

## **Adhere to pitching guidelines – ACA**

Given the recent outcry surrounding the “excessive and indulgent” number of advertising agencies invited to pitch to the South African Post Office (SAPO), the Association for Communication and Advertising (ACA) has reacted strongly by reaffirming its new business acquisition guidelines to member agencies and the marketing industry.

The ACA, its member agencies, in collaboration with the Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS) and National Treasury, spent almost three years drawing up a code of conduct governing pitches, which is designed to protect the advertising industry from unreasonable and unfair procurement practices on the part of potential clients.

### **Fair process detailed**

According to Odette Roper, ACA CEO, the guideline document details a fair process to be implemented when pitching for new business – one which is endorsed by all members.

“In light of the recent disregard of our industry guidelines for tenders and pitches, the ACA has both castigated those members who flouted their own guidelines and is in the process of launching a communications campaign to create a greater awareness of the guidelines amongst its members, marketers, industry consultants, Government and procurement departments. There are mutual benefits to be gained by all parties from these guidelines,” says Roper.

“As a voluntary association we expect our members to abide by our code of conduct, especially where they have initiated guidelines. In the interests of those agencies that comply, we have to act more decisively to curb this practice. This is all about peer pressure and democratic sanction by members. The ACA has the support of the industry's leading agencies who have expressed their intention to take a stand against those who continue to disregard the industry's code of conduct.”

### **Overkill and resource waste**

Roper says that if clients calculated the cost of pitching for a major account, they would realise that having more than five agencies on the list is overkill and a waste of resources. Furthermore, if the playing field is to be leveled and smaller agencies are encouraged to compete with the major players in the ad industry, marketers would be encouraged to limit the number of agencies invited to pitch and to consider including an emerging or entrepreneurial agency on the pitch list.

Where larger agencies may budget for the costs of new business acquisition, smaller agencies may not have available resources to do the same. Unreasonably expensive and indulgent pitching processes often lead to the demise of smaller agencies because of the costs incurred in pitches.

### **Dedicated website section**

As part of the ACA's campaign to create a greater awareness of the industry guidelines for tenders and pitches, a section of the ACA's website will be dedicated to assisting agencies, marketers, industry consultants, government and procurement departments with tenders and pitches. This section of the website will also make available to marketers and procurement departments an opportunity to advertise their tenders.

“To resolve this unsatisfactory situation, the ACA looks to both its member agencies to be sincere in support of their own pitch guidelines as well as marketers, who need to understand the enormous cost in intellectual capital and operational expense which agencies invest in pitches. More often than not the collective effort runs into hundreds of thousands of rands of real cost. On the other hand, marketers are exposed to a range of concepts and creative work for which the unsuccessful agencies usually remain unrewarded for their efforts,” concludes Roper.

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