

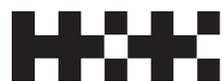
CREATIVITY IN PR

GLOBAL STUDY 2016

THE
HOLMES
REPORT



In association with **H+K Strategies**



Hill+Knowlton
Strategies

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ARUN SUDHAMAN



The fourth edition of the Creativity in PR study again provides the most in-depth examination of how creativity is transforming the public relations world.

This year's study reflects an industry increasingly at ease generating the big ideas that result in genuine business transformation. This is not just evident from the campaigns that we see winning in major award shows across the globe, but also in the practices and processes that are ensuring that creativity is viewed as a central element in organisational culture, rather than being viewed solely in terms of creative output.

Four years ago the Holmes Report and Now Go Create set out to explore whether the public relations industry is truly creative enough to meet the demands of the 21st century. Our findings since then have, alternately, surprised us and encouraged us — often demonstrating a significant gap

between rhetoric and reality, between an industry that often talks about creativity, but has found it more difficult to ensure that it is paying more than lip service to the notion.

This year's study, conducted in conjunction with H+K Strategies, finds that while public relations people are more likely than ever to develop the big ideas around which movements and campaigns are formed, concerns still linger over whether PR firms can be entrusted to lead creative. Techniques for generating and evaluating creative ideas remain a work in progress and, perhaps most importantly, the creative talent challenge continues to rank as the thorniest of all.

This Report polled **300** people from more than **35** countries across the world, helping us once again uncover some fascinating findings about the state of creativity in PR. Respondents came from agency and in-house, and from a range of industries and sectors.

To improve insight, meanwhile, we have asked a handful of senior in-house marketing and communications executives for their views on some of the pressing issues identified by this year's study. These can be found on page **30** of this study.

All respondents answered a variety of questions during the three months the study ran during the summer of **2016**, encompassing attitudes towards creativity; tools and skills; opportunities and challenges; and suggestions and advice. We are very glad to bring you the fifth edition of this landmark study, particularly after the remarkable support the first three editions have received. As always, we appreciate your time, thoughts and feedback.

Arun Sudhaman, President and Editor-in-Chief, The Holmes Report

CLAIRE BRIDGES



In recent years the cry for creative bravery in PR and work that challenges the status quo has become louder. The world is a noisy, crowded place and campaigns need to work ever harder to cut through.

Yet this year's Creativity in PR report highlights how big a part fear of failure plays in holding great ideas back. While in-house PRs said that courage was one of the three biggest drivers of great PR, they also said that their bosses' unwillingness to try anything risky stopped more adventurous ideas in their tracks. Over two-thirds of agencies, meanwhile, agreed that their clients' play-it-safe attitude was a barrier to delivering great work.

In fact, we have more reason to have faith in our collective ideas than ever. The results this year clearly show that people who work in PR feel more confident about their abilities than in any of our previous surveys. Almost **60** per cent of agencies thought that the

quality of PR in **2016** was better than it was in **2015**, and almost none of the in-house respondents thought it was worse.

There remains, however, a disconnect between clients and agencies: clients need to know that the message agencies often seem to be getting is "play it safe". Agencies, meanwhile, may be surprised to hear that clients say they want to take bigger risks.

Whatever side of the fence you're on creative bravery and risk taking is nigh on impossible in any team or organization that doesn't have a foundation of trust to create an environment where dissent and questioning established ways of doing things doesn't turn into all-out war. With trust we can encourage and celebrate creative deviants – those who deliberately ask the difficult, provocative and challenging questions – a right not exclusive to those with the word 'creative' in their job title.

Perhaps **2017** will be the year that the two sides can reach a better understanding of what the other really wants.

Claire Bridges, founder, Now Go Create

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

Creativity continues to attract an increasing premium when it comes to agency hiring decisions. Clients rate it at **8.6** out of **10**, with **65%** rating it **9** or higher. Interestingly, agencies see it slightly differently: When asked how important creativity is to their clients' hiring decisions, they rank it as **7.19** out of **10**.

How important is creativity when clients decide whether to hire you or your agency?

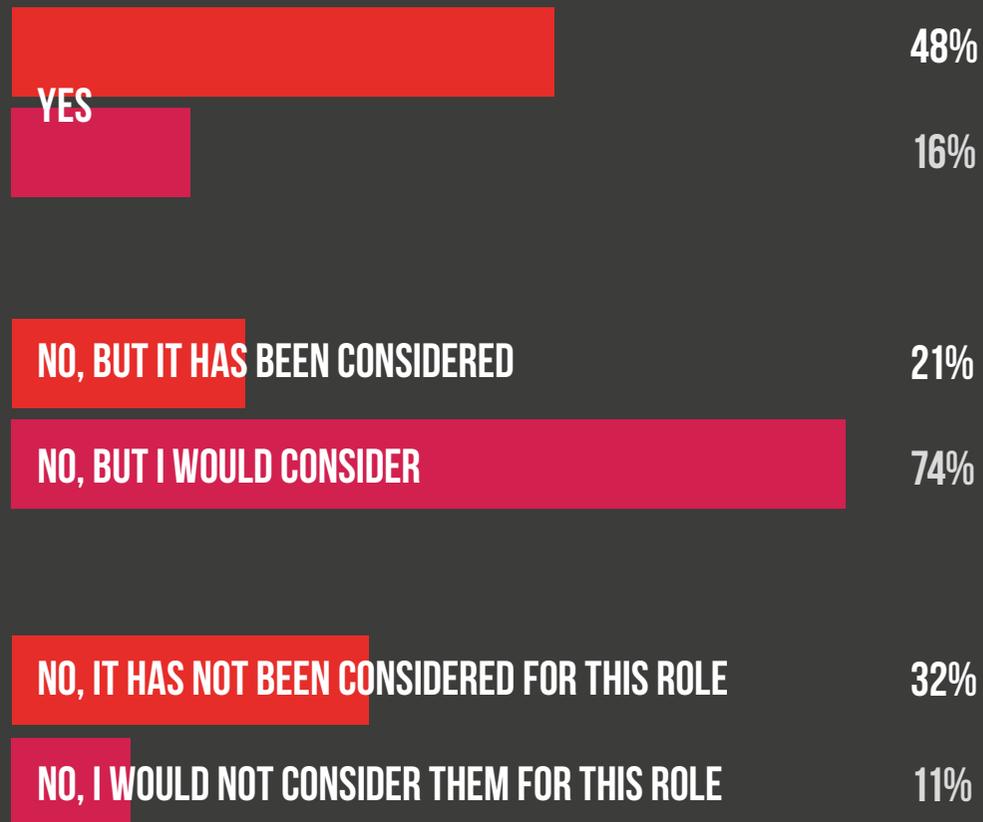


How important is creativity in your decision to hire & retain an agency?

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

New this year, we asked the question on everybody's lips — are PR firms actually leading creative on behalf of their clients, ahead of advertising or digital agencies? At best, the results are mixed. **48%** of agency respondents said that their PR agency has been designated as lead creative agency, while a further **21%** added that it had been considered. On the client side, however, just **16%** had turned to their PR firm as lead creative agency. Encouragingly, at least, **74%** of clients would consider their PR firm for this role.

Has your PR agency ever been designated as lead creative agency?



● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

What is stopping PR firms from taking on lead creative duties? Significantly, both agencies and clients point to in-house structures being the key stumbling block, presumably a reflection of the siloed nature of many corporate organizations. Both sides, furthermore rank PR agency creative and strategic quality second and third, respectively, suggesting that agencies cannot get off the hook that easily.



“What do you think are the barriers to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency? Only ourselves. I would ask... is the industry too ‘fat, lazy and happy’ to change?”

Fat – For many years the public relations industry has been successful. We have the same conversations about change over, we love talking about change but do we really want to change? Lazy – I hear again and again that time is our enemy and the PR industry is not paid to push the idea far enough... to become lead agency status we need to go the extra mile. Happy. Do we really want to change or are we happy with the status quo. Change is hard. Change is uncomfortable but change is necessary.”

.....
Simon Shaw, chief creative director, H+K Strategies

Other suggestions included:

‘Lack of adequate success stories as compared to other disciplines’

‘Clients have a traditional view of advertising firms as lead creative’

‘Payment structure of PR firms vs ad/media firms’

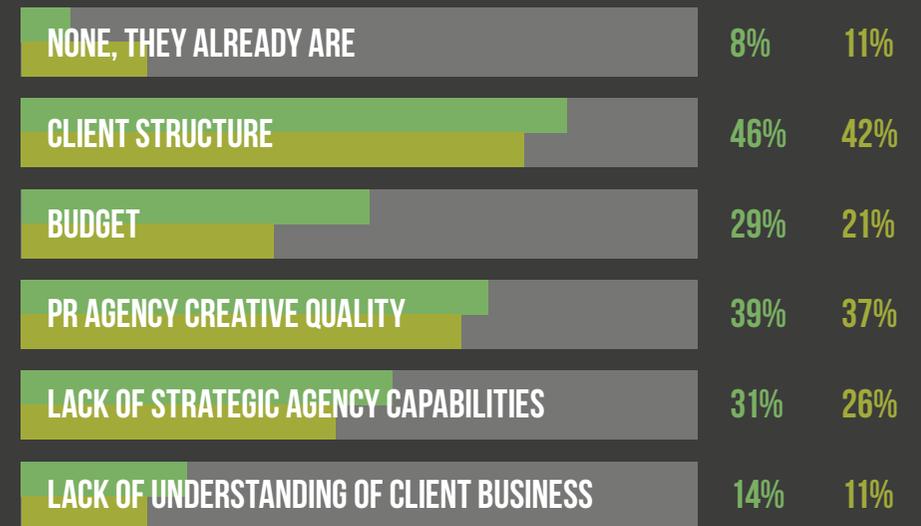
‘Afraid of upsetting traditions of mass agency leads’

‘Get PR involved too late in the process, the default is to ask the ad agency. “When PR is involved from the beginning and asked to provide creative concepts, we find ours are often head and shoulders above the rest! We just need to be given the chance.’

