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## State of the Pitch - Marketers ask too much of their agencies

By AdNews | 8 April 2024

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Marketers and their procurement teams are asking too much of agencies in pitches, some of which are decided before they start, according to the inaugural [The State of Pitch report](#) by consultancy TrinityP3.

Clients are casting too wide a net in terms of the pitch lists and process requirements when asking agencies to sign up for new business, according to the study.



Credit: Ella Christenson via Unsplash

TrinityP3's report is based on feedback from agencies across 77 pitches covering 28 industry categories with agency fees from \$50,000 to \$10 million.

Anonymous feedback included key issues such as "whilst the process and openness of the pitch was encouraging, it appeared the CEO had already determined the outcome".

And "No engagement with the CMO throughout the entire process until the very last creative presentation. The pitch was predetermined, and the client used the pitch process to move the entire account to the new agency. We could have saved money and effort if they had have just fired us and moved the business, instead of making us chase the unwinnable pitch," another said.

TrinityP3 CEO Darren Woolley said the key insight that stood out is that many marketers are boiling the ocean in their search for the right agency.

"It doesn't need to be that way but also it shouldn't be," Woolley said.

"We had agencies reporting pitch lists of between three and up to 45 agencies.

"Now some clients will have open tender requirements, but a process involving that quantity of agencies needs a speedy and robust process for refining the list in the interests of everyone's time and effort."

When asked to score the 77 pitches included in the survey, the average was 3.13 out of a possible score of five.

TrinityP3 general manager Lydia Feely said a score of 3.13 out of 5 isn't wholly damning, but it also highlights that the industry has significant room for improvement.



Lydia Feely and Darren Woolley

"We noticed a significant difference in how agencies scored the process depending on whether marketing, procurement or an external consultant was running the pitch," Feely said.

"Sadly, in too many cases, agencies were reporting a lack of 'table stakes', the minimum requirements that makes sure the client pitching business has a clear and reasonable process, that they know they can stick to and which will keep everyone involved informed and respected."

The TrinityP3 report noted how consultant-run pitches account for less than 15% of the pitches surveyed in the Australian market.

Amid an environment where marketing and their procurement teams often run a pitch themselves, it recommends the need for stronger industry-wide guidelines with greater optionality that assist marketers and brands when considering how to select an agency.

"The issue is too many marketers are applying a one-size-fits-all approach. How you select an agency for a \$50,000 project brief should look a lot different to a \$10m retainer account," said Feely.

"The problem is some marketers are signing up, or being forced into, the same procurement process regardless of the size of the account or the scope of work.

"That's not good for agencies or marketers - it simply wastes everyone's time, money and effort."

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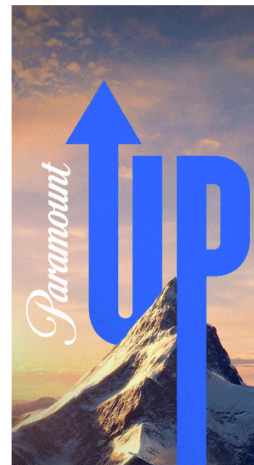
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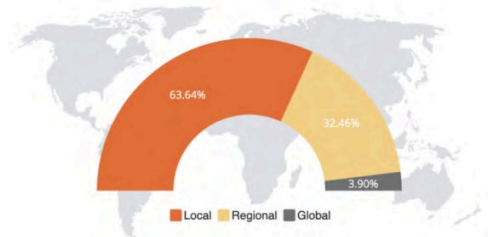
"As an industry, this is something we can all collaborate on to solve.

"If you look at something like the UK's Pitch Positive Pledge, this is an example of what can be done to help achieve a better outcome."

The report also looked at which industries were pitching with the categories of banking, financial and insurance the most represented followed by education, tourism then retail and food and beverage.

Local pitches represented more than 60% of those surveyed with regional representing 32% and global pitches were just 3.9%.

Q7. Was the pitch for a local, regional or global project or appointment?

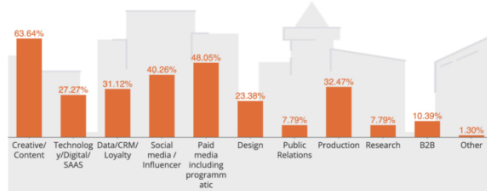


"It is great to see local pitches dominating the Australian market," said Woolley.

"We too often hear that global, and even some regional pitches, rarely represent value for return for agencies in the local market and so we see this shift as a positive for Australian adland, although there's a risk that it is cyclical and that particularly COVID may have spiked the number of pitches in categories such as travel, tourism and education."

The needs of clients are also rapidly evolving, with a growing number of clients demanding capabilities beyond strategy, creative/content and paid media, including programmatic.

Q8. What disciplines or capabilities was the client looking for?



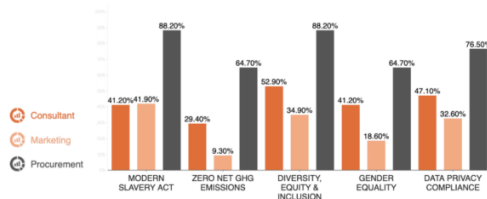
"The survey highlights what TrinityP3 has been seeing in the market - which is the rise of multi-discipline pitching," said Woolley.

"The creative pitch or media pitch still exists but increasingly they are trying to find ways to consolidate rosters and overheads to have a less fragmented agency team.

"While you expect to see creative, paid media or production high on the client needs, it's worth noting the rise in demand for technology, data/CRM and even social and influencer capabilities to win at pitching agencies today. They need to have more than one string to their bow."

The list of client compliance measures, especially in the data privacy space has also increased significantly as part of the pitch process.

TrinityP3's report highlights how it's not legislative data compliance or modern slavery requirements which marketers are asking agencies for but also policies on net zero, diversity equity and inclusion and gender equality.



"It's no surprise that data privacy compliance is a client expectation in 2024," said Feely.

"What is interesting is that marketers are increasingly demanding supplier policies in areas like zero net emissions, DE&I and gender equality.

"Much of this is being driven by procurement, but we see this is a real positive for the industry, and increasingly, we expect all of these areas will be seen as a 'hygiene factor' that agencies just need to have sorted if they want to be involved."

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