

Hiring A Marketing Agency

The Complete Guide



LIMELIGHT
marketing

LimeLightMarketing.com



Choosing a Marketing Agency

Choosing a marketing agency can seem like a daunting task. If you're reading this, you probably know you need one, but how do you choose the right one for you?

You want a marketing agency who can work alongside you to transform your marketing both in terms of creativity and execution, and ultimately give you the best return on your investment.

While marketing these days is much more of a science than an art, hiring a new marketing agency does require a degree of intuition. We'll look at everything you need to consider when selecting an agency, from their capabilities and clients to their expertise and communication.

There are a lot of marketing agencies to choose from, but one of the most important things is that they're a good cultural fit with your company and a good personal fit with your team.

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What Does a Marketing Agency Do?

A marketing agency can maximize the potential of your company, product or service – essentially, they help drive sales and profit. They do this with their talent and expertise along with their ability to help you execute faster.

There are a myriad of agencies out there who provide a range of services, from niche agencies in the digital space to full-service agencies who provide all different types of marketing.

A marketing agency can provide services such as:

- **Creating and implementing marketing strategy**
- **Market research**
- **Customer profiling**
- **Branding**
- **Website design & development**
- **Search engine optimization**
- **Paid search**
- **Public relations**
- **Social media**
- **Advertising**
- **Data analytics**
- **Video marketing**

...the list goes on. But at its core and no matter the channel, a marketing agency should help you effectively reach your target audience and convert them into customers.



Why Brands Hire Marketing Agencies

There are various reasons [why brands hire marketing agencies](#), and it's important to discuss internally what gaps you need to cover and why you specifically need an agency. That will help you determine what sort of agency you're looking for and the types of questions to ask them.

Why hire a marketing agency?

1. You aren't getting the results you want from in-house marketing.
This undoubtedly isn't anyone's fault; there's often a lot of pressure on in-house marketers to cover a lot of ground, or you may not even have a marketing team
2. You lack expertise. Unless you're a massive corporation, it's often not possible to hire all the expertise you need internally. A marketing agency can offer a wide variety of marketing expertise while being more cost-effective
3. You don't have enough capacity. There is often too much work to do and not enough time to do it in, or you may not have the appropriate resources
4. Your current agency is under-performing. It may be that you already work with a marketing agency but they aren't achieving the results you require, or perhaps your needs have changed

Whatever your reason for hiring a marketing agency, whether it's because of a lack of results, resources, skill, knowledge, or expertise, finding the right agency will help improve performance and achieve your goals.

Choosing the right marketing agency for your business is critical to its success.

What Makes a Good Marketing Agency?

The list of characteristics of a good marketing agency is long, and rightly so. If you find a marketing agency which meets all of these considerations, it's probably worth taking the conversation further.

The Agency Is Results Driven

If an agency isn't driven by results, the conversation should stop there. After all, you are hiring them and investing money, time, and resources to meet a certain objective. How will you know what is working if they don't have the mindset, processes, and tools to track and analyze results?

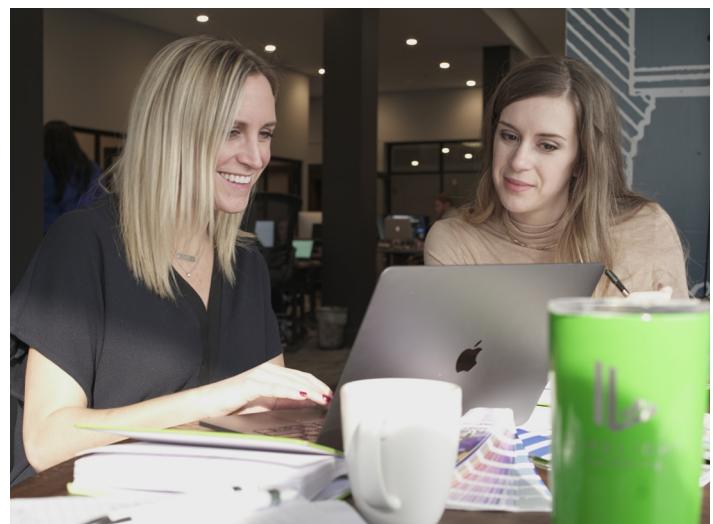
A good marketing agency will provide regular, detailed reports, analysis, data, and recommendations. They'll identify what's working and where improvements should be made to drive better outcomes, and they'll make proactive suggestions and provide insights. They'll also have access to data which can support competitor and industry research, showing you the wider picture as well as your own results

