

Research finds strong client-agency relationships lead to more effective work

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Image supplied. Amy Rodgers, head of Warc Creative. "Does the strength of the relationship between client and agency correlate with effective work? We can answer with an emphatic 'yes'"

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Outlined in the study *Do stronger relationships produce stronger results?* the analysis demonstrates where the strongest, most effective, relationships excel, and it points to where brands and agencies should focus their efforts in developing an effective culture in the partnerships they build.

Key findings

Across the board, relationship scores were stronger in client-agency pairings that had won an effectiveness award.

- 68% of agencies that had been awarded for effectiveness were scored above average by their clients.
- 67% of clients that had been awarded for effectiveness were scored above average by their agency partners.

"We've long held the belief that stronger relationships build stronger business. Now we have proof. This is a wake-up call to the industry. No longer is a positive client-agency relationship a soft option - it is a critical driver of marketing performance," Kim Walker, founder, Aprais.

"We are in the midst of a global paradigm shift where the happiness of teams, and the people that comprise them, is driving greater performance," adds Walker.

Three key areas

The research highlights three key areas where these effectiveness award-winning relationships excel.

- **Strategy**

Among the job-specific skills, strategy is the discipline for which winning teams show the biggest increase in score compared with average relationship scores. This is both when clients score their agencies on strategy and when agencies score clients, showing that teams on both sides of the relationship need to get involved with the strategy behind great marketing ideas.



- **Trust**

The team can be relied on to deliver and behave with integrity. This was the highest-scoring behaviour as viewed by both clients and agencies. Also a clear and positive differentiator when comparing award-winning teams with the overall average.

- **Challenge**

The client-agency team uses initiative to challenge the status quo and does not allow conflict to go unaddressed. This is the behaviour that shows the greatest difference between average relationships and the award winners.

“Does the strength of the relationship between client and agency correlate with effective work? Following this research using two unique sets of data, for the first time, we can answer with an emphatic ‘yes’.

“The implications are profound for marketers and their agencies – and arguably for any business relationship. As uncertainty continues to dominate the business world, the importance of strong relationships to navigate through uncertainty is clear,” says Amy Rodgers, head of Warc Creative.

Methodology

To test the hypothesis that stronger relationships produce better results, two unique sets of data were used. The 1,800 winners of effectiveness awards world-wide, ranked in the Warc Effective 100 database between 2013-2022, were cross-matched with 25,000 client-agency evaluations conducted by Aprais.

To qualify for the research, agency teams had to have been assessed by Aprais 12 months before the award was given, must have worked on the specific award-winning brand, and be in the geographic region where the work was awarded. This matching process gave a sample set of 282 evaluations of agencies that went on to win effectiveness awards and 278 evaluations of award-winning client relationships.

A complimentary copy of the report is available to read for a limited time [here](#).

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