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Agency pitches that get noticed

It's a dog-eat-dog world, this business of interactive marketing, and agencies have to be unrelentingly resourceful to remain competitive. This is particularly true of the ongoing quest to obtain new business. Whether responding to a client-side "Request For Information"; vying for the coveted agency-of-record relationship; or participating in the agency review process, presentations must be perceptive, comprehensive, and distinctive enough to stand out from all the rest.

Over the years, digital agencies have come up with some extremely creative methods to present their unique value proposition and convincingly communicate the benefits of working with them. One approach that's increasingly visible is using the client presentation as a way of showcasing the organization's skills. Instead of creating yet another sleep-inducing PowerPoint deck, agencies with a web development arm might create an entire website for the pitch. There is no limit to how elaborate these pitch sites can become; they can mirror the look and feel of the client's brand, incorporate video and audio of the agency staff, and even include sample projects or a "big idea" concept that serves to demonstrate the quality of the thought and work the client could expect to receive.

Stay infomed! For more information on optimizing your agency strategies, attend the iMedia Agency Summit. Dec. 6-9. [Learn more about the iMedia Agency Summit.](#) This is not to say that unorthodox methods are guaranteed to work. It's certainly possible for agencies to take the creative license given to them by the client -- and the desire to impress that client -- a little too far. Perhaps you remember [Agency.com's 2006 effort](#) to take over the reins of sandwich chain Subway's interactive advertising business. The original idea was to document Agency.com executives as they endeavored to learn all they could about the Subway brand, post the resulting video to YouTube, watch it go viral, then use the experience as a testament to their creativity and the power of the web. It was a big risk, however, for the agency to upload its pitch for the world to see, and [plenty of criticism ensued](#). Ultimately, the video did go viral and generate buzz -- including over 80,000 views and over 400 comments on YouTube alone. But many of those remarks were negative, and the agency ultimately [withdrew from the race](#) to win the Subway business, due to a "conflicting account."

YouTube, YourPitch

Despite its shortcomings, this example should inspire agencies to develop a unique approach to their pitches for new business. YouTube certainly remains a tool that can be used to this end, as recently evidenced by another advertising shop. Earlier this year, Charlotte, N.C.-based ad agency BooneOakley [built its agency site](#) entirely on YouTube.



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The custom channel includes everything an agency site normally would, from featured work to contact information, and it is all navigable via links embedded within the video. This approach could also be used by agencies in lieu of a microsite when you are asked to provide potential clients with an overview of your business and body of work. You might not make use of YouTube's full feature set, as your objective is to make an impact on the client (not the general public), but the service is still a viable, and unexpected, choice for an agency pitch. You might, however, consider disabling comments so as not to enable unsolicited feedback that you may not want to expose your potential business partners to.

A higher education in agency pitches

As far as the vehicle for a pitch is concerned, Microsoft PowerPoint might remain among the most common, but it certainly isn't the only option available. A new product on the market is perfectly suited to the task of showcasing an agency's grasp of a potential client's business.

A multimedia communications platform originally founded in 2007, [Faculte](#) has since completely redesigned its product to meet the changing needs of marketers and the evolving digital space, launching anew this past September. Faculte allows agencies to produce broadcast video using a self-serve online interface; users can customize their layout and theme, insert text, images, and video into an online tool, and play the content like an interactive video. In upcoming iterations of the product, the company plans to also facilitate access to acting, voiceover, and graphic design talent, allowing businesses to outsource some of this work directly through Faculte.

Because presentations created using Faculte reside online, they are portable and can be imbedded as supplementary material on social sites like Facebook or LinkedIn, as well as on an agency's own pitch site. An online RFI response or pitch for an agency-of-record account, for example, might include a Faculte-created video of the team that would work on the new campaign or account. The video could introduce agency executives, account managers, and creative and media folk, and offer some insight into their personalities and individual experience within the agency to demonstrate how these specifically relate to the business opportunity at hand.

This product might also be used to present media plans in a more engaging fashion than the Excel or PowerPoint standbys. It's particularly helpful for those who don't have video content to speak of, as virtually any collection of images (e.g., site screenshots and sample banner ads) and text (e.g., snippets of site content or testimonials from previous advertisers that have worked with the sites your agency is recommending) can be transformed into a multimedia presentation.

Your objective when developing business pitch materials doesn't vary much from client to client: Deliver the requested information in a way that isn't as stale as day-old bread. Use the opportunity to showcase some of the innovation that differentiates you within the industry -- the same that incited other desirable accounts to select you above your competitors -- and demonstrate why your shop is, bar none, worthy of the win.

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