



Media Specialist Association (MSA)

MEDIA PITCH GUIDELINES

2025

MSA Media Pitch Guidelines

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Executive Summary

This document outlines the best practices and procedural guidelines for conducting media pitch processes under the Malaysian Society of Advertisers (MSA). It aims to ensure transparency, fairness, and efficiency in agency selection. Key components include RFI, RFP, evaluation criteria, and commercial templates. This summary provides a high-level overview for quick reference.

Definitions

In this guideline, unless there is something in the subject or context inconsistent with such construction or unless it is otherwise expressly provided, the following definition shall have the following meaning: -

“Presentation” refers to advertising media planning presentation, advertising media buying, or any other relevant presentation from the media agencies, except credentials presentation, regardless of the need of Advertiser.

“Pitch” includes any proposal to promote any brand, product, service, company, or organization for any campaign stating the objective(s) of the campaign in Malaysia and it shall include proposals for media communications strategies, market/media consumer analysis/media ideas/executions and any such display of an Agency’s intellectual capital.

“Media Agency Service Contract” refers to any contract that creates legal relation between media agency and advertiser, regardless of its title.

“Current Agency” refers to the Media Agency that is bound by an existing contract to provide services, and whose contract with the Advertiser has not been terminated, either legally or de facto."

“New Agency” refers to Media Agency that the Advertiser signs the new contract related to “presentation”, based on this regulation.

“Participating Agency” refers to all Media Agencies that accept the pitching invitation, including the current agency of the Advertiser.

“New Advertiser” refers to the Advertiser who has not signed the contract for any participating Agency.

Introduction

The Media Specialists Association of Malaysia (MSA) upholds and promotes core principles which essential to the interactions between advertising agencies and their respective advertiser. These principles are particularly crucial during tender processes, to ensure fairness and impartiality for all parties involved.

Our commitment to fostering trust, transparency, and professionalism is guided by the following four core principles:

- (a) **Respect** – Cultivating Mutual Professionalism: Demonstrating deep professional respect not only nurtures trust but also safeguards the confidentiality of shared information, efforts, and resulting work. This fundamental principle inspires trust and confidence in the process, enhancing the overall experience for all stakeholders. Valuing confidentiality, time, and effort fosters to positive relationships throughout the process.

Advertisers benefit from knowing their sensitive information and efforts are protected, fostering a more open and trusting partnership.

- (b) **Fairness** – Impartiality and Equitable Consideration: Upholding an objective and impartial stance throughout the process mitigates any perception of favoritism or bias. Advertisers shall consider the interests of all parties involved, ensuring reasonable expectations. This approach ensures an equitable process, strengthening trust and legitimacy.

Advertisers gain assurance that their interests are considered fairly, leading to more equitable and trustworthy interactions.

- (c) **Transparency** – Openness for Clarity: Transparency is fundamental to ensuring the tendering process remains open and accessible. Clearly communicating the decision-making criteria upholds integrity and fosters a climate of trust.

Advertisers benefit from a transparent process, ensuring integrity and trustworthiness.

- (d) **Accountability** – Defining responsibility and accountability at the outset is paramount. Clear definitions of roles, responsibilities, and timelines enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Identifying decision-making authority and ensuring accountability for decisions and deadlines fosters ownership, bolstering credibility and progress.

Advertisers can expect streamlined processes, ensuring accountability and credibility, and saving time and resources.

Key Principles

Conducting a pitch process can be a significant endeavor for both participating agencies and advertisers' personnel. To ensure a streamlined and efficient pitch process, it is imperative to uphold the four fundamental principles highlighted above: **Respect, Fairness, Transparency, and Accountability**. When organizing a pitch, it is advisable to ensure absolute clarity for the agencies involved.

For agencies, it is crucial to have well-defined pitch details, a reasonable time for questions and answers, a clear understanding of responsibilities, submission formats, deadlines, and timelines.

Furthermore, an effective pitching process is characterized by its conciseness, punctuality, and well-organized structure. It is worth emphasizing that a well-structured pitch process often results in superior ideas and responses from the participating agencies, thereby increasing the likelihood of finding an agency that aligns seamlessly with the advertiser's requirements.

In addition to these principles, several key considerations contribute to an effective tender process:

- Developing a behavior charter at the beginning of the process is considered best practice. This charter should encompass evaluation criteria, expectations of confidentiality, mechanisms for feedback and intellectual property ownership.
- Recognizing and acknowledging the individuality of every advertiser-agency relationship is paramount. A standardized approach is not suitable for all situations.
- Maintaining a delicate equilibrium between transparency throughout the marketing value chain and equitable agency compensation is of considerable significance.
- Lastly, while price and cost are significant factors, it is essential to remember that value carries even greater relevance in the overall assessment of agency capabilities and suitability.

