

# IPA and ISBA launch Pitch Positive Pledge to improve pitching behaviours

11 May 2022



- *Cross-industry pledge aims to tackle systemic pitching behaviour to drive better outcomes across the industry for its people, the planet and profit*
- *More than 70 companies have already pledged their commitment including Samsung, Boots, Virgin Media O2, Nationwide Building Society, Nestle, as well as PwC, AAR, Wunderman Thompson, BBH, VCCP, among others*

## Sign up to the Pledge

The IPA and ISBA have today launched their much-anticipated Pitch Positive Pledge, a joint initiative that seeks to improve the behaviours of agencies and advertisers around pitching for the benefit of its people, the planet and profit.

With almost 40% of the industry workforce reporting feeling stressed and anxious in the last twelve months,<sup>[1]</sup> the Pledge, supported by Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) and NABS, brings together the two trade associations, their members, procurement professionals and intermediaries, to focus on making the pitching process more intentional, accountable and responsible for both advertisers and agencies. In doing so, it aims to drive better outcomes including more transparency and better mental wellbeing, resulting in better quality work, fewer costs and less wastage.

Historically pitch guides have focused on the process and 'how to' of pitching and have lacked the consideration of both human and environmental costs. This initiative seeks to address the systemic pitching behaviours, providing a new perspective.

## The Pledge

The full pledge is located on [www.pitchpositivepledge.co.uk](http://www.pitchpositivepledge.co.uk) and details the core commitments agencies and clients must adhere to and outlines the various considerations they must take into account during the three stages of the pitch process – before, during and after. In summary, these comprise:

### • Be positive a pitch is required (before a pitch)

The advertiser will be positive a pitch is necessary and will provide a written statement clearly setting out why.

### • Run a positive pitch (during a pitch)

The advertiser will consider the implications of the requirements it asks the agency to fulfil during the pitch. Meanwhile, the agency will consider both the interest of their client and the wellbeing of their people throughout the process.

### • Provide a positive resolution (after a pitch)

Win or lose, the advertiser will inform the agency of the pitch outcome directly and provide feedback on their performance. Meanwhile for agencies, win or lose, they will accept the client's decision and provide feedback on how well their team handled the pitch and adhered to the Pledge.

At launch over 70 companies have already pledged their commitment including Samsung, Virgin Media O2, Nestle, Specsavers, British Gas and Nationwide Building Society, as well as PwC, AAR, Wunderman Thompson, The7Stars, BBH, VCCP and The Advertising Association, among others.

To help ensure its long-term success for the industry, the initiative has received strategic input from a number of leading advertisers including the CCS, Barclays, Boots and Direct Line Group; agencies: BBH, Mother, Wunderman Thompson and Drummond Central, as well as intermediaries and procurement. In addition, and in light of the Pledge's commitment to improving the mental health of the industry's workforce, the IPA and ISBA worked hand in hand with Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) and with the support of NABS.

## Creating long-term behaviour change

To measure the impact of the Pitch Positive Pledge, the IPA and ISBA will be commissioning an industry survey of agencies and clients to benchmark current pitching activity with questions addressing the areas of mental health, wastage, costs and effectiveness, which will be run again in a year's time to chart progress.



Pitch  
Positive  
Pledge

A joint initiative by



The initiative will report on completed pitches to showcase best practice, and client and agency commitment to the Pledge will also be incorporated into ongoing industry trade press reports.

Pitch Positive Pledge will be regularly reviewed by the IPA and ISBA and a progress update will be provided at the flagship cross-industry RENEW event in January 2023.

**Says IPA President and Vice Chairman & International CEO, VCCP, Julian Douglas:** "One of the very few positives that the coronavirus has delivered is an inflection point, a discontinuous moment to change things, and an opportunity to tackle the long standing challenges facing our industry. One of those challenges has been pitching, of which the negative impacts are so high. As we have seen from the latest industry figures, mental health issues have increased significantly among industry members. Now is the time to change and the feedback we've received is that people feel like they can. This change won't happen unless we all play our part, which is why I'm delighted to have such support and collaboration from the outset.

