Trends and Insight

TrinityP3 Exposes Hidden Costs of 'Free' Pitch Intermediaries in Wake-up Call to UK Marketers

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Trinity P3
Consultants
London, UK

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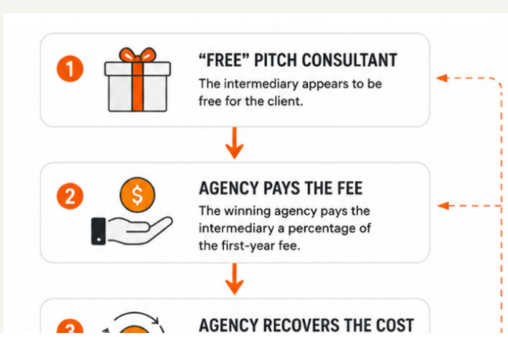
TrinityP3 report serves stark warning to marketers on the traps and risk inherent within the 'free' pitch consultancy

Marketers and procurement specialists are being reminded of the multitude of risks, including legal, corporate and governance, that come when brands use agency-funded pitch models to select their advertising partners.

Global marketing management consultancy TrinityP3 has released a hard-hitting white paper challenging the ethics, transparency, and effectiveness of agency-funded pitch intermediaries. Backed by new market research, the report, 'The Hidden Cost of 'free' serves a stark warning to marketers and procurement professionals that the 'free' pitch consultant is a dangerous illusion that actively restricts talent and compromises objectivity.



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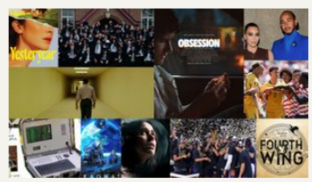

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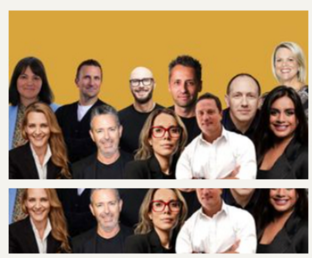

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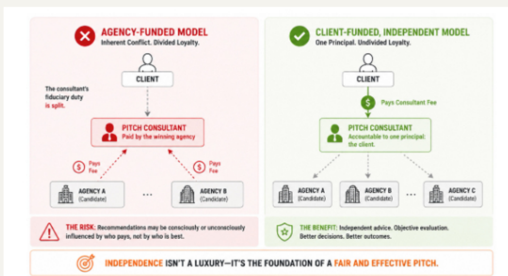
The report arrives at a critical time for the UK advertising industry, particularly in London, where a significant number of pitch intermediaries regularly operate on a "pay-to-play" model. In this setup, the intermediary offers their tender management services to the brand for free, instead extracting a commission - often up to 15% of the first year's revenue - from the winning agency, or requiring agencies to pay subscription fees to be included on pitch rosters.

TrinityP3's latest research reveals a market that fundamentally rejects these opaque practices, with 95% of respondents expressing deep concern that this funding model structurally excludes independent, start-up, and highly specialised agencies that simply cannot afford the intermediary's toll. Furthermore, 86% stated that an agency-funded model severely undermines their confidence in the objectivity of the final agency recommendation.



Industry Leaders Demand a Return to Transparency

Jeremy Taylor, managing director of TrinityP3 UK, commented on the findings, "The London market has long been hindered by opaque 'pay-to-play' intermediary models, but our research shows the tide is finally turning. Marketers and procurement teams are waking up to the fact that when agencies are forced to surrender up to 15% of their first-year fees just to win the business, those costs are inevitably passed back to the client through hidden markups, rate card inflation, or junior staffing. It creates an entirely uneven playing field that penalises brilliant independent agencies and deprives clients of seeing the best talent the UK has to offer. True independent advice is never free; if you want a fair, rigorous, and transparent pitch, the brand must fund it."

Darren Woolley, global CEO of TrinityP3, added, "A consultant cannot serve two masters. If an intermediary's financial success is directly tied to extracting a fee from the supplier rather than the buyer, their fiduciary duty is inherently broken. Would you trust a financial auditor who is paid a commission by the company they are auditing? Of course not. So why do we accept this in marketing procurement? The data from our latest white paper is unequivocal: the industry expects a zero-percent agency contribution model. It is time for marketers to take ownership of their selection processes and put an end to the hidden tax of the 'free' pitch consultant."

Key Findings from the Report Include:

● Zero Tolerance for Agency Fees: 72% of poll respondents and 57% of survey respondents stated the appropriate fee to pay an intermediary from a first-year agency fee is 0%.

● Objectivity at Risk: 86% of survey respondents agreed that an agency-funded model negatively influences their confidence in the consultant's objectivity.

● A Call for Full Disclosure: 72% of respondents demanded that if these fees exist, they must be declared on the agency fee submission as a fully itemised cost to the client.

Research Methodology

To gauge current market sentiment regarding intermediary remuneration models, TrinityP3 conducted quantitative and qualitative research utilising two distinct data collection methods:

1. Direct Industry Polling: A targeted LinkedIn poll capturing immediate market consensus on appropriate fee structures (n=50).

2. Comprehensive Surveying: An in-depth Survey Monkey questionnaire distributed to a panel of marketing, procurement, and agency professionals (n=44).

The research tested awareness levels of various funding models and measured sentiment on how these models impact agency participation, process integrity, and financial transparency. The data was aggregated to provide a holistic view of the friction points between brands, agencies, and intermediary practices.

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