



## THE PERFECT STORM

*for a New Agency Model in Healthcare Marketing*

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It seems that we continue to see articles being written touting the death of the traditional advertising agency model. The economic reality of a global pandemic not only has changed the way we work, but it has turned a bright spotlight on many of the challenges that clients have been struggling with for years with their agencies. Clients' perceptions and needs have changed, and they are loudly voicing their frustrations over a lack of innovation, little to no transparency with their agencies, and the continued scope-creep that they experience all too often.

I see the world with a "glass half full" perspective and find that these market forces are driving positive and rapid evolution. Think about how marketers now leverage data and analytics to make decisions. Technology has leveled the playing field by providing scalable, portable, and discrete platforms that seamlessly connect and enhance productivity; automation is here to stay and will dramatically enhance HCP and patient experiences; digital has transcended physical walls impacting how we interact with each other; and social media has given rise to communities of support and opportunities to grow market share with a new breed of influencers. The media landscape in general has exploded, offering additional avenues to create experiences for targeted audiences that expand a brand's reach.

It's an exciting time to be in marketing and advertising—especially if you are nimble enough to harness these advances and pass this knowledge, expertise, and savings on to your clients. Yet the traditional agency model has not evolved, and I go on record to say that our pharma and biotech clients deserve more.

The agency practice of filling a building with people and keeping them billable in quarter-hour increments has helped keep the lights on for decades. And yes, of course there are multi-billion-dollar agencies that still make this model work every day. What I'm questioning is the model's efficiency, the speed at which work is delivered, and the cost to clients. When agencies staff up for client wins and then reduce forces for client losses, only to staff up again with the next win—it's a rollercoaster that negatively impacts employees, families, and company morale. At a minimum, it creates an environment of instability. We are also still experiencing the ongoing battle between brand marketers wanting more work completed and procurement

officers pushing back on the fees for the work. With all of these factors, including inevitable client turnover, the traditional agency model is clearly challenged to deliver ongoing success.

In 2009, I wrote an article for a national trade publication about having the courage to disrupt the industry with an alternative to the traditional agency fee-based model. Ideas are the lifeblood of agencies, yet there has been and continues to be an erosion of their perceived value. I focused on the notion that clients should pay for ideas instead of the time that it takes an agency to create them. Creating an idea-centric agency model was, I felt, key to jump-starting innovation, sparking creativity on multiple levels, and creating accountability.

Think about a lean biopharma company that lacks the resources, financial or staff, to launch a new product. What about the pharmaceutical company with an underperforming brand? Or the startup company that needs help building commercial strategies to accelerate their brand's success? These companies need an agency that is agile and scalable, led by industry veterans, with a global bench of talent ready to provide customized solutions to optimize their brands' performance. They are looking for an agency model that delivers speed, quality, accessibility, technology tools and solutions, and most important, partnership.

Clients come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and personalities, yet they typically fall into one of two categories: happy or unhappy. Here's the difference. A happy client works with an agency that:

- Is nimble and solves strategic, research, creative, and production challenges;
- Executes smart, on-brand thinking in any channel—branding, campaigns, digital, naming, B2B, B2C;
- Is active, responsive, and accessible when needed, and consistently delivers results on time;
- Achieves high velocity, high quality, and higher ROI and;
- Accomplishes all of the above more efficiently and effectively across all the metrics that matter to clients.

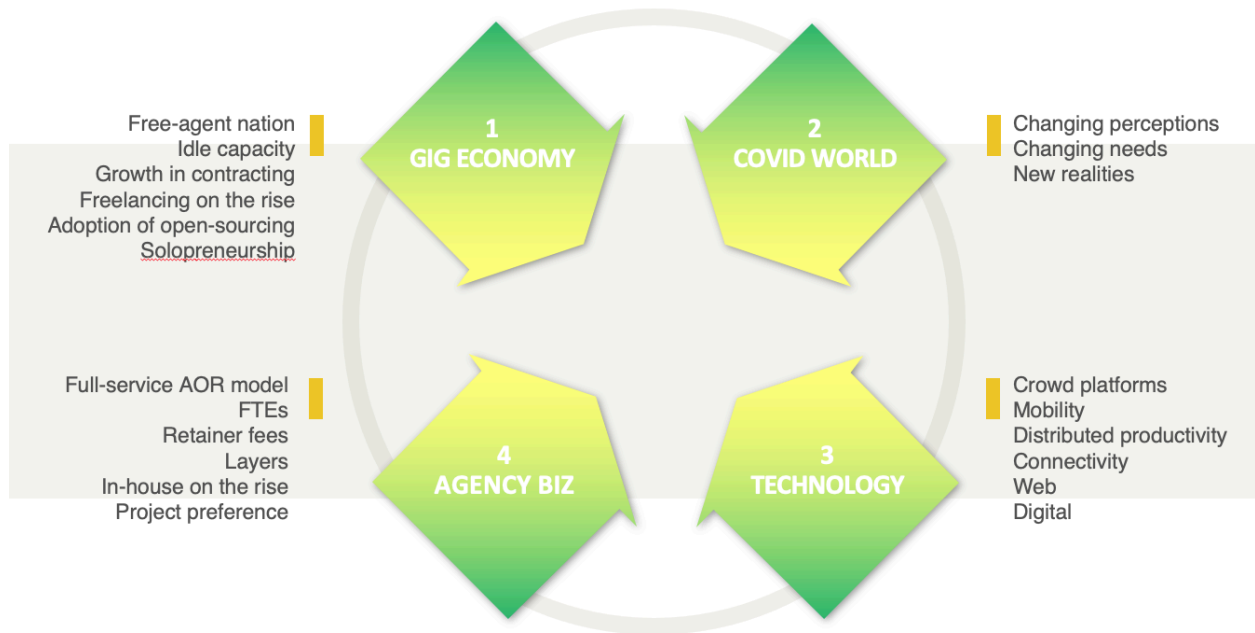
An unhappy client doesn't have the same experience. It's really that simple.

Because I just binged *The Queen's Gambit*, let's gain an advantage: White moves pawn to d4. It's time to think and work differently, stop defaulting to old habits, and push for new ones. Transformation is occurring in almost every industry. Why not healthcare marketing and advertising?

Today's clients want responsiveness versus process to the nth degree. They expect smart, omnichannel thinking on their brands along with quicker, more cost-effective solutions. Here's what they don't want: They don't want to sacrifice quality. And they shouldn't have to.



## FORCES DRIVING RAPID **CHANGE**



Fast-forward 12 years from the ideas espoused in my article to the forces driving today's evolved landscape—a global healthcare crisis, a gig economy ripe with on-demand talent and capacity, increased mobility through innovative technology—and one sees that the industry is ready for a smarter agency model. I know clients and their brands are more than ready.



### About Cross & Wild

Cross & Wild is an independent advertising and strategic consultancy agency. This agency is focused on client engagement and is built to deliver a customized approach that scales to clients' needs. Led by industry experts and powered by the global talent engine of CrowdPharm, the agency works with pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to unleash their brands' potential. Learn more at [crossandwild.com](https://crossandwild.com).



### About CrowdPharm

CrowdPharm is one of healthcare's largest global networks of vetted talent. The agency is ready to develop compelling brand communications in healthcare, medical, and pharmaceutical marketing to pharmaceutical and biopharma companies and healthcare agencies. With 2,800 members spanning six continents, members work across time zones to deliver an abundance of original solutions more efficiently and cost effectively. Visit [crowdpharm.com](https://crowdpharm.com)