

# Beware of over focusing on metrics, as mediation is the key

 By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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The month of love (Valentines) is upon us, and coincidentally it correlates with a period of the year where top brands and their partner agencies take a view on how effective their relationships are. Chemistry is a key component in the success of hard-driven marketing partnerships and just like any other relationship, it waxes and wanes.

In our industry there is a proliferation of products that help client agency relationships. Most of them focus on the metrics – ignoring their need for mediation. The kind of mediation that can re-catalyse the chemistry that brought the two partners together in the first place.

This industry constantly faces the ubiquitous challenge of often trading in creativity and intuition as well as not easily quantifiable assets. We see time and again that for this reason scoring performance and ticking boxes is not enough. These partnerships have subtleties and nuances that are hard to measure through computer programmes alone – though analysis facilitated by software programmes starts the ball rolling and is integral to the process.

A non-biased and external mediator needs to interpret that data and through experience and deep listening intuit what type of very specific and tailored remediation will re-establish an effective working relationship between the partners.

We designed our TLC Programme to help clients and agencies to evaluate current relationships by looking at a number of variables to streamline better analysis.

Below is how the TLC programme evaluates current relationships on a number of different – all critical factors and levels. It looks at:

- Quality of agency input
- Adherence to deadline
- Deliverable
- Quality of client briefs
- Client approval times
- Cost and pricing
- Client agency dynamics
- Media planning
- Measuring results

- Remuneration structures

Both agency and client personnel complete a questionnaire and the feedback is analysed and presented to both parties at a joint session. It is expected that growth will double this year. We also use it to assess developing trends across the industry. Client agency relations are constantly being tested and often fail. Finding out why relationships fail is key to not having the same situation happen again with a new agency. If the problem can be fixed between a current agency/client relationship this is always first prize.

## 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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