

PITCH PERSPECTIVE

ID COMMS

Agency Readiness During Covid-19

—
A CEO survey by ID Comms March 2020

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"But what happens to pitches...?"

This has been the most frequent question we have been asked in the last few weeks, by agencies, advertisers, trade bodies and journalists alike.

This indicates (for right or wrong) what a lifeblood new business pitches are to the media and creative agencies around the world. Hence we felt the need to get a sense of agencies' current sentiments towards pitching during the pandemic.

As one of the world's leading advisors to advertisers on agency management, ID Comms wants to be sensitive in our advice to marketers about pitching agencies in the current business climate.

Typically the decision to activate an agency pitch isn't a decision that is taken in isolation, it is usually part of larger changes in the marketing organization or marketing approach. So when the pitch happens it is part of a bigger timeline of change and cannot necessarily be delayed a year.

For those advertisers considering how to pitch agencies in 2020, it is important to adapt timelines and workloads with sensitivity to what is realistic for competing agencies to manage.

Key findings

- The industry is "open for business" as 57% of agency leaders confirm they are confident of responding to most pitch briefs despite remote working
- 69% of respondents say that pitches they have been working on have been delayed, postponed or cancelled because of covid-19
- 16% of respondents think that the agency pitch process needs to be re-thought in the current climate
- Agencies' criteria for participating in pitches hasn't changed, except they would like to see more of an emphasis on the human factors of pitch management and delivery. Client values such as tolerance, empathy and fairness matter now, more than ever
- ID Comms has prepared guidelines for advertisers on how to manage or prepare for a pitch in 2020. [This can be downloaded here.](#)
- Advertisers choosing to delay pitches in H1 should use the added time to make better preparations and perhaps conduct further internal diagnostics to define a clear role for the agency and set KPIs

Methodology

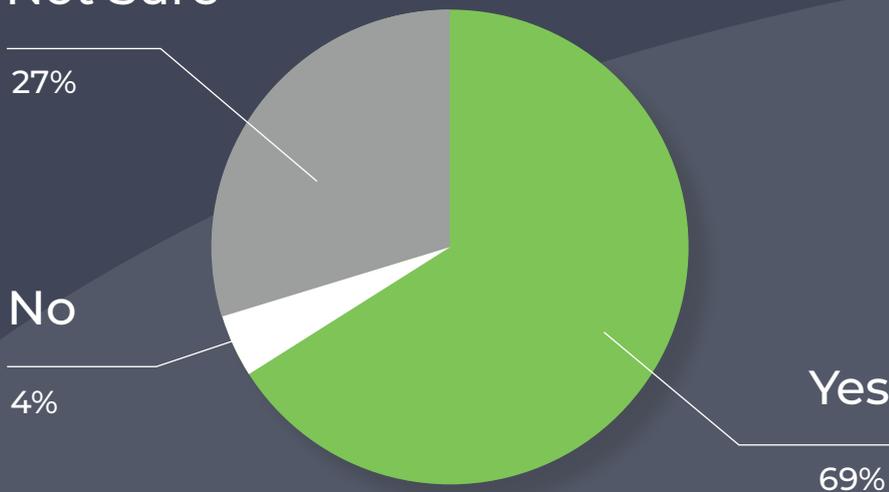
- The CEO survey was conducted between March 19-27, 2020 and findings are based on responses from 81 respondents.
- All 81 respondents are either CEOs or New Business leaders, they work for major agencies representing more than 80% of global ad spend.
- 30 percent of the respondents stated they have global management responsibilities, 29% work in EMEA roles, while 23% represent North American agencies. The remaining 18% oversee APAC or LATAM agencies.

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69% of agency leaders report pitch changes due to covid-19

Have you been informed that any pitch you were already working on has been cancelled, delayed or postponed because of covid-19?

Not Sure



ID Comms says:

We advise to pause your pitch for 2 weeks to allow time to replan to suit the new remote working environment. Make sure this is communicated very clearly internally and externally, and align all stakeholders to the revised format and timings before recommencing the pitch.

57% of agency leadership say they are open for business and ready for pitches

Which of the following statements most closely matches your sentiment?



ID Comms says:

Agencies are generally positive about their ability and readiness to manage new business briefs during covid-19. We think pitches need to be considered carefully, agencies will want to compete but pitch conditions must not exploit any agency vulnerabilities or be unfair to the limitations of remote working.

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In the current conditions, what things will you be evaluating in order to select which pitches to participate in and which you will decline?

"Same selective criteria apply, though some will be applied more strictly: is the client looking for a pricing race to the bottom or is the client looking to reinforce its marketing strategy operations in a way that allows new agency partners to contribute additional value? Is the client looking for a new or reinforced partnership or is it just a question of more with less spend?"

Agency Managing Director (EMEA)

"Clients that are overreaching in terms of their demands on an agency's fiscal resources will get pushed to the bottom. It is time for both clients and their consultants to stop assuming we are in business to lose money for the opportunity to service the business"

Agency Chief Investment Officer (Global)

"The same criteria as always would apply, however we would take an extra look at the process during this time and work out if it is even feasible to complete the work to a good enough standard via remote means and if we could communicate this back to the client in the best way possible"

Agency CEO (Global)

"Outside of the usual fit with agency, values and purpose of the prospective company are more important than ever. We're seeking clarity of client purpose and how they envision partnering with an agency to help grow their business while helping the world around them (not one over the other)."

Agency CEO (LATAM)

"How single minded are the requests, and do the clients seem like the kind of people who can make clear decisions. This environment can actually be positive for helping to filter out some of the more traditional, but outdated, "courtship" process methods and force both agency and client to focus on the work"

Agency CEO (Global)

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Please add any suggestions you have about how agency pitches could be run effectively during a period of remote working:

“Remote working forces clients to focus solely on the content of the pitch itself, removing pitch theatre allows agencies to focus all of their time and effort on solving the clients’ business problem. .”

Global Head of New Business (Global)

“Be more flexible and tolerant of the circumstances, and more transparent in how the process is going to be run and evaluated”

Agency Business Development Lead (Global)

“Make sure that things are organised. And that briefs are clear. In the current situation, organising meetings [or being unclear about timing] within the week, for example, shouldn’t be a thing”

Agency COO (Global)

“Video calls with no more than 5 people. 3 from agency and 2-3 from client side. Anything bigger than this makes for lack of chemistry. .”

Agency Chief Strategy Officer (Global)

“Greater effort to be placed on fueling interaction and feedback in meetings so they are not one-way monologues.”

Agency CEO (Global)

“One area we would like to see generally more of is greater frequency of meetings with clients (check ins, tissues etc). Reliant on one big presentation doesn’t help to foster the relationship”

Agency President (Global)

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About ID Comms:

ID Comms is a global management consultancy, specializing in media and advertising. As a trusted media advisor to the world's most ambitious advertisers, ID Comms empowers marketers to reduce waste and find new value and growth in a complex and fast-changing media landscape.

ID Comms key service areas include:

- Media Operating Models
- Media Benchmarking
- Media Diagnostics
- Change Management
- Assurance Services (audit and performance evaluations)
- Agency Management

Founded in 2009 with headquarters in New York and London, ID Comms provides independent, expert consulting in the areas of Advisory and Assurance to the most ambitious marketers around the world and works closely with marketing, media and procurement teams to improve media performance. ID Comms has advised on over \$50bn of marketing investments and works with leading brands across most categories.

Find out more at www.idcomms.com