly. There's not a world where we would want to do everything through our internal agency: there's always a role for external agencies.  
*In-house agency leader*

When commenting on the scope of remit between in-house and external agency partners, there was commonality in the view that an in-house agency is all about delivery whereas the external agencies' focus should be the quality of the creative thinking and ideation. This is rather binary and it's not to say that the leaders of in-house teams weren't concerned about creativity. They are. Very concerned. Whilst the axis for in-house agencies is throughput, with the focus being on 'resourcing at the point of demand', managing the volume of asks in the most agile way possible, there is still a desire to make the work as good as it can possibly be.

With in-house teams you have to recognise that most of the creative work you do is akin to 'porridge every day'. You get to decide whether it has sugar, jam, cream or chocolate sprinkles on it but it's still porridge.  
*In-house agency leader*

The brands we spoke to acknowledged that the balance to this was how effective the work is commercially for the brand. The task is to always do the very best for the brand to get the desired commercial return but that in-house teams still had to aim to 'knock the porridge out of the park' creatively.

That said, big projects where fresh thinking, creativity and innovation are required are seen as the province of the external perspective by almost everyone we spoke to.

There's always a call for balance; you need to have an external agency roster. You need them for the right briefs and for innovation. Because we do a lot internally, we need to make sure the in-house team keep on top of their personal development and that we give them opportunities to work with external agencies in order to keep fresh. There is an inherent danger in losing that external perspective.  
*Marketer responsible for In-house creative resource*

Even where there is a highly sophisticated in-house agency within a client company – one multi-product brand we spoke to had a team numbering up to 26 people focused on creating and producing a wide range of digital content and campaign assets (key visuals, POS and other instore assets, AV, social media and, in one case, a TV ad for a media owner partnership) – there was still the view that there was a continued and defined need for relationships with external agencies.

I think the future for this model for brands is – where feasible and possible – to have an in-house team that has a clearly defined role. But I'm not seeing a place where that trumps the need for outside support.  
*In-house agency leader*

## THE 10 BEST PIECES OF ADVICE WE CAN GIVE TO THE AGENCY COMMUNITY

- 1** Work with the marketing team to forensically agree the remits and responsibilities for both the in-house team and you as the brand's external agency partner. This should indicate the clear water between you and dictate where the hand offs are when collaborating on a campaign or piece of work. Review this with your client regularly.
- 2** Make sure the respective remit and scope of work of both the in-house team and you as the external agency partner are communicated clearly to the rest of the client's business.
- 3** Always keep in mind that brands have a very clear view about the value of their external agency partners and what they can offer a brand in terms of IP and perspective.
- 4** In-house agencies usually have an openness and willingness to collaborate that will serve the mutual relationship well.
- 5** They are generally pretty agnostic and rarely have an agenda to take on the external agencies' work – they don't set out to run the world, they don't need to win big pitches and be on top of the new business rankings. They are much more focussed on making great, hard-working assets for the brand that are right and drive the business – and you can help them with that.
- 6** Be confident. Don't be precious. Acknowledge the in-house agency's strengths and dovetail them with your own. Recognise that the value you bring is your creative IP, strategy, perspective and big galvanising ideas.
- 7** If you become obstructive, unwilling to co-operate or dismissive of their work, this leads to strife that the CMO and their team don't need. In this scenario, it's very likely the external agency will be the loser. Resentment can build up internally: 'why have I just spent thousands of pounds on that when it's been so painful?' can lead to the marketing team questioning all of the work, not just the piece that should have been handed off to the in-house agency. Fighting over work that you can't hope to do at the same cost or with the same agility as the in-house agency is not smart. Concentrate on what you do that adds value and lean into your strengths.
- 8** Include the in-house team when entering effectiveness or integrated awards; enter awards jointly as a clear statement of your collaboration with one another and intention to do the best, most effective work for the brand.
- 9** Promote shared portfolios of work internally within the brand and in the agency's own credentials.
- 10** Be less afraid. Most agencies already work with many brands who don't have an in-house capability, and it's not something they can build overnight. The fear that 'everything is going in-house, we are going to lose our business' is misguided. It's just not going to happen in that way.

We work very collaboratively with our agency; we don't touch what they do, that's their world. We look after the day to day work for the brand so collaboration is key. You've got to trust each other.

*In-house agency leader*

Some of the best agencies I've worked with are the ones that don't try and do the 'we want it all'. It is pointless the agency trying to do the art-working and other assets as we can get that done elsewhere and the agency could then move on to the next big project or exciting thing.

*Senior brand manager*

Whilst this summary is only scratching the surface of the what we have learned during our conversations with those brands who run their own in-house creative resource, I hope it engenders a feeling of reassurance. It should also flag an opportunity which exists for agencies to help and support their clients who want to create some form of in-house resource – whether it be via headcount or insourcing - or who already manage some of their scope of work in-house.

As the model where brands depend on both their in-house resource and

their external agency partnerships to seamlessly deliver brand communications evolves, one very significant and necessary question arises.

How are agencies going to be suitably remunerated for the strategic and creative platforms they create from which other integrated communications – developed by the in-house team – are produced?

