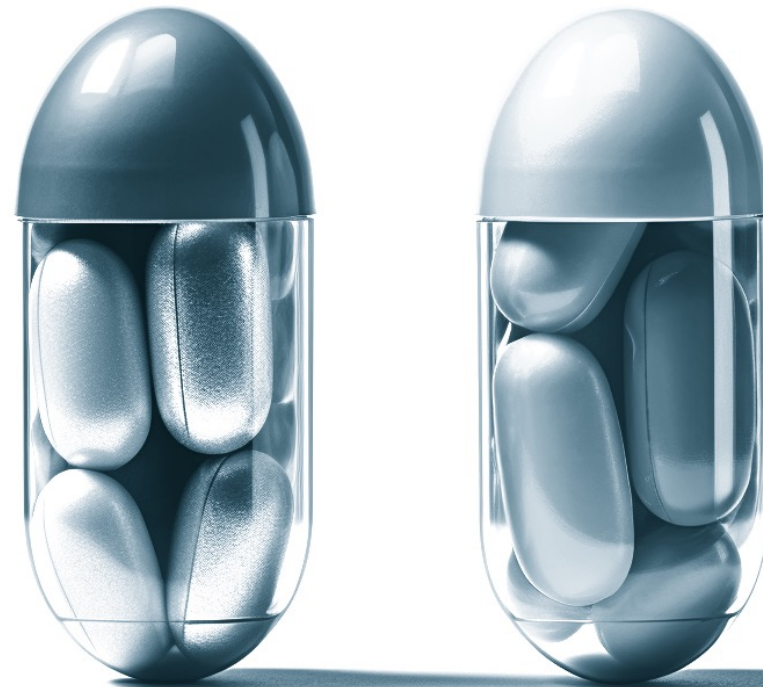


Understanding business relationships in the healthcare category

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 healthcare category improve?

“The teams work closely together on briefs and ensuring expectations are clear.”

Healthcare 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.

Consumer healthcare

The nature of the healthcare industry brings unique challenges that shape the dynamics between clients and their agency partners.

The category is characterised by its distinct regulatory environment, complex scientific information and heightened sensitivity surrounding health-related matters. These factors directly impact client-agency team relationships.

First, the regulatory landscape governing healthcare advertising and marketing is often stringent, requiring agencies to have a deep understanding of compliance guidelines and restrictions. This necessitates a close collaboration between clients and agencies to ensure all communications meet the legal and ethical standards set by regulatory bodies at local, regional and global levels.

Second, consumer healthcare products often involve intricate scientific concepts and medical terminology. Both the agency and the marketer need to accumulate a comprehensive knowledge of these aspects to effectively communicate the product benefits to the target audience. This calls for a close partnership between clients and agencies, where clients provide accurate scientific information and agencies translate it into clear and compelling messaging.

Moreover, the consumer healthcare category is characterised by heightened consumer sensitivity. People are understandably concerned about their health and wellbeing, and they expect healthcare advertising to be accurate, trustworthy and empathetic. Such concerns may differ by culture and by region.

Clients and agencies must work closely together to develop messaging and campaigns that resonate with the audience, address their concerns and build trust.

About this report

This report is based on our experience advising some of the world's leading marketers and agencies in the healthcare 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 healthcare category.

Healthcare 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.

