



HUBSPOT
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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

**HIRING AN
INBOUND AGENCY**

HOW TO SELECT THE RIGHT MARKETING AGENCY TO
HELP YOU ACHIEVE INBOUND MARKETING SUCCESS



INBOUND MARKETING'S ROI CANNOT BE DENIED

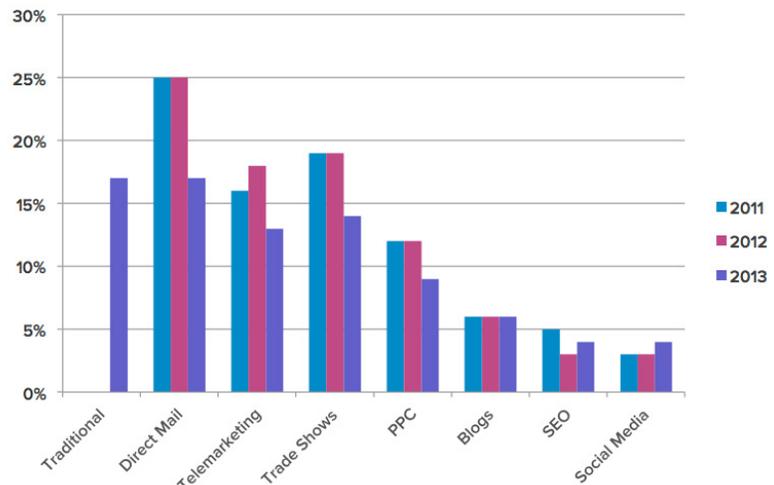
The return on investment a business experiences when shifting its marketing investment strategies from outbound to inbound is well documented. During 2012:

- U.S. inbound marketers who spent more than \$25K per year saved an average of 13% in overall cost per lead.
- 48% of marketers planned to increase their inbound marketing spending – the third year in a row that inbound budgets were slated to increase at a near 50% pace.)

It's clear — profitable companies are adapting to the 21st century and migrating the majority of their marketing to where their ideal buyers are doing their buying research and discovery — on the internet. Today 79% of online shoppers are spending at least 50% of their shopping time researching products. (Source: PowerReviews, Feb. 2012)

Q: Which sources of leads have become LESS important to your company over the last six months?

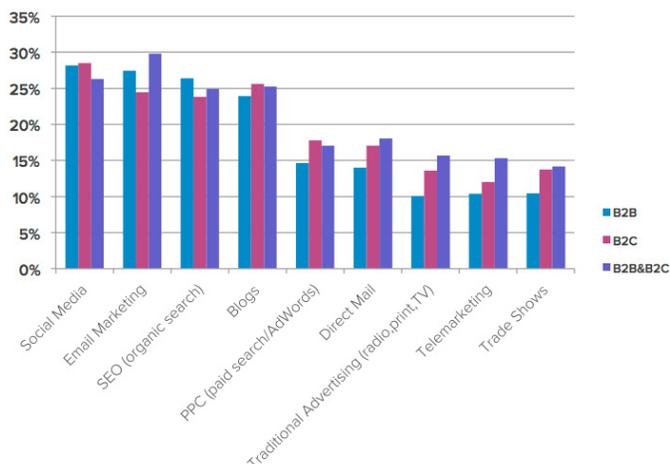
Interruption Marketing Losing Market Share
Traditional advertising, direct cede more ground in 2013



Q: Please estimate your company's cost per lead for each of the channels listed below vs. your overall average cost per lead.

