

Thrilling CLIENTS?

On today's pharma world of patent expirations, consolidations, downsizing, and shrinking budgets, we are finding that having "happy and satisfied" clients is no longer good enough. Today's environment demands that agencies strive to build team chemistry, deepen relationships, and seek to "thrill our clients."

Thrilling clients is in the lifeblood of agencies, it is what sets us apart from our competition, and it is the foundation upon which we build real relationships and partnerships with the people who depend on us for our unique expertise, skills, and insights. Striving for anything less during this time of turbulent change and scrutiny is inexcusable.

But what do we mean by thrilling our clients? How is that defined? And what does it require?

Colleagues across disciplines — account, art, copy — delivered some extraordinary, insightful answers. I am struck by the richness of their responses and the common themes in the replies.

Passion and Enthusiasm

Be as passionate about the client's brand as they are and bring that to the table in your work. It is equally important that the passion is real, and demonstrates true love for what you do for them.

Be even more passionate about the brand than they are. The careers of your clients are riding on the brands on which they work. Show that you're all in...every day. Constantly think of — and deliver — new and unexpected ways to drive the success of the brand, and they'll love you for it.

Show an ongoing visceral excitement, a genuine enthusiasm for clients' brand and their success. The key word is "genuine." Let them know you've got an honest appreciation of the opportunities they have, in the context of the limitations they face.

Convey a true feeling of enthusiasm for the work being presented. This sentiment, when it permeates everything you do, is infectious, and thrilling to clients.

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Trust

Building trust is huge. Work to get your client to trust your judgment, and make sure they know you always have their backs and have the best interest of the brand in mind. Ensure, every day, that you are always there when they need you.

Stand out above the rest. Trust is hard to gain and easy to lose. It constantly needs to be nurtured and cultivated. You can easily tell the difference when talking to a client who trusts you and one who doesn't.

Listening

Listen more. If your work and ideas prove to your clients that you heard them and respected their request, they will in turn respect your decision to challenge them with ideas that take that same request in directions they never considered. Equally important: if your actions prove that you are listening to them, they will never feel that talking to you is a waste of their time.

Go above and beyond to exceed their expectations. Although you may not always agree with clients' views or direction, you have to show them that you are hearing them, but more importantly listening to what is being said.

Be connected with clients beyond "just the work." Knowing about them and relating to them as people helps you to better understand their lives and personalities. It lets them know you are really there and that you listen and understand them. It creates a connection that moves beyond the average "vendor/client" relationship.

Proactivity and Responsiveness

Finish their homework for them and do it earlier than planned. Help shoulder their burden and make them look good.

Gain their confidence — total responsiveness is essential to thrilling your client. They should know that your accessibility to them isn't limited to just 9 to 5.

Contributed by



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Creative Expression

Use your right-brain. Clients are wrapped up in budgets and making numbers, which often drives them to forget about the big picture and the long term. Don't forget, they rely on you to bring it full circle.

Push to present elegant ideas that communicate intent simply — simple salience, smart work. Show them how their brand vision really stands out. Creatively highlight the need and show the emotional connection to the brand.

All relationships require maintenance. They require investment. They require a commitment to exceed expectations, to deliver the new, to combat ambivalence and reticence with fierce and unrelenting passion. Client relationships are no different. We have a responsibility to keep them not only satisfied, not only happy, but thrilled.

Ask yourself: "Am I thrilling my client?" **PV**

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