

**IT'S TIME TO DEBATE THE REBATE****是时候商讨回扣了**

I was lucky two weeks ago – I got to meet Michael Roth. It's not often you meet someone who knows nothing about advertising with plans to change a major advertising issue – and all for the better. It's well known that 'Good ideas don't care where they came from.' Mr Roth runs a group of companies called The Interpublic Group, a continually maligned, financially challenged holding group, still in search of a strategic plan (expected Jan 2006). All that said, his 'idea' is as basic as 'what is mine is mine – and what is yours is yours' – that media and production rebates should not be a source of income for his agencies, but instead be a benefit for the clients of those agencies.

两个星期前，我很幸运地遇到了 **Michael Roth**。一般上，你很少会遇到不了解广告的人，去策划改进一个主要的广告业议题 – 并且是为了改善目前的情况。这就是人们常说的“优良的概念无论从何而来。” **Roth** 先生是 **The Interpublic Group (IPG)** 的主席及首席执行官。**IPG** 是一间备受争议的控股公司，目前仍在制定战略计划（预期在 **2006** 年 **1** 月完成）。他的“概念”非常简单 – “是我的就是我的，是你的就是你的” – 媒体与作品回扣不应该成为他的代理公司的收入来源，这些利益应该属于代理公司的客户。

Here's the situation – on September 30<sup>th</sup>, Interpublic (who 'holds' agencies such as Lowe, McCann, FCB, Initiative and a whole slew of PR and integrated players) two weeks ago returned around US\$150m of 'retained rebates' as part of a five year, US\$550m financial restatement. Rebates are not new - through the 150 years of recent advertising history, they have remained an opportunity for media and creative agencies to generate more revenue based on preferred arrangements with their vendors. In first world markets, the practice has been progressively stopped over the last two decades. In the third world markets – well, the situation is less clear.

在 9 月 30 日的两个星期前，Interpublic（Lowe, McCann, FCB 的控股公司，业务包括公关及综合广告代理）送回大约 US\$150m 的“保留回扣”（retained rebates），作为五年 US\$550m 财务重新陈述的一部份。回扣并不是什么新鲜事 – 在 150 年的近代广告业历史中，这一直是媒体与创意代理获得更多收入的机会。这是通过他们与卖主的特殊安排。在第一世界的市场中，这个实践在过去 20 年内逐渐被中止了。至于在第三世界的市场中，情况则不是那么清晰。

Roth's decision to return these rebates globally is a watershed. It sets a new tone for business practices, and despite the litany of other problems at IPG, is a lighthouse for the rest of the industry to watch. For instance, one rival holding company currently under the gaze of investors reported GBP474m of media income from GBP7.3b of turnover in 2004. That's an effective commission rate of 6.5% - no doubt prospective bidders will be poring through financial data over the next month to understand how they managed to achieve that.

Roth 在全球范围内送回这些回扣是一个分水岭式的决定。无论在 IPG 有着许多其他的问题，这个决定树立了新的商业实践典范，就像是灯塔指引其他的同行。例如 IPG 的竞争对手，现在倍受投资者关注的另一间控股公司，在 2004 年 GBP7.3b 的营业额中获得 GBP474m 的媒体收益。这相等于 6.5%佣金率 - 毫无疑问，未来的出价者将会仔细审查他们下个月的财务数据，以了解这是如何达成的。

For agencies in Asia, this means that multinational and local marketers will be asking questions they never asked before. They will want greater transparency and clarity and likely more involvement in media vendor negotiations. And this could be a good thing - in markets like China, a joint client-agency approach to vendors will always deliver better results anyway. We've just completed three media rebates analysis projects in China - two of the agencies were in total compliance, and this made their relationship stronger.

对于亚洲的代理公司来说，这意味着跨国及本地的营销商将会提出前所未有的问题。他们将要求更大的透明度及清晰度，并且更加积极地参与媒体卖主的谈判。在像中国这样的市场，这可能是一件好事。客户与代理联合应对卖主的方法，无论如何都会取得更好的成果。我们刚在中国完成了三项媒体回扣的分析 - 其中两间代理公司完全同意我们的建议，这使他们的关系更加牢固。

But for marketers in Asia, this is a double edged sword - you can't pay a media agency the equivalent of 1 or 2% commission anymore and also expect all the rebates back as well. Some media agency fees must rise - in some case double or triple - but for the first time in a totally transparent way, so that there can be appropriate performance metrics set and greater talent locked in.

但是对于亚洲的营销商来说，这是一把双刃剑 - 你不能再支付媒体代理 1 或 2% 的佣金，并同时期待着得到所有的回扣。某些媒体代理费用必须提高 - 有时会达到双倍或三倍 - 但这是首次以完全透明的方式进行，因此将会有合适的业绩衡量标准，以及更佳的人才参与。

**You might say ‘be careful what you wish for’ – marketers must now be prepared to pay ‘more’ for media agency services – but agencies must be prepared for far greater scrutiny. Hopefully in the end, our children will see a career in advertising elevated above its current position down with other agents, hawkers and salesmen.**

你也许会说：“谨慎对待你的希望。” – 营销商现在必须准备支付“更多”费用给媒体代理服务商 – 而代理公司则必须准备更广泛及详细的审查。最后，我们希望下一代会看到广告业的地位向上提升，能够超越其他代理商、小贩和销售员。

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