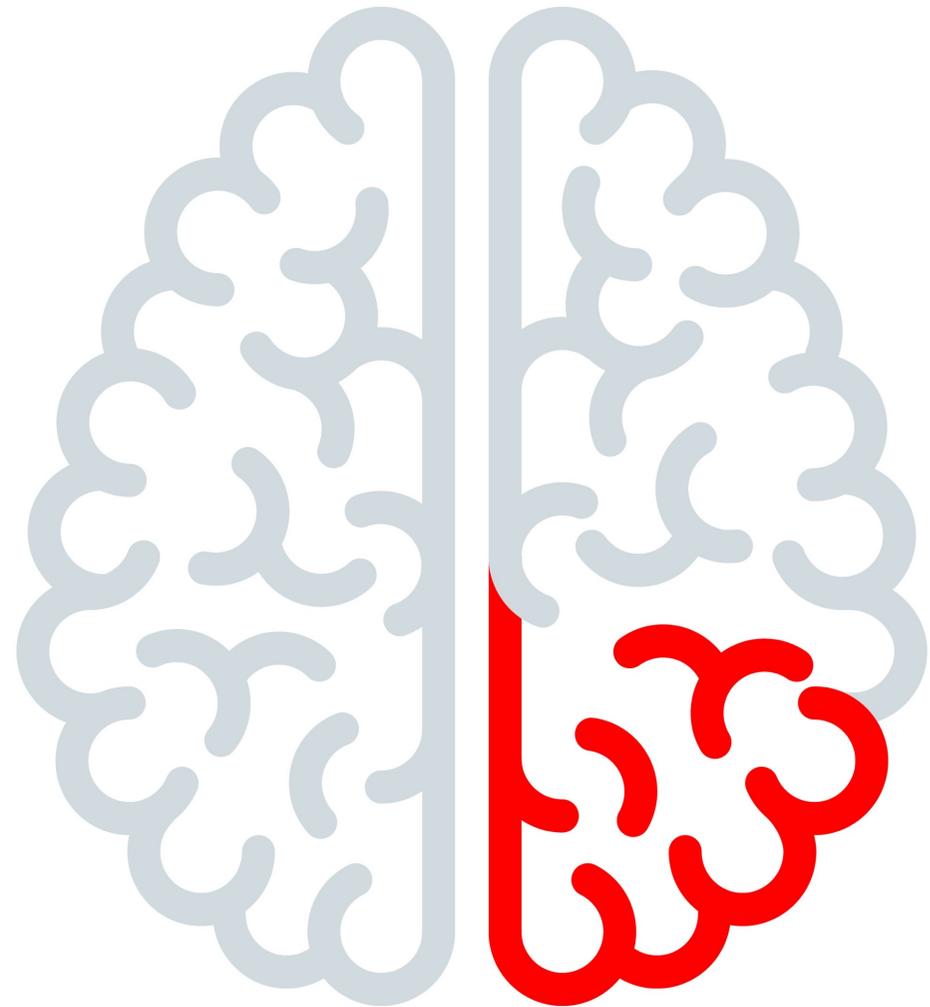


Functional

One of the seven key behaviours vital for building stronger business teams



Introduction to behaviours

Performance evaluations have historically focused on teams' and individuals' specific functions as defined by the scope of work.

This monitoring of scope-specific performance remains crucial. However, it is also important to consider the human behaviours that help build strong relationships and produce good work.

