





Top 1000 Brands Agency Report Cards

MARKETING, ANALYSIS, OPINIONS

Has marketing lost its heart and soul?

Even as procurement teams are emphasising sustainability and philanthropy, marketers appear uninterested—or in some cases hostile toward—pro bono work their agencies may be doing for charities. That's a mistake, according to the founder and CEO of TinityPs.











It can be rare in a marketing forum to hear anyone suggesting that procurement is leading innovation and action. But a recent exercise undertaken by TrinityP3 has shown that for all the talk about brand purpose, many marketers struggle with values and purpose when it comes to their agencies.

Increasingly, we find procurement teams are focusing on creating and managing supply chains that complywith expectations around the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDG). These include climate action, gender equality, reducing inequalities, decent work the elimination of modern slavery and more.

The exercise we undertook, with the thousands of agencies who have registered their details with us for new business, was to capture as much of this information as possible for each one, without it becoming burdensome for the agencies. It would mean we would be better able to respond to the requests of the procurement teams when they made enquiries about potential agencies and their position on many of these

Rather than capturing all 17, we distilled this down to five key areas or values. Gender and cultural equality and inclusion, environmental action, good corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy.

All of these are worthwhile and important values for a modern company and all are worthy considerations when choosing a supply chain partner. But, it appears from the lack of enquiry, not particularly high on the agenda for the majority of marketers when choosing a new agency supplier.

The one that was most interesting of the five was the last one: corporate philanthropy. Agencies have traditionally been big supporters of charities, regularly offering to do pro bono work for those charities that most resonate with the agency and more importantly, the agency employees. This was often the motivation: the opportunity for the agency to give back to society by making a difference for those charities they most

There have been some great examples over the years of campaigns for charities that have achieved significant success. Many charities, under-resourced but nonetheless worthy, have often relied on the support of the advertising industry to help them drive awareness for their cause and their work. This is in a category that continues to become increasingly crowded and competitive.

It was therefore important to capture these pro bono relationships as proof of the agencies' commitment to contributing to making the world a better place. But in talking with agency CEOs and our new business contacts inside the agencies, we started to hear that just as marketers were not considering or driving the global sustainability goals in selecting agencies, they were also incredibility cynical about the corporate philanthropy of the agencies.

Presenting a pro bono case study to a major retailer, one CEO was explaining the major increases in awareness and donations before being cut off by the senior marketer, who asked "Could we get on to the real work, please?".

Likewise, an agency new business leader commented that they no longer include the pro bono in their case studies because clients do not seem to value the work. This was best summed by an agency creative director who shared that "the client asked me to move on" in the middle of a creative case study, because "we are not interested in scam advertising".

Sadly, this is driven by the handful of agencies who have used speculative creative work for charities to enter into creative award shows as scam work. But the fact is, pro bono work that delivers results is an incredibly valuable way to measure the creative thinking of an agency. While scam ads rarely have credible results, true charity work will need to have driven a result, be it equivalent media exposure for organisations needing to raise awareness without financial resources, or significant increases in donations to fund their work.

Taken in isolation, this apparent widespread rejection of agencies' charity work could simply be written off as a level of cynicism in the marketing industry towards agencies. But in the context of the observation procurement and not marketing that is driving consideration of agencies' commitment to the Global Sustainability Goals, is it rather a matter of marketing having lost its heart and soul? Or in a world where brands are talking increasingly about their purpose, does the purpose of their agencies not matter that much?

One agency shared that because of the low consideration by marketers of their charity work, they had instead embraced allowing staff to spend a paid day a year working for the charity of their choice. A noble gesture. But potentially a complete waste of talent. Having an agency person help deliver meals to the aged, the poor and the underprivileged is certainly worthy work. But wouldn't it be better that they gave their time and talents to do what they did best, helping the charity to raise awareness and increases donations and participation?



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Perhaps if those marketers who cynically do not value the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of their agencies took another look in the philanthropy of ththeir heart and soul and saw the good these agencies do, then the world could become a much nicer place.

Darren Woolley is is the founder and CEO of marketing consultancy TrinityP3.



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