

People

Darren Woolley: 'Agencies Need to Get Their Swagger Back'

trinity P3 Consultants London, UK

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LBB's Casey Martin speaks to the Trinity P3 founder on finding the right agencies, rather than the 'best' ones



Darren Woolley was originally a laboratory scientist at The Royal Children's Hospital. In 1987, he made the decision to move away from STEM and took a flying leap into the creativity industry.

Over the course of his career in advertising, he spent 15 years as a copywriter and creative director. During this time, he found his passion in developing brand and business communication strategies. These skills that he learnt would prove to be beneficial in the future.

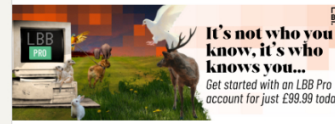
Today, Darren is better known as the pitch doctor and founder of leading global marketing consultancy, TrinityP3. LBB's Casey Martin sat down with Darren to discuss Trinity P3, what it takes to keep up to date with the ever changing industry and how LBB can benefit adland as a whole.

LBB> Can you tell me a little bit about Trinity P3; what's the background to the business, and what is the problem you are trying to solve?

Darren> The TrinityP3 business commenced in 2000 when I left my CD role at JWT Melbourne to set up an independent advisory or consultancy for marketing, media and advertising. Back then I saw there was a role for an independent expert advisor to help marketers and their agencies navigate what was already becoming a more complex and nuanced media and marketing landscape. With time the level of complexity and the associated challenges have only increased and our role has evolved. In the early days, it was production consulting and pitch management.

Today we are engaged in advising our clients, procurement teams and agencies on everything from ways of unlocking value in their media supply chain, to optimising technology across their suppliers and developing innovative and bespoke marketing and roster structured, both in-house and outsourced. Of course, production and pitch consulting is part of the mix and something we are known for, but it is by no means the only thing we do today.

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LBB> You work hard to create successful relationships between brands and agencies. What is one piece of advice you would give to new business and growth people when looking for opportunities?

Darren> The best and most enduring advice I was given and happy to share is to never forget that we are a commercial industry. What is meant by that is we are a function of commerce and industry, and our role is to change behaviour and perception. It is a word that has fallen out of fashion and favour, but was known as propaganda. Another word like that is persuasion. The point is that strategy, creativity, insights, technology, media, are all simply tools we use to achieve an outcome for the business.

The advice is to grow your business, and understand the value you bring to your client's business. That means understanding their business and looking for the opportunities you provide to assist them in achieving their objectives. At the end of the day, everything else is just technique.

LBB> How do you see the best way to keep up to date with what's going on in the industry, and why is that important for ambitious agencies?

Darren> In the advertising, media and marketing industry, read widely, listen extensively and ask relevant questions. There are many sources of information. Websites, newsletters, podcasts, webinars, conferences, trade media and more. The important thing is to find the ones that are valuable to you and commit to it. This also applies to the wider industry. Make sure you are reading and listening to the sources of information your clients rely on, from the brand manager up to the board chair.

Know their business category as well as they do. This is essential, because most marketers are not just looking for the right agency, they are looking for the right agency that gets them and their business and category. Investing time and resources is essential as it puts you ahead of the rest of the agencies.

LBB> You are encouraging agencies who register with TrinityP3 to offer their LBB profiles as part of the registration process. What is it about a resource like LBB and the Creative Library that helps you assess suitability for the pitch process?

Darren> In 2004 when we started managing pitches, agencies would send us beautiful bound documents, U-matic tapes, DVDs and more to showcase their credentials of work. I would place this in a room in the office and once every six months find myself clearing it out. Such a waste. So we built a database where the agencies could register and provide the essential and confidential information we needed to consider each agency for a pitch. The TrinityP3 Agency Register. It is free and the agency can manage their profile in a secure environment. But today with literally thousands of agencies on the database and limited space for the latest work we needed a solution.

LBB and the Creative Library is the best solution we could find. Not just for the technology, but for the fantastic design of the interface and the high level of engagement of both agencies and clients alike. This offers the perfect collaboration. Agencies can curate their profile on LBB and the Creative library and share that with us on the TrinityP3 Agency Register. In the same way as we do not ask for profiles and bios of key staff, we simply ask the agency to share their LinkedIn profile links.

LBB> What are you looking for in the profiles, and how can agencies maximise their visibility and credentials?

Darren> When assessing agencies for adding to the consideration list, we look to the brief from the client. A brief that we develop with them to get a clear and detailed view of what success would look like for them in selecting the right agency. This is more than just capabilities, key personnel, experience and clients – but is a combination of all of these. And being able to view the work that the agency feels the most proud of gives us an invaluable insight into how this comes together in the work they showcase.

So, while it is not any one thing, it is definitely a combination of all of these. And there is no one size or approach that suits all clients. Each client has their own specific needs, wants and desires. Our role is to help them find the right agency, not necessarily what everyone thinks

is the best agency.

LBB> Finally, is there anything else you would like LBB to know?

Darren> What I would say is that agencies need to get their swagger back. That does not mean arrogant self confidence. It means reassuring confidence that when the agency walks into the room, there is no need to explain what you do and why you do it and who you do it for. But you walk in and take your place and get down to the business of winning the clients trust and persuading them that you are the team they need.

Too often we see agencies spend too much time explaining what you do and why you do it and who you do it for, and in the process sound like every other agency, only to wonder why you get treated as a commodity. If an agency walks in and says they are a creative agency, with data in their DNA and a focus on results, that is table stakes. You don't get to be in the room if you are not creative, not able to use data and research and not focused on making a measurable difference. Chemistry sessions, credentials presentations and the like are not a 'getting to know you' session. They are an opportunity to win business. If agencies want to win business, then stop explaining what you do and why you do it and who you do it for, and just get down to the business.

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