Stopping the Agency Treadmill:
Find Focus for New Business and Business Development

So what's the big deal? Business development/new business. Same thing.

Nope. Not if your goal is to thrive versus simply surviving.

Getting new clients and keeping your current clients while you on-board the new ones are two very different efforts that require different strategies.

Let's look at what's going on when you win a new business pitch. I'm talking about a full-blown, competitive, pull-out-all-the-stops AOR pitch. You are gathering the best of every discipline like the All-Star Games; you're clearing the decks on resource availability and not hesitating to "invest" in the work to win the pitch. In addition, you are asking everyone else on the team to "step up" and make sure the current roster of clients is being taken care of. Sound familiar? If it doesn't, you're probably not in the business of winning pitches but rather in the business of participating in pitches…But that's a topic for another day.

New business is just that: NEW. Once it's been in-house for a while (a year or so), it needs the deeper focus of development to keep it growing and prospering. How many times have we heard that Agency X is falling out of favor with Client Y, and the reasons stated tie back to that big client the agency won last season that has all the good talent "distracted." In the meantime, Client Y is looking around for a new agency and round and round it goes: the never ending circle of life in the agency world. This is just the reality of our business, right? Well, it doesn't have to be. If you are deliberate about separating the two efforts, focusing the right talent and placing equal value on both, there is an opportunity to break the agency treadmill paradigm.

A few things to ask yourself as you plan to put an effort on growth:

1. Are you seeking growth through new clients just to survive, or are you truly committed to growing the size of your agency?

2. Are all your current client relationships on solid footing? Are you taking care of their needs? Are they going "outside" of your agency for specialty services?

3. Have you truly stayed relevant in the industries you service by adding the type of talent needed to help your clients grow in their channel/field?

4. Have you maximized the opportunities you have right in front of you with existing clients?

5. Are you seeking new clients because you are simply bored with the ones you have, or is it because the ones you have are difficult?

The point is this:

Identifying and winning new client opportunities is not as easy as it sounds on paper. The pitch game is not always a fair and equitable playing field, and if you are not astute at identifying an uneven field it can be very expensive, demotivating and damaging to your brand. If — on the other hand — you have the right people in charge of the effort and your win-to-lose odds are favorable, it's just the ticket to growing beyond the survival edge. The key is and has always been keeping what you have, adding the right talent to round out the new opportunities and staying relevant with your current clients.

Remember this:

Every client relationship is vulnerable. Are you treating every relationship like it was new?

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January 2013