

ADVERTISING, DIGITAL, MARKETING, MEDIA, PR, ANALYSIS, OPINIONS

Darren Woolley | Jul 22, 2020

## Questions to ask and answer when an agency loses a pitch

Remarkably few agencies get useful feedback after losing a pitch. Try asking these followup questions.



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Agency pitches are of great interest for the industry. They come with natural drama. There are always winners and losers. Typically, one winner and a list of losers. The agencies may drop out early at credentials and chemistry, at the workshop or presentation, or at the finish line during the final negotiation. But no matter where or when in the process, the big question that must be answered is, "Why?"

This is something we are diligent in doing. We provide detailed and candid feedback to all of the agencies when they are unsuccessful. At all stages of the process. Yet we are often surprised by their reaction. Most agencies tell us that very few marketers or procurement teams provide any useable feedback post pitch. This is incredibly rude and most unprofessional. Besides, frank, honest and constructive feedback may be the only value an unsuccessful agency will get from the whole process.



So, when an agency gets the opportunity for a debrief, what should they ask? Here is a list of questions we recommend if an agency is unsuccessful. It is also a list any professional marketer or procurement person should be prepared and willing to answer. For convenience we have classified and collated the questions by stage and category in the process. Beyond that they are in no particular order.

### Credentials & Chemistry

- Were there any specific team members that you felt were weaker than in the winning agency?
- What did you think of the team and specific people in the meeting?
- Was our USP clear from the other agencies in written and face-to-face presentation?
- Was there a specific capability that we didn't offer? Or that you were specifically looking for in our response?
- Can you share if there was a specific cultural mismatch between our teams and yours? And where you felt that we didn't match.
- How well did we tell our 'agency story'?
- Did we clearly define who we are and in what we believe?
- Was this a positioning/ territory that resonated with the client team?
- Was our failure to connect more about people or product?
- Did we fail to communicate how much we wanted the business?
- Did we talk about ourselves too much rather than what we could do for you?
- What 3 key lessons should we take away from this?

### Task

- What did you think of our strategic thinking?
- What did you think of our creative?
- Can you please provide independent feedback on our people, processes and ideas.
- Did we appear to have a robust structure and a process that is a springboard for innovation and ideas?
- Were the dynamics of the day wrong?
- Were the dynamics/ chemistry of the team wrong?
- Did our different teams / divisions / companies appear united as a seamless team delivering holistic solutions?
- Did we fail to communicate how much we want this business?
- What three key lessons should we take away from this?
- How did our response compare with other agencies?
- What could we have done better?

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- How were we positioned or ranked on price?
- How much higher priced were we?
- Did we fail to demonstrate value in our proposal and if so, how was this assessed?

#### Overall

- What did we do well?
- What did we do wrong, if anything?
- What are the top 3 reasons we didn't get through this time? (Only three.)
- What is the most important thing for us to improve next time? (Just one.)
- What were the final decision-making criteria and weightings for your decision?
- And any specific areas that were above/below the winning agency?
- Were there any individuals you can give feedback on from the client POV and your POV, having seen so many agencies?
- How did we score versus the other agencies through your process? Where were we strong and where were we weak?
- What was the strongest part of our agency's offering evident or presented during the pitch process?
- How different is your perception of the agency now compared to when you first selected us to pitch?
- What was the main reason for us not being appointed as the winning agency?

#### Future

- Based on our performance: would you consider us for future pitches? Would you recommend us to colleagues or friends looking for an agency?
- What's the single, biggest thing we need to remember, and keep remembering, for the next time we pitch?
- Is there any other advice you could provide that could help us?

None of these questions requires a breach of confidentiality, commercial or otherwise. There is no reason why you could not ask these questions as an agency. On the other side, be prepared for many marketers and procurement people to be evasive in answering these questions. It will be because either they have not considered it, or they believe the honest answer will hurt your feelings, or make them look unprofessional.

So, now it is over to you. If you are a marketer or a procurement professional, are there any questions missing from here or are there questions you do not think you should answer?

If you are an agency, are there any questions we have missed, or do you have a killer question you like to use?

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







Source: *Campaign Asia-Pacific*


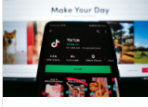


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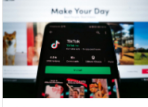


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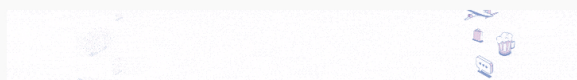
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