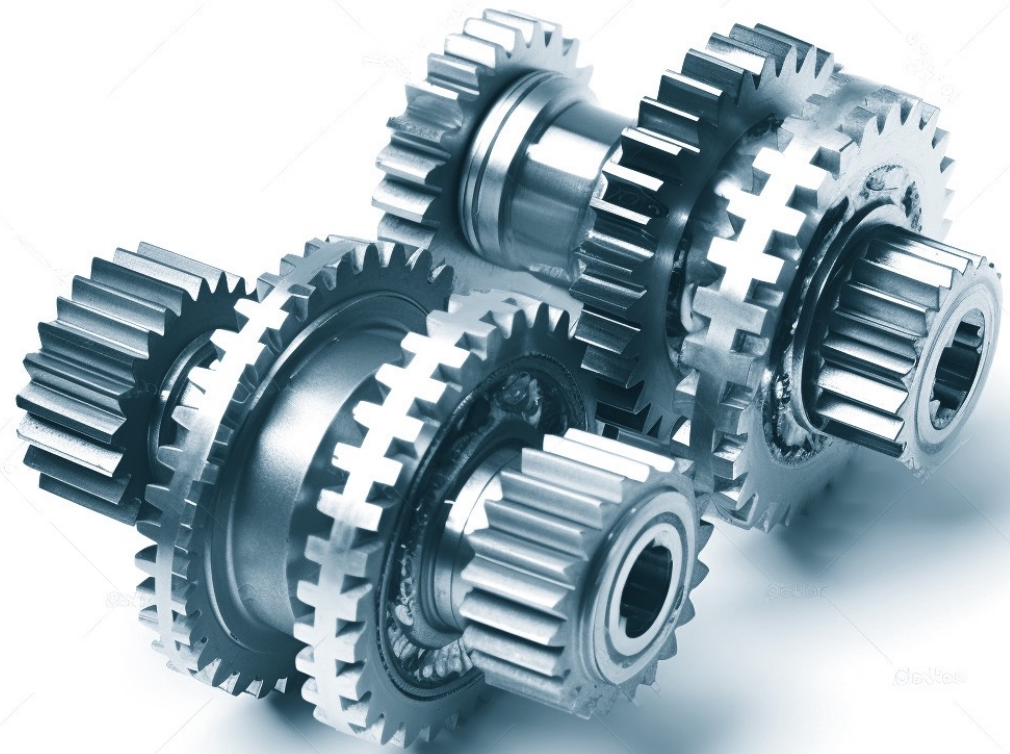


Understanding business relationships in the automotive category

2023



aprais

Relationships matter

Over the years, we have compiled extraordinary evidence that stronger relationships build stronger business because they:

- produce higher quality, more effective work
- are more cost-efficient
- build valuable shared knowledge
- motivate staff to go the extra mile for each other
- bridge the gap between corporate cultures
- expand the scope of work
- instil more trust.

It's clear, then, that team relationships are important, both internally and with external stakeholders.

But how are these business relationships affected by their marketing category? And how can teams in the automotive category improve?

“The client team exhibits strong, intellectually honest leadership about the challenges confronting [brand] and engages the broader team in the development of aggressive, forward-looking solutions to those challenges. They generally operate with urgency and efficiency, understanding that time is always of the essence.”

Automotive agency lead

Categories matter

Client-agency team relationships are significantly influenced by the marketing category in which they operate.

Each marketing category possesses unique characteristics, challenges and dynamics that directly impact how clients and agencies interact and collaborate.

Automotive

The automotive category offers exciting opportunities for creative campaigns and innovative strategies. Clients and agencies can collaborate to create memorable advertising that taps into consumers' aspirations, desires and emotional connections with their vehicles. The automotive industry often allows for larger budgets and high-profile campaigns, which can boost agencies' reputations and provide clients with a competitive edge.

However, as this report will reveal, the category also presents unique challenges that can strain client-agency relationships. The industry is highly competitive, with numerous brands vying for consumers' attention. This competitive landscape puts pressure on agencies to deliver exceptional results, which can lead to heightened expectations and increased stress.