B2B and B2C Marketers Report Inbound Reduces Average CPL

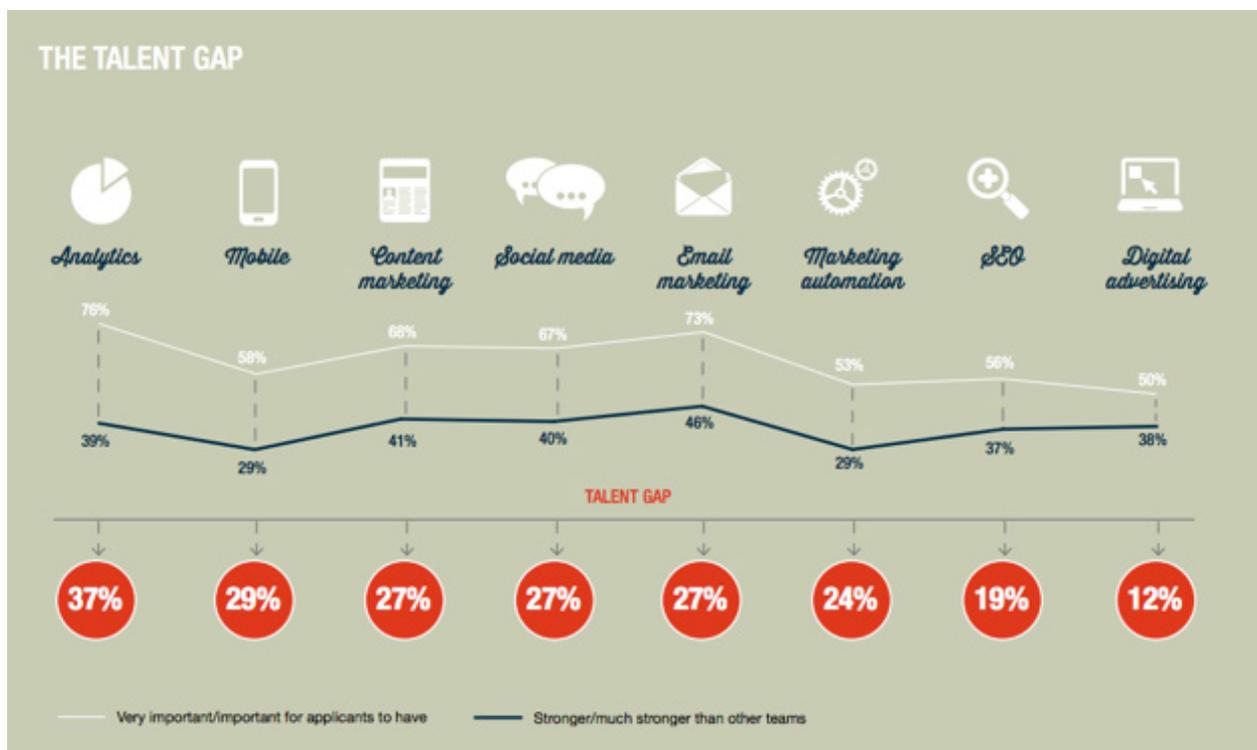
Both B2B and B2C firms found social, SEO, email reduce average lead cost



Companies that follow their ideal buyer personas online are blowing key growth metrics such as cost per lead (CPL) and cost of customer acquisition (COCA) out of the water. The inbound combination of remarkable content and website engagement create a bedrock foundation for sales and marketing efficiency, effectiveness and growth.)

MARKETING AGENCIES CAN ACCELERATE RESULTS

Marketing dollars have shifted away from traditional strategies such as direct mail, print advertising, and telemarketing bullpens. Unfortunately, the skill sets of many internal teams lag behind these new marketing strategies and requisite technologies by as much as 37%.