They Seek To Understand Your Brand

Don't partner with an agency unless they truly seek to understand your brand and can articulate your company's vision. They need to be as much a part of your brand as you are, able to understand and identify strategic opportunities, have your short and long-term goals as a central focus, and know your needs. That way, the relationship becomes a true partnership and they can advise solid strategy. If an agency can nail this, it can feed into everything else they offer.

They Have Knowledge and Expertise On Tap

A good marketing agency will be able to provide the knowledge and expertise you need to take your business to the next level. If you're looking for an agency who can improve your organic search rankings, find an agency which has SEO experts. If you need a new website, you'll need an agency with in-house web designers and developers. Take this a step further and look for examples of how they've helped previous clients achieve results.



Experienced Marketers Are Your Point of Contact

When you first contact an agency, you'll probably meet someone from their sales team. It's also important that the people who'll be on your team and working with you on a daily basis have the experience to support you and take your business further.

These account managers are the face of their agency, and your relationship and growth will be much more fruitful when they are experienced in branding, strategy, creative, and can deliver on your objectives. As the link between you and the agency, they should also be skilled at relationship building, have attention to detail and quality, good communication skills and be able to set expectations. Added to that, if they are passionate experts in their field, the value they provide can be exponential.

Processes & Tools to Keep your Work on Track

You want an agency who will consistently deliver on time and in budget. It's normal for agencies to be managing multiple projects for multiple clients, and allocating resources across client work as new requests and approvals come in. Strong project management processes and tools are an indicator that the agency has a process for managing workflow and delivering on time and in budget, while making it easier to work with them.

How will the agency deliver work to you?

Will it be via email where you need to search through months of emails to find a file or a communication thread about a project, or do they have a client portal where all communication is centrally housed?

These are important things to know before you hire an agency.



They Have a Strong Company Culture

The success of a marketing agency is very dependent on its staff, and on how they work with your team. If an agency has cultural values that align with your own, your staff and theirs are much more likely to work well together. The importance of this cannot be overestimated - this is where the bulk of the work and results will stem from, and these two teams must work as one. The people are the key to success - both yours and your agency's. Another positive signal is when a marketing agency invests in training its staff and is dedicated to learning. This shows that they are committed to growing their employees and keeping up to date in the constantly changing world of marketing.

They Are Good Communicators

Marketing is based on good communication – both external and internal. Having good, open, transparent communication with your agency means a stronger relationship, better teamwork, and a more constructive working environment. An agency needs to be able to clearly communicate expectations, timings, deadlines, needs, requirements – and you as the client should feel comfortable asking questions and challenging your agency. It's always better to start a relationship face-to-face, or by video. If that's already happened and a relationship is established, communication through digital channels becomes a lot easier.

They Understand the Digital Landscape

Even if it's not your first marketing priority, digital is such an integral part of our lives that every marketing channel has a connection to the digital landscape. A good marketing agency will be on top of the latest digital trends and be able to discuss them with you and advise your team. They should also be on the lookout for and responsive to changes in technology.

They Are Creative

If an agency ticks the expertise, experience and tools boxes but doesn't have an ounce of creativity, they will only be able to take your business a short way. Creativity helps an agency stand out from the crowd, which helps set you apart from your competitors. Conversely, creativity can't be the only card an agency has to play – it has to be backed up by the more robust practicalities we've already seen are characteristics of a good marketing agency.



