

# THE RULES OF ATTRACTION

IN THE FINAL INSTALLMENT OF A SERIES OF INSIGHTFUL RANTS, DARREN WOOLLEY ASKS AGENCIES TO THINK OF PITCHING LIKE DATING AND TO ASK MORE QUESTIONS BEFORE AGREEING TO THE FIRST DATE.



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The pitch is now the RFT. Credentials are now an RFI. The financials are an RFP.

The big mistake many agencies make is running head-on into the process without really understanding the details of the process or the consequence of participating.

Obviously, being invited to pitch holds the possibility of winning new business. But just as easily it can be a drain on the agency resources, involve excessive irrecouperable costs and, even if suc-

Think of pitching like dating. Would you go out on every date you were asked?

cessful, may not add to the agency bottom line.

When you get the invitation to participate in a pitch / RFI / RFT / RFP, it is worthwhile asking a few questions before you decide.

Again, think of it like dating. Would you go out on every date you were asked?

In one recent pitch, the client

requested the inclusion of a particular agency in the process.

When I called the agency, the managing director said they did not pitch unless they could meet with the managing director or chief executive of the client company. The agency also did not participate in a pitch if there were more than three agencies in the process.

I went back to the client and told him, and instead of putting them out of the process, it made the agency more desirable.

So before you say yes to the next invitation to go on a date, here are a few questions worth asking before you decide if you want to go.

1. Will it be an open tender or a closed tender, and if it is a closed tender how many companies will be participating? An open tender or too many participants simply

reduces your chances of success and indicates that the process could potentially be a fishing exercise.

2. What is the process and how long is it planned to take? If there is no clear process and there is no clear timeline, then there is likely no real thought or planning behind the process and in most cases this

leads to protracted and poorly managed processes.

3. What will be the requirements of the agency and will fees be paid and if so how much and to whom and when? If the process is particularly onerous on the agency or the client wants to own the intellectual property produced by the agency during the pitch, then fees should be paid, and at least you'll know what investment will be required if you decide to participate.

4. Who will be involved in the process from the client side? Is the CEO or senior management involved? Is it being managed by procurement or a consultant? Who in marketing will be involved? After all, this gives you an idea of what level of involvement and importance the process is seen within the organisation.

5. What is the value of the business in the first year? This is often an awkward question, but nevertheless an important one as it allows you to balance the potential cost of the pitch with the upside of success.

Perhaps if more agencies asked these questions upfront and were better informed before deciding to participate in pitches, there may be less complaining about the process.

After all, if you go into the process fully informed there is no excuse when it doesn't go your way. <

Darren Woolley is founder & managing director of TrinityP3.



Just like dating, pitching can be awkward. Before you say yes to the next invitation to go on a date, ask yourself some pertinent questions first.