‘By and large, PR firms don’t understand creativity or have processes in place to develop or capture it.’

‘Prejudice and preconception. Clients still believe that only the advertising agencies are truly creative.’

What do you think are the barriers to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency?



● AGENCY
● IN-HOUSE

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

Almost **60%** of clients are more likely to approach to their agency for big creative ideas than they were **12** months ago, solidifying a positive trend that first became clear in last year's study.

'Clients want big ideas but then say they don't want to pay for planning, creative development. Ugh.'

'Creativity is not perceived as being within the realm of PR'

Compared with 12 months ago, are clients more or less likely to approach their PR agency for big creative ideas?



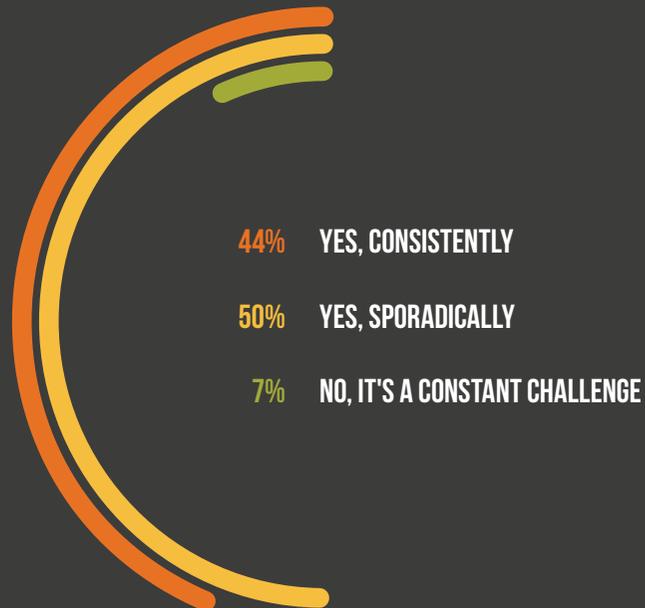
● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

Significantly, given the obvious importance of creativity, PR firms have seen a big increase when it comes to how happy clients are with their creative capabilities. **44%** are consistently happy compared to **14%** last year, while only **7%** see it as a constant challenge, compared to **29%** last year.

Meanwhile when clients are asked to rate the level of creativity at their PR agency, **58%** opted for 'Good' while **42%** saw it as ordinary or worse. The question that arises from these results must be: Are clients actually happy with average levels of creativity from their PR agency, despite how important it is to their hiring and retaining decisions?

In general, are clients happy with the creative capabilities of your agency?



How would you describe the level of creativity at your PR agency?

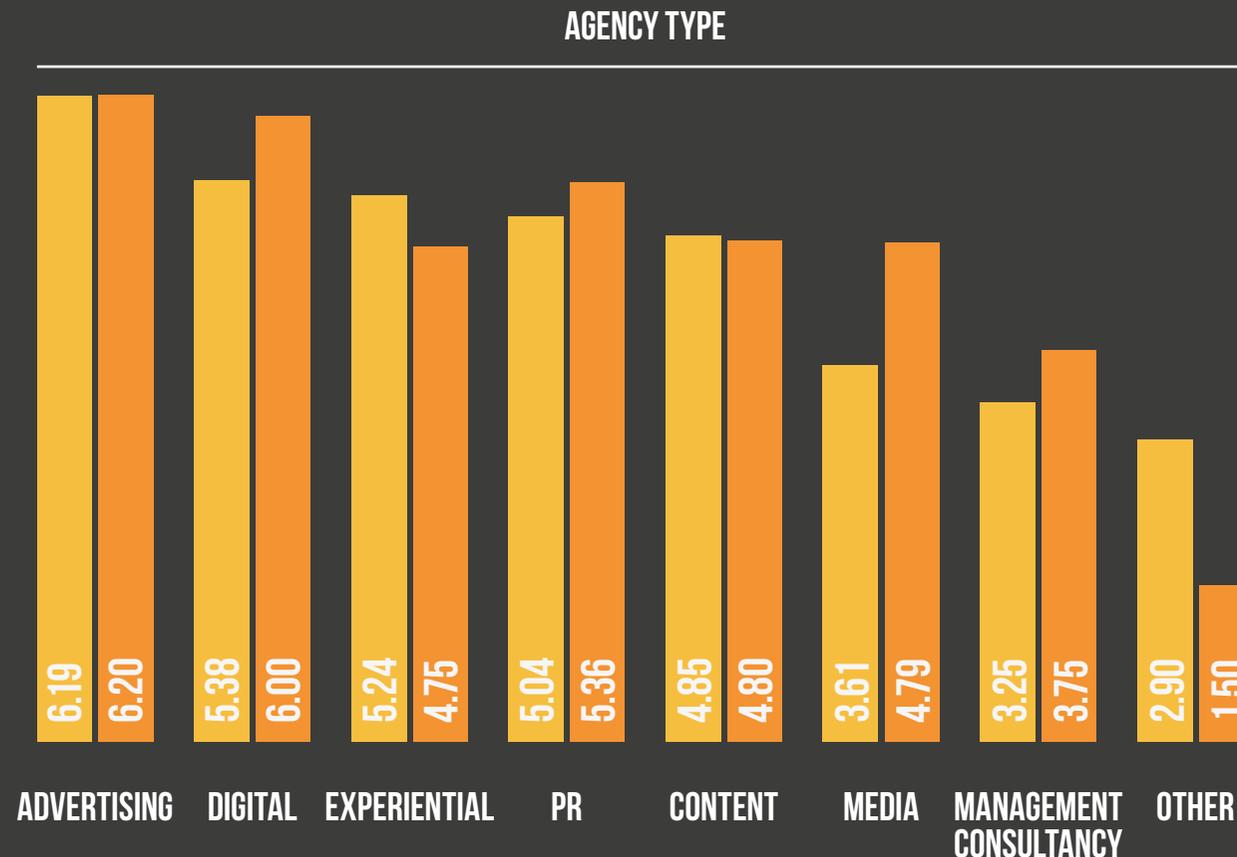


THE WAR FOR IDEAS

PR VS THE WORLD

Respondents were asked to rank the creative quality of their various agencies, with clients again ranking PR firms behind advertising and digital agencies, but ahead of content, media and experiential agencies and — by some distance — mangagement consultancies.

Please rank the creative quality of the following agencies. (8 is highest and 1 is lowest)



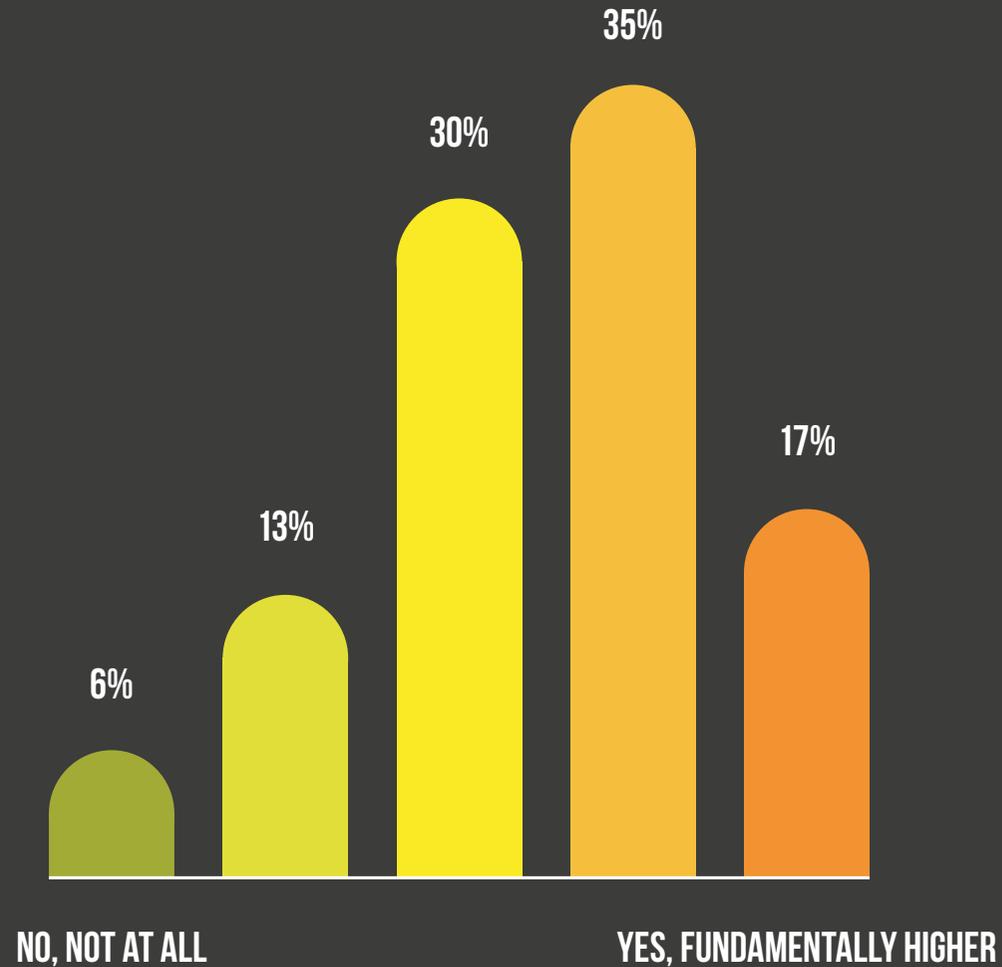
● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

RISING DEMANDS

17% of agency respondents note that clients are demanding 'fundamentally' greater levels of creativity from them but, worryingly, almost 20% see this moving in the opposite direction. Overall agencies ranked rising creative demands as 3.43 on a scale of 5, pointing to a general positive trend.

