

# Client training addresses skills gaps and can even help build new business units

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There is no doubt that great agency and client partnerships are the foundation for work that shifts the performance needle. However, when there is an in-house skills deficit it places strain on the relationship that can impact results. Client training can not only remedy the knowledge gap, but can even help brands build new business units.

As digital marketing grows in importance, having people in leadership positions who understand the work that is being done and how and why it will make a difference is paramount.

“Great client and agency partnerships are easy to foster when there is an alignment of skills. The best way for clients to extract the most value is when everyone’s expectations are aligned and there is an environment where candid conversations can be had. But we know that these open and informed conversations are far easier to have when client and agency teams are on level playing fields.

When there is a mismatch in insight or gaps in knowledge it can result in a breeding ground for misunderstanding and defensiveness and could eventually lead to a breakdown of the relationship as a whole,” explains Niamh NicLiam Director of Growth & Partnerships at Incubeta.

While there has been a real improvement in basic understanding of digital marketing, there is still a skills gap, particularly amongst individuals who have a traditional background.



Chelsea Owens, Business Unit Director at Incubeta

## Even the most seasoned CMOs can benefit from training

Training must be driven from the highest level if it is to succeed and NicLiam says that the CMOs that get behind the idea, and are themselves involved, are the ones to see results the fastest.

“Digital marketing technology has advanced incredibly fast. You can’t expect seasoned CMOs to understand the nuances of managing campaigns on a complex platform like DV360. But if that CMO is aware and can acknowledge their skills gap they will look for ways to improve their knowledge. They will also make sure they have a team around them that has specialist knowledge,” she explains.

The time for the training conversation must come at the beginning of the relationship, especially when there is a big tech outlay on the books.

“When companies make big tech investments it makes no sense for the licences to come without the appropriate training – and no leader worth their salt would settle for anything less. But it’s at this point that it’s also important to raise the opportunity for the whole team to undergo additional training, not just the people working directly with the technology. Sometimes these can be quite delicate conversations, but good leaders see the business benefit and it becomes far less tricky,” Chelsea Owens, Business Unit Director at Incubeta explains.

## An opportunity to build in-house skills and boost sustainability

Looking at the power of training, NicLiam shares how one big retailer used the training opportunity to build a new digital department.

“Forward thinking CMOs have not only used the training to ensure they can properly engage with their agency, but some have actually taken it a step further. A local brand knew they needed DV360 training. But they also saw an opportunity to upskill their team and bring the missing skills in-house. The training was so successful that they were able to build an entirely new business division that is working independently and making a real difference to the business. Client training can transform organisations,” she shares.

Incubeta has also worked with clients to develop tailored tools and then trained both the client and their agencies to ensure proper knowledge transfer.

“We can’t run tools for clients indefinitely, that is not a sustainable solution. In this case we craft training that allows brands to take ownership of the tools as well as ensuring they have teams that know how to use them. Working with a multinational retail brand we designed dynamic-driven creative templates and we trained both the brand as well as their other agency partners on how to use them. We look at training agnostically, the more people in the collective who understand and speak the language and who have a practical understanding of what we are doing, the better. There is no room for a territorial mindset,” Owens says.

An important part of sustainable client training is to tackle it at an organisational level. Owens explains that it’s crucial to build and nurture institutional knowledge that will survive staff turnover or the brand will find itself back to square one in a very short period or time.

“The vast majority of people embrace the learning culture and teams quickly develop an appetite for more. Given how fast our industry changes it’s vital that companies stay on top of new trends and new skills. Working with a partner can make it a lot less daunting and can deliver measurable results far faster,” Owens sums up.

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