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by **CALUM JASPAN**

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Last year the MFA brought out its best practices for media pitching, endorsed by the AANA following on from the IPA in the UK launching the Positive Pitch Pledge.

"Are those being used?" says Publicis boss Michael Rebello on this week's Mumbrellacast. "Probably very few and far between, if you were to ask the pitches we've been in."

"Have they followed the MFA best practice pitch guidelines? No, in short. Some have probably referred to them."

In a **Mumbrellacast panel discussion earlier this year**, IAG's Zara Curtis, TrinityP3's Darren Woolley and Thinkerbell's Katie Dally spoke about why pitching should be your last solution, and called for more transparency.

Asked if he thought some pitches could be on their way to being decided before they even begin, Rebello says he's not necessarily sure that is the case.

"I think most clients if they want to work with an agency, they'll just go and engage them, or if they want to retain their agency, they'll just retain them."

"What I think a lot of the commentary forgets, is that it's a lot of work on a client to run a pitch process, on their time, on top of their day job. And engaging a consultant, even if they have a consultant, it's still a lot of time on a client's side as well, and cost to them when they could be out there driving new customers into their business."

No pitch is the same, he says, and that to put all pitches under one generalisation is a "bit of a mistake".

"But there are certainly some pitches that are run better than others without a doubt. That doesn't necessarily mean all the big ones are run better and all the small ones aren't. It's not even about size, it's just about what the intent is. What is the criteria? Why are you going to pitch?"

"I think one of the things that we have noticed is when there's an intermediary or a consultant involved, there's a lot more transparency. The process is more clearly defined, there are criteria, there's feedback, and there's certainly a level of governance there. That's not to say that it's the only way to achieve that, but there is certainly some new consistency in pitching."



Rebelo: 'Sometimes we're our own worst enemy as an industry.'

What is the solution?

Rebelo sits on the board of the MFA and the Ad Council, the only person to be present on both. He says this has been an issue that has been looked at on an industry level, but "we haven't solved it yet".

"Sometimes we're our own worst enemy as an industry."

"Sometimes agencies can exacerbate the problem because a principle is only a principle until it costs you something, and there are some agencies that are willing to do whatever it takes to be involved in a pitch and to win a pitch. And that hurts all of us, right?"

"We are a professional services industry and sometimes I think we can forget that. We've got to make sure that if we are to be taken seriously, we operate with a code of conduct that even if it's to our disadvantage, we follow that."

Across the rest of the conversation, Rebelo talks about the "recalibration" the industry's talent market could be set for in 2023.

"Zenith is forecasting a 3% growth in investment in media, which is down from this year. So we're going to start to see a slowing, and you've already seen some organisations get ahead of that and start to make some talent restructuring plans already.

"So I definitely think there is some room there for recalibration, and I do think that what's happened this year will certainly slow down into 2023, and I think it's, it's necessary because it's unsustainable.

"The fact is that most businesses in media and creativity, the largest part of their cost base is talent because talent is what we do. They bring the ideas, they bring the strategies, they bring the thinking, and they bring the execution, and we've seen pretty radical wage growth, and salary inflation this year.

"But the issue has been that our pricing hasn't been able to keep up. It's very hard to renegotiate a contract midterm on a rate card that's based fundamentally on salary costs. We haven't been able to keep up with that.

"That isn't a sustainable model, so I think next year, given the economic headwinds, there's going to be a slowing down of that. I'm still pretty enthusiastic and confident about 2023 from a group point of view, but I do think these are some of the things that we'll start to see play up."

To hear the team's biggest stories of 2022, and the full interview with Michael Rebelo, listen to the Mumbrellacast below, or on your favourite podcast platform.



Episode Breakdown

- The biggest stories in media and marketing in 2023 (02:02)
- Interview with Michael Rebelo (14:58)

This article was updated after publish.

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