10 ROI BOOSTING TIPS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

"How can we get the most out of our relationship with [insert supplier's name here]?" Can you remember the last time you asked your team that question?

Your decision to partner with another business is an investment — an investment in people. To ensure that it doesn't depreciate over time, here are 10 tips (in no particular order) we believe will help you drive ROI.

ALIGN TEAMS TO THE BIGGER PICTURE

Take time to get to know a little about the people on your supplier's team — not just the senior members. Create a true team dynamic by involving (when feasible) all the individuals that contribute to your business. Nothing motivates people more than to feel they are part of something bigger than the individual tasks they manage.

GET A SECOND OPINION

We love when clients ask "What do you think?" or "How would you do it?" It sounds simple but some clients can get stuck in a rut of doing something a certain way because that's how it's always been done.

To think more strategically and long-term about campaigns and their results, set aside some time upfront to outline specific program goals. This will help to establish a test design, see it through, review results, and optimize.

SHARE YOUR PAIN POINTS

Maybe you're completely out of budget and need to get creative on how to do more with less. Or maybe your supervisor has an unrealistic demand that you don't have a good solution for. Share the pain points your internal team is experiencing and let your account director propose some help.

ALWAYS PROVIDE CONTEXT

As Tom Cruise once said to Cuba Gooding Jr. in Jerry Maguire, "Help me, help you." As your partner, a supplier cannot fully help you if it doesn't know the "why" behind your request for support. It needs to be aware of what's happening within your walls. The more context, the better. It allows a partner to not only deliver on your request, but possibly recommend other solutions to solve your problem.

COLLABORATE FROM START TO FINISH

It's important for you and your supplier or services provider to define the requirements for a deliverable as the work is starting. Kickoff meetings are often valuable to discuss the project objectives, align on the proposed approach or solution, and plan for the finer details like budget, timing, deliverable formats, etc.

The most successful client relationships we have are where the teams work directly with one other and collaborate on projects from start to finish.

STREAMLINE YOUR COMMUNICATION TOUCHPOINTS

Let your service provider know who their main point of contact is and who will be the final approver on work deliverables. Having multiple opinions and points of contact can cause confusion for an agency and require hours of rework.

Also, don't overlook the importance of scheduling (and committing to) regular status meetings. Schedules can be demanding, but a brief check-in helps keep questions answered and items reviewed in a timely manner. It may also spark an idea or discussion that would not have normally been brought up.

BE TRANSPARENT FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Even though the relationship may only overlap certain areas, giving a business partner visibility across your department will allow them to think more holistically. Knowing your goals aids them in bringing solutions that advance the impact of work with other groups and vendors. Remember, we want to see your business succeed, not just the projects that we are delivering.

ASK FOR THE METRICS YOU WANT — AND NEED

Don't assume (no matter how long the relationship has been in place) that your services provider is thinking 12 steps ahead. Sometimes a campaign or tactic may just be viewed as a campaign or tactic — and that's OK. If you want to ensure you'll get the metrics and insights you need about performance, just ask!

GET ON THE SAME PAGE INTERNALLY

From assignments to sign-offs, service providers are often asked to move forward on things without the client team in full agreement. Take the time necessary to get everyone on your team on the same page internally. This due diligence will prevent the frustrating process of going through multiple rounds of feedback and any lost time that comes with it.

REMEMBER: PARTNERSHIPS TAKE TWO TO TANGO

According to Forrester Research, most agencies, suppliers, and service providers will shoulder the blame for a business relationship that just never lives up to its potential. When in reality, clients have the power to foster an "environment where an agency can easily or advantageously organize around and deliver customer-centric strategies." To make good on this:

- Address (and break down) internal channel silos
- Prioritize a lasting partnership
- Vet a service provider's long-term staff quality

ONE FOR THE ROAD

Per Forrester, a common mistake clients make is asking for a strategic vision but then treating an agency or services provider like a product vendor. That's a big mistake, because the businesses you choose to work with are, in essence, an extension of your team.

Include them in strategic conversations to ensure they know your business goals, both overall and long-term.

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