Objectives

The objectives of the proposed MSA guidelines encompass several dimensions:

- (a) **Optimizing the Media Pitch Process:** These guidelines are designed to refine and enhance the media pitch process by providing clear recommendations and principles for advertisers to adhere to. The goal is to create a more organized and efficient pitch procedure, ensuring agencies have a precise understanding of expectations, timelines, and evaluation criteria.
- (b) **Supporting Sustainable Agency Resources:** The guidelines address concerns such as unrealistic negotiations and pricing demands, with the intention of supporting the long-term resources and financial sustainability of media agencies. By setting boundaries and limitations on pricing information and revision requests, these guidelines empower agencies to consistently deliver quality services. Furthermore, it tackles acceptable media pricing and remuneration, emphasizing the necessity of a benchmark for comparison to precisely define what qualifies as unrealistic. This aligns with the spirit of fair remuneration.
- (c) **Promoting Equitable Resource Utilization:** The guidelines encourage fair resource utilization by discouraging advertisers from seeking media ideas or leveraging concepts from agencies that were not chosen or unsuccessful in the pitch process, thus ensuring a level playing field for agencies.
- (d) **Protecting Intellectual Property Rights:** These guidelines establish clear parameters governing the usage of proposals and media concepts shared during the pitch process, providing protection for the intellectual property rights of media agencies and media owners.
- (e) **Enhancing Collaborative Media Pitches:** The overarching objective is to enhance the ongoing media pitch process, fostering collaboration and mutual benefit for both advertisers and media agencies.

While necessity for pitches persists, their execution requires a systematic approach rooted in respect. These guidelines furnish advertisers with recommendations and principles for conducting media pitches characterized by transparency, equity, and efficiency. The guidelines encompass:

- The various dimensions of the pitch process, such as the expression of intent to pitch, process management, Request for Information (RFI), commercial and pricing templates, as well as intellectual property rights. The guidelines underscore the significance of lucid communication, clarity in agency remuneration model, and safeguarding intellectual property rights.
- Recognition of the individuality of each advertiser-agency relationship and endeavor to achieve a balance transparency across the marketing value chain and fairness in agency compensation. To ensure compliance, the Association has outlined penalties for members who infringe upon the pitch guidelines.
- Enhancement on the current media pitch process, safeguard agency assets, and foster just utilization of agency resources.
- Within this comprehensive appraisal, the guidelines shall be scrutinized considering MSA by-laws and their consequential ramifications.

Pitch Guidelines

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

1 Request of Information within the RFI document

The MSA places a strong emphasis on fairness and equity in agency-advertiser interactions, particularly during the Request for Information (RFI) stage. This section outlines the permissible boundaries and recommendations for information requests, ensuring transparency and mutual protection.

1.1 Mutual NDA for IP Protection

- 1.1.1 Advertisers are required to sign a mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with agencies. This NDA serves as essential legal protection for the agency's sensitive information, safeguarding both parties' interests. The MSA strongly recommends this approach to prevent one-sided NDAs that agencies have encountered in the past.

A sample crucial points for the **NDA is featured in the appendix A**, encompassing key elements necessary for any NDA mandated from the advertiser. This strategic inclusion is designed to ensure the protection of both parties involved.

1.2 Non-Permissible Information

- 1.2.1 The MSA acknowledges the need for relevant information during the RFI process. However, it is essential to establish boundaries to ensure fairness and integrity.

The following information is deemed **not permissible**:

- a. Company financial information
 - i. Actual Billing information by other advertisers; and
 - ii. Actual Revenue information by other advertisers
- b. Information pertaining to other Advertisers, past or current Agency clients.
 - i. Annual Billing Information
 - Actual Media billing/revenue information; and
 - Actual Media spend breakdown by channels.
 - ii. Contractual detail information of Agency clients
 - Contract Agreements details.
 - Statements of Work (SOW).

- Contractual Value; and
 - Purchase Order / Booking Orders.
- c. Agency Personnel Information (that conflicts with PDPA regulations):
- i. Agency personnel detail & personal information
 - Personal identification information.
 - Personnel detailed resume; and
 - Actual Salary & Remuneration.

