



Don't Kill the Traffic Manager, Kill Archaic Agency Processes

By Connie Burtcheard

Among the many things an agency can do without - prima donnas, bloated pontificators, wannabees, clueless CEOs and ugly interns - are mindless workflow processes which force seemingly normal agency employees into socialistic, neo-Nazi worker bees akin to freaked out postal workers. It all makes us wonder why a simple BRC has to undergo 32 monotonous, 1984-ish approval steps sucking valuable time away from that big brand re-launch due next month. But it does explain why death threats are hurled towards the traffic manager during their daily appearance in the office doorways of account managers and creative staff.

Rather than kill the poor TM who's just doing his best at the most thankless of agency jobs, learn how to avoid an agony worse than listening to Ashlee Simpson sing without the aid of a backing voice track. Here are a few suggestions to get you started on the right track.

1. Provide a clear and concise project/creative brief. Serves as a benchmark during the life of the whole project against which you test concepts initially, you test developing concepts and in the end, it serves as a measurement for the success of the whole project.
2. Have strong leadership. A strong leader articulates the objectives of the project well up front. A strong leader understands the audience. A strong leader is available and decisive to the project. A strong leader understands how design satisfies the objectives and is able to communicate that internally. A strong leader always debriefs at the end of the project whether or not that team will ever come together again. Poor leadership is exemplified by leaders who attempt to come in and influence the creative product and this is how sometimes the creative product becomes compromised.
3. Never confuse collaboration with building consensus. Collaboration within a project means pulling out valuable and critical input from a host of internal participants and influencers. And, also, pulling in critical, important involvement from the design side. It means getting the best out of the design team, out of your own team, and you as the leader being the shepherd of all that. When collaboration is done right, you have a piece of communication in the end that is rich, well informed, and very on target.

So if you as a leader have articulated your objectives, you understand your audience, you make yourself available during the project and most importantly you care about creating something excellent. Chances are you're going to create something excellent. And, the approval process may be as enjoyable as the final product.