Survival Tips for Account Managers
By: Denis Gutierrez*

The successful advertising materials and campaigns we see today are usually attributed to the output of an ad agency's creative team. While the creative unit's “Eureka!” is essential, we must not forget the role of the account managers, the liaison officers between the ad agency and the client.

Account managers are the key to unlocking the vision of the client with reference to a project. They are responsible for the harmonious relationship of the agency and the client. They serve simultaneously as analyst, strategist, critic, motivator and profit planner. To the client, they are the agency. And because they are the interface between the agency and its customers, because they must communicate the clients’ expectations to the creative department without being able to control the latter, the account manager’s life can become very stressful.

How does one survive this fast-paced, high pressure job? Here are some tips:

1. READ, READ AND READ.
A successful account manager is knowledgeable about a vast variety of things. He need not be a walking encyclopedia, but should at least have a working knowledge of topics, trends and developments that can provide any raw material for his campaign. Clients are impressed by people who can converse on books, films, music, politics, economics, arts, science and the latest trends in the market. A literate account manager is a manager with a wealth of ideas. The worst thing you can do is limit your conversation to the weather.

2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.
The topic of greatest interest to a client, of course, is his job and the product he is responsible for. Before your initial meeting, study your client's company profile, his products and services, his brand’s position in the market, his goals, and competition. It doesn’t hurt to find out more about the client himself – his likes and dislikes, sports, hobbies, temperament and outlook in life.

3. BE THOROUGH.
Remember, you are the link between the agency and the client. Your agency’s creative output will be based on your inputs. Trash in is trash out. Ideally, the client provides a copy of information and direction regarding a project. However, this documentation is not always practiced, and clients are sometimes casual and unclear. Do not hesitate to ask your client for as much information and detail about your project as he can provide, and obtain his permission to record your agreements.
4. MANAGE THE ACCOUNT
Account managers sometimes assume they are mere runners or glorified messengers, shuttling mindlessly between agency and client and delivering instructions and presentations. Make No Mistake: YOU ARE A MANAGER. The project is in your hands; you must ensure its success. Manage the account as if it were your own business.

5. DOCUMENT YOUR MEETINGS
Miscommunication is one reason projects never seem to end on time. A contact report documents the important information and directions provided by the client. Make sure he receives it and confirms by affixing his signature.

6. MANAGE YOUR TIME.
Time management ensures the fluid motion of events and activities that culminate in success. Managing your time means prioritizing things that have to be done. It also leads to managing your client’s time.

7. SMILE
A genuine smile is refreshing and can break down any barrier that a client puts up. A smile signals that you are there to listen and understand, you are accommodating and approachable.

8. BE PROFESSIONAL
Keep your personal problems away from your work. Remember that you are there to help your client with his product, so don’t get derailed and involved in his personal life either.

9. BE CONFIDENT
Bring your very best creative work and recommendations to your client and show your conviction and confidence during presentations. You cannot convince your client if you yourself are full of doubt. He has called you in because he thinks you can solve his problem; don’t give him cause to change his mind.

10. ENJOY
An account manager’s job provides many opportunities and occasions for laughter. Have fun.

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