

# ENGINEER'S EXPERTS

Nowshir Engineer, founder and director of **EMDI**, the institute of Media and Communication, speaks to event producer for concept world events, Sue Pengelly, about the need for planners to identify exactly why they are holding an event



**ENGINEER: WHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN EVENT PRODUCER AND A CORPORATE CLIENT?**

**PENGELLY:** As a producer I think that a good brief is pivotal in my success of getting a visual storyboard of what the client wants.

If I don't get that detailed brief then it's a massive waste of everybody's time.

I'm quite passionate about this because I'm noticing the briefs are getting worse.

The person who is giving the brief to the producer or event organiser hasn't been properly briefed themselves or hasn't got the skills to communicate a brief.

Essentially, they are not the right person and they don't have the right information needed for the brief.

I tell them I can't give an accurate solution for an event because I don't have the right information.

A brief has to be templated with a thorough list of questions so I know how many people will be attending, what the event is for, the target audience, who to invite, how old they are and where they are from.

I also need to know the job descriptions they have and what kind of budget there is.

**ENGINEER: WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS CHANGING? IS IT A CASE OF YOU USED TO SPEAK TO THE BOSSES WHEN YOU WERE PRODUCING AN EVENT, BUT NOW YOU SPEAK TO JUNIORS?**

**PENGELLY:** Before I had decision makers who I got the brief off and they had the empowerment to answer my questions — they could say what they wanted.

Now that job has been given to someone else such as the PA or marketing manager and when I start firing loads of questions to concept check what they want, they don't have the answers.

I ask why they are having the event or how many people they expect and they say 'I don't know'.

**ENGINEER: ARE THERE A LOT OF AGENCIES**



**GETTING IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CLIENT?**

**PENGELLY:** Definitely. The advertising arm of any corporate is always left to do the event, so they look for someone who can conceptualise it.

They then claim that they came up with





**OF AN ONUS ON YOU AS THE EVENT MANAGER TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS RATHER THAN THE CLIENT BEING ABLE TO GIVE YOU A GOOD BRIEF?**

**PENGELLY:** Yes absolutely, but I am asking the right questions. It comes back to the person giving the brief not knowing the answers and the fact they are not empowered to make decisions.

If they don't give me a response then the storyboard will be incomplete.

Such things as not getting high-resolution logos to generate a good storyboard is incredibly frustrating.

I spend so long tracking and finding something that is so simple, something like a high-resolution logo. It's like extracting teeth.

But a lot of corporates don't know why they are having an event and that's hilarious really when you think about it.

They even say they don't know how much they are going to spend on the event.

the idea, which is fine, and they put 17.5% on the bill.

But what happens is Chinese whispers. I know how I can best get the information I need to do a great storyboard and how to cost it, but when the advertising arm does it there are lots of things that get missed.

**ENGINEER: DO AGENCIES SOMETIMES GO AS FAR AS BLOCKING YOUR ACCESS TO THE CLIENT WHO WANTS THE EVENT?**

**PENGELLY:** Yes of course, they don't want the client to know it's not them that are doing the event.

In the end, I usually get access to the client because it gets to the situation where it's critical to get information and its not coming through, or not communicated and I have to get involved.

What I'm trying to do is to get all my staff to take cohesive thorough briefs so I can be creative with the right information.

There's nothing worse than going back into a presentation with a fabulous storyboard for an awards ceremony and they say we are not having one anymore, we are having an outdoor concert instead.

**ENGINEER: ISN'T THAT MORE**

**ENGINEER: ISN'T THAT A CASE OF THEY KNOW HOW MUCH THEY WANT TO SPEND, BUT IF THEY SAY IT THEY THINK YOU WILL GIVE A QUOTE UP TO THAT AMOUNT — ISN'T IT A GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE?**

**PENGELLY:** Yes but you have to remember, the only limitation in a producers mind is their imagination and I'm much better at producing the concept if I know the budget.

If the corporate planner knows what they want to communicate, they have already figured things need to be on CD such as floor plans, collateral logos — they know the storyboard will be rich.

**ENGINEER: WHICH THEN THEY WILL BE ABLE TO SELL ONTO THE HEADS OF THEIR COMPANY.**

**PENGELLY:** Exactly. They seem so

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Be rich with content on the brief”



relieved and say this is perfect and then I can give them a shopping basket of choices.

I then get a reaction of 'the CEO loved the concept, there are things he wants you to include and things he's not as sure about' and invariably I get it costed and signed off.

I like them to take ownership of the event. I'm only a facilitator, it's their idea, their money and they are the ones who want to reach the market to communicate a message.

I want them to come all the way through with me — come to the studio and see your edit online and come and look at the venue.



**ENGINEER: TO ENSURE AN EFFECTIVE INITIAL PLANNING MEETING, WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS YOU WOULD SAY TO A CORPORATE PLANNER BEFORE THEY CALL YOU?**

**PENGELLY:** Be rich with content on the brief, because you will get a rich storyboard back.

Be aware of how much you want to invest to make it a success. It doesn't have to be exact, but a ballpark figure is needed.

And get integrated communication involved in the process of a brief — it needs it if the planner is serious about having an event. **M**