Agencies: Are clients demanding greater levels of creativity from you?



THE WAR FOR IDEAS

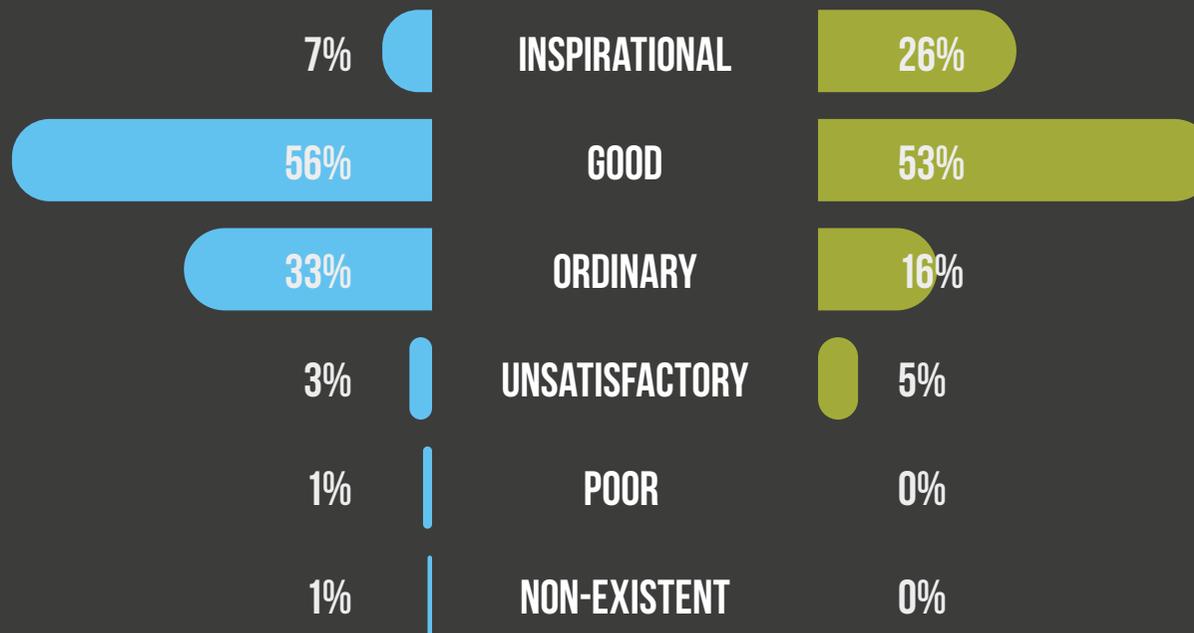
In general clients appear to think they are far more receptive to creative ideas than their agencies would agree. **26%** of clients see their receptiveness to creative ideas as inspirational, while only **7%** of agencies see it this way. Indeed **33%** of agencies describe client receptiveness to their creative ideas as 'ordinary' — proof of the divide that still bedevils the client - agency relationship.



“What we aim for at SJR is to help our clients find asymmetric solutions to their problems. That means going beyond the confines of any particular problem and experimenting with the assumptions that underpin it. Cultivating an asymmetric worldview is a constant source of renewal and transformation. And if we’ve done our job we pass that on to our clients in an enduring way.”

Alex Jutkowitz, CEO, Group SJR

In general, how would you describe the receptiveness of clients to creative ideas?



● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

THE WAR FOR IDEAS

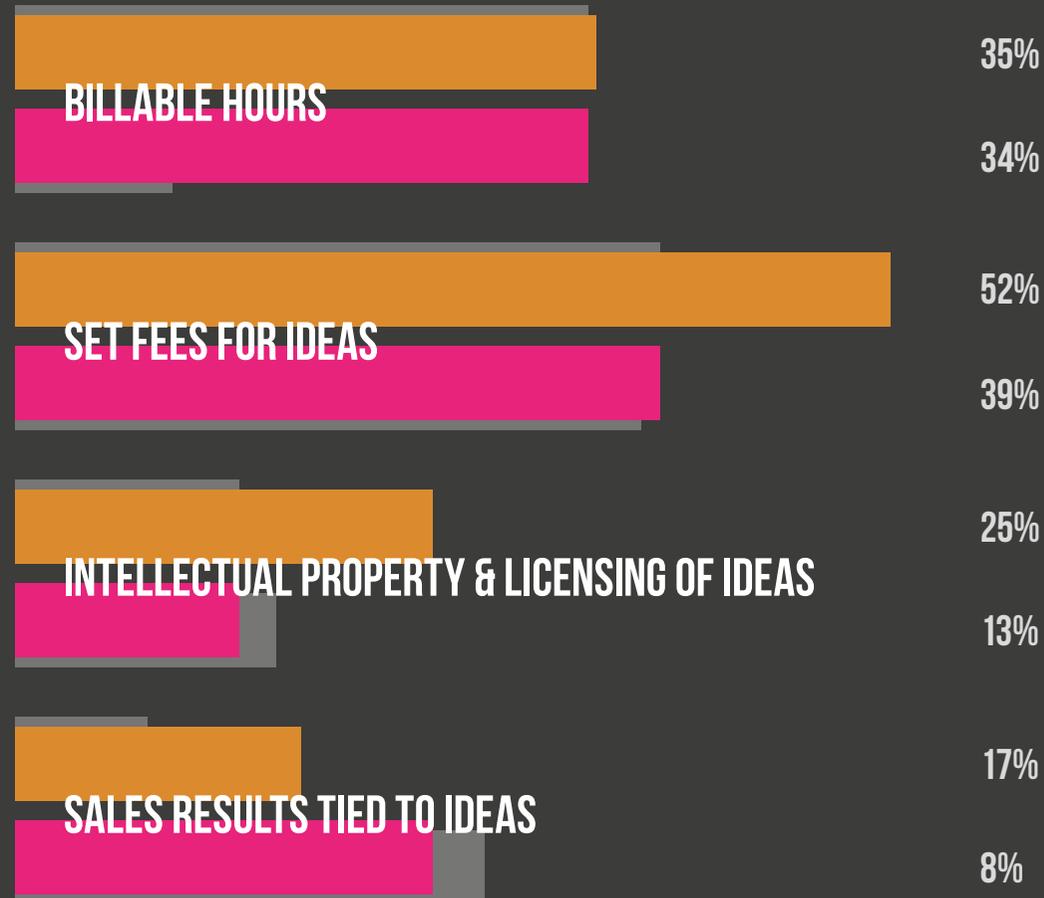
GETTING PAID

This year's survey again addresses one of the fundamental issues that affects creativity. How exactly should agencies be reimbursed for their ideas? This question was put to both clients and agency people.

Interestingly, both agencies and clients select 'set fees for ideas' as their top choice, suggesting that a more innovative approach to funding would help encourage idea development and overall creativity.

Agencies, however, continue to favour billable hours (35%) far more than clients (25%). Only 17% of agencies, meanwhile, want their remuneration tied to sales results.

In terms of developing ideas would you prefer to be paid according to:



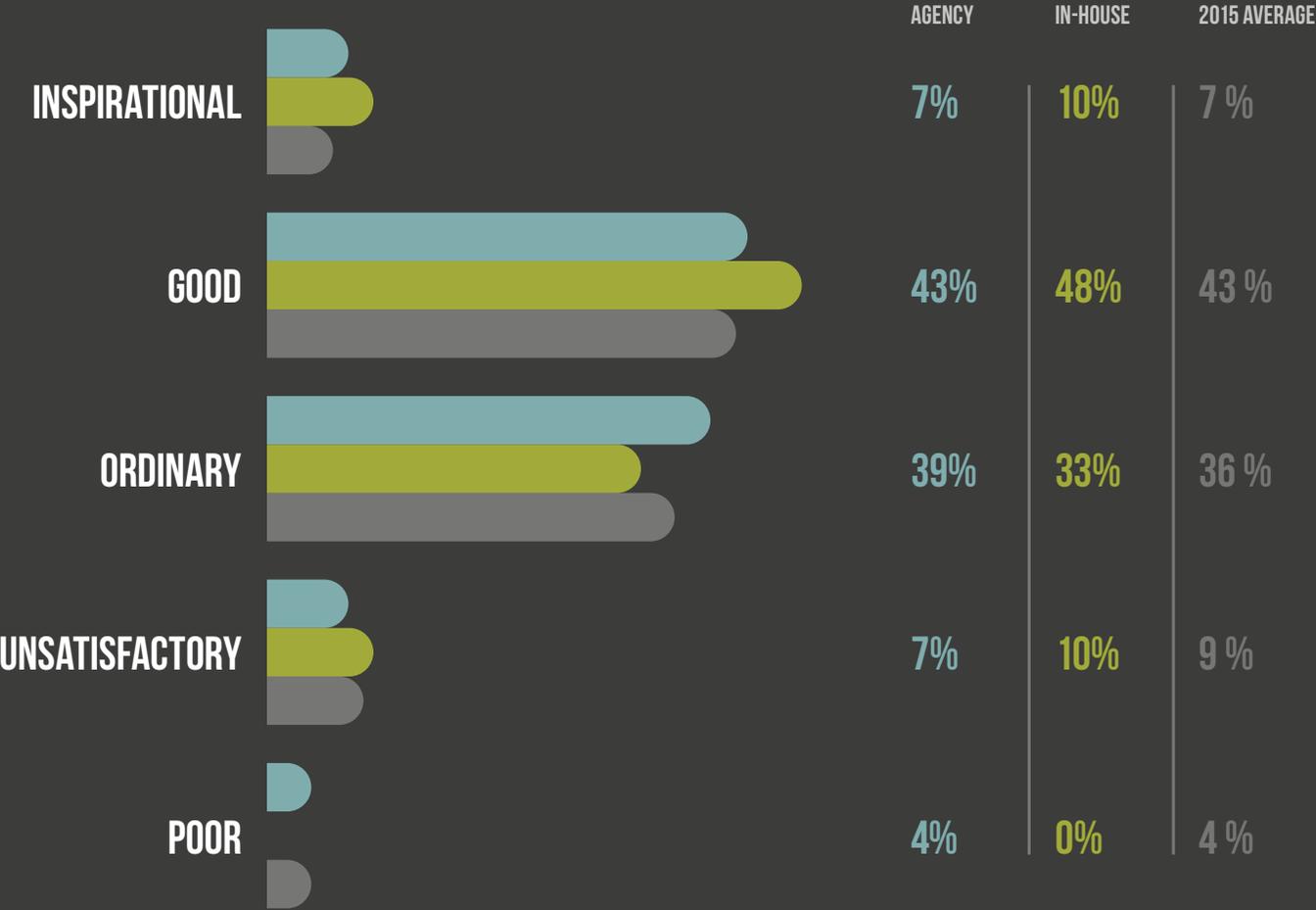
● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE ● 2015 AVERAGE

INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

QUALITY

The survey finds a modest increase in terms of the industry’s creative quality. More than **50%** describe it as ‘good’ or ‘inspirational’, compared to **49.5%** last year.

