Twitter Thread by Samuel Brealey

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THREAD: Turkeys don’t vote for Christmas. It’s 6pm on a Friday evening, everyone is sat around a table at a nice restaurant in London. The head of Marketing from some big company is sitting down with his agency who invited him down to talk things over.

They insist on paying the bill, it’s a casual thing they say. Just a chat about ideas.

Wine starts flowing and jokes too. Everyone has a good time.

Especially the agency, they just signed a new client retainer for £5,000 a month.

Easy pickings.

Too often we see Marketers signing agency contracts because of a few casual chats, usually following some conference waffle sales pitch about how everything in Marketing is dead now and only they have the solutions in this “new world”.

The point here is that turkeys won’t vote for Christmas.

They won’t sell you the best option, they’ll sell what’s best for them.

But the problem isn’t the agencies, its Marketers.

Agencies will try to sell you what they sell, of course they would. Marketers of all people should be aware of this. It doesn’t really matter if you get on really well and they paid for your meal and they are young, millennial, white and middle class and do digital.

What matters is what they can do for you and the business.

And what they can do for you, is your job to figure out. It is not theirs.

Lazy Marketers pay laughably high sums to agencies to make it seem like they are doing something productive, just to keep their jobs and avoid responsibility.

As a Marketer, the aim is to get an agency that can act on the strategic objectives of the organisation and its own media plan. A Marketer is the middle man between the business and the agency.

Hiring an agency who does social media to do a social media strategy for you because you don't actually have a plan or a strategy at all seems to be the common issue here. Many Marketers have just a vague idea of the kind of customers that actually buy.

Usually justified with some excuse about being too busy to do a good job. It's intellectually lazy because busyness is not the same as productivity.

As is always the case with Marketing, it entails doing it properly. The usual legwork of research, marketing audits, diagnosis, segmentation, targeting and positioning and everything else that follows the remit of Marketing needs to be performed first.

Once a Marketer has done this, and by this, I mean a proper job. That Marketer can actually find an agency that can help communicate to their potential customers in a way that will actually work using all the insights gained from the Marketing process.

The role of the Marketer when meeting an agency is then to educate them about what the agency can actually do for them. How does what they offer fit in with an overarching plan and so on and so forth.

If it doesn't sound like it works for the Marketer, then they need to find another agency who can fulfil the goals of the organisation.

Once it looks like you have the agency you need, make it clear what the objectives are, make it clear when you need it and give them everything they need to do a good job.

A bad marketer will present a twenty page ream of corporate sludge to an agency, in an attempt to feel intellectually superior. They'll use all this marketing jargon crap that doesn't mean anything to anyone but a Marketer, especially not to a creative.

It doesn't mean anything to the audience either. Keep it simple stupid.

The final point here is on briefing.

I'm one of those rare weirdos, a creative and a Marketer. Therefore I can see and understand both sides of the conundrum. One of the biggest problems creatives face is making bad advertising.

Most creatives don't want to create bad advertising and sadly most of them end up working under lunatics who just want to shove cheap, nasty anything on clients with the least effort but the most profit, quantity over quality.

But the few lucky creatives, they create good work, stuff that's clever, fun and entertaining and just good advertising. They are usually a bit rebellious and weird, that's a good thing.

These are the agencies that Marketers want and need but the only way to get there is to first, do a proper job as a Marketer, as I've said now repeatedly and secondly it is to learn to brief.

I've seen too many Marketers, brilliant at everything they do but they fall face first at the final hurdle which is briefing. They think that all they need to provide is some data and some usual report stuff. It's a real shame but it's so common.

Briefing properly is about understanding who you're actually talking to. Presenting a one page memo, like a TV ad script or a print ad. That summarises everything that the business is and wants to be. Briefs are brief.

In a language and presentation that reflects its intended audience. Creative people need some inspiration, they need something that is narrowly defined, insightful and clear but still has energy that can be exploited to give them ideas.

Turkeys don't vote for Christmas, agencies will always sell what's best for them. Marketers, make sure you do your job right and then you can find the one that sells what's best for you too. Then, everyone is happy.