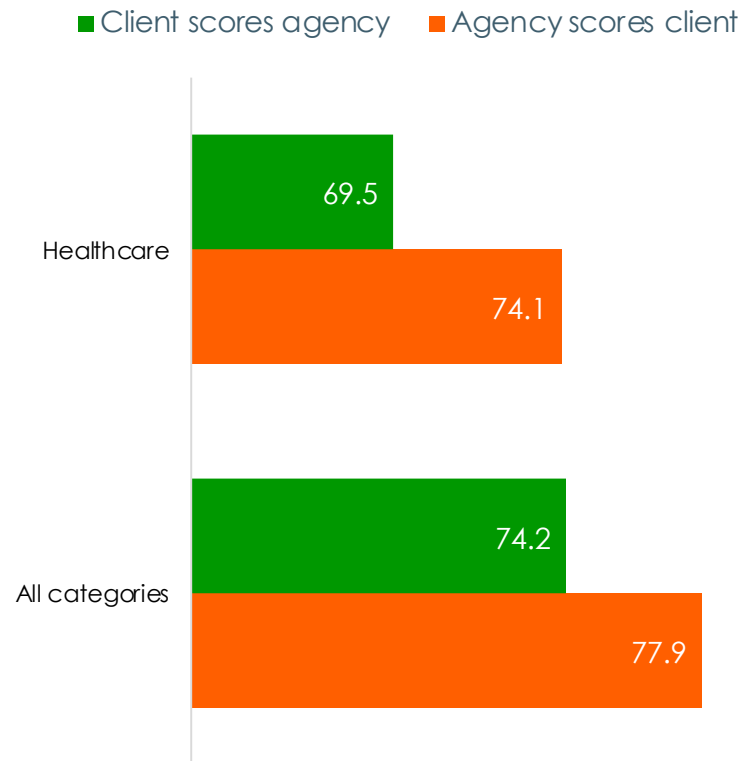
The global average across all categories for marketers scoring their agencies is 74.2, whereas agencies score their clients 77.9.

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.

As the graph indicates, there is a significant difference in healthcare when compared with the all-categories averages.

Clients in the healthcare category score their agencies almost five points lower than the all-categories average, while the agency score of their client is almost four points lower.



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.

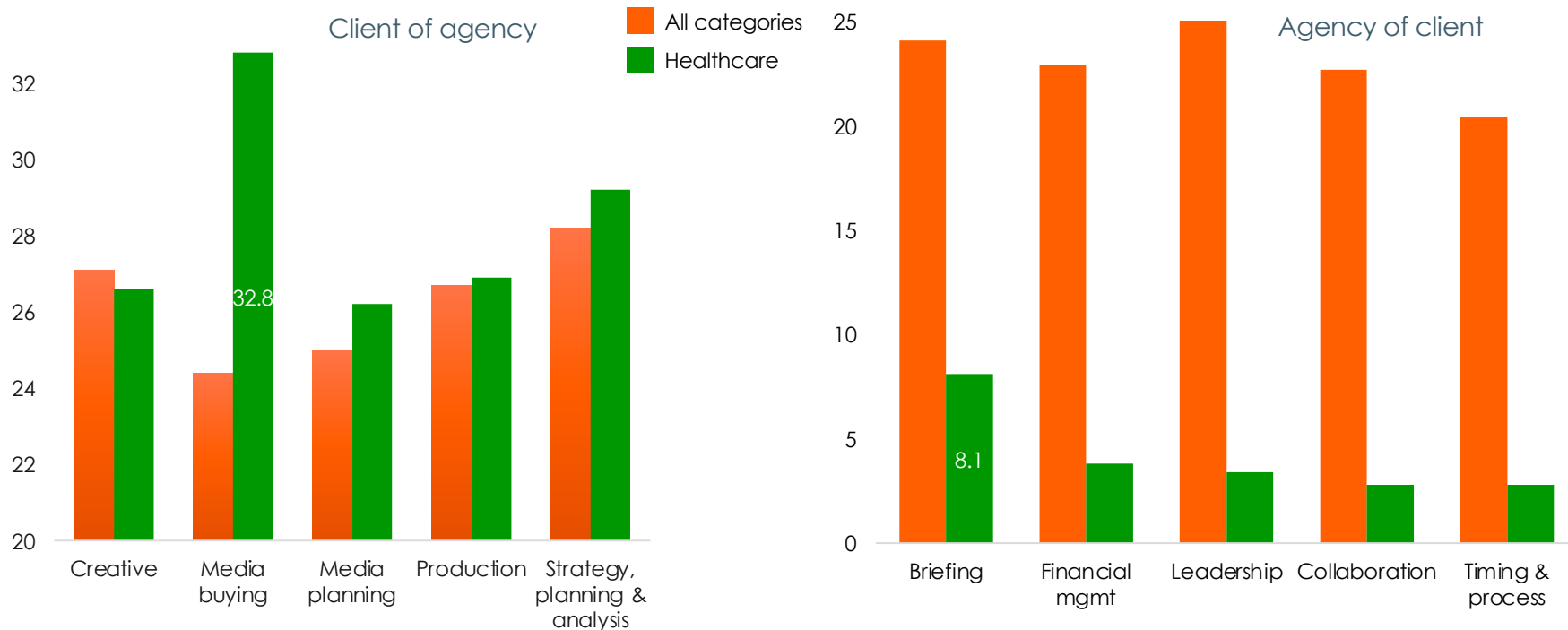
The charts below show the gap in scores between the top 10% and the bottom 10% for a selection of disciplines, and compare the gap in healthcare with the all-categories average.