Additionally, the automotive industry is subject to rapidly changing trends and technological advancements, requiring agencies to stay agile and adapt quickly. This dynamic environment can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflicts between clients and agencies over strategic direction or implementation.

Moreover, the automotive category often involves complex regulations, long product development cycles and intricate sales processes. These factors can introduce additional layers of complexity and bureaucracy, which may slow down decision-making and hinder collaboration between clients and agencies.

Marketers and agencies must grapple with evolving consumer concerns around the environment while auto manufacturers respond to these pressures with the development of electric and hybrid vehicles.

About this report

This report is based on our experience advising some of the world's leading marketers and agencies in the automotive category. It is part of a series focusing on business relationships in 11 of the product and service categories we have evaluated.

The analysis is extracted from a database of more than 26,000 evaluations Aprais have conducted globally over the past two decades.

Our quantitative evaluations use a 100-point scale that enables us to create accurate benchmarks for comparison, trends and insights.

We also analyse the qualitative comments entered with each evaluation to provide context to the scores.

This report will examine team characteristics that set the best teams apart from the rest. It will cover both marketers and agencies in the automotive category.

Automotive versus all categories

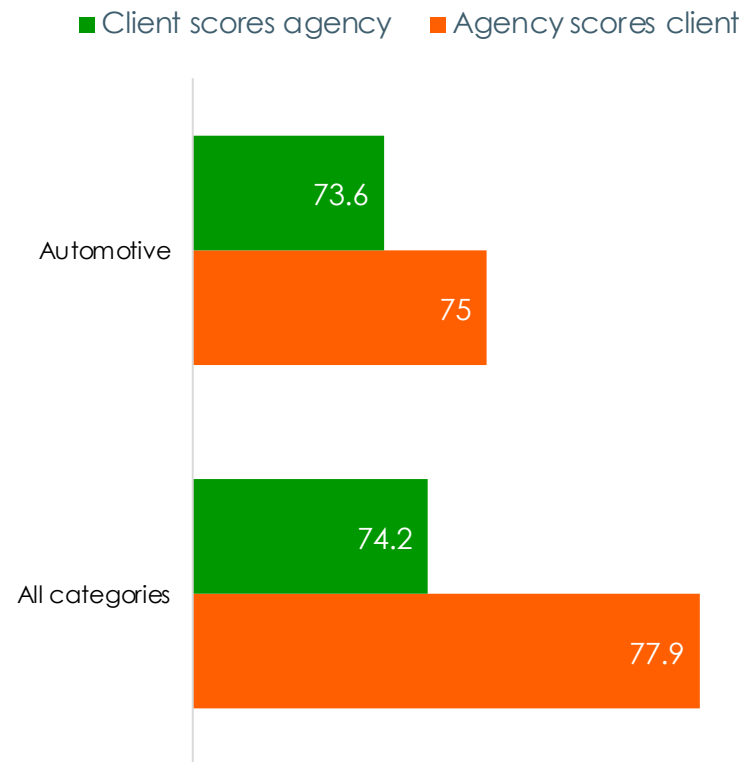
Across all categories and most regions of the world, our data shows that agencies score their marketer clients higher than clients score their agencies when assessing their relationships.

The global average across all categories for marketers scoring their agencies is 74.2, whereas agencies score their clients 77.9.

Generally, we find that businesses in less-regulated categories like non-alcoholic drinks and confectionery tend to have more positive views of their relationships than those in more technical and regulated categories such as automotive, healthcare and finance.

Keep in mind that a perfect relationship should result in the same score for both parties. Few relationships are perfect, however, and in the case of client-agency, many are not equal.

As the graph indicates, when compared with the all-categories averages, there is a significant difference in agency ratings of their automotive clients' performance in the relationship (75), suggesting room for improvement.



