



## NEWS

## Interfering CEOs adding to agency pitch misery

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by HAL CRAWFORD



CEOs and other executives are increasingly dropping into the pitch process late, according to new research that indicates the time-honoured means of winning business is becoming increasingly unpopular with agencies.

The State of the Pitch report, from marketing consultancy TrinityP3, covered 70 pitches over 6 months from July to December 2024.

The report's average pitch rating declined from last year, moving from 3.13 (out of 5) to 2.99.



Cover image of the TrinityP3 report

This is a measure of how agencies rate the overall experience of pitching: those who win pitches tend to rate highly and those who lose naturally give low marks. There are other, more interesting correlations however, with agencies involved in technology/digital pitches rating them a much better experience (3.86) on average.

TrinityP3 founder and CEO Darren Woolley said seven pitches fell into the tech category, and they were tightly focussed.

"There wasn't a wide range' of capabilities being tested, and I think when you bring that type of focus to a pitch, with very intentional outcomes, it's inclined to run better," he said.

"I think why we see creative pitches getting a much lower score is because often they're only part of a whole lot of different capabilities required — it's a lot more difficult for the agencies to know where to play, but also for the marketers to make decisions."

One trend being driven by the tough market is the involvement of CEOs in the later stages, with negative effects.

"We've noticed both on local company pitches and global regional pitches, there seems to be a greater involvement of senior management," Woolley said. "They're coming in late to the process, they're often not involved upfront ... it would be much better if they got involved earlier rather than halfway through."

The process would often have to restart entirely if the CEO or senior manager took a view contrary to their own marketers.

One notable feature of the report — which gathers anonymous comments along with ratings and facts — is the depth of emotion around pitches.



Darren Woolley

An example comment on one pitch: "The process was deceptive, as the only thing that mattered was a pre-existing relationship. I won't ever be



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doing business with them again and will be blacklisting all senior executives and procurement so that I never encounter them again. It is wholly unacceptable, deceptive, and unethical.”

Woolley said the negative feedback was often personal.

“Marketers have to start considering that running a bad pitch causes pain to agencies, and they take that very personally,” he said.

“The damage to reputation sits personally with some of the marketers as much as it does the brands.”

Another trend picked up in the report was a reduced demand for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) requirements.

“Particularly amongst procurement, you’ll see that there’s a significant decrease – almost 50% – from the previous year of those issues being required as part of the pitch process.”

This, along with payment terms blowing out from 30 days averages to 60 days, was a result of the tough market and a focus on price and costs above all.

GOT A TIP?

#### Hal Crawford

Hal Crawford is the editorial director on Mumbrella Media. He joined the team in February 2025 after senior editorial roles including editor-in-chief and publisher at ninemsn and chief news officer of MediaWorks

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Not significant 2 Apr 25

“I think why we see creative pitches getting a much lower score”? What are you talking about? The two scores (2024 vs. 2025) are no different from a statistical or practical significance POV. the headline should be, agencies feel the same as they did in 2024.

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