How would you describe the quality of creativity in the PR industry?



INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

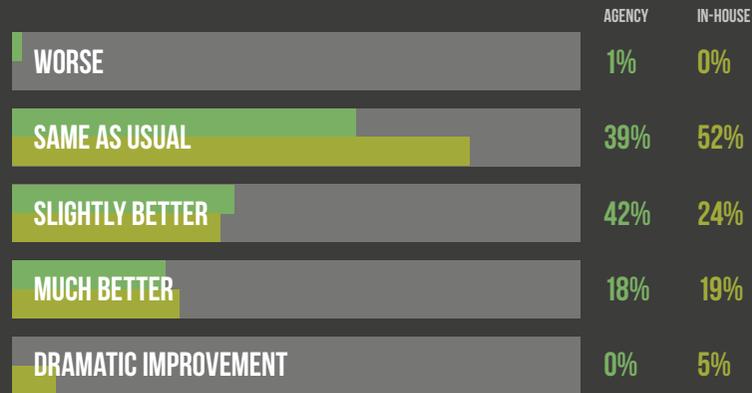
There is some evidence that the PR industry is moving in the right direction where creativity is concerned. Almost **60%** of agencies think that the quality of creativity in PR campaigns has improved over the past year. However, clients are less likely to agree — **52%** agree see no change.



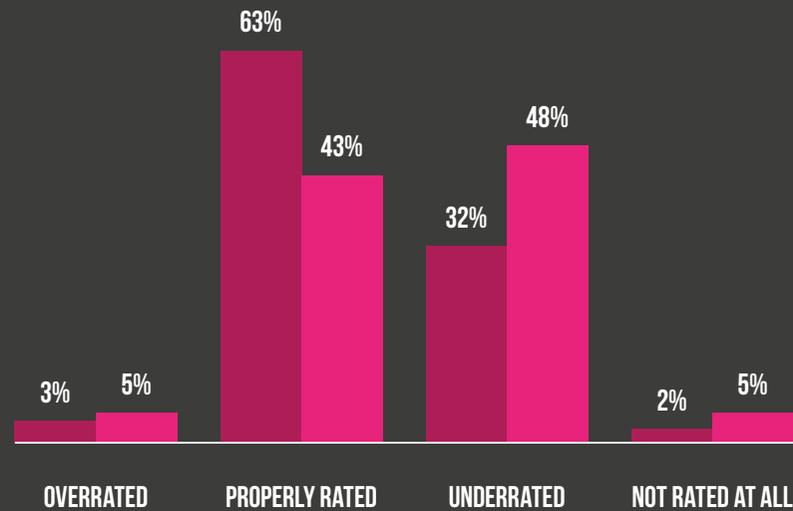
“The first time we’ve asked this question and it’s concerning to see that more than 40% of people who work in this creative industry feel that creativity is underrated in their workplace or, worse, has no perceived value at all. This view is supported by 16% more people working in-house than in agencies. Perhaps this relates back to the perennial question about how ideas and creative work is evaluated – how to best establish what the creative dividend from work is – and demonstrate creative effectiveness. However the PR industry is lagging behind our advertising cousins here where a direct link between creativity and effective work is a measured and rewarded. Take a look at ‘The Case For Creativity’ by James Hurman if you still need persuading.”

Claire Bridges, founder, Now Go Create

Over the past 12 months, how do you rate any improvement in the quality of creativity in PR campaigns?



How is creativity rated at your current business?



● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

TOP PRIORITY

Almost identical figures to last year, with over **83%** of respondents saying they felt that creativity was either of high importance or fundamental to their business (it was **88%** last time). The only real headline is the difference in how important creativity is to agencies vs in-house PR teams. Both clearly

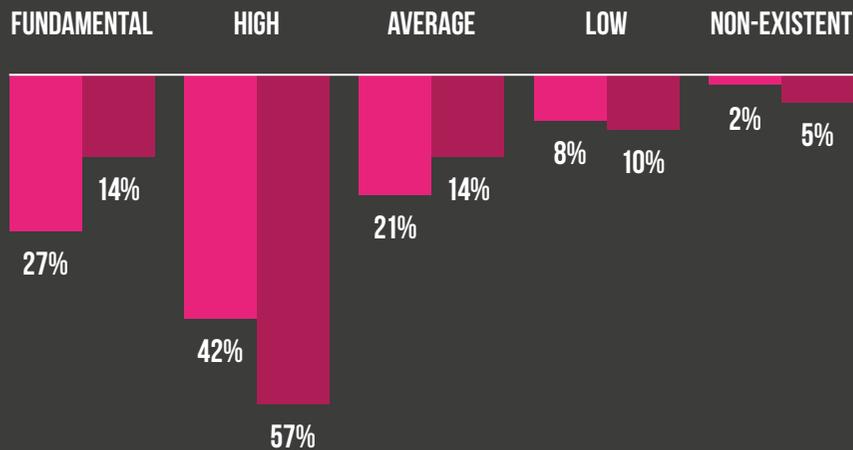
value it, but far more agencies (**50%**) deem it as fundamental to their business compared to in-house PRs (**29%**).

EVALUATION

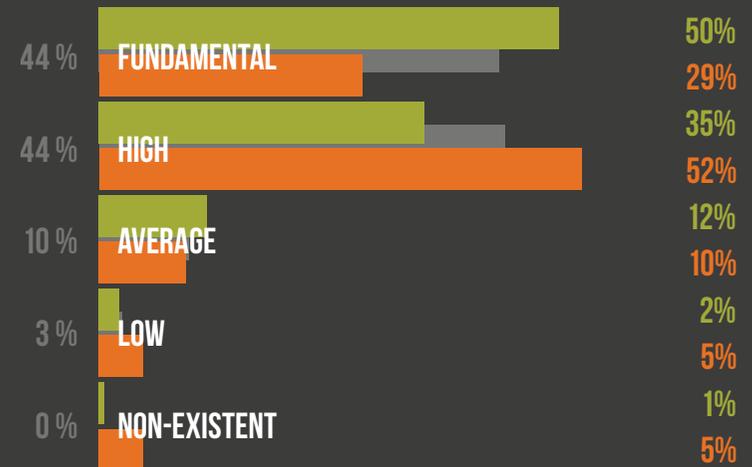
Industry-wide the metrics of evaluation have been improved and benchmarks set higher. We all know that AVE's by themselves just don't

cut it and most award shows rightly insist on other measures to assess work. **71%** of all respondents placing evaluation this highly is an encouraging result, but it also raises the question: what are the other **39%** doing to prove the value of their work?

How high a priority is evaluation of your creative ideas?



How high a priority is creativity for your current business?



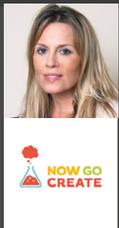
● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE ● 2015 AVERAGE

INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

DRIVERS

We asked people to rank a number of options in order of importance and it was a close-run thing at the top of the results table with storytelling, authenticity and engagement all scoring very well. But there were some big differences between how agencies and in-house voted – with the biggest split around ethics. Agencies are also more aware of the need for their work to affect the behaviour of the audience in support of the organisation’s objectives ranking it 5th versus 7th for in-house teams.



It seems something of a paradox given that in-house PRs are typically the brand guardians – agencies list ethics as a much higher driver for great PR work than their in-house counterparts (fourth place versus last). Maybe they feel the in-house teams peering over their shoulders to make sure they toe the company line? What’s certainly clear is just how highly valued storytelling and authenticity are – brands, now more than ever, need customers to get emotionally engage to relate to their products and believe the stories they are told. Interestingly in house practitioners also place courage in their top three, four places above

the agencies. But perhaps courage can be hard to find when it comes to selling or (buying) creative work. When asked ‘what stops you or your company from being creative?’ 67% of agencies say that clients are risk-averse whilst nearly 30% of in-house practitioners say that it is agency risk aversion that acts as a barrier.”

.....
 Claire Bridges, founder, Now Go Create



“While so much has changed over the last couple of decades in terms of technology and how people take in and share information, what hasn’t changed is the power of influence and advocacy. The same things that drove great work back then remain critical today and the great news is, we now have the tools to help us shape and measure effective campaigns. Because PR campaigns are developed with a first look through an earned media lens, the question we always ask is why should media and consumers care about the stories our clients are trying to tell. Our expertise is to editorialize those stories, making them relevant and shareable. Interestingly, the changing technology has made this skill more critical than ever. Ads are skippable. Clients that want to be a part of the conversation need to get people talking – to them and to each other. This is absolutely the time for our industry to shine!”

