

# How to be a Strategic Partner



Alliance of  
Independent  
Agencies

®



# Agenda

## **Partnership**

What is it, why it really matters

Foundations of partnership: expert view

Your partnership plan

## **Meeting a new client**

What you need to know

How get to grips with a project quickly

## **What's the problem, really?**

Need to reframe the client brief

Three collaborative methods

# Partnership: definition

Your are not just seen as a supplier

When there is *literally* shared risk and enterprise

Or *perceived* shared risk and enterprise

## Breakout

Think about clients at your agency.

Do you have *partnership* with some of your clients

What are the foundations of it?

# CEO's advice to “younger self”



Rania Robinson, Graham Kemp, Mike Walsh, Richard Pinder, Ian Milner, Dame Cilla Snowball

# Most important insight: it's emotional

When you are in danger of losing a client,  
practical things are rarely the deep cause.  
Though they may be the given reasons

They feel that you are not listening or  
that you don't care or  
don't understand their pressures

Rania Robinson



# It's emotional

If the client thinks you care they will  
forgive cockups and give you  
another chance.

Relationships can save a client

*Rania Robinson*



# Empathy & trust

Think like your client is thinking.

Find out what business problem you are trying to solve

It may be that the client is asking for a new website when that is exactly what their business has no need of right now, even if the agency might like the fee for doing it.

Respect and partnership will come from acting like it's your money. When you come to sell something to the client, they will respect your recommendation all the more, if you are not trying to sell something when it's not needed.

*Richard Pinder*

# Even friendship

Make friends with your clients. This does not mean buy friendship. Dinner/ Theatre tickets are only for when it's something you both might really like to do and are not about business, so don't confuse this with entertainment.

*But who buys from anyone they don't like?* Make friends so that they are happy to see you and trust you. Friends rely on each other and tell each other things that matter. It's perfectly possible to be friendly with a client without ever sharing a meal.

*Richard Pinder*



# Paranoia

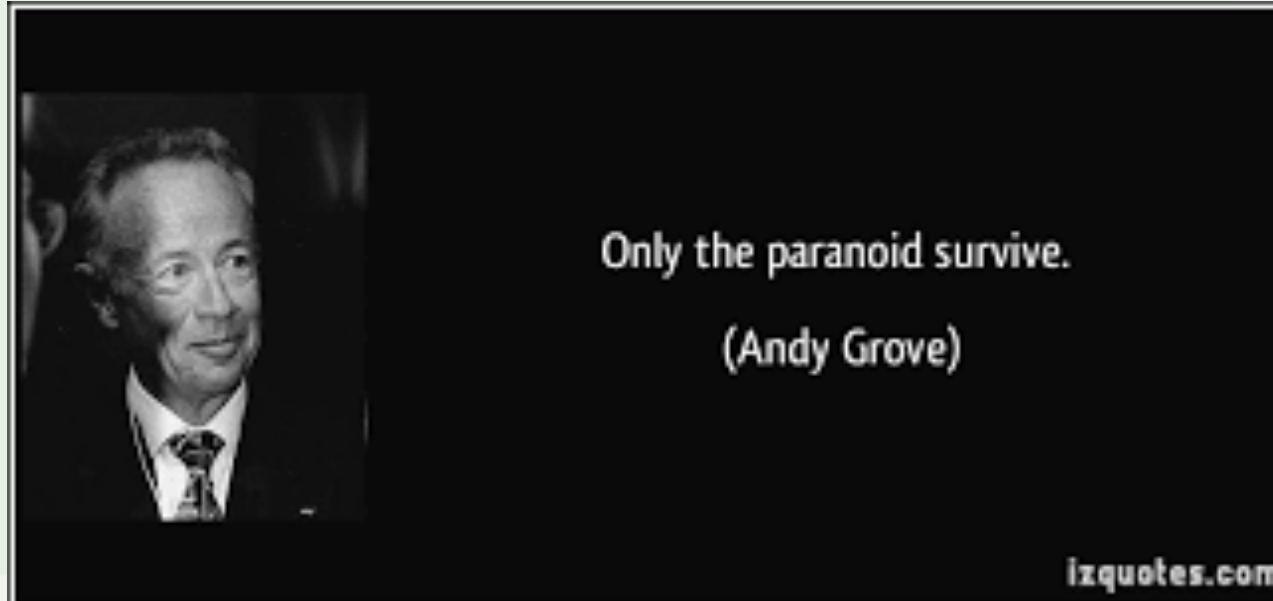
All your clients have the option to go elsewhere

You should assume they they are being approached

So try to anticipate their challenges

If you are off the pace (and somebody else is not) clients notice

*Rania Robinson*



# Well founded confidence

Try to be really good at something.

I wish I had concentrated earlier on trying to be world class in something....rather than some kind of marketing 'decathlete'.

Voice coaching and confidence; Success in our business is some kind of combination of confidence and influence...the more you realise and understand this, the more you can harness your natural strengths and the more you can win the tight squeezes

*Ian Milner*



# Dame Cilla Snowball

**Empathy**

X

**Delivery**

=

Good career for you

Profitable long term relationships



# 90 day plan

## Breakouts

Name four habits that you are going to develop/persist with  
(i.e. things that you will regularly do)  
to build client partnership

# Cold shower from Mike Walsh.

Account people today have become lazy and devalued their role, becoming no more than a project manager.

