

HOW CREATIVE AGENCIES WIN vs IN-HOUSE

6 KEY STRENGTHS THAT IN-HOUSE TEAMS CAN'T MATCH

IF YOU WORK IN A CREATIVE AGENCY YOU'LL KNOW THAT

YOU DON'T ONLY COMPETE WITH OTHER AGENCIES.

IN-HOUSE TEAMS CLAIM AN EDGE IN INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

AND A CLOSER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR CUSTOMERS. SO

HOW DO AGENCIES RESPOND?

WE'VE PULLED TOGETHER THE **SIX KEY STRENGTHS** THAT NO
IN-HOUSE TEAM CAN MATCH.

1. DISTILLATION OF THE ISSUES



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THE BIGGEST CLIENT FRUSTRATION that agencies cite is usually the one about **clients not always knowing what they want**. Everything flows from this. Question: Who finds it easier to define problems succinctly: In-house teams, or agencies? We say *agencies*. Why?

A. IN-HOUSE TEAMS CAN BE TOO CLOSE

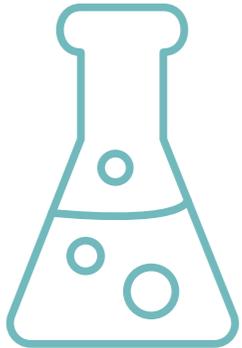
When you're immersed in the same environment every single day of the year, it's genuinely hard to see the wider picture. Think wood and trees.

B. COMPANIES HAVE A SURFEIT OF INTERNAL OPINIONS

Employees are surrounded by colleagues with diverse perspectives, and these have to be placated. Toes are easily stepped on. In-house progress is therefore complicated.

C. SIMPLICITY IS SLIPPERY

The goal is to magically define the issues with glorious simplicity. But it's hard for an in-house individual to diplomatically keep digging and prodding internally until it's eventually found.



WHEREAS AN AGENCY...

... has the right to ask **penetrating, almost impertinent questions** with far more justification.

... gets into the mindset of **distilling complexity into concepts** every week, so it becomes second nature.

2. FRESH THINKING

FRESH

WANT

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YOUR CLIENT PAYS YOU FOR FRESH THINKING. And they need it, because their old ways don't work too well any more. Fresh thinking is difficult for them to keep generating, for the following reasons.

A. IT'S HARD FOR A FIRM TO CHANGE DIRECTION

Companies aren't geared up to make spontaneous changes. It would even be a bit dangerous if they were. So suggested changes tend to be resisted at first.

B. OLD PROBLEMS, NEW TWISTS

The chances are that their core problems aren't brand new, but that crucial new twists are needed to solve them. That's a mixed message. It's asking a lot for an in-house team to continuously come up with them and get the balance right.

C. NEW METAPHORS FOR THE PROBLEM ITSELF

Coming up with the right framework for the key problem can be crucial when a company has always viewed their problem in a set way defined by their history and culture.



WHEREAS AN AGENCY...

... can play the **objective observer role**. It's a powerful card to play, because it's what the client is paying you for anyway.

... is less conscious of the **company's previous biases**, u-turns, cliques and product issues anyway.



3. BREADTH OF SKILLS & EXPERIENCES

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AGENCIES ARE HIRED LARGELY BECAUSE they have resources and skill sets that are unavailable in-house. They don't have:

A. PARALLELS WITH OTHER COMPANIES' EXPERIENCES

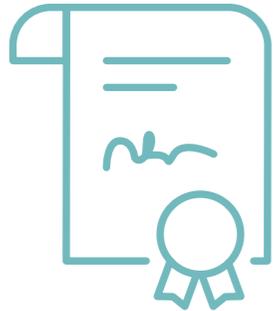
Which other companies have grappled with similar issues? What worked? What didn't?

B. DIVERSITY WITHIN THE TEAM

In-house teams rarely gather a wide diversity of experiences and skills. That's because companies are biased towards hiring people who have previous experience in the same industry and the same role. That's understandable, of course. They hit the ground running. But it's not conducive to breadth.