The value of the strategic and creative ideas created by the external agency which are exploited, in

the best sense of the word, by the brand for forms of communication that the agency does not execute nor gain any margin from, cannot be predicated on a time-based, cost plus model of remuneration. If the future for performance marketing and other hardworking integrated assets is in-house management then the model via which external agencies are remunerated for the IP they create for their clients has to change.

We've got some ideas.

Watch this space. ■

# Creativity starts with curiosity

by Tony Spong

**We work in an industry where the words ‘creativity’, ‘big idea’ and ‘brave’ are bandied about a lot. More recently, we’ve been hearing the notion that there is some existential crisis in our ability to be creative and who should ‘be’ creative.**

If exposure to stimuli lies at the heart of any creative project, then we need to be more open, more collaborative and, ultimately, less fearful of exploring things we haven’t done before. We need to develop a culture of curiosity within our businesses.

At a time of what seem like unprecedented challenges for our planet, the country, the high street and our own well-being as individuals, we need creative solutions more than ever. And the key to creativity is curiosity.

Let me give you an example. Last year I needed to lay a new path in my garden. I’d assumed it would be a traditional stone path, but I couldn’t see how I’d get it all done before the rains came.

Then, one free weekend, my wife and I went for a walk in the country. At one point we came across a path of raised railway sleepers lashed together and covered in chicken wire to stop us slipping. The simplicity of this solution sparked an idea involving fence posts, decking boards and postcrete. The following weekend I built an entire path up my garden in two days, at a third of the price I expected, and I now have a unique feature to boot.

If I hadn’t gone for that walk, I wouldn’t have seen something that gave me the stimulus, that made me curious to explore how it might work for me, and so end up with a really creative solution to a looming problem.



Every creative idea needs some form of stimulus to spark that leap from  $2+2=4$  to  $2+2=5$ . To find these stimuli we need to go for a walk; we need to change our environment; we need to feed our minds with (seemingly) unrelated ingredients. And if exposure to stimuli lies at the heart of any creative project, then we need to be more open, more collaborative and, ultimately, less fearful of exploring things we haven’t done before. We need to develop a culture of curiosity within our businesses.

In a recent Harvard Business Review article, two main factors were identified as stifling curiosity:

**1** We have the wrong mindset when it comes to exploring new ideas.

The marketing industry is often described as being ‘fluffy’. There’s a perception that letting curiosity off the leash will lead to a costly mess by slowing down decisions and constantly challenging the status quo.



This is the main reason brands hire external consultancies and agencies; to bring the stimuli to the table and act as a counterbalance to the brand's natural focus on efficiency.

The study found that the opposite happened if managed properly:

- Curiosity allowed alternatives to any given problem to be explored, leading to fewer errors.
- Curiosity drove greater innovation.
- Curiosity about other people's ideas and perspectives helped improve collaboration and reduce conflict.

For the leadership team, curiosity promoted sharing information more easily and listening more carefully, which enhanced overall performance. In our research we are certainly seeing that brands and agencies have lost a lot of that culture of curiosity. At an intrinsic level, brands are telling us that their agencies are not being curious enough about their business, while agencies say that they no longer have the headroom, which has to be a worrying trend.

Brands, both new and old, are looking at

how marketing can help their business but also how and where creative thinking is best deployed; that might just start to redefine marketing itself. Agencies, in turn, need to involve their clients in creating a focused curiosity agenda to ensure that the right stimuli are feeding the plan.

