



Five Ways to Differentiate Your Agency Pitch

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BE DATA DRIVEN

INTRODUCTION

Winning high-quality clients is a key to success for an agency. It helps to build a reputation, which creates a snowball effect for successful business. This type of long-term achievement starts with one thing: an extraordinary agency pitch.

An agency's pitch is what represents the agency itself. It is a comprehensive outline of what an agency can provide for in-house marketers. This requires a solid portfolio, data, and results. The agency's pitch is a standard of expectations that the in-house marketer can hold the agency to. It shows the in-house marketer that the agency knows its needs, market, audience, and competition. Vennli conducted research to discover the current expectations of in-house marketers, the quality of today's agency pitches, and what can be improved. As a result of this data, here are **five ways to differentiate your agency pitch**

BE DATA DRIVEN

While being passionate and sharing anecdotal evidence can be moving, data is what awards an agency a project. It provides the in-house marketer with immediate evidence of positive results. In a controlled survey conducted by Vennli, **70% of Marketers expect primary research in pitches, and 75% of agencies said they conduct primary research**. It was also found that primary research was conducted/expected more frequently than any other type of research.

Despite these findings, there is a discrepancy perceived by Marketers. When an in-house marketer was asked, **"What are the biggest errors or missteps an agency can make when pitching to you?"**, this was their response.

"Not showing how they plan to back up their claims to increase revenue."

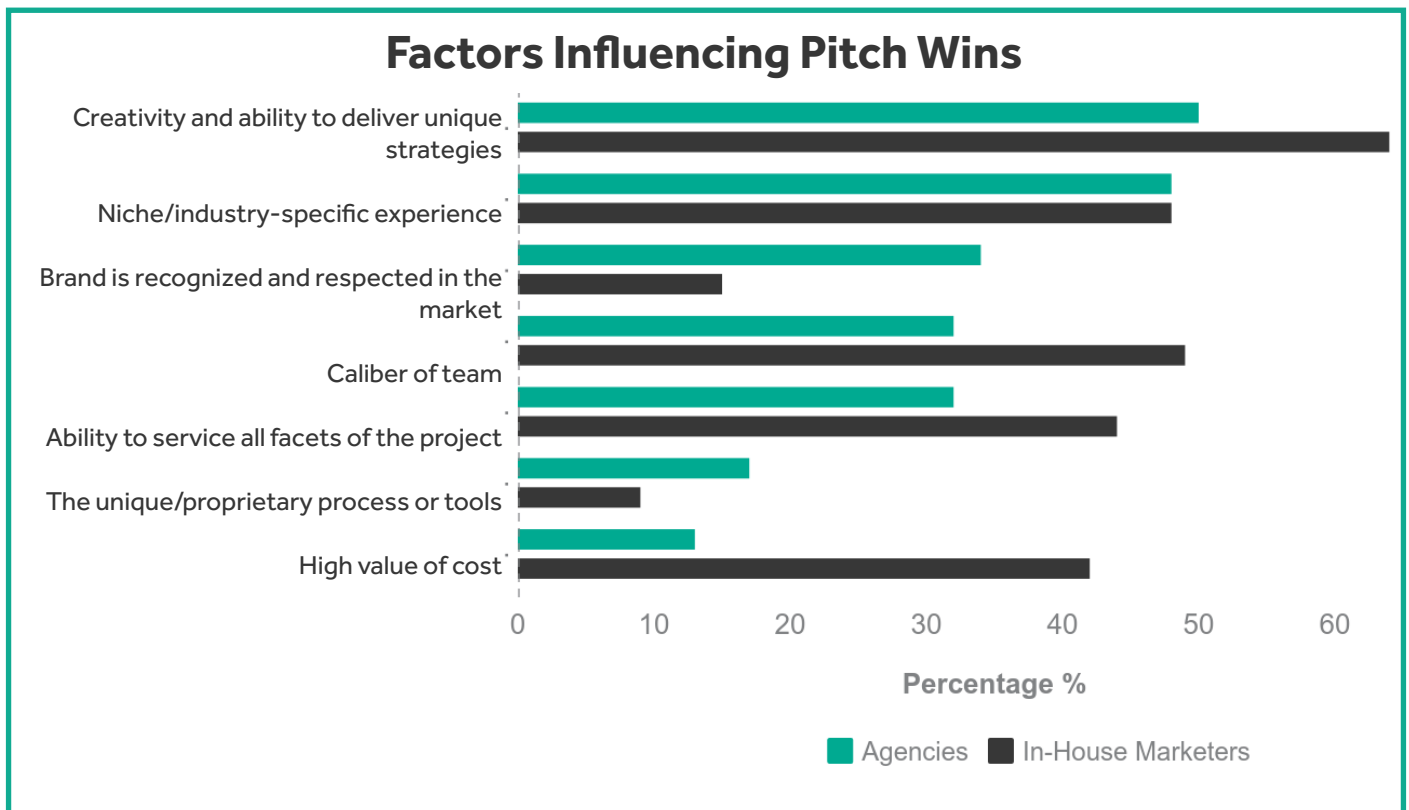
This proves to be true. **Of the agencies who reported pitch win rates above 50%, 89% said that they typically use primary research when developing a pitch. By comparison, of agencies with win rates below 40%, 64% reported that they conduct primary research in their pitches.**

