



## A Practical Guide to Working Direct-to-Client The Report

*We understand that our industry is becoming ever more competitive and that APA members are always looking for new ways to find work. One route to new work that has potential for APA members is to work with clients direct.*

*To give our members an insight into the process, earlier this week we held a seminar featuring experts speaking about the various aspects of the best methods behind, and what is involved when working direct to client (DTC.)*

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### Managing the Client - Bertie Miller

Bertie Miller is founder and partner of Watermill London, has a wealth of experience working in the 'traditional' model of advertising production but, through Watermill, now focuses on a hybrid method.

One of the most important things to keep in mind when working DTC is identifying the type of client that would benefit from working with you. You're not going to land an entire account but there may be smaller projects in a client's marketing department that big TV departments might not be looking for.

For example, Watermill identified that clients best suited to working directly with them tended to be either entrepreneur led or online companies, companies that had a great deal of digital expertise or didn't use agencies but could use help with TV or OOH projects. Companies that needed some advertising in the now.

Don't be afraid to step out of your traditional areas of expertise in producing.

You have to be prepared to take on more roles than an average production. Working DTC is actually all about using the skills you already have as a Producer in a different way, assembling a team from a different perspective, as an Architect rather than a contracted supplier.

It's important to realise that working DTC brings a completely new relationship; a client wants their product noticed, so it's about Impact and Relevance, not lenses and locations.

Without Impact, no one is going to notice the advertising. Now more than ever products are being marketed in the same ways. And without relevance, you've lost your audience.

Clarity and communication is key. Strategic thinking, presenting the reasoning, discussing it at length with the client and later agreeing the route the advertising should take, is what ultimately leads to winning the work.

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### How to Get The Work - Shaun Varga

Shaun Varga, new business consultant and founder of three successful agencies, joined us to speak specifically about how members can **get** the work from clients, and do so effectively.

Begin by addressing the big questions. Primarily that means identifying who your customers are, who they should be in the future, and what value you provide them with.

Many production companies spend too much time talking about themselves, and not enough time thinking about the needs of the market. It is important to be clear about what kind of client will want/need to engage with any production company direct, and then make it easy for them to choose you specifically.

Don't state the obvious, but instead, focus on how you differentiate from your peers and how you're different from the rest of the market. Specifically, how you can be better than agencies, in-house departments and even other production companies at achieving the clients objectives.

Shaun outlined a seven stage model to create a compelling new-business story.

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## Key Aspects of Agency Production - Tim Page & Jody Allison

Tim Page and Jody Allison, both former Agency Head's of Production, are now running Heads Up Production, an independent production partner.

Having many years experience from the agency side of the industry, Tim & Jody highlighted the importance of a production company assigning someone in the Agency Producer role when working DTC. This person operates as a hybrid of a project manager, account person and traditional producer.

Assigning this role is important considering this can be a completely new business model for some and without an agency in the middle there is no filter, no sounding board and no backstop. It can't be under estimated the time needed to ensure the Client is reassured and informed at every stage.

Budgeting a full service project is a key where agency expertise can be invaluable. The usual production company costs take place but additions such as post-production, audio post, insurance and especially usages (ie. music rights, artists etc.) are critical aspects that need to be taken into consideration. Knowing the right questions to ask at an early stage, can ensure that potential costly oversights are avoided.

Being aware of a client's needs and how to fulfil them is critical. A producer should be able to take the client "on the journey" throughout the production process so they feel the project is entirely under control. This is particularly the case when on the shoot as the client can concentrate on the overall advertising communication of what's being filmed. Going into a shoot with a lack of information a client can easily feel like something is out of control and might affect their advertising or their budget - this is exactly what you want to avoid. As Bertie mentioned, clarity and communication is key.

Don't underestimate post-production. An agency producer that has the client's trust will set the scene for what the client should expect. Clients should be in constant communication about the state of the edit to avoid any disappointments. We have all worked with Client's that have been underwhelmed by a first edit. This isn't just a 300k production, it could potentially be a £2.5m media issue for the client!