They'll Ask Lots of Questions

You probably have a lot of questions to ask an agency - and if they're good, they'll ask you lots of questions right back. They'll want to ensure that you're the type of client they're looking for and that you'd be a good fit for them as well. The agency should also ask questions that allow them to feel confident that they can solve the problems you have and that their expertise aligns to your needs. They'll likely want to understand what you're currently doing for marketing, what gaps you are looking to solve, and what you consider success.

They Are Agile, Versatile and Able to Scale

A good marketing agency will be responsive and quick off the mark. They will be able to accommodate changes in your business or industry rather than sticking to rigid tactics, and they can meet your changing needs as you grow. In essence, they will have the flexibility that you would expect from an in-house marketing team to see what works, what doesn't, and pivot accordingly.

They Are Transparent About Costs

No one wants hidden costs or quotes that balloon as a project progresses. A good marketing agency will be transparent about what it will cost to meet your goals. They will work with you to clarify the scope of the work so that both partners are informed and understand what will be delivered for the value. That doesn't mean they'll be cheap - but a good agency will offer good value for the money. After all, it's the ROI that matters.

The Agency Will Market Themselves Well

A good marketing agency should have an informative, easy to navigate website. They may have a strong online presence such as a blog, be active on social media, take part in events and offer speaking engagements. After all, if an agency's job is to market another brand, they need to be able to market themselves first.

What a Marketing Agency Can Do For Your Brand

The Benefits of Using a Marketing Agency

Having looked at the characteristics of a good marketing agency, it's not a stretch to see how an agency can bring a lot of benefits to your brand.

- You'll get **better results** – your success is an agency's success
- You can quickly and easily tap into **fields of expertise** and depths of experience you don't have in-house (unless you pay a lot for them)
- Agencies are generally **more cost-effective** than employing a full in-house team – depending on the size of your business, of course
- Agencies are **efficient and productive**. They are used to working with a variety of businesses and are able to quickly understand your needs and how to fulfill them. Internal processes produce high-quality work on time and to budget while taking care of operational details
- Agencies frequently purchase **new tools and resources** such as software and training as it allows them to stay ahead – and it means you don't have to make these investments
- They also stay up-to-date with the **latest marketing trends** which allows them to better serve their clients
- Outsourcing your marketing enables you to **keep momentum and ensure stability**, regardless of changes to your team
- If you have a strict, urgent or unplanned deadline, you can use an agency to quickly **scale up**, using their skills and experience
- An agency provides a different perspective from your employees who work in the business every day. They can offer **new insights** as well as experience across different industries and types of business
- Agencies **help in-house teams** become more efficient, as they can reprioritize their workload to concentrate on core tasks

How Much Does An Agency Cost?

That is the million dollar question (normally figuratively, rarely literally). There really is no one-size-fits-all, nor should there be. As a brand, you need something that entirely meets your needs rather than an off-the-shelf package, so it's very difficult to gauge a ballpark cost.

Also, it's important to choose the best value rather than the best price.

Cost also depends on a number of factors, such as:

- **Your current assets and future needs.**

For example, do you have a website you're happy with, or does it need development? Do you have a customer database and do you want to grow it? Do you want to expand your social media reach?

- **Your goals.**

How quickly are you expecting to achieve your goals? If you want a quick return on your investment, you may need to increase your budget accordingly.

- **Scope.**

How much your agency does for you depends on how much you want to spend.

- **Your competitive landscape.**

What are your competitors doing and how competitive is the market? Higher competition will drive up cost.

