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## State of the pitch: 'No one's trying to get it wrong' but marketers still are

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Australia's pitch process may be improving, but agencies say the fundamentals remain broken and increasingly, marketers themselves are part of the problem.

New data from TrinityP3's third annual State of the Pitch report shows agencies rated pitch processes at an average of 3.22 out of 5, up from 2.99 last year - a marginal lift that still leaves the industry "scraping a C".

The findings are based on 59 pitches across Australia, spanning 24 industry categories and covering agency engagements valued from \$50,000 to more than \$10 million.

But beneath the surface, many of the industry's most persistent problems remain firmly in place. More than 76% of pitches offered no compensation to participating agencies, while some 66% still required speculative creative or media work as part of the process.

At the same time, nearly one in three pitches required agencies to assign intellectual property, raising ongoing concerns about how ideas are used and protected.

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Timelines continue to stretch, with more than a quarter of pitches now running beyond four months, and some extending up to a year.

Communication continues to break down and more than a quarter of agencies also reported receiving no feedback at all after pitching.

### Marketers under pressure, not malice

According to TrinityP3 global CEO Darren Woolley, a growing part of the problem is who is actually running the pitch process.

He said more marketers are choosing (and in some cases forced) to manage pitches internally, without fully appreciating the workload involved.

"No one is deliberately trying to run a bad pitch," he said. "But marketing is already a full-time job. When you layer a pitch on top of that, it requires hundreds of hours of additional work."

Woolley said the shift toward marketers running their own pitches is a key factor behind the breakdown.

**"Marketing today is relentless, it's campaign after campaign, always on. There is no quiet period to run a pitch.**

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They go into it thinking they can manage it, and then realise they simply don't have the time.

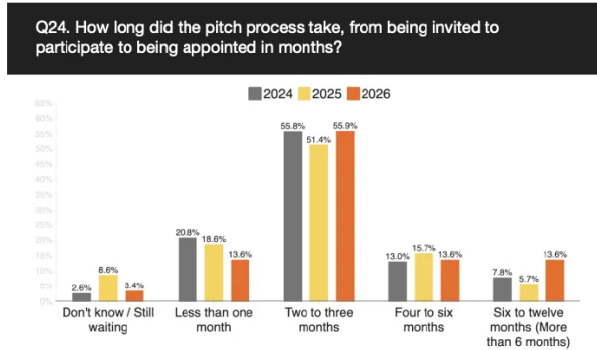
That pressure is particularly acute in sectors such as telecommunications, financial services and utilities, where the report found pitch processes consistently scoring lower.

"These are service-based industries under constant pressure. They don't have the downtime, and that shows up in how pitches are run," Woolley said.

### A "quagmire of stress"

The pitch process itself is also becoming more complicated. Where pitches were once centred on creative and media, they now span social, technology, data, compliance and in-house integration.

"There are so many elements now, social, tech, media, creative. You layer that onto an already labour-intensive process and it becomes a quagmire of stress," Woolley said.



The report reflects this growing complexity, with clients increasingly testing multiple capabilities within a single pitch process.

At the same time, in-housing is adding another layer of difficulty, forcing brands to assess how external agencies fit alongside internal teams.

### The spec work problem isn't going away

Despite years of criticism, speculative creative work remains embedded in the process.

Woolley said the industry is still holding onto an outdated model.

"The whole idea of speculative creative work comes from a different era. We don't live in that world anymore," he said.

"Clients don't need to see new work created for free to assess capability. They can look at what agencies have already done."

He likened the process to other professional services.

"You don't go to an architect and ask them to design a building for free to prove they can do it. You look at their past work."

### Smaller clients, bigger demands

One of the more concerning shifts is the rise of smaller advertisers running full-scale pitch processes.

"There are clients with \$100,000 or \$200,000 budgets putting agencies through full creative pitches," Woolley said.

"That might make sense if you're awarding a \$10 million account. It doesn't make sense at that level."

He argues that mismatch is a key reason agencies are pushing back.

**"If you've got a big prize, you can justify a more intensive process. If you've got a smaller budget, you need a light-touch pitch."**

While industry bodies often promote standardised approaches, Woolley said there is no one-size-fits-all model.

"There is no ideal pitch process," he said. "There are different pitch processes for different clients."

Instead, he said brands need to align their approach with both their budget and their requirements.

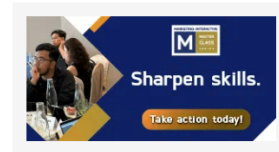
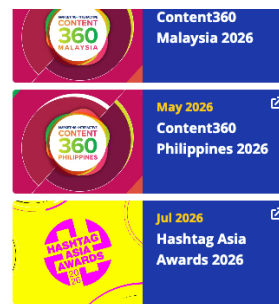
"If you've got a big spend, then yes, you need due diligence. But if you don't, don't put the onus on agencies to do speculative work. Look at case studies, past performance, references."

### Same problems, same sectors

For the first time, the report breaks down performance by sector, revealing where issues are most persistent.

Telecommunications, tourism and education were identified as some of the worst-performing sectors when it comes to protracted timelines.

Meanwhile, industries including utilities, food and beverage and home hardware were flagged for poor communication practices, particularly around feedback and transparency.



Banking and financial services, along with utilities, are also driving a surge in pitch activity, reflecting broader consolidation and strategic realignment across heavily regulated sectors.

A structural issue, not a local one

As the report expands globally across markets including the US, Canada and Europe, TrinityP3 is increasingly positioning pitching as a systemic issue rather than a local one.

“The complaints are perennial,” Woolley said. “But there are still too many marketers and procurement teams scoring a D or an F when it comes to how they run a pitch.”

For agencies, however, the day-to-day reality remains unchanged: high-cost processes, inconsistent standards and an industry still grappling with how to balance rigour with respect.

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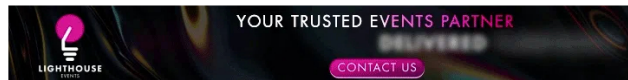
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