A go between, carrying messages between the client and agency, often literal instructions

Distant from the clients business rather than immersing themselves in it. *in a screen relationship rather than a real personal one*

People who sort out logistics rather than solve business problems



# Warning for Digital Natives

Emails/messages are not necessarily communication

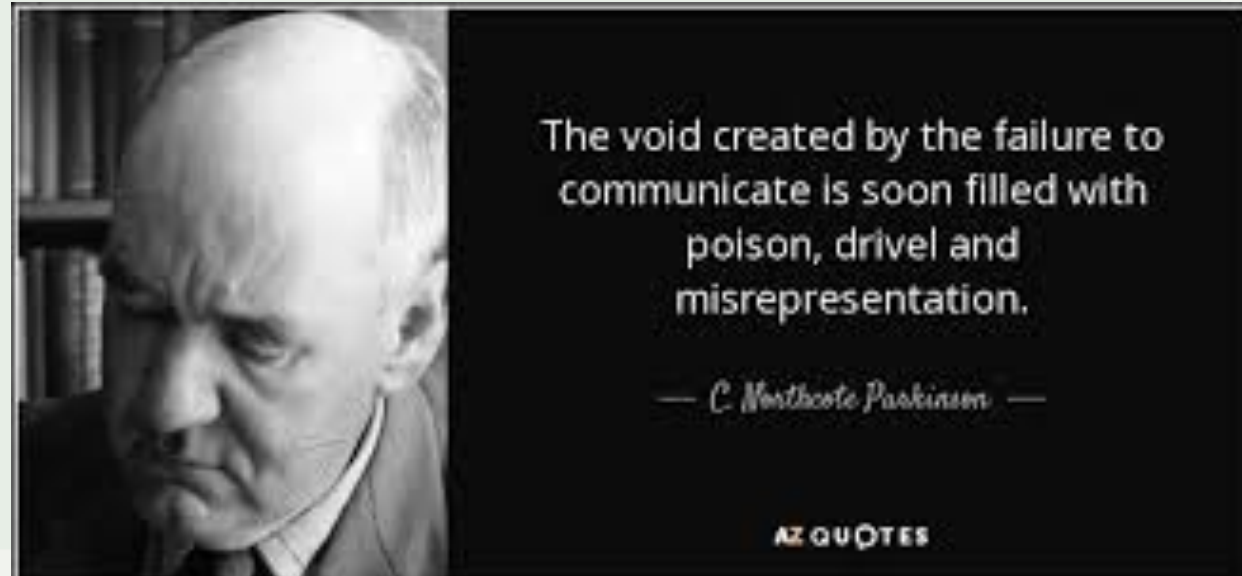
Because it is easy to do it doesn't show that you care

If there is a problem an email may be the worst thing you can do - because you cannot have dialogue or communicate tone

People want and need to hear voices and see faces.

This is basic, innate and unchanging

*Rania Robinson*



# Benefits can be huge

## To you

You will get promoted faster if clients value & trust you

You may avoid losing your job

You may build relationships that help you to start your own business

## To your agency

It will be entrusted with more work

Mostly likely be more profitable (less pitching/more recommendation)

Retain clients longer



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## **New client**

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# Meeting a client for the first time- What do you need to know?

(apart from read the brief if there is one)

# What is going on in your client's world ?

- 1) How is the business doing?
- 2) How does the client make money?  
Eg – from the product or the finance



# Sources

- Annual company report
- Share price and trends
- Analysts reports
- Market share data-eg Nielsen
- Ft.com (subs)
- Economist.com (subs)

# Where do we fit in?

# Where do we fit in to the client's picture ?

## **Business strategy**

A plan for achieving the required level of revenue and controlling costs in order to reach profit targets and the deployment of resources to do so.

## **Brand strategy**

A plan for occupying a position in the minds of the consumers.

## **Marketing strategy**

A plan that details the effective and efficient balance of product, price, placement, promotion... and, increasingly, service delivery.

## **Communications strategy**

A plan that outlines what needs to be communicated in order to achieve the brand and marketing strategy.