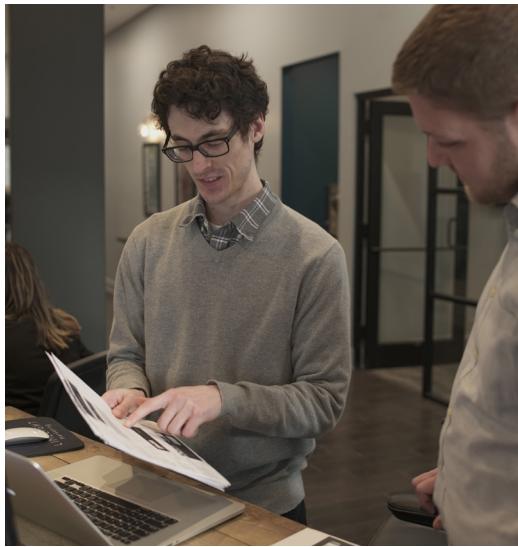
- **Geographic reach.**

Are you selling your product or service locally, nationally or globally? Some types of marketing can be more costly as increase your geographic footprint.

- **Duration of your buyer journey.**

Do your customers purchase quickly or do you have a long buyer's journey? A longer sales cycle often requires more content and more touches which can require a larger budget.

A lot of marketing agencies will work on both a retainer and project-by-project basis. Retainer-based services often include things like SEO, content marketing, social media management and email marketing, while a one-off project could be a web design and build, logo design, or a company video.



Nine Tips For Finding The Right Agency For Your Brand

Knowing all that you now know about what makes a good marketing agency and the benefits they can bring, how do you go about finding the right marketing agency for you? If you're looking to partner with an agency and build a long-term relationship, you need to do your research, meet with them, have internal discussions, and finally agree on your goals and what the agency will deliver.

1

Set your own expectations internally – what is it that you need, what do you expect to get, what kind of agency do you want?

2

Start with desk research, and don't limit yourself to the local area or restrict your search geographically. The agency that's right for you may not be on your doorstep, and that's fine – with modern technology it doesn't need to be

3

Look at the agency's body of work on their website and social media. Do they do for themselves the things you are looking for? Do they have a good website? Are they producing quality content? Do they have a consistent brand look and tone across all channels? In short, do they drink their own Kool-Aid...?

Dig deep, [ask a lot of questions](#), find out everything you need to know about the agency's capabilities and recent results, the tools they use, how they measure, track and report, how they handle challenges, how they prefer to communicate

5 Go even more in-depth on the agency's culture. Are they collaborative, innovative, energetic, vibrant, friendly, passionate? You need to know that they will work well with and be a good fit for your team

6 Meet the whole team you'll be working with - and ideally, everyone in your team should meet them too. It's critical that your main point of contact is an experienced marketer (it's something that's worth insisting on so you can be confident that they will help drive your business forward)

7 Have an open conversation about goals, budget, and timelines. A good agency will inquire about these things, but if they don't ask about your goals or what success looks like to you, how do you know that they can get you where you want to be?

Goals: ask them if they feel they can achieve your goals and be open to their feedback if they feel your goals are unrealistic.

Timelines: don't only talk about goals, but talk about the timeline for reaching those goals. If you agree to double website traffic but your expectation is to do that in three months and theirs is one year, this needs to be discussed.

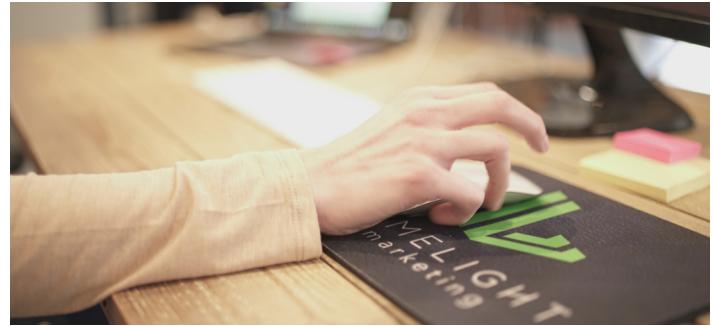
Budget: many agencies have minimum retainers which are good to know before you get too far. Share your budget with the agency rather than keeping it a secret in case the agency takes as much as they can. Marketing is much like building a house. If you want a \$30k house, you'll find a builder who'll give you a nice tiny house will bare necessities. If you want a \$7 million house, it's still a house but it will be significantly bigger, more elaborate and luxurious. In the same way, an agency needs transparency on the budget that makes sense for your business and your goals so they can create the best plan to get you there.

