TV services firm JCA pleads for level playing field

Company missing out on work with major clients due to corporate governance issues, writes Jamie Hurley

CASE STUDY: SALES

Entrepreneurs will adopt all manner of ruses to make their start-up appear bigger than it really is. Take the design agency owner who "borrowed" an unused space on the floor below his serviced office pool and called in an array of family members to pretend to field calls when a potential client came in for a meeting. Serious players would never trust a one-man band, he explained.

The bad news for new owners-managers is that it doesn't always get any easier once you've established and such subterfuge has long become routine.

Directors Simon Kay and Matt Bowman of film and television services business JCA, are evidence that even with a 20-year record and revenues of £3.5m, the scale problem doesn't go away. JCA stores, distributes and digitises content, translates titles and puts films and TV shows on to Blu-ray for example – it recently restorated Sharpe's Rifles, for example, the original incarnation of ITV's Napoleonic drama starring Sean Bean, transforming original film negatives to an HD format.

"The most cyclical reason I ever heard from a potential client was, 'your rivals' are under service contract and how they compare on the floor below his serviced office 'borrowed' an unused space on the platform says 'give JCA a call when a potential client claims. "After jobs have been awarded, we've been leaked the evidence that even with a 20-year scale problem doesn't go away. JCA in New York, we need to go out there and walk the streets," Kay admits.

"We've been thinking about a new executive advisor, but also whether we need a younger style of sales force," Bowman adds. "People talk about social networking tools, and we look at each other blankly. We've been asked, 'you're at the forefront of digital content, why aren't you engaging?' Perhaps we've missed the point that the youngest member of our management team is 42.'"

"The company simply focuses on building market share among its smaller players? 'People keep buying them,' says Bowman. "We're happy to look at small businesses, but the desire is to grow as quickly as possible. We're hungry," adds Kay, who is predicting sales of £4.25m for the current financial year. The 50-year-old says the company would like to simply settle for modest organic growth.

"We've gained more clients and the reputation of the business is really growing. We're cramped to the gills where we are. We could sit there until we win the next contract and simply add a couple more machines and people each time. But there's more ambition than that in the business and the marketplace needs the skills-set.'"

At a glance

Company: JCA
Based: North Acton, London
Turnover: £3.5m
Employees: 38

Challenge: Persuading large clients to see the business as a viable long-term partner rather than just a troubleshooter

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