



FEATURES

## Agencies complicit in 'abusive' pitch culture, warns TrinityP3

ELEANOR DICKINSON  
May 6, 2026 10:23



Darren Woolley

"Abusive" pitching practices are becoming normalised across Australia's advertising industry and agencies are partly responsible for letting it happen, according to TrinityP3 CEO Darren Woolley.

The consultancy's latest *State of the Pitch* report reveals a rise in delayed and poorly managed pitches, outcome-less processes, and the collapse of 30-day payment terms, with one global client even requesting a full year before agencies can invoice.

While acknowledging poor practices across the industry, Woolley said agencies need to speak up if they feel mistreated.

"Agencies need to take more responsibility for participation because ultimately it is their business," he told Mumbrella.

"And so if they allow themselves to be, for want of a better word, abused in this way, they need to take responsibility for it."

Noting that the most severe issues are confined to a minority of brands, Woolley said there should be increasing public scrutiny of poor behaviour.

"We will be heading towards people starting to call out this bad behaviour a lot more publicly because it is a minority," he said.

"It calls the whole marketing industry and profession into disrepute when there is a group—significant, but not the majority—of marketers actually behaving badly."

### A red flag

Released today, TrinityP3's third annual *State of the Pitch* [report](#) surveyed agencies involved in 56 pitches between July and December 2025.

Overall satisfaction with the pitch process improved slightly, rising to 3.22 out of five from 2.99 the previous year.

However, key issues worsened, with a growing minority of large organisations pushing payment terms out to 90-120 days, effectively treating agencies as a "bank".

Pharmaceuticals and utilities were the worst offenders.

This adds pressure not only to agencies' cash flow, but, according to Darren Woolley, is "a very clear flag" that some clients are not interested in working with independent agencies.

"They only want the big holding companies, and that's a bit of cutting off your nose to spite your face, because the indie market is dynamic, growing, and offering some terrific work," Woolley added.



ADVERTISEMENT



## 'Still waiting'

While ghosting, the practice of going silent on all communications, is more commonly associated with modern dating culture, it is increasingly creeping into the pitch process.

Out of the 56 pitches assessed by TrinityP3, a fifth were flagged as "no outcome" or "still waiting".

One agency quoted anonymously in the report said the pitch ended without any outcome, weeks after the scheduled appointment.

"All IP was given to the client and their overseas agency to understand the Australian market," the agency said, describing it as "an overall abuse of goodwill and positive partnership intent."

"Pitching is descending into a disgrace and an abuse of power. Too many agencies are now willing to do unprofitable business out of desperation and client pressure."

Meanwhile, Woolley cited another case in which an agency was ghosted and only discovered the outcome three months later via the trade press.

"So in many cases, from the agency's perspective, the pitch is over, but they never receive formal closure," he said.

One key reason for this is that overworked and under-resourced marketing teams may be calling pitches without fully appreciating the time and resources required, both from their side and from agencies.

Many are also simply reverting to incumbents without formally concluding the process.

"They go to market, decide there's nothing better than their incumbent, and just revert back—without formally closing it out," Woolley explained.

"That can work if the pitch hasn't gone public, but often it leaves the industry waiting for an outcome that never comes."

## Just a commodity

Curiously, and in contrast to its reputation as the "villain" in agency pitches, processes led by procurement teams rather than marketers actually scored higher among participants.

Procurement teams, organisational units focused on supplier management tend to deliver more structured processes, Woolley said,

However, he said: "They're often less inclined to encourage interaction between marketing and agencies, which agencies hate."

He added that some procurement approaches still treat agency selection as a commodity transaction rather than a relational decision.

"Some procurement people still think of managing a tender as if you are buying an object, whereas in actual fact, you're choosing a relationship."

The report also criticised procurement teams for failing to properly communicate pitch processes, often treating agency notification as an afterthought.

"It is a severe breach of professional respect to leave an agency hanging after they have invested heavily in a response," the report said.

## RELATED CONTENT



### FEATURES

**Top indies:  
Australian  
independent medi...**



### NEWS

**TrinityP3 sets up  
subscription model  
for its 18-year...**

Eleanor Dickinson

TOPICS [DARREN WOOLLEY](#) [STATE OF THE PITCH](#) [TRINITYP3](#)

## 1 COMMENTS

[ADD COMMENT](#)


**Totally Pitched Out** 6 May 26

When I read this headline, I thought it was going to be about how abusive it is within an agency when a pitch is on. The demand on staff is outrageous; 20 hour days, weekends, even demanding public holiday work. I've been told by CEO's to "Tell them they have to work, it's not a question, it's a requirement of working here".

 **Reply**  
User ID not verified.

## Have your say

Login with:

 Continue with **LinkedIn**

### Or comment anonymously

Your comment will be marked as unverified

Name ...

Comment ...

**SUBMIT COMMENT**

### LATEST



Dentsu Creative on notice as the Iconic calls pitch



Capital Gains whack: Spot on for real estate, crippling for start ups



'Baleful bad-boy bots': News Corp news takes a hit as 'woo or sue' campaign continues



Agencies push Video Futures Collective to simplify buying and unify data



Wesley Hawes leaves 72andSunny Sydney after 17 months

**EVENTS** **FEATURES**

