

Time for a crusade on training

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Young marketers need to catch up on the learning they missed during the pandemic. Without urgent action, the industry could end up with a lost generation of talent. [Christine Downton, Associate Partner, The Observatory International](#) explains

The UK government is investing £1.8 billion in helping pupils who missed out on education during the pandemic. Marketing needs to be just as bold with its youngest recruits.

Nearly two years of working from home has meant limited formal training and a lack of mentorship, resulting in huge gaps in the skills of our industry's newest recruits. The graduate trainees who started work in 2020 and 2021 are particularly affected.

This marketing training gap isn't being discussed enough, perhaps because Gen Zers and even many Millennials can be reluctant to admit that they don't have all the skills they need to become the brilliant marketers we need them to be.

This isn't just some temporary blip, however, because we know that skills learnt early in one's career are the foundation stone for great marketing. That includes things like great brief writing and delivery, creative evaluation and feedback and constructive agency relationship management, for example.

If they aren't taught, then our industry will be ham-strung for years if not decades as this generation rises through the ranks. We repeatedly see these three areas as the primary sources of grievance between clients and their agency teams in the agency performance evaluations that we run.

Briefing, for example, is one of the cornerstone skills of a marketer. During the pandemic, and the associated period of remote working, junior members of the team will not have had the benefit of working directly alongside more experienced members of the team to hone this skill.

Great briefs and great agency relationship management lead to a frictionless and enjoyable process, which is good for client teams and the agency partners they work with, and which will invariably be reflected in the quality of output.

No one would disagree that training and mentoring are essential to ensure operational and creative excellence. But it's not fair to new members of our industry to put them in positions where success demands skills that they simply haven't been taught.

Companies can take immediate action by ensuring that new recruits spend more time in the office. That is where they will learn best from their more senior experienced colleagues. There may be a reluctance to travel, and senior marketers do tell us that they are having to find ways to entice junior colleagues into the office, but there are ways to overcome that.

Training can be a positive incentive to commute whether it's via guest speakers, events or time spent on structured agency visits that are properly managed and have a clear purpose.

Alongside these soft approaches to learning, marketing organisations also need to provide formal training. Research from the Management Consultancies' Association, published earlier this month, found that among those industry members with less than five years' experience, learning and developing new skills was one of the top two factors for delivering job satisfaction (co-incidentally helping with the current talent crisis by preventing staff attrition).

Setting a skillsets plan and directing new recruits to online courses, for example, can also help enhance their knowledge and confidence. Learning new techniques, theories and technologies will add dimensions to their thinking and enhance critical reasoning, enabling them to deal better with specialists.

As we head into tougher times, training budgets and development programmes need to be protected at all costs. The cost of living crisis and rising inflation will be easy excuses to cut training as an unaffordable luxury. That approach would only accentuate the damage that has already been done across both agency and advertiser teams.

Marketing needs to recruit the brightest and the best to, in the words of the cliché, earn its seat the top table. But, without training, the current generation of new recruits are being short-changed by our industry and being left without the skills they need to be truly effective.

We need to embark on a crusade for training. We need to invest in the home-working generation to ensure our skills as an industry are fit for purpose, now and in the future.

For further insights and advice by The Observatory International please visit their [website](#).

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