## **Or an element of the communications strategy**



# How does our key client sponsor(s) fit in?

# Sources:

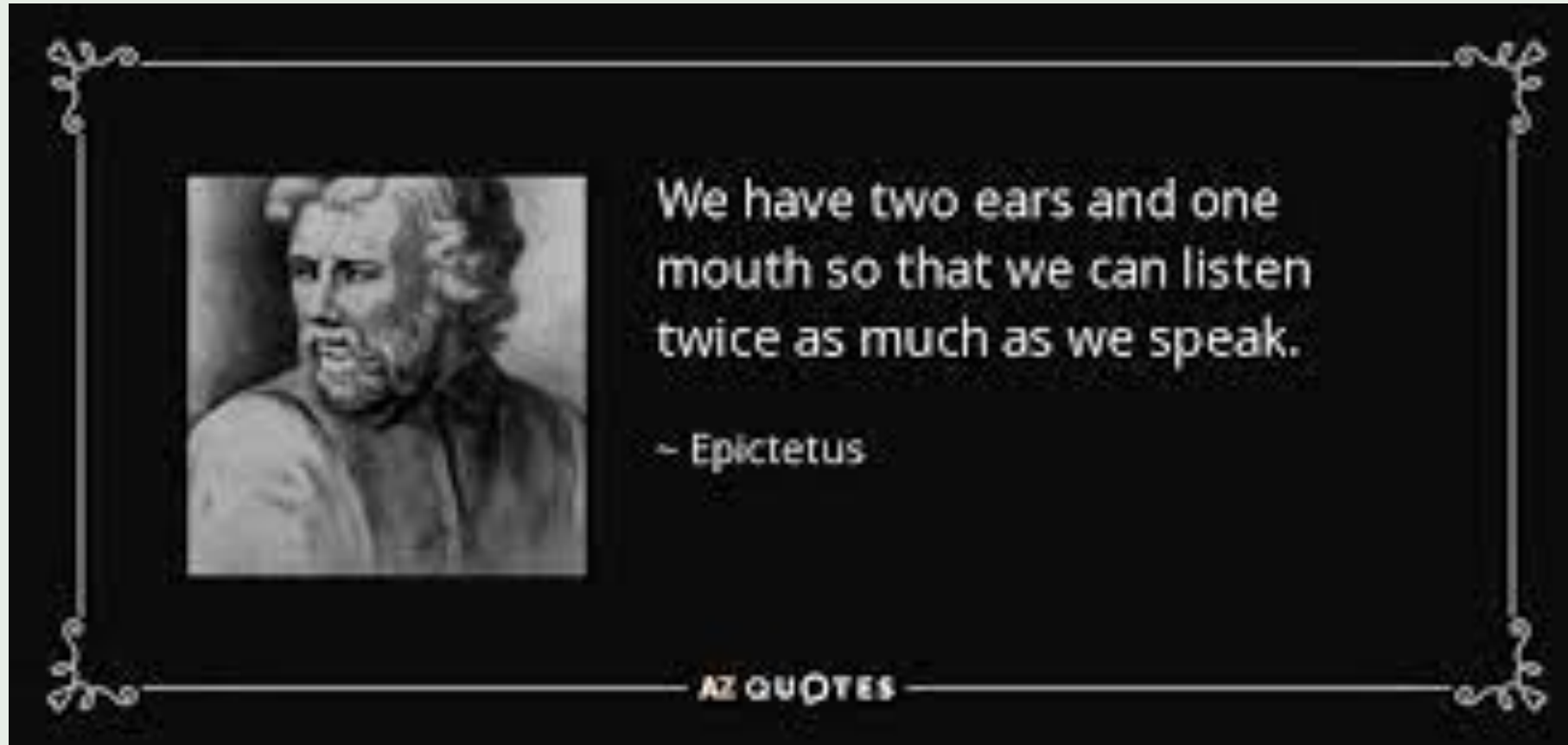
## **Client organ-ogram available**

- Who does this person report to?
- Will someone else approve/sign off expenditure?

## **Find the client on LinkedIn**

- Marketing/customer service/IT/general management role?
- Will someone else approve/sign off expenditure?
- What is their background?

# Top tip for first meeting



Your pre-research arms you with conversational openings about *your* client

# Getting to grips with a project quickly

1. Uncover the history of the client org/brand
2. Deconstruct the brand leader
3. Deconstruct the challenger/change maker (s)
4. What do people search for (and is it changing) ?
5. What do the category influencers say ?

# 1) Uncover the history of the client org/brand

Pitches often come with a message :  
“We need change”



# How much change, really ?

1. The history of the brand or company
2. How the brand or company has changed?
3. Key competitors and key competitor moves
4. Is this market being disrupted? How?
5. Profile of leadership and changes in key personnel

# Big appetite for change at Tesco ?

**How much do you feel you want to or are able to depart from the norms of Tesco coms to get noticed**

“Tone of voice and overarching position on helpfulness and serving should not change, nor should the essence of our current creative vehicle for Reputation ‘Always helping’ (which is the strategic territory) but I am happy to then leave the rest open to interpretation.”

**Would Tesco be open to seeing ideas with completely new partnerships? Brand partnerships (eg other charitable causes like WWF/CRUK) or media partnerships?** I’m open to both but would like one of the ideas to focus only on our existing partnerships please.

## 2) Deconstruct the brand leader

Leaders spend the most on research

Best satisfy consumers practical and emotional needs

Tells you what table stakes are

Do we need:

- Same benefit done differently?
- A different benefit



### 3) Deconstruct the change makers

Changer makers are alert to emerging trends and disruption.

