



HOW TO WIN YOUR NEXT PITCH: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM CANNES IN CAIRNS



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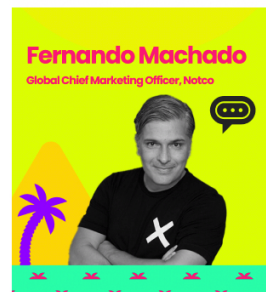


LOVE IT OR LOATHE IT, PITCHING MAKES THE WORLD OF ADVERTISING GO ROUND. FORTUNATELY, *B&T* HOSTED AN EXPERT PANEL AT CANNES IN CAIRNS WITH THE PITCHING EXPERTS IN AUSTRALIA'S ADLAND. BUT THE TRIO OF GRAHAM WEBSTER, CEO OF ENTH DEGREE, GREG 'SPARROW' GRAHAM, FOUNDER OF THE NEST CONSULTANCY, AND JEN DAVIDSON, MANAGING PARTNER OF TUMBLETURN MEDIA DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO ANSWER ALL OF THE AUDIENCE'S QUESTIONS.

Luckily Webster donated some more of his precious time to answer the unanswered questions so you can win your next pitch. And, handily, we've divvied them up into three easy sections:

- Pricing
- Chemistry and working relationships
- Pitching style and process

What's more, if you didn't catch the You Can't Ask That Session, Darren Woolley of TrinityP3 has answered even more questions about [adland](#) and [pitching](#).





PRICING

Do you feel that media pricing grids that ask for guarantees are fair, especially as more media buying moves into digital auctions where nothing is guaranteed?

Pricing grids are intended to ensure that clients are not going backwards on their media rates. Further, they ensure that agencies don't "promise the world and deliver an atlas."

We often see rate responses where the variation between top and bottom indicates a lack of competitive understanding (or reality!) from agencies. For this reason, the cheapest is often disregarded,

We acknowledge the reality of digital auctions but expect agencies to know the market and back their ability to forecast. That's why they get the big dollars!

Why do media agencies race to the bottom on rates in pitches rather than raising the whole industry up & demanding real value from clients for agency services?

The "race to the bottom" is not encouraged in the pitch process. Clients understand that you get what you pay and that a service fee that appears too cheap will bring grief in the relationship in the short term.

During COVID, we witnessed agencies that were clearly desperate for business and pitching service fees that were up to 1/3 cheaper than the expected fee range.

These agencies were not successful as it was obvious it was an unsustainable fee proposal. Agencies need to understand their own costs and the value of a client to their company's profitability.

Some pitch consultants charge agencies for strategic advice. Do you think this is a conflict of interest?

Absolutely! How do you remain impartial when you have received payment from a submitting agency in any capacity? It is impossible.

Enth Degree will never engage in any paid services from an agency. We are happy to give a view on an agency's credentials deck as an impartial observer but would never charge to do so.

CHEMISTRY AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS.

Should agencies and the prospective client interact outside the key meetings during the pitch process – to emulate 'real life' and 'real chemistry'?

All agencies are keen to interact with potential clients outside of scheduled meetings.

We schedule chemistry sessions during the process to emulate a working situation. Probity and procurement realities do not allow additional non-scheduled contact throughout the process, given that there are usually four agencies active in a tender.

We won our last 3 clients without a pitch. It was a chemistry session only. Is this the best way to select an agency?

This is clearly good fortune for your agency but if I am buying a house, I wouldn't be looking at one and saying OK! Chemistry is only one element of a successful partnership – the quality of the work should be paramount.

How do you get back-channel Intel when you don't have a direct good contact on the client side?

Throughout the pitch process, there are opportunities to ask for relevant background data. All agencies are given the same briefing and the same opportunity to ask individual questions. Use these opportunities judiciously and intelligently and you will garner the information required.

Further within this article, we have a question from a client that asks, "How do we stop those insane lists of questions coming from agencies?" There is a clue in that question of how best to manage your interaction with the client in the early stages of a pitch.

How are you encouraging your clients to evolve their agency KPIs to better reflect future business need states?

