



Keeping one's in-house creative team motivated to do their best work on an ongoing basis is a shared focus among InSource members. Furthermore, when the decision is made to call upon an outside agency to achieve specific objectives, a strategic approach in managing the in-house/agency relationship can lead to favorable outcomes that advance the work of the entire creative team.

A group of in-house creative leaders came together for a candid discussion on The In-House/ Agency Relationship and Creative Management Challenges and Solutions on May 15, 2013. Facilitated by Robin Colangelo, Global Director of Creative Services at White & Case, this InSource Roundtable was held in New York City and hosted by Adobe, makers of the new Adobe Creative Cloud.

Creative Outlets/Hobbies Outside of Work Shared by NY Roundtable Participants:

"I love photography." • "I draw and paint." • "I play golf." • "I coach sports for my children." • "I love to travel and recently visited Africa to help create schools there." • "I do arts and crafts, including helping my children create their Mother's Day cards." • "I enjoy spending my free time with my children." • "I'm interested in gardening. I like to make things grow." • "I love books and am an avid reader." • "I watch TV." • "I catch up on my sleep."

InSource provides the following takeaway messages from this event so participants can consider applying various ideas in their workplace:

Discussion Points Regarding In-House/ Agency Relationships

- Identify any preexisting perceptions your creative team may have and address any misconceptions directly. For example, some team members may regard the outside agency as being more creative, as owning the brand, and/or as posing a threat to their roles/jobs. It's important to define the purpose and scope of the work of an outside agency, highlighting how their contributions will strengthen the work of the in-house creative team in the long term. Also make it clear that the in-house team owns the brand.
- Clarify that "outsourcing the thinking" and strategy development to an outside agency can sometimes serve as the catalyst to force a more coherent focus; it can be more efficient than relying on a small in-house team of people who are subject to being "edited to death" by others.
- An outside agency can be useful for knowledge transfer, especially when the in-house team doesn't know why or how to do a particular initiative.
- Using an outside agency to serve a role in the educational process of junior staff can be valuable to help individuals learn and grow on the job. For example, one participant reported on the positive results of copresenting a design solution with both the outside agency and the in-house manager taking the leadership role. In this case, the initial concepts were created by the in-house creatives using the outside agency in a consulting role to work with the in-house team for maximum impact.
- Involve the in-house team early on so they can co-own the agency selection process.
- Cultivate an environment where the in-house creative team is open to fresh ideas.
- In-house creative leaders can work with their marketing colleagues to help raise the bar from a design perspective and encourage them to ask clear questions when working with an outside agency. Participants have witnessed times when "marketing goes rogue," which can lead to less than the best quality for the brand/initiative.

Discussion Points Regarding Creative Management Challenges and Solutions

- When forming a branding committee, include the Chief Marketing Officer to serve on this

committee. "It works better" when in-house creative leaders try to empower the marketing team and avoid the "Wild West" dynamics that can happen when the in-house creative team does not own the brand.

- Although the in-house creative team can serve as the brand police, there may be times to bend (rather than be strict and militant). Otherwise, rigidity may push colleagues away from their interactions with the in-house creative team. Building relationships is the key to working well together.
- All participants would love to see movement toward the creation of a Chief Creative Officer (CCO) in the business world. The role exists in the agency world and is now evolving on the in-house side in companies such as Johnson & Johnson and Pepsi.
- Cross-pollination of ideas in the workplace makes the work more interesting for everyone involved.
- Build relationships with other department managers to help build mutual respect. Have frequent conversations with others for context purposes and to show that your work goes beyond tactics to encompass strategic thinking.
- Be part of the orientation process for new employees, educating people about what creative services does for them and the company.
- Showcase the latest work of your in-house creative team to others in the company.
- "Fresh ideas come from fresh perspectives." It's useful to conduct a competitor audit. Find out what others are doing and figure out how to make your company stand out. Suggestion: Make a visual display of the work of competitors and use it as a way to achieve buy-in for your ideas from colleagues.
- Consider allowing time for in-house creative team members to do specific design research projects. The process of seeing what others have done can be motivating and set the tone so their work doesn't become stale over time.
- Focus on the "why" when selling your ideas to others. Provide data/metrics to justify proposed improvements.
- Consider advanced educational programs on managing creative services from a business perspective. Some participants reported on the usefulness of the AIGA, the weeklong course at Harvard and Yale, and the Design Management MSP Program at Pratt Institute.
- Seek out and attend conferences beyond one's own industry for inspiration.

- The daily avalanche of work assignments via email requests has become the norm for many in-house creative teams. Choose face-to-face or telephone interactions, not only email, to build relationships.
- Positioning yourself as someone who can offer consulting services has greater value than a perception of "only executing" workflow.
- Develop relationships with colleagues who can align themselves with you. "We all must have allies within our companies."

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