

## CREATIVE PLANNING



### To get to where you want to, you need creative planning...

In 1996 Rainmaker was founded on the principle that strategic planning for new business isn't optional - but essential. Yet agencies are still finding out the hard way that in order to get to where you want to, you have to plan for success. There are no shortcuts here - where you place the goalposts will firmly dictate the probability of scoring.

Planning mixes process and experience and the more of both the better. But above all it's about creative, lateral, conceptual thinking. It requires your best brains and a discipline to channel them to a productive outcome.

If you don't plan properly you waste resources, time and money. Everyone's wising up, but it's a tricky thing to get right and you've got to approach issues like 'what do we stand for?' and 'why is this better than our competitors?' with sensitivity and creativity.

What does this involve? Having conducted creative new business planning processes with the directors of over 100 agencies, including WWAV Rapp Collins, Interbrand, Landor, Agency.Com, The Partners and Firefly - we think we have a good idea.

You need to start some weeks in advance researching competitors - those you expect to come up against in pitch and those you'd increasingly like to. Take a snapshot of their top-line expressions, tone-of-voice and attitude. Without exception, agencies always fit one of six basic propositional types.

To perfect messaging you need to confirm objectives. Look at individual ones first, then from these find consensus on shared goals: e.g. fattening-up for exit, achieving annual targets, balancing portfolios, ensuring no pitch is missed in a focused target group, repositioning, etc. The best planning happens straight after annual strategy development so that the new business programme fits clearly with the overall objectives. Then down to business:

#### What are we saying?

- Agencies are made up of people – and *they* determine the characteristics of the agency. You can get the most out of the sum-of-the-parts, but you cannot be successful at something you're not. You need: -
- Clear value-proposition
- Clear competitive advantage
- Market space for your position
- Simple but powerful expression

#### Who are we saying it to?

- Always done after the messaging work above.
- Establish the targeting-model - the most fertile targets for the message now clarified.
- Look at a graded contact-strategy - prioritising the allocation of resources against segment.

#### How are we going to say it?

- 12-month communications schedule
- Channels & content
- Generic copy to enshrine what we stand for
- Cost effective tools & collateral to support
- Creative brief for collateral production
- Tactical messaging
- Marketing co-ordination e.g. website – consistency, seminar & conference plan
- Pitch follow-up procedure/tactics
- Ongoing planning development
- Information management platform

In terms of collateral, you should brief-in your creatives so you can mock-up pieces as you go through planning.

The output should be a 12-month blueprint that ensures proposition, targeting and communications are 100%. Do this, and you're halfway there before you've even picked up the phone.