



M&C Saatchi-owned LIDA finds a solution in Tempora that allows it to capture and analyse data on costs to the level of detail required by clients without disrupting day-to-day agency business.

Overview

While the success of a campaign may still be the defining factor in determining an advertising agency's value, clients are now more cost conscious than ever.

Under the scrutiny of procurement specialists even the most established of agency client relationships are no longer assured. Clients are demanding more bang for their buck and this is putting pressure on agencies to report in detail on their costs.

Agencies too have been forced to take a look at their own spend. High running costs and the pattern of 'billing low servicing high' can have a severe impact on profit margins.

The challenge for LIDA

To meet these demands, London-based marketing and brand response agency LIDA (part of M&C Saatchi, the fifth largest agency group in the UK) recognised it needed daily access to data on the time it was spending on clients.

The problem facing LIDA was how to retrieve that data accurately.

LIDA's existing system was not up to the task. Conceived as a bolt-on to the existing finance system, the time and costing software they were using was user-unfriendly and couldn't compel staff to complete their timesheets.

What's more, it couldn't report costs at the level of detail the clients wanted.

With a turnover in excess of £10 million and a client list that includes Vodafone, RBS Group and Mini, LIDA is working on any number of complex multi-layered projects at one time.



LIDA needed to be able to report at multiple levels within a project and accommodate variants such as sub-projects, locations, departments and different billing structures.

The solution

LIDA adopted time recording and job costing software Tempora, a web-based application that could be integrated into agency life with minimal disruption. More importantly, with its 'nag' feature, Tempora was able to provide the compulsion LIDA required to get users to fill in timesheets on a regular basis.

The nag automatically connects with the Tempora server to check whether a user's timesheet has been completed. If a timesheet is incomplete, the nag opens a full-screen Tempora login page over the top of any other applications that the user currently has open.

The nag is entirely configurable but, at its most insistent, prevents a user from closing or minimising the Tempora login page until time has been recorded and submitted. This is how LIDA has it set up.

The agency also runs the nag daily, which compels staff to fill in their timesheets in small manageable chunks, rather than once a week.

Stephen Blackledge, Financial Controller at LIDA, believes this functionality delivers real advantages.

"With our previous time recording system we knew the data we were getting back wasn't particularly accurate," he says. "Staff were having to remember back to what they were working on days or even weeks before, and this inevitably led to errors."

With the nag prompting them on a daily basis, staff at LIDA only have to remember what they've been working on in the last few hours.

"Not only it is less of a chore to fill in timesheets using Tempora," says Blackledge, "but the data we can pull out of the system is much more reliable".



Client reporting

Tempora's reporting functionality also allows for the snap-shot views of data at multiple levels that LIDA needed to report on.

Users are able to select one or all clients, and configure sub categories (such as region, product, sub-product and project) according to the reporting requirements of each client. Optional filters can be applied too, allowing users to report on a specific type of work, such as pre-sales, across all clients.

Blackledge says, "What we liked about Tempora was that it allows us to structure our reporting and time recording according to our own needs."

"This flexibility makes Tempora a really powerful tool," he adds.

Results

Above all, because Tempora provides LIDA with meaningful and up to date information, the agency can plan effectively and report to clients when required.

"The quality of analysis and data produced is very good in terms of detail," says Blackledge, "and this allows us to get to the core of each issue".

"Best of all, staff feel Tempora's easy to use and not a hindrance to their time," he says.