

# Credentials pitch vs creative (free) pitch:

## Compare and contrast the benefits of each pitch system

- In a credentials pitch the agency talks through their credentials using past examples of their work to illustrate how they effectively solved the brief provided by the client.
- In a creative (free) pitch the agency tries to solve the brief without full knowledge of the issues and in a limited time frame.

	Credentials pitch	Creative pitch
<b>Credentials</b>	Has this company got a track record of: 1. Working successfully within my sector? and/or 2. Have they worked on similar projects (in any sector) successfully?	Short outline of work done for other clients.
<i>Critique:</i>	<i>This approach gives you good practical evidence of relevant capabilities and expertise.</i>	<i>This will not give you any kind of deep insight into the role the agency played or the difference they made.</i>
<b>Capability</b>	What are the agency's processes? How have they codified what they do and how they do it? What is their creative process; their planning process; and strategic, insight and research process? How will they apply these processes to the work I need them to do? How will they manage shocks to these?	N/a.
<i>Critique:</i>	<i>This gives you a depth of insight into how your project will be handled and how they are able to repeat with you the successes they have outlined above.</i>	<i>You have no way of judging whether any work they have done is a result of luck or judgment</i>
<b>Creative</b>	Does the company have a 'house-style'? Is this suitable for my brand? If there is no clear house style, have they demonstrated a suitable breadth of creative to indicate they would be able to transfer their creative skills to my brand?	Do I think the creative the agency has done on my brief will work? Do I like what I see? Am I excited and engaged by the creative? Do my colleagues agree?
<i>Critique:</i>	<i>This gives you a good measure of whether the agency is suitable for your kind of work.</i>	<i>Whilst you have something tangible you can use to show colleagues and judge the different work it will be creative based on a shallow understanding of you and your market. From a client perspective this element of the creative pitch is commercially risky (see why below).</i>

<b>Chemistry</b>	Do the people I have met get on and can I get on with these people? 1. Is there a natural affinity between the team who are presenting? <i>and</i> 2. Between my team and them?	Do the people I have met get on and can I get on with these people? 1. Is there a natural affinity between the team who are presenting? <i>and</i> 2. Between my team and them?
<b>Critique:</b>	<i>One of the key aspects of the client/designer relationship is partnership, ascertaining that you will get on with the creative team is vital (and often overlooked).</i>	<i>One of the key aspects of the client/designer relationship is partnership, ascertaining that you will get on with the creative team is vital (and often overlooked).</i>
<b>Cost</b>	Are the outline costs (daily rates) and indicative timelines going to work for my budget?	Does the detailed estimate fit with our budget?
<b>Critique:</b>	<i>Combined with the information you gleaned as part of 'Capability' and perhaps also an outline project plan, this gives you the info you need to judge as to whether this agency is a good fit for you in regard to your budget.</i>	<i>A detailed estimate pulled together as part of a pitch is dangerous. The estimate will be likely to be full of inaccuracies as it is based on only a shallow understanding of you and the work required. It is also likely to attract various inducements and 'loss-leaders' aimed at attracting the decision to made in favour of the agency.</i>

## The Credentials Pitch

To be effective, relationships with agencies should be built for the long term. Finding the best agency you can afford for your project should be your ultimate goal. A free pitch might show you some creative ideas, but it does not show you who the best agency is for you. There are also some very specific, potential hidden consequences of the creative pitch that can negatively impact your business, post-decision.

To identify the right agency to meet your needs, we recommend focusing on five key areas to make your judgement – **the 5 C's**:

- **Credentials**
- **Capabilities**
- **Creativity**
- **Chemistry**
- **Cost**

These can all be ascertained through a Credentials Pitch, involving a series of meetings with a small number of agencies (usually no more than five), at which you can gather evidence across these five areas to inform your choice. None of these meetings require any of the agencies to produce original creative.

## The Creative Pitch

The Creative Pitch commonly sees clients ask suppliers to produce creative work for free as evidence of their ability to undertake the work. We believe this method leads to poor decisions being made at the outset and will not produce the level of considered work needed to drive your organisation forward.

**Choosing an agency based on unpaid creative work presented in a pitch is not a good way to source the best agency for your requirements.**

The quality of any creative produced will only reflect the amount of time the agency has spent on the pitch. You run the risk of appointing a poor agency with lots of time to spend on your pitch over the strongest agency who was busy with fee paying work in the lead up. Ultimately this will affect your competitiveness.

Any creative work presented in a pitch won't have been produced with the level of insight into your business and objectives that is required to deliver the best solution for you. The creative will be hastily pulled together and based on a very narrow understanding of you, your market and the true nature of what is required.

Creative like this is risky to share within a business as it can lead to commercial decisions being made on the basis of taste rather than commercial sense.

It also pays to be mindful that this isn't *free creative*, the cost of producing this work will be recovered through the subsequent work you do. The agency will likely resent giving their work away for free and this can undermine and hamper your commercial partnership.

Selecting and appointing a new design partner is an important element of what you do, but is the method you're using to choose your agency going to deliver the maximum return on your design investment? Getting your agency right is critical to your success. The DBA has further detailed, step-by-step advice on finding the right agency to meet your requirements in its free [Client Guides on Commissioning Design](#).

The guides focus on:

[How to buy design: 01 Getting started](#)

[How to buy design: 02 Writing your design brief](#)

[How to buy design: 03 Agency selection guide](#)

[How to buy design: 04 Pitch guide](#)

[How to buy design: 05 Pitch brief](#)

[How to buy design: 06 Pitch score sheet](#)

[How to buy design: 07 Pitch feedback](#)

[How to buy design: 08 Asking for a proposal document](#)

[How to buy design: 09 Proposal score sheet](#)

**The DBA is the UK trade association for the design industry.**

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