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ADELAIDE LIVE: The rise of specialists in pitching



By Jade Pshoglos | 31 March 2026

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Holdco consolidation, "full service" independents that struggle to deliver expertise in all sectors and middle-remit indies have resulted in the rise of specialist-based independents winning pitches.

Speaking at *AdNews Adelaide Live*, Trinity P3 founder and global CEO, Darren Woolley presented the opportunity for Adelaide indies to specialise in what they do best and win work outside of the Adelaide market.



Darren Woolley at Adelaide LIVE.

"All of the agency people in the room, it's time to lean in, because there are some big shifts happening," Woolley said.

Trinity P3's agency register, which has accumulated more than 1000 agencies in the last 17 years, sees 650 of them classified as independent agencies.

Sixty-five per cent of the pitches last year, in which Trinity P3 ran around 10% of those; 441 went to independent agencies.

The structural polarisation, or a barbell effect, is resulting in marketers and brands who are appointing large 'full service' agencies, finding gaps in their abilities to deliver across the multitude of channels.

Woolley sees this as an opportunity for specialist agencies who can deliver performance-based results in the market they do well in.

"When we talk about specialty, we're inclined to think of the things we do," Woolley said.

"We've got to stop talking about the things we do and talk about the outcomes we deliver. The specialties we have are not the skills, but what we do with those skills.

"And that's where we can optimise outside of just being another agency, by focusing on those skills.

"The fact that you're an agency in Adelaide should not mean that the limitation is Adelaide, there are opportunities for specialist agencies to do business nationally and globally."

Woolley made an example of an agency in Sydney that offers strategy, digital marketing, and creative, whose annual revenue comes more than 50% from the US.

Another agency specialised in communications and PR, built their specialist around helping challenger brands and tech disruptors. They have expanded from Australia and New Zealand to the US and UK, serving a portfolio of global technology companies.

"Get clients from overseas to come to Adelaide, and then you'll find the local clients will be beating a path to your door," Woolley said.

The number one most active sector in 2025 for 39 pitches was in food and manufacturing, followed by tourism and travel, according to Trinity P3's State of the Pitch.

"Adelaide is the home of food, wine, tourism, events and culture," he said.

"This is the place you should be refining your expertise in any of those areas and start exporting it to the world."

Woolley described the winning formula for pitching as an embracement of AI, evidence of performance-based results and the need to remain a sustainable agency.

"AI has already become table stakes. If you're selling yourself on AI solutions, you're playing catch up. Slop till you drop: How AI Junk is hijacking ad dollars

"We're also seeing more clients willing to pay for the quality of thinking, but only when thinking leads to performance improvements.

"There's an opportunity there for conversations around performance-based fees. This is where we can get away from getting paid by the hour.



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"Finally, there is still a corporate need in the marketplace for addressing climate crisis, gender inequality, for living up to our modern slavery act requirements.

"All of those things are becoming more important, not just because procurement has it as a tick box, but because it indicates a company that is thinking about sustainability in the medium to long term."

"If we make AI take over the drudgery processes and the boring, there is an opportunity for agencies to start charging for the quality of human thinking.

"If we start to make us specialists in ideas that change people's behavior, if we create ideas that grow businesses, then there's a big, strong future for any agency, no matter where they're located in the world."

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