

## **Buying Services – especially Fund-raising, Marketing, Digital & Media**

The key to success in this area is to know the category that you are buying and building strong client/agency relationships. Here are some tips on what I think would help the client: agency procurement relationship work better.

### **1. Accept and respect their role.**

Good procurement people can play an invaluable role in managing the commercial aspect of the client/agency relationship. They are often around longer than their marketing counterparts so work with them to ensure that all parties are happy with how they are working. Procurement people do move on, but it is always helpful to have a 'procurement' friendly agency when that next pitch or tender comes up.

### **2. Appoint a person in your agency for Purchasing to work with.**

It is time consuming to have to deal with the Finance Director, the Client Services Manager, the Group Account Director, the external lawyer, etc at an agency. It is easier and more controllable from a communication and action point of view to have one central point of contact to work alongside, especially if they understand the role and people in Oxfam Procurement. If this is the FD make sure that they understand the brief and the role that they have to play.

### **3. Be Open, Honest and Transparent.**

Procurement people are there to ensure that you make a fair profit for the work that you do. If your supplier feels that you should mark up third party goods to cover the time it has taken you to source it, then tell Procurement and they and your supplier will have a discussion about it. Or if the current trend of extending payment terms is too much for you, talk to them. As Bob Hoskins said in a very old BT old "it's good to talk".

### **4. Push back if you feel bullied.**

There is inexperience and lack of knowledge out there, but with initiatives such Magic and Logic and The Good Pitch Guide, things are improving within Procurement. But if you feel that an agency person is being unreasonable then tell Procurement. Stand up for what you believe in for Oxfam – agencies do great work and sometimes Procurement can help to see both sides of the table clearly.

### **5. Team work**

It is essential that Oxfam's procurement and marketing or Comms teams work together. Sometimes it is hard for the procurement person to engage with their internal clients. Everyone can help them 'build this bridge' by showing that by all working together, the Agency / Client relationship will blossom.

## **6. Education, Education, Education**

A lot of the commercial inexperience comes from a lack of knowledge of how an agency works or perhaps dependency on an external consultant. Help educate and train your agencies, procurement & clients alike – take them on a shoot, sit them at a Mac for a day, get them to sit with your media buyers – it will help all people become better at understanding the roles & responsibilities

## **7. Process Improvement**

Time and cost savings can be made for all parties by looking at the ways of working, both with the client e.g. the briefing process and internally within the agency e.g. creative development time. Engage all your teams to help review the processes together and to look at ways of improving upon timelines and sign off procedures, and over complications. .

## **8. Talk measurement and effectiveness**

Some people love numbers so talk KPI's, SLA's and ROI to them – we need to make that more people in Oxfam . With pressure on all Oxfam budgets, helping to justify expenditure by measuring the results of how the work has gone, will help all in the long term. Measuring the projects with wash up meetings and project evaluations should be a matter of course , for all spend. NOT by exception.

## **9. Management Information**

It is great to see an agency supply regular reconciliation reports on the fee and scope of work or even savings made to date on production – be it on a monthly or quarterly basis. The agency should supply it proactively too, and setting this as an expectation, early on in the relationship is very fruitful and highly recommended.

## **10. Relationship Management**

As well as measuring the output that Oxfam are receiving, take time to implement a supplier relationship management programme too with Procurement. Ensure there is a 360 degree so you get an opportunity to talk about how things are working or could be improved. We can offer you the tools , or facilitate this process for you.

You have to love or at least feel passionate about the category that you are buying. Buying Services is much more personalized and much more about stakeholder management than any other category of buying. We spend time reading and doing research on the category, we go and visit suppliers, we talk to your peers and we talk to fellow buyers – so can help find you the right solution.