

The agency of the future: no agency?

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"Clients do not want a retained agency any more. They want the best idea that is driven by a project agency." Agree? Disagree? Dean Delaney, Managing Director at [DAN Tanzania](#), discusses.



For an industry that should live and breathe innovation, at its core, the advertising industry doesn't seem to be innovating as fast as it should. The rise of the consultancy and the attempt to challenge the status quo is testament to the fact that our industry is ready for disruption. A quick Google Trends search shows the search term, "agency of the future" peaked on 14 April 2019, although data shows significant interest in this term going back to 2014. How much longer will we sit on our beanbags and speak of the future?

Ironically, the very same people who stand up in front of our clients and confidently preach the importance for brands to be customer-centric are the very same people who seem to be overlooking what it is that our very clients are truly looking for.

So what are they looking for?

Efficiency. Consolidation. Control. Compliance. Ten years ago, these words would most likely not have been part of a client's vocabulary. Today, you would be hard-pressed to get through a single status meeting without these words being bandied about.

Competition is fierce, consumers have choices, people are savvy. So brands have to work harder and smarter to forge a meaningful place in the consumer's daily life. Additionally, marketers and brand managers are now more accountable than ever before and have a real responsibility to deliver bottom-line growth. A starting point for delivering efficiencies is consolidating service providers and retaining more control of the supply chain through insourcing certain transactional capabilities such as SEO, programmatic, data gathering, social media management and social listening.

Creative impact

Clients are demanding big ideas that deliver real business growth. Maybe these big ideas will be implemented through insourcing or project-based agencies, but the real ideas are ones that drive real innovation.

The opportunities still lie in developing fresh, potent, energising creative for clients. As creative businesses, the sooner we accept that clients no longer want to pay for unnecessary services and we start to sharpen our focus, the sooner we will

identify better, more relevant revenue models that support the “agency of the future”. While we want to own it all, agencies also need to be open to selling the idea and supporting the implementation thereof, however the client sees fit.

Our greatest skill has always been creating the idea. Perhaps things have become blurry along the way, but that remains our single most powerful offering. Not for long, however, as we are starting to see mergers between consultancies and creative agencies.

A formula for value

Developing powerful creative, idea-led thinking has to be driven by data and that’s where DAN is leading the charge across sub-Saharan Africa. Focusing on genuine contextual engagement through data means we are able to stay true to our purpose of [moving business by moving people](#). Moving conversations from brand equity to brand energy, from scale to agility, from presence to connectivity. We believe that these conversations are part of the change that our clients are looking for. An innovative approach that puts our clients and their needs first and foremost. A solution that allows us to deliver an approach that is ideas-led, data-inspired and technology-enabled, and that delivers real value for our clients.

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