

Being on-site can give you a powerful voice at the table

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There's a general belief in marketing circles that working on-site with a client often puts you in the client's pocket when creating great work, undermining the quality and originality.



Alison Stansfield-Franks

The Oliver agency model, whereby bespoke creative teams are set-up inside client sites, was set up to dispel this myth and demonstrate that working closely with your client can remove barriers and clear the way for effective, powerful and above all, relevant strategies and creative solutions. It's all the benefits of close proximity, but with the independence of an agency team not employed outright by the client.

Gabrielle Gray, Executive Creative Director at Oliver, puts it succinctly. "We see our mission as helping marketers achieve more for less, by placing a creative agency where it's needed, at the heart of our client's needs. It's cost-effective and gives us a unique insight into each ongoing project from beginning to end. What's more, the creative teams are empowered to push the quality and creativity of their work by being seen as 'part of the team' by the client. "

Alison Stansfield-Franks, Group CD of Oliver, agrees, "Being on-site has proven to be a breath of fresh air. We create a collaborative spirit with our clients, gaining real time insights and becoming an important part of any decision-making process. Above all, it gives us a unique level of access."

This access is all-important to Oliver's way of working. Client/agency relationships can be notoriously thorny and often open to misinterpretations which can develop into an "us and them" attrition as everyone hides in their silos. Being in the same space means differences of opinion, often caused by confusion and simple misunderstandings, can be quickly cleared up, leaving the way clear to create new and immersive communication.

Alison continues, "This proximity gives us all the benefits of a close, continual partnership. It also means that when the time comes to say "No" and stand your ground on a piece of work or creative decision, as it inevitably will occasionally, you can maintain a strong belief in something without it looking like you're just flexing the famous creative ego."

"Being able to stand up for your work and use your experience to support an idea is an important part of any job, especially that of creatives. Simply saying 'yes' to every request that comes to you is a quick way of eroding the quality of any brand. However, our model enables creatives to have the confidence to interrogate briefs together with the client, resulting in work that truly speaks to the needs of their customers."

Naturally the best proof that the model works is the final product. Some of the best creative work around has come from this type of collaboration. The latest campaign from Yellow Shoes, Disney's on-site agency, is a simple idea stylishly executed, and above all, grounded in a unique insight uncovered through a close working relationship between client and agency.

In 2019, Gabrielle and Alison's counterparts in Oliver Canada won multiple awards for their "Flyre Festival" April Fools Campaign for client WestJet airlines, creating a hilarious spoof of the now infamous "Fyre Festival" - another example of an in-house team delivering great work.

Whether you're a client, a traditional agency or part of an in-house team, there's no arguing that brands are looking at new,

more efficient ways of speaking to their customers. It's opening the door to a world of possibilities and being closer to your client is a no-brainer to ensure the success of these new ideas.

The real question is, are you in or are you out?

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