

# BtoB

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## » FIRE YOUR CLIENT? By Spyro Kourtis

### Seven tips for making sure your agency is pursuing clients that meet your goals

IT'S TOO BAD MOST agencies passively wait for RFPs to appear or search agencies to call. I believe you get a better agency-client relationship and better advertising when agencies deliberately go after the clients they really want. ¶ Another concern is agencies that are willing to say anything to get a new client. They pursue large accounts that will break their business model just for the PR value of working on the brand.

In my experience, it works best when agencies first have a plan and then only pursue clients that can help them reach their own goals.

Here are some things agencies ought to be looking for.

**1. Similar outlooks.** Über-cool agencies align well with hip clients. Results-focused agencies fit with performance-oriented clients. That's why my first question to prospective clients is, "Why are you looking for a new agency?" Or even just, "So why did you take our call?"

**2. Some yin, some yang.** Commonalities are elemental, but the spice is in the differences. Creative tension is a wonderful thing when you come out the other side

with something magical. The best clients allow us to come up with brilliant ideas and don't edit them to death; the best agencies can take an honest challenge seriously.

**3. Truth.** I don't know of any relationship that can handle a steady diet of *brutal* honesty. But the best client-agency relationships are built on truth.

**4. Passion.** Nothing is more disheartening than a client who cares less about his or her campaign than the agency. When the client doesn't return calls, doesn't express emotion, doesn't get excited when we do, we're ready to move on . . . and we often do.

**5. Respect.** You don't always have to agree with your agency, but you do have to be kind. The first client our agency ever

fired, quite a number of years ago, was nasty to the account people and could turn vicious when a creative person came into the room.

**6. A promise is a contract.** A client, as much as any agency, must keep commitments. If they don't, their agency may feel their commitments aren't important either, and that leads to a downward spiral that leaves all parties bitter.

**7. A fair profit.** If you can't be profitable, you should seriously consider resigning the account, no matter how much you like the people or how great the brand looks on your client list. If you don't make money with someone, you'll have to make it up elsewhere, which isn't fair to the rest of your client portfolio.

Following these practices benefits clients as much as agencies.

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