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7 value adds by an agency to a client's wish list

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Value is the bottom line with any brand agency relationship- we need to be adding value in everything we do. This has always been



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around, and will stay around but in today's context of super competitive times, With budgets being tight, it is crucial to provide value and build value at a micro level. I'm tempted to begin with smarten up the human connection, but refraining will just put context to the text below. This is a one-sided approach with the context being what agencies should do, (I have counter arguments on the agency side more or less saying "clients who make poor Agency selections are bound to be disappointed. Clients who are price-buyers will get price product") but this is about what we agencies must do to build value. Taking a linear approach will begin at the beginning.

1. **Value begins before the brief, with the people you put on an account.** "Smart people get smart briefs" Very recently at a joint briefing session of a technology client with a dozen agency teams one agency sent an obviously technology challenged individual to "go collect" the brief. God help the outcome of a social media rich brief from the guy who looked zapped every time the term API was mentioned. Do your homework before the briefing session or it's mostly going to be a monologue. Be

curious, communicative and informed. Always remember there is a difference between collection and extraction of information.



2. **Interpret the brief well, decode if necessary and be specific in what your plan to the client will achieve. Then be sure that it's what the client hopes your plan will achieve.** In today's time of specialization the client prepares a briefing document as a common tool for all the agencies Digital, activation, content etc. the key is to decode the brief with the key specifics, which will be relevant to your plan. Challenge it – don't just copy and paste. It may be accurate and risk-free, but it adds no value at all. If needed put in a call, find out what's key, what's not, what kind of issues are really at stake for your proposal to be relevant, what kind of trade offs possible. Shape the proposal with additional insights. If you do this, it's already more relevant than the competition.

3. **Be service-minded and proactive at all times** – attentive, responsive, flexible, and proactive in finding solutions. Get training if you need it on client-service relationship management techniques. Too often I find that people simply haven't been sensitized as to how important service and reliability aspects are in a business relationship, especially when it's increasingly difficult to separate different suppliers on points of fact alone. Service-based choices are surely preferable to those that are driven by price against a backdrop of proposal parity or cost. Remember that people do business with people they can trust.



4. **Know your stuff and Make recommendations** – don't just present (or worse just read out the pretty slides), have a conversation and make it come alive – have a simple, compelling narrative, which involves all present stakeholders. If in a marketing service do not isolate your self from other mediums understand them even if they are not your area of specialization. It always is a plus to know the entire campaign holistically there fore have the opportunity to fine tune or pitch in. Recommend add on's from your experience, give relevant inputs and most importantly never forget the brand or its culture.

5. **Be connected with the brand permanently not sporadically** – its not just about information its also about a mindset and attitude. Inculcate the habit of reading up the brand and its competition. Subscribe to relevant blogs, like their Facebook page, follow them on Twitter, and visit them on YouTube. For teams at Pulp Strategy servicing technology clients its blasphemy not to visit mashable

and endgadget regularly. Bloggers get the product and its info 1st post which its up-to the rest of us mortals to find the information, Google alert them; what ever it takes but never caught off guard by the mention of a product or its competition.

6. **Be robust in your planning and better it in your delivery, inculcate value consistency down the chain – to the suppliers not just team members.**– too often I see best practices are ignored, critical nuances are overlooked, in all sorts of areas. Very often the client facing team is consistent while the support system changes, this adds to the “cookie crumbling” as the best-laid plans disintegrate during execution. Consistency is a large value as it builds belief and trust.



7. **Look at pricing options, but don't be bullied into inferior quality, learn to say no, always be honest.** If I get client feedback I will put in those extra hours to try and ensure I get the ROI he wants, but without being absolutely sure I will not commit to a number. I find that if the team really believes in keeping their commitments they will find a way or ensure that having tries all aspects a discussion for relook with the client is warranted. Never lie your way to a win, however big or small. Honesty is a large component in trust. Be quick to admit your mistake and always give honest feedback to the client. I feel this is always the most difficult but it's also the most valuable in the agency client relationship

What goes around comes around and a value approach will come back in return with stronger relationships, better business. It builds an agency character and sets the stage for a sound stable graph on the way upward, value begets value.