



How To Choose the Right Online Marketing Agency

Hello.

The marketing industry has changed dramatically over the last ten years, and agencies have had to keep up. As new channels and specialty areas have emerged, specialists have had to become more focused. Marketing agencies have to work harder to set themselves apart. Many have developed more focused service offerings, or have dedicated their work to serving clients in specific industries. This can make it even harder to find the agency that's the perfect fit for your brand.

The pressure to choose the right online marketing agency can be tough. It's tempting to keep all marketing initiatives in house, or continue working with an OK agency because you're comfortable with them. But your business deserves better.

- Most in-house marketing departments don't have the time or resources to dedicate to mastering digital marketing.
- An agency that's not continually impressing you with results and service can and should be replaced.

Whether you're looking to outsource your online marketing work for the first time, you need to replace an agency that's not delivering results, or you're looking for the right agency partner for your in-house marketing team, this guide was designed for you!

Before we get started...

A marketing agency writing a free download on how to choose the right marketing agency? Seems like it'll be pretty biased, right?

Telling you how great E-Power Marketing is would be easy, but that's not the point of this resource. Like every other marketing agency out there, we're the perfect fit for **our** clients. We're not the right agency for every brand. We don't have time to sell ourselves to brands that aren't a good fit for our agency, and this resource isn't about selling E-Power. The more empowered you are to choose the right online marketing agency for your brand, the more successful that partnership will be.

If, at the end of this, you'd like to learn more about E-Power Marketing to see if we're a good match for you, great! If you feel ready to take the next step with another agency who seems like a better fit, that's great too! Our goal is simply to help you move forward, to achieve your business goals and hopefully make your life a little easier along the way.

Prepare a Want Ad

When you're looking for an online marketing partner, it's important your needs and expectations are met. An easy way to get started is to pretend you're hiring a new staff member. You know what you have to offer them, and what you're looking for in return. Beginning your search for a new agency partner with the same expectations in mind will be a big help.

- What are the roles and responsibilities you'd like covered?
- What could a new staffer do to make your job easier?
- How will you be holding them accountable?
- What resources do you have to support them?
- How will the new agency integrate into your current team?

The clearer the picture you have of what you're looking for, the easier it will be to make sure the agencies you're talking to check all your boxes.

Pro Tip:

When an agency asks you for your budget requirements, share some numbers with them. A great agency will be able to work with your budget and design a customized program that will allow you to meet your goals with resources available.

A higher budget should get you a more aggressive program, but with no sense of your budget, the agency will have a hard time putting together a strategy that will really work for your brand.

Meet With Your Decision Makers

Is there anything worse than being ready to move forward with a decision, only to learn someone else needs to be sold on your choice? There are a lot of people invested in making your brand successful. Who is going to be part of the decision on which online marketing agency to hire? Put together your team of decision makers early on in the process, so you all have a shared vision for the purpose of the hire. The sooner you get your team on the same page, the easier it will be to reach a consensus.

The fewer the people involved, the easier it will be to move forward. Typically, the people involved in hiring an online marketing agency include C-Suite executives and senior level management in the marketing department. Occasionally, sales and web teams are also included, but more often than not we interface with those professionals after being hired.



Start Your Search

Though there are tens of thousands of online marketing agencies in the USA alone, you need to develop a short list, but how? Narrowing down your options can seem daunting. While there is no perfect formula to accomplish this, here are some ways to start:

- Do you want someone who specializes in your industry, or has a broad clientele? There are pro's and con's to both, so decide what's more important to you, a specialized focus or widespread experience?
- Are you expecting to meet face to face with your agency regularly? Digital marketing can be done online, so location doesn't have to be a factor, but if you expect a lot of in-person meetings, keep your search relatively local.
- Ask for recommendations! Great agencies have happy clients, so ask around! For a long time, most of our new business came from client referrals, when an agency does great work, people are talking about it!
- Search, search, search! You're looking for an agency who can set your brand apart online, so they should be doing the same for themselves! As an agency, we know first-hand how our own marketing can take a backseat to our clients' success, but a productive agency will make a mark for themselves online, too.

Pro Tip:

Be careful when using recommended lists and supplier directories. Many of these listings are paid, and not great sources for unbiased recommendations!

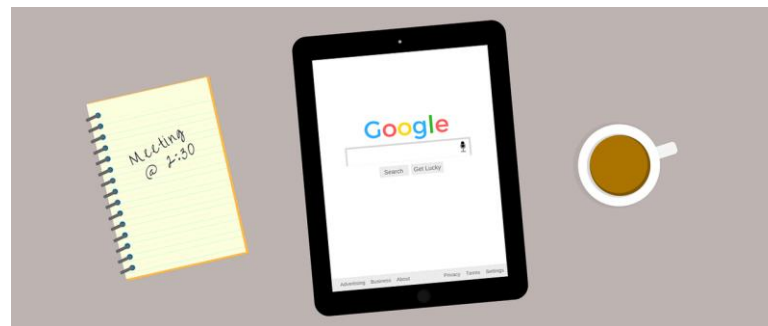
Let the Inquisition Begin!

Now that you have a short list of prospective agencies, it's time to ask the hard-hitting questions. Let's break things down a bit...

