

What does the future agency look like? (part II)

 By [Abey Mokgwatsane](#)

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In [part I](#) of this series, I looked at how the client environment is changing in the age of technology and parity. Here, in part II, I discuss how agencies will change as a consequence.

Content generators

Breaking through the clutter remains a challenge; to cut through, agencies will become content generators. In a way that's what they do now, except today's content manifests in distinct marketing channels - mostly advertising, promotions, brand experiences and digital.

Soon, however, the lines between these channels will blur and agencies will create brand content in many other forms and combinations. Accelerated by media fragmentation and technology, content will vary from movies to movements, from creating bands such as the Jonas brothers to choirs as Glee, from social media apps to [online games](#) played by thousands of people across the world.

Traditionally, content has been the [domain of media companies](#), which then engage brands through sponsorship. [Branded content](#) will become the Holy Grail, and agencies will own that space.

This will cause a shift in how agency teams are recruited and designed - teams that are able to tell a brand story through engaging, interactive (aided by social media and mobile) content will be highly sought after.

Strategy and thought leadership

Agencies will invest more in strategic capacity. A solid strategy with clearly articulated campaign objectives becomes even more critical in a world where brand owners and agencies have a plethora of communications options available to them. This trend mirrors the increase in marketing investment and therefore rigour and scrutiny in the client environment.

Agencies will have to stay at the forefront of the changing communication landscape if they are to service their client effectively.

They will become thought leaders and provide the crystal ball perspective to clients. Clients will lean heavily on agencies to interpret the complex and ever-changing world. Agencies will allocate more resources to internal [thought-leadership](#) programmes - this may be more companywide training, an increase in the sharing of global intellectual property within the network, regulated research time and more.

Investment in delivery platforms

The land grab for anything digital won't stop; however, agencies will also buy and partner with new delivery platforms such as mobile, film, gaming and experiential in an effort to own as much of the marketing mix channels as possible. This is driven by the need to keep pace with technological innovation, margin and revenue extraction.

Project management

There will be more investment in senior strategic project management, currently [account management](#) or 'suits'. This role will evolve into a more strategic force. The day of paper pushers will be over.

Being the front line, they need to be strategically 'sussed'; they need to understand the client's complex world and interpret it to their agencies and vice versa. They will go from being the note takers to the umbilical cord between client and agency - the way it should always have been.

The large will get larger

Finally, clients are going to invest disproportionately more with larger agencies. For a number of reasons - in uncertain times, the money goes where experience lies - ask the McKinseys and Accentures in consulting, or the Goldman Sachs and the JP Morgan Chases in investment banking.

Large agencies will have the depth of global experience that will give clients the comfort that their agency partners can safely navigate them through uncertainty. Large agency groups will also have the resources to procure the best-of-breed talent, new business platforms (as discussed above).

In a nutshell, they will have the experience and service offerings that will make them even more competitive than they are today.

Some things never change?

David Ogilvy once said, "We sell or else." The fact that marketing is such a critical function means more scrutiny on investment and return. Agencies that don't help their clients sell will see the door faster than ever before.

In closing

I've written many times before about how the flux the world is in has made us [naïve](#). When people are naïve, they appreciate the opportunities that exist beyond their own experience and knowledge.

This can only mean good things for the industry. Let's embrace our naïvety and boldly go forth where no one has gone before.

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