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**What is an advertising agency?**

**The Client Agency Relationship.**

An advertising agency handles part or all marketing communications activities on behalf of a client organization. The agencies themselves tend to vary in size from small, perhaps a handful of people, to vast - where many thousands of employees make up the company. A commission is generally taken by the agency which tends to be taken from the media purchases of the client organisation.

This is done rather like a theatrical agent would take a percentage of the income of an actor for whom employment had been found. The agency may also take payment from the media owners (i.e. sometimes take a discount and do not pass it on to the client). More transparent means of payment are becoming more popular, with some agencies being paid-by-results.

There are many types of agency, but it is generally accepted that the main ones are include full-service agency, a la carte agency, or specialist agency. A full-service agency will take on the whole project or campaign. An a la carte agency will offer some aspects of a campaign such as media buying, rather like buying items from a menu. A specialist agency tends to be small and more focused on a specific aspect of marketing communications and/or a specific market such as Internet Marketing.

**A Full-Service Agency will offer:**

* Account management.
* Creative.
* Media.
* Traffic and production.
* Account planning.
* Account management.

Account managers work for an agency with the client (an agency's customers are called 'clients'). Very often they will spend a lot of time with the client working as part of their marketing team. This is one way in which an agency works closely with its client and why the 'chemistry' between a client and its agency needs to be right. The account manager makes sure that the correct information is passed from the client to the other members of the agency. He or she is a co-ordinator and time manager. The account planner will work on a brief that is fed back to the agency team.

**Creative Team**

The first internal agency team members to see the brief tend to be the creatives and the media planners. The brief contains a 'proposition' that the client wishes to communicate to the target audience. The creative team will transform the proposition into something exciting and attractive to the target audience. The creative team decide upon the 'creative concept.' This will be a motivational idea. The words used to express the creative concept are called 'copy.' The images, pictures and diagrams are created i.e. the 'design' or 'layout.' This is done by 'designers' and 'copywriters.' Beware some creatives! Creatives tend to be artistic and innovative. Hence their advice should be highly regarded and any criticism should be constructive.

**Traffic and Production Team.**

The traffic and media team are in charge of the production of the physical and artistic output, i.e. the marketing communication. In the case of a TV advert, they would commission scripts, recruit a ctors (mainly via agents), film crews and supporting activities (such as costumes and catering). All ads are different and so the specifics will vary. In the case of print advertising, the traffic and production team would commission and sign-off all printed advertising material such as direct marketing materials, magazine ads or posters.

**Account Planning Team.**

The account planning team work on the 'customer's' perspective, and take an outward look at the world. They support the creative teams by supplying data and opinion on what I actually occurring in the marketing in which advertising is to be placed. They tend to use secondary data to support decisions, and would rarely commission original research. However, with material supplied my organisations such as Mori, Datamonitor, ACORN, and other - the account planning team can build an image of segments to help the creatives.

**Media Team.**

The media team will organize the timing and scheduling of the marketing communications campaign. They will look at the range of media to be exploited, and then look at the best slots in which to run advertising. They will help a client to decide upon the duration of and individual slot, and how many of them to run. Here the expense and return to the client are key factors that influence decision-making. The two main skills of the media team are media planning and media buying. Today there is a wealth of data on which media buying can be based. There is software for planning and simulation.