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.

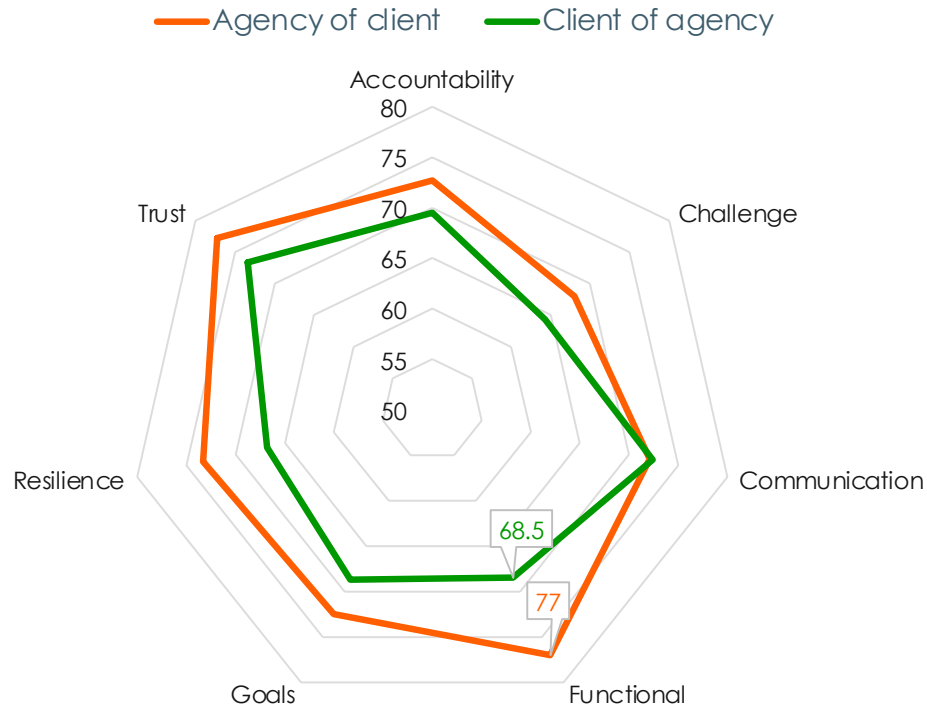
Two remarkable observations stand out when comparing teams in this category against others. For agencies, media buying is a clear differentiator, with an extraordinary gap of 32.8 between the best and the rest.

Also interesting are the relatively small gaps in scores for the top and bottom 10% of marketers in the category. Briefing (8.1) is the area where underperforming clients can most improve relative to their 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 healthcare category.

Typically, agencies score their clients higher, but take note of where there are greater or lesser differences between the two.

Trust is often the highest-scoring behaviour, underscoring its importance to all relationships.

In the healthcare category, agencies evaluate the functional abilities of their clients (77) considerably higher than their clients rate agencies (68.5). There is also a considerable gap in perceptions of each others' resilience.

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.

The consumer healthcare category presents unique challenges that directly impact client-agency team relationships. Collaboration, deep industry knowledge and a shared commitment to regulatory compliance and consumer trust are vital for success in this dynamic and sensitive sector.

These challenges are reflected in lower performance scores both for marketers and for their agencies compared with many other categories. Analysis of the best versus the rest in the category reveals media buying to be an area for poor-performing agencies to improve against their top-rated peers, while clients have an opportunity to improve their briefing skills.

There is a significant gap in perception of each others' behaviour, particularly in the area of functional skills – i.e. their basic ability to get the job done. This weak perception among clients of their agencies is cause for concern and something agencies should strive to improve.

“...media needs to be better connected into the account/creative arms of the agency.”

Healthcare 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

Don't miss out on the latest information about building stronger relationships.

Click to [sign up for our newsletter](#)