C. SPECIALISMS THAT ARE NOT FEASIBLE OR AFFORDABLE IN-HOUSE

A generalist wears lots of hats. That happens a lot in-house. But some skills are specialised, or are needed all of a sudden, or only intermittently. So an internal incumbent ends up doing lots of things tolerably well. That's not the way to beat the competition. You need specialists.



WHEREAS AN AGENCY...

... is far better at attracting divergent skills and experiences

... can include specialisms that are expensive, where the cost can be spread between multiple clients



4. BIG-PICTURE AWARENESS

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EVERY COMPANY WANTS TO SEE the wider perspective and to be on board with new trends and technologies. But that's hard to achieve.



A. TECHNOLOGIES

There is constant change in every industry, so clients have enough to do to be on top of competitor initiatives and product innovations. But technology changes also continually happen in marketing, channels, communications, platforms and digital. How can the average busy company be at the leading edge of all that too?

B. SHIFTING CUSTOMER DEMANDS

It is a general truism that customers relentlessly expect more, for less, and are increasingly demanding, impatient and disloyal about getting there. This takes a significant mind change at many levels. Companies used to customers previously being happy with one level of service can be in for a shock.

WHEREAS AN AGENCY...

... hungrily seeks customer expectations shifting. It's bread and butter to them. It's expected, not feared.

... is therefore geared up to spot them and find solutions.

... can take the opportunity to **cut through the clutter** and find the core issues on which **everything turns**.

A close-up, high-angle shot of the iconic Jaguar hood ornament, a leaping cat, mounted on a polished chrome surface. The cat is captured in mid-leap, with its mouth wide open, showing its teeth and tongue. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

5. THE LEAP: THE BIG IDEA

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THE BIG IDEA IS WHAT THE CLIENT CRAVES. Somebody coming up with the silver bullet. The genius idea that everybody gets right away. But where, oh where, is it to be found?

A. WHO HAS THE BOLDNESS TO COME UP WITH IT?

It takes confidence and courage, even fearlessness, to pitch it to the decision-maker. Who internally is prepared to stand above the papapet and nail their career to an idea that might not hit the spot with the senior team?

B. WHO HAS THE CHUTZPAH TO SAY 'THIS IS THE ONE'?

Big ideas aren't always self evident, and if they're only whispered they never sound great. It takes authority and belief to look a client in the eye and say *You need look no further. This is The Big One.* Even if someone internal had come up with it, would it have been recognised? Believed? Seen as authoritative? Remember the old truism about prophets being honoured everywhere – except in their home town.



WHEREAS AN AGENCY...

... has more kudos. The audience is looking for the solution from them, and is primed to receive it.

... is used to coming up with justifications, anecdotes, pitches and emotional intelligence about it.

... knows that there is a solution to be had, so keeps looking until it's found.

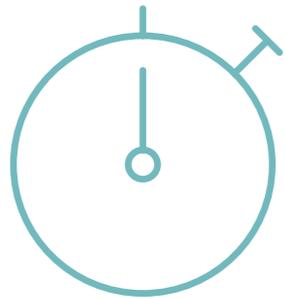
...has a process. It's less mysterious, more manageable, for them. No-one is in a better position to nail it than an agency.

6. THE DRIVE TO THE FINISHING LINE



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GREAT IDEAS ARE all very well, but many would say that great *implementations* are what really counts.



A. MAKING IT HAPPEN

There are two types of people in business. Some make things happen, in spite of setbacks. It can be lonely pushing onwards to the finish. But others get bogged down in the problems and never quite make a clean end-game of it.

B. DEADLINES ARE CONCRETE

Before a deadline is defined, everything is woolly. But the moment it's set, it's tangible, real, immovable. It doesn't matter if the date was actually chosen rather arbitrarily. It's in concrete now. The problem for in-house teams is that if they set their own deadlines on themselves they can sometimes not quite take them quite as gospel.

Which means that when problems arise they might be tempted to change the deadline rather than move heaven and earth to solve the problem.

WHEREAS AN AGENCY...

... lives and dies by deadlines. It's part of their DNA.

... sees client sign-off on a plan as a fixed deadline that has to be met. Mountains regularly get moved to get there.

... might not have a comfortable ride getting there, but difficult things nevertheless get accomplished.

... can therefore be the catalyst in turning a company from good to great.

WE HOPE THAT...

...you found this summary interesting.

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