

“ Seven behaviours that
set the best client-agency
relationships apart from
the rest ”



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aprais

Key findings

- While the fundamental characteristics of client-agency performance remain crucial, it has become important to also factor in the behaviours that help build strong relationships and produce good work.
- Our analysis has identified the seven key behaviours that set the best teams apart from the rest.
- We can also track how the significance of these behaviours has changed over the last decade, how clients and agencies are more prepared to challenge the status quo.
- *Functional* competencies like timing, process and financial management are no longer the highest scoring characteristics for clients. *Trust* is now the benchmark.
- Covid has further changed the landscape and both parties have demonstrated an ability to adapt to new challenges, universally in creative & media relationships.

Drawing on more than 20 years of experience evaluating relationships, Aprais has been able to identify the characteristics of the best and worst performing agencies and clients.

Ten years ago, our data showed that *Functional* characteristics like timing and process management were what defined the top performers.

Today's business environment is radically different to that of ten years ago, and the pace of change has increased exponentially within the last year.

To discover how this rapid change has affected day-to-day client-agency relationships, we recently reviewed our data to compare the characteristics of top and bottom performers with those a decade ago.

FUNCTIONS

To use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance

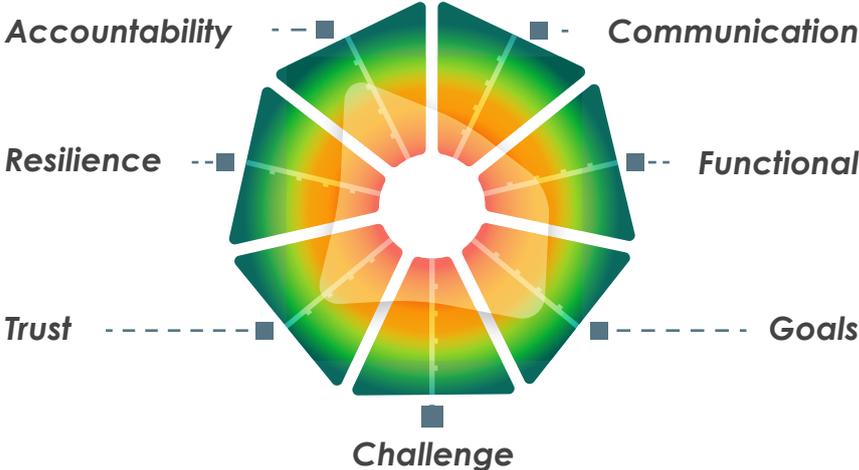
BEHAVIOURS

The way in which someone conducts oneself or behaves

Defining key characteristics

We split characteristics into discipline types covering areas such as Briefing, Strategy and Collaboration, to provide benchmarks from the very first round of evaluations.

We also assigned behaviour traits to each core question in our database to look at the behaviours behind these *Functional* disciplines and their impact on team relationships.



Have these metrics changed over time?

The order of importance for traditional disciplines such as *Timing, Process and Financial Management, Briefing and Leadership* has changed little since 2010 for clients and agencies.

The seven behaviours, on the other hand, have moved significantly, especially in the latest data taken during the pandemic (to 23 September 2020).

Clients as scored by their agencies

1	Trust	+1
2	Resilience	+1
3	Accountability	+1
4	Functional	-3
5	Communication	=
6	Goals	=
7	Challenge	=

Agencies as scored by their clients

1	Communication	+1
2	Resilience	+4
3	Trust	-2
4	Accountability	-1
5	Goals	=
6	Functional	-2
7	Challenge	=

Clients as scored by their agencies

Functional capabilities decreased in importance

- Whilst the scores for all of the behaviours have improved for both top and bottom performing clients and agencies over the last decade, their relative importance has changed.
- *Functional* competence improved least and has gone from the top behaviour 10 years ago to fourth in 2020.
- *Trust* is now the top behaviour, across every region.

Agencies as scored by their clients

Increased importance of good Communication

- Most behaviour scores improved since 2010 with the notable exception of *Trust*.
- This fell for both top and bottom performing agencies, driven by evaluations carried out in the Americas and Asia.
- As a result, *Trust* has moved from the highest scoring behaviour of a top performing agency 10 years ago to 3rd in 2020, replaced at the top by *Communication*.

The growing importance of challenging norms

The *Challenge* behaviour scores have improved substantially for top and bottom performers, clients and agencies, since 2010.

This suggests clients are more prepared to change processes, resolve issues and take risks than they were a decade ago.

