
CLIENT CONSULTANCY PARTNERSHIP CHARTER

The PRCA believes that the best client-consultancy relationships are true partnerships, where both client and consultancy deliver against key commitments in order to achieve common goals, and where each partner understands and respects the commercial and operational imperatives of the other.

This **10 Point Charter** is intended to help client organisations and their public relations consultancies work together as effectively and as productively as possible; to ensure that consultancies are able to deliver their very best work to clients within agreed budgets, and that clients get the value and return on investment from their consultancies that they need and expect.

It is in no way intended to replace existing contractual arrangements between clients and their consultancies. Rather, it hopes to add to the 'legal stuff' some key principles which can make the relationship more effective, improve results and increase return on investment.

The elements of the Charter stem from a project led by the PRCA's *PR Council* which created a working group under Vice Chair, Martin Bostock, to canvass views from consultancy and client members.

Valuable input has also been contributed by Simon Rhind-Tutt of Relationship Audits & Management, a specialist consultancy which helps companies optimise their strategic partner relationships. Since 2000, Simon and his team have conducted tens of thousands of interviews, gaining an unrivalled insight into what makes client-consultancy relationships deliver beyond expectation, and what makes them less satisfactory for either side.

It is hoped that member consultancies of the PRCA will present the Charter to clients both new and existing, and that both parties will gain by carefully considering and signing up to it.

***Francis Ingham, PRCA Director General,
and Martin Bostock, Chairman of the
Nelson Bostock Group***



Both client and consultancy will strive to comply with all the points of the Charter. Where that is not possible, for whatever reason, we will commit to open and honest discussions to seek alternative agreements.

1.

WORKING TOGETHER

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

Although we are the client, and are purchasing services from the consultancy, we believe that working together in partnership can foster a rewarding and mutually-respectful relationship which will help both parties deliver their business goals.

We will agree clear two-way working processes for key programme elements (e.g. sign-off; reporting; progress meetings; reviews) and stick to them.

We will ensure that mutually-agreed, clearly-articulated expectations are set and agreed at the start of the relationship and reviewed on at least an annual basis.

We appreciate that the quality of a consultancy's output will be in direct correlation to the quality of our input so we will always aim to commit time for briefings and updates.

We will treat the individual members of the consultancy team with the same respect and integrity that we would show to our own employees.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

Although we understand that the client is the purchaser of our services, we believe that working together in partnership can foster a rewarding and mutually-respectful relationship which will help both parties meet their business goals.

We will always aim to deliver consistently high results for the client, sharing learnings from across our wider business wherever relevant.

We appreciate the importance of working flexibly within the terms of our contract and aim to have systems and processes that meet the client's current and potential needs.

We will aim to ensure continuity in our account team in order to build shared expertise and stable points of contact.

We will be cognisant of the priorities and culture of the client organisation so that our account team delivers seamlessly and without disruption.

We will commit time to understanding our clients' brands, audiences and products so that we are mindful of the brand stretch and limitations and always suggest client-appropriate ideas

2.

SETTING THE SCOPE OF WORK

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We will supply comprehensive written briefs with clear objectives and success criteria, which include broader business objectives and information on other marcomms activity, where this is available.

In the event that a written brief cannot be supplied we will set aside time to meet with the consultancy to discuss our goals and enable them to construct their own brief.

We will set budgets with clear parameters including provision for planning, execution, evaluation and contingencies.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We will deliver timely responses to briefs based on best advice and insight (including a sound understanding of the client's business), strategic thinking, experience and creative execution.

We will develop relevant (and, where appropriate, innovative) proposals with the potential to be executed through all appropriate communications channels, including digital.

We will always submit proposals which can be achieved within the client's budget, although we may also offer additional options should further budget be available.

3.

AGREEING TIMESCALES

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

Whenever possible we will give the consultancy 'reasonable' timescales (i.e. ideally weeks not days) for responding to briefs, to enable them to interrogate the brief, conduct insight programmes as necessary, develop overall strategy and present accurately-costed programmes.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We will deliver material, on or before agreed deadlines, which is concise, accessible and 'right first time,' when submitting proposals or responding to briefs.

We will build in ample time for the client to respond ahead of the start of activity.

We will be open and honest if we believe that timescales cannot be met.

4.

MANAGING BUDGETS

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We appreciate that consultancy time is a finite, measurable resource.

We accept that increases in demands on the consultancy over and above original briefs will need to be funded (or other activities reduced in proportion).

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We commit to spend our clients' budgets as if they were our own.

We acknowledge that client budgets are not infinitely elastic, and that we must work as closely as possible to the parameters set by the client.

We appreciate that the late cancellation of planned-for projects can impact the consultancy's ability to manage its resources. We will attempt to avoid late cancellation, but where it is unavoidable we acknowledge that the consultancy should be recompensed for resources provided but not utilised.

We will be fully transparent in how we report back on budget spend and give early alerts of potential budget overspends to avoid delivering unpleasant surprises.

5. COMMUNICATING FRANKLY

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We will give the consultancy clear, frank and timely feedback on pitch proposals, continuing campaign recommendations or other materials submitted for approval.

We will also contribute frankly to enquiries from the consultancy as to our satisfaction with the consultancy's team and work.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We will be prepared (if necessary) to challenge briefs and the client's response to our proposals, with opinions based on sound insight, strategic thinking and honesty.

We will ensure that the client's business objectives are paramount in everything we do.

6. TAKING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

If a truly integrated response is required we will aim, where possible, to brief all agencies at the same time - and before plans have been finalised by the internal marketing team - thereby ensuring that consultancy input is gained from the outset, and that campaigns will then be truly integrated and channel neutral.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

When truly integrated responses to briefs are required we will work as constructive and co-operative partners with the client's other agencies to develop the brief and to deliver joined-up strategy and execution.

7. RAISING BUSINESS AWARENESS

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We will ensure that awareness of the consultancy's brief and progress extends across our business (senior management as well as the wider comms team).

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We will invest time in ensuring that the whole account team gains a deep understanding of the client's business, its wider industry sector and key competitors.

We will help educate the in-house marketing/comms teams so that they fully understand how and when they are required and able to interface with the consultancy.

We will always be cognisant of the client's wider business objectives when developing PR plans.

We will help the client communicate the value of PR activity to an internal audience by ensuring that the business case for all activities is fully developed.

8.

BUILDING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We will help the consultancy work effectively by making introductions to key internal and external stakeholders to the benefit of the business.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We will build a range of contacts within the client's stakeholder group to help maximise the effectiveness of our work by widening our knowledge of the client's business.

We recognise that in dealing with colleagues in your organisation we are ambassadors for the PR/ Comms discipline and will act courteously and professionally at all times.

9.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We will ensure that the consultancy has as wide a perspective of our business as possible, by sharing insight and knowledge and facilitating strategy briefings led by senior management when appropriate.

We will ensure that the consultancy is informed promptly when things change within the business, especially when the change could have a material impact on communication objectives and outputs.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

We will ensure that we keep fully abreast of business developments within the client and within the client's wider market sector.

We will maintain a strategic focus on the future of the client's business, whilst delivering on current activities.

We will ensure that the account team remains well trained and fully abreast of latest developments and techniques within the PR/communications industry.

We will always innovate and challenge convention in order to add value to our programmes.

10.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

THE CLIENT COMMITMENT

We appreciate that meaningful evaluation of PR activity is essential, and that budget needs to be allocated to this.

THE CONSULTANCY COMMITMENT

Our focus will always be on maximising the value of the client's investment in PR and delivering meaningful and measurable outcomes.

We will seek to measure the quality of our service to you regularly to ensure that standards are maintained to the highest level.



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