A Production Company, without doubt, do some of the stuff an Agency Producer does, but you should ask yourself if you can afford the time to co-ordinate the whole project, from beginning to end along with the running of the production and your business overall. And for a relatively small cost compared with a potential oversight or mistake, surely its worth having another person on the bench – especially if the job isn't straight forward after all.

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## Key Aspects of Business Affairs - Amanda Levett

Amanda Levett from Royle Productions shared her insights about what's involved with Business Affairs. Following 13 years as Head of TV Admin at BBH, Amanda joined Royle Productions partnering with brands, agencies and production companies to make commercials and content.

The main aspect of business affairs is to be support for the agency producer with expertise in key areas such as: artists & usage, music licensing, permissions & clearances, regulation, production risks, insurance & indemnities and all the production & licensing agreements.

### Talent

It's important that when putting the budget together you look at the creative requirements of the production. A good way to do this is by putting together a questionnaire for the client, asking them to think broadly about their commercial as to how they'll be using that talent. This will help you understand every aspect of what they require from the artist/talent and then using this information to put forward a casting use summary, basing the fee on the usage that's required and the talent that's required from them. This should then be sent to the casting director before the casting process has begun.

### Music

Watch out for featured music, it is vital you have a signed licensing agreement before the shoot takes place or you could end up having a very big problem. If you have footage of the people in the ad reacting or dancing to the music and the artist later pulls that music, that footage essentially becomes useless resulting in what can potentially be a very large insurance claim.

### Permissions & Clearances

With branded props, a brand is far more likely to let you use their product if the usage is aligned with their values. For example, if you're featuring a car in a commercial and it's shown broken down, permission will be much more difficult than if you featured a family in the car with values that the brand portrays in their own advertising.

Business Affairs is almost an invisible role, until something goes wrong! They are experts in envisaging, and avoiding, potential pitfalls before production has even begun - potentially saving you and the client costly insurance claims.

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## A New Route to & for Clients - Jon William & Lins Karnes

Former Chief Creative Officer of Grey EMEA Jon Williams and former Managing Director of B-Reel Films both now run the new creative platform The Liberty Guild. Often describing themselves as the 'Uber' for ideas or the 'AirBnB' for the space in a creatives head, the Liberty Guild was started based on clients seeing the benefits of decoupled production.

The platform offers decoupled creative, alongside the best creative and strategic communications ideation in the world delivered as a utility that you can just plug in right alongside your production talent.

The Liberty Guild is essentially a platform that connects clients with the best creatives and strategists in the world in a tightly curated way. All are CCO and ECD level, and guided by a heavyweight strategist.

They can either bring you pipeline with: three way pitches on pre-vetted ideas, no joining fee & no monthly fee – even contributing towards your bidding costs and transparency of budgets, and timings with no phantom projects.

Or they can help you build your own pipeline which can help with; prospect identification, client interface & commercial negotiation, 'Agency lite' response and skillset, supercharge & differentiate your offer, easier, cheaper and better than building your own and you retain the relationship as well as produce the work.

It's a five-week process from the agreed platform brief to final presentation. Which includes; strategic development, collaborative ideation, secure qualitative and quantitative research with a cloud of 2 million people, feasibility check and design studio finessing. Then it's yours.

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## Top Takeaways

There were many areas that the speakers touched on during the event but if there's anything you should takeaway it's these key points:

- You should identify who your client is, be clear with them on what your working relationship will be like going forward and don't be afraid to step-out of your comfort zone as the traditional producer.
- Assess the current market and understand what it is that could help make your company stand out. Don't be generic.
- Recognise the importance of the agency producer role when working DTC, the difference of this role compared to the traditional producer and how the agency producer should take care of the client.
- Have an understanding of Business Affairs and how it's main aspect should be to support the agency producer. This is by having the essential agency knowledge including working with artists, music licensing, clearance and regulations.
- Research new and different methods in which you could take on DTC work such as the The Liberty Guild.



Advertising Producers Association