

## OPINION

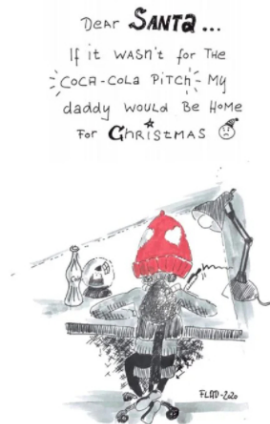
## Woolley Marketing: It was the pitch before Christmas...

*In his regular column for Mumbrella, Trinity P3 founder and global CEO Darren Woolley suggests the festive season is the time for partying rather than pitching.*

December 10, 2021 9:42  
by [DARREN WOOLLEY](#)



This time last year the big news was the Coca Cola Company was undertaking a global pitch for creative and media services. We know how that Christmas story ended with the appointment of WPP to the bulk of the business globally, almost 12 months to the day of the announcement.



Cartoon by Dennis Flad, with permission (2021)

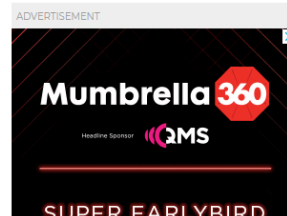
My colleague in Zurich, Dennis Flad, penciled this cartoon of the impact a pitch like this would have on the hundreds or perhaps thousands of agency staff and their families as they were preparing for their festive holiday. What made the timing of the announcement even more ironic was the launch of the Coca Cola Christmas television commercial last year, telling the story of the father who goes to extraordinary lengths to fulfil his child's Christmas wish, which it turns out is having him home for Christmas.

So, what is it that makes many marketers choose this time of year to call a pitch or review of their agency arrangements? What is it about the coming holidays that makes that little light globe go on in the minds of those marketers, who suddenly think it is time to review their incumbent agencies?

Don't get me wrong. For the incumbent, there is no good time to have a client call a pitch. Any time an existing client informs you they are reviewing the account, any good agency person knows they are just two such calls away from closing the doors. But there are 52 weeks in the year, last time I looked. There are plenty of opportunities to call the pitch, so it is not hanging over the agency's head at this time of year.

I have heard all the reasons for a Christmas pitch over the years, but they generally fall into one of three categories. There is the considerate marketer, who believes this is a quiet time for the agency and so the pitch will get the agency's attention. The problem with this is, for most agencies, there is no quiet time, as quiet time is non-billable time and that is one step towards going under. And, if your brand has cachet in the market and comes with a reasonable marketing spend, that is all it takes to get the agencies' attention.

The priority marketer usually confesses running a pitch was not really



their highest priority for the year, but as the countdown to the New Year commences, it becomes important to get it off their desk and on to someone else's before they go on holidays. Which is perhaps an insight for the agency into the type of client they would get if they were successful.

Then there is the New Year resolution marketer who is wishing to have a new agency to start the New Year and that this timing was their plan all along. Their idea being that by the end of January they would have the new agency signed, sealed, and delivered.

But the bottom line is that the last weeks before the holiday season (or the weeks before Lunar New Year in Asia) are possibly the worst time to call a pitch.

First, agency people are people. They want a break and most need a holiday after working through the second year of a pandemic, remote working and more. Most will have made plans for their holidays, which your pitch may require them to cancel or postpone. Not exactly the best way to endear yourself to your potential new agency.

Second, agencies encourage staff to take off this time if they can, to minimise annual leave disruption throughout the rest of the year. Therefore, selecting an agency during the holidays means you do not get the best of the agency – rather, you get the skeleton staff, with clients who are busy during this time, such as retailers running their post-Christmas sales.

Finally, the holidays are considered a time for good cheer and goodwill to all, so is it really the best time for you to be disrupting people's plans? To marketers suddenly with the urge to get a pitch going before the holidays: slow down. Do your research and preparation. Get the timeline and all the pitch meetings scheduled to start in the New Year. Prepare the RFP, the RFI, the score cards and everything else you need.

Then take a break, along with the rest of the industry, and celebrate. Then hit the ground running. The two or three weeks you delayed will be more than made up for by your outstanding preparation. And if you need help, you know where to find me.



*Darren Woolley is the founder and global CEO at Trinity P3. Woolley Marketing is a regular Mumbrella column.*

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**Abe Udy** 10 Dec 21

Really like this timely reminder that people are people. Heard a quote recently – "people aren't the most important part of your business, they

ARE your business."

👍 6

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