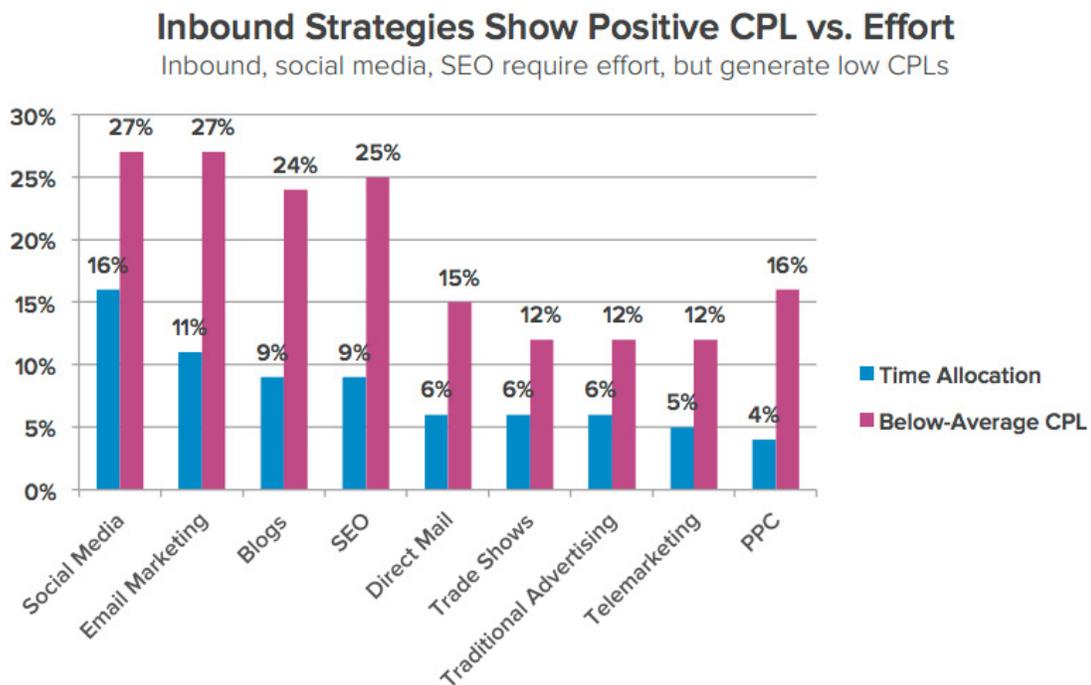


Source: Online Marketing Institute's 2014 Digital Marketing Talent Study

For most small and mid-sized businesses, the time and resources needed to train internal people on how to master inbound marketing must-haves such as SEO, analytics, and email marketing do not exist. While these strategies require more effort, they also generate much lower costs per lead and higher ROI.

As a result, smart businesses that want to take advantage of ROI-charged online tactics such as blogging and social media are turning to outside agencies for help. These agencies use their deep online experience to help organizations that are short on time and internal resources to increase their brands' online visibility and lead generation efforts.

Q: How does your company dedicate its full-time marketers to the following channels?



Source: 2013 State of Inbound Marketing

However, it's not one-size-fits-all proposition. Agencies come in all shapes and sizes, with different specialties and talents. Yet there are core values and skill sets that will make some better suited to your company than others. What follows are the 11 most important values you should consider when choosing an inbound marketing agency.



CHAPTER ONE

OFFERS THE RIGHT SERVICES

Hire a Marketing Agency that Delivers the Inbound Services that Matter the Most

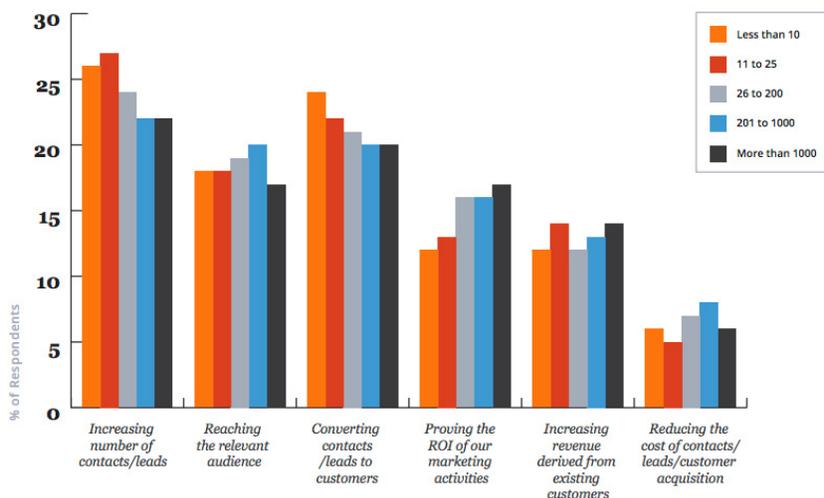
While a specialty or two such as social media or email is to be expected, any firm that claims to be an inbound agency must offer Four Core services. These services each have several tactical components. To deliver real value and maximum impact, all these tactics must be integrated and executed in optimal sequences. Seeing that an agency can fold all of these tactics together into one cohesive strategy is a good sign they know how to execute efficiently and get results.

The first core service of inbound marketing is generating traffic to a website using SEO, blogging, and social media sharing. The second is developing the premium content needed to attract site visitors' interest and convert them using landing pages and managing online lead generation efforts. The third is constructing targeted lead-nurturing campaigns aimed at converting those leads into customers. The fourth core service is measuring and conducting analyses at every step in the process for continuous tweaking to improve results.

As you can see from the adjacent chart, you're not alone in needing to improve the marketing results for your company. Small and mid-sized businesses are focused on generating leads, while large enterprises place a higher priority on proving ROI than do smaller firms.

