

What marketers look for in an agency during a pitch process

 By [Johanna McDowell](#)

13 Jul 2016

For any business worth its salt, it is hard to be influential unless that business makes a positive, lasting impression among potential clients who are looking at buying into their products or services.



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It is the same for the marketing and advertising industry, where explaining what your company does in a short yet comprehensive way goes a long way to making a lasting impression and creating a “sale”.

The reality is that if you do not know how to describe your agency business in five minutes and are not clear on what you do, then marketers will also not be clear; thus an opportunity is wasted.

In many cases, where an agency has been given an opportunity to do a credentials presentation – many clients often leave having not quite understood what the agency can do for them. This is frequently as a result of the agency focusing on what it does instead of what it could do for the client.

A savvy agency will do some desk research – using all of the tools that are available – in order to assess more about that client’s business activity before meeting them. Some insights about the client’s business and the industry in which they operate will make the difference between a relevant or irrelevant credentials presentation by the agency.

One of the services provided by the Independent Agency Search & Selection Company (IAS) is to help agencies improve their hit rates with prospective clients. The IAS will view the agency’s presentation and give feedback which could make the difference between a win and a loss for that agency.

During the pitch process, what most marketers look for is an agency that is able to distinguish itself from the rest of its competitors, which makes it very important to elaborate on the authentic nature of the agency which will often be its key differentiating factor in the market place.

Marketers argue that many agencies say the same things over and over again and yet we know that every agency is different in their thought processes, ways of behaving and methods of understanding client business issues.

When marketers look for agencies to partner with, it is always going to be a highly competitive situation. In that type of environment, sometimes it's the small things in the end that can make a big difference.

ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen Africa, with a background that includes being on both the agency and the client side of the fence, Johanna McDowell is well-placed to offer commentary on marketing and advertising in the South African and international contexts. She built her career in marketing and advertising since 1974, holding directorship in both SA and British advertising agencies. She was MD of Grey Phillips Advertising in 1988.

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