According to in-house marketers, being data driven is a huge differentiating factor in an agency pitch. Why is data so important to the in-house marketer? It is important because an in-house marketer expects from an agency what their company expects of them. A substantial part of in-house marketing is proving that marketing efforts have a return on investment.

When asked why data was so important to them, this in-house marketer replied, **"It will be beneficial when trying to convince executive management for change"**. Agencies are not the only people that develop pitches! Marketing campaign proposals rely heavily on data insights that can be brought to the executive level. Without this valuable data, a lot of budget requests will be denied, resulting in a lack of work for both the agency and the in-house marketer. The ability to prove data driven decision-making and positive return on investment are absolutely essential when developing a strong partnership between in-house marketer and agency.

TAKE CHANCES & RETHINK MESSAGING

Another reason for the importance of working with a data driven agency is reputation. According to one respondent, “we are a highly data driven marketing team and bringing quantitative insights shows we are working with someone that gets strategic marketing and the value of strong claims.” It is the agency’s goal not just to close deals, but to close good deals with marketers who will be reliable. By working with an in-house marketer than values quantitative insight, an agency can be certain that they are working with a reliable client. Being awarded projects with this type of in-house marketer is remarkable for an agency’s reputation. When other in-house marketers have seen that the agency works with high-quality clients, it improves the chances of success for the agency.



TAKE CHANCES & RETHINK MESSAGING

One of the best things an agency can do for itself is commit time to producing a unique, thoughtful pitch for every potential client. Authenticity is one of the most desired traits for an agency to have. No in-house marketer wants to award an agency a project if the project doesn't feel important to the agency.

Thirty-six percent of agencies said that they're always re-thinking the client's entire strategy when developing a pitch. However, only 7% of marketers reported seeing this happen in all pitches.

In fact, a majority of marketers (59%) agreed that they really only see this happen some of the time. When an agency doesn't put effort into producing a fresh, authentic pitch, it comes across as little effort put towards researching the company of the marketing team.

TAKE CHANCES & RETHINK MESSAGING

In addition to producing new pitches that acknowledge the in-house marketer, understanding what's important to the in-house marketer is equally vital. A lot of agencies assume that the agency's brand recognition is the largest decision making factor for in-house marketers. This is not the case. Brand recognition is much less important to Marketers. While 34% of Agencies said that they think one of the most common reasons they win a pitch is because their 'brand is recognized and respected in the market', only 15% of Marketers actually thought this played a role when selecting an agency partner.