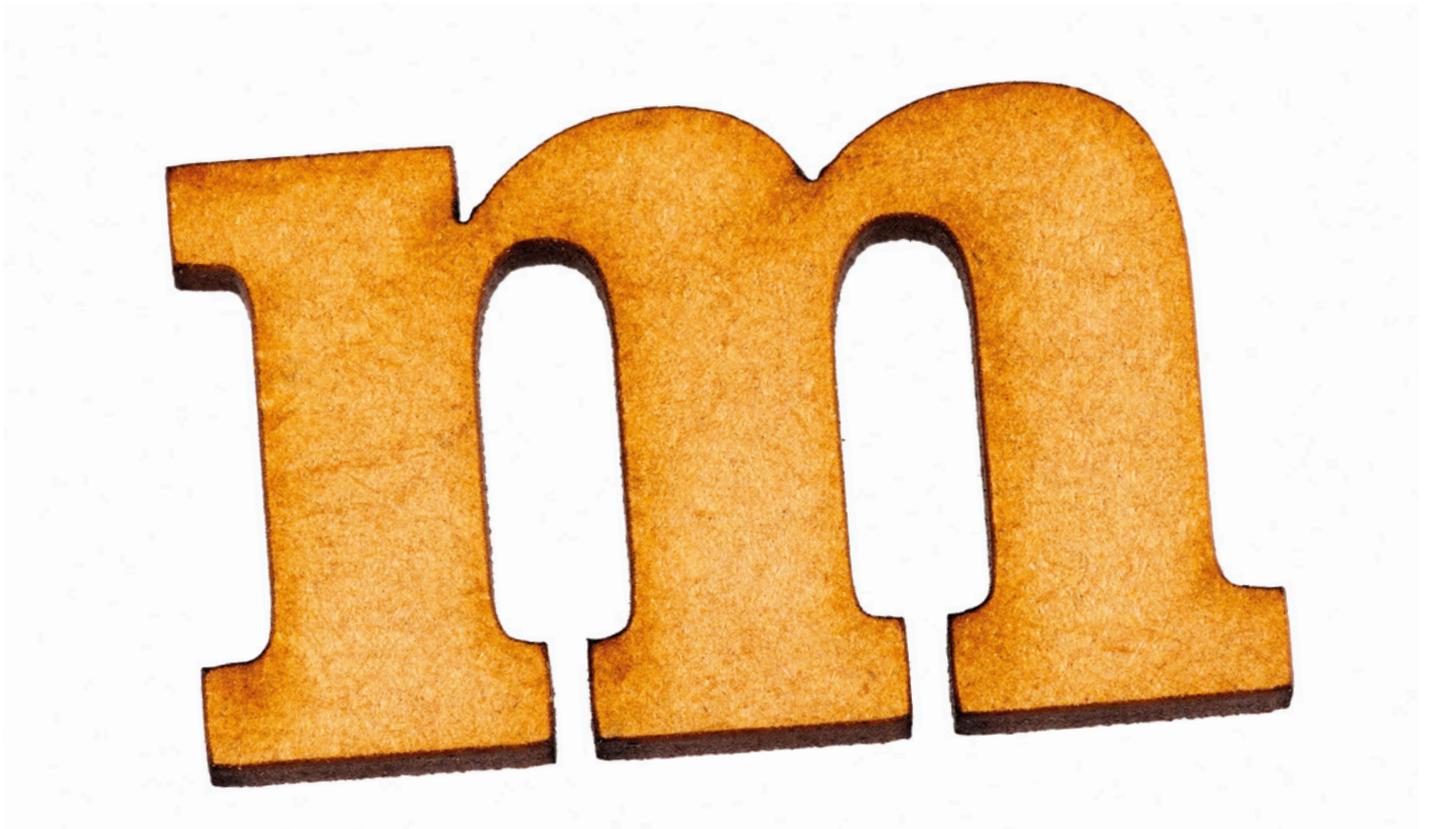
## 2 We seek efficiency to the detriment of exploration.

Part of the blame for this can be traced back to Henry Ford. He successfully identified that there was a market for a 'car for the masses' and set about working out how to do that at scale. His obsession with efficiency pretty much wrote the rule book on how to do things at scale; a rule book we still follow today. Unfortunately, he forgot to register the next trend which was that now everyone had a car, they quite liked the idea of having a different one from their neighbour. General Motors spotted this and developed a range of cars which captured the main share of the market and almost did for Mr Ford.

This is a very recognisable scenario today as new start-ups often spot the change in customer need faster than the established brands who have forgotten how to experiment and innovate. Indeed, many a founder story includes that 'country walk' moment when they are grabbed by a certain stimulus that is the spark for a business idea.

This is the main reason brands hire external consultancies and agencies; to bring the stimuli to the table and act as a counterbalance to the brand's natural focus on efficiency. However, is there a danger that, as consultancies and agencies have grown through acquisition over the last decade, they too have become overly focused on efficiency and are losing their natural curiosity?

It's time for a change in our thinking – in brands and agencies alike. We need to be brave enough to engender a greater culture of curiosity, to help find the stimuli to spark ideas and deliver the creative solutions our futures depend on. ■



# Let's talk about the 'm' word

by Paul Phillips

**A recent survey - you know, one of those surveys that's perfect fodder for talk show presenters on LBC - revealed that people in the UK find it easier to discuss mental health and their sex lives than they do money.**

The report suggests that despite wider societal breakthroughs in more openly discussing personal subjects, it appears that money is still seen as off-limits as a conversation topic in the UK.

This appears to be no less the case when it comes to brands pitching their business and, perhaps, understandably so.

Faced with the prospect of pitching agencies focusing their collective attention on the strategic and creative opportunities to be addressed, I can understand why the subject of fees, FTE's, bonus schemes, contracts, commercial arrangements and all else relating to money can be somewhat less appealing.

In my experience, there are three reasons why marketers don't want to talk about money, be it for marketing, comms, production, media or agency fees: this last one generally being of most interest to an agency.

**1 They are unable to give you a budget.**

It might seem unusual to not know what budget you have, but sometimes the reasons for this are understandable:

- Marketing must pitch for budget alongside every other area of the business.
- Marketing hasn't previously undertaken

the type of comms activity being pitched and is looking to the agency for recommendations.

- The business is a start-up and engaging the services of an external agency for the first time; they don't know what to budget.

## **WHAT CAN AN AGENCY DO TO HELP IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES?**

Always talk to them about this - and talk early in the pitch. Share your experience of how other businesses in similar circumstances have approached the issue of budgets. Reference advertising to sales norms or benchmarks, ideally for the category. Share your agency's PBC (Proprietary Budget Calculator) created for such circumstances. This may sound like a daft idea, but I suspect it would be well received.

