

# Clients make progress on integration but agencies point up familiar failings

/ INTRODUCTION

ARTICLE DETAILS

**Global brands are improving their ability to brief for integrated communications but some familiar failings remain, according to a new survey from the WFA. The results indicate that while many advertisers have improved their briefing there is still work to do on lack of alignment, clarity and timing.**



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Global Head of Marketing Services

**Press release**  
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The survey, conducted by the WFA in partnership with global marketing management consultancy, The Observatory International, is based on responses from 32 multinational clients across 12 sectors with an annual spend of more than US\$14bn.

Their responses have been compared with those of 46 senior agency staff with global and regional roles to provide an agency view of progress.

The results show that while advertisers are happy to claim improvements in their briefing process since the survey was last conducted in 2014, agencies are more sceptical.

Just 12% of brands say they now provide separate briefs for each department/agency, down from 24% in 2014, while an equal number (44%) of clients are now briefing with either a common master brief (including role-specific requirement for each agency) or a single brief for all stakeholders. This is an improvement from 36% and 40% respectively in 2014.

By contrast agencies say that too many briefs are arriving with specific channels/ outputs in mind. Nine per cent of advertisers will admit to doing this but 59% of agencies say this sometimes happens and 39% say it often occurs.

Perceptions of the quality of briefs are also split. While roughly three quarters of clients (73%) say they include a single-minded proposition and a single view of the customer in their briefs, this picture is not endorsed by the agencies' perspective as 76% highlight the sporadic nature (Never/Sometimes) of the inclusion of these critical elements.

Agencies were even more scathing about the lack of a clear integrated customer journey (93% said sometimes/never) or a single view of the customer and a common insight (82% said sometimes/never).

Clients confidently state that they brief departments/agencies 'at the same time' (71%) yet their agency counterparts dispute that statement with only 24% agreeing that this is happening 'Often or Always'. Rather, they highlight the sporadic nature of this approach with 67% of agencies saying that they are 'sometimes' briefed at the same time as other agencies, whilst 9% say this never happens.

Other key findings include:

- Face-to-face briefing is on the rise (up from 85% in 2014 to 93%). Briefing by email has, however, more than doubled (reflected in a decline in telephone briefing). Anecdotally, email is typically used when the brief is more tactical in nature. Online meetings and workshops remain in steady use.
- More people are now involved in creating briefs than in 2014 with clients saying more external consultancies being used (88% versus 47% in 2014) and, rather encouragingly, more local marketers also (65% versus 48% in 2014).
- Briefs now include more metrics: 100% of clients say they now include business KPIs, 96% include marketing metrics, 64% include behavioural changing KPIs. More insight is being included from a variety of sources but, most notably, local markets.
- Nearly 80% of clients believe they 'always or mostly' brief well in advance, however, 57% of agencies say they are usually briefed later than they should be.
- Whilst 46% of agencies believe they are very regularly 'right first time' in responding to briefs, just 36% of clients would agree. Seven per cent of clients say agencies are "rarely right first time".

It is relatively rare that agencies (12% according to agencies, 18% according to clients) will charge additional fees for reworking responses to briefs, even if poor briefing by the client is acknowledged. When the brief is clearly changed by the client there is often an additional charge (51% according to agencies, 44% according to clients).

*"It would seem global brands are making progress in improving their integrated briefing process. Ultimately integration doesn't come down to agencies or brands, it comes down to people. Strong client leadership coupled with agency collaboration is what's needed to ensure consistency and improvement in applying these processes", said Robert Dreblow, Global Head of Marketing Services at the WFA.*

*Lucinda Peniston-Baines, Co-Founder and Managing Partner at The Observatory International, added, "We were pleased to see that the findings revealed some degree of overall improvement in the quality of integrated briefing versus 2014, but there are clearly some issues which are significant 'watch-outs' for both parties in the future. As agencies' and clients' models evolve to deliver more dynamic marketing, having these basics in place – and alignment around them – will become increasingly critical when working at pace".*

#### About the WFA:

The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) is the voice of marketers worldwide, representing 90% of global marketing communications spend %u2013 roughly US\$900 billion per annum %u2013 through a unique, global network of the world's biggest markets and biggest marketers. WFA's champions responsible and effective marketing communications worldwide. More information at [www.wfanet.org](http://www.wfanet.org)

#### About The Observatory International:

The Observatory International is the leading global management consultancy dedicated to helping companies maximise their marketing and communications resources. We bring global and local perspectives to marketers along with the knowledge required to overcome the challenges associated with managing communications agencies in these dynamic times. With years of experience working with many of the world's leading brands and agencies, our casebook is full of best practice on how to get the most out of your marketing resources. More information at: [www.observatoryinternational.com](http://www.observatoryinternational.com)

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