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Media Business  
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## Savvy Teams Good to Grow

### Cultivating Rapport Between Adversarial Departments Makes Everyone a Winner

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Media planners would be remiss about honing their skills if they neglected to look beyond the bounds of the media world for insight that could help make their planning product better.

One promising area beyond the conventional bounds of media is that of growth. Growth is still a hot subject in business and marketing, providing many lessons that have solid applicability for media planning.

Some of the best sources for material on growth are the books written by leadership authority Stephen Covey; "Good to Great" by Jim Collins; "Guns, Germs, and Steel" by Jared Diamond; and "The Birth of Plenty" by William Bernstein. What's interesting

is that these great sources contain a number of striking similarities pointing to clues on best practices that contribute to growth.

## **Dream Themes**

A couple of common growth themes found among those sources translate to almost any marketing-related discussion:

- Many factors must fall into place for areas of endeavor to be successful.
- Full potential is rarely reached and never sustained without the interdependent endeavor of a population of people.

These two themes are certainly true in the area of media planning. Media plans cannot achieve their full potential in the marketplace without many factors aligning appropriately. A quality media plan requires proper environment, timing, message content, cost and target audience receptivity.

Equally true is the theme of interdependent endeavor. Without many people working together, even well-designed media plans rarely succeed.

Think about the disparate groups of people that need to come together to make a media plan a reality in the marketplace. There are the planning team, buyers, other agency disciplines such as account planning and account management, various levels of clients and then all of the people on the vendor side.

Even though the planning team leads the charge in creating plans, every one of the other groups has an important stake in the media product. And if the media planning team has a poor working relationship with any of those stakeholder groups, the chances that a plan will achieve success in the marketplace are reduced.

## **Account Management**

The relationship that has been perhaps most adversarial for planners over the years has been with their agency account management team. In recent years, building solid working relationships with account management has become even more challenging as media consolidation has pushed planners further away from their account management counterparts-philosophically and physically. (In many cases, teams are not even in the same building anymore.)

Now more than ever, it is extremely important for media planners to cultivate solid working relationships with their account management team. Even though building strong relationships with account management seems like an obvious best practice, media people shouldn't take it for granted. Why?

- Account people have information media planners don't.
- In an age of consolidation, geographic separation must be overcome.
- Account management can be a help or a hindrance.

First, account people generally have a greater degree of access to clients and brand information than does the media team. That information can be very valuable to the media team in planning; information is power. The more information planners have available, the better able media people are at developing successful plans.

Second, clients can sense good chemistry. Chemistry is best built by working together. That's harder to do if media and account groups don't share the same real estate. Media people need to take the initiative and break down geographic barriers, even if the barrier is only a couple of floors. If not, clients will get a sense that the advertising team is not well connected and that will

create problems.

Further, account management generally has the deepest relationship at the agency with the client. As such, the account team can use that position to influence the client. If media folks have a good relationship with their account team, it enables them via the account team to leverage a valuable chip when trying to sell plans.

Planners can do a number of things to strengthen relationships with their account management counterparts:

- Put themselves in the account person's shoes.
- Get involved in the process early.
- Increase account management's stake in the process.

### **Manager's Perspective**

If this practice can help media people better understand target prospects, it can also help them understand how better to communicate with account people. Account people have a primary role to manage the account and work flow. They also try very hard to provide clients with value on behalf of the agency-not to mention that they're also striving hard to keep the account profitable.

So as planners put plans together, they shouldn't fall into the trap of trying to manipulate account people to make the planning process easier. Planners should think about how what they're doing in the planning process can not only turn out a quality plan, but also help the account team fulfill its role.

### **Get Involved Early**

When media people are proactive, they can become involved in the communication creation process earlier. That involvement helps make plans better and gives the account team access to media team members who might be able to help out in other areas of the communication process.

Not only will account people be grateful for unexpected help, but better-informed media folks make better agency representatives who turn out a higher-quality product, both of which can help make the account people's jobs easier and make them look good. By the way, early involvement also gives media folks a chance to see some things they may otherwise not have experienced, in turn making media planners better at what they do.

### **Increase the Stake**

Planners should also try to get the account team more involved in what's being created on the media side. It's pretty obvious that account folks love to dive in with the creative team when communication pieces are being created. Give them the same opportunity to dive in with the media plan. Look to them to facilitate meetings with the creative team or possibly give them a role in the plan presentation.

A great way to do this is to ask for their help in having the creative team mock up some examples of how executions would look in some of the media being recommended in the plan. The account folks can be a strong bridge to the creative team to obtain the materials, and in addition, if asked to present the materials in the meeting they are able to have their own "oooooh" and "aaaah" moments with their important client, which is a good thing.

Media planners can mine areas beyond media for insight that can help make media plans stronger. One notion that flows from

the study of growth is the benefits of interdependent endeavor. When it comes to the media planning process, one of the most important relationship areas in which to ply this notion is the relationship between the media planning team and its account management counterparts. Strong relationships between those teams can lead to an interdependent endeavor that creates truly outstanding media plans.

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