2 Intent to Pitch

- 2.1 Advertisers are encouraged to convey the purpose of their pitch with the following: For example:
- a. Undertaking a procurement exercise, typically conducted periodically every few years.
 - b. Initiating the contract renewal process.
 - c. Soliciting innovative ideas and promoting fresh perspectives.
 - d. Expressing dissatisfaction with the existing incumbent or approach; and
 - e. Addressing evolving business circumstances and challenges, among other potential objectives.

3 Essential Elements in Pitch Documentation

- 3.1 In accordance with industry standards, it is essential to include the following key elements in pitch documentation:
- 3.1.1 Clear indication of whether the engagement is structured on an Agency of Record basis or a Project Basis.
 - 3.1.2 Precise specification of the contract's tenure period; and
 - 3.1.3 A well-defined Pitch timeline, delineating stages that allow for ample time at each step and culminate in a definitive decision date. This approach ensures that all stakeholders can engage with clarity and efficiency throughout the pitch process. **Refer to Appendix B for example.**
- 3.2 Advertisers are strongly encouraged to provide a well-defined Scope of Work, either preceding or within the pitch request during the Request for Information (RFI) stage. This proactive step enhances the clarity and effectiveness of the pitch process.

4 Managing the Process

- 4.1 This section focuses on the critical aspects of managing the media pitching process effectively. Specifically, it highlights the essential items that must be included in the Media Pitch brief document shared by advertisers with agencies, emphasizing the importance of clear timelines, milestones, and criteria for evaluation.
- 4.2 The Media Pitch brief document shall comprehensively outline the following key timelines and milestones:
 - 4.2.1 **Timelines/Milestones:**
 - a. Requirements
 - i. Ideal Briefing Method: In-person or a conference call involving all participating agencies.
 - ii. Specification of start and end dates for both the Request for Information (RFI) and Request for Proposal (RFP) stages.
 - Dates for Shortlisting, Final Selection, and Award Timing
 - Clear Shortlisting Process Criteria for both RFI and RFP stages. **Refer to Appendix C for example.**
 - iii. Transparent Process for Asking Questions (Q&A)
 - Reasonable Timelines for Q&A Responses: Typically, within 1-3 working days.
 - iv. Explicit Evaluation Criteria for the Pitch
 - Key Criteria for Evaluation and their weightages.
 - Provision of an Actual Scorecard for the Pitch, if feasible.
 - Advertiser to share comprehensive feedback for both successful and unsuccessful submissions, fostering learning and improvement.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

This section emphasizes the importance of a thorough Media Pitch briefing documents and transparent budget disclosure in the pitch process. Advertisers are encouraged to provide clear timelines, case study limits, crucial information, and details on their remuneration models along with pricing template requirements.

1 Media Pitch Briefing Document

1.1 Working timeline

1.1.1 The minimum timeline for proposal request should be 14/21/28 days depending on the nature of the pitch requirement.

- a. Pricing – Media Rates & Commercial (2-3 weeks)
- b. Pricing – Media Rates & Commercial & Case Study (4-6 weeks)

1.2 Number of Case Studies

1.2.1 The Association recommends limiting the number of case studies for RFP presentations to ensure efficiency:

- a. Maximum of TWO (2) case studies as per the guidelines; and
- b. Additional Case study (An additional cost will be incurred if the advertiser decides to add another case study as part of the RFP, amounting to RM10,000 per case study along with extended timelines)

1.3 Information sharing

Advertisers are encouraged to share vital information with agencies to enhance pitch response to specific brief and requirement (not mandatory):

- 1.3.1 Market Share Data (if the brief aims to increase market share by a percentage point).
- 1.3.2 Business/ Marketing challenges.
- 1.3.3 Brand Health Tracking Data (if available).
- 1.3.4 Advertiser's Marketing / Media team structure information to aid agency in building their team structure; and
- 1.3.5 Any other information that is pertinent to all agencies participating in the pitch.

1.4 Transparency in Agency fees

Advertisers are required to specify the remuneration model requested or currently in practice within the pitch document, choosing from options like:

- a. Commission Model on Nett Media or Gross Media.
- b. Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Model / Agency Retainer Fee Model; or
- c. Hybrid Model.

1.5 Media Budget

In accordance with industry standards, it is essential to include the following key elements in pitch documentation:

- 1.5.1 Transparent disclosure of the Annual Budget, with a recommended tolerance of approximately 10% variance, although agencies value accurate budget information to effectively allocate their resources; and
- 1.5.2 A detailed breakdown of the Annual Budget by media channels, essential for constructing a pricing template.

2 Commercial / Pricing template

The Association advises refraining from disclosing specific pricing information to maintain fairness and balance in media industry negotiations. This helps prevent one-sided negotiations, where agencies may be pressured to lower prices at unsustainable levels by procurement. Such situations could hinder agencies from delivering the required resources, affecting the advertisers negatively despite apparent negotiation success.