How behaviours make a difference

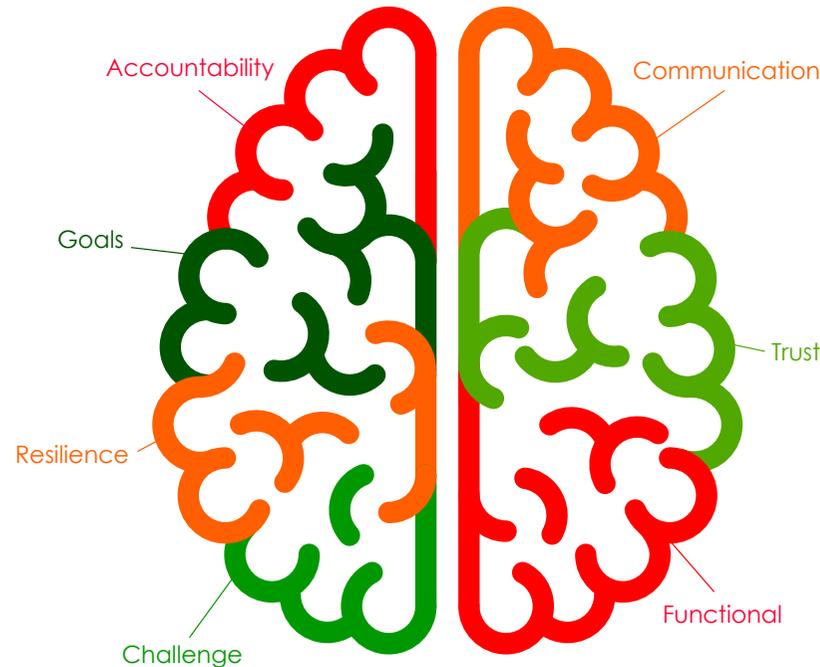
Analysis of our extensive database identified seven key behaviours, shown in the graphic opposite. These behaviours help define what sets the best teams apart from the rest.

Each of the core questions in our database has been assigned to one of these behaviours, allowing us deeper insight into team performance.

Unlike scope-specific disciplines, which can differ depending on the team role, behaviours are common to all.

As these seven behaviours are identical for all job functions, we can directly compare teams in a single relationship or against our broader benchmarks.

In this series of reports we outline the behaviours and their increasing or diminishing impact on team relationships.



What's in this report

We will focus on functional skill.

We explain our definition of this behaviour and how it was derived from our database of more than 24,000 evaluations we've conducted over the past 20 years. We on overall performance.

compare the top and bottom performers and assess the impact of functional skill

Most importantly, this report suggests ways for both agencies and marketers to improve functional skill and, in so doing, build stronger relationships with their business partners.

Functional skill

Among the seven behaviours, functional skill has arguably the most powerful influence on client-agency relationships. Fundamentally, it's being good at what we are paid to do.

Whereas the other behaviours involve pure behaviour or attitude, functional is the one behaviour that calls on the effective application of knowledge and experience to achieve a professional result.

For marketers, this means a thorough understanding of the principles of marketing, the brand and its competitors – knowing how to work with agencies and to harness their capabilities for optimal impact on the brand.

Beyond the scope

For agencies, it requires a deep and up-to-date understanding of the scope they are being paid to deliver – be that creative, media, production or whatever. Regardless of the service, the pervasive nature of the online world is such that digital awareness is no longer optional. It is integral to all we do and a vital component of virtually all job functions.

We have described this behaviour as the **effective application of knowledge and experience** to achieve a **professional result**. To state the obvious, experience can't be bought. It must be earned over time. Professional knowledge, on the other hand, relies on the foundation received during our studies, whether formal or informal.

Never stop learning

At the 2022 World Federation of Advertisers Global Marketer Week, leading marketers were polled on how well they understood the metaverse. The results were shockingly low.

In a world where technology moves at such a dizzying speed and consumer behaviours pivot relentlessly, professionals need to guard against redundancy by ensuring they keep ahead of the learning curve. This is commonly referred to as 'lifelong learning'.

Aside from the mere pace of change, the importance of lifelong learning has increased due to extended life expectancy according to a study by Hacettepe University¹. This has necessitated longer working lives and older retirement ages. As the average age of marketers and agency professionals is around the mid-30s, all must work to ensure that



¹ [The Importance of Lifelong Learning has been Increasing](#), Haydar Ates, Kadir Alsai

