

Your Guide to Selecting a Marketing Agency

How do you know that you need some help from an external agency?

You may need the help of an agency if you don't have the internal expertise to:

- assess your current situation and clarify your marketing objectives
- create the strategic direction for a clear marketing implementation plan
- translate the strategy into actions and make it happen

Alternatively, you may have this expertise, yet lack the time, inclination or resource from other team members to ensure your marketing activity actually happens.

What is the definition of an agency?

An agency is a business that specialises in a particular aspect of professional services; in this case, marketing. A marketing agency is essentially your 'one stop shop' for all your marketing needs – initial strategy, through to implementation of all your requirements. Should an agency not handle a particular aspect e.g. PR, then they are likely to know the right people to introduce you to.

What's the benefit for me?

If you feel that your current marketing activity is a little 'ad hoc' (if it happens at all) and lacks consistency and direction, the chances are, you are also wasting money. With proper planning, you'll be clear on what you're doing, when, to whom and how much it will cost. It will also be measurable, so you have KPIs for all marketing that you do. It will all look consistent and professional and, most importantly, actually happen.

So how do I know which agency is right for me?

If you select some agencies with experience of your industry, this ensures there is less of a 'learning curve' for the agency to get to know your business and your industry. With experience, the agency can also bring additional expertise and insights to the work they will do for you.

Should they be strategic or tactical?

Taking a strategic approach ensures that there is an overarching 'concept' for your marketing activity, from which all the implementation will work in a more cohesive and consistent manner to maximise your marketing budget.

Tactical activity alone (actual outputs e.g. direct mailing letters, adverts) without strategy, means marketing activity can be inconsistent, sporadic and reduce the likelihood of good results.

Should I be looking for any marketing qualifications or accreditations?

There are marketing institutions which provide industry recognised marketing qualifications and accreditation. It is recommended to work with an agency with accredited and qualified personnel because current members will keep up to date with the latest marketing industry learning, applications and best practice.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing is probably the most well-known and their Chartered Marketers need to complete 35 hours per year of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to keep up to date and current for the benefit of their clients.

The CIM maintain an online directory (<http://www.cim.co.uk/resources/chartered-marketer-directory/>) listing everyone who has earned the right to use the designation of Chartered Marketer - the mark of an up to date, experienced and qualified marketing professional.

Can I see examples of their work?

Being able to see examples, either on their website or at a meeting, will give you a good idea of the work they can do for you, along with an indication of price.

How will I know if we'll get along?

If you like the way their personality 'comes across' on their website, then it is worth meeting in person, to ensure their personality, ethos and values complement yours.

Are they happy to have a 'no obligation' meeting?

Any consultant or agency should be happy to meet with you for an initial meeting, free of charge, to understand what your requirements are, reassure you that their experience is relevant to those requirements, ensure there is good chemistry between you and ideally give you some initial advice that is helpful.

Do they provide the full range of services that I think I may need?

If the consultant or agency that you meet with can provide the marketing strategy for your business, can they then also deliver on the activities that need to be implemented?

Some consultants focus purely on delivering strategy and allow clients to use their own choice of designers, web developers, PR agents etc.; other consultants offer a 'full service' where they can deliver the strategy AND all of the implementation, giving you the benefit of one point of contact. This ensures all of your marketing activity is all managed in the most appropriate manner and is all integrating to deliver the best result for you.

Do they need to be geographically close to me?

Thanks to technology, distance isn't so much of an issue, however real relationships, in person, help to deepen good, long term working relations. In the unlikely event that any misunderstandings occur, it is easier to meet face to face to resolve them and they are less likely to happen with regular contact in person.

Are they happy to work with my existing in-house team or existing providers?

Any marketer should be happy to work with any of your current providers. This is all about what you want, after all.

What are the terms of engagement?

It is considered prudent for a consultant or agency to have some Terms and Conditions of Business that clarify what you can expect of them and what they expect of you. This should include payment terms. Split payments for projects may also be available, so if this would help, do ask.

What about retainers?

Larger agencies like to sign clients up to retainers, which ensures a payment level for the year, irrespective of service, so ensure you are clear on what you are paying for each month. Without a retainer, the emphasis is then on the agency to ensure they deliver and work smartly to deliver that project at the agreed price and on time.

Why consider Enterprise Marketing Solutions?

If you're looking for a helpful, full service agency that really delivers and guarantees an enjoyable working relationship, call Enterprise Marketing Solutions on 01296 910131 now for your 'first contact' meeting.