



Pull Your Own Weight :: The Client's End of the Deal

By now, hopefully you can tell that we try to provide unbiased and helpful marketing advice. This month however, we're covering a topic that might have some sting to it if you find yourself guilty of not holding up your end of the bargain. It's easy to think that hiring an agency is the one-stop, fail-safe solution to all your marketing problems; but, as we've hinted in previous newsletters, involvement from the client's side is vitally important to the success of your marketing endeavors. Following are some of the most important areas to be mindful of.

Disclose it all

Unfortunately, many clients go into their relationship with an agency with the attitude of "that's what I'm paying them for...let them figure it out." You're cutting off your nose to spite your face with this approach. Once you've committed to a marketing partner, don't hesitate to share your company history, problems, etc., and especially your research. While the agency you're working with might want to perform their own research, sharing anything you've already done, even with another agency, could be useful. Another hugely important item to share is your budget. A lot of clients are afraid to share their budget figures for fear that an agency will take advantage of them. If you've done your homework and selected the right marketing partner, then you should be building a relationship of trust and mutual respect. By disclosing your budget, an agency can better plan for the "big picture" marketing approach, rather than ad hoc projects that only meet immediate needs, never addressing long-term goals.

Provide all project information at the outset

Nothing can be more frustrating than having to start over on a design because a client forgot to tell us that there were four logos to include instead of one. While it might seem insignificant to you, even the smallest detail can be a big hurdle if revealed too late in the game. Make sure you have all the pieces to the puzzle before your agency begins work – things like logos, web addresses, disclaimers, etc. Coming to the table prepared will save you in time and money.

Proofing

This is one of the touchy subjects. Most good agencies will have this topic covered in the working agreement or contract they ask you (the client) to sign; but many times it's a small detail that's overlooked until there is a misprint. While your marketing partner should be making every effort to ensure all typos, misspellings, and mistakes are caught before your work goes to press or print, ultimately it's the client's job to sign off on all projects. For an agency, the output on projects is only as good as the information they get to start with. For example: your agency isn't going to know if the phone number you gave them to print is correct, all they can do is check against the information you (the client) provided. If you have a long-standing relationship with an agency, hopefully they'll question why your 800 number changed to an 877 number; but in the end, it's not their job to have all your phone numbers memorized. It's their job to make sure the information they give you back in the form of a proof, matches the information you provided to them.

Deadlines

In the age of lightning-fast technology, we barely have time to think anymore before a project is due. When it comes to meeting deadlines, keep in mind that the client has just as much to do with this as the agency. If it takes three days to get approval on an ad that is due to press in one day, the agency isn't to blame for the missed deadline. Hopefully most of you are reading this thinking that's a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised at what gets blamed on the agency. Being mindful of impending deadlines is important for you (the client) to keep up with so that you don't become a road block.

Time Management

Echoing what we just said about deadlines, time management is just as much a responsibility of the client as the agency. Waiting until the last minute to bring a project to the table isn't respectful of your marketing partner's time. Although we work hard to make our clients feel like they're the only client we have, we do have other schedules to work around and keeping that in mind goes a long way in building a mutually respectful relationship. Keeping unnecessary or drawn-out meetings to a minimum is also key to building your agency/client relationship. Nothing is more frustrating than to be stuck in meeting that's going nowhere when you have 10 other things to get done that day. If a meeting is called, be sure to have an agenda and time-frame planned. This helps everyone come to the table prepared and ready to get down to work without wasting time.

Let Us Do Our Job

You'd be surprised at how often clients' attempts at giving direction turn into giving orders. We've touched on this topic in previous newsletters as well – while we welcome input, steer clear of telling us how to do our job. For example, if you think the logo in your ad is getting lost, tell us “the logo is getting lost” and let us determine the best solution. Many times, clients will skip this step and tell us “make the logo bigger,” when size might not be the issue, but its placement. If you've done your research, you've hired an experienced marketing partner, so allow them to do what you hired them to do.

Prompt Payment

Unfortunately, late payment is still a problem that plagues many agencies. Clients who are slow to pay are difficult to manage. Often, our work for clients requires us to purchase outside services, such as printing, photography, etc. We don't want to damage our relationship with vendors, so we make every effort to pay them on time. If our clients don't pay us on time, it can put a severe cramp in the cash flow and create an uncomfortable situation.

Passing Referrals

Interestingly, a lot of clients are afraid to refer their agency to other colleagues for fear that their account will get back-burnered or somehow less serviced. In fact, the opposite is true. If a client openly recommends their agency, it demonstrates that they have an interest in seeing us succeed. If we're getting potential business from a client, the last thing we'll do is let their account slide. Besides, healthy agencies should be operating with 8-10 clients on roster anyway; you might feel like you're the only one, but you aren't. So, don't be afraid to recommend us – we'll thank you for it.

While a lot of the items we addressed might seem like givens, we're addressing them for a reason – we still have clients who need to work on them. Take a few minutes to reflect on how you work with your agency and keep some of our tips in mind. It will go a long way to building an outstanding client/agency relationship.

Fresh Creative is a communications and design firm that specializes in marketing real estate development and hospitality properties. We use strategic process and experience to develop comprehensive solutions that create distinctive impressions.

Contact Fresh

For more information about Fresh Creative and how we can help you, please contact Sam Berens: sam@visitfreshcreative.com or call 850.244.5549

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The Importance of Professional Photography

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