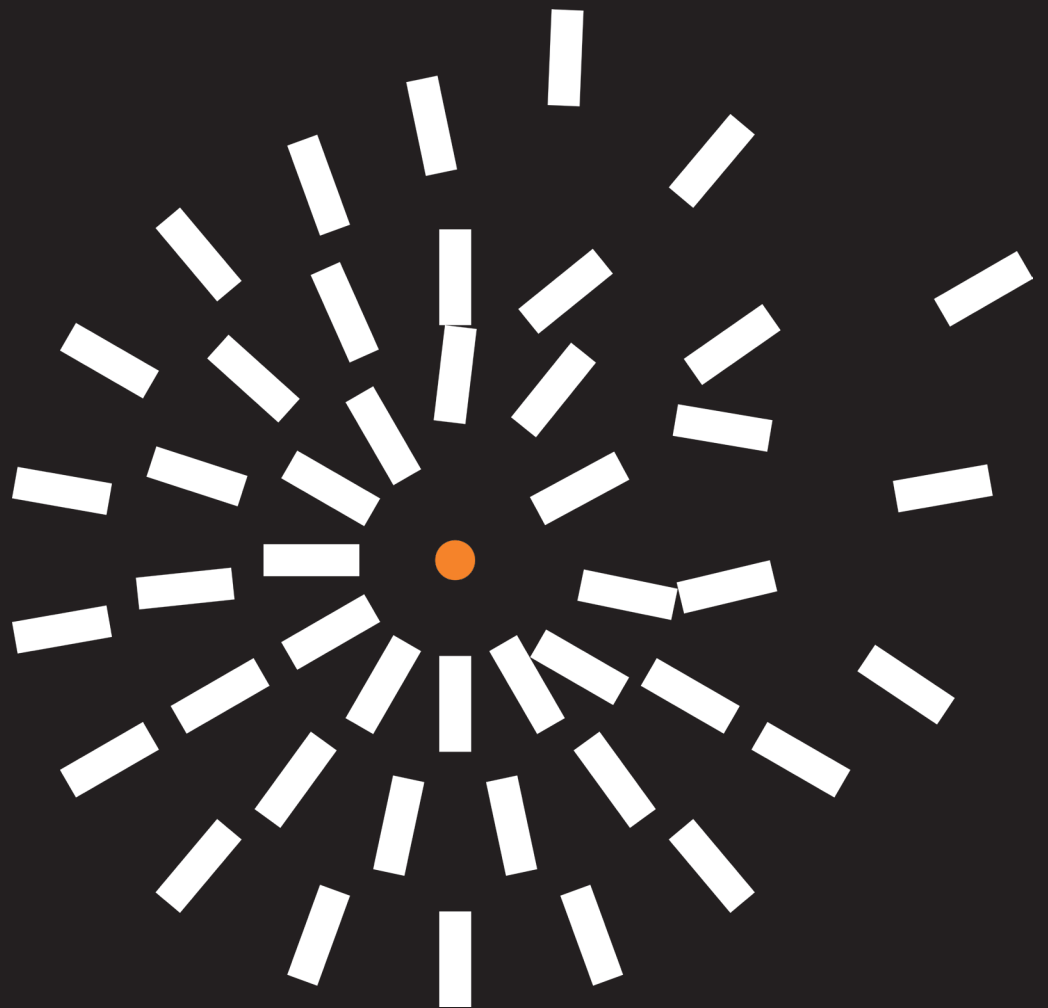


Modern agencies need to lean-in to in-housing

By Katy Maloney, Head of Wavemaker Business





The future for the marketing sector is more uncertain than ever. The ability to flex in a rapidly evolving landscape was already becoming increasingly critical for progressive agencies. Moving forward (in our new working normal) it will be vital.

Media agencies that have set themselves up for success have taken a modular approach which offers them the agility to respond to the distinct requirements of clients and react to any new and emerging opportunities at pace. A good example here is proactively leaning-in to trends including the likes of in-housing.

The opportunities created by in-housing have led to agencies diversifying their products and solutions. For Wavemaker, this meant equipping our agency with a different set of services to allow us to react in real-time to our evolving client landscape and serve the needs of our customers in a way that facilitates their growth.

There is no “one size fits all” approach to in-housing – it means something different to every client. The drivers for in-housing discussions are varied. Sometimes it’s about reducing risk of legislation or regulation breach.

Often, marketers are motivated by the benefits in regaining holistic control of all their data, media spend and customer experience channels under one roof. More recently advertisers have been rethinking the benefits of in-housing because it means fixed costs where agencies can be more agile and have broader sector knowledge.

The extent to which in-housing occurs and how involved the agency is, is entirely dependent on the relationship and trust associated with the process, people and technology supporting a client’s marketing investment long-term. The strength of the agency/client partnership is key in determining the commitment to the process and how much the client will take the agency on the journey with them.

Agencies that succeed will be the ones that can offer the inherent adaptability to focus on strengthening this partnership with their client, while also flexing specialist solutions to support the client process. Positive provocation sits at the heart of Wavemakers approach and planning ethos, meaning we will challenge every client to make the right decision for them, whatever the solution may be.

In-housing is part of that and view it on a sliding scale, from taking and owning technology with 3rd party support, right through to owning the whole process with no agency support required whatsoever. For us this only further reinforces the increased importance of client service and human interaction across our industry, no matter what the current trend.

We also must focus on education. Specifically, educating our clients on the benefits and potential pitfalls of each approach and then supporting them with longer-term solutions and outcomes vs. a gut reaction to a market trend.

Even more so as we begin to emerge in re-prioritised reality in the aftermath of COVID-19. In-housing will always be a learning experience and clients often hit stumbling blocks through a lack of internal expertise and resource. Most frequently, this is based on misconceptions on the time involved in certain buying processes, or not keeping ahead of industry trends and evolutions which are happening more rapidly than anyone can predict.

Having an integrated set-up allows an agency to look beyond demand driving performance media and evaluate the whole digital ecosystem on behalf of clients. This helps to improve the customer experience and conversion efficiency. In an era where precision & context based marketing become increasingly significant, in-housing should be viewed as an opportunity to foster deeper long-term relationships with clients.

Ones that are focused on end-to-end customer experience, matching up marketing technologies to support efficient, long-term growth. Ultimately, we shouldn't be afraid to adapt to ever-evolving trends and lean in to those that challenge and provoke us.