In such circumstances the client will welcome some help from agencies and is more than likely to be open to the suggestions you make, and in the agency's quest to win the pitch, this will add to a sense of being 'an agency I want to work with' amongst the client team.

## 2 They are unwilling to give you a budget.

I've never understood this attitude, but from time to time we still come across it. Marketing or procurement have clarity about the overall budget, what they are looking to pay in agency fees, production and media, but do not want to share any of this information. Why?

I think the answer lies in a misguided (in my opinion) belief that this will both reduce their ability to negotiate effectively and only encourage agencies to make recommendations that spend all the available budget for the maximum fee.

### SO, WHAT'S TO BE DONE?

You can still apply proxy assumptions to how you approach the pitch, again sharing them with the client team so they have an opportunity to comment or correct should they choose to do so.

But if this is not forthcoming you should apply the criteria that any agency should have in mind in such circumstances: financial stability, predisposition to marketing and advertising, reputation (company and individuals), previous knowledge or working relationship, the appeal of the business, brand or sector upon which to base your decision.

I also think there's a more qualitative, but no less insightful approach you can take: trust your gut instinct.

What do you feel when you eyeball the decision-maker? This should tell you

everything you need to know.

If it were me in these circumstances, I'd like to think that I'd walk away. Every time. Because I wouldn't want to work with a business that didn't respect my agency sufficiently to share some basic information about the opportunity for which my team is prepared to bust a gut to try and win in a pitch.

Easy for me to say. I don't have the growth targets or reporting lines that you do. But I suspect that there are too many occasions when an agency pitched without knowing the budget and regretted it after the event, win or lose.

## 3 They haven't thought about the budget.

To be fair, I should probably add the word yet or sufficiently to the end of the statement.

In these circumstances there's a recognition and understanding that, when pitching, budgets are important for agencies to know about and understand as this information will help inform and craft the response.

So, although next year's budget may not be locked down, you can probably get access to what the client has invested this year across the different elements of marketing activity.

And the reality is that year on year, most brands' marketing looks more similar than different to the previous year. By taking the current year as a proxy, you're not going to go too far wrong in your assumptions.

You can also apply the same thinking as in the first scenario – where they are unable to give you a budget - and such an approach will probably be welcomed by the client.

Despite wider societal breakthroughs in more openly discussing personal subjects, it appears that money is still seen as off-limits as a conversation topic in the UK.

### TO SUMMARISE

When it comes to pitches, I've distilled everything that an agency wants to know from a prospective client down to two questions:

#### 1 What is it you want us to do for you?

#### 2 How much are you prepared to pay us for our services?

Of course, there's lots of detail behind each of these, but I think fundamentally it boils down to these two questions and, in preparing for pitches, brands can often focus much more on the first question, and less so on the second.

If that's the case, hopefully there's some useful guidance here depending on the circumstances, ignorance, unwillingness, or omission.

And if ever AAR comes to you with a new business opportunity where we haven't asked the money question, you should call us out on this! ■

# Ten observations on the creative pitch

by Victoria Fox

I've always loved new business. The focus is on a challenge that doesn't have client boundaries in the same way a day-to-day brief does.

**There are many reasons why I took the role of CEO at AAR but the attraction of seeing inside the pitch was certainly a big draw.**

I've always loved new business. The focus is on a challenge that doesn't have client boundaries in the same way a day-to-day brief does. This is where we stretch ourselves strategically, creatively and commercially. It's where an agency pushes its boundaries and evolves. There is nothing like that feeling when you win, and nothing like that feeling when you don't.

If you work in an agency I can't believe you haven't had a moment where you've thought "I'd love to sit on the other side of the table in a pitch". Or is that just me?

After my first couple of months here, I sat down and thought about my initial observations and it dawned on me that with, my agency hat on, I'd have liked to hear about the things that jump out when

you are, indeed, sitting on the other side of the pitch table.

So, I'm sharing my initial ten observations on creative pitches so far. Most of them apply to any type of pitch.

**1** Competitive context is everything in new business. The talent across this industry is immense. I've been blown away by the meetings I've had. What makes an agency unique are its people and its culture, as these cannot be cloned. Capabilities are important, for sure, but your competitors are equally capable in most cases. Don't waste too much time on table stakes. Really think about who you might be up against and how and what they will present, so you are setting your stall up in a competitive context.

**2** Go early with an opinion. Given how competitive the new business landscape is, what will set you apart very early on is a strong point of view.



**3** Benefit, Benefit, Benefit. It is so tempting to tell a client everything you are proud of. But less is more, so keep asking yourself ‘why am I including this part?’, ‘what benefit is this to the client sitting opposite me?’. Be brutal. Strip it out.

**4** Capturing the essence of your agency is hard, but dynamite when you get it right. Authenticity is everything. Distil who you are as an agency and culture, not what you think you should be.

**5** Honesty and directness helps. Constructive criticism is your best friend. Hard to give, hard to hear but the most valuable thing we can offer as an intermediary.

**6** The welcome is everything. Whether you are a small independent or a large network agency you can still make the client feel like the most important person walking into the building that day.

