

For the Corporate Executive: How to be a Great Client in Ten Easy Steps

1. Create a spirit of partnership: Equality versus superiority.
 - a. Superiority/subordination is manifested by:
 - Lack of respect
 - Intimidation
 - Threat of dismissal
 - Mediocre/safe advertising
 - b. Equality produces:
 - Honesty
 - Risk taking
 - Great results
 - Ability to admit failure
 - Mutual respect of intelligence and expertise
2. Do not be imitators: Be wary of change for change sake.
 - a. Be skeptical of trends; defy and question what is hot now.
 - b. Tune into the consumer.
 - c. Understand the changes.
 - d. Develop a smart position and stick with it.
3. Make sure your agency is making a fair profit.
 - a. No business operates at a loss.
 - b. If you are fair with them; they are fair with you.
4. Immerse your agency in your product, people and culture.
 - a. Explore weaknesses, secrets, failures: they will probe for the strengths.
 - b. Concrete (positive) facts make great claims in advertising.
 - c. Good advertising is a by-product of understanding.
 - d. Virtually all companies are proud of their personality.
5. Encourage experimentation and be prepared to pay for failure.
 - a. Risk aversion produces off-target and mediocre advertising.
 - b. Great clients want great advertising (ads that stand out).
 - c. Back up this desire with open minds.
6. Treat the agency people well.
 - a. People work harder for their friends than business acquaintances.
 - b. An “attaboy” nets you a bigger, better, effort.
7. Agree on a clearly defined objective for your advertising.
 - a. Do due-diligence with thorough, up-front research and analysis.
 - b. Scrutinize advertising strategies, not the executions.
 - c. Make creative direction precise, unambiguous.

8. Keep approvals simple and disapprovals kind.
 - a. Do not have the approval process go through layers upon layers of the organization.
 - Do not debate every copy/art nuance.
 - One layer is best.
 - b. On disagreements:
 - Be honest.
 - Be specific.
 - Be kind.

9. Give the agency responsibility for the advertising and give them the authority to be responsible.
 - a. Your responsibility is to be involved in the process:
 - Share responsibility at the beginning.
 - Do not deny the approval empowering the agency to realize the vision.
 - b. Work together toward achieving certain goals.

10. Give the agency a formal evaluation every year.
 - a. Good clients reflect on whether advertising is better or worse for the year.
 - b. Draw up the evaluation in partnership with the agency.
 - c. Review the evaluation with agency management.