.....
 Beth Balsam, US president and CEO, H+K Strategies

In your opinion, what drives great PR work?



● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

The eyes have it: visual and image-led communication (56%) and AR/VR (44%) are the two trends that are getting PRs excited right now. The rise of media like Instagram and Snapchat and the rapidly increasing volume of branded video content shows that consumers are clearly reacting to what they see, and PR is adapting to make the most of that. The 3D and wearable tech bandwagons, meanwhile, have well and truly left town.

Two of the most interesting changes since last year are the hike in importance of mobile-centred PR and a 25% drop in the popularity of social good (also reflected in the answer to what drives great PR with purpose ranking 8 out of 9). The main discrepancy is that the Internet of things is almost three times more exciting to agencies than in-house PRs. Celebrities and influencers are also more important to agencies than in-house execs.



"We're still seeing a huge amount of focus on partnerships. For me this covers three key areas.

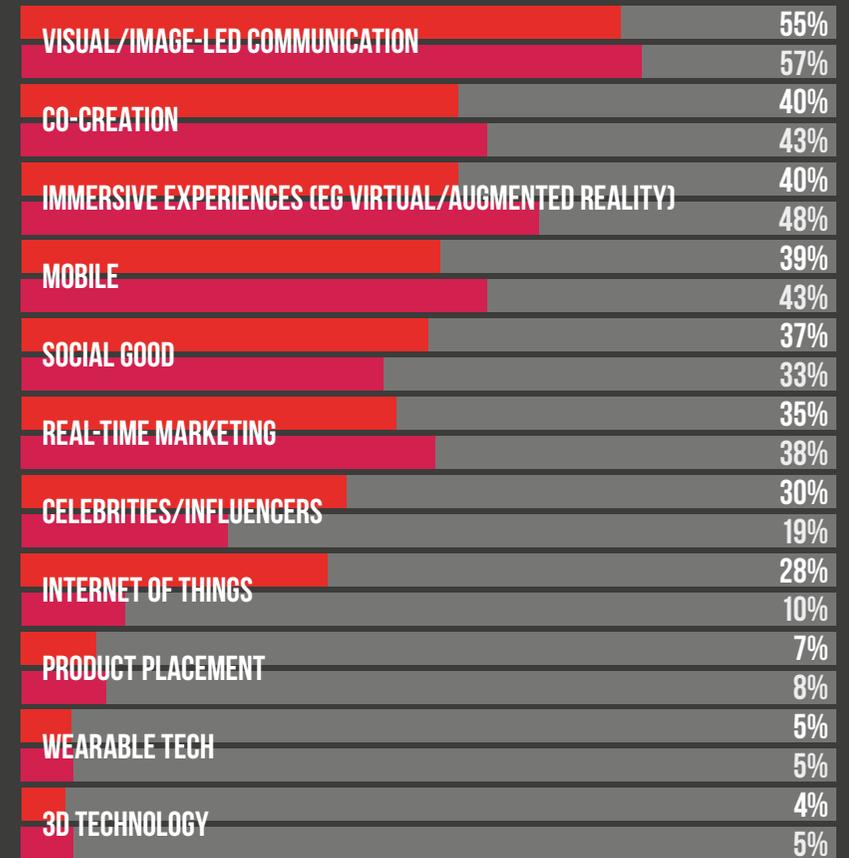
First; the continued rise of the influencer. We're seeing ever more focus on the 'creator' as a partner, largely due to the incredible amounts of reach this type of person can generate for a brand via social channels. What's more interesting though is the investment we're seeing from clients in working with grassroots influencers (the 'people like me' effect).

Second we've got the platforms themselves; Snapchat is of course, the darling of the industry right now. Partnerships with the platforms have become almost solely pay-to-play, so that's having a big impact on what's possible. Those with budget can do incredible things; those without are left with mediocre results.

Last we have publishers. The next evolution of sponsored content looks like Netflix and Wall Street Journal's Cocainenomics; interactive, visual and integrated."

Vikki Chowney, Director of Content + Publishing Strategy, H+K Strategies

Which trends are most influential when it comes to informing your creative or marketing/communications work?



● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

BARRIERS

We found a huge divergence between agency and in-house here, none more telling than the different responses we got to “our own risk aversion”: **11%** of agencies thought this was a major factor whereas **43%** of in-house respondents thought it was holding them back. Likewise, it was the in-house execs who mainly thought that their bosses did not view creativity as being important (**38%**). The agency suggestion that client feedback is stifling their creativity is telling – more than two thirds believe they could deliver more creative ideas if their clients allowed it. Collectively, lack of budget is still cited as a big barrier for everyone.



“Avoiding risk in relation to generating cut-through creative ideas is a strong theme from the study this year. It’s a complex subject, bound up in the confidence to sell ideas both internally and externally and the ability to determine and manage the risk. There are lots of models to help manage this process and the PR industry could learn a lot from the world of design thinking – rapid prototype of idea,

iterate, learn, improve. In PR we tend to place the onus on one, big campaign or idea when we could be honing and refining, or reinventing and idea – placing small bets to manage the risk rather than betting the farm.”

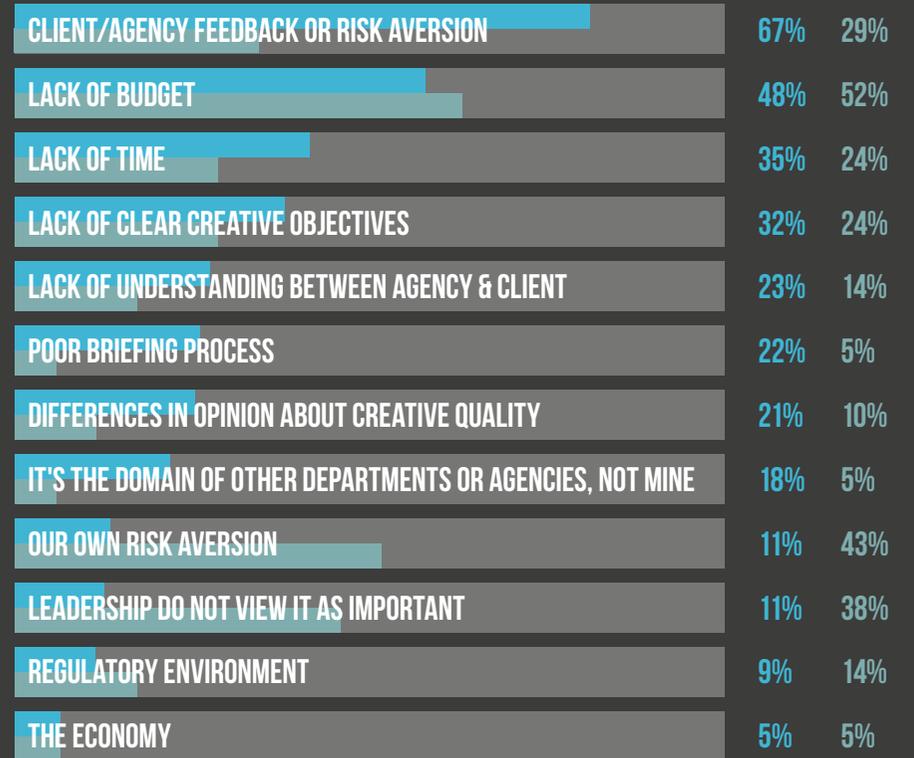
.....
 Claire Bridges, founder, Now Go Create



“Creativity is born from curiosity. Curiosity is a hungry mind; inquisitive and open to new experiences. If you are not innately curious about the world around you – about society or politics or business or culture, the arts or sport – or any combination of these, if you don’t have a passion to find and follow trends, to understand change, to join the dots to find new answers to today’s challenges then H+K, and ‘public’ relations, is not the place for you.”

.....
 Richard Millar, UK President and CEO

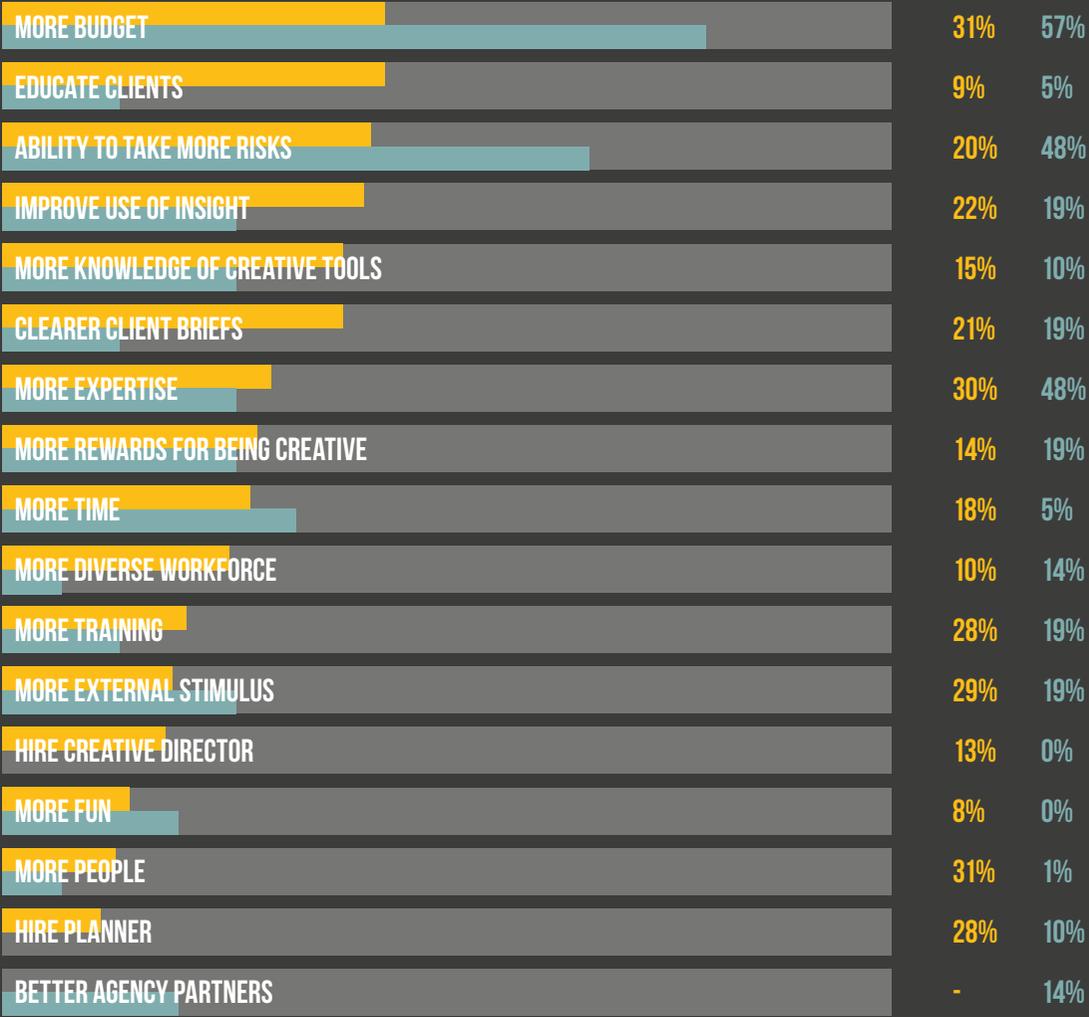
What stops you or your company from being creative?