Be waiting in reception, don’t let them feel like they are just another client signing in.

**7** Make yourself memorable. Another way to remind clients how special they are is the effort taken with the catering. I know it sounds trite but the biscuits, cakes or sugar fixes when it’s late in the afternoon do get noticed. The reason they set you apart is not because clients are shallow, they set you apart because, in a highly competitive landscape, there might be little to separate you strategically and at this point in the race little touches really matter.

**8** Don’t go into transmit mode, especially in a chemistry meeting. Always aim for a dialogue. It can be hard to create but it is a delicate balancing act between telling, listening and chatting.

**9** Choose the right front door. Across the industry there is so much convergence, and agencies are also able

to stretch into so many areas. In addition, holding groups offer all specialisms under one roof. This is exciting and good for organic growth. But from a new business perspective, it can be a negative. If a client isn’t specifically asking for all these skills from you, then focus on their ask and lead them through this specialist front door. As tempting as it is to show them everything you can offer, it is distracting and can put them off. Once they are a client you can take them on a journey and introduce new specialisms.

**10** Respect. In the current marketing landscape where clients are looking to fuse traditional and digital marketing techniques, there is a genuine need to change hierarchies across disciplines. The ‘lead agency’ role is changing and true collaboration and respect across disciplines can drive competitive advantage. Choose language carefully and demonstrate genuine interest and respect for other partners you will be collaborating with should you win the pitch. ■

# Cross-functional teams call for focus on relationships

by Vicky Gillan

**Is there any business that isn't discussing how to keep ahead of their customer's expectations? Or indeed working out how to build customer experiences that are satisfying from end to end, and still deliver on the brand promise?**

Making this work means the end of silos. It fundamentally shifts how a business needs to work both internally and with its external marketing partners (including agencies).

External marketing partners increasingly need to be fully embedded with internal teams (Insight, Analytics, Proposition Development, Project Management, Brand etc.) and with each other, in order to create programs that genuinely engage customers and join up all the channels through which they choose to interact with the brand. This landscape requires a different team set-up, different processes and a radical change in ways of working. The answer has to be cross-functional teams.

All brands are on this journey to build cross-functionality and true collaboration. It's complex and challenging, and our view is that change that is occurring is too painful, too slow and is delivering varying degrees of success and efficiency. The reason is that in all this change management, we are not focusing enough on relationships and people.

A change is decided at a senior level

but its success is determined by how it is implemented in the day-to-day reality. Are the smart – but possibly less experienced – marketing teams within brands and their agencies empowered to make change happen?

Are agencies joining up with each other across the client's ecosystem to collaborate and help the client break down silos? Are agencies working hand-in-glove with the internal marketing teams to drive the right change? How are repeated blocks and barriers such as budget ownership, briefing and sign-off being removed to accelerate success?

New cross-functional client and agency teams must include a wide range of capabilities and personality types to create the alchemy that unblocks new thinking and unleashes game-changing new ideas. But we're idealistic if we think they won't need some help in coming together and forging respectful and productive teams. Any new cross-functional team needs nurturing, whatever their remit. The effectiveness and success of any team is evident in the detail, and in our view the signs of success can be seen when the following aspects are considered:

- 1 How teams come together, physically and remotely;
- 2 How teams behave and interact;
- 3 How easily ideas and thoughts are built on;
- 4 How quickly information is shared;
- 5 The quality of the information that's shared;





This landscape requires a different team set-up, different processes and a radical change in ways of working. The answer has to be cross-functional teams.

you work with, what will come naturally and what needs your helping hand to nurture.

To help focus where your assistance will have most effect, our advice is:

- Ask what the blocks are to making this cross-functional approach really work? Ask both your team and the client to get the complete story, and then collectively prioritise what matters most.

- Take the “what will make the biggest difference” list and differentiate between the factors the client team controls, and those that you can influence. Act accordingly.

- Lean into what you have no control over and be honest in how you handle that conversation. Adam Morgan’s “Beautiful Constraint” approach to turning limitations into advantages always helps to soften the blow and can produce surprising results.

A healthy dose of agency objectivity can bring new perspectives, reframing a client’s view of the root causes of any problems, and offering new ideas and solutions can transform ways of working and have a huge impact on marketing effectiveness. ■

**6** How constructively disagreements are handled;

**7** How blocks and barriers are overcome;

**8** How the relationships work under pressure;

**9** How consistently success is articulated across the team;

**10** Who wants in? Who cites this team – unprompted – as being the game changers?

Much as we all want collaboration and cross-team functionality to just work, it is by making subtle changes in all these aspects that enormous leaps can be made, and genuine pain points taken away from both the client and agency teams.