Such as:-

- New/emerging target audience (s)
- Radically lower costs allowing dramatically different prices
- New routes to market
- Shift in culture due to demography or technology

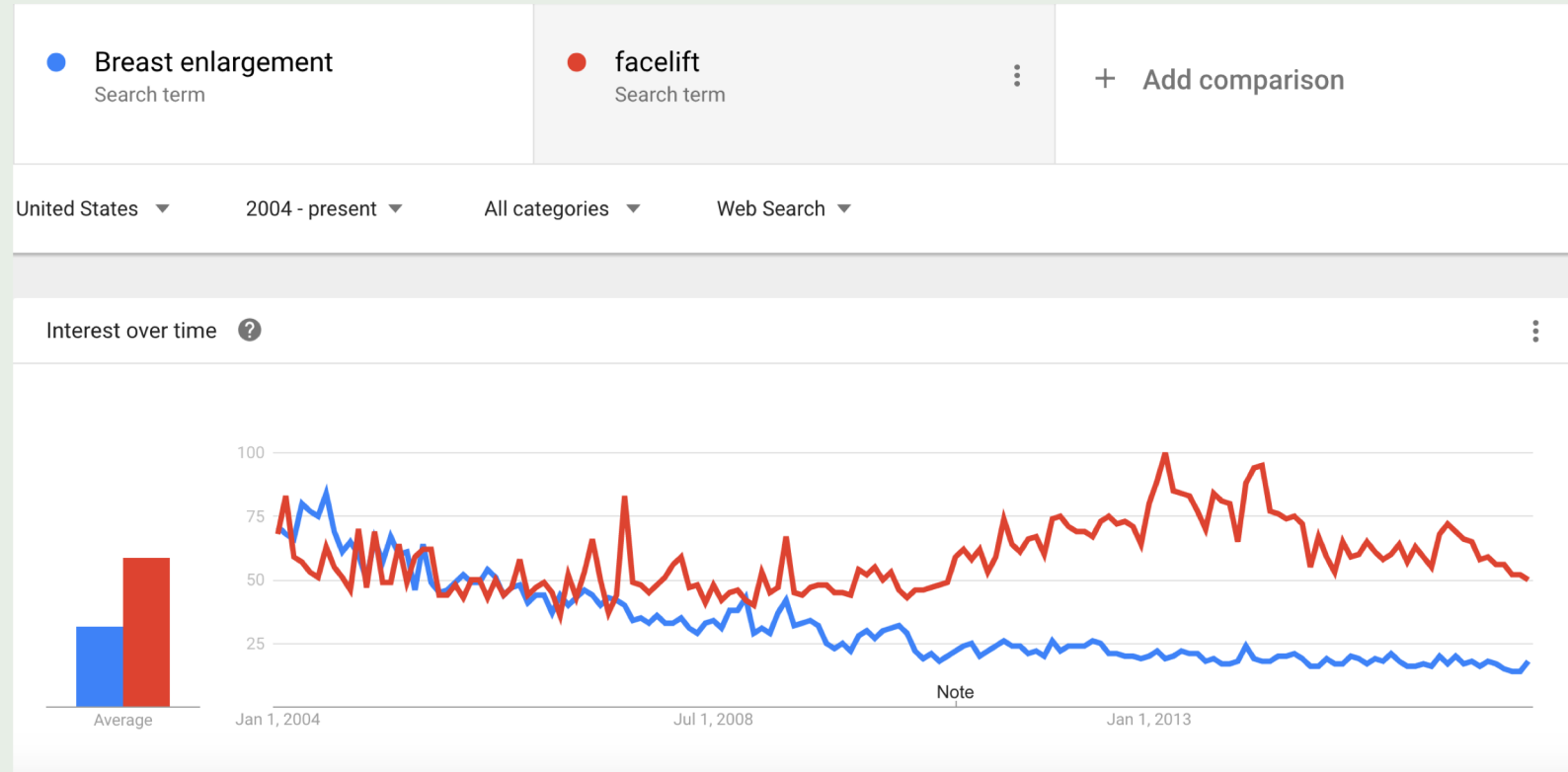


# 4) What do people search for ?

Compare key search terms  
Over different time periods  
By different geographies

Questions:

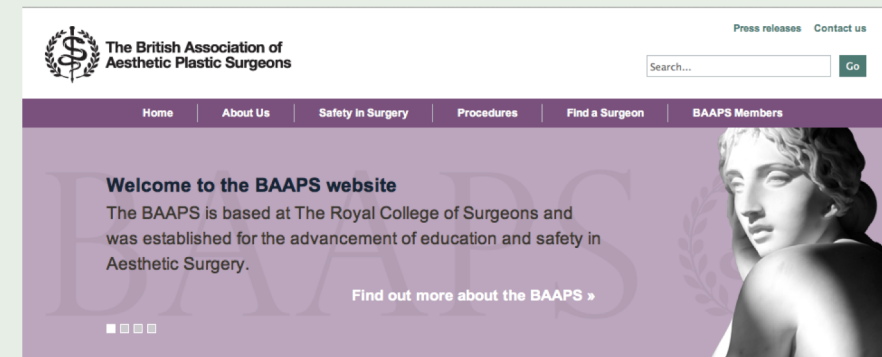
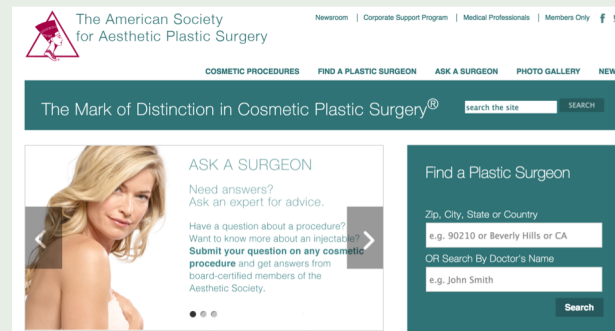
- Where is the market volume
- Needs v brands
- Trends over time
- Projected future trends