This means there is another factor playing a role in the in-house marketer's decision-making process. In the study conducted by Vennli, it was found that in-house marketers are interested in high value for cost, which is something most agencies think is irrelevant to an in-house marketer. While only 13% of Agencies said that they are winning pitches because of the 'high value for cost' they project in their pitches, 42% of Marketers said that this plays an influential role when choosing an agency partner. In-house marketers are looking for a high-quality candidate who can actually show, measure and quantify the value that they are bringing – and may have the winning edge here even if they aren't projecting the lowest costs.

Value comes from positive results, and positive results do not appear from making the same choices over and over again. Change happens when an in-house marketer chooses to let someone outside of the organization to give a third-party perspective. This outside perspective is what leads an in-house marketer to search outside of the organization. In the research, two in-house marketers were elaborated on this concept.

Q: Please tell us more about why seeing a new way of thinking about your brand, creative, marketing messaging, etc. in a pitch, has been (or would be) influential when choosing an agency partner?

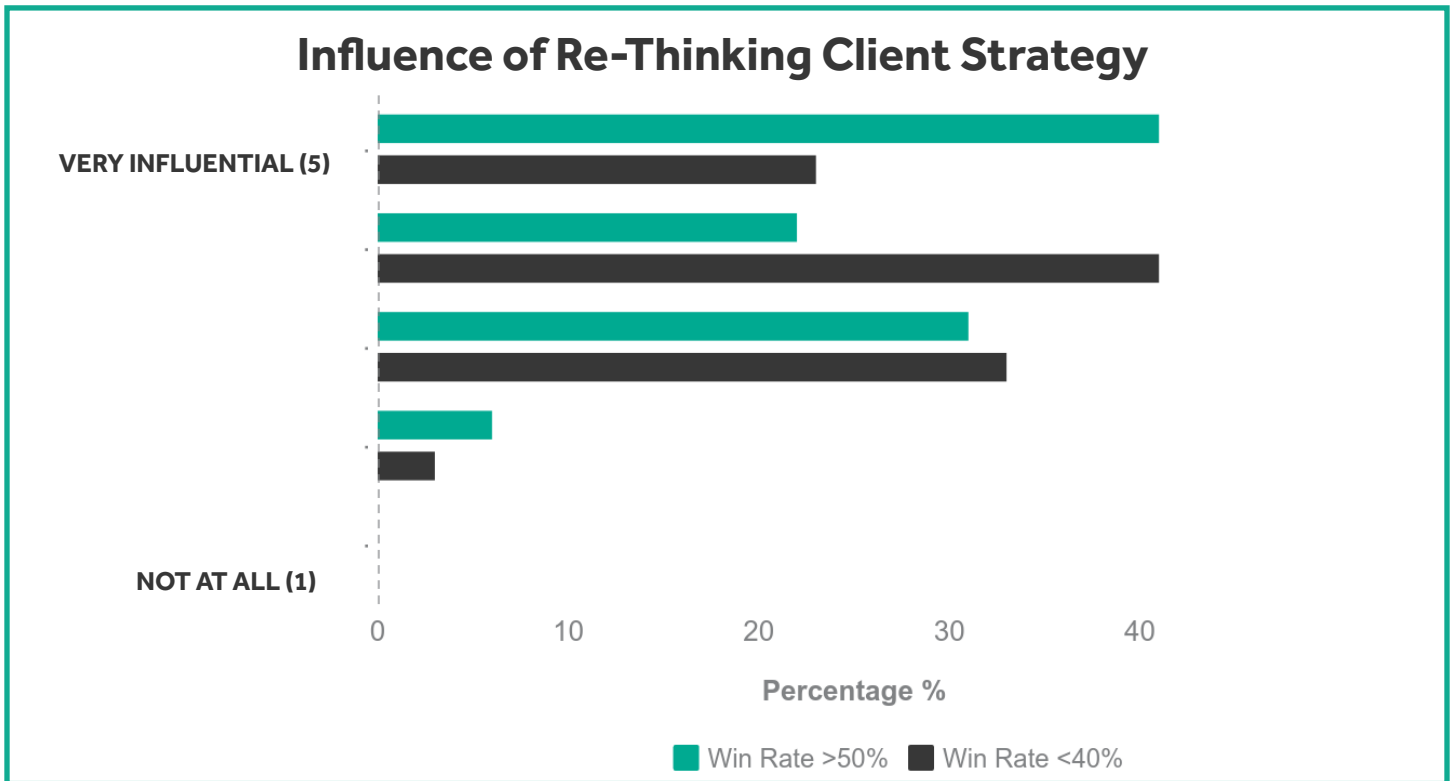
“We see our own brands every day, and looking from the outside in can be quite difficult.”

