

# NEW BUSINESS PEOPLE DRAMATIS PERSONAE

When it comes to new business people within the world of marketing agencies, for so many reasons, a good culture fit is critical. The person must be on-brand in their dealings with your markets and at some point they will be right for promotion to more senior commercial roles in the company. It's important that you're all going to get on and enjoy being in each other's space. That's why you must always stick to the most fundamental of recruitment mantras - the 3 C's: **culture, competency** and **commitment**.

Any successful hiring must demonstrate as close as possible to 100% in all of these suits and if any of them are weak, NEVER take them on, no matter how good the other 2 factors are. Culture is the most important of them. Competency can be trained and commitment will perhaps come with time, but you're not going to change someone's 'culture' - you can pretend if you want, but the cracks will remain and they generally undo whatever progress you might otherwise make on the other 2 'C's.

Blossom, part of the Intelligent New Business group has advised the boards of hundreds of marketing services companies. As such we have unusual insight into the different cultural environments agencies offer. Breaking this down they usually consist of the following types: -

- Youth
- Corporate
- Elite
- Down-to-Earth
- Cerebral
- Techno

Every agency has its idiosyncrasies, which for recruiters pose different challenges. Getting under the skin of an agency's culture is difficult because only those that work there are able to define it. When looking to hire someone to fit in from the saturated job boards, recruitment consultancies and social media forums, there's little focus on the aspect of cultural fit – you need to live and breathe it to be able to articulate it.

At Blossom we take cultural fit very seriously. We interview 1000's of new business people year in year out. From this experience we've seen a set of broad personality types of new business people that agencies employ. Here's our somewhat tongue in cheek assessment of these types. Perhaps a few of them you'll recognise!

**THE PERFECTIONIST** – is logical, organised, methodical, usually initiative taking and highly accountable. The downside is they can lose sight of priorities, spending too long on relatively trivial matters. They can lack pace. If not getting the results they themselves expect (either through their own failings or a failure of support from the company) they get frustrated and by their nature are more likely to leave and do it somewhere else rather than push through challenging times. They don't necessarily need constant praise but they do need recognition from those they report into – often in the form of promotion and a good commission structure. This type of new business person typically looks for the 'big fish' and will put most, if not all of their effort into larger opportunities, which can mean they forget the wider picture of keeping the cold new business pipeline growing.



**THE KNOW IT ALL** – is ultra confident, noisy, a good internal player and usually well liked by their peers. They will get results but on their own terms, so normally suit an autonomous role. Their lively personality means they may over-sell their abilities, but resist criticism, which can make them quite hard to manage. So while impressive at interview, accountability can be an issue in that it's not unusual for them to bite off more than they can chew. Too many times we've heard feedback where at the pitch stage they've talked too much rather than listening to your potential new client. This said they do bring an important energy and enthusiasm. They work incredibly hard to build the pipeline. But sometimes this spills into the dangerous area of over-servicing where to win that new client they promise more than the agency is willing to deliver.

**THE GRAFTER** – very hard working, usually one of the last in the office and someone with unwavering commitment. They need careful management because they tend to be quite rhythmic - preferring a process driven environment. The risk is that how they articulate themselves isn't always 100% on-brand and it can be hard to get them to engage with a new approach – they can be uncomfortable with change. There's also a danger that they expend too much energy on things of secondary importance so they need to be focused, therefore they are more likely to respond well to tactical campaigns with a specific hook. Internal distractions frustrate them and while their pace is first-class, if they don't get results quickly they become de-motivated. Regular positive feedback is always important but their intra-competitiveness can sit uncomfortably with their peers. We've also observed they prefer others internally to make the effort to build relationships, meaning they may be perceived as slightly aloof. They have a work rate that can't be sniffed at and managers / senior team often view them in a positive light.



**THE CONTENTED** – 'been there and done it'. Usually highly experienced and can be invaluable at the pitch stage and as an ambassador internally. They know the nuts and bolts of the agency world but with this is complacency. As a mature 'business developer' they tend to think strategically – preferring to advise rather than do. Their work life balance becomes important, earning their stripes less so. The drive may have been lost, but they still expect job security. They are likely to get results but not necessarily those in line with the expectations of the business. Radical business change can be unnerving, especially if it's outside their field of knowledge (comfort zone). What is made up in gravitas with clients is lost in a lack of youthful enthusiasm. As such they have a community of contacts, will be a good networker but to be frank become exposed when the little black book of contacts has dried up.

