

# Populism De-Merits Design Management

A decade ago Brand Design firms were looked up as prestigious associates to business & saviors in times of dwindling consumerism. Clients used to respect the engagements & work produced. With time this perception has changed and there are many reasons I can think of.

Today clients are more interested in knowing how much will be the fees and how many iterations will be non chargeable. While they still look at the credentials and clients credits but somewhere deep inside they are missing the point. It is not about how many clients an agency has for credibility index, how economically they can derive the output without causing big dent in budgets or how fast the project can be turned around.

With the proliferation of brand design firms parallel to main stream advertising (full service agency) firms, the selection and engagement parameters have changed radically.

From my experience I can say that there are three major risks in the business partnership of such firms.

Brand Owners/ Marketers (Clients) should have a clear understanding of the following risks:-

**AVOID POPULISM** – Clients should not get carried away by the names, number of years or the number of clients showcased in the credentials/ pitch. Instead they should be more concerned and interested in what the agency did in a situation like theirs or would do. What was the role of the agency in mitigating the problem & how did they overcome the planning & execution weaknesses. There is a very thin line between these selection parameters. For e.g. almost all design firms have credentials of doing brand identity for any brand but the question is “Can they do it for them?” Meaning, can the design firm create brand identity for the particular category of product, segment or challenge. Knowing how to do brand identity is not the same as “Creating a brand identity that fulfills the brands desired objective”.

*Recently I was asked by a prospective client why do I charge so much for doing a brand identity when the existing one was done so cheap. I just asked one thing, “Did you get it done or they gave it to you?” For a moment he was confused then he realized what I meant. We later got the project but more importantly my client realized that any design firm can make an identity for him, but will it be what it is meant to be or is it what a creative person can visualize that looks good.*

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service provider.

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Stand out  
& Be Heard

Discover  
Define  
Innovate  
Brand Design

Our solutions  
basis market realities

TRUST &  
SATISFACTION  
of many aspiring  
FMCG brands

honeybee  
design

**AVOID SPEAK & SHOW BUSINESS** – Try to work with brand design firms who produce more tangible and realistic results / solutions. Don't get caught up in jargon, don't get overwhelmed with history, and don't get blind in glamour. Engage with firms who listen & do. There are many firms who take senior rank / good speakers for important meetings just to put weight age on the work being presented. They are more likely to sell than be caught up in point of view. But beware. Clients should entertain firms who don't have a song and dance show to make the point. They should rely on those firms who value your time and facilitate you to make important decisions in the meeting.

*Recently I was attending a Strategic Brand Review Meeting with board of directors of one of our client. An activation agency was presenting their credentials and possibly trying to convince why they were so good. All through the one hour presentation they kept on singing the songs they knew (self proclaimed recognition coupled with what they did). Nobody was talking of creating a new tune (how to handle the new situation of a new client). It appeared as if they were good at remix and that's what they were trying to portray.*

**AVOID WHO PROMISE THE MOON** – Many firms in order to clinch the deal go to extents you cannot imagine. At least I can't imagine. They can show you the moon and will show you, but not tell you how to reach there. They will craft everything so well that every piece will appear perfect. But on closer look (when the execution begins) you will realize how superficial were the claims & how impossible it will be to get to the moon. Clients should engage with firms who have the courage to take responsibility. Courage does not need powerful point presentations. You can sense it, smell it or see it when the doer comes in front of you.

*Recently I was reviewing some retail visibility solutions that were presented by a retail design solutions firm. On being asked how do they think these solutions would work for the client, the presenter shook away the onus saying that it has been done by many people in the past and hence assuming that it would work again. He insisted that we try and see rather than committing his responsibility by saying that if it didn't work they would go back and work again. Responsibility I am talking of comes with big thinking.*

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