Team characteristics – functional disciplines

At Aprais we use two main concepts to identify, compare and improve team characteristics:

- **Functional disciplines:** On-the-job skills, using one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance.
- **Behaviours:** The way in which teams conduct themselves or behave.

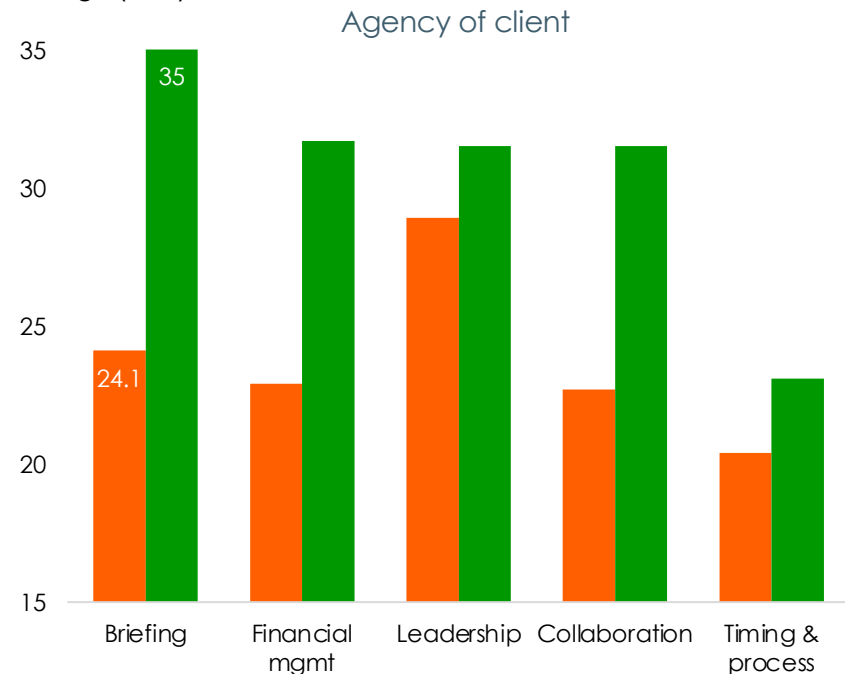
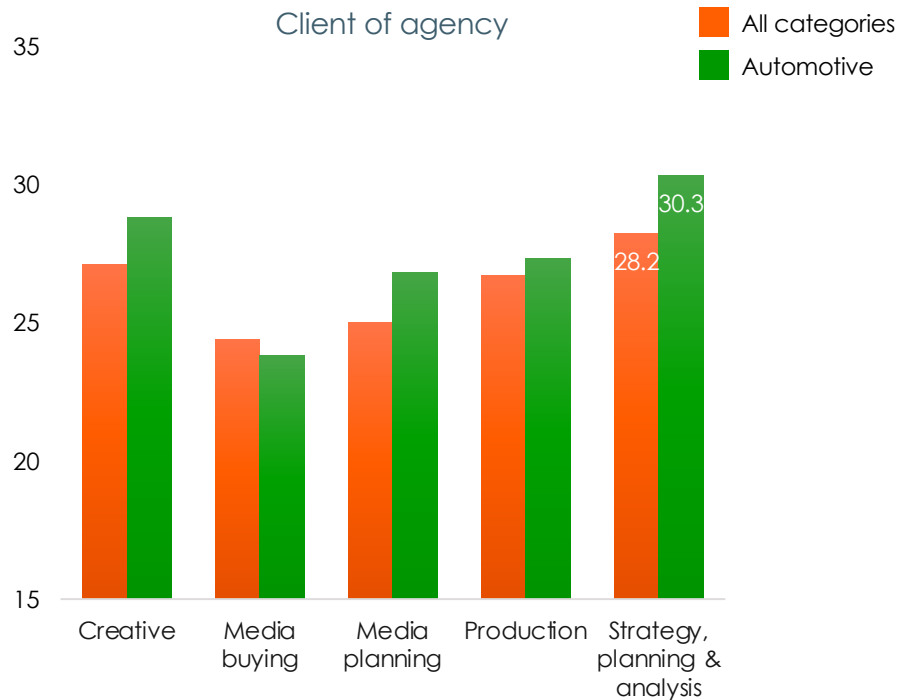
The charts below show the gap in scores between the top 10% and the bottom 10% for a selection of disciplines, and compare the gap in automotive with the all-categories average.

