

The crucial role of client service excellence in agencies

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It is the excitement of the pitch process, supported by a showcasing of quality creative and strategy work that inevitably secures a new account for an agency, but past this point, it is the client service department that must work to continuously deliver and grow the client relationship to retain the business.



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Without client service excellence, the chemistry quickly dwindles and the client might consider taking their account elsewhere. This means that an emphasis needs to be placed on refining this essential agency skill with the ultimate goal being to become an extension of the client's marketing team.

Understanding of the brand's place in their consumer's lives

Briefs can often be limiting. Instead of waiting for and merely answering a brief, the ideal client service team leads with an always-on perspective that allows them to identify their client's needs in an ever-changing business landscape, attempting to pre-empt the clients' requirements. This is the exciting spoke in the wheel that is the service-delivery process – discovering insights that ignite an unexpected train of thought in the client's mind, resulting in blazing new trails with them.

The client service team needs to be tapped into several factors to enable optimum client servicing; the world and local events, industry news, customer demand, market and product trends, and economic patterns. The client/agency relationship is anchored by nurturing the relationship between brands and consumers by innovating and supporting at every turn.

A deep understanding of the brand's place in their consumer's lives is a good place to start when designing any solution. As often stated: the consumer owns the brand, and to craft effective solutions for clients, a combination of models that gives further insight into the audience's possible cognitive and emotional states when interacting with the product or service, followed by the language used to communicate and action to be taken to influence their decision to choose our client must first be considered.

Team-centric style of business

A team-centric style of business is crucial for superb client relations. Relationships are paramount in creating a true

partnership between client and agency. This type of relationship is one where trust is crucial, communication is constant, and service excellence is the result.

The space where co-creation thrives is one where account managers are in-tune and in-sync with client's absolute reason for being, and they deliver at the highest level of excellence in order to translate any idea into an experience that leads to a lifelong relationship with the brand.

It's not to say that the dynamics of the entire agency are not important. In fact, true delivery of excellence entails a harmonious play from each member of the team of strategists, designers, copywriters, client service and the leadership, with a focus on collaboration and curiosity.

But as the client facing team, a special role is reserved for the client service team to deliver and own the relationship. It is key to align with your client's business needs and the changing needs of their industry in order to offer the kind of value that will ensure account retention. As they say: it costs you five times as much to win a new client than to keep a current one.

ABOUT MPHO NKOMONDE

Mpho Nkomonde is the Group Account Director at Leratadima Marketing, one of South Africa's leading 100% black South African owned agencies. Mpho is an executive with unparalleled experience in brand strategy, events and communications management; Mpho has experience from a variety of industries including Publishing, Broadcast, Fashion and Music. She holds qualifications in Psychology and Media Management, and has held esteemed positions such as Head of Marketing at Media24, Ndalo Media and the Thabo Mbeki Foundation.

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