



Your Guide to Selecting a Marketing Agency

Are you guilty of typing the phrase 'Marketing Agency' or similar into Google and crossing your fingers in hope as hundreds of thousands of results scroll across your screen? If done properly and with the rigour it deserves, selecting a new agency will be a time-consuming and tedious affair as you embark upon a search for one amongst thousands. There is a whole world of specialisms to explore in the landscape of marketing agencies each with glossy logos, swish websites and a jargon filled language that needs to be deciphered before making a decision. Finding the right agency for your brand requires careful consideration to ensure you secure a long-lasting and productive relationship.

FindGood are professionals at navigating the landscape of marketing agencies, which makes us an essential travel partner for your search and selection journey. There's no charge to client firms for using our service, our agency compensation model allows us to remain completely unbiased as we advise our clients. We only charge agencies if they win the business, leaving us free to scan the full range of agencies out there in cyberspace and beyond.

Why it's important to do it right?

If you are looking for a shortcut to finding the right agency then you might as well give up now. There is no shortcut, no quick fix and no miracle method. There is only the long, meticulous (and right) way to go about your search and selection process. Rest assured the talent is out there, but finding the right one for you can be a challenge. It is easy to get weighed down by list upon list of options and candidates in a time consuming and exhausting process of research, communications and pitching. Remember, this is going to be a long-term relationship and the decision process demands a justified amount of thought and effort to the right agency – just as you would in a personal relationship.

Ultimately selecting the right agency is about the final result and will be measured on the success of the campaign or campaigns they deliver. Make the right choice and you could land a match made in heaven resulting in a revenue boost for your business that exceeds your expectations. Make the wrong choice and you can lose investment in a fruitless relationship.

So how can you be sure you select an agency that will give you these results? Unfortunately, we can't see into the future but you can take every precaution to reassure yourself you undertook the selection process correctly.



One in a million

In the UK there is fierce competition between the thousands of marketing agencies that are all screaming for a perspective client's (your) attention. Latest figures from Companies House listed

- 2283 companies under the category of 'Advertising Agency'
- 2734 'Design Consultants'
- 3400 'Event Agencies'
- 5709 'Graphic Designers'
- 1180 'Market Research Organisations'
- 4391 'Marketing Consultants'
- 2240 'Public Relations Consultants'
- 4935 who practice 'Website Design & Development'

With one of the world's most developed and sophisticated market for creative and marketing services it is both a blessing and a curse. Which agency can provide what you need? More often than not it is the smaller, less exposed agencies that can offer you the best working relationship and transparency, but those are notoriously hard to find.

Narrowing it down

Big vs Small agency

The question of agency size brings up two main subjects for consideration; cost and workforce. If you are delivering a brief with a smaller budget then a smaller firm may provide the best value as there is more likelihood the entire agency workforce will contribute their expertise. Large agencies are more likely to assign teams to a campaign that might require a collective of skilled individuals to work on the brief as it's being developed. Costs can quickly mount as more individuals are called upon to contribute at different stages and expenses can snowball. Also with larger overheads a bigger agency will need to recoup those cost through higher fees.

Specialist vs Generalist

In summary, a specialist knows a lot about a little and a generalist knows little about a lot. A generalist will have a thirst for knowledge in the field of marketing and absorb that information to apply to their strategies, using innovation from outside your own industry. One uncertainty of generalists is that their knowledge is deep enough to deliver at the level the industry demands. A specialist is a master of their craft and will use their distinct skills to produce high quality content and results. Unfortunately in the world of marketing agencies almost everyone claims to be a specialist in their field - trusting the wrong agency can equal disaster for your brand.

Single Discipline vs Integrated

An integrated agency will house a number of different marketing specialisms in one firm making it easy to include multiple channels to your campaign. For an effective integrated marketing campaign you will either need to call upon the services of an integrated agency or recruit several specialists to work in close collaboration. The benefit of recruiting single discipline agencies is that you can guarantee the services they provide are their specialism.



Ok, you know the agencies you want to contact – what next?

So the research section is almost completed but the hard work is far from over. Once you have shortlisted approximately six agencies you want to contact, based on their level of experience and expertise, it is time to deliver a brief.

Formulating your brief

The brief is as much a challenging task for clients as it is for recipient marketing agencies to respond. Culminating the history of your brand is an essential part of a brief, providing insight for agencies to begin work on a campaign tailored to your specific needs. The brief is arguably the most important part of the process. A well-written brief can separate those agencies that are unable to meet your specifications early on. This can help you avoid nasty surprises once you have invited them to pitch only to discover they are unable to meet your requirements. (By the way, FindGood offer a free brief writing service).

