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Outsourcing monitoring adds value

Darryl [Salerno](#) - 15 May 2006 11:18

Many PR agencies grapple with high staff turnover at junior levels. It's a vexing problem that creates client unrest and upheaval on account teams, and adds significant costs for recruitment and training.

Focus groups conducted with junior staff at agencies indicate that one of the primary motivators for movement is the lack of challenging assignments that will provide an opportunity for growth and advancement.

Agency management frequently responds that while they'd like to provide junior staff with new, more significant tasks, their time is limited owing to the necessity of completing important, but repetitive tasks like media monitoring.

In most agencies, media monitoring commences for all junior staff at 8:30 or 9am and is often not completed until noon.

This has many negative consequences. First, with nearly 50% of junior staff time committed to media monitoring, hours from personnel at this level are limited. This makes it difficult to delegate other tasks appropriately, creating situations where work is being completed at higher levels in the organization, limiting growth opportunities throughout the firm.

This also creates significant financial problems. First, a large percentage of the client budget is eaten up producing the daily media monitoring results. Second, by pushing responsibilities up within the agency, tasks are handled by personnel with higher billing rates, increasing overservicing without adding any incremental value to the client.

As stated earlier, this limits opportunities to work on more rewarding tasks, frequently leading employees to consider leaving the firm for more promising jobs.

If media monitoring could be handled another way, junior staff could be given more challenging assignments, increasing retention and reducing costs for recruitment and training. It would also allow tasks to be moved down to lower levels, dramatically reducing overservicing. Most important, it would allow more time to be spent on the added value associated with providing analysis of the day's media, rather than the compilation of the day's coverage.

Several forward-thinking firms are accomplishing this by sourcing the work to a different part

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of the world. With global access to the Web and worldwide databases, anyone with broadband capabilities, intelligence, and proper education and training can provide knowledge process outsourcing effectively.

While there are several locations that are economically viable for outsourcing, India leads the pack because of the low cost of infrastructure and a large English-speaking graduate population.

When the media breaks in the early morning hours on the East Coast of the US, it is in the middle of the workday in India. This allows media monitoring to be completed by the end of the day in India and delivered, complete, to the US before 9am EST.

Despite the fact that personnel in India who work in this capacity are older and more experienced than junior staffers in the US, the work can be done at much lower cost, allowing for greater profitability for the firm and better value to the client. It allows for a reduction of agency time on low-value work while raising the focus on high-value strategic thinking and quality execution. Isn't that why we're in business?

Darryl Salerno is president of Second Quadrant Solutions.

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