



COMMENTARY

Maintaining Successful Client-Agency Relationships

by [\[Name\]](#), May 27, 2022

Relationships are the heart and soul of agency life. Every agency wants clients that return year after year and grow their scopes of work, and every client wants an agency that consistently produces extraordinary work and offers innovative ideas.

When client-agency relationships are strong, everyone benefits. Clients benefit from a marketing expert and partner that delivers consistent strategies and deliverables, goes above and beyond, and anticipates industry trends. An agency benefits from satisfied client referrals, saved money on acquisition costs, and a bolstered reputation for producing extraordinary work and being a great partner.

Although these benefits are the ultimate goals of client-agency relationships, they aren't achieved overnight; it takes work to reap the rewards. And there's not just one primary stakeholder — both parties are responsible for building the partnership and maintaining open, thoughtful communication.

Successful client-agency relationships are especially critical today. According to a recent Gartner survey of CMOs, 29% of work performed by external agencies was moved to internal teams in 2021. As companies continue to take their marketing efforts in-house in 2022, agencies need to form strong relationships to secure a bright future.

Maintaining Strong Relationships

Alignment is the key to a strong relationship, which is why managing clients is one of the most important roles of the agency's leadership team. Leaders must understand that it takes a fair amount of trust, respect, and transparency to manage clients properly. Additionally, they must understand exactly what each party brings to the table. The good news is there are a few things that the agency's leaders can do to establish and maintain great relationships with clients.

The foremost step an agency must take is to set the tone and expectations for both sides of the partnership (and this work begins before a contract is even signed). Agency workers should go into each meeting prepared and ask relevant questions. Every partnership involves an exchange of value, and both sides must understand how the other defines this. The most common value exchanges among client-agency relationships are good briefs, open communication, honest feedback, and effective collaboration.

Agencies also need to understand the client intimately. Account teams should learn how a client's business operates (the market, competitors, strengths, etc.) and how individual people at the company work (their goals, key performance indicators, career paths, etc.). Additionally, account teams should demonstrate ongoing education by keeping tabs on emerging trends and offering updated strategies. Understanding the client allows the agency to provide value far beyond the current scope.

Finally, agencies should aim to overcommunicate. Less is definitely not more when it comes to communication. Great relationships require ongoing dialogue, so client leaders and account teams should discuss everything: results, progress, challenges, timeline changes, new opportunities, and more. It's also essential that account teams provide information before the client has to ask for it. Communicating and following through are two of the best ways to show — rather than tell — clients that they are in good hands.

Ensuring a Successful Future

When it comes to maintaining strong client-agency relationships, agencies have to take the lead and show clients how dependable and invested they are. Setting the tone and establishing expectations upfront, demonstrating industry expertise and field authority, and constantly communicating and delivering are just a few ways agencies can keep clients happy and committed for years to come.