

they can remember the constraints, demands and practicalities of working for a retailer. This can build credibility for a potential retail client who may be looking for recent experience of what it's like to be in their shoes, or for reassurance that marketers or designers have a practical outlook rather than just theoretical creative skills.

Nina Butt spent six years working as in-store marketing manager at Asda before leaving to become client services director at Bezier – working on the Asda account. "I always envisaged I would go agency side at some point to make myself a more rounded individual," comments Butt. "If I was to go back client side I would approach things – like the expectations you put on suppliers – differently."

Crossing the line offers both parties valuable personal and business benefits, and will be attractive for a variety of reasons. One key bonus is the opportunity it presents for individuals to broaden their skills and work with a range of clients with different needs and styles of working. "This can be a real shot in the arm for someone who has spent some time working for one or maybe two retail brands helping them to generate new ideas and stimulate creativity," says

**"In many ways I know more about the brand than some of the people briefing me"**

Paul Humphreys

Barrows International

**"I know how much working for an agency taught me, and I owe a lot of my skills to my agency work"**

Phoebe Cobb

David Clulow Group

Judy Bennett, psychologist and director at business psychology consultancy Criterion Partnership. "It can also give insight into what other retailers are doing in a way that isn't possible otherwise."

A move in the opposite direction might happen when people feel they want some longer-term continuity in the work they are doing and the ability to see plans come to life. Although agency relationships can continue successfully for longer periods, there is still the client-supplier relationship at work; when projects finish you may not get to see how results work out in the longer term, having already moved on to an entirely new project.

"Working within a retailer or brand name can create more of a sense of belonging and ownership as well as the potential for having a greater impact over time within the organisation," says Bennett. "An individual who has had agency experience can often bring fresh ideas and a broader view of what they are doing and how that can be of help to a retailer."

"Working for an agency develops your skills quickly, as there are lots of experienced people there to learn from," agrees Phoebe Cobb, PR man-

**Matt Sinfield, Beswick Design project manager**



"Working on both sides helps you to value the importance of honest and communicative relationships. Suppliers too often want to hide problems from retailers and be selective with their information, believing that the retailer is not interested in the detail, but I've experienced the frustrations of this. The best results for all and the avoidance of larger issues or delays come from open communications.

"It's refreshing to see the other side of the picture, and I've really come to appreciate the extent of the attention to detail that a successful creative agency must be committed to.

"It's good to have a new challenge and to be working for an independent, smaller scale business. It's offered me a level of autonomy and learning not really compatible with retailers' structures."

ager at optical group David Clulow. "I am currently working in-house and really enjoying it, but I know how much working for an agency taught me, and I owe a lot of my skills to my agency work."

The pace of work in an agency is typically hectic and demands multi-tasking to service a large number of clients at one time. High agency workloads can be particularly stressful as agency workers know they need to get the results for their clients or they will take business elsewhere.

Similarly for her career, she puts great value on the opportunity to work in-house. "It is a real luxury as you can give all your attention to one thing and really spend time developing your strategies and ideas."

The distinctive skills employees develop from these different spheres

are arguably of equal value, although they can manifest themselves in many different ways. While someone who has only worked in-house might not have the broad experience and benefits of working with a wide range of other professionals with creativity to share and the energy derived from that, they will have a deeper understanding of a brand. They may also have a practical attention to detail, and a view of longer term implications, that come from spending hundreds of working hours working on particular projects.

And, as the old saying goes, a change can be as good as a rest. This in turn can bring unique and special skills to an agency. Experience of both worlds will inevitably play a role in shaping an individual's and thus a company's capabilities. ■



**The Recruitment Specialists**

*...for people in every sphere of POP*

[www.nwahr.co.uk](http://www.nwahr.co.uk)

for the very latest opportunities

