

= value

Boston / Chicago / New York

REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE ATTENDEE NOTES

The next time in-house creative professionals are asked to justify their value, it may be useful to whip out the following equation to start the conversation:

(Productivity ÷ Accessibility) + Accuracy + Brand Compliance = Value

In other words, high productivity is what every manager of in-house creative teams strives to achieve on a daily basis. Unlike external agencies that may or may not be accessible depending on the competing priorities serving multiple clients on a 24/7 basis, in-house creative teams can develop workflow processes that efficiently and effectively triage and streamline their operations to meet the needs of internal clients. In-house creative teams can apply their state-of-the-art skills and expertise to execute deliverables with attention to accuracy and brand compliance. Metrics, more than bravado and fancy rhetoric, can make an objective case to document value.

Most important, building strong relationships with people throughout the organization is the key to achieving value recognition in the corporate setting.

That's the premise that brought together a total of **56 participants** to attend the InSource Roundtable Event on the topic of **The Value Equation: Creating, Promoting and Earning Value Recognition for In-House Creative Organizations**, which was held in Boston, Chicago, and New York City on June 23, 2011. These candid discussions took place in three different locations, and the challenges and concerns expressed by the participants were universal.

InSource provides the following take-away messages from these discussions in hopes that participants will find inspiration to move forward in applying best practices in the workplace:

Ways to Describe the Role of In-House Creative Teams

- > Become well-versed in articulating the many benefits of in-house creative teams throughout the workplace.

In-house creative teams:

- are cost effective
 - are brand experts
 - provide diverse creative talent
 - can adopt an agency model
 - work within the company's firewall, adhering to a confidential code of ethics
 - understand the company's culture and where the company is headed
 - apply their knowledge of the brand and the business
 - have more motivation for the project and the company to succeed
- > Keep in mind that external agencies charge more for their work, mark up costs for third-party services, and stick to an estimate even when hours come in lower than estimated. However, just because an in-house creative team may charge less than an outside agency, we still need to prove our value and quality to our internal clients.
 - > Some participants consider the best-case scenario for working with outside agencies is for the in-house creative team to take the lead in controlling the work of these agencies; this approach results in creating extensions of the inhouse creative team rather than competition.
 - > One way to describe an in-house creative team: "We are a high-end creative in-house agency with brand and business expertise, providing targeted, cost-effective marketing communications to align with our firm's strategies." In addition, "with a creative eye on excellence, we are brand stewards whose initiatives foster a culture that drives business forward."

- > If possible, establish a chargeback system or at least develop a mindset for operating a chargeback system within your company. Without a chargeback system, customers tend to think that if our services are "free," they must be poor quality. They may also send work back for countless revisions with no awareness of the cost in time and opportunity cost.

Questions to Ask Ourselves

- > **How do we prove our value to others and change internal perceptions of our worth?** Proof requires objectivity; case studies that capture internal and external comparisons can be helpful. Provide data that tracks effectiveness, including e-mail/Web metrics and anecdotal stories.
- > **How can we effectively manage inhouse creative teams?** Motivation is key; explore incentives for creative work and create time for internal initiatives.
- > **How do we position ourselves for a seat at the table as a strategic thinker?** This takes time and requires building relationships and a solid track record of measurable achievements that prove value.
- > **How can value recognition become a reality?** Proving value is one challenge; establishing value recognition is another challenge. Strive for organizational alignment with "big picture" thinking. Visualize the ideal and create a clear value proposition that articulates core values and the expertise of the inhouse creative team.

Ideas to Promote/Market In-House Creative Teams

- > Share metrics that show your team's effectiveness with key internal clients and stakeholders.
- > Do in-person "roads shows" to educate clients on the brand and showcase your work; these may involve setting up a table in a common area with work sample and maybe a slide show OR setting up department meetings to do a "show and tell" session. Include approximate prices for a project done by the in-house creative team versus the prices an outside agency would charge.

- > Host social meet-and-greet or lunch and learn (pitch plus food) events in the department or offsite to showcase your work; include the team's demonstration of process, portfolio, posters, "brag book."
- > Create a brand center/internal website with meaningful data; make it creative to show your group's skills.
- > Be part of orientations for new employees.
- > Start online blogs, and use social media to stay top of mind within your company.
- > Enter award competitions to show recognition of excellence by others.
- > Prepare annual reports/reviews of your team's accomplishments.
- > Conduct internal customer surveys and report survey results.

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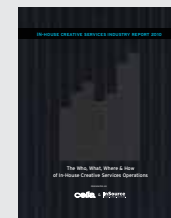
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