

Postcard from down under: Taking your destiny in your own hands

The Bailey Group here in Australia has posted good growth over the past few months and I can only attribute this to an increasing amount of companies looking to outsource more of their core business functions such as retail sales, marketing and merchandising as well as devoting more money to in-store marketing generally.

The trend seems to be that companies are facing up to the tough conditions by changing their business models and looking for ways to make their retail marketing and sales force a more flexible and variable cost. At the same time these businesses are focusing their attention much more on grassroots marketing techniques, such as in-store, to reach consumers as they make their purchase decision. So the last three feet is a vitally important battleground in which brands need to be stealing a march. This is the perfect environment for companies like The Bailey Group to flourish both here and the UK.

We are offering brands state-of-the-art knowledge, expertise and technology in areas where they wouldn't normally assign budget, that ultimately complements and enhances their own skills base. We understand how the big retailers work, so by employing a company like The Bailey Group, brands are taking their commercial destiny into their own hands and making sure the right product is in the right place at the right time. And this is not something that only benefits the big brands; smaller businesses do very well as they find a way to make it work for them – they have a sales force out there and they make sure they get their pound of flesh.

Although “outsourcing” is a definite growth area, I, personally, don't like the term as I don't believe it truly reflects the nature of what we offer our clients. Outsourced, to me, suggest something that is bolted-on to the existing company structure, where as we often run dedicated teams on behalf of our clients, and we like to integrate these as much as possible into their business.

These teams are often so integrated into our clients' work that they are based in-house alongside the client's own staff. This enables them not only

to develop far stronger relationships, but to add value by being able to pick up on activities that field marketing companies wouldn't normally get access to. The client can also benefit from the full range of our skills, including things that they may not have realised we're capable of doing. Sometimes a client will be asking for one thing, but we can show them that could actually benefit more from something else – the only way you can share this sort of knowledge is when you work closely together.

This is how our business relationships grow.

By being able to understand the pressures our clients are under we are able to help them and share the burden. It can be difficult tactically to be this heavily involved, but when companies have a strategic vision of their relationship with field marketing, it works fine. We're still working to budgets and well-defined KPIs, but we're working very much as a team. The more integrated these teams become, the better it is for our long-term business and the better it is for the long-term business of our clients.

To my mind, this goes way beyond the bounds of outsourcing.