

Projects

A better way to market

Corporate marketers have for generations seen the need to outsource disparate communications delivery services to a myriad of eager and keen suppliers. As the market has moved away from the generalist suppliers to the specialist, many benefits have ensued but these can be overshadowed by a number of other issues.

Specialist versus generalist – the need for a specialist generalist?

Specialist suppliers can, for all their value, be myopic when a broader perspective is required. Clients naturally retain the broad scope of the requirement with the initial responsibility to interpret these requirements in the form of a brief. But often specialist suppliers will ignore the big picture view and replace it with a detailed focus of their own specialist areas. When this scenario carries across all the marketing communications that make up the project, what often materialises is a mix of solutions that become disconnected. What suffers is the integration of the parts to form the greater whole i.e. the ultimate objective. A simple concept, yet one that is regularly missed by the client.

Making project success the focus not logistics

Paying attention to the bits that gel a campaign programme together can often determine the ultimate success of the marketing exercise. Take an exhibition centric campaign for example; clients understandingly turn to the services of a specialist event management company to take care of the logistics and planning for the event. Often the sheer scale of logistics will absorb both client and event organiser, obscuring the necessity to deal with the bigger picture.

What is it we are trying to achieve from our attendance at the exhibition and why have we decided to attend or host the event in the first place? How can we stimulate demand to the event to ensure that the exercise is a success? What promotional activities need to be organised to trigger this demand, what additional opportunities can be exploited at the event, what progression should be set in motion off the back of the event? How are we to measure performance, how should we manage the campaign delivery process? Who should we involve in the process – sales, technical teams, management?

From a brief that was initially perceived as a set of logistics, the real requirements are far wider, particularly when objective setting, strategic planning and closed loop measurement need to be embraced in the equation.

This broader view and remit for the project can be applied to whatever type, size and mix, whether it be advertising, direct marketing, PR, web or research centred. The lesson is to stay focused on the bigger picture before you become immersed in the detail and put in place mechanisms and terms of reference so as not to lose sight of project goals.

The true costs of a project

To review another perspective of the traditional manner in which external services are procured for a marketing project, consider the elements of cost management. When individual delivery services are sourced, each supplier will naturally look to maximise their return on services provided. But does the individual supplier ever consider the holistic view of the budget; the answer is never, as their remit is simply to deliver a point solution and charge a fair rate accordingly.

When the client attempts to manage the budget by apportioning elements by service area, the specialist supplier has little incentive to bend and more often than not service levels are eroded by suppliers justifying giving less. The real danger with this approach is that the client receives pockets of work from multiple suppliers, with little reference again to the integration of the parts, leaving the client frustrated as they attempt to join the disparate elements together.

From the pure financial perspective each supplier will inevitably load their service charges to maximise their return on service provided. What the client receives is the awkward aggregate of all these costs without any real reference to the likely success of the campaign programme. Overall, costs are forced upwards, with the client desperately fighting to protect budget levels. Energies and attention lines are then focused on budgetary pressures, once again obscuring the real objectives that will ultimately bring campaign success.

Mind the gap

As we have discussed, a natural instinct when deploying marketing projects is to employ the combined services of a number of specialist providers. Analogies a plenty, but our favourite being the home building project and the schedule of work that goes completely out of synchronisation, which is then further compounded when the various tradesmen start blaming each other for the inadequacies of the other...

Couldn't happen in the high tech world of commerce... you say! But isn't this invariably what happens? The reality and resultant affects are project creep; spiralling costs and a burning sense within that there could have been a better way.

When a project goes out of control resulting in supplier squabbles, the client is often left feeling helpless acting as an intermediary. What invariably is being debated are the friction points which manifest at the crossovers of the disciplines and service areas.

"This design is not web friendly... this web design is not in line with our brand remit... what brand remit... where have our propositions gone... our channel partners won't like this, etc."

But unless the client places the focus on the gaps that divide the disciplines then attention is distracted into non value add areas and project accountability is pulled apart.

But this is my job isn't it!

Ultimately it is the client's role and responsibility to determine the objectives for the project and to ensure that these are met if not exceeded. Traditional lines of demarcation between the client and its suppliers dictate the levels of accountability. By selecting a strategic supplier who shares the client's broader remit produces great dividends. So when a supplier positions itself to offer a 'client like' service they should not be seen as a threat but as a potential ally.

This type of relationship offers enormous benefits above and beyond the traditional client/supplier type relationship. Working together with the client on an end-to-end project on this basis removes all the unnecessary checks, balances and anxieties caused when dealing with multiple suppliers and replaces them with one relationship based on mutual trust and respect. The relationship ensures that an independent view is maintained throughout the lifecycle of the project. The strategic supplier can then work with the client, not against the client, on shared objectives, determining from the outset the correct requirements brief and maintaining universal control over all elements of the project.

