

Understanding business relationships in the confectionery category

2023



aprais

Relationships matter

Over the years, we have compiled extraordinary evidence that stronger relationships build stronger business because they:

- produce higher quality, more effective work
- are more cost-efficient
- build valuable shared knowledge
- motivate staff to go the extra mile for each other
- bridge the gap between corporate cultures
- expand the scope of work
- instil more trust.

It's clear, then, that team relationships are important, both internally and with external stakeholders.

But how are these business relationships affected by their marketing category? And how can teams in the confectionery category improve?

“Briefings and information are always shared with clarity and transparency, and doubts are resolved with agility and propriety.”

Confectionery agency lead

Categories matter

Client-agency team relationships are significantly influenced by the marketing category in which they operate.

Each marketing category possesses unique characteristics, challenges and dynamics that directly impact how clients and agencies interact and collaborate.

Confectionery

This category is highly competitive, with numerous established brands and new entrants vying for consumer attention. As a result, clients rely on their agencies to develop innovative and compelling marketing strategies to differentiate their products and captivate target audiences.

This places a considerable demand on agencies to continually generate fresh ideas, stay up to date on consumer trends and deliver creative campaigns that resonate with consumers.

This category is also heavily influenced by seasonal occasions and celebrations, such as Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, Eid, Hanukkah and Christmas. Clients often require agencies to develop timely and contextually relevant campaigns that leverage these events to drive sales and engage consumers.

This necessitates close collaboration between clients and agencies to ensure that strategies align with the brand's messaging and objectives, while also capitalising on the seasonal demand spikes.

Furthermore, the category faces growing consumer concerns about health and wellness. Marketers in this category often need to balance their messaging and media strategies for different audiences, such as children as consumers and their 'gatekeeper' parents. This is a delicate balance and fraught with traps for the inexperienced.

Teams need to be sensitive to these evolving consumer preferences and effectively communicate how confectionery products can be enjoyed as part of a balanced lifestyle.

About this report

This report is based on our experience advising some of the world's leading marketers and agencies in the confectionery category. It is part of a series focusing on business relationships in 11 of the product and service categories we have evaluated.

The analysis is extracted from a database of more than 26,000 evaluations Aprais have conducted globally over the past two decades.

Our quantitative evaluations use a 100-point scale that enables us to create accurate benchmarks for comparison, trends and insights.

We also analyse the qualitative comments entered with each evaluation to provide context to the scores.

This report will examine team characteristics that set the best teams apart from the rest. It will cover both marketers and agencies in the confectionery category.

Confectionery versus all categories

Across all categories and most regions of the world, our data shows that agencies score their marketer clients higher than clients score their agencies when assessing their relationships.

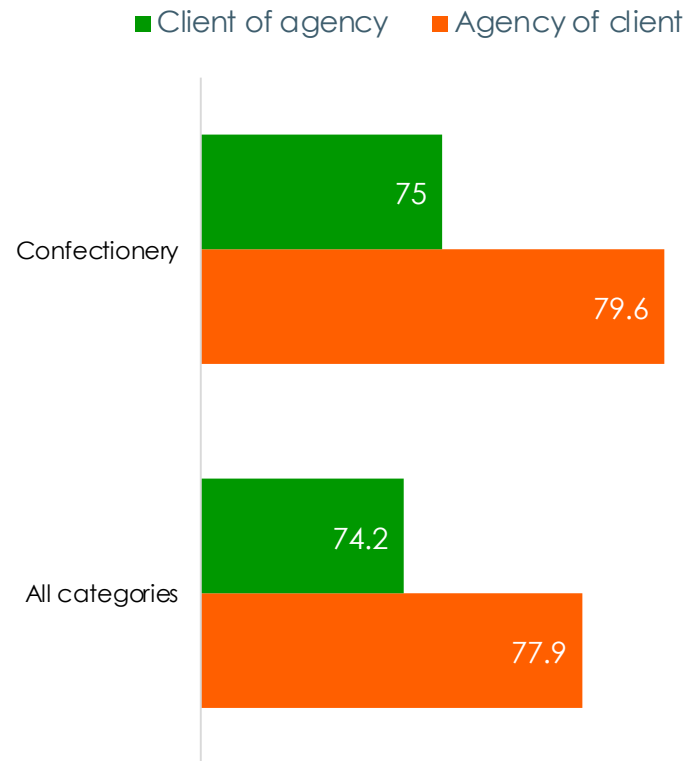
The global average across all categories for marketers scoring their agencies is 74.2, whereas agencies score their clients 77.9.