What does this tell us?

The height of the bars indicates the extent of opportunity for poor-performing teams to close the gap on their best-performing rivals.

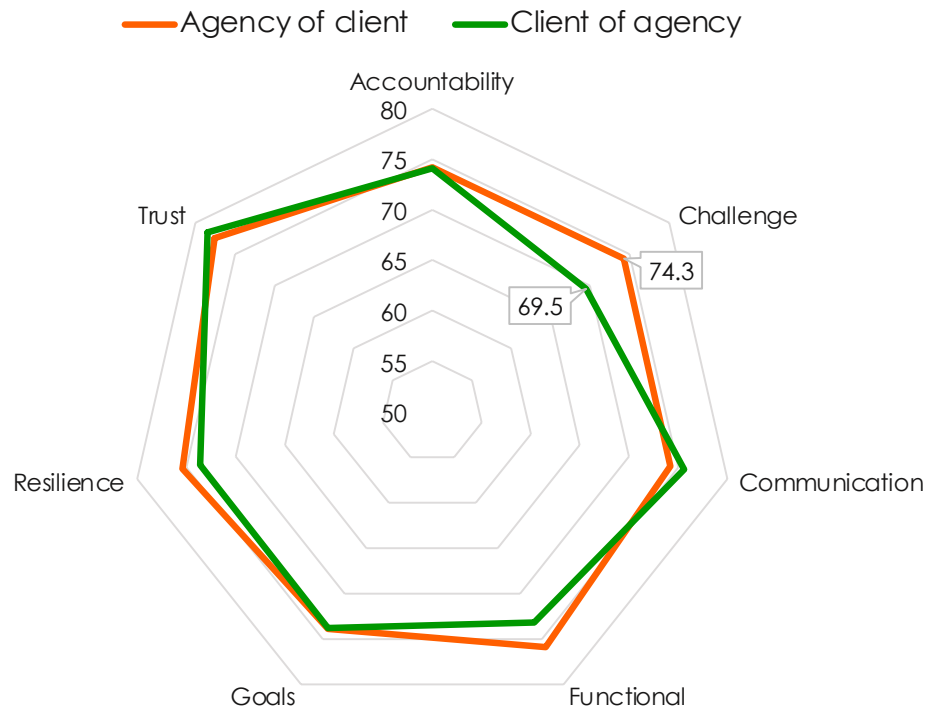
Two observations stand out when comparing teams in this category against others. For agencies, strategy, planning & analysis is a clear differentiator among all categories and even more so for agencies working in auto brands, with a 30.3-point gap between the best and the rest.

For marketers there is room for improvement across a number of disciplines. Most notable is briefing, which shows a 35-point gap for poor performers in the category, far greater than the all-categories average (24.1).



Source: All-categories 26,000 Aprais evaluations.

Team characteristics – behaviours



Accountability – Sets and takes responsibility for actions.

Challenge – Uses initiative to challenge the status quo and does not allow conflict to go unaddressed.

Communication – Regular dialogue to ensure facts are shared in a timely fashion.

Functional – Competence to do the day-to-day work.

Goals – Clear objectives are in place, information is shared, the team is stretched and success measured.

Resilience – Can withstand and bounce back from a crisis.

Trust – The team is trusted to deliver and behaves with integrity.

Through rigorous analysis of our extensive database, we have defined seven behaviours that have the greatest influence on team performance¹.

This chart compares the behaviours of each team in the automotive category.

Typically, agencies score their clients higher, but take note of where there are greater or lesser differences between the two.

Trust is often the highest-scoring behaviour, underscoring its importance to all relationships.