A very good question. With a new relationship, we develop KPIs with the client to ensure that we extend the agency's responsibility to achieve business objectives. KPIs also reflect the practicalities of the working relationship between all parties, in the agency village. It is not unreasonable to expect an agency to be assessed on the same metrics as the marketing team i.e., business results.

A new win is a fast way to embed best practices – both parties are signed up. Do you see accountability on clients to co-own ways to work that aid mental health?

I'm not sure how the two parts of this question relate however I suspect from the second point that you're asking if clients have a duty of care to ensure that their demands are fair on the agency personnel and that they aren't imposing undue stress on staff. This is a two-way street and should be addressed by relevant senior personnel at both the client and agency at regular review discussions.

PITCHING STYLE AND PROCESSES

Do you think pitch task briefs are written better or worse than a regular campaign brief and why?

It depends on who is writing the brief. In reality, due to confidentiality reasons (despite signed NDAs) a pitch brief cannot always contain all elements that would be included within the brief to a contracted agency.

The pitch brief is intended to highlight the contenders' ability to formulate an insightful strategic response.

This question suggests to me that whoever asked it is not happy with the calibre of an existing client's brief. As the agency, you should be working with the client to assist in the development of the brief that will ensure that you can produce your best work.

What is the sweet spot number of your team to bring to a pitch?

There is no magic number, but all members of the team need to be meaningful contributors. Don't bring any passengers.

As a boutique agency, how do you bring a competitive edge to win pitches?

Don't think of yourself as a boutique agency, but an agency with a difference, and sell that difference.

Tender environment pre-being invited to pitch (based on proposal only). Any tips on how best to stand out?

Tender environments necessitate you respond to all questions.

The key is to be succinct and highlight the advantage of your agency with each response.

While some questions often evoke the same response (pitch doctors also have to pitch) look for the key difference in each question and address that. Don't say "refer to previous etc." – it looks lazy and disinterested. Also, remember to focus on the client when framing your answers.

In a pitch, is it more important to be right or to be interesting?

The obvious answer is both. Media is not a science. I've yet to see a media pitch that can absolutely demonstrate that it is the "right" solution.

I have seen too many presentations that are incredibly dull because they are "agency-centric".

The most interesting presentation to the client will be the one that talks about their issues, opportunities, and solutions.

How important is it to have the actual team working on the project pitching?

No client expects an agency to have a spare team sitting around waiting to pick up a piece of business.

It's important to field a team that is representative of the calibre of person that will be working on the account.

Don't overload the presentation with the A-team, nor allow them to dominate.

Key agency staff should be consistent through pitch to the actual working relationship i.e., strategy and creative leads.

How do we stop those insane lists of questions coming from agencies? Should we say, as a client, you have four questions only?

Provide the agency with the opportunity to ask questions, but reserve the right to:

Share with all other candidates.

Limit the opportunities to one meaningful session.

Not answer if deemed immaterial to the project.

Do advertisers understand how media agencies can create value for them?

I will answer that with my own question.

Can the agency definitively demonstrate where they have created value for their clients over and above the marketplace?

Unfortunately, too many clients are sceptical of “value creation” following a history of exaggerated claims. For example, “80 per cent discount from outdoor yielding \$X,000 saving” is not value creation, but agency inflation.

How can you make sure the team follows through on pitch promises?

Enth Degree builds a fee-at-risk component into contracts, with KPIs linked to agency pitch commitments.

How often do you recommend clients bring digital media, if not all media, in-house?

Rarely, but on occasion, Enth Degree has suggested that it could be an option where the client’s objectives, spend volume, market experience and positioning suit. As we move into a world of increased programmatic placement, agencies can expect this to become a consideration for some large marketers.

How do you win a client in a new category when everyone wants previous experience as an agency in their category?

Client pitches rarely demand category experience, new or otherwise. Marketers are looking for sound strategic thinking. A case history doesn’t need to be in the same category if it demonstrates relevance to the client’s objectives and desired outcome. We have had instances where clients don’t want category experience i.e., they want a fresh take on their business.

What agencies do you think have the best planning products and tools?

Those that have the people who know how to use them!

Rarely do agencies reveal a tool that is unique, apart from the name.