Generally, we find that businesses in less-regulated categories like non-alcoholic drinks and confectionery tend to have more positive views of their relationships than those in more technical and regulated categories such as healthcare and finance.

Keep in mind that a perfect relationship should result in the same score for both parties. Few relationships are perfect, however, and in the case of client-agency, many are not equal.

Intensely competitive, fast-changing marketing categories like telecoms and retail show remarkably similar scores.

In the case of the confectionery category, the gap in scores between the client and agency teams is similar to the global average.



Team characteristics – functional disciplines

At Aprais we use two main concepts to identify, compare and improve team characteristics:

- **Functional disciplines:** On-the-job skills, using one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance.
- **Behaviours:** The way in which teams conduct themselves or behave.

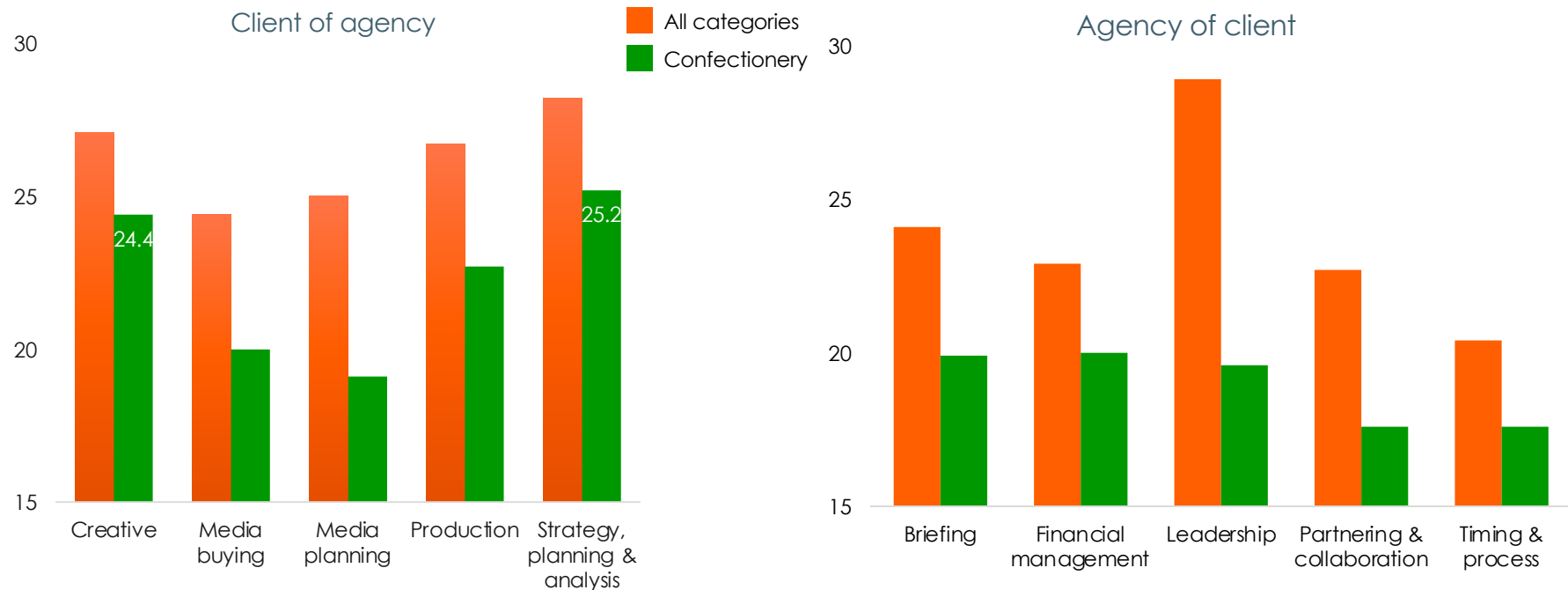
The charts below show the gap in scores between the top 10% and the bottom 10% for a selection of disciplines, and compare the gap in confectionery with the all-categories average.

