

# The Brand's Pocket Guide to Communicating with Agencies

*With expert input from the  
client-side experts at*

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# Healthy win-win relationships

**Don't be coy about sharing critical information – after all a problem shared is a problem halved!**

The more transparent you can be with your agency the more they can do to work around foreseeable problems. So if your budget is restricted or the timing of delivering results are impossible to move then let your agency know.

Equally if you have to manage difficult personalities as part of the project or have to work around restrictive processes share this with your agency – you never know they might be able to provide a more workable solution to help you. The mutual aim should always be trust and healthy long-term win-win relationships.



# Define expectations

# 02

**Define what you expect in terms of deliverables and ways of working rather than expect others to read your mind.**

Have you seen the film 'What Women Want'? This is what life is like for your agency a lot of the time. Desperate to keep you happy, but having to read between the lines without being able to read minds. The more you can tell them what you expect from them the more likely they will accommodate your needs.

So if you need a weekly update by phone to reassure you all is on track then let them know. Everyone is different so let them know what works for you.



# Spell it out

## **Spell out what the project success and failure looks like.**

Paint a picture for your agency and let them work out how they can make it happen.

Talk about what you consider a brilliant project looks like and how it makes you feel.

Share experiences where agencies have delivered above and beyond expectation and where agencies have fallen short.

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# Decision making

## **Share the decision making criteria for proposals.**

Your agencies are a competitive bunch but they need to know what game is being played if they are to have a chance at winning your preference. So let your agencies know how you are going to be judging them against each other.

The more open you are to sharing this the more likely you will get back lots of good quality responses. Be honest about the strategic importance of the project and the value you will place on service, innovation etc.



# Listen

## **Listen to alternative opinions. Keep an open mind.**

We are all busy and sometimes we just want someone to say 'yes, how high' when we say jump. But if we surround ourselves with yes people we limit our ability to learn, to experience new things and see things from a different perspective.

Your agencies will be made up of a mix of different people who can see the situation and your brand from an outsider's point of view.



# Be prepared

**Be prepared to seek out answers to questions if you don't know the answer yourself.**

When your agencies challenge you they may ask you questions you do not know the answers to. Don't see this as a negative, view it as an opportunity to seek more information out from stakeholders.



# Time to think

## **Give yourself and your agencies time to think, not just do.**

We all get swept up in doing tasks and our to do lists are forever growing. We spend a lot of time going through the motions of a task so we can tick it off and move on to the next one.

When we are under the pump it is too hard for our brains to solve problems or think creatively. So give your brain time to mull over a situation rather than expect it to come up with the best answer instantly.

Go for a walk, or even better let yourself think about it overnight. And give your agencies the space to do the same.



# Provide feedback

## **Provide proper feedback in a constructive way.**

Einstein said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. If clients don't give constructive, specific feedback to their agencies then it is hard for them to tackle the request differently next time.

Most clients don't like giving feedback as they don't want to be seen as negative or mean so often they default to generic or easy feedback options – such as saying the agency lost on price – because this feels less awkward. Be specific and honest, whilst remaining kind and polite. At the end of the day, it's all about healthy win-win relationships.

This Pocket Guide is part of a set created by Skopos London: MR Company founded in London in 2001 as 'bricks met clicks'. Client-first imaginative research calculated to meet the needs of the world's major brands. Helpful & insightful.

**Skopos would like to thank Caroline Florence of Insight Narrator for her special contribution to this guide.**

Caroline has a unique combination of insight, intelligence and consulting experience gained from senior agency and client-side roles with Royal Mail Group, Bass Retail, Masterfoods, Incite, Synovate and Ipsos.

Caroline established Insight Narrator in 2012 to help professional services companies and in-house service teams achieve a step change in their communication.

Specialising in presentation skills, proposals and pitching, and stakeholder facilitation, Insight Narrator work with some of the largest companies in marketing services, including Kantar, Chime and Ipsos-MORI, and major blue chip organisations, such as Unilever, Tesco, Financial Times and Legal & General.