# 5) What do the category influencers say?

Places to look

- a) Trade associations UK
- b) Trade associations USA
- c) Frugal innovation: emerging markets
- d) Vloggers, Bloggers, Instagrammers, journalists and academics

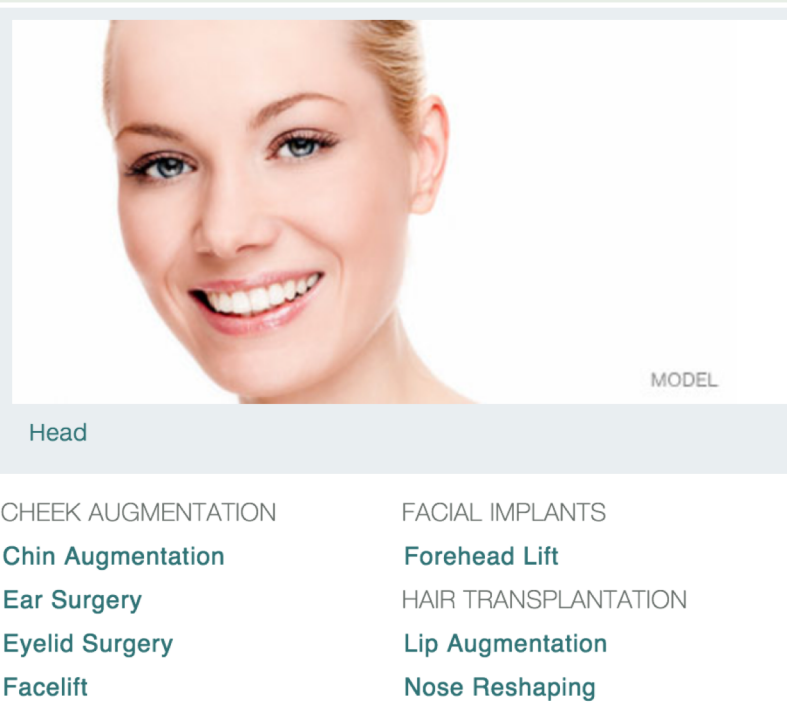


# UK and US trade associations

(great sources of info)

## Celebrity guinea pigs

With the new trend in A-list celebrities openly confessing to the odd nip or tuck, it's patients are feeling encouraged by their positive admissions and attractive results.



# Getting to grips with a project, quickly

## Checklist

1. History of the org/brand
2. Analyze the leader(s)
3. Analyze the challenger(s)
4. What do people search for ?
5. What do category influencers say?

## Top tip

Your agency competitors can do all online research & analyze competition, easily.

Two ways to be different

- 1) Live in person experience
- 2) Think laterally-diverse inspirations

# Rania's point – Live experience

- Mystery Shop
- Interview service people
- Work there !
- Talk to customers
- Talk to rejecters
- Talk to lapsers



# Police recruitment brief

“We asked serving officers to interview us for the job.  
We failed the interviews.

It was this chastening experience  
that gave us our insight and  
idea”



# Only comes from experience

“Who could not respect someone who attends the scene of a cot death or treats a suspected rapist as innocent until proven otherwise

Make 999 out of every 1000 people realise they couldn't be a Police Officer, but respect like hell the one who could.”

**Idea : I couldn't. Could you?**

# Think laterally-diverse inspirations

## Breakout

What is out category, really ?

Not just other multiple grocers

But:-

Sustainable packaging, sustainability practices and communication about it

# Rabbit holes..



- Q best brands for sustainable |
- Q best brands for sustainable - Google Search
- Q best brands for sustainable **fashion**
- Q best brands for sustainable **palm oil**
- Q best brands sustainable
- Q best sustainable **clothing** brands for **basics**
- Q **what are the** best sustainable **clothing** brands
- Q **which** brands are sustainable **fashion**
- Q **what is the most** sustainable **fashion** brand



- Q removing plastic |
- Q removing plastic - Google Search
- Q removing plastic **from the ocean**



- Q sustainable packaging |
- Q sustainable packaging - Google Search
- Q sustainable packaging **uk**
- Q sustainable packaging **materials**
- Q sustainable packa
- Q sustainable packaging **companies**
- Q sustainable packaging **ideas**
- Q sustainable packaging **coalition**
- Q sustainable packaging **design**
- Q sustainable packaging **solutions**
- Q sustainable packaging **for food**

# Where do you see the effects of plastics in our world?



Tesco's expected world – shops/homes  
Unexpected world-Tesco and the seas



## **Breakout:**

Sustainable packaging, sustainability practices” and communication about it

Task:

Run down google rabbit holes and find something that you think Tesco can learn from

