

WHAT JERRY MAGUIRE WOULD SAY ABOUT THE PR/MARKETING AGENCY MODEL

Seven things businesses should look for in an agency relationship.

by Jennifer Tramontana



PR and marketing agencies should take a page from Jerry Maguire's script.

...And other straight talk about the agency business model.

To channel the infamous mission statement in Jerry Maguire 'The Things We Think and Do Not Say: The Future of Our Business,' the PR/Marketing agency model could use some straight talk.

The current model is sales and growth-focused, ignoring the well-known fact that it's easier and more profitable to keep and grow current clients than it is to get new ones.

But more importantly, it sets clients up for a constant churn of account managers and work that trends from good to ok to mediocre.

I founded The Fletcher Group eleven years ago as a new kind of agency, a self-managed organization that is focused on long-term client value and profitability.

Here is what I have learned, and what businesses should look for in an agency relationship.

1 Hire an agency that wants to invest in a long-term partnership.

You will get much more value out of investing for the long-term, instead of on a project-by-project basis.

It allows the agency to get to know your business deeply, not just focus on short-term wins and billings.

Your account teams don't get moved around to more lucrative projects or downsized in rough times.

2

Look for an agency that understands that they are there to meet business**goals, not report on a bunch of tactics.**

The typical agency is notorious for breathlessly reporting on what they are doing, as if doing a bunch of “work” means anything if it doesn’t actually drive results. They can shove you into programs the agency is comfortable with instead of thinking through how it will propel your goals or meet your business needs.

“Your agency team should be business people first who choose to focus on marketing and PR.”

3

Make sure the senior principals**actually do work.** Those who only focus

on new business then disappear to go onto the next client pitch are out of touch with the changing nature of the work and what the team is struggling with or doing. It’s bad for your business, bad for agency morale and bad for churn. What is the character of the people working at your agency? Do they fit within your company culture and values? It matters when you hire an employee, so it should matter when you hire an agency.

4

Look for an agency that is as focused on smart business strategy as you are.

Dig into how the agency – not just your account – is managed. You want an agency that is in control of its business. Agencies get into trouble when they boom and bust with clients, over-invest in fixed costs, or take on business that is not a good fit. This leads to the constant need to squeeze work out of employees or look for new business. Make sure the agency has the business acumen to be a strategic partner and a sustainable firm.

5

Prioritize an agency that has a passion for its people.

Nobody delivers their best to clients when they are burned out, and that starts by setting realistic expectations and managing resources efficiently. Agencies that truly have a culture that values both the professional and personal needs of their team are better partners.

“Agencies should be clear about what they are experts in, and what they're not.”

6 Look for honesty about results and strengths and weaknesses.

Agencies should be willing to try new things and fail, just like all successful businesses. At the same time, they have to be willing to communicate honestly with clients about what is working and what falls flat. Additionally, agencies should be clear about what they are experts in, and what they're not. They should also have a network of resources who can help meet the evolving needs of their clients, including SEO, design, web and other partners.

7 Hire business people who just happen to focus on PR/marketing.

Look for an agency that can do the following: delve into a business plan; ask smart questions; interview stakeholders; size up competitors and identify the challenges, roadblocks and opportunities in a business model. Too often, PR folks rely on a rolodex of media contacts to get coverage. Good agencies today should be full-service storytellers and suggest strategy, develop compelling content, draft white papers, create research, analyze data, report to the C-suite and get the right story placed in the right outlet. You can't do this unless you have critical thinkers who understand how a business runs.



As the leader of The Fletcher Group, Jennifer has become a sought-after communications partner for B2B growth companies. Her direct approach and razor-sharp business acumen make her a favorite with executives and a trusted advisor to client organizations. Under her guidance, The Fletcher Group has earned a reputation for smart marketing and PR strategy and exceptional client service.

Jennifer specializes in advising clients in the era of modern communications, which blurs the lines between news, opinion, and influencers, and is delivered in traditional as well as increasingly digital channels. A businessperson first, and marketer second, Jennifer develops communications solutions that drive quantifiable value and help brands to tell memorable stories.

She serves various non-profit associations, speaks at conferences and events, publishes articles and opinion pieces has served as a founder and executive director to several trade associations serving her clients' industries. She has worked with businesses, foundations and government agencies in the US, Canada, Europe and Asia, bringing an international perspective to her work.

A native of Toronto, Canada, Jennifer obtained a Bachelor of Arts, Political Science from the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. She also possesses a Masters of International Affairs from Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario.

The Fletcher Group's Mission

The Fletcher Group is more sustainable and value added than any other PR or marketing agency model that exists today. We become trusted advisors to our clients, and help them to grow, protect and enhance their businesses. By maintaining low overhead, we offer clients the best value for customized, specialized service. We grow consciously and carefully. Fletcher Group consultants are self-starters who are collaborative, but also thrive independently. We are a family-friendly organization, offer our consultants unmatched flexibility and support their personal and professional aspirations.



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