

## **Responsibilities of the Traffic Manager**

By Dawn Travelstead

The core competency of advertising agencies (and other creative outlets) is not simply the production of creative work. It's the efficient management of that production. Without traffic management — the ability to carefully control workflow — even the most creatively successful agency might find itself in a state of disorganization.

An agency has to meet deadlines and stay within budgets. In order to do so, someone must know who's doing what and when. The Traffic Manager, or System Administrator, is the "filter" through which all work should flow.

Workflow control begins the moment a job enters an agency. Typically, the Traffic Manager opens a Job Number at the request of an Account Executive (AE). This can be done in a number of ways — a Client Contact Report, Job Request form or Creative Brief, for example. Materials accompanying a job (e.g. client-provided copy, CD or work sample) should be routed via a paper job jacket.

The Traffic Manager is responsible for checking input for accuracy and requesting additional details as needed. A target delivery date, for example, is helpful in order for a schedule to be formulated. A Budget, no matter how tentative, aids the Traffic Manager in monitoring a job's financial progress in addition to its overall timing. [Note: In the absence of a dedicated Print Buyer, the Traffic Manager may be responsible for estimating projects as well as distributing materials to vendor outlets.]

In addition to verifying input, the Traffic Manager counsels the Creative Director, as well as other department members, during times of excess workload and establishes realistic Workback Schedules. He/she expedites the inevitable crisis job, so the remainder of work moving through the agency does so on a reasonably scheduled basis. The Traffic manager is also responsible for monitoring stalled jobs and moving them forward.

Keeping a job on track requires enabling information flow throughout all departments. This includes the gathering and maintaining of accurate records — everything from the initial Client Contact Report and estimate to subsequent Purchase Orders and printed pieces. The Traffic Manager ensures information is accessible to everyone involved with a project.

Providing continuity among team members in times of vacation, promotion and termination is yet another responsibility of the Traffic Manager. A job must continue to move forward, even in the absence of key team members.

Lastly, the Traffic Manager maintains an electronic archive of all completed and cancelled projects for future reference. The paper job jacket, if applicable, is filed as well.

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