

NEWS

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## Pitch perfect: 'It is the worst possible way of actually reviewing your current agency'

March 4, 2022 9:51  
by [CALUM JASPER](#)



"The way the industry approaches the pitch process, they think it's a panacea to solve problems," said [Trinity P3 global CEO, Darren Woolley](#) on yesterday's Mumbrellacast. "It's not. It has one function and one function only: select an agency."

Woolley was joined on the [Mumbrellacast Special](#) by IAG's director of content and customer engagement, [Zara Curtis](#) and Thinkerbell GM, [Katie Dally](#), to debate whether the current processes are fit for purpose.



Global CEO and founder of Trinity P3, Darren Woolley

"Procurement has done particular harm when they start saying things like 'at the end of every contract, we have to go to market', because pitching is great for selecting a new agency, but it is the worst possible way of actually reviewing your current agency, if they're already performing well."

Woolley continued that the numbers show that the incumbent only has a "one in four chance" of winning a pitch.

"There's a lot of reasons for that, one of them being that the pitch process is flawed at reviewing performance."





Dally: 'We shouldn't default to divorce'

Dally said that the default position should not be divorce. "There's marriage counseling there for a reason, the average tenures of relationships now tend to two to three years. Back in the mad men days, it was more like ten plus and then some.

"Let's be less promiscuous and be more willing to kind of sow into the relationship side of things."

Woolley joked: "Imagine going home to your partner and saying, it's been a great seven years, but I'm going to sleep around with a few people for three or four months, and then come back to you and decide whether I'm going to stick with you for another seven years. It's exactly the same proposition."

Curtis suggested there is a problem with the word pitch, "because it means sales and selling". Over the course of the discussion, she also agreed with both Woolley and Dally that there needs to be more transparency from marketers upfront before the pitch is called.

"If you're actually looking for the quality of work and the assessment that you're talking about Darren and Katie, then it's less about the sell and the sizzle and more about when the rubber hits the road. Pitching is about selling and winning and that's addictive as well for some agencies, but really for all of us, maybe it's about looking at what that actually means and being able to say no, it's going to work out for everyone in the long run."



Woolley argued that the pitch has become a go-to solution for marketers, "they think it's a panacea to solve problems".

"It's not. It has one function and one function only: select an agency. It's got nothing to do with performance or anything else."

Earlier this week, **The Ouch Factor Survey returned for a second year**, calling for submissions from Australian agency leaders and marketers about their pitching experiences, with the info to be used to calculate the hidden cost of pitching for both sides.

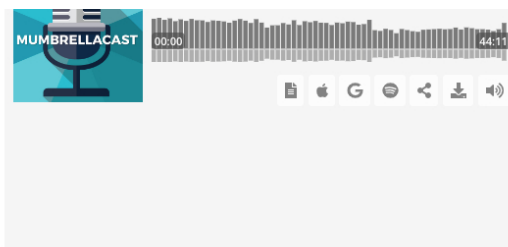
Tony Hale, CEO of the Advertising Council of Australia in its release that "pitching is important for agencies but it is often not fit for purpose. In order to address the inefficiencies that all parties bear, we must quantify the cost and impact of pitching."

*So, is there a solution? Listen to the full discussion below to find out. You can find previous episodes [here](#), and don't forget to subscribe on your podcasting platform.*

*And let us know in the comments what you think. Does the current state of pitching need to change?*



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#### Calum Jaspan

Calum Jaspan is News Editor at Mumbrella, based in Melbourne. He is also the producer and host of the Mumbrellacast.



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Kylie Chain 7 Mar 22

Agree that pitching is not the way to review performance for an incumbent agency, however there is some validity to re-testing the market on expiry of a contract particularly when all Government agencies are required to do this by law. There are Procurement professionals in Government who disagree with this approach for certain categories, however there is no nuance by category in the legislation unfortunately. It is also not unheard of (in fact quite common I would argue) that an organisation's marketing team or new CMO choose to go to pitch rather address performance issues or changes in strategy with their incumbent. Many organisations still do not have an internal Procurement function (particularly SME's) so blame cannot lie squarely with Procurement.

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