Equally agencies feel empowered to challenge traditional processes and solutions and think more laterally.

The improvement has been particularly marked across EMEA, where top client scores jumped by nearly 8% over the 10-year period and agency scores grew by more than 12%



More agile ways of working

Throughout the Covid pandemic there has been a focus on the *Resilience* of client-agency relationships. Both parties have had to adapt to new ways of working, within the restrictions of lockdowns. *Resilience* scores have risen for both clients and agencies across our global database, in comparison with 2010.

Resilience is now the second highest scoring behaviour for top agencies and clients. However, there are significant differences within the *Resilience* scores by region and agency type.

All regions have seen improvements in both parties' *Resilience* scores for creative relationships and top performers in media, reflecting the significant changes that had to be made to respond to the restrictions of working remotely with changing consumer media preferences and often reduced budgets.

However, only EMEA saw improvements for top performers in digital with declines in the discipline's *Resilience* scores especially for agencies in the other regions.

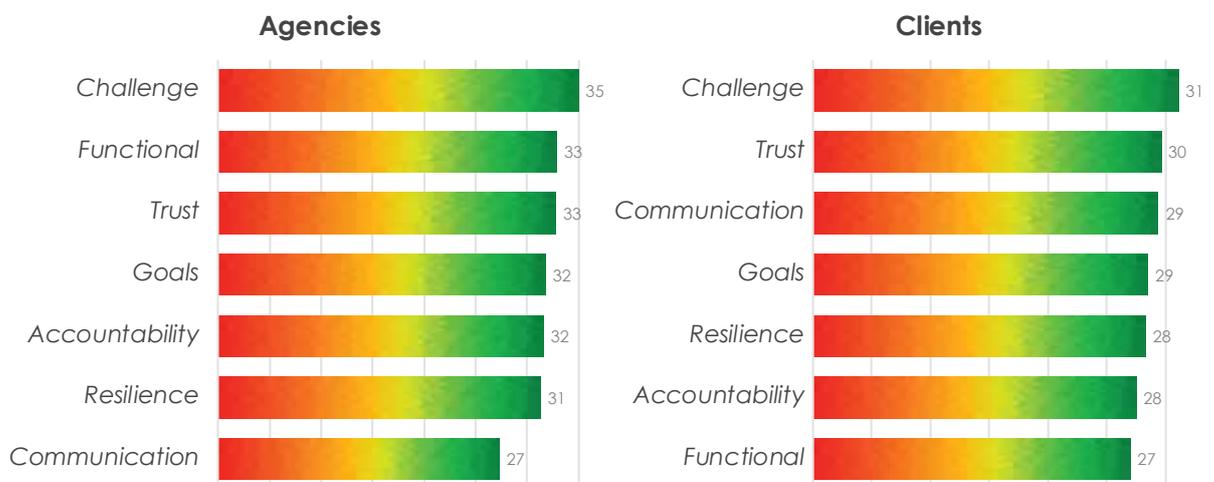
Download our free report:

"*Resilience* – a new 'business-critical' requirement for teams"

Where do top performers excel?

The charts below show the gap between the top and bottom performers, by behaviour. The behaviours have been ranked by the size of that gap.

Challenge is the behaviour that shows the biggest difference between top and bottom performers.





In summary

The marketing communications industry has undergone dramatic changes in the past 10 years. In that time, the behaviours of clients and agencies have changed, but particularly so in terms of the changes agencies have observed in their clients. While the fundamental characteristics of client-agency performance remain critical, we must recognise that human behaviours underpin all team performance and need to be better understood and managed.

Our analysis suggests that the ability to bounce back from adversity (*Resilience*) and the need for courage to *Challenge* the status quo present opportunities for client and agencies to distinguish themselves.

Methodology

By comparing the profile of clients and agencies with the top 10% scores in our database of more than 22,000 interactions, with the bottom 10%, we can pinpoint where they differ and define the strengths of the top performers both globally and by region and discipline.

Aprais conducts agency-client evaluations across all global regions.

Data comparisons are from September 2010 to September 2020.

If you would like to know more about client-agency team behaviour in specific regions, agency types or client sectors, please contact us.

About Aprais

Aprais is a global leader in maximising team performance.

At its heart, is a purpose-built, user-friendly online platform. Each response contributes to a database of more than 22,000 evaluations that enables accurate tracking of performance.

This data accuracy and the resulting benchmarks, enable Aprais to advise clients how to optimise the performance of their teams and the individuals that comprise them.

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