“That is what we pay them for. We are often too close to the problem. A unique vision sets us apart from our competitors.”

The type of insight that in-house marketers are looking for cannot be found in pitch approaches that do not have flexibility. The pitch is not just about what the agency can do. It is also about what the in-house marketer needs from the perspective of a professional outside of the company. An agency that takes chances and surprises the in-house marketer with new, insightful and innovative ideas for the company will be likely to win the project.

While agencies with win rates above 50% and those with win rates below 40% reported that they are always rethinking the client's entire strategy, those with win rates above 50% were much more likely to report that doing this was 'extremely influential' in differentiating their pitch (41% vs. 23%). Agencies that reported innovative re-thinking of the client's strategy were much more successful than those who did not.

KNOW THE CLIENT



KNOW THE CLIENT

In order for an agency to think outside of the box, they must know the client they are presenting to. This requires time and effort, but it is essential to a successful project. When developing a client profile, here are a few things to think about

What is the mission of the client?

What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Where is the client positioned in relation to the competition?

Who is this client's competition?

What is the client's target audience?

Developing answers to these questions is vital when writing a pitch to an in-house marketer. How can an agency possibly have success meeting the client's needs if the agency does not know who the client is? In-house marketers answered questions regarding this topic.

Q: What is the one thing you wish agencies would do when pitching that they aren't currently doing?



THINK LONG-TERM

“I would want them to fully review what we want and need and make the pitch based on our needs and not necessarily based on their strengths.”

“Some don’t thoroughly research the nature of the audience we must cater to.”

In-house marketers are looking for an agency that understands their needs based on the audience they cater to. This research can be done by understanding the work the company does, what services or products are provided, and what type of consumer is looking for that product or service. From there, establishing competitors can be as simple as researching similar companies providing the same product or service that are on the same scale.

A considerable part of knowing the client comes from knowing the competition. According to the research conducted by Vennli, 82% of marketers said they expect agencies to conduct primary research on their competitors as part of the pitch. However, only 56% of agencies reported that they always conduct competitive research. Agencies do not consider competitive research as primary research, which is what causes miscommunication. What this means is if an agency claims to do primary research prior to a pitch, this must also include competitive research. An in-house marketer’s needs are always a reflection of the competition, which is why this data is so vital.

There is data that shows the benefit for agencies that conduct competitive research. Of the agencies with pitch win rates above 50%, 60% said that they are always conducting competitor research. However, of the agencies with win rates below 40%, only 44% reported always conducting competitor research. Agencies that conduct competitive research have a higher success rate than agencies that do not.

THINK LONG-TERM

The reason why agencies skip these steps is blatantly this: there is not enough time. Anyone who works in an agency knows the fast-paced environment and constant pressure that comes with the job. It is just the reality of the industry. However, if an agency stops to think long-term, it is clear what the solution is. Rather than spreading the agency thin among several different short-term projects, the key may be to focus on more long-term prospects. When an in-house marketer was asked about the biggest errors that were made during agency pitches, this was their answer.

