

Are the dinosaurs dead, dad?

 By [Jason Ray](#)

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The other day I attended a PR pitch where the client team numbered three (including me) and the PR agency marched in with 11 people. Only two people had a speaking role, the rest just nodded sagely. It reminded me of the bad old days.

For the longest of times, ad agencies were a mirror of the client's marketing department. A complex, layered structure, stuffed with well-dressed juniors who were 'working their way up the ladder'. Each client body required an equal agency body and our remuneration was hard-wired to work on head count.

How times have changed.



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Marketing people these days are under unimaginable pressure. Teams have been trimmed down to just one, two or a few people, and those people are expected to manage absolutely everything that makes the brand tick. From the curatorship of the internal culture... to the planning of traditional advertising... to activations on the street... to the management of the digital experience... even, in some cases, store décor and customer process design.

The last thing they need is the agency making things even more complicated. No. What modern clients need is a team of specialists who know exactly how to bring all these different channels to life within a single brand voice.

So, why aren't agencies trying to become less complicated (I know for sure we are)? And why can't we get rid of layers? They just get in the way.

For me, this means, three very simple premises:

1. It is impossible to 'visit' a business.

Account planners should not "pop in" for a weekly catch-up. They should move in, for a few days a week, where they become a working part of the team. Part of the conversation and right at the heart of the business.

2. Quality time is better than lots of time.

Studios should consist only of senior people. People who have the experience needed to distill a business problem into a beautiful, pure idea. Quickly.

3. There is no such thing as a mass market.

Even with so-called mass media, we should explore the segments within to speak to a tightly defined niche.

Does it work? Well, we've been trying it out and our scores in both measurable campaign results and client satisfaction are uniformly high, so yes, we think so.

Later, on the night of that same PR pitch, I read a book to a friend's child. Lovely book by Julie Middleton, it was called *Are the dinosaurs dead, dad?*

In the book, like in advertising, they weren't. But they should be.

ABOUT JASON RAY

Jason Ray is the owner and strategist at RADAR which he loves because it means he gets to be part of the front-line in their client's quest to be the very best at what they do. In his spare time he loves SA art, adventure travel and designing spaces.

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