What does this tell us?

The height of the bars indicates the extent of opportunity for poor-performing teams to close the gap on their best-performing rivals.

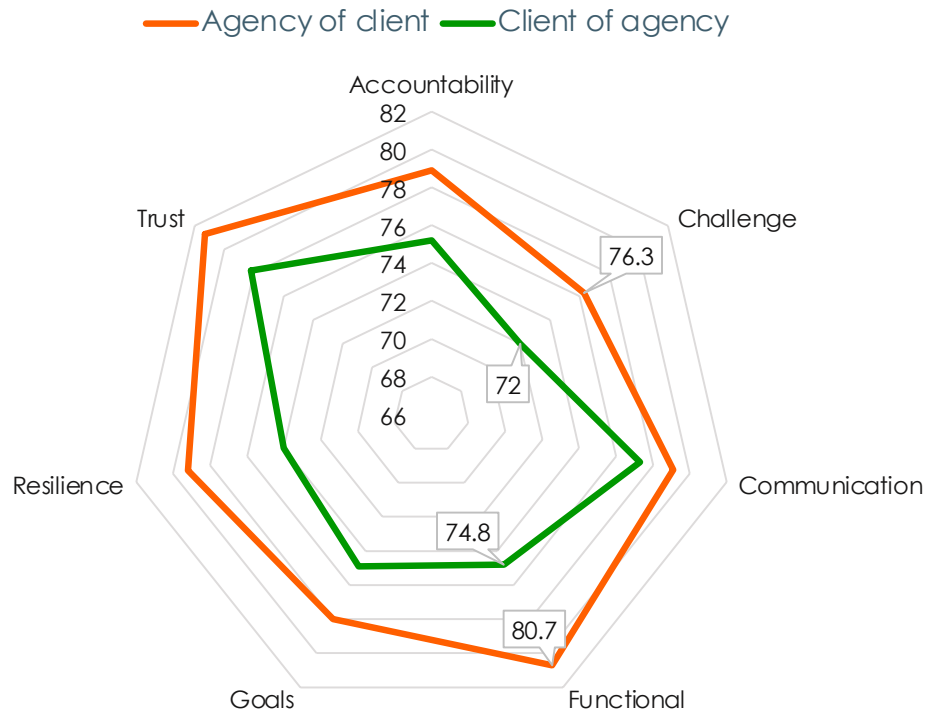
Comparing client-agency teams in the confectionery category (green) with the all-category average (orange), we can see that across all the functional disciplines the performance gap between the best and the rest is smaller than average. An unusual and positive distinction from other categories.

Despite this, agencies would do well to focus on strategic skills (25.2) and creative to close the gap with their best performing peers.



Source: All-categories 26,000 Aprais evaluations.

Team characteristics – behaviours



Accountability – Sets and takes responsibility for actions.

Challenge – Uses initiative to challenge the status quo and does not allow conflict to go unaddressed.

Communication – Regular dialogue to ensure facts are shared in a timely fashion.

Functional – Competence to do the day-to-day work.

Goals – Clear objectives are in place, information is shared, the team is stretched and success measured.

Resilience – Can withstand and bounce back from a crisis.

Trust – The team is trusted to deliver and behaves with integrity.

Through rigorous analysis of our extensive database, we have defined seven behaviours that have the greatest influence on team performance¹.

This chart compares the behaviours of each team in the confectionery category.

Typically, the agency scores of their client are higher, but take note of where there are greater or lesser differences between the two.

