



## The State of the Pitch: Two continents, same problems

Our groundbreaking research provides new pitching market benchmarks for Canada, but also allows a comparison to one very similar market half a world away.

by Cecilia Garzella | May 06 2025



Whether in Toronto or Sydney, Montreal or Melbourne, ad agencies are navigating a very similar pitch landscape, one defined by inconsistent processes, minimal compensation, and a lack of soft skills that transcends borders.

[The State of the Pitch 2025](#) provided groundbreaking data on agency review processes and practices in Canada, establishing benchmarks that could be used to pursue improvements and enhancements to the pitch market in Canada.

But, as Canadians are so often inclined, we were also curious about what the data said about this market vis-a-vis others: i.e., are the problems and challenges in Canada unique? Fortunately we have data from one similar market to help answer that question.

Our survey was originally launched in Australia in 2023 by TrinityP3 founder and global CEO Darren Woolley. Campaign worked with Woolley and Canadian search firm Listenmore to bring it to Canada last year.

With identical survey questions fielded in both regions during the second half of last year, the data allows for an apples-to-apples comparison. The key takeaway?

"It's almost as if the problems that are in Canada are also being replicated in Australia," Woolley says.

At a high level, agencies in both markets gave lukewarm assessments of their most recent pitch experiences. In Australia, about 35% rated their experience as above average or better; in Canada, 42% said it was "somewhat good" or better.

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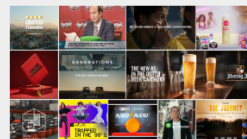
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"We position the second round [2024 vs 2023] of Australian results as going from a C-minus to a D-plus, from just above average to just below average," Woolley explains. "And interestingly, even some agencies that won pitches still gave the process a very low score because it's the way you feel about the win or the loss, not just whether you won or lost at all."

The similarities extend well beyond sentiment. Pitch timelines, communication levels and the lack of pitch fees are

strikingly aligned. In both countries, most agencies had two to four weeks to respond to briefs, and pitches typically ran two to three months. More than 85% of agencies in both markets said they received no compensation for their time or spec work.

But a few notable differences offer insight into the structural and cultural dynamics of each market.

For one, Canada had a higher proportion of procurement-led pitches (37% vs. 28% in Australia), while Australia saw more pitches led by consultants (21% vs. 12% in Canada). The difference isn't just statistical — procurement in Australia is underdeveloped compared to the U.S. and Europe, says Woolley.

### Procurement plays bigger role in Canada; Consultants more active in Australia

Share of respondents by primary pitch lead

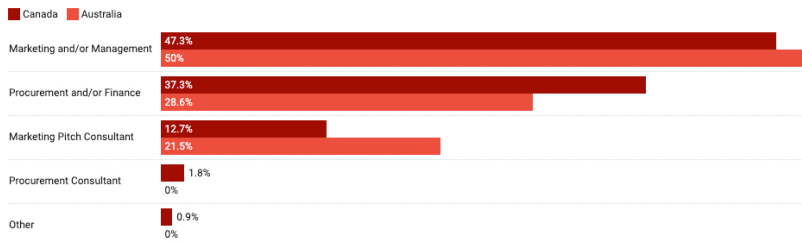


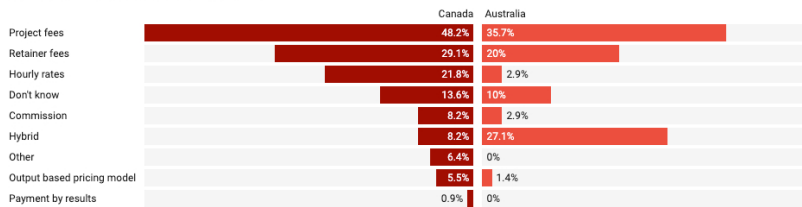
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"In the Australian market, we not only have half a dozen pitch consultants for a market that's smaller than Canada — we have a very large number of people that literally get [laid off] and immediately hang up a shingle to say they're pitch consultants," says Woolley. "Everyone who's ever worked on a pitch, either as a client or on the agency side, thinks they can manage a pitch. But it's a lot more nuanced, political and detailed than they thought."

That procurement influence may explain another key difference: the use of hourly rates, which remain largely absent in Australia, but are more common in Canada. While over 20% of Canadian agencies reported using hourly billing, only 2.9% of Australian respondents said the same.

### Project fees dominate in both markets, with slight nuances

Share of respondents by agency fee model used



Canadian respondents could select multiple fee models used in their most recent pitch.

Chart: Campaign Red - Source: The State of the Pitch 2025 - Created with Datawrapper

"Almost no marketer would engage an agency to just charge them on an hourly rate. It's either a retainer or a pre-agreed project fee, and then the agency works to that," Woolley says.

In Canada, procurement teams are often generalists who apply familiar corporate models to agency engagements — even when those models don't fit. "I spoke to one who also procures swivel chairs and a whole raft of things," says Listenmore principal Stephan Argent.

Argent notes that hourly billing often becomes the default because it's easy to understand — not necessarily because it's the most strategic. "It's a starting point for a procurement person when they are not perhaps used to the service business," he says. "That tends to be the metric by which they get used, rather than looking at a deeper scope of work, for example, and then figuring out how to staff that, and then backing it out accordingly."

Lastly, speculative work appeared to be more prevalent in Australia. 67% of Australian respondents reported being asked for spec work, particularly creative, compared to 57% in Canada.

### Did the pitch require speculative strategic, creative work or a media trading exercise?

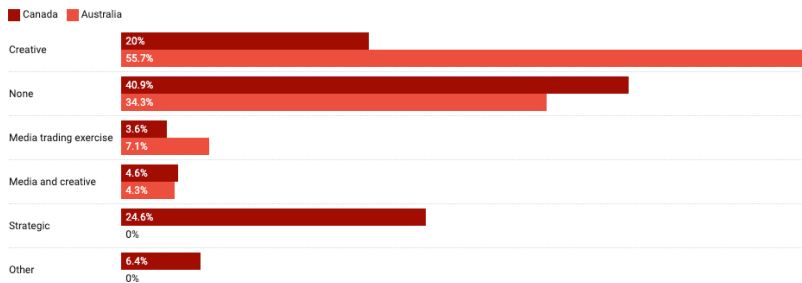


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"Spec work is very common here because so many pitches are marketer-led, and the only experience they have of running a pitch is what's been done previously," Woolley says. "It's self-perpetuating. The thing is, 10 years ago, most of the pitches were for agency of record or long-term relationships. Now, increasingly, a lot of it is project work or very small budgets. What they're not getting is that they're still using a hammer to fix a wrist watch."

There's also an emerging concern around payment terms. In Australia, payment terms have stretched from the typical 30 days, to 60 or even 90 — a shift Woolley attributes to broader economic pressures, including inflation, slowing growth and uncertainty driven by tariffs. While it's usually the business, not marketers themselves, setting these terms, the result is the same: agencies are waiting longer to get paid. This trend wasn't as evident in the Canadian data.

Still, the overall message is clear: Across borders, the biggest pain points are often the simplest ones to fix — better communication, timely feedback and respect for agencies' time and expertise.

"If marketers just get the basics right," says Woolley, "there'd already be a big improvement."

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