#### SO HOW DO YOU DRIVE THOSE SUBTLE CHANGES?

Within some marketing cultures the team will need to ask permission to change first, and at others you can get away with asking for forgiveness afterwards. You’ll know which culture

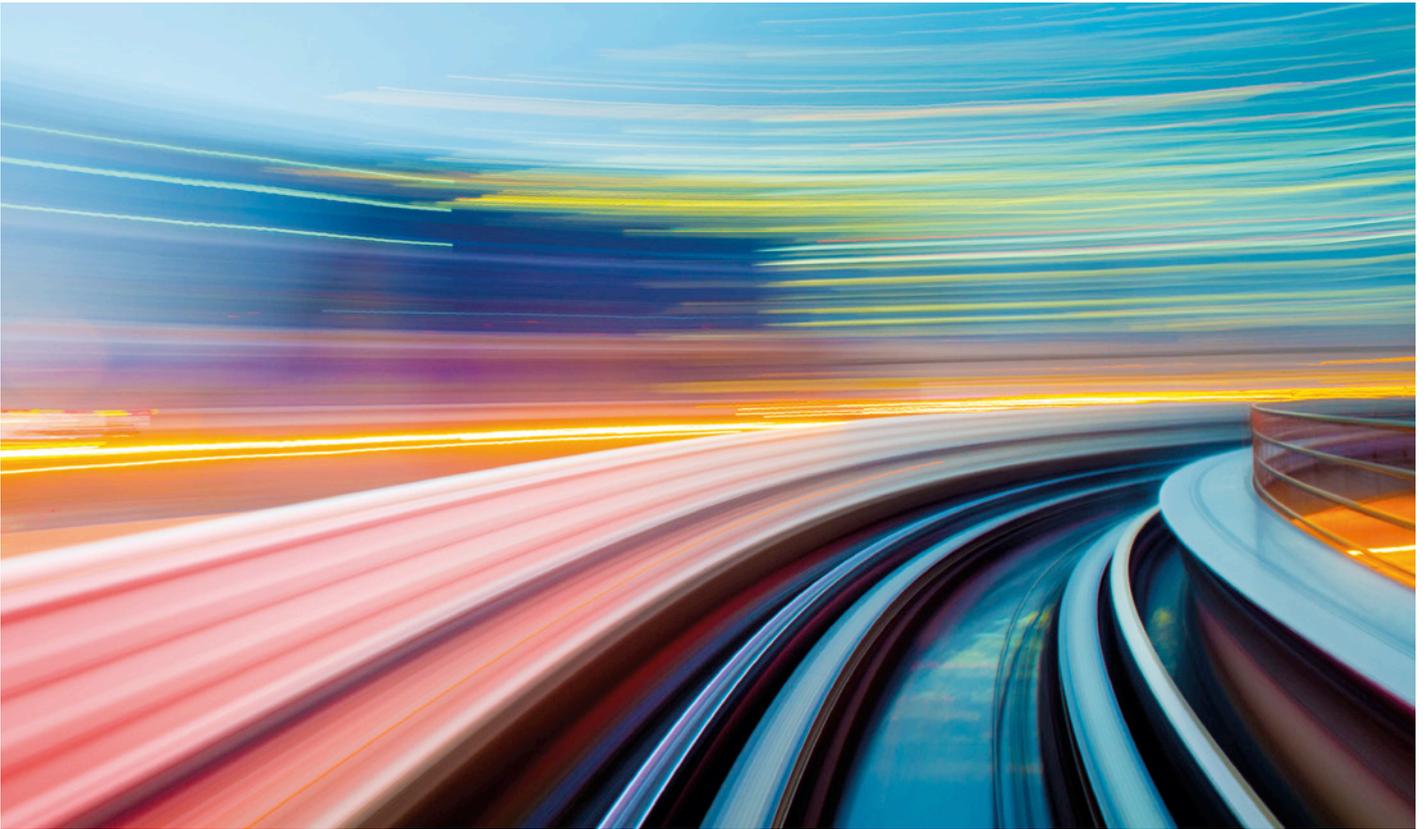


The AAR team understood our needs from the beginning and shaped a pitch process to ensure we would find the perfect agency partner for us. AAR's industry expertise was invaluable. It gave us confidence that we were shortlisting agencies that were right for us and, coupled with their logistics and project management, allowed us to run the pitch process within demanding timelines.

AAR was able to guide us through the process, ensuring we were engaging the right stakeholders at the right time. They didn't influence our decision but kept us honest throughout and ensured we stayed true to our original objectives. The emphasis was not on completing the process within the time but absolutely on finding the right long-term partner for us.

Put quite simply, I don't believe we could have done it without AAR! Thank you!

**Virgin Media**



# Boarding the consequences train

by Tony Spong

**I've recently made the daring decision to change which part of my train I get on in the morning. Sad that this should be such a highlight of recent times but, as creatures of habit, we are suspicious or even fearful of what the immediate consequences are going to be.**

For me? Still no seat, just as crowded as before, still doesn't make the train run on time but I'm nearer the front and get through the barriers a little quicker. So slightly positive.

The mobile phone has been a wonderful invention with many positive consequences, but we are now finding that there are secondary consequences emerging. According to Ofcom, 6 billion calling minutes were used on mobile in 2017, which was a staggering decline from the 151.2 billion minutes in 2016. With 52% of all web traffic being generated through them, leading to concerns for the health and wellbeing of

our children, should we really be calling them mobile phones at all now?

