

Trends and Insight

Number of Pitches Dragging For 6-12 Months Doubles: TrinityP3 State of the Pitch

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CEO Darren Woolley told LBB's Lilya Murray marketer-led pitches were slowest in Australia, and scored worse than procurement and finance-led processes. But agencies' pitch satisfaction has risen slightly to 3.22 out of 5



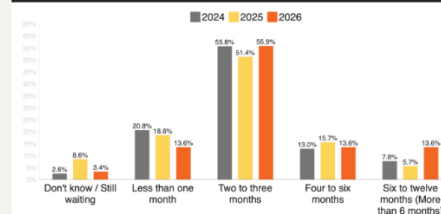
TrinityP3's 2026 'State of the Pitch' report shows the number of Australian pitches taking six to twelve months has doubled in the past year, from 5.7% to 13.6% of all pitches. Telecommunications is one of the worst categories for protracted processes.

CEO Darren Woolley told LBB this could be attributed to marketers who want to run their own pitches.

"This is doing a tender process on top of what is already a full-time job. [Marketers] will start it with the best intention, only to get bogged down and time poor as the process continues," he explained.

"Unfortunately for the agencies, they go into it with an expectation that this is a high priority because there's the chance of winning business, only to find out that the market has really lost interest by the time they get to the end of the process."

Q24. How long did the pitch process take, from being invited to participate to being appointed in months?



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Longer pitches do exist, Darren said, "but if you tell the agency upfront it's longer, then they can make a decision. I think it's where promises are made to say, 'Oh yes, this one will take two or three months' and [it] ends up taking four to six months – that's where there's pain."

The annual report surveyed agencies for their views on 59 pitches, over six months, spanning 24 categories, with fees ranging from AUD\$50,000-\$10 million. This sample of half the pitches run across AUNZ during that period found agencies' pitch satisfaction score was 3.22 out of 5 on average (up from 2.99 from last year). Mostly, national pitches were surveyed across 24 categories. 76.3% of agencies were not paid to pitch.

Q28. Beyond the outcome, how would you rate the pitch process with 5 stars being world-class and one being the world's worst?

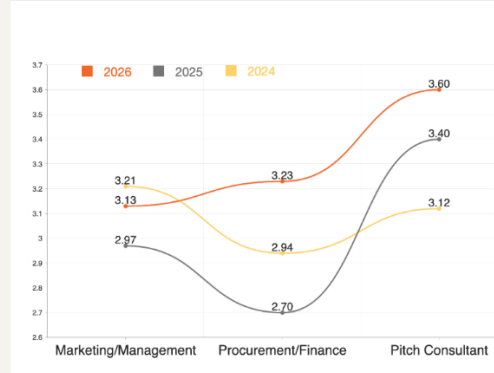


Darren said there was an increase in four star ratings, but virtually no agencies awarded a pitch process five stars.

"The problem is that, three years into the report, there are still too many marketers [or] their procurement teams who are scoring a D or even an F when it comes to how they run a pitch."

For the first time, the report also isolated pitches based on category, and who managed the process: pitch consultant, marketer, or procurement and finance teams. The latter managed just 17% of the pitches surveyed (up 15% year-on-year) – but ran the process better than marketers.

Q10. Who primarily led or managed the pitch process? vs Pitch Score



Procurement and finance also ran the fastest pitches, with just 13% of their pitches extending beyond three months. 40% of consultant-led processes took four to six months, which TrinityP3 suggested reflects the rigour and governance of such a process. Marketer-led pitches were the most likely to result in timeline delays.

Darren noted the data could be affected by a sampling issue – the last report surveyed 70 pitches, while this year studied 59 – but there was an increase in the state-based pitches represented.

"It's almost like the national pitches are usually run by companies that are big enough to be able to resource the pitch process, whereas the state-based ones are probably too small to be able to take on the process of running a pitch. And so it's inclined to take longer."

He also argued the research doesn't support the idea pitching isn't worth it. "Many people in the industry say 'ditch the pitch', or 'we shouldn't pitch'. The fact is that if two-thirds of them are doing okay, then there's still a reason to pitch."

What needs to be addressed, he said, is getting "the one-third that are run either by marketers or procurement to embrace some guidelines so they also run them well."

Darren suggested there should be a range of guidelines, beyond just

the estimated length of the process. He suggested expectations, requirements, and scope all be communicated clearly to agencies. Only 20.8% of marketers provided “very clear” scopes; 33.3% of marketing-led and 22.7% of procurement-led pitches provided “not clear”, or insufficient, scopes, expecting agencies to guess at budgets and deliverables.

He also cited “anecdotal conversations” with agencies who believed they were going to win a major contract, “only to find out at the end that it was a project or that they were being added to a panel that could get work down the track.

“These are clear examples where brands and marketers were not clearly articulating and sharing with the agencies upfront what the size of the price or the processes [were].”

Charities, hardware brands, and utilities, were among the categories most guilty of ghosting agencies – 27% reported receiving no feedback at all.

In one anonymous piece of feedback, one agency recalled not hearing about an outcome for weeks, with all IP remaining with the client and its international agency (almost 30% of pitches required agencies to assign IP as part of the process).

“Overall abuse of goodwill and positive partnership intent,” they said. “Pitching descending into a disgrace and abuse of power. Too many agencies willing to do unprofitable business now out of desperation and client pressure.”

Darren said of the lack of transparency and feedback, “One of the things that most annoys [them] is being invited to pitch; going through a process that can take two, three, or more months; and then be completely ghosted at the end of it.

“You would think a charity of all the categories would be the one most aware of the need to treat people with respect. I think a lot of them are under-resourced, and so to go to tender, to choose an agency ... they just literally run out resources to do what needs to be done.”

Even worse, Darren continued, was the fact businesses weren’t aware that the more agencies they invite, the more they have to say no to.

“If you invite six agencies, there’s going to be five losers, and you’ve got to be willing to have the conversation as to why they weren’t chosen.”

Another agency recalled, “We were advised we weren’t successful via a letter. No invitation to learn more about why we weren’t successful and still no sign of an opportunity to discuss it despite it being common knowledge who has been appointed. There was also a complete lack of qualitative assessment criteria for the creative component. This lack of transparency is the trade-off for a commercially lucrative opportunity in what feels like a shrinking market.”

Majority of pitches had payment terms of less than 60 days attached, but categories such as healthcare products, beauty and pharmaceuticals, home hardware and building supplies, and utilities enforced payment cycles up to 120 days.

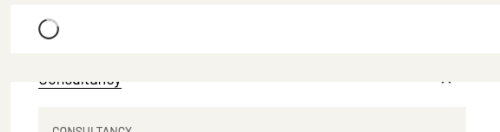
This is the third annual Australian State of the Pitch report from the pitch consultancy. The survey is in its second year in the US and Canada, and is also set to be rolled out in Germany and APAC later this year.

Darren ultimately recommended the local industry follow in the footsteps of the UK to agree upon, and enforce, stronger guidelines.

“As an industry, we can and should work together to collaborate on a better process that equips marketers and their teams better. If you look at something like the UK’s Pitch Positive Pledge, this is a clear example of what can be done to help achieve better outcomes which serves both marketers and their agencies.”

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