

# Case study: are five heads better than one? essay



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Case Study: Are Five Heads Better Than One? This case study involves an interactive team working for Advert marketing firm on a new ad campaign for one of the firm's most important clients. The team of Evan, Conner, Alexis, Derek and Judy was picked by upper management based on their similar talents, personalities, and biographical features such as age and tenure at Advert.

This group was tasked with creating an innovative ad campaign to promote a 60-inch plasma television. Due to Advert's confidence in the team, they were given complete autonomy throughout the entire process of creating the campaign. During the initial discussion, the team selected an idea for the commercial and ran with it. Upon presenting the final product to their managers and the client, the ad was met with disapproval, ending the working relationship between Advert and the client.

There were a number of problems with the ad campaign that could have been prevented by both upper-management and the selected team members. The team's problems manifested during their initial meeting. The team showed ineffective planning, poor communication skills and lacked structure. In the meeting, there were many problems with the way in which the group went about establishing their idea for the commercial. Conner took the reigns at the beginning and presented his personal vision on what the commercial should be.

When Conner assumed a controlling and over-confident role, it led to groupthink within the team because the other members showed a lack of confidence to speak up about their opinions and ideas contrary to Conner's.

When Conner pressured those who expressed doubts, members such as Derek gave in to such pressure and refrained from expressing viewpoints contrary to the group's consensus, although his opinion would have been very valuable due to his previous experience with the client. This group conformity inhibits the creative brainstorming and decision-making process, which is very important in the advertising field. The managers also made an error in selecting a team that lacked diversity. In an advertising team, it is important to have a team composed of people with different backgrounds so they each add a unique perspective.

A homogenous group lacks this crucial diversity of perspective. Management also provided poor oversight of the project by giving the team too much autonomy and not screening the commercial before it was pitched. It shows the client that the senior members were not concerned and engaged with their employees. No research or fact checking was conducted to find out more about the clients image and positioning in the market. It is important to make goals and establish strategies oriented around the clients needs, possibly even by setting up a meeting between the client and the advertising team. A solution to improve the groups inefficient planning and poor communication would be to utilize a group decision-making technique, more specifically, the nominal group technique.

In implementing the nominal group technique, members share their ideas individually at first and then discuss the alternatives after each idea is presented. While the group is still meeting physically, there is little interpersonal communication in this process which makes this technique beneficial for independent thinking, whereas in other types of group

decision-making skills, such as brainstorming, there are many different people interacting at once and interfering with others thought processes. The nominal group technique, however, has its disadvantages because it is a time consuming process, one that requires planning and facilitation. Also, while the technique fosters individuality, it also impedes spontaneous discussion, creating a process that lacks in the exchange and expansion of ideas. In the case of Advert's group, the nominal group technique would have been an ideal method of exchanging ideas because it was apparent that groupthink was prevalent.

This method would have created a level playing ground for presenting creative alternatives for the advertisement. Advert's upper management should have selected a team with more diversity because the complete autonomy given to the marketing team led to the failure of the ad. A more diverse team would have fostered more creative and dynamic ideas. If the ages and personalities of the team members varied, there would have been a variety of ideas.

With more ideas, it is possible that the 'right' idea would have been chosen. Had tenures been different, it may have prevented Conner from imposing his ill fated vision on the rest of the group. A longer tenured employee may have spoken out about Conner's poor idea and helped avoid a flop. To go along with diversifying the group, Advert could have assigned a few marketing teams to the project. There would have been multiple ideas to decide from since each team would have an insight toward the ultimate goal of the client. The con to this solution is that it may have cost Advert too much money to compose two or more teams.

However, if Advert added three more members to the team and split it into two teams of four, there would be a better chance of developing multiple, creative ideas for the ad. Upper management failed to realize this and put all of their trust into one team of five, which led to a disappointment. After losing one of their most important clients, it would have been wise for Advert to spend the extra time to select a more diverse group or the extra money to expand its marketing team. Another possible solution to the problem is to have had more oversight and involvement from Advert's upper management.

Instead of giving the team complete autonomy, upper management would send a representative to act as a facilitator during the first few meetings. This would ensure that no hierarchical environment could develop and more importantly, this would prevent groupthink. In this specific example, upper management would have encouraged Derek to express his idea because of his experience working with the client in the past. Also, upper management would require the team to present updates on the project from time to time to monitor their progress. If they recognized that the ad was going in the wrong direction, they would be able to make the team rethink their proposal.

Lastly, upper management would screen the completed ad before it was shown to the client. As beneficial as it would be to have upper management monitor the team, it would be cost ineffective, as this process would likely cost Advert a good deal of money. Of the three proposed solutions, Advert should immediately introduce the nominal group technique to help avoid these problems in the future. This strategy would assisted with planning, communication and eventually lead to a more successful, creative

advertisement agency. The nominal group technique is a decision-making method that enables equal opportunity to each member to systematically and independently propose his/her own ideas to the group.

In the first part of the four-step process, each member writes down his/her ideas and proposals about the issue at hand before any discussion takes place amongst the group members. After the ideas are written, the members take turns presenting one idea from their card and continue to take turns until everyone's ideas are presented. After each idea is recorded, the ideas are discussed amongst the group to evaluate each idea and clarify its meanings. When the discussion is over, each group member silently ranks the ideas from best to worst, and the highest ranking idea is the final decision. Advert's loss of client is proof of how irresponsible/risky it is for group members not to explore other options or deliberate before settling on an idea.

Had the Advert team utilized the nominal group technique, Conner's idea most likely would not have been chosen because the other four members would be obligated to provide their own ideas. Derek would have had the opportunity to express his valuable insights on his past experience with the client and propose the idea that the company ultimately chose for their ad campaign. This decision-making technique would have absolutely enhanced the team's creativity and performance on the ad campaign. In addition, this technique would have been the most effective because it is the easiest to implement and would have had the most impact because it was the first and most crucial step in their creative process.

Also, the nominal group technique would have been the most cost effective as it would not have not required upper management to screen and find diverse members for the group nor would they have had to incur the extra cost of spending time to review ideas or approve the commercial. The nominal group technique enhances the communication process by putting all the group members on equal ground, thus eliminating any possibility of groupthink. The process forces each member to present their own independent ideas rather than hear someone else's ideas and passively agree on it like the team members in the case study did. However, the process is not without potential issues.

Because the process minimizes discussion of the ideas, it hinders the expansion of alternatives and, therefore, can be a less thought-provoking meeting than if another method was used. Also, because each idea is presented individually, some presenters may be more persuasive in sharing their proposal than others, creating a bias. In conclusion, Advert can trace its failure, and the failure of its marketing team, to a number of different instances throughout this process. However, had Advent implemented a team strategy, such as the nominal group technique, they could have assisted the marketing team in avoiding many of the problems they encountered. Had the nominal group technique been in place before the marketing team was even formed, it is reasonable to assume that Advert would not be dealing with these issues at this time and would not have lost one of their biggest and most important clients.