

# Finding an agency through pitch process

Allowing agencies to pitch for your rebrand, a new website, PR, social media or a marketing campaign is a great way to ensure that your budget is spent wisely. The pitching - or procurement - process will help you to understand what you need and will lead you to the agency best suited to the task.

According to Sylvia Schutte, MD at integrated agency Stratitude, there are benefits to getting integrated agencies to pitch for your business and suggests four stages to the pitch process.

## Pre-pitch process



Sylvia Schutte

Before you begin your search, work out your objectives and how this project would meet them. You do not need a comprehensive plan – the successful agency can help with this – but setting clear goals will give both parties a good starting point.

“We have often had to pitch on a branding project or a new website and then ended up signing a fully integrated campaign with a client. They do not always know all the elements they need for a campaign, but by talking to an integrated agency, they are shown the possibilities, benefits and ROI they can achieve from an integrated campaign,” says Schutte.

## Selecting agencies to pitch

When companies look for an agency they frequently think that ‘bigger is better’, but if you are a small client in a large agency, you might not get the attention that your business needs. The first step is doing research on agencies in the market, including visiting their websites and looking at their previous work and case studies.

Then consider whether you need a specialist agency or a full-service agency. A specialist PR agency will offer a great service, but what if you want to integrate your PR with your website or send a monthly newsletter to your customers?

“We believe that the biggest value to our clients is that we offer an integrated service. We are not restricted to one channel, so when you have created a great content piece, it can be used across multiple channels, such as a press release, a blog article, a Facebook post and in a customer newsletter.

## Consider chemistry

You might be impressed by an agency’s website and credentials, but consider holding a ‘chemistry meeting’ before asking them to pitch. This is an opportunity to discuss goals, ask questions and have a face-to-face meeting with the people you could be working with.

Your primary goal is to find a professional, trustworthy agency that you can develop a strong relationship with. While some agencies have great ideas, if you do not get along, those good ideas can end up being expensive mistakes.

## The pitch

“Create a shortlist and invite no more than three agencies to pitch. Provide as much information as possible and be clear on what you expect from the pitch presentation, otherwise it may result in unsuitable responses and wasted time.

“If you want a creative solution, you need to ask for creative work and be prepared to pay a fee for the agency’s time. Many established agencies will not pitch free creative solutions, unless they have agreed to do so beforehand. Instead, they will show how they will approach your challenges and how much it would cost.

“When it comes to the pitch presentation, the agency must talk about your business and its understanding of your requirements not about itself, its case studies and the awards it has won. The standout agency will be the one that has done its research and has a thorough understanding of what it is you need and how you are likely to get there.

“Many of our project clients have turned into long-term retainer clients, so keep that ‘chemistry’ in mind even when you are looking for an agency to work on a short-term project. If the agency you choose delivers the results you need, then you may not have to look for another agency for future work,” concludes Schutte.

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