“I think the biggest error is not realizing the full potential of working with my company and trying to make margins from the initial proposal”.



KEY TAKEAWAY:

Thinking beyond the pitch will leave your agency open to ideas about a long-term relationship, saving time and effort for both the agency and in-house marketer.

BE A CONSULTANT

If an agency just takes the time and effort to consider long-term options, it saves time in the long run. Building a long-term relationship with a client eliminates time spent on pitches and new client research. This long-term strategy makes the most sense, considering that most businesses propose long-term relationships. In research conducted by Vennli, 40% of marketers reported putting their business up for review every 1-2 years and 47% reported that the typical length of their relationship with an agency is between 2-4 years. This means that the majority of in-house marketers consider a two-year commitment to be desirable in an agency.

BE MORE THAN AN ADVERTISER, BE A CONSULTANT

In-house marketers work with people in advertising and sales every day. Trust in the fact that they do not want to hear a pitch that sounds salesy. When they are searching for an agency, it is because they have a problem that needs to be solved. It is the job of the agency to provide a true solution, not a sales pitch. An agency should serve as a consultant for the in-house marketer that can provide specific expertise.



Marketers ranked traits they are looking for in an agency partner. In the study, 49% of marketers said the ability to be 'flexible and redirect efforts if we need to change direction' is among the top three characteristics they seek in an agency partner. 41% of marketers also cited 'can become a subject matter expert on my company, brand, and/or industry' as one of the top three characteristics they seek in agency partners. It does not matter who many sales clichés you throw at an in-house marketer. What matters is that the agency is, without a doubt, an expert on the topic. It is the job of the agency to prove to the in-house marketer that they are indeed the expert they need. This respect is built using proof of experience, data driven results, a complete understanding of the client's needs, and a planned solution to the problem.

When a group of agencies were asked the most common reason they were chosen for a project, 48% of agencies said it was due to their industry-specific experience. Being an industry-specific professional also helps an agency avoid generic pitches because the agency has the ability to elaborate on the topic. Generic pitches make the in-house marketer feel as if the agency has done nothing to research their business, which is not a great impression to make during a pitch. A consultant, by definition, is a professional who provides expert advice in a particular area! So be a consultant, not an advertiser.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Be prepared, do your research, and think about being a long-term partner when preparing an agency pitch.

CONCLUSION

Winning high-quality clients is a critical path to success for any agency. Using data, conducting client research, developing innovative solutions, planning long-term commitment, and being an expert in the field are just a few of the way to impress an in-house marketer. Using these methods not only improves an agency pitch, but it also improves the effectiveness and credibility of the agency. Agencies who have not implemented these tactics have a proven lowered success rate. Follow these steps to help your agency new business pitch win rates with high-quality clients.



ABOUT THIS EBOOK

Data for this study was gathered by Vennli through an online survey containing quantitative and qualitative questions. Responses were analyzed from 200 U.S.-based professionals who either work at agencies or as in-house Marketers. Respondents were recruited via panel.

All Respondents were screened to ensure their role required involvement in the pitch process. Respondents from agencies were screened for agency type (all types except for media planning and buying agencies were included) and their agency had to have annual revenues greater than \$1M. Respondents from the marketing department at organizations were screened for an annual marketing budget greater than \$250,000.

Agency-based and in-house marketers were asked a similar set of questions relating to their perceptions of the pitch-process. When possible, a similar set of answer options were provided to these two segments of respondents in order to allow for comparison.

ABOUT VENNLI

Vennli is a voice of the marketplace analytics platform. Vennli makes it easy to understand how consumers and customers make choices so that businesses can take quick, targeted actions. Vennli combines a proven choice model with continuous insights delivered through advanced data visualization and analytics software. Using Vennli, agencies can now streamline the insights process, improve pitch quality, and close more new business.

Learn how Vennli can help grow your business and follow us on our [blog](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

