



TrinityP3 London
 Market Research/Consulting
 London, United Kingdom

[Follow](#)
[Share](#)

[RFI](#) [Print View](#) [Update](#)
[Overview](#) [News](#) [Insights](#) [Team](#) [Contact](#)


Large Or Small, Agencies Like to Be All Things to All People. Does Size Really Matter?

Jun 30, 2021




Jeremy Taylor spent a week in May 2021 attending the AdForum Consultants Forum, on the receiving end of nine full credentials presentations from some of the leading global advertising networks and from some up-and-coming independents.

No agency credentials story is complete without a reference to the number of people they employ and the number of offices they have. Big or small, what does it really matter?



TrinityP3 London
 Market Research/Consulting
 London, United Kingdom
[SEE PROFILE](#)



JEREMY TAYLOR
 Business Director UK — [TrinityP3](#)
[SEE PROFILE](#)

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE SIZE OF THE AGENCY MAKE TO THE CLIENT RELATIONSHIP?

After the statement of agency size comes the 'so what?' section. And an interesting thing about agency management teams is that they almost universally spend the next few minutes re-assuring the prospective client about all the things they won't be missing out on as a result of the agency's size.

So the big networks tell the tale about how they provide personal service and fast turnaround despite their size and structure, due to the excellence of their systems and the quality of their people. While small agencies expand the story of their ability to service global accounts despite their lack of employee numbers and global presence, through their alliances and networks.

In short, big agency networks want to reassure you that working with them is just like working with a small agency, and smaller agencies are keen to let you know that they are just like the big ones. At the AdForum Conference, there was a feeling that the prospective client could end up feeling that all agencies ultimately want to be 'all things to all people'.

It's because agencies have a habit of backing up every factual point made in the credentials with a subjective pitch focused on the emotions and presumed reaction of the prospective client. They really want you to like them; but there is a risk in this approach that you can miss the actual benefits of working with them. And it's only by going beyond the emotional, subjective aspects of the credentials presentation that you get to the objective benefits of the relative size of the agency business. Let's try to dissect those pitches and dig out the true positives of agency size – both large and small.

WHY IT'S GOOD TO BE BIG: WHAT NETWORKS BRING TO CLIENTS

Here are a few of the things you get when you work with a big agency that you might miss out on with a smaller independent. All of them were tucked away in the AdForum network credentials, although sometimes it was necessary to go searching for them.

- Networks can provide a global talent pool, in depth. Teams can be selected for specific client engagement, so you don't just get what's available that week from the agency talent pool. The networks can also provide global heads of excellence, to fly in and oversee the quality of work (if you can afford it), and global coordinator account heads.
- This approach should add up to global consistency for the work, with no dependency on alliances of independent agency businesses and sub-contracted suppliers.
- Available from the networks is their investment in content delivery systems. For example, Dentsu announced their new system at the AdForum conference – Dentsu Connect, which operates across all the network businesses internationally.
- High quality data and insight tends to be on tap as a proprietary service, and this can also include the benefit of including market overview surveys of general customer developments and industry trends. This all needs paying for, of course.
- Large numbers of employees working across multiple offices do make available a depth of experience that is simply beyond a smaller independent.
- Also available for clients might be considerable breadth of experience across multiple markets (vertical and national) and skill specialities. Properly harnessed this can provide unexpected benefits through the provision of a different angle on the brief – for instance, health sector experts providing a specialist overview of the health aspects and implications of a creative concept, a point well made by the McCann Worldwide team.
- If you are interested in the financial health of your agency partners, PLCs and publicly quoted agencies are required to publish their results (turnover, negative and positive growth, and profit) on a regular basis. So there should be few sudden, hidden financial surprises during your working life with them.
- Public limited companies with institutional shareholders have another benefit over some of the independents. Investors in the newer start-ups tend to be hedge funds and venture capitalists with high expectations on rate and speed of return on their investment, and they have been known to apply corresponding pressure to the agency management teams to achieve results. Not necessarily to the benefit of the clients.
- In-housing your agency resource is growing as an option amongst advertisers. Agency networks are the major suppliers of this service, with experience and resources to call on globally and locally.

NO NETWORK: WHY IT'S GOOD TO WORK WITH AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY

Conversely, there are also many positive aspects to working with independent agencies. Here are a few that they do talk about, alongside some observations of the different approaches to producing the creative product that they are

Contact Information

49 Greek Street
 London W1D 4EG
 United Kingdom

[Get Directions](#)

PHONE: (+44) (0) 203 994 2211
 EMAIL: people@trinityp3.com
 WEBSITE: www.trinityp3.com



Darren Woolley
 Managing Director
 Phone: (+61) 4 11126176
darren@trinityp3.com



Basic Info

FOUNDED IN: 2000

EMPLOYEES: 5

sure to bring to bear.

