



(Any resemblance between characters in this tale and persons living or dead and or businesses is purely coincidental)

## Synopsis

A tragi-comedy. Four thousand marketing services providers ('the suitors') set up shop in the UK, intending to solve the communications-related agenda of just one thousand (or so), organisations with spend worth fighting for. Each suitor, (they describe themselves as 'agencies' or 'consultancies' depending on how they hold their mirror), thinks it is a rightful claimant. The din of ensuing battle is deafening. We are left to imagine how confusing it is for those that they fight over. Gradually certain suitors achieve dominance based on the strength of their propositions and the tactics they deploy...

## Setting

The set for our play is a complicated one, with broad horizons, shifting sands and frequent costume changes. The agencies inhabiting this landscape work with countless models yet are united by a singular objective – securing a lion's share of the spenders' budgets. Though offerings differ due to specific make-up, the end results they promise are often similar: lift sales, increase market share, enhance brand equity, acquire, retain, cross-sell, up-sell, through-sell, join-up brand experiences, align brand actions, improve recall and standout, integrate channels for consistency at every touch-point, and thus transform shareholder value, etc. etc. They make their offers from the safety of their pigeonholes, classifying themselves (or being classified whether liking it or not) by the prospects as: direct/relationship marketing, advertising, interactive, PR, live communications, brand strategy and management, packaging design, environmental design, promotional marketing, market research, media planning and buying etc. etc. If they feel their pigeonholes are pigeonholing, they may apply grand banalities: transforming themselves into integrated communicators, or simply 'value-creators' etc. etc.

Each discipline within marketing services stakes a claim to be chief driver in achieving success for its clients. They endeavour to be seen to provide 'strategic counsel', to have the ear of the board, deserving of long-term and secure revenue stream. And so, via telephone lines, in-boxes, mailbags, press releases, conferences and awards nominations, the clamour of claim and counter claim clangs in chaotic cacophony; numbing senses, maddening the budget holders, and even confusing the suitors at times. For though they are each evangelist for the particular service they sell, they cannot help noticing what others are up to and wondering sometimes what really is best, what work's better, and what doesn't. ([See Dimension 13 - selling integration](#)).

## Themes

The propositions of the suitors swing on slow pendulums. "The right way is specialist": unbeatable, relevant experience, masters of trade, independent, unfettered. But then wait, "the right way is now integrated": single purchase-point, economy of scale, buying-power synergies, under one roof, joined-up thinking and joined-up doing. They justify their propositions as being good for the clients. Often they more accurately reflect their own structural realities. In some year's jacks have the upper hand; some year's masters win above the din.

The agencies that the new business characters in our tale help to build are sold. Owners move on quick sharp or earn-out slow. Some of our new business folk are lucky enough to work for founders or visionaries, others for those that succeed them. Succession teams manage others successes often under the cosh of group or holding company masters. Seldom will they generate a vision of their own. Managers buy out - managers buy in. Many have never picked up a phone to cold-sell their agency in their lives. They find it difficult to relate to the pressures our heroes and heroines, the new business folk of our story, confront.

## Principal Players

### *The New Business Professional*

In the frontline of the earlier 4000 goes into 1000 equation, are those in the new business function. Whether executive, coordinator, manager, or director, they are to extents fishers, farmers, foragers and hunters. Some believe in the old ways; choose a target, stalk it meticulously with favourite spear or hook. Others believe in latest industrial techniques - factory farming for bigger, more reliable harvests. Whatever their approach, their new business life will be like Cinderella meets Groundhog Day. Sweeping dirt one moment, belle of the ball the next, then faster than you can say 'next quarter's targets'; it's back to the sweeping. To gratuitously extend this simile, an ugly sister generally lurks in the boardroom, with purpose and satisfaction to apply unrelenting pressure on poor Cinders. She cheerfully wipes the sweat from her brow and types another tailored letter, hoping for the big win that will someday soon, carry her off to a fabled land of meaningful promotion, 'torch bearing', broom bearing now joyfully delegated to the next generation.



But the years spent sweeping were valuable. She learned skills forged from pressure, the mastering of true business ability -identification of demand, and the supplying of an appropriate solution. At the annual masked ball she no longer sees her colleagues as homogenous executives, rather they divide into types: a rarer breed of entrepreneurial thinkers like herself, and a larger community of courtly-mannered bureaucrats. She will talk to the entrepreneurs and consider her next move.

