

Colin: I'm Colin Sutton. I'm the Director of Social Media within OMD. We're an Omnicom Media Group and we represent Apple, Intel, monster.com, FedEx, and a number of other Fortune 50 companies. I direct the social media business within OMD and so I'm helping to Vet vendors and introduce new technologies to our company, and to the leaders of the digital business. It depends on whether or not I really see value in the e-mail, but when I get 10 to 15 e-mails a day, I probably respond to 1. Out of the 9 or 10 people that write me every day, I probably will end up getting 3 to 5 e-mails from them on a regular basis, and I still only respond to 1. Now, I'm responding to 1 out of 30. A lot of people that write me ... so, in terms of responding and who I respond to, a lot of people write to me without really understanding my position, or understanding the value that they can bring to our company. They're coming out of left-field asking the wrong questions and representing the companies that don't even really show value to my buyers.

I'd say the most annoying thing about e-mails that I get from vendors and technologies that want to get into OMD is cut and paste, basically a cold call via e-mail. You get a lengthy, lengthy e-mail that isn't on-track and isn't the right type of value or the right type of vendor we're looking for, and it's obvious cut and paste, very impersonal without a real connection. I'd say I probably get about 50 calls a month. I try not to answer my phone, ever, because of that. I know when my phone is ringing at the office, I know that it's a vendor trying to get a meeting, so I never pick it up. There's always, always a voice mail. Everybody that calls leaves a voice mail. It doesn't give me any more motivation to call them.

That's a good question. What are the red flags that I get via e-mail? A lot of them are the subject lines, so if the subject line is just cut and paste, standard sales pitch, that's a strong red flag. People do try to be conversational, and they try and force a relationship or the idea that we have a relationship that doesn't really exist, so they have to strike a fine balance. There's a couple things that will get people into the meeting. The first is, if it's really a technology that we see value in and something that can be a leader within our company, or something that can help our company become differentiated or a differentiator for us. If we really spot something that is going to be the next thing, then we get in for a meeting right away. That'd be one reason why people'd get in. Another is personal recommendation, so I'd say 9 out of 10 of my friends that recommend somebody to meet, I'll meet immediately. The last one is probably if it's a recommendation from my boss. Those get in immediately.

My CEO, Alan [Kohn 00:02:40], is out meeting a lot of technologies and a lot of potential partners every day, and so when he gets the partners that are in social, or in social media, or technologies that are supported my social, then he uses me to vet them. He sends them right to me and we'll have a meeting and see if there really is value that we can bring to our Digital Teams. Because it's coming down from the top, he sees value and he wants to make sure that there's something that we're not going to miss out on. Our company's always trying to differentiate.

It's a crowded marketplace, and so we need to find those partners that can help set us apart. There's definitely a report back to the boss, but there's also potential for test projects. If we really see value then what we'll try and do is get a test project going with one of our clients.

In meetings when vendors come in, typically what we'll do is we'll walk into a conference room and the first thing the vendors will do is to go for their computer. I think salespeople today are very reliant on their PowerPoints and their credibilities deck. They're almost not comfortable having a conversation. That, to me, immediately talks to the value of that Sales Person. If they can't have a conversation with me and look me in the eye and tell me in a pretty brief, and concise statement, what they're all about and why their value should be right for our company and for my team, then it's not going to be a very good meeting.

I usually try to ask people to just put away the PowerPoint and see if we can just have a conversation first. I'd say the people who are really confident and comfortable in what they're doing and what they're selling and why it could work for us, we end up having a great conversation. It can be fast. It doesn't have to be a long, lengthy conversation. We can cut to the chase in 15 minutes and get a real understanding of if there's an opportunity for us. Can we run a test, or the other way?

I see an e-mail from people and they'll explain their company and what the value is to OMD and why we should work with them and who they're working with, and then they'll immediately jump to trying to set a time. It just feels like they're trying to do too many things with 1 e-mail. This is about relationships and the way into agencies and into this business is through relationships and try to dump all of those things into 1 e-mail, just doesn't really breed success. You can do some education on me. I mean, I'm pretty transparent, in terms of my social graph and the things that I do in social media, whether it's Twitter or Foursquare or Instagram. There are certainly ways that if somebody was to educate themselves on me, they could find out what some of the passion points were, and that would be an easy way in.

Another way that people could find me or get to me with success would be to understand who my peers are and figure out a way to get a recommendation, either from my peer or from Senior Management within our organization. I'd rather respond to an e-mail than a phone call and the e-mail should pose a question. "Is there value? Do you see value in a relationship with me? Is there something that I can do to support you, and are you interested in taking a meeting," short and concise. A lot of people send us e-mail assuming that we need to meet with them and that they'll be the right partner for us in various areas and those assumptions don't really help their game.

I'd say people are generally punctual. They want to stay as long as they can. For us, we like to keep the meetings as short as possible, so I think half an hour is a good enough time to have a good conversation about what somebody does and where the potential value might be. If it's a first meeting, a half hour is about the right, for my side. In terms of meetings and meeting length, so you know within the agency, within social, within all of the things that we're doing, it's really busy time. There's a lot going on every day. It's a nonstop, action packed day. It doesn't leave us a lot of time to meet with vendors. With a half hour meeting, that should be enough to set the tempo, build a relationship, understand what value they can provide, and see if there's some real next steps.

For better or for worse, within the agency landscape, today, we're kind of stuck in a PowerPoint frame-of-mind, and people have learned how to communicate via pages in a PowerPoint. There are some good PowerPoints. There's some bad. I think length is a problem, so we see PowerPoints that are capabilities decks of 100 pages and if a company can't explain to us within 10 or 15 pages, it's probably too long. I don't really see a lot of proposals, personally, in this line of business that I'm in, now. When I pass it onto our Digital Teams, the proposals tend to be a little bit lengthy. They should be able to be concise, a couple pages should be enough to get across terms of service, timing, deliverable, budget.

What are the qualities that the best people have that meet with me? Personality is one. Ability to understand what my role is and what our agency's role is, so real education about the space and about their potential value within that ecosystem for us. Those are probably the better qualities that I see.