Removing the caveats for poor performance

All too often, suppliers will place their own caveats to protect their lack of performance on projects. Unless a supplier/partner is commissioned to cover the whole project, can the correct level of accountability be fully expected? The question again is what is more important, the individual excellence of the parts or the overall and overwhelming success of the project as a whole?

The answer is to engage with a strategic partner who is challenged to deliver overall project success given that they have the mandate and trust of the client. With this broad scope performance measures can be agreed across the breadth of the project to ensure that the sum of the parts does indeed add up to greater than the whole.

The client then has to look for a more strategic partner and be convinced of the partner's ability to deliver on these terms. Evidence of capability and track record as well as a history of successful project implementations and strong references become the prerequisites for partner selection in this instance.

Anderson Baillie: A better way to market

We have discussed the not so obvious vulnerabilities and causal affects of potential project failure. The Anderson Baillie Projects methodology approach addresses these points.

It challenges the traditional methods of multi discipline project delivery by concentrating on the gaps or points of integration between the functions of marketing, whilst not losing sight of the bigger picture and maintaining an ongoing reference to performance measures.

The Anderson Baillie Projects service offer is unashamedly 'client like', in that it supports the ultimate interest of the client in appraising the big picture to deliver the overall objectives for a particular project or programme.

It adopts a smart marketing approach in that elements of the mix are crafted with the emphasis on integration, ensuring that no bias is built into a particular marketing communication mechanism unless the objectives determine otherwise.

Also, by considering the strategic perspective, the original terms of reference for the project will consider the overall business and market situation as well as other factors including deference to the sales process and impact affect on all channels to market.

Project Planning



Anderson Baillie Projects model

The method travels from strategy to planning through to a robust project management process, which has been pre-defined and agreed in a Project Plan with the client. The Project Plan starts with a statement on the terms of reference, which underpins the agreed marketing goals and objectives for the programme.

The plan then considers the full lifecycle of requirements including:

- Target market and audience groups – a review of all agreed target groups and stakeholders for the campaign. Reference to contact data integrity and availability.
- Strategy – what communications strategy is proposed?
- Methodology – what communications tactics are to be deployed, by which mechanism to achieve the communication objective?
- Communications Modelling – how the communications process stack and integrate together?
- Performance Measures – what are the agreed key performance measures we are looking to achieve for the programme both at a general level as well as a specific tactical level? This will include performance targets for lead and demand creation.
- Budgeting and Scheduling – an insight into the projected costs for the specified project, broken out by communication mechanisms and individual service areas. On the scheduling front an indication of critical paths and key dependencies that will determine time to market.
- Measurement – the means of tracking response, analysis and reporting.

Summary

By combining strategic process, creativity and technical skills, the Anderson Baillie Projects model is a proven methodology that enables the project team to simplify and deliver the most complex of marketing models whilst ensuring continuity and integration of the proposition and supporting sales and marketing messages. The Anderson Baillie Projects portfolio of successfully managed campaigns is unrivalled in the B2B marketplace and include multi medium programmes of all types and sizes, working directly with clients or via channel and partner marketing initiatives. Anderson Baillie has project-managed programmes for both large corporates and smaller growing organisations such as BT, BASF, Nokia, Sun Microsystems, Intenia and EDS.

Glossary

Project Implementation

The key to successful project execution is a strong and well-structured delivery team. Depending on the scale of the project an Anderson Baillie project team can be deployed across the various functions from Project Direction, Project Management, Project Execution to Project Administration.

Campaign Management

The importance and the ability to measure campaign effectiveness are of paramount importance. To support programme management and reporting, Anderson Baillie has developed its own campaign measurement tool within a CRM environment. Within this environment campaigns are set up and launched with all response routes tied back to the tracking system and ultimately through to campaign reporting.

Project Management Tools

To support the project delivery function, Anderson Baillie has developed a number of e-marketing tools. These include online job tracking, client proofing production areas and web registration engines.

Notes about the Author

Anderson Baillie provides its IT and high-tech client base with integrated marketing solutions and Business Growth consultancy. Currently the UK's sixth leading business-to-business marketing agency specialising in the business-to-business sector.

With over 12 years of industry practice, Anderson Baillie has developed its own methodology of strategy development through to communications planning and deployment for companies operating throughout Europe. Business Growth and Analytical Lead Development is an Anderson Baillie Research Solution.

Companies who have realised the benefits of Anderson Baillie Projects methodology:



For further information on Anderson Baillie Projects capability visit www.andersonbaillie.com/projects

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