TOP MARKETING PRIORITIES BY COMPANY SIZE

Smaller companies tend to prioritize lead gen, whereas larger companies prioritize ROI. Few focus on reducing cost per lead/customer



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

All of which points to the most critical success factor for the agency you choose — the capacity to set metrics, track results, and dig into them for insights on improving performance.

Doing so on a regular basis lets an agency repeat successes, and fine-tune underachieving campaigns. Reporting and analysis must be embedded in the agency's DNA. It must be a comfortable part of their vocabulary, second nature to all their actions, and embedded in all their tasks.

Key Questions to Ask

- Do you offer traffic generation, lead generation, leads-to-customers and analytically focused service packages?
- What tactics does your firm use to deliver each of these service packages?
- What past or current client example(s) can you show me that best illustrate a success in each of your service offerings?

Characteristics to Look For

- Comfortable discussing metrics, sharing their analytical thinking, and the results they've achieved for clients
- Prolific content producers — willing to share examples of eBooks, emails, and other content
- Deep analytical thinkers — willing to share and discuss analyses of work they've done (with confidential information masked)
- Asks insightful questions to help you clarify your specific needs

Red Flags to Avoid

- Glosses over questions on return on investment
- Can't show you how they connected the dots between goals, metrics, results and what they specifically did to improve results
- Doesn't blog regularly
- Doesn't have an active and vibrant presence on social media



CHAPTER TWO

PRESENTS A CLEARLY-DEFINED DELIVERY PROCESS

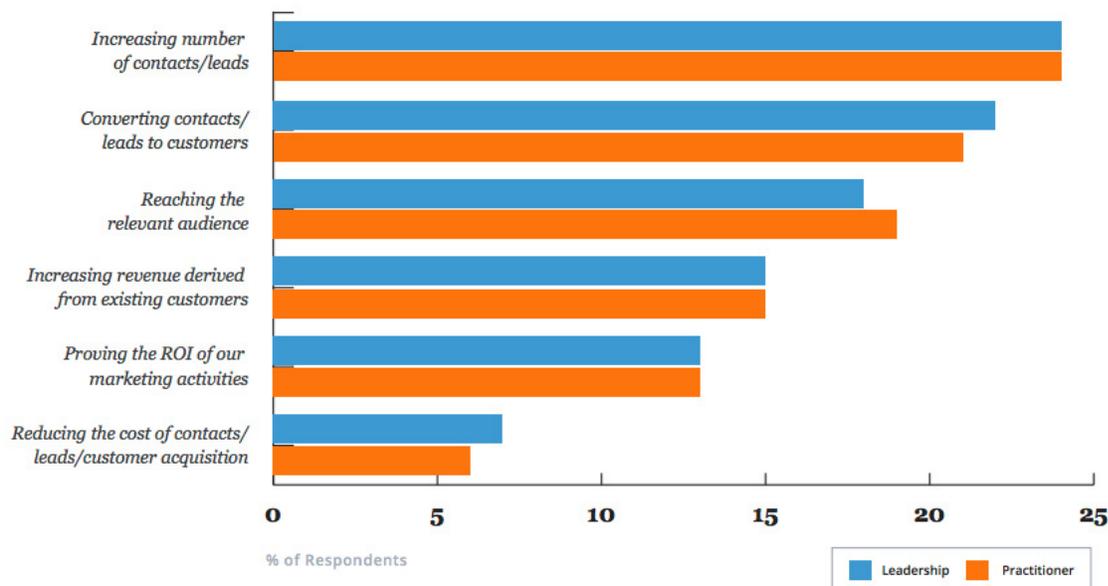
Hire an Agency with a Solid, Proven, and Logical Plan of Attack

They know you. They know your business. They know their capabilities and what is required for inbound marketing success. Therefore, any agency worth considering should be able to plot out the specifics and details for the strategy and campaigns they propose for your business.

Building on the goals and challenges identified in the sales process (more on this in Chapter 3), your potential partner agency should be able to outline their approach in terms of the Four Core Services and explain all the tactics they plan to employ in their execution. Expect a timeline for each chunk and a description of the resources they're likely to need along the way.

TOP MARKETING PRIORITIES BY ROLE

Strong alignment exists between marketing practitioners and leaders



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

Make sure each component of the strategy they're proposing, as well as what comes before and after each piece, makes logical sense.

