

Ad industry is about relationships

 By [Paul Williams](#)

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The glory days of the advertising industry, when ad execs would drive around in fancy cars and spend their days having leisurely drinks and lunches with clients, are long gone and the ad industry, like the PR industry, has largely shaken-off its reputation of being a party industry. But, while "the good old days" are certainly part of a bygone era, the emphasis on relationship-building and having a bit of fun should not be lost in the scuffle to "keep it professional".



Business, like all aspects of life, is about relationships. Good relationships make for good business and in our industry, the success and sustainability of the client-agency relationship depends on the amount and type of energy and time that is spent on developing that relationship.

Unfortunately in today's hurried, high-pressured and competitive business climate, it can be all too easy to forget this.

Notoriously tough

The advertising industry is notoriously tough. Clients are demanding, hours are long and stress levels run high, and, sadly, many clients and agencies these days base their business relationship of a type of mutual fear and understated threat to get things done.

Their relationships are underpinned by the threat, 'do it or I leave', and the insecurity and fear that results generates an unhealthy pressure to perform.

This kind of strategy might yield great performance for a while but it will be a short-term solution and will never lead to sustained levels of exceptional advertising and deep insights into the business. People will eventually buckle under the emotional strain.

This is not conducive to business and it is certainly not conducive to establishing long-term relationships built on mutual respect. No one is committed to anything they don't like and unfortunately low commitment is often the reason for the breakdown of business relationships.

Take time to interact

In short, I believe that agencies should take time to interact on a more social level with their clients because to limit interaction to "business only" demeans that client relationship. After all, clients are still people and sometimes a Friday afternoon drink with them might be just the thing that is needed to cement the relationship after the stresses of the week.

Obviously if a particular client demands professionalism and a more conservative approach, then the relationship dynamics should reflect this. However, this should not detract from the importance of focusing on the deeper issues of the relationship, such as shared values and goals, respect, integrity and a dedication to the success of each other's business.

Good business relationships that are able to stand the test of time are those which recognise and respect the people involved.

ABOUT PAUL WILLIAMS

Paul Williams is client service director at MGBrand Construction & Advertising (www.mgmcom.co.za) and has 14 years' experience in the advertising industry, having worked on industry giants such as Pick'n Pay, Chrysler, Jeep, Unilever, KFC, Vodacom, Prominent Paints and Consol. Paul has a Bachelors degree in journalism and theology and a AAA certificate in client service. During his time off, Paul can be found taking moonlit walks on the beach, pondering his heydays as a Russian KGB spy. Contact him on tel +27 (0)11 482 8944.

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