

Agency anxiety - managing uncertainty, protocols and business strategy

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As the Covid-19 period has expanded, so business uncertainty has increased. Here Johanna McDowell CEO of IAS, and Brehndan Botha, certified Action Coach business coach share some thoughts around the importance of recreating certainty in the workplace in ways that are in your control.



In times of uncertainty, hope is not a strategy. Uncertainty very quickly becomes anxiety. The flipside of anxiety is resilience, and business leaders have to find ways to inspire resilience when unprecedented events are forced on them.

This resilience in agencies would be created by having a firm strategy around how to drive the delivery, consistency and quality of their work under new circumstances.

While it's impossible to manage external forces, we can – and must – seek areas of manageability in uncertainty. If we wait for things to become certain, we'll all go out of business. The key is for agencies to ensure their own clarity around what they offer, their value proposition, how they package what they are offering, and their business model.

Agencies who review precisely what it is they offer and how they can ensure a solid connection with their clients are the agencies that develop resilience.

New rules of engagement

Right now, clients and agencies are finding ways to work together within the parameters of physical distancing and all the other recommended protocols, in order to be able to continue to deliver at a level necessary for ongoing relationships. But the real test will be when they return to the workplace and face-to-face meetings with clients.

Getting back into client-facing situations is likely to also bring some unease and a situation where both parties amplify each other's anxiety. To mitigate this agencies should first practise having a face-to-face meeting, implementing the distancing and time protocols; and even the value of masks in a meeting.

We must be cognisant of the fact that we're in an environment where we can infect each other, and keep meeting to a maximum of 20 minutes. With a novel virus, it's not about whether people trust each other – we may not know that we ourselves are infectious and what the ramification of maskless meetings in the business place may be.



The agency that future-proofs takes the lead

Johanna McDowell & Brehndan Botha 6 Aug 2020



Flexibility as a business imperative

Business leaders must understand that nobody can say with any great certainty what next week will bring, and that this requires a measure of readiness and agility we've not known before. If a client needs to shift gears rapidly in this climate, their agency must be able to follow suit.

Hope is not a strategy in uncertainty, so the focus must be on finding certainty. Hope is not something you can pin your revenue on, or the effectiveness of your marketing.

Seeking certainty is crucial for agencies right now. The client/agency relationship is not without its uncertainty, even in less stressful times and their leaders need to ask what must be done to ensure their business model is future-proof.

The over-arching lesson from the pandemic for businesses right now is that we need to be prepared for any eventuality, and a robust strategy that keeps your goals, deliverables and client relationships top of mind is what brings the resilience to adapt.

Watch the full Agency Anxiety session below:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brehndan is one of only 50 certified ActionCOACH business coaches in South Africa. He is the former Marketing Procurement lead for Diageo South Africa (formerly Brandhouse) and is a former Client Service Director at Y&R South Africa. He has a deep marketing background spanning PR, Fundraising, Sponsorship and Advertising. Brehndan has worked on brands like Caltex, Woolworths, Safmarine, McDonalds, Metrorail, Michelin/BFGoodrich and Telkom. He is a business builder and passionate incubation advocate, bringing together marketing insights from client and agency side and combining those with globally proven strategies to build businesses. ActionCOACH is the world's Number One business coaching firm.

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