

Integrators and relationships: what CMOs are looking for from agencies

 By [Cesar Vacchiano](#)

29 Aug 2022

Marketers are spending 50% of their budgets on brand building and 50% on sales activation in the digital arena.



Source: © fauxels [pexels](#) CMOs want one agency within their ecosystem that is an integrator

This is according to the *Agency Scope 2021/22* research from interviews with more than 3,000 key-market CMOs globally.

Previously the impact of Covid19 on digital growth was highlighted.

One integrator as a driver

CMOs have realised that platforms such as Google and Facebook do not necessarily help strategically but are good value tactically. Agencies, however, have become even more important from a strategic point of view and are valued as strategic partners when they can advise on the best use of various platforms.

Scopen Africa Partner and CEO of the Independent Agency Search & Selection Company (IAS), Johanna McDowell, says that CMOs across the globe want to work with specialists in the digital space, realising there's much more to digital than just content and performance marketing.

McDowell says marketers also recognise that they must have one agency within their ecosystem that is an integrator and helps the CMO to integrate all the different functions of each participant in the system, bringing these together in a cohesive way.

It must be clear that this integrator should not be seen as the driver of the eco-system; but rather as the facilitator that ensures the right agencies are in place to meet the strategic plan.

As McDowell suggests, this may not necessarily be the creative agency. In the past, this task was often given to the media agency, which may be a solution worth taking into consideration.

Scopen data shows 49% of CMOs globally have a lead agency, which could be any of a company's agencies but must have the ability and acumen to consolidate the functions of a whole group and have them work as a cohesive unit.

Key disciplines under the spotlight

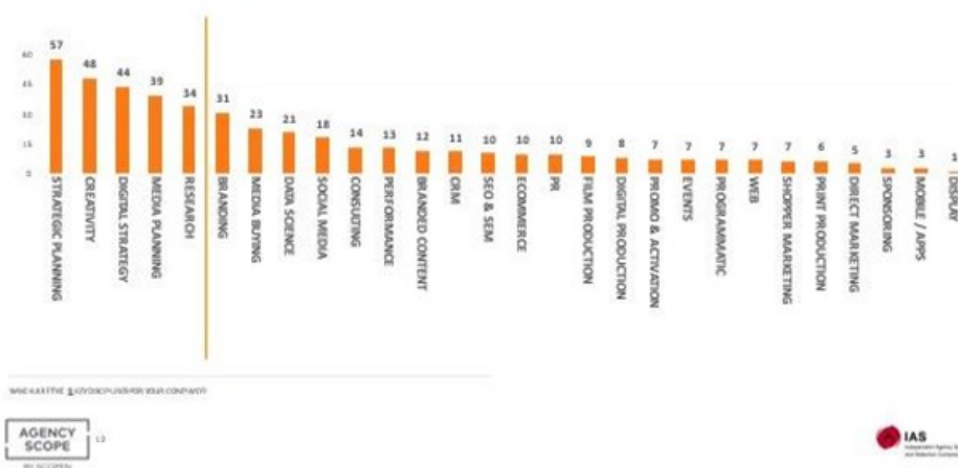
In analysing and tracking more than 6,000 marketer-agency/partners relationships across the world, Agency Scope 2021/22 sees the order of marketers' key discipline requirements now being:

- strategic planning (57%)
- creativity (48%)
- digital strategy (44%)
- media planning (39%)
- research (34%)

When seeking the ideal agency partner, both strategic planning and knowledge have grown in demand.

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Key Disciplines for Marketers



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Reviewing new business activities in the post-pandemic years, McDowell says CMOs now want more face-to-face meetings than online and, while video calling may still be used for agility and speedy conversations, preference will always be given to meeting in person.

integration high on the list

As mentioned in previous highlights, clients are generally satisfied with their agencies. However, if they are going to go out to pitch, they now have integration high on their lists and will look to ensure the incumbent agency is able to be effectively integrated into the mechanics of the client's current organisations.

Agencies should note that when a CMO is looking for an agency, they will always ask how well that agency will be integrated into their ecosystem. It's not just about the great creative idea or an agency being brilliant in the media arena – it's become equally important to respond to the CMO's key question: "How well will this agency partner with my organisation?"

Another key area of interest highlighted in the *Global Trends Masterclass* is the importance of case studies when a marketer is looking for an agency.



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Ability to troubleshoot

However, these are not just to enable the marketer to see the work the agency has done – what today's CMO is looking for is the ability to troubleshoot, so they'll be looking at problems that the agency helped the marketer to solve, and how they solved them.

Finally, the digitally-savvy CMO wants agency partners who can understand data, manage it, and integrate it. If this is beyond the ability of the agency, the partnership won't work.

As marketers continue to seek the best ROI from their investment in agencies, stand-out companies that bring creative innovation; market, client and brand knowledge; and strategic planning will likely make the cut. However, should this be packaged with integrated services offering and digital capabilities, the CMO may well have a winner.

ABOUT CESAR VACCHIANO

President & CEO at SCOPE

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