In the auto category, perceptions of each others' behaviours are well aligned, with the exception of challenge.

This suggests that agencies need to show greater courage in speaking out.

¹ Reports: Seven behaviours that set the best teams apart from the rest.

In summary

The marketing category in which a client operates significantly affects the client-agency team relationship.

In terms of the functional disciplines, automotive marketers have clear opportunities to improve, particularly in the area of briefing.

Agencies need to adopt a more challenging stance in the relationship, as indicated by the comparative gap in perception of this behaviour by each party.

The automotive category offers exciting possibilities; it can also pose challenges to client-agency team relationships. By understanding and addressing these factors, both parties can cultivate a strong and productive partnership that effectively navigates the unique dynamics of the industry.

“The agency is always requesting information to understand the industry, market and competitors, taking into account insights from research and buyers’ behaviours.”

Automotive marketer

Building stronger teams

How agencies can do better

1. Become a subject-matter expert in the category. In a world of generalisation, specific industry knowledge is valued.
2. Know the criteria that won you the business. Measure and monitor them to ensure you keep up with the client's expectations.
3. Make sure the team is aware of the criteria for good performance and is challenged to deliver on them.
4. Be enthusiastic about the client's business. People who are interested and engaged in a brand or category are likely to deliver better work.
5. Acknowledge and respect client members at all levels. Problems at a junior level can become senior headaches.
6. Be courageous and transparent. If you disagree, say so. All good relationships are built on trust.
7. Tackle issues before they become problems. Regular and frequent client-agency evaluations provide an objective platform for open dialogue.
8. Never be complacent. Think of all the other agencies who would love your client.
9. Have a 'can do' attitude. But if you say 'yes' be sure to deliver. If you deliver on your promises, the client is more likely to accept those times when you have to say you 'cannot'.
10. Good work is the best insurance. Effective solutions seal partnerships and provide great momentum and stickiness in a relationship.

How marketers can do better

1. Set mutually agreed, realistic and quantifiable objectives.
2. Instigate a regular 360° review of progress against these objectives.
3. Push for directness, trust and chemistry between the agency and client teams.
4. Make sure there are equally talented people on both sides who are motivated by shared incentives and principles.
5. Demand ongoing, transparent feedback in both directions.
6. Always respond to work with the positive first. Get cycles of positivity going, then turn the conversation to more critical feedback.
7. Empathise with their pressures. Care about the issues and celebrate their achievements. Forgive them their foibles and try to see things from their point of view.
8. Give agencies the opportunity to get under the skin of your business. Allow them to immerse themselves in every aspect of your operation. Enable them to understand your culture and openly share information and intelligence with them.
9. Create an atmosphere of excellence. Demand excellence. Inspire excellence. Recognise excellence and reward it.
10. Encourage your agencies to work together. Relationships that are better orchestrated can deliver substantially better performance.

Other reports

This report is one of a series focusing on how team relationships are affected by marketing category.

The first report introduces the topic.

The other reports each focus on an individual category and cover the behaviours and disciplines that set the best teams apart from the rest in that category.

1. Automotive
2. Banking & insurance
3. Confectionery
4. Food
5. Healthcare
6. Drinks (non-alcoholic)
7. Personal care
8. Petcare
9. Retail
10. Telecoms
11. Wine, beer & spirits

Download the report for your category [here](#).

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Understanding business relationships in the petcare category

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Understanding business relationships in the automotive category

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Understanding business relationships in the healthcare category

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Understanding business relationships in the retail category

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Understanding business relationships in the banking and insurance category

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Understanding business relationships in the (non-alcoholic) drinks category

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Understanding business relationships in the telecoms category

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Understanding business relationships in the confectionery category

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Understanding business relationships in the personal care category

2023



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Understanding business relationships in the wine, beer and spirits category

2023



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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 26,000 evaluations, with multiple clients in over 70 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 us

Request a free consultation for your organisation: aprais@aprais.com

Learn more: www.aprais.com

Don't miss out on the latest information about building stronger relationships.

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