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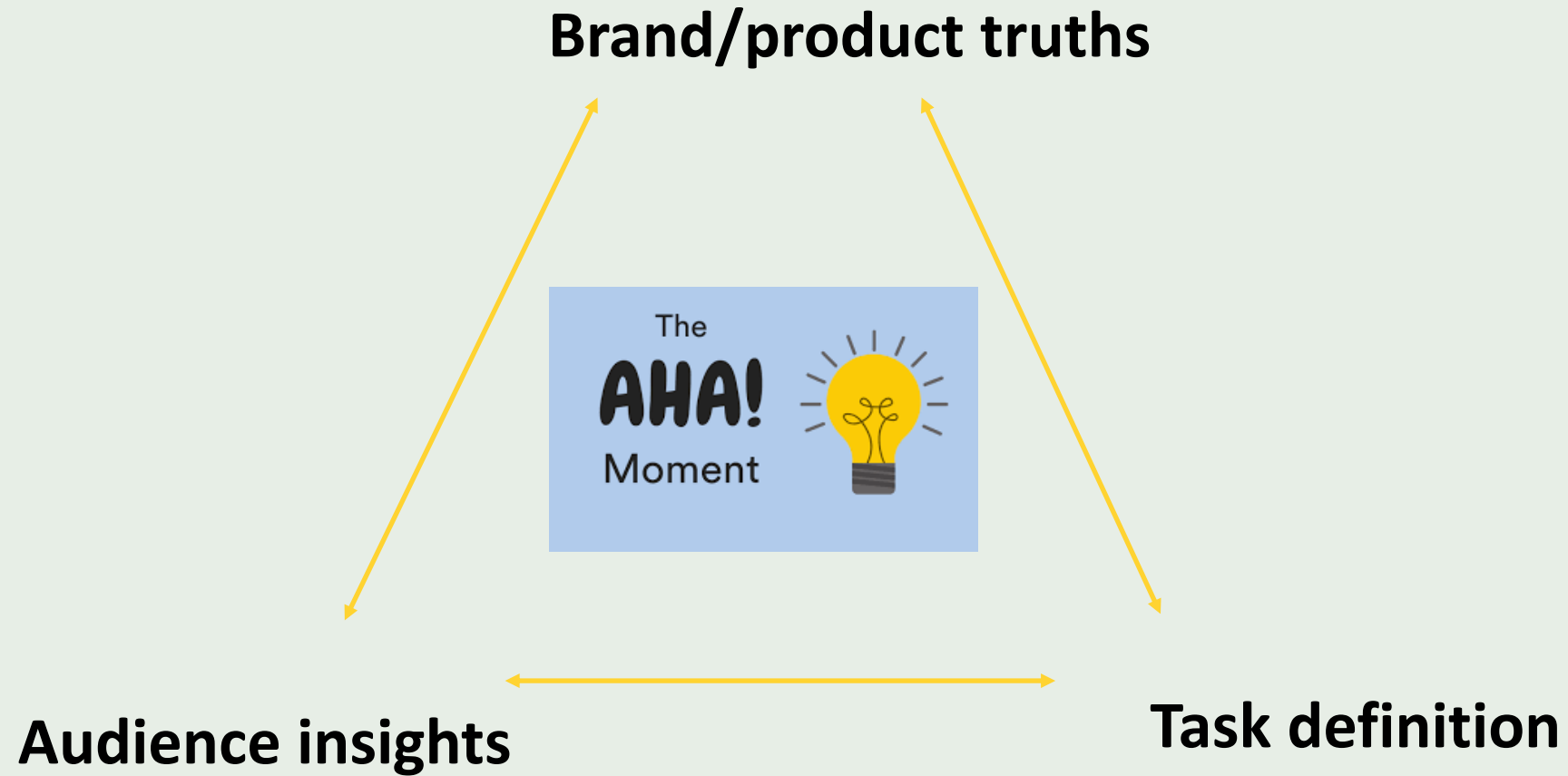
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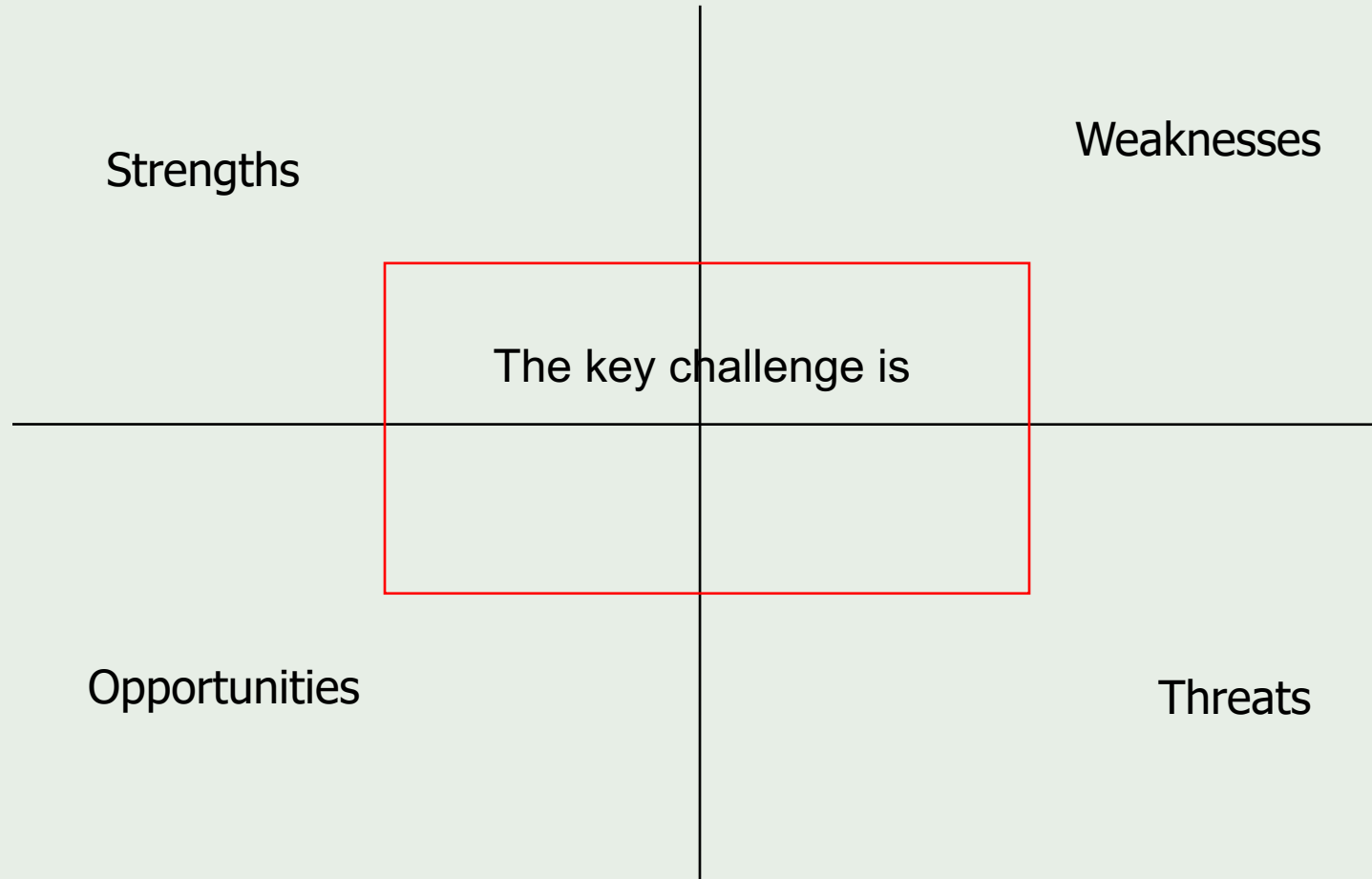
## **Do you need to redefine/reframe the brief ?**