The fabulous documentary series 'Blue Planet 2' and more recently 'Seven Worlds, One Planet' have brought home to all of us the long-term consequences of our throw-away society. Across the world, people (finally) woke up to the fact that there is only one planet and there is no bin collection on a Wednesday when it gets full.

Even the newer brands such as Facebook and Google are only just finding out the unanticipated consequences of their creations.

Responses have already begun to many of these secondary and long-term consequences; from a wider understanding of mental health, to the prospect of legislation to curtail the gathering of our personal data to the importance of education in adjusting to new behaviours. Brands have started to respond, with Tesco trialling plastic free aisles in some stores, Starbuck's using biodegradable cups and Lidl selling imperfect fruit and veg at £1.50 a box, saving 250 tonnes of food waste in six months.

Our recent research among marketers highlighted that the demand for 'change' sees no sign of slowing down which not only makes the task of predicting, and managing, the consequences all the more important but also the emotional sense of risk that brings. ▶

## INTEGRATED STRATEGY

Let's take, for example, the growing demand for integrated strategy. The concept of integration is nothing new, but for too long the perceived answer has been to focus largely on the ability to execute more than one thing. Which is not really integration at all.

Our research highlighted marketers' frustrations at this so-called integration because, in reality, it meant three agency people turning up each knowing one thing when they were expecting, and wanted, one person who knew three things. Clients want 'Integrated Strategy' as this would be simpler, more efficient and ultimately more effective, as that person would be able to advise objectively about how the best combination of three things should be executed.

The consequences of failing to meet this expectation has seen clients exploring new models, or reverting back to single discipline agencies. So, why has integrated strategy been so difficult to achieve? There are a number of factors at play. First, there are some structural issues as agencies feel the client should lead while clients feel it should be the agencies. Secondly, the talent is not there because agencies have spent a generation optimising their individual, vertical channels or disciplines, so it's no surprise that there are very few people who can view things along the horizontal axis. But, fundamentally, no one really thought through the consequences and anticipated how to meet the demand.

Yes, there are a few all-agency teams

for the likes of Ford and Vodafone, but most have been set up along executional lines more than strategic decision making. O2 are one of the few, if not only, clients to set up and lead a planning hub that brings the agencies together to make the strategic decisions. They are already finding that these decisions are being made faster, and with fewer rounds of debate and amends. The agencies are paid for their thinking separate from execution, and the business is feeling the benefit.

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Clients are also telling us that they believe delivering category-leading customer experience will be the major growth driver for their business, and so they are investing in various martech solutions to join up all the key data points, which in turn will derive greater insight to drive better engagement delivering lower acquisition costs and increased lifetime value. We are already seeing the appointment of 'Head of Customer Experience' in many client organisations.

Sounds great, doesn't it? If we've never used this martech before, or had this level of visibility of customer behaviour before, or found insights we've never gained before, how do we write a customer strategy that brings all this together if we've never had the ability to write one before? How do we share these insights with other stakeholders, and what do they do with them if this is new to them as well?

One of the biggest consequences of the increased ability to communicate at a

The concept of integration is nothing new, but for too long the perceived answer has been to focus largely on the ability to execute more than one thing. Which is not really integration at all.

one-to-one level has been in finding ways to generate the right content fast enough to meet the demand of the algorithms. No wonder Sir Martin Sorrell bought the global content production agency Media Monks.

All this change puts an enormous pressure on both budget and talent resource, which leads to reviews on how best to deploy, redeploy or add to it in order to meet the new requirement. It's a delicate equation and, as we enter the change cycle, there are typically parallel workstreams on insourcing, automation and consolidation, all of which we are witnessing to some degree or other.

## INSOURCING

If we take the much-debated insourcing topic, we are seeing plenty of consequences emerging with some clients taking immediate steps to abandon the idea and return to the outsourced model as they are just not prepared to invest in managing the after-effects or end result. Recruiting and managing the talent required is another area that will be new to several client HR teams and needs to be worked through. In many areas, some things absolutely should be insourced, automated or consolidated otherwise it's hard to progress the change agenda but equally it shouldn't be a surprise to find that these decisions have consequences, too.

The successful businesses are the ones who have anticipated the consequences and invested in the right areas ahead of the curve. Clients are making some big decisions at the moment and need to feel that the agencies have identified where the risks – real or perceived – exist and have a solution, either in theory or practice, to match. But most importantly we should accept that we need to work through them together, otherwise we can give up too early on change. ■

# AAR in 2020

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# Core and senior management seminar programme 2020

by Tony Spong

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**Thank you for your feedback and ideas during the 2019 seminar season. It's great to see that each of our seminars scored over 4 out of a maximum of 5 for relevance and content; we are really pleased that you find them so useful and that many of you have had follow-up sessions with some of the speakers, as well as with Vicky Gillan and me on the subject of 'Developing a culture of curiosity'.**

Inspiring, thought provoking and motivating.

Clients are still wanting to transform how they work with agencies, and agencies are adapting to these new demands. To help manage this change, we will be running a specific workshop on this area to share tools and develop new skills to help it all go smoothly.