**THE DEMANDING** – they communicated a profound desire to succeed at the interview and so you took them on. They're incredibly likeable but the intelligence conveyed when you first met takes time to be realised as they struggle to build the outward confidence needed to do the role – they're afraid of making mistakes. The result is a lot of questions to management and peers. Often the same questions are asked time and again as solving problems is something they lack the tenacity to do themselves. They need a lot of managing. With patience they often become great new business people, but the immediacy of the role can create a sink or swim effect. They're usually early in their career; perhaps their first job from University, meaning they need time to adjust to the commercial world. If not watched carefully, they will be easily distracted by marketing projects or sending emails as an alternative to picking up the phone and talking to your target audience. They need to be nurtured and developed. They'll build a strong peer network and likely to be great socially. But beware the 'them' and 'us' divide as they struggle to adjust to managing senior relationships.



**THE MAGICIAN** – we don't meet many of these. They tend to work on their own and it's difficult to track what they do day-to-day. They get results on their own terms, and often through elaborate and unusual methods. They'll be bright, sharp and articulate but perhaps self-fulfilling. They'll have a consultative edge. One day they'll walk into a management meeting to let you know they've landed an enormous brief and ask if they can leave it with you because they've got other things to get on with. They have great sales tenacity but come with maverick tendencies that mean getting a sales pipeline report out of them is unlikely and if they do give you one it will confuse rather than inspire. Perhaps they work from home? They have a mysterious quality that many agency owners often find amusing as long as the results come through. If they don't it can be a very frustrating experience for all, because no one really knows what to do with them.

**THE QUIETLY CONFIDENT** – gets on and does their job. They are bright, diligent, and hard to distract. It may take time to get to know them, but once bedded-in they are loyal and trustworthy. They always get results and are in the main easy to manage. They respond well to constructive criticism and their no-fuss approach means the advice they receive is actioned quickly (although not always obviously). They are not always forthcoming and ironically may not be the best of the bunch you met at interview; sometimes overlooked in favour of a brasher candidate. They prefer close-knit relationships – one-to-one – and as such perhaps not the gregarious social-butterfly one might expect of a new business person. But this said they'd have a strong friendship network and perhaps even some weird and wonderful hobbies. It's important they are managed well and career progression opportunities communicated early as it's likely you'll want them in your business long-term. They'll be well respected internally.



**THE CURIOUS CAT** – asks lots of questions internally and on the phone and of their clients / prospects. They want to know everything that's going on around them. They love people and are quick to build relationships internally. You'll find them to be positive, engaging but possibly infuriating. While they are the perfect candidate for embracing insight-led sales techniques; non-intrusive, calm and considered; they can be distracting. They may have a lot of energy but channelling this energy into the right places can be a management headache. They'll always be looking for the next challenge and if managed well will drive excellent results. But to keep them motivated they need to feel part of a 'team'. It's vital they have others to bounce ideas off and learn from so striking a balance here is key.

**THE UNDEAD** – a bit bold? We think not. We meet too many people who despite possessing a huge CV from a long list of agencies are in fact totally ineffective. They have few or no successes of their own and when challenged cannot produce credible referees on their precise share in their past employers' successes. New business has become a career by default, not by craft. They've been doing it too long, badly, and now lack real spark or passion for new business, though you will get a virtuoso performance in interview (lot's of practice). They hide behind emails and desk research, have 1000's of LinkedIn connections and will spend too much time building long-winded decks to send to people they've never actually spoken to in the hope they'll build a rapport. They exaggerate sales reports; log fictitious conversations in your CRM system and set-up meetings that eventually drop out of the diary. They are exposed quickly internally; make little effort to bond with their peers, but have canny ability to sense imminent danger and jump ship before they're fired. Previous employers will all get blamed for holding them back and not supporting them properly. This all sounds terribly horrible, but just perhaps the spark could be re-ignited? They'll need a very strong leader to get them into gear though.



New business people have some of the most interesting personalities. If you'd like to talk to Blossom about helping you recruit and train the ideal new business HR for your agency, please contact us on: 020 7833 5262