How functional skill has changed

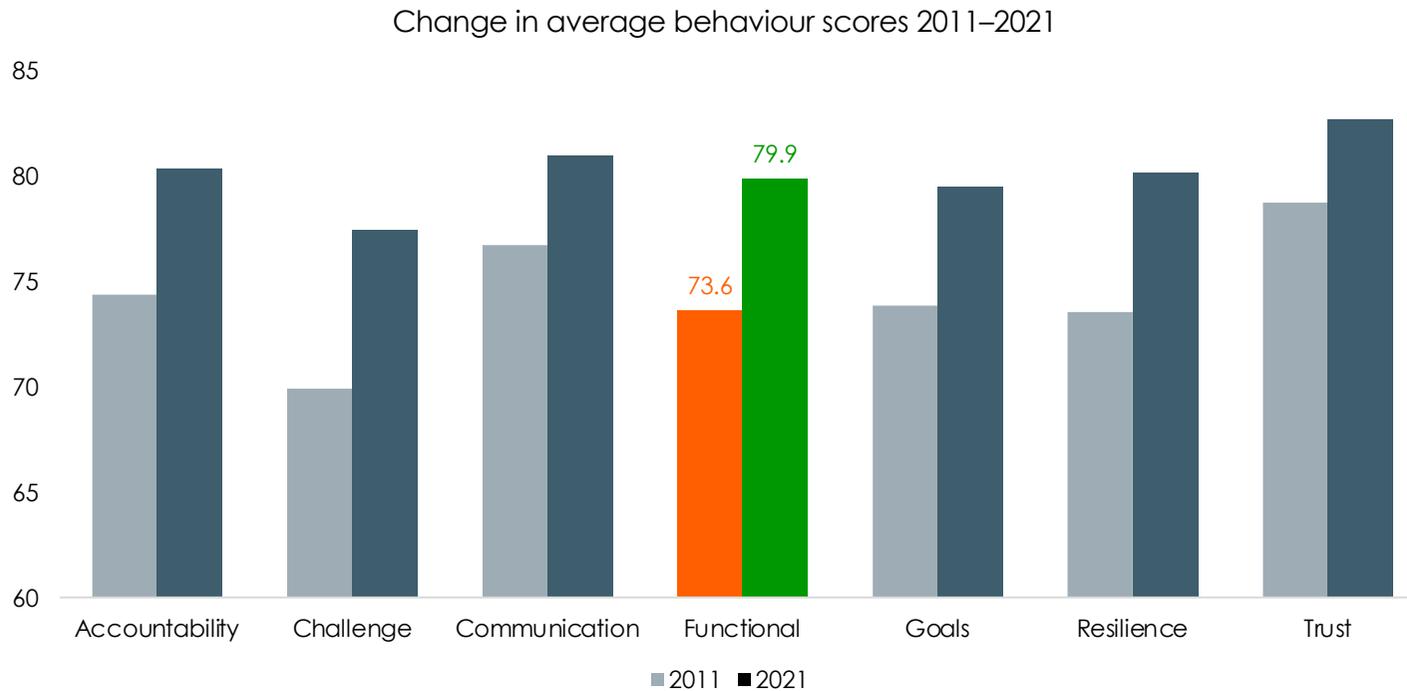
When it comes to client-agency relationships, it is important to understand how functional skill has changed relative to other behaviours and to overall relationship scores.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen steady increases in the average evaluation scores given by marketer and agency of each other. With this in mind, we wondered how each of the seven behaviours has changed over the same 10-year period.

The chart below shows the change in average behaviour scores of all teams (marketer and agency).

Positive changes are evident, albeit to different degrees, for each of the behaviours.

The functional behaviour began the decade with one of the lowest scores (74) among all the behaviours. By 2021, this score had jumped by 8% to almost 80. This change over the decade reflects the growing appreciation and importance of teams' functional skill among the other behaviours.



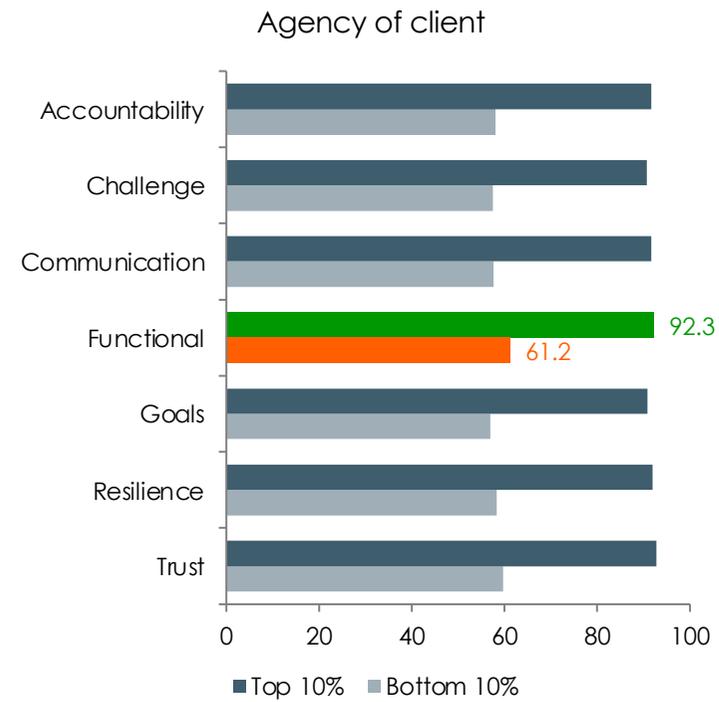
The best versus the rest

By identifying the clients and agencies with the top 10% scores in our database, and comparing their profiles with those of the bottom 10%, we can pinpoint where they differ and define the strengths of the top performers. This analysis shows that those who perform best overall score very highly for functional skill.