If advertisers deviate from these guidelines, agencies should inform the Association, prompting possible corrective actions. These guidelines are designed to ensure equitable and productive negotiations for all parties involved.

2.1 Pricing template guidelines:

- 2.1.1 Agency Volume Rebate could be disclosed by media (i.e., TV, OOH, Radio. Etc.) and not by channel details (i.e., TV3, Bigtree, amobee, etc)
- 2.1.2 Requests for pricing revisions are limited to a maximum of ONE (1) round after the initial submission.
- 2.1.3 Below are the guidelines for Media Pricing templates, outlining what can and cannot be shared:

Channel	Permissible	Not permissible
TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CPRP/ROI by FTV & PTV ● Criteria can be defined accordingly. channel split, daypart, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual CPRP/ROI by channel, daypart, race
RADIO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rates/ROI by station (if the spends by station are provided) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual station Rates/ROI (i.e. Era, MY).
OOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rates by list of location and size (except for Programmatic DOOH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●

2.2 Requirements need to be stated (MUST Have)

2.2.1 TV CPRP: It is essential to include specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for FTV (Free-To-View) and PTV (Pay-To-View). These requirements should encompass:

- Audience segment (TA should be clearly stated).
- Prime/Fringe Split.
- Racial Split; and
- Budget allocation.

2.2.2 Digital (CPM, CPV, CPL, CPA): In the context of digital advertising, it is imperative to transparently share specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This includes:

- Audience segment (i.e., Demographic, Interest, Behavior, Custom).
- Viewability Rate.
- Creative type (Static/Video).
- Device (Laptop/Mobile).
- MRC (Media Rating Counsel) standard if any; and
- Budget allocation.

3 Other Requests

3.1 Non-Permissible Information

The MSA acknowledges the need for relevant information during the RFI process. However, it is essential to establish boundaries to ensure fairness and integrity.

The following information is deemed **not permissible**:

- a. Company financial information:
 - i. Actual Billing information by other advertisers; and
 - ii. Actual Revenue information by other advertisers.
- b. Information pertaining to other Advertisers, past or current Agency clients.
 - i. Annual Billing Information:
 - Actual Media billing/revenue information; and
 - Actual Media spend breakdown by channels.
 - ii. Contractual detail information of Agency clients:
 - Contract Agreements details.
 - Statements of Work (SOW).
 - Contractual Value; and
 - Purchase Order / Booking Orders.
- c. Agency Personnel Information (that conflicts with PDPA regulations):
 - i. Agency personnel detail & personal information.
 - Personal identification information.
 - Personnel detailed resume; and
 - Actual Salary & Remuneration.

Alignment of MSA Guidelines with Industry and Legal Frameworks

This section highlights how the Media Specialists Association of Malaysia (MSA) guidelines align with industry standards and MSA by-laws, ensuring transparency, fairness, and the protection of intellectual property rights in the advertising industry.

1 Intellectual Property Rights

1.1 Protection of Agencies' Intellectual Property Rights:

- 1.1.1 MSA ensures that intellectual property rights for presentations and pitches from unsuccessful agencies remain with those agencies.
- 1.1.2 Agencies share their media plans, ideas, and proposals exclusively for the purpose of the pitch, preventing advertisers from requesting pre-pitch documents that could transfer these rights.

1.2 Compensation for Media Ideas:

- 1.2.1 If an advertiser wishes to use media ideas from an unsuccessful pitch, MSA guidelines recommend fair and equitable negotiations for compensation.
- 1.2.2 Fair compensation must be determined by mutual agreement between the agency and the advertiser.

1.3 Safeguarding Intellectual Property Rights:

- 1.3.1 MSA emphasizes the importance of protecting intellectual property rights, in line with Malaysian laws.
- 1.3.2 All ideas, concepts, strategies, trademarks, and materials presented remain the property of the agency.
- 1.3.3 Advertisers acknowledge that any ideas, concepts, strategies, trademarks, and materials presented by agencies are for the sole purpose of evaluating the pitch and deciding whether to engage the agency's services.

Summary

In conclusion, the Media Specialists Association of Malaysia (MSA) extends its sincere hope that these meticulously crafted guidelines will find widespread adoption among advertisers, thereby contributing to the advancement of the advertising industry. This dynamic sector employs a multitude of dedicated professionals across Malaysia, encompassing agencies, media proprietors, and advertisers. The implementation of a fair and well-structured pitch process promises to deliver mutual benefits, safeguarding financial interests, preserving intellectual property, and nurturing a harmonious work-life balance for all stakeholders involved.