- Flexibility – any smaller company is usually able to work with more flexibility and adaptability than its bigger equivalent, and this holds true with advertising agencies. The big agency story about the power of the production system is replaced by the small agency tales of 'just getting the job done'.
- Agility – taking this approach to the next level, it's noticeable that smaller agencies are less intimidated about taking on the apparently impossible. They often pride themselves on better lateral thinking skills about problem solving, and couple it to a can-do outlook and approach. Maybe they just try harder.
- Smaller businesses usually work with less reliance on bureaucracy, which means less resistance to working flexibly. (There is of course an attendant risk to working this way – bureaucracy does have a role in business life.)
- Buying advertising services from an independent often also means that you get only the services you want, with less temptation for the agency management team to cross-sell other network resources and companies.
- Linked to this benefit is the presence of a unified, single P&L bottom line for the agency. The client is therefore not landed with multiple commercial relationships and associated extra cost.
- No network also means no network overhead costs to cover within your fees, accompanied by better transparency in the working relationship.
- Ideas and creative concepts in independents are more likely to come from left-field sources – typically from people from backgrounds such as experiential, PR, media or even gaming. This can result in some truly original thinking and stand-out work.
- Independents are the new home of a revival in agency house styles. Not seen much since the nineteen eighties, this can produce very distinctive work.
- New independents are often driven by a hunger for success and results in their work to build reputation and growth. Again, this can be reflected in edgy creative work.

HOW SHOULD THE CLIENT CHOOSE THE IDEAL SCALE OF THEIR AGENCY?

To complicate things a little further, it's not just about size. Agencies of all sizes offer specialisations in specific markets, with in-depth experience. Others offer a particular approach and working process you might identify with. You might be attracted by an agency belief in the power of brand purpose, or the importance of building a customer experience out of every creative campaign. If you want it, you'll find a commitment to the power of creativity to transform marketing, or sometimes to transform entire businesses.

Most agencies are more generalist in their approach, and that also brings benefits. But maybe you'll be excited to be on the ride with an agency that has ambitious growth targets and a corporate mission to lead the world in its own market place, or maybe you would prefer an agency that's happy as it is and just wants to produce effective and/or award winning work. Whichever of these lights your fire, your job during the credentials presentation is to look for the evidence behind the claims to satisfy yourself they have substance.

The choice can be overwhelming, especially as there are very few poor sales people fronting up agency pitches. Ultimately there is only one piece of advice for clients on making their choice of agencies to work with. Be objective about it and choose the one that's the best fit for your requirements, current and future. The one with the ability to service your account, to produce the most effective work and to work best with your team, all at the right level of remuneration for both parties.

That is the TrinityP3 philosophy. We work hard to help our clients arrive at the right solution for their business.



Q New Search

Follow

Share

NEWS	AGENCIES	PRODUCTION	CREATIVE LIBRARY	AWARDS	DIRECTORIES	ADFORUM
All About Advertising	Agency News	Production company...	Subscribe to Creativ...	What's Hot	Marketing Services ...	About Us
Agencies	Search Agency	Search Production ...	Find Ads	Upcoming Events	Academic	Partners
Insights	Full Service	Film	Discover	Winners Showcase	Media Advisors	Services
Production	Digital	Digital	Latest Ads	Awards Listings	Trade Associations	• Company Profile
Industry	Boutique	Sound/Music	Top5	Cannes Lions	Trade Media	• Talent Profile
All interviews	Media	Animation/VFX	Best Ads Archive	Epica Awards	Awards	• Creative Library
Creativity	Experiential	Post	Case Studies	Business Creative R...	Agencies	Summit
Point of View	PR	Production services	Socially Responsibl...	Add Your Award Org...	Production	Submit an Ad
Perspectives	Social Media	Film Commissions	Worldwide		Search Consultants	Advertise with Us
Headline Makers	Multicultural	Create Your Compa...	Directors		All	Contact us
Socially Responsibl...	Luxury		Auto			
Live in Cannes	Create Agency Profile		Tech			
Get the Latest Adver...			Travel & Tourism			
Business Creative R...			Alcohol			
			Food			
			Retail			
			Beauty & Health			
			Finance			
			Digital			
			LATAM			
			Eastern Europe			
			Socially Responsible			
			Business Creative R...			
			Top5 Newsletters			
			Full Access to Creati...			