

DRIVING CLIENT SERVICE



DRIVING CLIENT SERVICE is surely an obsession of any fiercely-competitive sector today. But it's hard when client demands are growing so quickly. Take just four factors: Client frugality, the drive for transparency, the rise in procurement and the need for trust. These are all huge issues that consultancies have to juggle with.



1 IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY TO CLIENTS

Consultancies tell us that clients increasingly expect more openness about job progress, job health, hours worked, milestones reached and so on.

- *"We like to offer transparency to clients, so they can see the commitment and investment we're making on their behalf. It increases awareness and trust."*
- Steven Clark, Financial & Commercial Manager of Tayburn.
- *"There's a new realism and transparency today. Clients really will not put up with mystery and pomposity."* Rob Hill, Managing Director, HMA.
- *"Synergist gives us a transparency which we didn't have before. We can run digital timesheets and produce reports on those, which means total confidence for the client."* Lee Day, Company Director, RJDA.



3 WORKING WITH FRUGAL CLIENTS

One of the most commonly-heard phrases from businesses today is that clients demand more for less.

This is not simply a question of clients wanting to get the best deal. They continue to be under pressure themselves to validate every expenditure to ensure the budgets deliver a return on investment. Since the recession, the mindset continues that anything that can't be fully justified won't happen.

It's a leaner mindset, one that's unlikely to go away in a hurry. Most companies tell us they think the frugal way of thinking is probably permanent.

- *"Clients are more frugal today, more savvy. Their budgets have been tightened. Their £ has to go further. So you have to respond. It's never been more important to be able to deliver efficiently."* Nigel Wilson, Managing Director of a project-based company.

2 ELEVATING CLIENT CONVERSATIONS

A number of businesses told us of an unexpected spin-off after implementing Synergist. Their client conversations were more productive and at a higher level...

- *"The data that Synergist delivers allows us to have conversations with clients that we couldn't have before. It's the power of proof. With data in front of you, you can discuss the situation with clarity and confidence."* David Ladds, Director, Bladonmore.
- *"We've got the tools now to show us what each project really costs and what its status is each day. Everybody accesses the same information. So we now encourage team members to be more up-front to clients about what the reality is at all times. It makes for honest, adult conversations going on right across the client-facing teams every day."* Kent Valentine, Director, Draw.
- *"Smarter client conversations take place today."* Lisa McLaren, Director of Finance, ClickThrough.

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4 MAKING PROCUREMENT WORK FOR YOU

Chris Ross, Managing Director of RLH, has a lot to say about procurement:

- *“Clients demand ROI, quite rightly. And in recent years we’ve seen major corporate clients introduce comprehensive levels of procurement.*
- *“But there are two sides to that. We believe procurement teams must appreciate what it is we offer. We see it as part of our role to help them better understand exactly what we do, what they are buying, how we operate and what they should expect from us.*
- *“Like it or not, procurement is here to stay. Fortunately, attitudes towards procurement have matured in many large organisations today. Procurement departments are therefore not the enemy.*
- *“Once in the know, agencies can greatly benefit from the process and the deepened relationships that can flow from procurement. Our client procurement teams are also happy. That’s because we are transparent and so we’re seen to be trustworthy.”* RLH use Synergist.



7 PERSONALISING CLIENT SERVICES

One company we know, Tayburn, sometimes consider giving professional services in exchange for equity. Steven Clark, Financial & Commercial Manager, said:

- *“When we choose to, we sometimes invest in a start-up company’s branding and marketing. We take little or no fee, but we earn a slice of the equity in return. It’s a strategic investment. Synergist makes that feasible, because we know exactly when it makes sense to do it from a staff utilisation viewpoint, and everything is tracked so we’re in control. We’re... creative here, but we’re financially astute too. You have to have both of those traits, in parallel.”*

6 CLIENTS ARE BECOMING LESS REVERENTIAL

Jeff Stark, ex Saatchi and Saatchi, said:

- *“You can’t be a temperamental genius anymore. Clients are less in awe and less reverential about what we do. There has been a demystification of what we do.”*

Rob Hill, MD of HMA, agrees, saying the answer is in delivering things that make a return for the client, and being lean:

“Synergist plays a significant role in helping agencies drive through efficiencies.”

8 MAINTAINING CREATIVITY DURING GROWTH

- Creative problem-solving isn’t limited to those with the word ‘creative’ in their job title. Fresh thinking is needed in every role, but it’s particularly crucial when the business is growing and everyone is racing. That’s when an infrastructure with built-in process particularly helps, not hinders, creativity.

- *“With Synergist we’re just as creative as ever. We have what we call Controlled Creativity. It’s creativity within a framework. Our team has the freedom to be creative, but to support that we have the metrics, the key performance indicators, for each project to work to budget, to specification and to brief. So you obviously need creativity but you also need good process today. And that’s why Synergist wins out. Synergist totally understands your processes.”* Simon Butler, Co-Founder, Purestone.

5 FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Are you and your team working on the right things?

- *“In this industry you have to get to the essence of what’s needed, fast. If you allow the signal-to-noise ratio to become unbalanced, people waste their talents on things that won’t even help the client. So cut through it. Before our new system [Synergist] we couldn’t see which areas of our business we should most focus on. It’s now crystal clear.*
- *“It leaves more time for client focus. An agency bogged down in internal process-noodling can never be authentic because it’s oriented inwards rather than outwards. Proper data helps you focus on the essentials.”* Kent Valentine, Director of Draw.
- *“Before Synergist, [we] used several different systems. None of their elements talked to each other. We needed to focus on key performance indicators, which relies on everything being connected, everything in one place.”* Martin Dyer, Financial Manager of a Berkshire-based project-based business.

