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# “There is a Significant Power Imbalance Between Marketer and Prospective Agency”

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Lydia Feely, general manager at Trinity P3 discusses “The State of the Pitch” with LBB’s Casey Martin



*The pitching process has been a topic of discussion within the industry for some time now and yet, nothing has changed for the better.*

*Ideas are bigger, but budgets are smaller. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on a project before it gains the client’s approval, and resources are used only to be wasted.*

*LBB’s Casey Martin spoke to Lydia Feely at Trinity P3 on what ‘The State of the Pitch’ means for the industry, how it will improve conversation and what the possible next steps are.*

**LBB> In your opinion, where does the problem lie? With agencies being complacent with the current pitch process, or with the marketers who want more but aren’t willing to raise budgets?**

**Lydia>** The problem is that pitching, and the pitch process, has become so prosaic that little time has been invested in improving it beyond the numerous complaints from agencies.

As an industry we should be providing more tools and training to better equip marketers and procurement teams when they’re running a pitch. Because while the pitch process has not fundamentally changed in decades, the complexity of the requirements and the market demands it evolves and changes.

We see clients head into a pitch process thinking it will be relatively simple but it’s complex and getting it wrong can cost millions of dollars in lost opportunities.

**LBB> “Boiling the ocean in their search for the right agency” is an interesting way of putting things into perspective. What advice would you offer marketers who are entering the pitch process with agencies?**

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**Lydia**> Marketers and procurement teams quickly fall into a rut of undertaking a pitch without the time and thinking if the process is fit for purpose. Pitching requires marketers to be particularly deliberate in their considerations as to why they are pitching and what success would look like at the end.

Then make sure that the agreed process is designed to deliver a successful outcome, not just for the marketers, but for all the agencies involved. This means not just doing the same pitch process repeatedly hoping for a better outcome, but embracing ways of pitching that are better suited to the desired outcome.

### **LBB> Should the Australian industry strive to have a 'Pitch Positive Pledge' like the UK, if so what should it look like and how will it benefit the industry as a whole?**

**Lydia**> The Pitch Positive Pledge, which TrinityP3 is a founding signatory, is an excellent initiative and provides guidelines for marketers and procurement when they go to market. For the Australian market, there appears to be a need to set these and similar expectations on those initiating and managing pitches to ensure they get the basics right by engaging agencies in a respectful, professionally run, transparent, and fair process that minimises harm to those involved.

### **LBB> Talk around the pitch process has been on the mind of agencies for some years now. Why do you think the conversation hasn't changed, despite the constant discussion?**

**Lydia**> The pitch discussion is not advancing change for several reasons. The first being there have been plenty of opinions but little quantifiable data to create an informed foundation for the conversation.

The second is there is a significant power imbalance between the marketer and the prospective agency which means that while there are visible impacts on the agency for poorly managed pitches, they are not able to influence a change.

The impact for marketers of poorly managed pitches is often unseen and therefore easily overlooked. But falling satisfaction with agencies and high turnover of relationships is a symptom of a flawed pitch process that costs marketers dearly.

### **LBB> With an overall score of 3.13 out of 5 and the statement that there is room for improvement, what does this improvement look like to you?**

**Lydia**> 3.13 is an incredibly average score and one that no one involved in pitching should be happy or comfortable seeing. The data shows there are two clear opportunities for improvement. The first is to stop believing that one pitch process suits all pitches.

We must stop thinking of pitches as if it is a universal process. In fact, there are many ways that meet all the needs of due diligence and governance and yet are best suited to the many and varied types of pitches.

We also need to bring a level of professional courtesy and respect to the pitch process and treat agencies from the get-go the way we wish to work together going forward. This means being open in communications and transparency and work to define the successful outcome with the right fit agency.

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