Proposals, pitches and final shortlisting

The next few phases are very much like dating. You need to build on the relationships between the agencies and yourself to gain a better understanding of their capabilities to fulfil your brief. Once you have asked the shortlisted agencies to submit their proposals you can begin communications via email, telephone and in person. Glossy agency websites and logos can be an effective form of self-promotion but also deceiving as it may disguise their lack of experience or knowledge in their field. In the process of pitching you will build a better understanding of the agency and begin to pick out the 'wolves in sheep clothing'.

Notes of warning

Confidentiality

When dealing with marketing agencies you must ensure there is a professional level of confidentiality. Neither yourself as a client nor the agency are permitted to discuss the brief with external bodies. You should adopt a heightened level of caution when dealing with agencies that represent a competitor. (FindGood can provide NDA documents)

Cost of pitching

Pitching can be an expensive process for both the client and the agency so you need to be sure that, out of the agencies you have chosen to shortlist, at least one will reign victorious. This puts extra emphasis on getting the search and selection process correct from the start.

Finally ... stay trend savvy


One indicator that an agency will be right for you is if they have an attuned awareness of trends in the marketing industry. Staying one step ahead in the marketplace is about staying one step ahead in the marketing world. To ensure your company are using new, innovative strategies you need to find agencies that are already aware of them. To catch fakers from performers you must do your research so you know if they have done theirs. And no, we aren't talking about knowing the biggest hitting YouTube video that week (although viral advertisement may be what you are aiming for). We are talking about the latest strategies being implemented in the field of marketing you are looking for. If you are unsure of where to start download **FindGood's Guide to 2013 Marketing Trends** as a starting point.



FindGood's insider tips for search and selection

From our experience in search and selection of marketing agencies we have picked up on a few tricks of the trade. Kindly we are going to pass these on to you, so notepads out and pens ready.

- 1.** If you aren't a flash brand with bottomless pockets then chances are **you won't get much response from large and award-winning agencies** so better to not waste your time and efforts. You will find the best response from an agency with an interest in your business compared to one that is flooded with proposals.
- 2.** Agencies that already provide work for **competitors of your own company will be unlikely to consider your brief**. This doesn't apply to all media agency specialisms however most will be hesitant to commit even if they choose to review and consider your brief.
- 3.** Friends and business acquaintances can be quick to suggest agencies based on their own experiences with them. However, **peer recommendations do not always mean that the agency will be suitable to your requirements**. For example an agency that produced a well-executed PR campaign for a consumer goods brand may not be able to produce the same results for a financial company.
- 4.** It can be reassuring to think the agency you have chosen is within convenient travelling distance allowing you to pop by regularly to see how things are going. **Convenience does not guarantee you are hiring the most competent candidate for the job**, they may simply be the closest.
- 5.** Agency new business staffers can get very over excited when they are approached with a potential brief. It is advisable to **avoid premature contact with agencies and do as much research as possible first** to reduce the chances of pestering phone calls and emails to your inbox. FindGood have a database of thousands of agencies that we search before ever getting in touch with anyone. But, as a marketer, you most likely won't have this luxury (unless you hire us!).
- 6.** **Be aware of the team of staff who will be assigned to work on your campaigns**. More often than not agencies will wheel out their best and brightest employees during pitch meetings but once the contracts are signed they will hand over responsibilities to less experienced staff or junior teams who you have not met.

Above all the agency you choose should be selected upon their particular skill set that suits your requirements. It can be particularly hard to pinpoint which agency has the right expertise among the thousands available. Requesting case-studies and completing extensive background research into agencies may still not reveal their ability to keep-up and perform in the constantly changing industry. That is where FindGood comes in. We have the knowledge and we have the time to dig on your behalf to find that one in a million. 



Feel a little overwhelmed?

Have you already made a cup of tea to avoid starting the task of marketing agency search and selection? We thought so. Don't sweat - FindGood can help. We search thousands of UK agencies, providing pitch prospects for firms of any size and offering solutions for clients unsure where to start when selecting a marketing agency. FindGood is an agency intermediary, we specialise in helping client firms to select marketing and communications agencies of all disciplines.

To learn more about FindGood and the services we offer, please get in touch.
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