As you know, we're passionate about re-building the account management function and we specifically welcome Shelford Chandler to the 2020 seminar programme. Shelford will focus on curiosity being at the root of creativity and we'll be repeating some of the new sessions we ran in 2019 due to popular demand.

We spoke a lot during the year about the power of empathy and asking questions to build an understanding of where the emotional risk sits with each stakeholder you deal with. Lizzie Palmer will explore these areas in 'The art of consultative selling', so one not to miss, for sure.

Really very useful, lots of big and small points that can be applied. Great insights.

Latest details of our 2020 programme can be found opposite. We are still finalising some of the sessions so do look out for updates via email and on the AAR website.

Brilliant learnings. I felt inspired throughout.

Please remember that your AAR subscription entitles you to one place at each of the seminars but we are happy to keep a reserve list if the content is very relevant to you. It always helps to plan ahead, think of who would benefit the most from each seminar and pencil it in their diaries now. We open up bookings roughly three weeks before each seminar so, if there are any on which you are particularly keen, keep your eyes peeled for an announcement. ■

## CORE SEMINAR PROGRAMME 2020

29 January

Presenting with impact  
Tessa Morton

26 February

Putting curiosity at the heart of  
account management  
Paul Burns

25 March

What do clients want from a  
strategic partnership  
Abigail Dixon

29 April

So what have we learned  
about social media  
Martin Thomas

20 May

Curiosity at the root  
of creativity  
Shelford Chandler

10 June

The art of consultative selling  
Lizzie Palmer

14 October

Developing an  
entrepreneurial mindset  
Stephen Chandler

11 November

Creating a culture of curiosity  
Anthony Tasgal

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME 2020

Dates for our senior management seminars throughout 2020 are as follows:

■ 11 March

Change workshop  
John Monks and Lawrence Weber of Curve

■ June - TBC

■ October - TBC

■ November - TBC



All of the core and senior management sessions are recognised by both the Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising as contributing to the Continuous Professional Development Award Scheme.

# Business development apprenticeship

by Martin Jones

**We've been running our Business Development Apprenticeship courses since 2012 and have now seen over 300 new business people "graduate".**

The course, which runs twice a year, is aimed at agency people who are entering the world of new business for the first time. Over five consecutive weeks, apprentices form competitive pitch teams and look at everything through the eyes of a potential client.

As in previous years, the 2019 apprentices were asked to come up with a name for their "agency" team, as well as positioning. We witnessed the births of OzComms, Silk and Green, Mankind, Full Circle, Atlas, Matter and 140.

This is a fantastic course. I've sent two of my team on it and feedback is always great. Content is highly relevant to the day to day job and improves overall performance. Also a good reminder to the rest of the team re good practice!

The agency teams learnt about the key elements of successful new business including how to take a more proactive approach rather than simply waiting for the phone to ring, how to complete an RFI and what to do in a Chemistry Meeting, all backed up with stories and anecdotes from various AAR Business Directors.

I would wholly recommend the course to anyone getting started in new business. I've learned things I will use for the rest of my career.

The teams were asked to demonstrate how they would pitch for a prospective client, Alzheimer's Society, by completing an RFI and participating in a Chemistry Meeting.

When it came to participating in the Chemistry Meetings, the factors that affect meetings in 'real life' – plentiful rehearsal, coming across as a team – influenced how successfully the teams performed. We were delighted to have real life clients representing the charity in order to make the meetings as realistic as possible. Considering that nobody in any of the teams had any experience of Chemistry Meetings, the standards were pleasingly high.

Each team was given feedback on their Chemistry Meeting, enabling them to see and hear what others had done, reminding them that new business is invariably a comparative process.

Their feedback tells us the participants found it a useful introduction to the world of new business and we look forward to seeing some, if not all of them, in real life pitch situations in the coming years.

If you have any colleagues who are new to new business and could benefit from an introduction to the world of business development, please don't hesitate to get in touch. ■

Those who have attended LOVE it. Makes them fall in love with new business.

## COURSES IN 2020

### SPRING COURSE

March

### AUTUMN COURSE

September/October

#### Location:

The House of St Barnabas, 1 Greek Street, Soho, London W1D 4NQ

#### Maximum of 16 places available

For further information, please email [events@aargroup.co.uk](mailto:events@aargroup.co.uk).

# About us

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# Who we are

**AAR is a management consultancy specialising in helping brands establish and manage their marketing and innovation partner ecosystems.**

We work with both marketing and innovation teams with established and growing brands to help them create the right agency model for their needs, populating that model with the right partner mix to drive growth and deliver business transformation. We also help brands and their partners to establish the commercial terms of their relationship and to work together more productively.

The first intermediary in the world to specialise in this complex sector, we have pioneered best practice for over four decades and remain the leading consultancy in the marketplace. ■

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■ **Kate Donaldson**  
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■ **Maria Farrell**  
Chief Commercial Officer  
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AAR's guidance and support during our search for an agency partner was invaluable. From the practical logistical support to the wealth of experience in client and agency relationships they offer, AAR was a great ally to our organisation and we would highly recommend their services.

**GATES FOUNDATION**

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The Experts in  
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