While overall trust is high, and communication seems to be a strength for both teams, there is a worrying gap in the

marketers' perceptions of their agencies' resilience and functional ability.

Both teams need to use initiative to challenge each other and their organisations. Contrary to popular belief, clients and agencies crave this behaviour from their counterparts.

¹ Reports: Seven behaviours that set the best teams apart from the rest.

In summary

The marketing category in which a client operates significantly affects the client-agency team relationship. Understanding the unique characteristics, challenges and dynamics of each category is crucial for building strong and successful partnerships.

Confectionery presents unique demands for client-agency relationships because of intense competition, seasonal variations, shifting consumer preferences and increased pressure from governments and public health organisations in markets such as the UK.

Successful partnerships require agencies to demonstrate creativity, adaptability and a deep understanding of the target audience, enabling them to develop compelling marketing strategies that drive sales while addressing evolving consumer needs.

“Very strong knowledge and understanding of the business, brand and target consumer. They fully understand our processes, which allows us to advance quickly in the strategies and plans.”

Confectionery marketer

Building stronger teams

How agencies can do better

1. Become a subject-matter expert in the category. In a world of generalisation, specific industry knowledge is valued.
2. Know the criteria that won you the business. Measure and monitor them to ensure you keep up with the client's expectations.
3. Make sure the team is aware of the criteria for good performance and is challenged to deliver on them.
4. Be enthusiastic about the client's business. People who are interested and engaged in a brand or category are likely to deliver better work.
5. Acknowledge and respect client members at all levels. Problems at a junior level can become senior headaches.
6. Be courageous and transparent. If you disagree, say so. All good relationships are built on trust.
7. Tackle issues before they become problems. Regular and frequent client-agency evaluations provide an objective platform for open dialogue.
8. Never be complacent. Think of all the other agencies who would love your client.
9. Have a 'can do' attitude. But if you say 'yes' be sure to deliver. If you deliver on your promises, the client is more likely to accept those times when you have to say you 'cannot'.
10. Good work is the best insurance. Effective solutions seal partnerships and provide great momentum and stickiness in a relationship.

How marketers can do better

1. Set mutually agreed, realistic and quantifiable objectives.
2. Instigate a regular 360° review of progress against these objectives.
3. Push for directness, trust and chemistry between the agency and client teams.
4. Make sure there are equally talented people on both sides who are motivated by shared incentives and principles.
5. Demand ongoing, transparent feedback in both directions.
6. Always respond to work with the positive first. Get cycles of positivity going, then turn the conversation to more critical feedback.
7. Empathise with their pressures. Care about the issues and celebrate their achievements. Forgive them their foibles and try to see things from their point of view.
8. Give agencies the opportunity to get under the skin of your business. Allow them to immerse themselves in every aspect of your operation. Enable them to understand your culture and openly share information and intelligence with them.
9. Create an atmosphere of excellence. Demand excellence. Inspire excellence. Recognise excellence and reward it.
10. Encourage your agencies to work together. Relationships that are better orchestrated can deliver substantially better performance.

Other reports

This report is one of a series focusing on how team relationships are affected by marketing category.

The first report introduces the topic.

The other reports each focus on an individual category and cover the behaviours and disciplines that set the best teams apart from the rest in that category.

1. Automotive
2. Banking & insurance
3. Confectionery
4. Food
5. Healthcare
6. Drinks (non-alcoholic)
7. Personal care
8. Petcare
9. Retail
10. Telecoms
11. Wine, beer & spirits

Download the report for your category [here](#).



About Aprais

We are the global pioneers in building stronger business relationships.

Since we established the category 20+ years ago we have advised the world's leading marketers and agencies on more than 26,000 evaluations, with multiple clients in over 70 countries, in 13 languages.

This has enabled us to build a large bank of data that allows companies to accurately compare their business relationships with those of their peers.

Contact us

Request a free consultation for your organisation: aprais@aprais.com

Learn more: www.aprais.com

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