"The Pitch Positive Pledge isn't a marketing tool. It is a call for a change in behaviour across the industry. By signing up to the Pledge, agencies and clients are making a clear commitment to the positive mental health of their people. In tandem, we hope it will lead to better wealth for their businesses by cutting down on unnecessary waste, in terms of resources, time and energy. This is our chance to really make a difference for the benefit of our current industry employees and for future generations for whom we hope conditions will be fairer and even more enjoyable."

**Says Andrew Lowdon, Director of Agency Services, ISBA:** "Signing up to this Pledge provides clients, intermediaries, and agencies the opportunity to look afresh at their pitching behaviour. There were examples of poor pitching behaviours before the pandemic, but COVID-19 has changed the way we all work. There is a lot of good practice deployed but maintaining and spreading it further is required as we seek to value individuals' wellbeing, and recognise the importance of good mental health. The Pitch Positive Pledge doesn't seek to change the process by which pitches are run, it seeks to make the process more intentional and operate with greater consistency through better planning, preparation, and project management. There is nothing new or onerous in the pledge, just the behaviours employed throughout making a difference. It's about seeking advertisers and agencies alike to remind themselves or learn what good pitching should look like. For a multitude of reasons, there may be some who perhaps may not have lived up to these expectations previously, but now can refocus using this industry Pledge."

**Says Alain Duvaud, Group Marketing Director, Nestle UK&I.** "I am proud to be signing the Pitch Positive Pledge. Our relationship with our agency partners is very important and the pledge enables both sides to consider the wellbeing and environmental impacts of pitching behaviour. We hope our commitment to the pledge will lead to even better marketing outputs to support our much loved brands."

**Says Charlie Martyn, Global Client Development Director, Wunderman Thompson:** "Pitching at its best is brilliant. It brings amazing minds together, leads to business-changing ideas and helps our people grow. But at its worst, it can be hugely inefficient and costly. Particularly to our main asset: our people. The Pitch Positive Pledge is a great opportunity to set a new standard that lays the foundations for a healthy, fruitful and sustainable partnership. It's better for the work, better for our clients and above all, better for our people. We're thrilled to be committing to the Pledge from the outset.

**Added Duncan Wood, Managing Partner, Ingenuity:** "No one sets out to run a bad pitch, everyone involved does it with the best intentions of getting a good result. What's great about the Pitch Positive Pledge is that it encourages all sides to stop and think about their behaviour, before, during and after a pitch and adjust how they behave accordingly. This can only lead to happier people, less waste and a great output. That's something we are very happy to support."

Pitch Positive Pledge was initially discussed at RENEW in January this year. Following the cross-industry conference the IPA and ISBA ran a series of workshops with their members, partners and intermediaries to work through the full details and commitments of the Pitch Positive Pledge.

Find out more and sign up at [www.pitchpositivepledge.co.uk](http://www.pitchpositivepledge.co.uk) #PitchPositive

[1] All In census data 2021

The initiative has already received signatories from companies right across the industry

including:

**Agency signatories at launch:** Above+Beyond, ASG & Partners, Cogent, McCann Manchester, Republic of Media, St Luke's, The Beyond Collective, the7stars, Frontier, Total Media, Wunderman Thompson, Yonder Media, VCCP, Omnicom Media Group UK agencies including OMD UK, MG OMD, PHD UK, Hearts & Science, Drum, Fuse, OMG Unite; Starcom, Drummond Central, Forever Beta, Unite, Portas, PwC, Mother and Publicis Groupe UK agencies including BBH, Leo Burnett, Saatchi & Saatchi, Publicis-Poke, Starcom, Zenith, Spark Foundry, Digitas, Octopus Group and Prodigious.

**Intermediaries at launch:** AAR, Aperto Partnership, Creativebrief, Ebiquity, Hamilton Associates, Ingenuity, MediaSense, PWC, Steve Kershaw Limited, TrinityP3.

**Advertisers at launch:** Boots, Barclays, British Gas, DiDi, first direct, Nationwide Building Society, NatWest, Nestlé, Samsung, Santander, Specsavers, Tui, Virgin Media O2 and White Claw.

**The initiative was supported by:** Advertising Association, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), NABS.

**The initiative received contributions from the below companies among others:** CCS, Barclays, Boots, BBH, Direct Line Group, Drummond Central, Mother and Wunderman Thompson.



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