INFLUENCES & BARRIERS

Again – two sides of the fence. Digging deeper into the figures, agencies want clearer client briefs (21%), and they also want to educate their clients (31%). Clients, meanwhile, are crying loudest for more budget (57%) and to be allowed to take more risks (a whopping 48%). We also offered the clients “better agency partners” as an option; agencies will no doubt be relieved to hear that only 14% of clients thought that would boost creativity.

What would improve your own or your company's creative capabilities?



● AGENCY ● IN-HOUSE

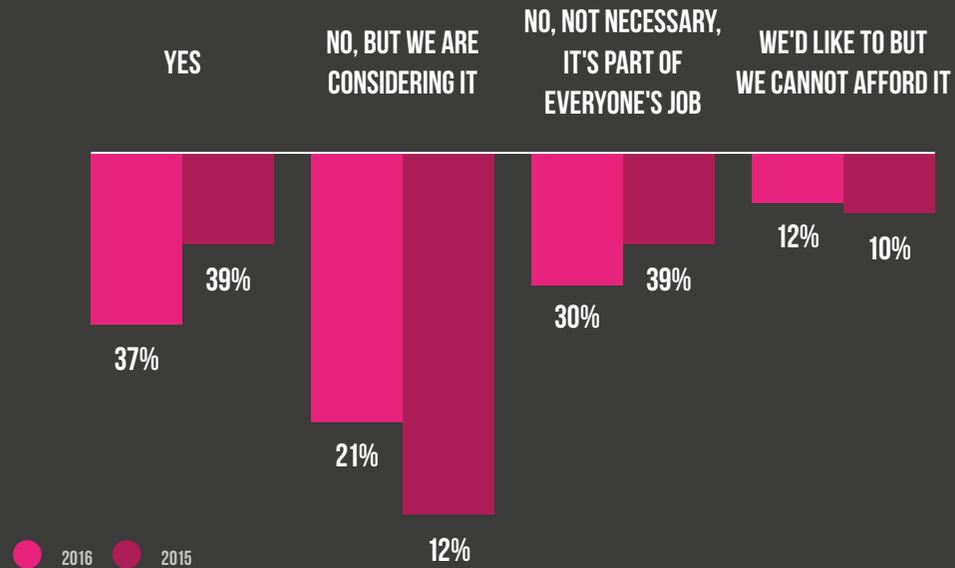
TALENT

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

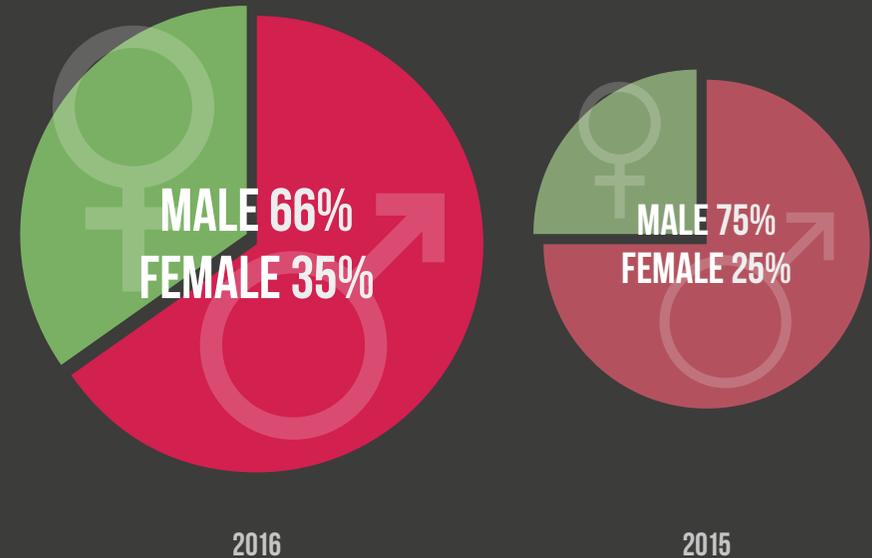
37% of this year's agency respondents have a creative director in place at their firms, around the same as last year. There is a reasonable increase in those that are considering it (21%) and a corresponding drop in the proportion that believes the role is not necessary (30%).

Similarly encouraging is the proportion of creative directors in PR that are female. According to this year's Creativity in PR study, that proportion has increased to 35% this year, compared to 25% last year.

Do you have a creative director?



Is your creative director male or female?



Considerable debate still persists about the exact role and responsibilities a creative director should fulfil within a public relations agency. When asked this question for the first time this year, respondents opted for campaign ideas first (88%), ahead of new business (70%) and design/branding (47%). Remarkably, talent and training ranked last (44%).



Creative directors come in many types... you know a creative director is doing a good job when a client is demanding that they be in the meeting.

Simon Shaw, chief creative director, H+K Strategies

Other suggestions included:

'Informing strategy'

'Change agent.'

How would you characterise the creative director's role & key duties:



RECRUITMENT

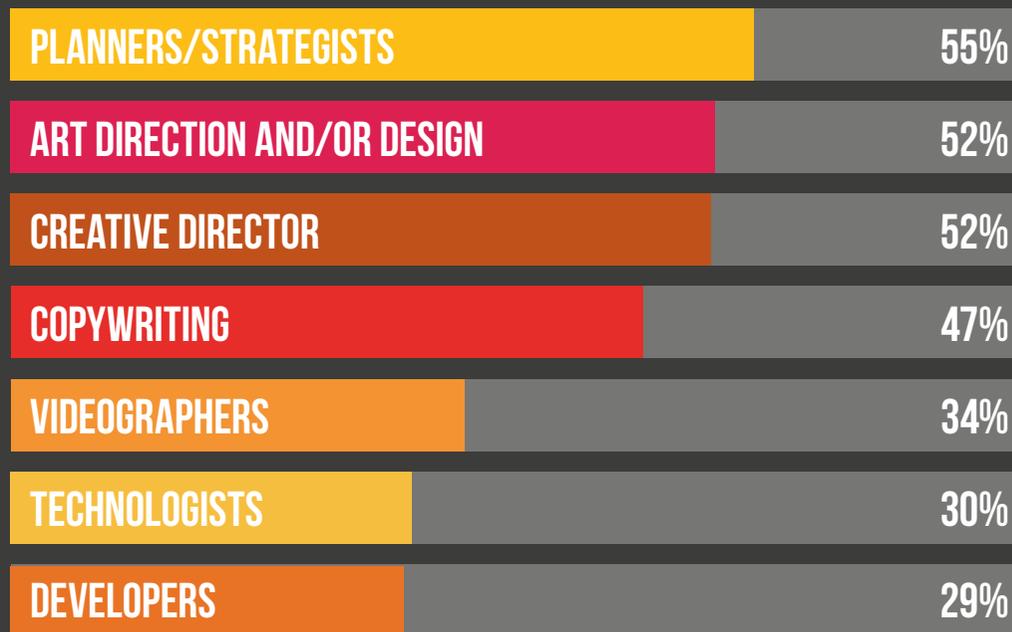
What types of creative talent does your business need?

Another new question designed to see where creative teams want HR to step up its game. It's not so much the hands-on types that creative teams are crying out for, but big-thinkers to help them develop ideas and see them through.



"We need a broad range of talent, from great journalists and writers to graphic designers and animators to UX/wireframe pros, storyboard artists, shooters and editors."

Mitch Stoller, president, Group SJR



TALENT

Far fewer respondents say they have no specific methods this year (**23%** compared to **36%**), with specific interview questions the core part of the process. Past glories still play a big part, meaning that the ideal candidate has both a gold-plated track record and the ability to think on his/her feet.

One of the challenges often raised by PR firms revolves around their ability to attract the best creative talent. Accordingly, a new question this year addressed this issue, with more respondents (**35**) noting that creative talent prefer to work at another type of agency, presumably in a competing discipline. **27%**, meanwhile, believe that agencies are not trying hard enough to hire

creative talent, while **18%** think salaries are the issue.

