

Production and procurement skills high on IPA agenda

Creative services management and procurement skills have been afforded high priority by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) – but are agencies seeing it that way too?

The IPA has laid its cards on the table, and made the commitment. With creative services departments across the industry under pressure from production decoupling and seemingly often being under-valued internally, the IPA's decision to establish management courses for creative services staff can be viewed as an attempt to reverse the trend.

The only problem seems to be in prodding agencies to commit people to the training. This year the IPA Creative Services Management Knowledge Course, due to begin in March 2007, has been put back until the autumn. Why so, PMM asks?

Olga Budimir, formerly of Burkitt DDB, now a consultant and the chair of the IPA's Creative Services group, suspects it is partly due to some uncertainty amongst agencies about what size and shape their creative services teams will be in the future

as they undergo re-structuring, and therefore some reluctance to spend on training. Again, decoupling raises its troublesome head.

"I get the impression that some agencies are not paying enough attention to the creative services area," says Budimir. "When clients say they are taking production away, they say 'OK, fine', because it is easier to farm out. So, creative services departments are shrinking. They need to be trained and motivated though. If all of a sudden you find that you are losing half of your creative services team that is very demoralising for the people left behind in the department.

"The IPA is committed to ensuring that creative services staff are trained though. We have to train everybody in the company, but a lot of the senior people in creative services are just going. They're needed, and if the agencies don't keep them, then clients might use them direct. If agencies did look a lot more at this, things could run more smoothly and efficiently."

Intended to attract intermediary and senior members of creative services departments, the Management Knowledge Course was introduced to run as a more senior version of the Creative Services Introduction Knowledge Course (formerly known as the Press & Print Production Knowledge Course).

The course aims to provide a comprehensive grounding in creative

skills and to back up each student's on-going practical experience. It includes education in important functions such as negotiation and conflict resolution, and financial acumen including procurement (see boxout for the full content of the course). At the end of the series of weekly sessions (over a period of about six weeks) the participants sit an exam and this, plus the course work, contributes to the award of an IPA Diploma in Creative Services Management Knowledge.

It takes time for any new training course to win its spurs in the eyes of the industry of course, but regardless of its current kudos, the point must surely be that creative services staff members that go through the training will be able to contribute more comprehensively to the agency's and its clients' bottom line.

These issues are becoming more and more pertinent if you are in the creative services front line, because the requirement to sit in front of clients is on the rise. The management course ought therefore to be a serious consideration for all in agency creative services.

Budimir points out: "Whether you call it traffic or project management, these people are having to deal directly with the client. If you've never dealt with clients before, never had to present and explain why it costs this much money, then you need to make sure you have those skills, and that's what the Management Course is all about. We

***"If you've never dealt with clients before, never had to present and explain why it costs this much money, then you need to make sure you have those skills, and that's what the Management Course is all about."* Olga Budimir**



need less craft skills and more business skills due to the nature of the relationship with the client.”

There’s assistance from the IPA for those outside of the production environment that also have to explain these things to clients. Budimir herself runs a series of “Friday morning workshops”, usually every four-six weeks, and has dealt so far with such topics as traffic and project management, demystifying production, and art buying.

Then there is another IPA course, put together with ISBA, the voice of UK advertisers, and CIPS (the Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply) following the success of the “Magic and Logic” study on how marketing, procurement and ad agencies can work better together.

“Procurement for non-procurement managers” shines a light on the dynamics of the procurement/agency relationship, providing a greater understanding of how purchasing works in the supply chain environment, and it equips participants with numerous skills to manage that relationship better.

Modules on the course include procurement tools and techniques, the Tender stage of the procurement process, negotiation skills, and client: agency relationship management (see boxout for full content). The IPA says that agency staff working in creative services, account, business or project management, finance and new business should all benefit, and the 12-week course is crowned with the award of the IPA Certificate in Procurement.

Tina Fegent, a purchasing marketing consultant who is helping the IPA run the course, and has a fairly unique background of having sat on both sides of the purchasing/agency negotiating table, believes the Procurement for non-procurement managers training is vital. Agencies need to learn how to be more open, honest and transparent in dealing with procurement, she says. Success lies in “learning how to work

with procurement” she says, and a good purchasing professional will work with an agency, will be prepared to understand that agencies require a fair fee for the job. “Very often agencies are bullied by clients,” she adds.

“Agencies often do a good job and don’t tell the client how good they’ve been in managing costs – they can save thousands of pounds. The idea is to engage with purchasing on another level: ‘it’s not just about money, let’s look at creative services and let’s make it better’, as well as this is how much money we’ve saved. This course tries to give them the confidence to stand up to clients. The creative services people on the course have learned how to negotiate, how to push back and get a profit out of the margin.”

This is all very different to the training available when Fegent herself was learning her trade a dozen years ago. In short, there wasn’t any, and Fegent learned about print by visiting printers. There are too few print-buying specific courses around for people to learn the specifics of a specialist procurement field. “When I started out, there was absolutely nothing. It’s much better now,” Fegent reflects.

Magic and Logic has been a watershed though for the client/agency relationship, she reckons, and has brought the IPA, CIPS and ISBA into much closer alignment. Indeed, at the annual conference of ISBA in March, case studies were described as to how Eurostar, Astra Zeneca and the agency 23red had used Magic and Logic to “improve their business practices”.

So it is all moving in the right direction, it seems, but progress demands that agencies make use of the opportunities being put before them.

- www.ipa.co.uk
- www.isba.org.uk
- www.cips.org
- www.consultolga.com
- www.tinafegent.com
- www.magicandlogic.co.uk



“The creative services people on the Procurement for non-procurement managers course have learned how to negotiate, how to push back and get a profit out of the margin.” Tina Fegent

Procurement for non-procurement managers

- Introduction to Magic and Logic
- Where procurement fits in an organisation
- Procurement tools and techniques
- The Tender stage of a procurement process
- Contracting with Client Purchasing
- Negotiation skills
- Trends in remuneration
- Managing the account as a business
- Client:Agency Relationship Management
- Project Management
- Summary

Creative Services Management Knowledge Course

- The role and importance of the agency creative services function
- Copyright and Legal
- Managing People
- Leadership Skills
- Managing Client Relationships
- Negotiation and Conflict Resolution
- Fearless Presentation Skills
- Confidence building
- Financial acumen, including procurement

Thinking of
:Webapproval...
:Think again!



from

£11,995.00