- What they do
- How they work
- Who they work with
- Why they're successful

One of the most important elements of a successful agency relationship is that you like and trust the team you're working with. What is it going to take for you to achieve that level of partnership with a new agency?

In the next few slides, we'll give you some specific questions to ask and things to consider, but before we get to that, jot down some of the characteristics and details that you think are most important for your team.



What They Do

Alright, first things first, do they really and truly offer the expertise and services your brand needs? Do they have the experience to apply their work to your brand effectively? Here are some easy questions to get these conversations started...

- How long have you been in business?
- How big are you?
 - ◆ *Bigger isn't always better, especially when it comes to digital marketing. You're more likely to get better service and more attention from senior level specialists with a smaller agency.*
- What are your core competencies?
- How do you keep up with the industry?
- Do you guarantee your work?
 - ◆ *Guarantees of rankings or results are usually a big red flag. Proceed with extreme caution when hearing these kinds of sales pitches!*
- What outside agencies or partners do you work with for additional services?
- How much do your programs typically cost?

Pro Tip:

Be the highest paying client! Great agencies provide great customer service and work, but they also devote more time, energy and resources to their biggest accounts. Look for an agency that you can be a meaningful client to.

How They Work

So now you should have a pretty good understanding of what services each agency offers, but how do they go about their work? If you were to hire them, what should you expect in terms of expertise and support?

- How do you approach online marketing?
 - ◆ *You're looking for an overview of their fundamental approach to digital marketing. Bonus points to those that can paint you a strategic picture of how their work benefits your overall marketing, sales and business goals.*
- Is your work done in-house, or outsourced?
- Do you use any tools or automation services to benefit your programs?
- What does your client onboarding process look like?
- What is your account management structure?
 - ◆ *It's important you have a clear sense of how their team will take care of you.*
- How often do your clients hear from their account team?
- How hands on is your program management?
 - ◆ *You shouldn't pay for an agency that takes a 'set-it-and-forget-it' approach to your program, ask for specific examples of ways they actively optimize their programs.*

Who They Work With

So you know what they do and have a general idea of how they do it, but can they do it for you? Who are they currently working with, and how do you stack up?

- Do you specialize in a certain industry?
 - a. How did you choose that focus area?
 - b. Why have you kept your client base diversified?
- Who are your current clients?
- Do you have any experience within our industry or targeting our audiences?
- If we signed on, would you work with clients we feel are our competition?
- How do you work with other agencies, client vendors and marketing partners?
 - ◆ *You want to be sure they'll integrate and work well with your other teams!*
- What are the job titles of most of your client contacts?
- Who is your longest running account? Who is your newest?

Why They're Successful

By now, you've heard a lot about why they think they are the right agency for you, but can they back it all up?

- What is your agency's mission statement?
- Tell me about your most successful program.
 - ◆ *Can they provide you with success stories or testimonials?*
- What sets you apart from the other agencies I'm talking to?
 - ◆ *How does this compare to what you're hearing from other agencies?*
- Why would you be successful running my online marketing strategy?
- What reports do you provide to clients?
- What references can you provide me?

Extra Credit

Alright, you have your most pressing questions answered, but a decision may not be obvious. Here are some bonus questions to ask your team that can help you determine which agency may be right for you.

- Who asked the most questions about your brand?
 - ◆ *If they weren't as interested (if not more) in you, than you are in them, they probably aren't the right fit.*
- Which agency's values best aligned with your brand?
- Do they seem to practice what they preach?
- Did the team seem fun and creative?
- Will they make our jobs easier and our business more successful?
- Do they seem like they will be strategic partners, or just service providers?
- How do their prices compare?
 - ◆ *The old adage, 'you get what you pay for' is certainly true in online marketing.*
- Did you get the chance to meet with your prospective account managers, or have all your interactions been with sales people?
- When you asked questions, did they respond with industry jargon and buzzwords, or did they use language you could understand?
- How was the chemistry?
 - ◆ *Remember, you have to trust and like these people for a truly successful partnership!*

Conclusion.

Ultimately, moving forward with a new agency partner is a risk. You can ask all the right questions, call references and do your homework, but use your intuition as well to decide which online marketing agency is the right fit for your brand. Be sure that they have your best interests at heart, are interested in and committed to your success.

As you move through the buying journey to find the right agency for your brand, be sure to keep your business goals and service needs in mind. Search for a true agency partner that will make your job easier and your business more successful. Be wary of guarantees or sales pitches that seem too good to be true. Online marketing is a fast paced and complicated practice, there are no quick fixes or magic formulas for success!

Your relationship with your online marketing agency will be one of the most important business partnerships you have. Once you've found the agency that is a good fit for your brand and team, can demonstrate their marketing successes and customer satisfaction, you're on your way to a truly successful marketing strategy!

ABOUT E-Power Marketing

E-Power Marketing has been generating the traffic, leads, and sales our clients deserve since 1998.

We amplify our clients' marketing and sales efforts by becoming their online marketing partner, working with all aspects of their digital presence, from SEO and online advertising to social media, content marketing and so much more to meet and exceed their business goals.



**Are we the right agency
partner for you?**

Let's Talk

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