



Show Them That You C.A.R.E. *How To Manage Your Client-Agency Relationship Effectively*

C.A.R.E. stands for Client-Agency Relationship Evaluation. And with few exceptions, advertisers and agencies don't do an adequate job evaluating the finer details of their relationships, from top to bottom, on an ongoing basis. It's too bad, because proper attention to managing the details of such an important partnership can help ensure the health of the relationship and preempt the usual breakdowns that eventually lead to an agency search.

A strong advertiser-agency relationship usually leads to a more inspired effort by everyone involved in the creation and execution of marketing communications. Agencies do their best work when they have good bottom-to-top relationships with their clients. And if agencies did their best work all of the time, according to the 2000 Salz Survey of Advertiser-Agency Relations, advertisers estimated that they would get a 26 percent boost in sales! Conversely, if the client-agency relationship is not healthy, you can expect the effectiveness of the marketing budget and the marketing ROI to suffer commensurately.



Barry L. Linetsky
Partner

The C.A.R.E. instrument was born out of a number of major client-agency audits we did for some of Canada's largest corporations and agencies. Clearly there was a need for an objective methodology to assess the key processes behind the joint advertiser-agency creation of marketing communications. That methodology resides neither with the advertiser or the agency alone; both parts must come together and operate as a single entity to be most effective.

To this end, if the creation and production of marketing communications is embarked upon as a partnership in the true sense of the word, then both advertiser and agency must maximize the efficacy of their respective contributions. If it is a partnership, then both the advertiser and the agency must be open to reciprocal assessments for the benefit of the target audience, and the good of the product, the relationship, and more importantly, the responsibility both groups have together to the owners/shareholders of the advertiser. That is what the C.A.R.E. survey does: it provides a means to assess the quality of the client-agency relationship.

Unlike a formal annual agency assessment (which relatively few advertisers do), the C.A.R.E. survey is

more akin to a business "process" assessment (which almost nobody does). It takes a more granular approach to the assessment of key processes in the development and execution of marketing communications on both the client and agency sides. The survey is completed anonymously by everybody who is involved on the account in a significant way, both from the advertiser and the agency. Each person provides their perspective on what constitutes an

excellent client and agency across a number of dimensions; they provide an importance weighting across a number of categories; and they rate the performance of both organizations on a number of attributes. They can also provide narrative comments about the relationship and improvement recommendations.

The results are tabulated and a comprehensive report is prepared and presented to both teams. The report includes findings and conclusions in graphical and narrative format, and includes the identification of the relationship improvement priorities on both sides.

With the C.A.R.E. results at hand, we encourage both sides to come together and jointly approve the top three to five improvement priorities for the advertiser and the agency. Each should then go away and develop a "90-day" improvement plan to be presented to and approved by the other party. Once approved, implementation should begin, with the goal of improving the weakest processes to strengthen the quality of the client-agency relationship and ensure that together, the agency is able to do the best work that it can for the client. We can also provide an energizing and motivating two-day workshop to present the findings, discuss the key client and agency issues, and create action-plans that both sides would agree to implement.

Given how important great marketing communications are to driving top-line revenue for your company, and given how important the client-agency relationship is to the success of great marketing communications, the question must be asked: Why don't you C.A.R.E.?

For some companies, millions, or tens of millions of marketing dollars are invested annually. We think you owe it to yourself, your employees, your board and your shareholders to show that you C.A.R.E.



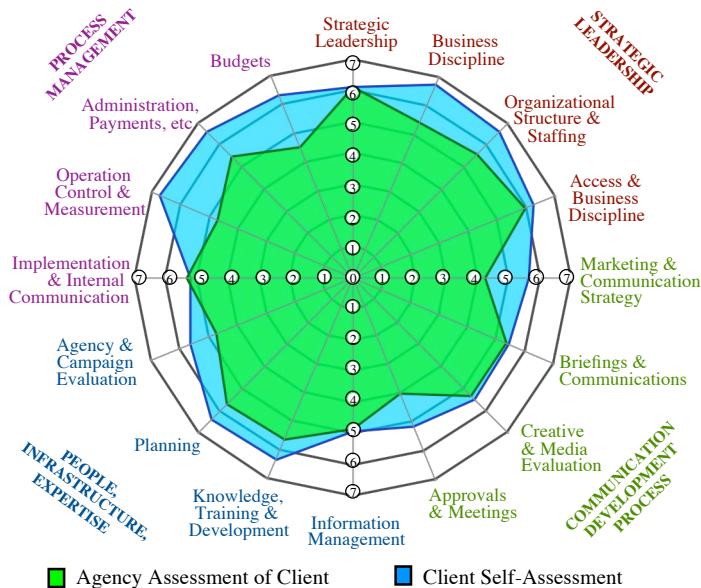
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Responses from the C.A.R.E. survey are tabulated and presented in a detailed report that is visual in appearance (graphs, charts, tables, highlights) and easy to understand, interpret, and use. The report enables Advertisers and Agencies to take the temperature of the relationship by identifying perceived strengths and weaknesses, and to work together to improve priority improvement areas on both sides of the relationship for mutual benefit. The survey is an objective two-way evaluation that enables advertisers and agencies to rate themselves and each other.

Diagram Representing the Client Side Relationship



About the Agency

- Assessment of the Agency against Client perceptions of an “excellent” Agency
- Assessment of Agency performance on a series of Agency functional attributes
- Agency’s assessment of its own performance
- Objective gap analysis of Agency and Client perceptions of each other
- Ranking of importance of key attributes
- Verbatim comments by Client and Agency

About the Client

- Assessment of the Client against Agency perceptions of an “excellent” Client
- Assessment of Client performance on a series of advertiser functional attributes
- Client’s assessment of its own performance
- Objective gap analysis of Client and Agency perceptions of each other
- Ranking of importance of key attributes
- Verbatim comments by Client and Agency

About The Strategic Planning Group

The Strategic Planning Group (T.S.P.G.) is a full service consulting firm that can provide organizations with a wide range of advice, business tools and solutions. At T.S.P.G. our focus is on helping our clients solve their complex issues to realize their ultimate business potential, whether we are helping to set the overall strategy for the organization or assisting in a particular functional area. Our practical-results-oriented approach to solving business problems, combined with our personal commitment and dedication to providing great value for our clients, makes us the consultants of choice to blue-chip executives across North America.

We aspire to be more than just consultants. For us to be successful in helping you we need to understand how you operate and what challenges you are currently facing. We want to help you achieve your goals and your ultimate business potential. To accomplish this we must be trusted and objective advisors by contributing our knowledge, experience and thinking in ways that have a positive impact. We want to be *your* consultants of choice – as we are for other senior executives – for all of your strategic business needs.

How to Reach Us

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