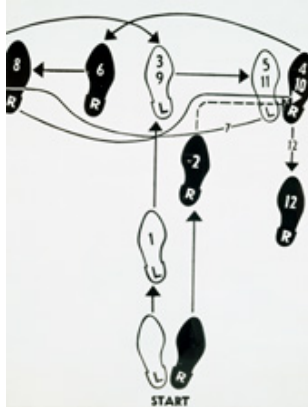


## WORKING WITH AN EXTERNAL



## Two to tango...

Employing external new business support can be hazardous. Aside from the risk of over promise and under delivery, many agencies outsource their entire lead generation brief then (rather optimistically) just leave the supplier to get on with it (not ideal). However, there's a subtler yet more common pitfall.

In the interests of complete transparency, I should begin by saying that over the last 10 years alongside many successful relationships, we've also had some truly awful ones. The unsuccessful relationships we encounter, ours, but also when picking up the pieces of others, are often caused when agencies (by their own admissions) fail to understand what outsourcing aspects of their new business function really means in practice – in terms of expectations, but also in terms of how prepared they need to be for what's required.

Many agencies worry about external new business suppliers' HR, yet the suppliers' delivery should (in theory at least) be consistent, with staff trained to certain standards and recruited with appropriate skills. However, churn of new business personnel specifically within agencies (we monitor personnel movement at 8000 UK marketing agencies) is nearing 50%.

Changing new business HR within agencies often triggers the breakdown of the supplier relationship. There is a loss of knowledge to maintain the relationship and to supply essential tools, collateral and levels of collaboration necessary to service dialogue with prospects. There may now be no one left to organise or field meetings and valuable opportunities go stale. Further dysfunction occurs as new agency personnel seek to pick up the reins with the supplier, or fail to grasp why they need one at all. The consequences are the same though – a significant waste of time and resources.

On the other hand, if agencies' new business HR is consistent, the growth plan can stay on the rails and we've many relationships that demonstrate this well. For example we've worked with the well-known brand consultancy Landor Associates for the last 4 years, with the original HR in place at the agency and at Rainmaker, enabling continuity of expectation and maintenance of deliverables.

But it's not just sorting out your HR that matters. As mentioned above in my introduction, it's also unwise to outsource new business support and expect the supplier to be self-sufficient. There is no such thing - they will always need a certain amount of time and commitment for the programme to succeed; e.g. a continual drip of information on latest case studies, insights, awards and PR etc. - not to mention information on the latest wins generated organically within the agency or from referral. To permit them to default to primitive alternatives, such as generic or poorly tailored email to do the job, is not an attractive option for your brand – do you really want to be spamming your prospects?

Further, you must open up your culture fully to the relationship - Rainmaker is about connecting the capabilities of everyone in the agency with the agendas of the organisations they should be targeting.

And so I recommend you factor these points in. An experienced supplier will advise you on the things you need to do at your end to make the relationship work, especially in terms of your own HR. To avoid costly mistakes, you should not engage in a relationship with a supplier, unless you've got your house in order first.