

A LITTLE MORE CONVERSATION

VARIOUS FORMS OF COMMUNICATION ARE ON YOUR AGENDA THIS MONTH

Time for action

According to *the marketer*, “it is essential to be able to use the language of business and finance,” (Another level, *the marketer*, March 2005, p6). So why do we still find statements such as: “Now 85% of MSN staff work flexibly, including 49% of men, and it has taught them to work smarter rather than harder, resulting in a 66% growth in the business” (No longer working 9–5, *the marketer*, March 2005, p13). This statement implies that flexible working has resulted in the growth.

If we’re going to consider marketing a business discipline we have to be much more careful with our assertions. We

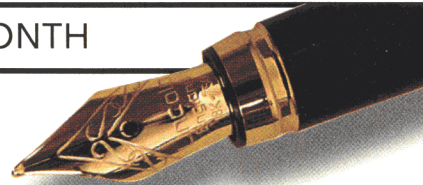
need to look at the whole business, and the business case for decisions. Perhaps (and this is only a supposition because I don’t have all the facts) MSN was already growing, so it could afford to introduce flexible working to help staff retention and sustain the growth. Without flexible working maybe it would still have grown at 66%? After all, we know from another article in the same edition that “There is so much competition in almost every aspect of modern-day business that staff numbers have been pared to the bone in an effort to reduce costs,” (Question time, *the marketer*, March 2005, page 32).

These three articles reflect some very different viewpoints and very different

challenges for marketers. I suspect that having good access to the board would be rare occurrence for many.

Not all companies are growing. If we are considering investing in better working conditions, additional people or bigger marketing budgets we must look at the costs and benefits, both tangible and intangible, and the overall business case. Let’s stop talking about talking business and finance and start talking it!

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