New business people are conflicted types. They enthuse, convince and explore. They lay egos and other important bits from time to time on the line. They are ambassadors externally and diplomats internally. They lead a team, but also serve as P.A., co-coordinating diaries. Then they're creative thinkers, moving dialogue on with prospects laterally, diagonally, and even dimensionally. They subtly steer agency grandees away from empire-building communications strategies, which rely on imaginary wunder-weapons, towards simpler yet abler tactics that won't 'jam in the field'. Then it's back to stuffing envelopes. But they never complain. Like ballerinas they don't show pain or weakness - they can't afford to.

### *The Owner Driver*

Cinderella's greatest friend, the Knight of the tale is clear about the quest, proficient in the use of new business tools, and will inspire new business folk to reach the top of the mountain.



### The Group

The Group (court of the Grand Pasha) understands how to wage war by acquisition, influence, and managing costs, but is as far away from the day-to-day realities of new business as a First World War general from the trenches. They'll continue to expect cold-prospected revenue once they've taken over the company from the founder/owner drivers, but may then be entirely unwilling to resource it properly. Their imperious approach cultivates a climate of pressure, but usually not one of support and leadership at the grass roots. Irritatingly, they will occasionally issue diktats on vision, mission, the 'group message' etc., but as it was conceived at the top of an ivory tower, it is often useless at ground level.



### The Succession Team

Sometimes Cinderella's worst enemy and usually close friends of ugly sisters and bean counters. New business activity is a cost, not an investment. "Why can't you just ring up your mates, or whoever your contacts are exactly, and get them to use us. What the hell do we pay you for?" The Succession Team may be risk averse. Earners of accruing packages, stability is their hidden goal.



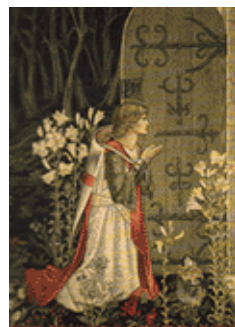
### The New Business Consultancy

The New Business Consultancy lives in the land of Shifting Sands. Colourful troubadours, they are nomads who dislike putting down firm foundations like solid planning for messaging, targeting, and communications. Rather they are mystery players and minstrels. They talk the talk. They sound very nice, very certain. Our troubadours arrive in the village, with drums and dancing, over-promising (and under-delivering). Everyone knows the storyline - but still - like children, they queue up to hear it again. What exactly is a new business meeting? It seems so simple? What exactly do we mean by a pitch? One man's pitch is another man's introductory chat. They promise results based on case studies. Does everyone in their portfolio achieve these results? How many failures are there for every success? If only we knew. But the magic of the external lead generator is that we will never really know. As soon as the encores fade, they've packed up and moved on to the next village.



### The Freelance Lead Generator

Unlike the external troubadour, here's one with a plan, albeit one-dimensional. It involves knocking on doors (or battering in gates, tearing off portcullis's and rudely waking the king in his nightdress). Our door breaker has a notebook with the addresses of several other castles he regularly gate crashes on behalf of your agency's brand.



### *The Search & Selection Intermediary*

Search and selection has exceptionally well-manicured fingers in both breadbaskets. There are only a few players of note. Their model of convenience for the clients is matched by one of resignation among the agencies - a kind of annual marketing tax. The precise nature of the dark and twisting corridors that lead an agency out to the light via a search and selector can only be guessed at.



### *The Intelligent New Business Provider*

Jumping in and out of Cinderella's tale is her fairy godmother. She supplies certain relationship and brand building advantages that help ensure Cinders goes to the ball. These are: best practice new business planning (ensuring Cinderella has a dress that's different and special), press monitoring that clearly identifies where the value is and where it isn't (intelligence on the luminaries attending the ball), prospect development programmes that deliver for the majority as opposed to a lucky case study-making minority (i.e. a vehicle that won't turn into a pumpkin). Our fairy godmother will make sure Cinders reaches the most profitable audience with the most compelling message. She then helps her to maintain an effective dialogue, avoiding wasteful stop-start activity (those pumpkins again), to improve the relationship so that she becomes the logical choice a marriage partner for Prince Charming...



...The End