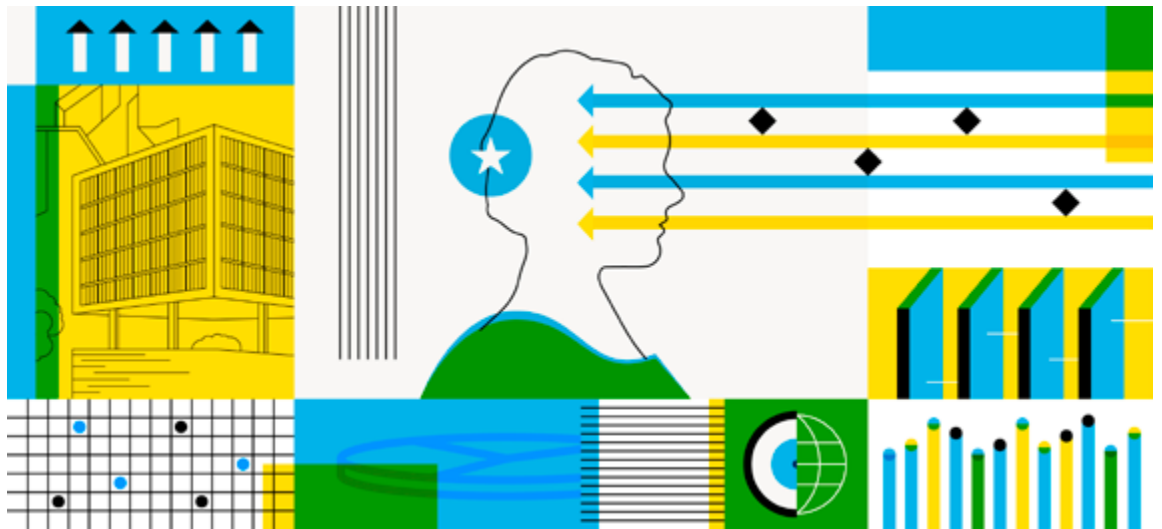




Kevin Smith, IQ

Account People Are Not Dead, Long Live Account People



Each year, we're overwhelmed by predictions of trends, technologies and/or consumer segments that will provide 'make-or-break' moments for agencies. This year you've probably seen articles on augmented reality, effective methods for targeting millennials, or even thoughts on how the very model of an advertising agency must change in order to compete in today's environment.

We must pay attention to these external forces and continue to evolve our offerings to stay current. However, it's the internal forces within your agency that can truly make the difference between success and stagnation. In my humble opinion, determining whether you have the right people in the role of Account Management is one of those key factors.

Your Account Management team is essential to your growth and success as they are on the front lines every day, working in partnership with clients and serving as the face of your agency to the outside world. Finding account people with the right skill set and qualities is critical. Consider your current team and try and view them through your client's eyes. Is your agency seen as a part of their business, providing daily insight and solutions? Or are you an order taker waiting for the next job, or the middle-man

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who simply delivers the creative work that was requested? Simply put, are you a replaceable vendor or a valuable partner?

Hopefully it's the latter, but if you have questions about your team here are some qualities to consider when looking for a game-changing account person:

- They possess an entrepreneurial spirit. A vision, drive and passion that motivates them and their teams. They are proactive and always part of the solution.
- They are able to make decisions in the moment. Plans and processes are important, but the best account people will know when to take a calculated risk if the situation calls for it.
- They are insatiably curious. They know what's going on in their client's business, the client's industry, and the agency world in general. The goal of a great account person should be the ability to fully understand a situation from their client's perspective and speak intelligently and quickly on their feet.
- They are humble and attentive. Often those with service industry experience possess the temperament to excel in account service. You learn skills waiting tables that you would never learn at a desk job.
- They are patient. Great account management is chess, not checkers. You need someone that is able to remain calm in stressful situations and anticipate where each interaction with the client (or with the internal team for that matter) may lead in order to grow the account. Lasting relationships with clients are built by keeping the long game in mind, which means that empathy and diplomacy are critical traits.

“Are you a replaceable vendor or a valuable partner?”

Regardless of any trend or segment that your business or clients may face, cultivating these qualities in your Account Management team will position your agency for success. With the right team members in place, these qualities will invariably spread throughout the agency and you'll be seen as an even more indispensable partner to your clients.

It's refreshing that we're finally moving beyond the era of weekly “Death of...” clickbait headlines and are starting to surf the patterns. For fun, dig into The Hero with a Thousand Faces before reading through this section. You'll see what I mean.

P.S. In the next issue, the “BS Buzzword Launcher” returns when we interview Chelsea Hardaway, Co-Author of Why Businesspeople Speak Like Idiots, and we'll introduce you to some brand new horribly unnecessary buzzwords that we hope you'll begin to use in everyday conversation. Nudge nudge, wink wink.

***About the author:** Kevin brings eleven years of experience in the Marketing and Advertising industry to his position as COO at IQ. He also brings humor, determination and collaborative focus to the table when working with clients and internal teams. Kevin thrives on engaging clients and internal teams to create powerful, stunning work focused on addressing a brand's specific needs. Kevin has a Bachelor's degree in Marketing, Advertising & Public Relations from Emerson College and an MBA with concentrations in Strategy, Analytics and Marketing from Boston University. He also has a certification in Content Strategy from Northwestern University.*

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