

BETTER AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS. BETTER WORK. BETTER VALUE.

See where time, talent and money go—and improve the value created on both sides.

AGENCY EFFORT AND VALUE AUDIT FOR CLIENT ORGANISATIONS

AIDAN
MORAN

Agency Operations,
People, Performance
and Change

Why I can see both sides of the relationship

More than 20 years inside agencies has given me a practical understanding of what clients need and what agency teams need in order to deliver it.

COMMERCIAL AND OPERATIONAL

- Agency-wide operations across more than 400 people
- Utilisation, realisation and workforce economics
- Pricing, scope behaviour and delivery models

INDEPENDENT AND HUMAN

- Evidence before anecdotes
- Listen before reaching conclusions
- Simplify without ignoring complexity

Clear enough to challenge. Experienced enough to understand the consequences.

Hours alone do not tell you how hard an agency is working

Timesheets can show recorded effort. They rarely explain why the effort was required—or whether it produced the right value.

THE MORE USEFUL QUESTIONS

Is senior talent involved where it matters?

How much effort goes into thinking and making—and how much into rework, administration or waiting?

Is the agency absorbing work outside the agreed scope?

Are client behaviours creating hidden demand?

Does the fee model reflect the service actually being delivered?

Understand the work behind the hours—and the conditions creating it.

Follow the work from request to outcome

I look at how a request becomes agency effort, where that effort changes shape and what ultimately reaches the market.

THE WORK

Brief and intended outcome

Estimate, scope and team shape

Strategy, creation and production

Reviews, amends and approval

Final output and result

THE CONDITIONS

Decision rights and stakeholder alignment

Access to information

Speed and quality of feedback

Changing priorities

Agency ownership and escalation

The same hours can represent very different kinds of value.

Build the clearest available fact base

The audit deals in available data rather than anecdotes—and tests it through conversations on both sides of the relationship.

COMMERCIAL — scopes, fees, estimates, rate cards and change requests

EFFORT — timesheets, team mix, seniority and utilisation patterns

DELIVERY — schedules, briefing, revisions, amends and approval cycles

OUTPUT — volume, type, quality and strategic importance of work

EXPERIENCE — interviews with client stakeholders and agency teams

No single measure provides the answer. Read together, they reveal the system.

Separate valuable effort from avoidable effort

The point is not to declare effort good or bad. It is to understand what created it and whether it should continue.

VALUE-CREATING EFFORT

Strategic thinking and creative development

Appropriate senior attention

High-quality execution and QA

Responsive problem-solving

Learning that improves future work

AVOIDABLE OR HIDDEN EFFORT

Poor or changing briefs

Duplicated management layers

Unplanned amends and rework

Waiting for decisions or assets

Work absorbed outside scope

Make hidden effort visible so both parties can make better choices.

The client and agency create the operating environment together

An honest review must examine both sides. Inefficiency is rarely created by one party alone.

CLIENT-SIDE DRIVERS

Unclear ownership, fragmented feedback, late decisions, shifting priorities and unavailable inputs.

AGENCY-SIDE DRIVERS

Poor scoping, inappropriate team shape, unnecessary layers, weak workflow and failure to challenge constructively.

SHARED OPPORTUNITY

Clearer expectations, earlier conversations and a delivery rhythm that makes pressure and trade-offs visible.

A stronger relationship begins with a shared understanding of reality.

Read utilisation and realisation as signals—not verdicts

High utilisation can indicate productive demand—or an overstretched team doing the wrong work. Low realisation can point to poor pricing, scope leakage, inefficient delivery or a deliberate investment in the relationship.

UTILISATION

Where agency capacity is being deployed and how consistently.

REALISATION

Whether recorded effort is converting into the revenue expected from the work.

TEAM MIX

Whether capability and seniority match the needs and commercial model of the account.

SCOPE BEHAVIOUR

Where the service being delivered has moved beyond what was agreed.

The meaning lies in the relationship between the measures.

Clear service definitions create better commercial conversations

I introduced menu pricing for repeatable, task-based work so clients could see what they were buying—and both parties could recognise when demand had changed.

The model made several common sources of leakage visible:

Resources booked but not used

Feedback arriving later than agreed

Amends exceeding the agreed allowance

Additional effort being absorbed without discussion

Visibility does not make everything chargeable. It creates the grounds for an informed conversation.

What the audit gives client and agency

The outcome is a shared view of where effort goes, why it happens and what should change.

EVIDENCE

Agency effort mapped by work type and level

Sources of rework, waiting and scope pressure

Where seniority and capability add—or dilute—value

Client and agency behaviours shaping demand

ACTION

Clearer roles and decision rights

Better briefing and approval rhythms

Fee or scope conversations supported by evidence

A practical improvement plan with measures

The goal is better value and a healthier working relationship.

AI is changing how agency effort is understood

Clients and agencies should embrace AI as a powerful way to organise evidence, reveal patterns and identify opportunities for better work and value.

AI and operating platforms can analyse large volumes of commercial, workflow and timesheet information far faster than manual review.

Use that capability to strengthen the evidence, then combine it with human judgement and conversation to understand what the patterns mean and what should change.

AI makes the audit sharper and faster. Human understanding makes it useful.

What a clearer fact base allows leaders to decide

The review creates a practical conversation about value. It shows where effort is going, what is getting in the way and which changes deserve attention first.

AGENCY LEADERS

- Where capacity exists and where delivery is at risk
- Which work creates value and which work consumes it
- What should change first

CLIENT LEADERS

- Where agency effort is going
- Which conditions are creating avoidable work
- Where scope or process needs to change

A shared fact base makes the conversation more useful for both sides.

How others describe working with me

You will be a total hit at whatever comes next. The best sergeant major of strategic ops I've ever worked with.

CLARE LAWSON | Global Chief Client Officer and Head of EMEA, WPP Enterprise Solutions

Strategic and infinitely successful in your implementation. Every business needs an Aidan.

GABRIELLE LUDZKER
Former Chief Executive Officer, RAPP

You worked the operational machinery we have now come to rely on. Whoever gets you next will be lucky indeed.

SHIONA McDOUGALL
Global Chief Strategy Officer, RAPP

Wherever you end up next, they'll be extremely lucky to have you.

CHRIS FREELAND
Chief Executive Officer, Merkle

You kept things simple to move them forward, without shying away from what was actually complicated beneath the surface.

KATY NYMAN
Global Client Partner, Dentsu

How I can help you.

See where agency effort goes—and improve the value created together.

WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER

- Independent efficiency audit
- Interim operational leadership
- Focused implementation support

FOCUS

- Agency effort and team shape
- Scope, fees and service model
- Client-agency ways of working
- Commercial effectiveness

Aidan Moran aidan@aidanmoran.co.uk London