New York

# Managing
### the
# Constant
### of Change
Preparing for the Growth
of Your In-House Teams.

**InSource** | Inhouse. Creative. Connected. | ⬡ Regional Roundtables

**Embracing changes that are needed in the workplace is often difficult for in-house creative teams.** When the business world is in flux, how can these teams stay nimble and compete in developing new capabilities as needed? By definition, change can be stressful and disruptive, generating some degree of resistance, risk, and uncertainty. That's why in-house creative leaders are important as agents for managing change. Managing change is a matter of managing expectations, which requires clear communication on an ongoing basis.

Sharing mutual concerns, experiences, and lessons learned on this complex topic is the focus of the 2014 InSource Regional Roundtable series, which included a lively discussion among in-house creative leaders on October 8, 2014, held at Adobe offices near Times Square in New York City. Facilitated by Robin Colangelo who serves as vice president of InSource and global director of creative services at White & Case, a group of 15 creative leaders came together to discuss "Managing the Constant of Change: Preparing for the Growth of Your In-House Teams."

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**Change Management Survey:** We asked participants to identify three challenges they face as in-house creative leaders in the following three areas (percentages reflect number of responses to each issue, and therefore equal more than 100%):

## Growth Goals

| | |
|---|---|
| 50% | Change From Order Taker to Strategic Partner |
| 40% | Grow Client Base |
| 30% | Executive Support |
| 30% | Other (process, build a team) |
| 10% | Add Responsibilities/ Accountabilities |

## Obstacles

| | |
|---|---|
| 70% | Resources |
| 40% | Convincing Execs |
| 30% | Other (talent, education, utilization of internal resources) |
| 20% | Recognition |
| 20% | Technology |

## Challenges

| | |
|---|---|
| 60% | Poor Communication |
| 40% | Executive Support |
| 30% | Prioritizing Projects |
| 20% | Production Process |
| 20% | Prioritizing Training |
| 10% | Other (budget) |

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**InSource provides the following takeaway messages from this roundtable discussion:**

**How in-house creatives keep clients in check**

• It's all about managing expectations; influencing and persuading; and gaining ground on value propositions.

• Set expectations early on with all people involved in making these changes. Be direct in ongoing communications but avoid an antagonistic or confrontational tone for best results. Pose the question: "Can you agree to this?"

• Use any opportunity you can to build trust and relationships, as well as build the case for best practices.

• When circumstances beyond one's control lead to inferior design work, conducting a postmortem on what went wrong and how to avoid similar results in the future can be useful.

• Gaining respect as an in-house leader takes time and initiative. Making the effort to build solid relationships with your peers is a priceless tool that will navigate you through future projects together.

• Make it a goal: Every project has a project brief, ideally written by the business partner—with assistance from the in-house creative team/leader when needed.

**Suggestion:** Consider using trends as an opportunity for others to learn internal processes and time requirements.

**For example:** Creating infographics can galvanize interest and attention to what's involved in creating compelling visuals.

**Suggestion:** Focus groups can be helpful to offer the opportunity for others to react to what can be done. Compare and contrast what can be done when the team is given 1 week versus 2 days for design work on a particular project.

• Be aware of the dangers of "intellectual complacency," when business partners may only focus on content. Make the case that their ideas will go further with greater impact when design best practices are applied.

• Organize periodic check-ins as well as micromanage each project timeline. Make all parties involved in the project accountable.

**Understand the difference between these two approaches:** Are creative team members owning the project OR is the business partner throwing the project at them?

• Plan for flexibility. Do what you can; sometimes it requires adjusting one's own thinking and accepting realities rather than engaging in a losing battle of "fight and educate" versus "adjust."

• Use language that resonates with each business partner/client.

**Note:** Using the word "business partner" instead of "client" may be more effective, especially in the in-house setting.

**Taking a seat at the strategy table**

• It's all about using metrics (both quantitative and qualitative); building trust and ensuring quality; and transparency and authenticity.

• Respect the corporate culture at all costs. The company's culture will endure beyond any shake-ups that happen.

• Sometimes change happens to us when we're not privy to the vision of those at the table. Galvanize around the vision/strategy rather than only react to poor change execution by others.

**Suggestion:** Take the initiative to bring added value. For example, start publishing an in-house e-blast or an e-newsletter on relevant topics from in-house creative services.

• The agency model has a change mentality. Metrics can show waste when the in-house creative team is not part of an outside agency-driven change execution.

• Be a champion for the brand, not the police or protector of the brand. Our teams are the brand ambassadors for their organizations.

**How in-house creative leaders build and keep a dream team**

• It's all about creating opportunities for growth; building team morale; and acquiring and retaining staff.

• Some staffing agencies are requiring up to 4 hours of project assignments as part of the screening process to assess the actual skill set of potential staff candidates.

**Suggestion:** Hire talent as freelance workers first, then convert to direct hire after mutual assessment of fit with in-house creative team needs.

• Make it clear up front what is needed beyond skill sets when recruiting for new staff. For example, basic etiquette and ability to interact with people in a polite manner are essential qualities to thrive in working with in-house creative teams. Ability to present work to others in a professional manner is also important, as well as the capacity to grasp strategic approaches to work.

• Take an honest look and determine what flaws you can live with when assessing the fit of individuals to work with your team.

• It's a fact of life that workload is constantly in flux. This means it's especially difficult to schedule staff development initiatives at times of project overload.

• For those who are "a team of one" as in-house creatives, start to make a case for more resources; the more one delivers, the more others will require from you.

• Become more strategic in everything one does. Ask yourself: What is the business case behind each initiative? Are your projects and goals lined up with your organization's strategic vision?

• The revenue model of the business does not revolve around design; it is critical to align with the business goals of one's company.