To summarize, the proposed guidelines by the Media Specialists Association of Malaysia exemplify unwavering commitment to adhering to the pertinent laws and regulations that governed the advertising arena. These guidelines uphold the core principles of transparency, equitability, and the protection of agency resources and intellectual property rights.

By aligning seamlessly with the provisions set forth in the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, the Malaysian Code of Advertising Practice, and fundamental legal precepts such as contract law and fair competition, these guidelines present a comprehensive roadmap for the execution of media pitches in Malaysia. The MSA's proactive approach in addressing industry-specific challenges while diligently upholding legal requisites underscores their resolute dedication to fostering professionalism, ethical standards, and sustainable industry growth.

Dated:

Appendix

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

- **Mutual NDA for IP Protection**



NDA (Pitch
Guideline).doc

- **Pitch timeline**

Stage	Timeline to Agency	Timeline for Agency to Revert	Purpose	Actions
Request for Information (RFI)	8-10 weeks before the pitch	1 weeks	Gather preliminary information from potential agencies	Send out RFIs to understand capabilities and interest
Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)	7-9 weeks before the pitch	1 week	Ensure confidentiality and protect sensitive information	Send NDAs to all interested agencies and secure signatures
Request for Proposal (RFP)	6-8 weeks before the pitch	2-3 weeks	Invite detailed proposals from selected agencies	Distribute RFPs outlining project requirements and expectations
Q&A Session	4-6 weeks before the pitch	1 week	Clarify any questions from agencies	Hold a Q&A session to address queries from participating agencies
Proposal Submission	3-6 weeks before the pitch	By specified deadline	Receive detailed proposals from agencies	Agencies submit their proposals by the specified deadline
Proposal Review	2-3 weeks before the pitch	By specified deadline	Evaluate proposals based on criteria	Review and score proposals internally
Agency Presentations	1-2 weeks before the pitch	By specified deadline	Allow agencies to present their proposals	Schedule and conduct presentations with shortlisted agencies
Final Decision	1-2 week after presentations	By specified deadline	Select the best-fit agency	Decide and notify the selected agency
Contract Negotiation	1-2 weeks after decision	By specified deadline	Finalize terms and conditions	Negotiate and sign the contract with the chosen agency

- **Timelines/Milestones – Shortlisting Process & Criteria**
 - **Sample Score Card**

Section	Criteria	Maximum Marks Available	Minimum Qualifying Threshold
A	Quality and extent of research and informed understanding of the defined target audiences and their media behavior.	150	90
B	Quality of the defined media strategy for the briefed campaign which shows clear evidence of the research insights being distilled into a coherent media strategy.	150	90
C	Quality of the accompanying media plan layout/overview with clear demonstration of the breakdown of media spend, activity timing, and role of each channel as it relates to the Media Strategy in Section B.	100	60
D	KPI delivery and reporting - Quality of the campaign measurement approach which clearly demonstrates how the agency will measure the success of the campaign against the set KPIs.	150	90
E	Quality of the technology, tools, and techniques that will be used in aiding the client to deliver on their objectives across all aspects of the business. This includes technology, tools, and techniques being used across all levels of the agency from media strategy, planning, activation, and optimization through to reporting.	100	60
F	Account Resources - Quality and balance of the team proposed to manage the business at all levels from senior team leadership through to account management and buying.	150	90
G	Cost - Agency Fee and overall commercial proposal (fee, PRF, savings, media cost template).	200	120
Total		1,000	600

○ **Award Criteria Methodology**

% Mark	Award Criteria Methodology
0%	Response fails to address the criteria outlined.
1 - 20%	The response is vague and lacks detail, failing to explain how the agency will meet the objectives. For instance, it might state a general approach without specifics on execution.
21 - 40%	The response includes some relevant information but is disjointed and lacks clarity. For example, it may outline a strategy but fail to link it to the objectives or provide sufficient detail.
41 - 60%	The response is detailed and clear but has some gaps. For example, it might provide a good overview of the media strategy but lack specifics on measurement and reporting.
61 - 80%	The response is detailed and well-structured, showing a clear understanding of the brief. For instance, it includes a comprehensive media plan with clear links to the objectives and detailed measurement criteria.
81 - 100%	The response is exceptionally detailed and coherent, addressing all criteria thoroughly. For example, it provides an in-depth media strategy, a detailed plan, and a robust measurement approach, all clearly linked to the objectives.