Three collaborative methods:-

Certainly do these with your team at the start

Ideally do these with your client

## SWOT



Tip on SWOT: do at the end. Good ones are short.

# S

## STRENGTHS

- Things your company does well
- Qualities that separate you from your competitors
- Internal resources such as skilled, knowledgeable staff
- Tangible assets such as intellectual property, capital, proprietary technologies etc.

# W

## WEAKNESSES

- Things your company lacks
- Things your competitors do better than you
- Resource limitations
- Unclear unique selling proposition

# O

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Underserved markets for specific products
- Few competitors in your area
- Emerging need for your products or services
- Press/media coverage of your company

# T

## THREATS

- Emerging competitors
- Changing regulatory environment
- Negative press/media coverage
- Changing customer attitudes toward your company

# Five-Whys

A flexible laddering technique. Such as:

- Brand x is growing (WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY).
- Brand y is launching a new product (WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY).
- The market is commoditized (WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY).
- Consumers are stuck in existing habits (WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY).
- We are not getting credit for our actions (WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY/WHY)

What are the key issues on your project ?

# Five-WHYs

**Market Fact:** spirits consumption is low in Sweden relative to other European countries

1. **Why?** Because spirits prices in Sweden are extremely high
2. **Why?** Because State taxes imposed on spirits are high
3. **Why?** Because the State was keen to reduce spirits consumption in Sweden
4. **Why?** Because there is a historical legacy of alcohol abuse
5. **Why?** people tended to either drink very hard or abstain or both

## **Insight:**

Deep down in the national psyche there is a feeling that spirits consumption is “sinful” and that consumers need “social permission” to drink spirits

# Method: barriers

- All goals are pursued in a context.
- Think of these as **barriers**
- Mental judo-use the barrier to sharpen up or even redefine the role for communications



# What sorts of barriers?

## External

- Competition-how heavy and nature of
- Consumer-such as entrenched behaviours/beliefs
- Environment- media interest and regulation
- Brand-such as how you are positioned in people's minds

## Internal

- Resources- such as spend/infrastructure/innovation
- Culture- such as management beliefs

# Competitive norm barrier

## Market usurped by new entrants

“Price comparison websites had become the self proclaimed customer champions by dramatically simplifying the process of comparing policies on *price*”