- **Does your business have a limited web presence?** Then traffic generation services such as SEO, blogging, and social media need to come first.
- **Is your website underperforming from a lead generation perspective?** If you're like most marketers today, your focus is on reaching more of the right prospects and converting them. If so, your agency partner will need to ensure that your site has decent traffic and then begin crafting premium offers and landing pages to increase the number of leads coming in.
- **Are too few sales being attributed back to the website?** An agency brought on to help with that challenge will also need to look at traffic and lead numbers to ensure quality is present, and begin crafting targeted lead nurturing and email follow-up sequences.

Obviously, the ability to measure and interpret data is a baseline skill for each of the core services, and each agency you consider should be able to set benchmarks, identify trends and take action.

Key Questions to Ask

- Given your understanding of our situation, goals and challenges, what do you recommend we do first, second, third, etc.?
- How does our situation, and the plan you're recommending, match that of another customer you've worked with?
- What do you see as the most critical piece of inbound marketing for our business and goals?

Characteristics to Look For

- They regularly write in their blog about the trends and challenges in your industry and share specific solutions for overcoming them.
- They provide detailed flowcharts or diagrams showing how they would make different strategies work for you.
- They show examples of work they did for clients in the same (or similar) industries including details of how they implemented it, as well as charts / graphs showing results as they related to the clients' goals.

Red Flags to Avoid

- They jump around from subject to subject, unable to give you a logical and cohesive story of their work and its results.
- They can't name the resources that will work on your account and what each one will be responsible for.
- They have difficulty explaining metrics tracked, results achieved, and how they adjusted marketing strategies to compensate and improve performance.



CHAPTER THREE

CONDUCTS A GOAL-ORIENTED SALES PROCESS

A Marketing Agency's Pitch Should be Tailored to your Specific Business Challenges and Goals

The sales process of a good inbound agency will start with your goals and challenges, and dovetail into how they can help you. You're sure to see slides about who they are and what they do, but they should understand that their services are most compelling when they can be seen as potential answers to the business challenges you are facing.

They should begin by asking about your goals, challenges, and the timing and urgency around meeting those goals. Questions such as:

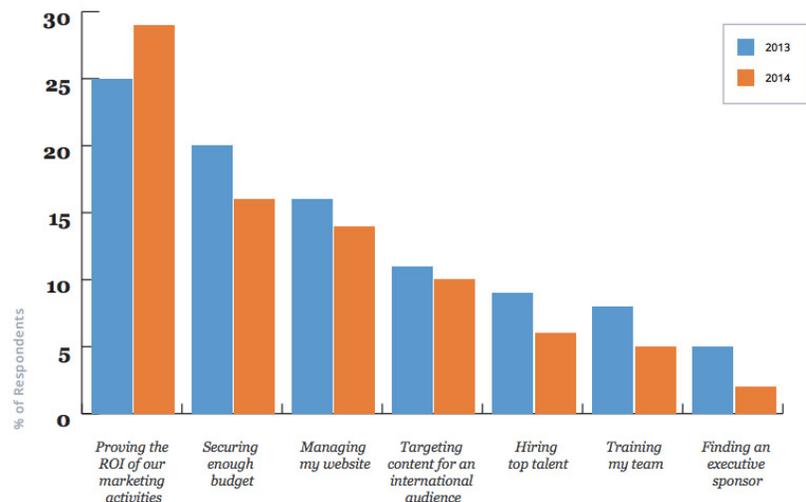
- How are you measuring the success of your marketing?
- What metrics and benchmarks are most important to you?
- What does the size and makeup of your internal team look like?
- What results do you need to achieve and by when?
- What are you doing now to reach them?
- Are you on track for reaching those results?
- What will you do / what will happen if you don't reach them?
- What challenges might keep you from reaching those goals or getting the resources you need?

Getting answers to these critical questions at the outset will allow them to prescribe a plan unique to your business.

Your goals and challenges should be natural segues into discussions around their capabilities and case studies.

TOP MARKETING CHALLENGES BY YEAR

Marketers are overcoming many challenges, but ROI remains a hill to climb



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

Key Questions to Ask

- What clients have you worked with who have faced challenges similar to mine?
- How does each piece of what you are proposing take aim at my challenges and goals?
- What is the timeframe for achieving my goals, based on the strategy you have in mind/outlined for my business?

