

HOW TO GET GREAT WORK FROM A CREATIVE SUPPLIER

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ear Ms Marcom:

Now that you have selected Super Creative Partners, I am happy to provide criteria that will enhance Swampland's working relationship with them. The following are the ten points I recommend to all my clients.

1. EXPLAIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Much of the direction you will be providing will be subject to interpretation. The more they know about your organization, its structure, and its personnel the more accurate their interpretations will be.

So the very first step is to get them up-to-speed with your working procedures. Be particularly careful to identify who's who—your command structure—and how your approval process works.

2. THINK PARTNERSHIP

The best creative work comes out of a strong client/supplier partnership; you provide the objectives and overall direction, they provide the experience and talent to achieve them.

The more clearly defined and accepted this relationship is, the better the work that will result. You should concentrate on what you do best and let them concentrate on what they do best.

3. SET A BUDGET & TIMELINE

There are nearly infinite ways in which most creative projects and campaigns can be developed. To ensure both efficiency and effectiveness, you need to establish project budget and time parameters.

Then, from these guidelines, ask them to prepare a proposal or estimate detailing what they will be able to provide and on what schedule.

4. REVIEW YOUR PREFERENCES

Although your general likes and dislikes are already known, reviewing them within the context of a specific project is also necessary. Not to do so is to risk time being wasted on the pursuit of inappropriate approaches.

Be careful, however, not to err on the side of being rigid or restrictive. Provide only the most general of preference guidelines. Good, effective creativity is possible only when there is freedom to explore and experiment.

5. PROVIDE OBJECTIVES

The more specific you can be about what you want them to achieve the better your chances will be of achieving it. Try to state your objectives as quantitatively as possible.

Preparing a creative brief is often the most effective way to do this. It will help you organize your thoughts and objectives. And it will also minimize any chance of misunderstandings by the creative team working on the project.

6. START ON TIME

And try not to fall behind schedule later. Compressing the time any creative supplier needs to do good work is a principal cause of projects that end up more costly or less effective than need be.

Not only is much of the creative development process linear, but many functions cannot be shortened without affecting quality and risking mistakes.

7. PROVIDE CREATIVE FREEDOM

In a sentence: Tell them what to do, but never how to do it. They know more about their business—what communicates well and what

doesn't—than you do. Don't make the common mistake of hiring expensive professionals and then ignoring the very reasons they were hired.

When reviewing concepts, remember that there are few rights or wrongs in creative efforts, only individual preferences. If a concept meets all the goals you've established, and you can't be objective in your criticism, accept it. Don't let your own personal taste or limitations destroy an approach that could be very effective.

8. MINIMIZE APPROVAL ROUTING

Everyone asked to review a creative effort will have an opinion, many of them conflicting. Trying to reconcile many viewpoints and opinions not only runs the risk of alienating well-meaning contributors it also may vitiate the work.

Avoid this by restricting approval routings to as few individuals as possible, preferably under half a dozen. If necessary, show to others on an "for information only" basis. And make sure all project communication is channeled through one person—preferably you.

9. EVALUATE RESULTS

As important as style, aesthetics, and craftsmanship are, they are never as important as effectiveness. Great appearance does not guarantee great performance.

Although not always possible, make it an objective to track the performance of every single project.

10. BE REALISTIC

Hitting the target with creative work is more art than science. Even with the best direction to the best supplier, efforts will sometimes miss.

What you should be looking for is a high batting average.