

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LONG AGENCY LUNCHES?



Juliet La Marque

Digital communication may be simpler, but is it the best way to do business?

For starters

I went for a drink in my local on Monday after work and bumped into a couple of industry marketers, one of whom has been playing email tag with me because he has found himself too booked up, with too many random meetings to take time out to discuss the development of his campaign.

We sat and chatted over a drink for an hour and now have the wheels in motion for campaign development and the bones of a direct to consumer (DTC) communication platform. The other one bought me a drink, we had a chat about digital projects, a proposal we are now working on, and I had to get a taxi home!

The main

The point I'm trying to make is that doing business over a drink or a meal is a ritual that has existed for centuries. Taking clients to breakfast, lunch or dinner has long been an effective way to build relationships and often culminates in great creative ideas and innovations.

Giving yourself time out in a relaxed atmosphere unleashes your creative juices, but the modern pharma work ethic has changed so much during the past decade that people now just tend to grab an inedible snack and a muddied machine coffee while rushing from one meeting to the next.

The need to fill every day with meetings and actions from meetings, which never get actioned because you're too busy in meetings, is surely counter-productive?

The emphasis on being busy is so high, but being busy doesn't necessarily make you more productive, and certainly not more creative. When you're busy, your attention is on the moment, with no time to contemplate or consider the opportunities around you.

Sweet temptation

The motive for big pharma mergers and acquisitions, and multinational agency networks, is to develop business and make more profit by achieving economies of scale. However, cutting costs by homogenising everything doesn't always pay dividends. When everything is focused on the bottom line, tunnel vision sets in, and all too often great creativity flies out of the window.

Digital communication has made everything accessible at the touch of a keypad. We don't even have to get out of bed in the morning to send our first email, but is this really the best way to do business?

"Ideas arise from human interaction and considered thought ... all of us are in the ideas business"

Yes, emailing is a lot less costly and much quicker than having to travel, walk into the next office or chat across the desk and spend valued time with each other, but the end point is a poorer idea, because ideas arise from human interaction and considered thought. And all of us – creative agencies and pharma marketers – are in the ideas business.

To end

Have a think about the moments in your life when you've had the best ideas and they will probably have come to you at the most unexpected times, when your mind is clear.

Mainly when you are relaxed and out of the work zone. Maybe over a drink in the evening, having a long soak in the bath, or a stroll with the dog.

Those thoughts would have been stifled in the day-to-day mayhem that prevails in our industry. So in our information-rich and time-poor lives, let's all try to take some valuable time out... Anyone for lunch?

Juliet La Marque is managing director at Life
juliet@life-healthcare.com, www.life-healthcare.com

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