

MEDIA STRATEGY

Your best source for new business is you

Media directors do more than planning and buying

By Helene Kalmanson

Media directors have a lot to keep track of, but Helene Kalmanson, president of Kalmanson Consulting, points out that they must not forget developing new business. To back up her suggestions, Kalmanson talked to media and new business executives for insight on pursuing opportunities.

Think your plate is full? Guess again. Today a media director needs more than expertise in planning and buying in every medium on this planet, more than the foresight of Nostradamus, the negotiating skills of Henry Kissinger and the wisdom of Solomon. Add new business development to your list.

Media directors' new business opportunities and responsibilities are escalating due to advertisers' increased focus on media and its prevalent complexities. Given this spotlight, it's no longer enough to limit your new business role to specific pitches. Get involved at all levels; it's important for your agency's growth and for your own career path. There are at least five areas of new business to which you can contribute greatly:

1. *Agency self-analysis.* Insist on being included in the agency's annual review of new business. If your agency doesn't already examine its competitive positioning and the results of its new business program at least once a year, initiate the meeting yourself. The most important client you have is your own agency. Help make sure its marketing and promotional strategy is on-track.

Richard Dale, senior vice president and media director at Deutsch Inc., keeps closely involved, although he believes "it's not the norm. The three of us [Don Deutsch, Jeff DiJoseph and Dale] get together and discuss our positioning within the industry frequently, not only in terms of new business, but what we want the agency to become." He advises, "Try to get as involved as you possibly can with the entire strategy. Don't isolate yourself."

2. *Prospecting and lead generation.* Knowing when an advertiser turns into a prospective client is key to business development. As media director, you have a wonderful natural source of information on potential new clients: the media sales force. Don't evade them; mine them for information. One agency I know successfully courted the publishers and sales directors it dealt with by throwing intimate "get-to-know-us" breakfasts. It was upfront about its new business plans and asked its guests to think of the agency when they heard of disgruntled clients in those areas.

Susan Gianinno, executive vice president and marketing director at



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Young & Rubicam, counts on media's involvement. "Our media people are terrific windows to the client. Their network of connections, contacts and insights is incredible. George Sharpe [Y&R's media director] has wonderful resources for lead generation and in reviews."

3. *Pursuit.* Getting the prospective client in the door for the first meeting often requires more than an invitation. As media director, you may not make the cold call, but you can make a vital contribution to pursuit strategy. Use your contacts to gain inside knowledge about the brand. Take your thinking beyond media opportunities. Try to look at media choices as clues to a company's marketing situations and challenges. You have a unique point of view, different from that of other members of top management. Put it to work for new business.

Sue Nanfeldt, senior vice president and media director at Margeotes Ferritita & Weiss, suggests contacting the publisher of the prospect's trade publication. "Publishers are one of the best sources of business knowledge." I'll add that they're also one of the fastest conduits to insight about a category. Therefore, get to know publishers of trade books in your agency's primary prospect categories.

4. *Presentations and spec.* Don't limit your role in the credentials presentation to describing your department's size and function. What is your agency's attitude toward media? What media philosophy do you ascribe to? Do you offer highly creative approaches? Early integration of the media function with creative and strategic planning? Anything unique? What does the prospect need that your agency can believably offer? Be prepared to address these

issues, as well as those of unbundling services and the ever-present question of clout. There is no one right answer; each media director's opinion reflects the position and approach of their agency.

Dale believes that "many agencies give lip service to the idea of integrated service... But the people at the top need to really believe that media can provide added value."

"The term [clout] is a misnomer," claims Nanfeldt. "I can buy more efficiently than big agencies... The key is that the media rep is willing to work with us. Sometimes smaller agencies and buying services are more flexible and adaptable."

Gianinno disagrees. "Media clout is incredibly important because it really makes a difference. But clout is not just a matter of size, it's in the quality of the relationship with the media... the creativity and value media can bring in can make the difference in the quality of the idea."

Mike Lotitto, senior vice president and director of media services at Ammirati & Puris, believes "unbundling puts tremendous pressure on the client to coordinate between [agency and buying service]." He adds, "I think the importance of media clout to prospects is overstated. They come to an agency for strong strategies and sound creative that are executed wonderfully."

Geer DuBois has turned the tables on the unbundling issue by starting its own agency-of-record operation, Media Control Systems. Although it provides AOR services just for current Geer DuBois clients, it "possibly could lead to new business opportunities," admits Joy Sliwa, executive vice president, media director. I certainly hope so; it's a terrific business development idea.

5. *Corporate identity.* Commit yourself to helping improve your agency's public profile. Join organizations where networking can pay off. Make speeches and participate on panels for client and agency groups. Enter media-oriented award shows. Let reporters who cover your agency know you are available to speak with them when they are writing about media issues. Author articles for agency and industry trade books.

Lotitto does. Besides speaking "at least three times a year," he helped start Media Directors Forum, whose members from mid-sized agencies meet regularly and share information and ideas on important issues and trends.

Finally, remember: You have unique skills and contacts that are essential to your agency's growth. Put those skills to work. It will add to your professional stature and increase your value to the agency as a whole. ■