

Digital production agencies: what are they and why do I need one?

 By [Nick Durrant](#)

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As the creative marketing world ebbs and flows around the new impetus brought about by the increasing influence of digital on the marketing mix, creative technologists are emerging to service client requirements.

What is a digital production agency?

Think of a digital production agency as the equivalent of the video production agency you would call on to implement TV advertisements as part of an above-the-line campaign.

They have a range of specialist technical skills encompassing all things digital, including web, social media, mobile and underlying management technologies.

As with video production agencies, there are many ways to skin a cat. You might have some, or all of these skills in-house, and need to bring in extra capacity or specialist experience now and again. Or, you might prefer to outsource digital production to a specialist agency lock, stock and barrel.

As the digital star rises and clients become more confident about the role digital can play in their promotions, we're seeing an increasing shift from pure tactical implementation, to increased strategic involvement from the outset.

Introducing the creative technologist

This brings the creative technologist into the spotlight. The industry at large and creative technologists themselves might still be debating the exact definition of this role, which is not surprising in such a nascent field.

Creative technologists are playing a crucial role in digital production, irrespective of whether they are a techie that understands and can participate in the creative strategic process, or a creative strategist that can actually code.

The creative technologist is vital in matching the correct digital technologies with expected creative outcomes, and then making sure the implementation actually achieves that.

Choosing a digital production agency

It could be easy to think that all digital production agencies are on the same footing skills and experience wise. After all, it's

a relatively new field, especially in South Africa. But when choosing a digital production agency, marketers and creative agencies shouldn't overlook experience, in order to ensure they team up with the best partner for their, and their clients', needs.

1. Experience

There is no amount of resource, qualification, talk, mumbo jumbo that can replace the, late nights, difficult situations, client demands, changing briefs, than experience.

International experience is particularly advantageous, especially if you're pitching for a cross-border account. Suddenly you have the resources and international experience from a production point of view.

2. Project management

Servicing a client abroad requires a strong focus not only on customer service, but also project management. It is important to ensure digital projects are delivered on time and to brief.

3. Technical skills

Accreditation across a range of technologies, and experience in working on the gamut of platforms, from iPhones, to Facebook, to the regular desktop web is essential when looking for a partner.

Web content management expertise should include key web platforms such as Umbraco, EPiServer and SharePoint. Mobile development experience is also key.

4. Knowledge

Finally, seeking out an experienced digital production agency gives you access to a bit of magic that only comes with spending time in the trenches.

With tight deadlines and even tighter budgets, rabbits need to be pulled out of hats more often than not, and this is where a partner that has been around the block once or twice has access to a depth of knowledge to draw on.

As the digital sun rises, choosing a digital production partner is going to be as important as choosing a video production company has been for ad agencies over the past few decades.

The good news is, despite the relative newness of the field, pockets of experience do exist.

ABOUT NICK DURRANT

Nick Durrant is MD at Bluegrass Digital, a digital production agency. We work with marketing teams and creative agencies around the world delivering digital platforms. After spending 15 years in working the industry in the UK and setting up the business in London in 1999, Nicholas now runs the business from Cape Town, developing the business in Africa and Europe.

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