Other suggestions included:

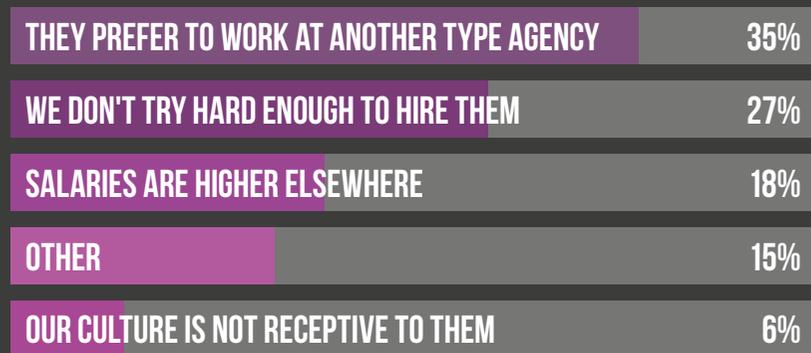
'They don't see PR as a place for them. Wrong.'

'Not enough demand.'

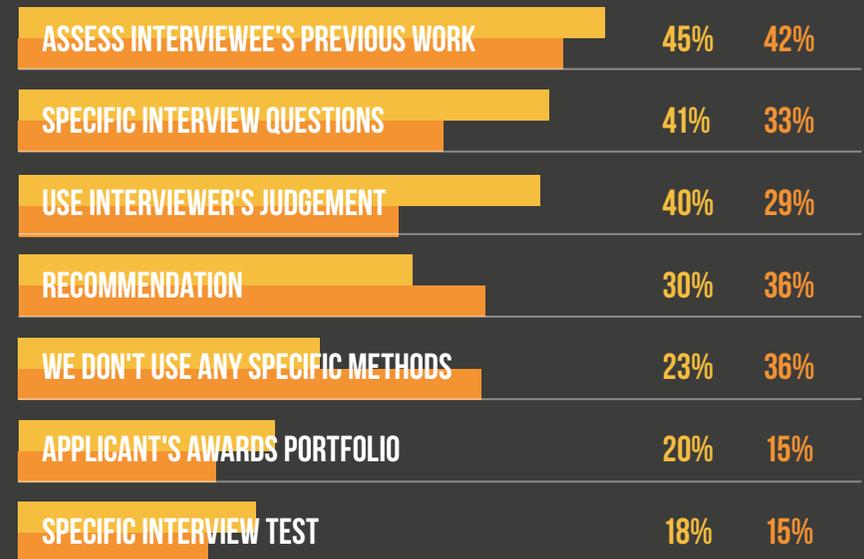
'They work in other professions.'

'There are not that many creative people out there.'

What stops creative talent joining your agency?



How do you recruit for creativity?



● 2016 ● 2015

TALENT

What is the best source of creative talent for your business?

When asked to list the top sources of creative talent for their business, **25%** pointed to adland, ahead of other non-PR agencies (**23%**). Only **15%** find the creative talent they need at other PR firms, while **13%** hire from in-house and **11%** from digital media.

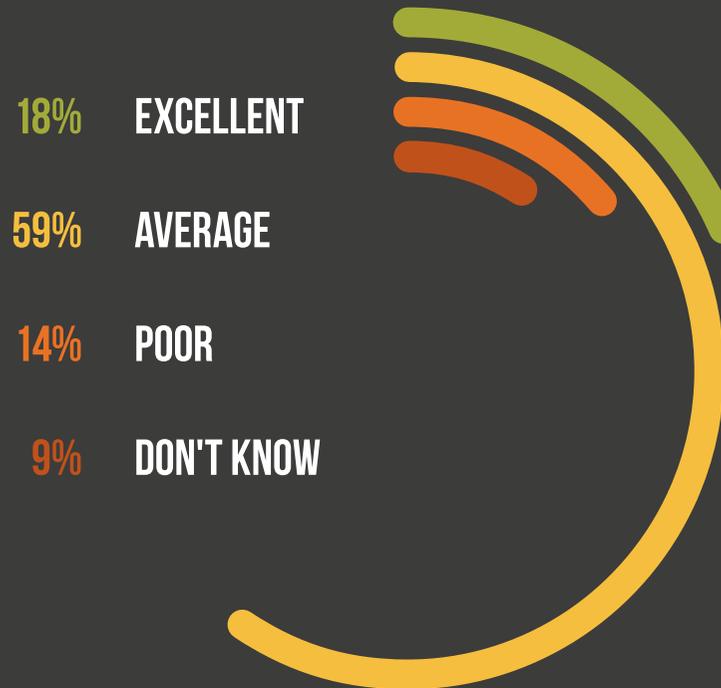
7% believe the best source of creative talent is outside the media and marketing world including 'pop culture', 'writers, artists', 'freelancers' and 'organisations like YunoJuno and The Dots.'



RETENTION & DEVELOPMENT

Given that creativity is increasingly becoming ingrained in PR practitioners' lives, we wanted to know how respondents felt their company was doing at hanging on to their ideas men and women. The answer seems to be 'ok' with more than **77%** of firms doing an average or better job of ensuring their creatives didn't jump ship the second they have the chance. Only **18%** of respondents said their bosses were doing an excellent job, however, so there's obviously room for improvement.

How good a job does your company do when it comes to retaining creative talent?

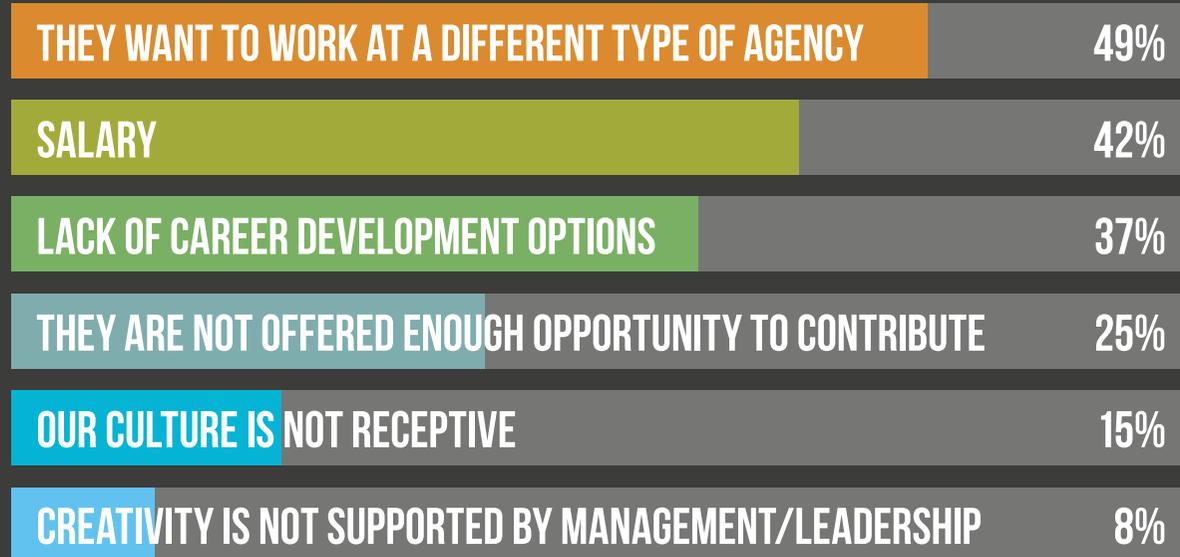




“There are an awful lot of people out there who are looking for the perfect outlet for what they do. What we didn’t establish from the study is where people are heading to in terms of other types of agency. It’s not that employers don’t appreciate creativity, perhaps, it’s more a case of creativity is in no small part about our natural desire for the ‘new’ and to continue testing ourselves. Moving on can be a way to satisfy that need. To retain talent the freedom aspect of motivation is really important here – how and where to work and what projects to work on all play a part in satisfaction and productivity.”

.....
Claire Bridges, founder, Now Go Create

What are the barriers to retaining creative talent?



How do you encourage creativity and creative behaviour?

What gets you out of bed each day? If you're motivated by the possibility of financial reward for your best ideas, the picture's not very good, as almost **44%** of respondents say that their creative endeavours are not rewarded at all. What's notable is that far more people than last year (**37%** compared to **21%**) see that demonstrating great creativity at work is a chance to get promoted.



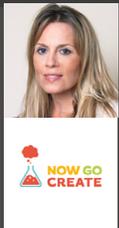
"In our business—content—we publish and post original journalistic, multimedia and interactive content everyday. By definition, it means our creators, from writers and editors to designers and filmmakers, are constantly making, shaping, shooting and more. We try our best to get out of the way and let them flourish."

Mitch Stoller, president, Group SJR



TALENT

Another fairly positive picture: the importance of creativity is formally recognised to some degree in almost three-quarters of businesses, though only a few of these (7%) go the extra mile in making sure that its practitioners are very well supported. If you're working for one of the 27% of businesses that seem blind to the idea of rewarding and training for creativity, then the good news is that you clearly don't have to look too far to find places where your talents might be more appreciated.



“According to Dan Pink’s masterly book Drive, motivation is made up of 3 key factors – autonomy, mastery and purpose. Motivation is bound up with creative high performance, so HR teams who want to improve their score here need to consider how to allow their employees more freedom – in terms of the job in hand, the time given to do it and who they do it with as well as offering training to allow for mastery and skills improvement and offer purpose beyond the simply financial.”

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Claire Bridges, founder, Now Go Create

How good are your company's HR practices - remuneration, appraisals, rewards, training - when it comes to supporting creativity?





Pete Marino

Chief Public Affairs and
Communications Officer, MillerCoors

1. How important is creativity in your decision to hire & retain an agency?

It's absolutely the most critical factor. Creativity is what separates agencies. I am looking for creative that works and I am looking for an agency that doesn't just retread tired ideas that may or may not have worked in the past for other clients. An idea is not something that you have used in the past. That's not an idea. That WAS an idea, but the moment you try to revive it, it's no longer an idea. That's not creativity. That's simply laziness. That's one of the reasons why PR agency creative lags that of ad agencies. Creativity is hard and it needs to be nurtured and appreciated within an agency and with clients.