## Problem redefined

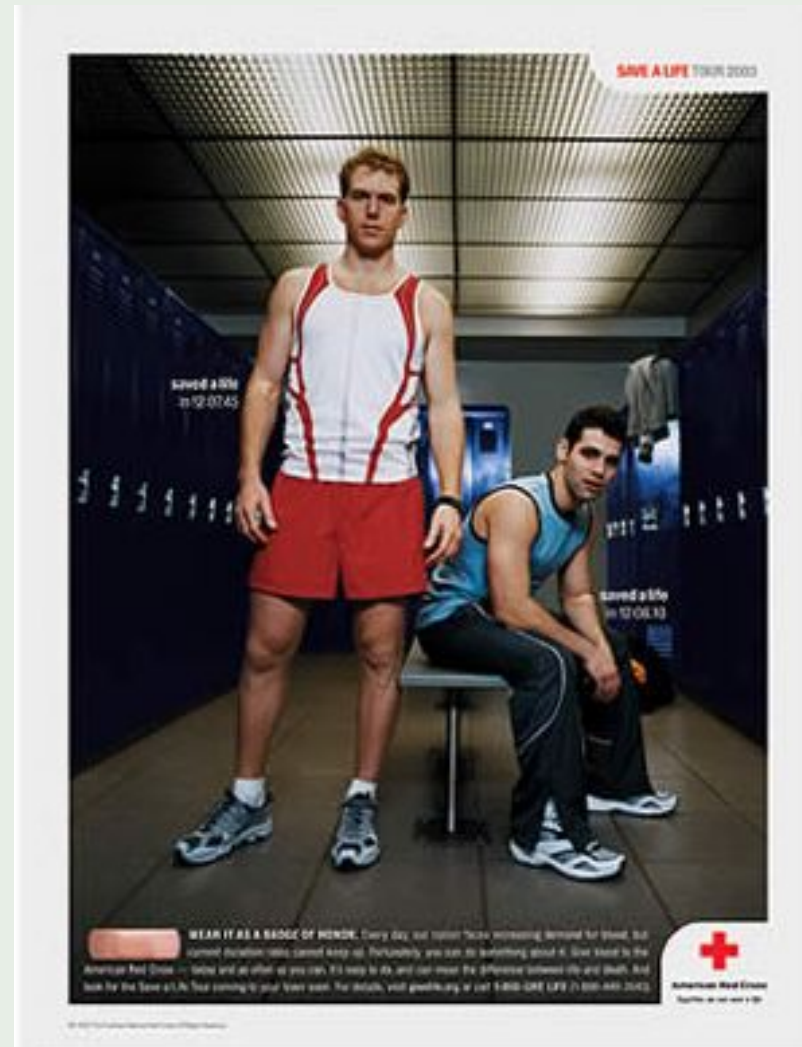
Show how Direct Line's service is valued by customers

Dramatise its value : you use it when most in need

Source: APG Grand Prix 2015



# Human inertia barrier



# What stops you giving blood ?



Who can make it possible for you to take time ?

# Donations up 26% in RSA



Role for communication:

Motivate HR directors in big companies to give staff an hour off work to give blood

# Women and barriers to exercise

Not being fit enough    Showing their body    Being seen in Lycra    It's too far away  
It's too expensive    Not knowing the rules    Having a red face    Being sweaty  
Wearing sports clothing    Being the worst one there    Not appearing feminine  
Not being competitive enough    I can't get there    Bringing the wrong equipment  
Family should be more important    Not being good enough    Holding back the group  
Changing in front of others    Wearing tight clothing    Studying should take priority  
Need childcare    Time with friends should be more important    Exercise isn't cool  
Being the only new person    Wearing the wrong clothing/kit    Not looking 'made up'  
Housework takes priority    Developing too many muscles    Being 'too' good  
Body parts wobbling when exercising    Being seen as too competitive    Looking silly

## Unifying barrier

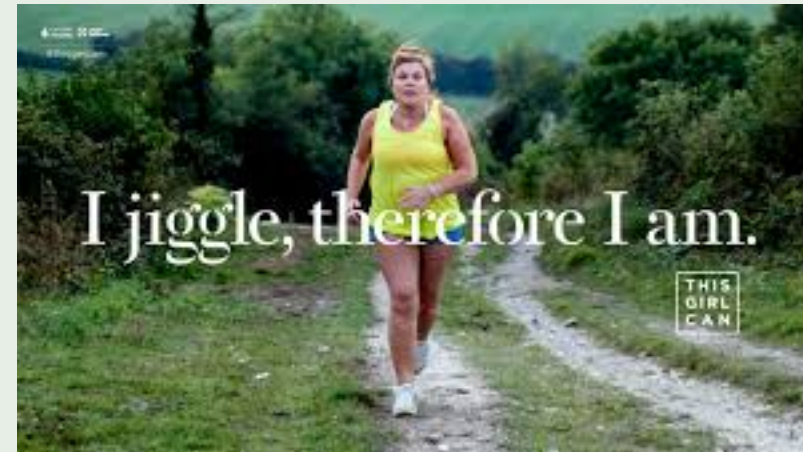
“ The fear of judgement.  
Fear was stopping women from  
exercising”

Source: APG grand prix 2017

# This girl can

Role for coms:

Liberate women from  
the self judgements that  
hold them back.



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# Breakouts

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## Barriers

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“we rank behind major competitors against ‘TRUST’ - the second biggest driver of net promoter score (*see appendix*).

Moreover, though we have seen some growth YOY, other competitor brands are ahead, even though our initiatives are market leading and long established.

Our hypothesis is that their gains are driven through national ATL communications and as we move out of crisis mode and people start to look up and beyond their immediate personal needs, we need to shine a light on our many little helps.”

## **Top tip**

### **Run a workshop with your client**

Make sure you agree on what the problem really is.

It may just be the key insight that unlocks the brief

1. 5-Whys
2. Barriers
3. SWOT

# Contacts

[julians@joinedupcompany.com](mailto:julians@joinedupcompany.com)

Blog: [www.joinedupthink.com](http://www.joinedupthink.com)