When clients review agencies, they are rarely impressed by tools. They expect all agencies to have the necessary tools to provide a professional and well-crafted product. A builder doesn’t win a job because he has the shiniest drop saw.

How important is scale (of agency) when considering who to invite to pitch?

Agency scale is important when considering who to invite to a pitch. A very large client, e.g., Governments, are unlikely to take a small agency to handle a Master Agency function considering the massive task of managing that business and knowing the agency would need to rebuild. It is too great a risk.

Alternately smaller clients are wary of working with large agencies where they are likely to be lost and/or looked after by juniors.

Are clients asking more now for indies to be on the lists you put forward or are there still some that only want holdcos and how do we combat that?

We have never been asked to consider the big Groups only – but they are well known through size, experience, and extensive PR.

Independent agencies need to generate positive PR so as to establish a reputation in the marketplace to ensure that clients are familiar with their achievements.

How do you go about choosing agencies to pitch? There seems to be a lot of favouritism.

We provide clients with an extensive list of candidate agencies that suit the client’s business needs (for example we exclude agencies handling competitive accounts). The shortlist is then agreed upon between the client and the pitch consultant, with the clients having the final decision on the candidate list.

Perhaps the favouritism element is more relevant to agencies that pay consultants for services or consideration.



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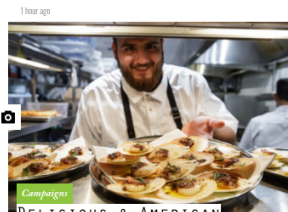
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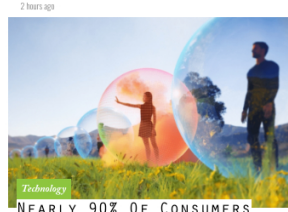
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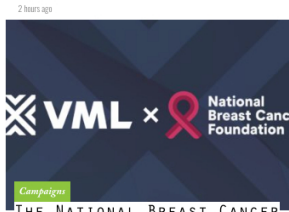


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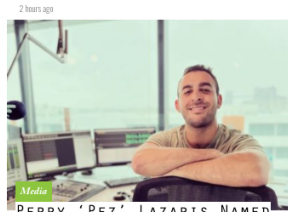


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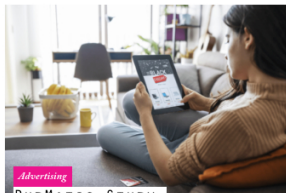
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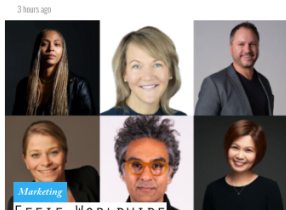
Luc Longley
 AM Ex-National Basketball Association (NBA) star and Australian professional basketball coach

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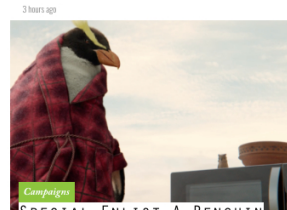
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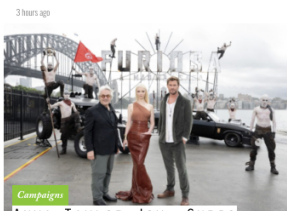
Marketing

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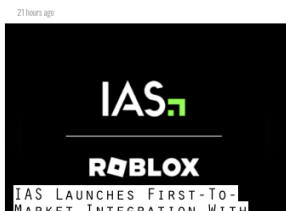
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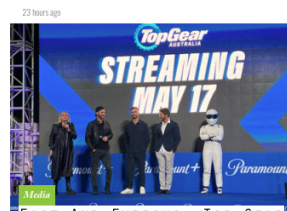
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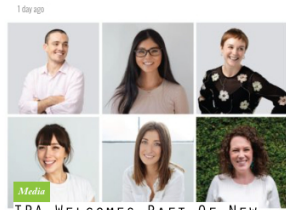
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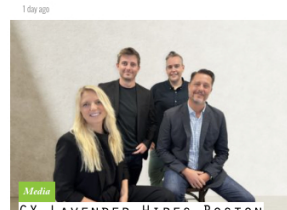
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