

Strategy Magazine

Bench strength

by **Lesley Parrott**

*With the seesaw economy of the last 10 years, staffing is an area that has followed that ride up and down. In the marketing sector, the effect of rapid or frequent staffing changes can have an impact on business that far outlasts the coming or going of a particular executive or creative. It's all about brands, says **Lesley Parrott**: A business can lose valuable institutional memory that is crucial to keeping a brand headed in the right direction, not to mention leaving certain skill sets perilously thin. **Parrott** offers some solutions to help marketers and agencies stay on track.*

The loss of key talent can have a devastating effect on both marketers and agencies. Building a sustainable brand relationship with consumers takes steady management to ensure consistency in brand positioning and a deft hand in maintaining the tone and manner of communication. Mistakes are invariably made as each new brand manager, strategist or creative wants to make their impact. The very essence of the brand becomes compromised.

So, what pressures cause the loss of these all-important brand champions? For many years there has been a focus on short-term results, often with no clear way of measuring marketing activities. Marketing and advertising is one of the few variable costs on the balance sheet, and time and again is victim to budget cuts. And as budget cuts have forced companies to compromise loyalty to their employees, in turn employees have lost their loyalty and now see themselves as free agents.

There are opportunities to reverse some of these challenging trends.

First, agencies must find ways to measure the return on investment of both long- and short-term marketing communications and demonstrate the folly and effects of diminished brands.

Second, employers should key in on what study after study has revealed about employee retention - the number-one reason people leave a job is because of their relationship with their immediate supervisor or manager. We must help managers develop strong motivational and management skills. Managers should not only build diverse teams able to meet the challenges of the marketing and communications tasks, but also let each of their employees know that their individual contributions are recognized and valued.

Lesley Parrott was former SVP, Education and Development at MacLaren McCann and is now principal in **Lesley Parrott Consulting**. She specializes in working with the marketing and advertising sectors and is an Associate of Insights Learning and Development, which develops programs to transform individuals, teams and organizations. **Lesley** can be reached at lp@lesleyparrott.ca or (416) 567-4596.