

# It's pitching time as marketers are looking ahead to 2024

 By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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Where many organisations start to slow down in the fourth quarter, the period between September and December is often one of the marketing and advertising industry's busiest periods.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Johanna McDowell, CEO of the Independent Agency Search & Selection Company (IAS) and Scopen partner says don't get caught out at pitching time

It's the season for new business pitches, and marketers are looking ahead to 2024 for several reasons.

1. They're evaluating whether the agencies they have in place are the right ones for what may come.
2. Any contracts coming to an end will need to be dealt with before the new year takes hold and this means looking at new agencies or reviewing their current ones for suitability.
3. Marketing executives will be noting the many changes taking place in the market, both on their side and that of the agencies, and formulating solutions regarding the options open to them in terms of resources and budgeting.
4. Some marketers are keen to get a head-start on 2024, with new agencies and new work before the end of 2023, making the time between now through to the end of February officially pitching season, with all its attendant demands.

Add to these pressures the fact that 70% of corporate South Africa starts its new financial year at the end of March, and marketers know there are deadlines and governance requirements to be met.

Those ready to run when the starter's pistol sounds will be in the best position to head the race.

## The season of the big spend

Impacting on this vital activity is that this is traditionally an extremely busy time, ahead of the holidays, followed by back-to-school campaigns directly thereafter.

The December break, where many South Africans get their chance for downtime, requires extra consideration around timing. Historically, this is the season where we see a lot of spend happening, particularly in the retail sector and the launching of new brands in time for festivities.

So, on top of the time spent on the pitching field, marketers and agencies still have their day jobs to contend with. It's an intense time – exciting too, but often fierce. It's a period of reviewing the work onboard, while not wanting to turn down new opportunities.



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## **Get your juggling gloves on**

My message to marketers now must be to get your juggling gloves on and make a start on all of the above, because if you want to start with new agencies or re-brief current ones, there are some 14 weeks to year-end.

To run a proper new appointment process takes eight to 10 weeks, and there's much to be done, so marketers need to call in their troops and get as much assistance as possible to make the catch within the timeframe and finish the hard yards before January to alleviate pressures as 2024 begins.

By making sure you have a team that includes an intermediary, you have expert assistance that can take some of the load off during this tight timeline, allowing you to dive in now and get that head start.

## **Little reason to drop the ball**

Handing over the management of the pitch process enables marketers to turn up just three times – to note credentials, the chemistry session and the final pitch, essentially removing their greatest pain point.

With the managing of post-pitch contracting and the hand-over between agencies taken care of, time-poor marketers can focus on hitting the ground running with their new agency in place and campaigns can be briefed in and started almost immediately.

Even as we watch the clock ticking towards 2024, there's little reason why marketers should drop the ball at this stage. By ensuring they're surrounded by an agile and experienced team, 14 weeks well-used can put a marketer ahead of the pack – not only to score that try, but to convert it to early success.

## **ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL**

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen Africa, with a background that includes being on both the agency and the client side of the fence, Johanna McDowell is well-placed to offer commentary on marketing and advertising in the South African and international contexts. She built her career in marketing and advertising since 1974, holding directorship in both SA and British advertising agencies. She was MD of Grey Phillips Advertising in 1988.

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