8 Ask for referrals and recommendations from other clients - and try and find reviews on third-party sites so you get a balanced perspective

9 Don't go on price alone. While price is, of course, one aspect to consider, look at the value the agency is providing before you squeeze their bottom line (which is often an ineffective approach anyway, as you may be scrimping on quality and service)

Hiring a Marketing Agency - The Agency Perspective

We've talked a lot about the things you should look for in a good marketing agency and the benefits of doing so, but we think it's also important for you to know what happens on our side of the fence when you contact an agency (and by 'an agency', we mean LimeLight Marketing!). This understanding should help the initial contact make more sense and be a smoother process for you.



What Happens When You Contact LimeLight Marketing?

When we receive your enquiry, we'll schedule an initial 30-45 minute discovery call with you. The purpose of this call is to understand your needs, challenges and goals and to determine if we can help you or not. We won't say we can help if we can't, or if it's not our area of expertise.

If we think we can help, we'll have an exploratory meeting either in person or on a video call. This will include the strategist who'd be working on your account, so you get to meet a member of your extended team. This meeting will go deeper into understanding your requirements and objectives, what you're doing today, what skills and capacity you have in-house, and what you are currently doing and how it's working. This is also the time we discuss budget and what makes sense for your business. We'll come to an agreement on whether we want to work together and if that's a 'yes', we put together a proposal based on what we've discussed together.

We'll have another meeting in which the strategist will present the proposal.. If you accept the proposal, we sign the contract, schedule a kick-off call, and work begins.

Our Key Learnings As a Marketing Agency

Over the years, we've learned a few things about the best ways to work to build a true agency/client partnership. They're useful for us, and we think they're useful for clients too.

1. Always align on goals up front and be transparent with each other - there is nothing to be gained for an agency by over-committing and under-delivering, or for a client by setting unrealistic goals and the partnership up for failure
2. Discuss concerns and challenges quickly and with transparency. Challenges can usually be overcome with good communication

Stay focused and be consistent - there are a million things you could do, but only a few that you should do. There is less than nothing to be gained by changing your focus and priorities every week, month, or quarter.unrealistic goals and the partnership up for failure

Discuss concerns and challenges quickly and with transparency. Challenges can usually be overcome with good communication

Why Hire LimeLight As Your Marketing Agency?

Our [About Us](#) page gives you an insight into our principles, culture, and our team. But this is the value that we really deliver on a day to day basis...

All our clients are managed by a marketer with at least 8-10 years of experience - you're paying for marketing expertise, and need people on your side who can strategize, set expectations, communicate clearly, deliver what you need, and read between the lines to identify challenges and see opportunities.

We are a high touch, high collaboration agency. Each one of our clients receive focused attention and are treated like a priority. We are not order takers, but consultants in helping grow your business.

Our team is made up of professionals who have worked across many different industries in different sized companies in corporate America. We understand business as well as marketing.



On behalf of the LimeLight Marketing team,

we wish you the best of luck in marketing your business. We hope this guide has been helpful in guiding your marketing practices. To get more helpful guides, tips and blogs on the ever-changing world of marketing, visit LimeLightMarketing.com/blog to sign up. As always, we'd love to discuss your business goals and help you align marketing tactics to reach them.



Brandee Johnson is an avid marketing expert with a passion for helping businesses achieve growth through data-driven marketing programs. She believes in building marketing systems and starting with strategy before tactics.

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Ready for the next step?

Check out our [Marketing Roadmap Guide](#) for all information necessary to getting off the starting blocks.

Need to refresh or jumpstart your branding?

We have a [Brand Guide](#) to walk you through the process of creating a visual element that will represent your company!