2. How would you describe the level of creativity at your PR agencies?

Good, because people like Josh Lohrius, the ECD of Olson Engage gets it and pushes his team to bring fresh, progressive ideas.

3. In general, how would you describe your receptiveness to creative ideas from your agency?

Very high. I don't value or appreciate the regurgitation of old ideas. Now, that certainly does happen and, at times, bringing back an idea that worked in the past has merit. However, I think what gets clients and agencies excited is the opportunity to develop fresh, new ideas. I talk all the time to my Brand PR and agency team to keep pushing the envelope with our brand teams when it comes to advancing creative ideas. Of course ideas have to be in the brand voice, but I want and expect my agencies to be persistently creative.

4. Has your PR agency ever been designated as lead creative agency?

Yes. It's still as rare as an albino buffalo but it has happened.

5. What do you think are the barriers to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency?

Two things. One, is the depth and scale of creative departments at PR agencies. Many clients want and need creative depth and scale. Unfortunately, it rarely, if ever exists at PR agencies because agencies don't invest enough here. Two, is the ability to get to the table, either because your internal client has the influence to get the PR agency there, the client is progressive and interested in the best idea regardless of it's origin, or the PR agency has a track record and a reputation that intrigues the marketing team enough



Amanda Grotz

GM, Global Corporate
Communications, Nissan

1. How important is creativity in your decision to hire & retain an agency?

Creativity is crucial for brands today, particularly in the automotive industry. We are in an age where brands must inspire people through emotion, causes and content sharing. From a corporate communications point of view, we need planners, digital and social media experts, creative talent – an approach that is driven by insights and multiple channels. We have to work with partners who can do this kind of work. Creativity is also important today because it is not only a matter of corporate reputation, but also of delivering business results.

2. How would you describe the level of creativity at your PR agencies?

I would say that it is a question of mindset. It depends on the level of maturity in the agency's thinking. For instance, Nissan works with Edelman globally. It's interesting in that, as one of the PR pioneers, they are moving to a new model of communications marketing. Having good PR experts is still fundamental, but not sufficient enough nowadays. We need PR agencies that provide an integrated approach, more creativity and planning, and new talent and digital or campaign experts. This approach might open new opportunities for us, and create more agility in a very competitive world.

3. In general, how would you describe your receptiveness to creative ideas from agency?

We are open to impact! The potential impact of an idea is crucial. Creative ideas must drive experience and emotion. What we are looking for is impact, and positive conversation with customers or stakeholders to drive positive reputation and image for the Nissan brand. We are evolving in a rapidly changing world,

in very different markets, cultures and environments. If we want to make a big impression on our stakeholders, we have to have ideas which resonate with the environment. Insights and research help to find the great idea.

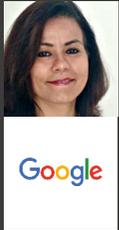
4. Has your PR agency ever been designated as lead creative agency?

Good ideas come from anywhere. An example I can share with you is the #SheDares campaign about women's empowerment that we launched during the last Olympic Games in Rio. This social media campaign came from a PR insight and the idea came from our PR team. It echoed a rising debate in the traditional media about the lack of interest in women's results during the Olympics as compared to the men. It was a huge success because it was social by design, and resonated with some of society's expectations.

5. What do you think are the barrier to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency?

I believe that the barriers are only in minds, for both brands as well as agencies. Silos and clear frontiers between advertising and PR is no longer efficient, particularly with the rise of technology and the impact of social media. Good ideas and creativity can come from a PR agency, and that is not a problem. It's the reason why we are looking for partners who are agile, smart, flexible and curious, and who have the objective of sharing these values with us.

IN-HOUSE VIEWS



Meenu Handa

Corporate Communications Director,
Google India

1. How important is creativity in your decision to hire & retain an agency?

It is important but depends on a few things- on the internal structure of the organisation and by that I mean - who is help accountable for social media, is it the COmms team or is it the marketing team - and secondly size of the company- larger companies tend to get more and more specialised resources in - whereas smaller ones tend to look for integrated solutions.

2. How would you describe the level of creativity at your PR agencies?

It is at best **5/10** (speaking of the traditional creative skills) or toally absent. Very few PR agencies in the country have strong creative teams.

3. In general, how would you describe your receptiveness to creative ideas from your agency?

Very open. Good ideas can come from anywhere.

4. Has your PR agency ever been designated as lead creative agency?

No.

5. What do you think are the barriers to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency?

Currently it is a chicken and egg situation- they want a commit and then they will put a team in place whereas clients say, show me the creativity and we can then talk.

In India the focus of the PR agencies so far has been media relations and not necessarily creating assets that can support a full campaign, but it's changing slowly and surely. Investments, to my mind, would be the biggest blocker.



Ros Hunt

Director of Communications, Coca-Cola European Partners

1. How important is creativity in your decision to hire & retain an agency?

Vital. Creative thinking isn't just about campaign ideas – although obviously those are important - it's about the agency's whole approach to running its own business and running the account team representing our business. Often a great creative idea can revolutionise the whole way of working.

2. How would you describe the level of creativity at your PR agency?

Very good. It's at its best when it harnesses also the natural creativity of the in-house team and helps free us from the constraints of the day to day – we rely on our agency to help us really think big and then dial back to what will work.

3. In general, how would you describe your receptiveness to creative ideas from your agency?

We're very receptive to it – and in fact we demand it. Even if we don't use every idea that comes forward, each one helps prompt other ideas and keeps us fresh in our thinking. There is huge value in that even if not every idea gets implemented in its original form.

4. Has your PR agency ever been designated as lead creative agency?

We take creative ideas from all of our agencies whatever their area of specialism.

5. What do you think are the barriers to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency?

In my personal experience, PR agencies are still too shy of proposing ideas or executions that they might feel traditionally sit with an advertising agency. From the client perspective, those boundaries are more blurred than ever before. We're looking for the big idea, regardless of where it originates.



Alex Malouf

Corporate Communications Manager,
Arabian Peninsula, Procter & Gamble

1. How important is creativity in your decision to hire & retain an agency?

In my personal opinion, creativity is become ever more important when it comes to hiring and retaining an agency. There's so much clutter and noise in the media and the digital space, and creativity is the only solution to cut through this and reach out to audiences with content that they will engage with. Increasingly I'm seeing agencies appoint creative heads, and it's a sign of where we as an industry are heading towards. We're no longer just wordsmiths – we're creating content of every shape and form to use in our stakeholder messaging. We're also turning to technology as well.

2. How would you describe the level of creativity at your PR agencies?

My team are full of ideas, and they'll often come to me with concepts which they think will be impactful, which I'm very grateful for. Would I like them to be more creative? Of course. A fertile imagination will conceive good, original ideas. I'll always encourage creativity, particularly if there's an awareness of how creativity works for the brand and how one maps out an idea from conception to execution.

3. In general, how would you describe your receptiveness to creative ideas from your agency?

I'm always open to a creative idea, particularly if its impact has been thought through. I'm sometimes skeptical of big ideas without an outcome attached; I don't want creative ideas to be gimmicky. However, if a creative idea is well conceived and it is based on a powerful insight, then I'm all for it.

4. Has your PR agency ever been designated as lead creative agency?

The PR agency and creative work side-by-side (they're part of the same group), and they're also housed in the same building. There's a strong relationship between the two teams and both understand the other's role. I'm fortunate to have this set-up. It's good for everyone.

5. What do you think are the barriers to PR agencies becoming the lead creative agency?

The challenge and opportunity always lies in the level of awareness and understanding. Below the line communications is increasingly being seen as one of the most powerful means to build credibility and trust. PR channels have changed beyond recognition – we're no longer dealing with print, radio or television. We can reach a mass audience directly online, and this shift means that we can also control how the message is conveyed. The digital realm gives us the ability to use creativity to refine how our messages are received. It's up to agency heads to understand this shift and bring in creatives who not

only understand public relations but have strong views as to how they can improve on how impactful public relations can be. The marriage of public relations and creatives means it's an exciting time for our industry.

ABOUT

ABOUT THE HOLMES REPORT



The Holmes Report is the authoritative voice of the global public relations industry, dedicated to proving and improving the value of public relations by providing insight, knowledge and recognition to public relations professionals.

The Holmes Group was founded in **2000** by Paul Holmes, publisher and CEO, who has more than two decades of experience writing about and evaluating the public relations business and consulting with both public relations firms and their clients.

The Holmes Group delivers against its mission by providing the most sophisticated reporting and analysis on public relations trends and issues, along with an extensive global footprint of events and awards.

For more information please visit www.holmesreport.com

ABOUT NOW GO CREATE



Claire Bridges is Chief Spark and Founder of leading creative training consultancy Now Go Create, whose philosophy is that everyone can be creative. Claire is an ex-WPP Consumer MD and Creative Director who has worked with some of the world's biggest brands in her previous **20**-year PR career and she now runs Now Go Create, delivering workshops around the world that last from three hours to week long creative leadership intensives and ongoing programmes. She has worked on hundreds of creative projects and trained thousands of people around the world.

Claire's new book *In Your Creative Element, The Formula for Creative Success in Business* explores the question 'What does it take to be creative in business?' and features proprietary work undertaken by the author for her MSc in Innovation, Creativity and Leadership from the Cass Business School at City University London.

In Your Creative Element is highly practical and packed with case studies and tips from creative experts and organisations including the NHS, United Nations, Twitter, Punchdrunk, Sky Media and Paddy Power as well as some of the world's most successful advertising and PR agencies including the Holmes Report's Most Creatively Awarded Agency in the World **2016** - Unity.