The charts below reveal the different profiles (top 10% versus the bottom 10%). The gap between the two indicates the potential for poor performers to improve.

Weaker agencies and marketers should be aiming to close the gap in functional skill with their top-performing peers.

Clients are paying the agency for their skill against a particular scope, so it is not surprising that the difference between the best and worst scores for agencies (36 points) is greater than the gap for their marketer clients (31 points).



Just how important is functional skill?

We have also analysed the impact of each behaviour on the overall evaluation – in other words, the priority for improvement.

This helps teams identify which behaviours to focus on for maximum impact.

Based on a correlation analysis across our database, the tables opposite show the behaviours ranked in terms of how they influence the overall relationship scores for the best (top 10%) and the worst (bottom 10%) performers.

Here is where the importance of functional skill is most revealing – it is ranked top for client evaluation of agencies for both the best performers and the worst.

Although communication has a slightly stronger influence on overall score than functional for the bottom 10% of clients as rated by agencies, it is the most influential for the top 10%.

On-the-job skill among team members is critically important in fostering healthy client-agency relationships.

Agency scores client		
Rank	Bottom 10	Top 10
1	Communication	Functional
2	Functional	Communication
3	Resilience	Trust
4	Trust	Resilience
5	Accountability	Accountability
6	Goals	Goals
7	Challenge	Challenge

Client scores agency		
Rank	Bottom 10	Top 10
1	Functional	Functional
2	Resilience	Accountability
3	Challenge	Resilience
4	Accountability	Goals
5	Goals	Trust
6	Trust	Communication
7	Communication	Challenge

How to improve your functional scores

The root of any team evaluation is the questions that are asked. Assembling and phrasing these questions in collaboration with our clients is both an art and a science.

By analysing the impact specific questions have on evaluation scores, we can identify actions that can be taken to improve aspects of a business relationship.

The lists below indicate what agencies and marketers can do to improve their functional skill.

What agencies should do

1. Accumulate and apply learning from experience within and beyond a client's category.
2. Demonstrate attention to detail from planning through execution.
3. Effectively apply research and an understanding of consumer contact points in the development of strategies.
4. Ensure brand integrity is maintained at all stages of the process.
5. Make sure that recommendations are solid, thorough and factually supported.
6. Anticipate clients' needs by acting as a marketing adviser beyond the essential scope definition.
7. Never stop learning. Remain current on all aspects of your profession.

What marketers should do

1. Ensure briefs are clear, thorough, inspiring, timely and in line with brand strategy. All work is evaluated against a brief.
2. Handle all agency financial matters efficiently and accurately, and ensure they are paid on time.
3. Maintain high levels of professionalism across the client team and consistent application of agreed brand policies.
4. Combine passionate leadership with a thorough understanding of the market and a long-term vision.
5. Actively educate agencies about your brands, business and organisational culture.
6. Never stop learning. Remain current on all aspects of your profession.

In conclusion

Functional skill is fundamental to the effective execution of any job. Yet how we apply that functional skill in our day-to-day is what defines this behaviour.

Functional skill impacts more than individual performance; it has a powerful influence within and among teams and can impact the relationship between the client and the agency.

Harsh though the expression may sound, 'don't suffer fools gladly' reveals a basic human intolerance of the failure of another's functional skill. The answer is to remain curious and never stop learning.

Among the other behaviours we have identified, functional is one of the more important aspects for teams to acknowledge and to improve.

There is a significant opportunity for poor-performing marketers and agencies to close the gap on their better-performing peers by improving their levels of functional skill.

Our data shows that clear improvements in functional skill scores are possible just 18 months from the introduction of a formalised, objective and regular evaluation process with Aprais.



This series

This report is one of a series focusing on team behaviours.

Each report focuses on one of the seven behaviours we measure:

1. Accountability
2. Challenge
3. Communication
4. Functional
5. Goals
6. Resilience
7. Trust

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 24,000 relationships, across 92 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 and follow us

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