Characteristics to Look For

- Curious about your business, asking questions that make you think and uncover details about your business and marketing challenges you hadn't thought about before.
- Listens well, asks follow-on questions that show they've heard your answers and tailors their responses to your precise situation.
- Passionate about what they do and how they can help you — this shines through when they show you exactly how they can help you achieve your goals.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Speaks in generalities “Yes, we’ve helped many clients” and can’t give you specific examples of what they’ve done or even cite relevant studies or statistics to support their claims or assertions.
- Asks superficial questions, they don’t dig deep.
- Can’t connect the dots between what they recommend and how it can help you achieve your goals or overcome your challenges.



CHAPTER FOUR

MAINTAINS A WEBSITE OPTIMIZED FOR INBOUND

Hire a Firm that Can Cite Itself as a Case Study

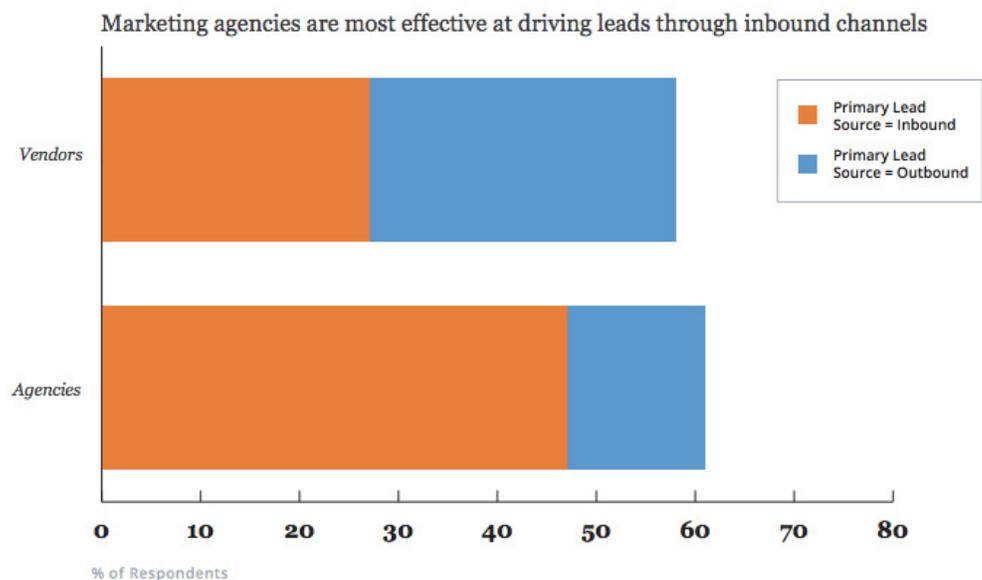
They will most likely talk the talk, but does the agency you are considering walk the walk? Meaning: do they do inbound for themselves? Digging into their site for a solid YES or NO answer to this question could give you interesting insight into just how good they really are at what they do.

Because you're in "hiring mode," your trips to their site have likely been dominated by scouring their services and client testimonial pages. But take a step back from these self-promotion pages and ask yourself, "Do they do the things they're proposing for me? Do they blog with the frequency they say I will have to? Are they active on social media? Can Call-to-Actions buttons and premium content offers that convey thought leadership or relevant information for my industry be found throughout their site?"

While one industry study shows that nearly 75% of agencies have used inbound marketing in 2013, a truly effective inbound marketing agency should be its own best case study.

Your partner agency should be fully utilizing inbound marketing and be excited to show you how well it's working for them with lots of charts and graphs. Think twice about engaging with a firm that doesn't make the services they sell a priority for their own business.

AGENCIES VS. VENDORS



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

Key Questions to Ask

- What have been the results of your own agency's inbound efforts?
- Does what you are outlining for us match what your own firm does online?
- What are some key lessons you have learned from using inbound marketing for your own business?

Characteristics to Look For

- Evidence of extensive use of inbound marketing throughout their website.
- Most of their employees are on social media and use it to share what the agency does for clients.
- When you click a CTA on their site, you see how well they attempt to convert you into a lead and nurture you into becoming a client.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Their website shows little evidence of inbound marketing tactics.
- They say most of their business comes from referrals, not inbound marketing.
- They say "we're so busy helping clients we don't have time to do it for ourselves" (i.e. "shoemaker's children" syndrome).



CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTS COMPELLING CASE STUDIES

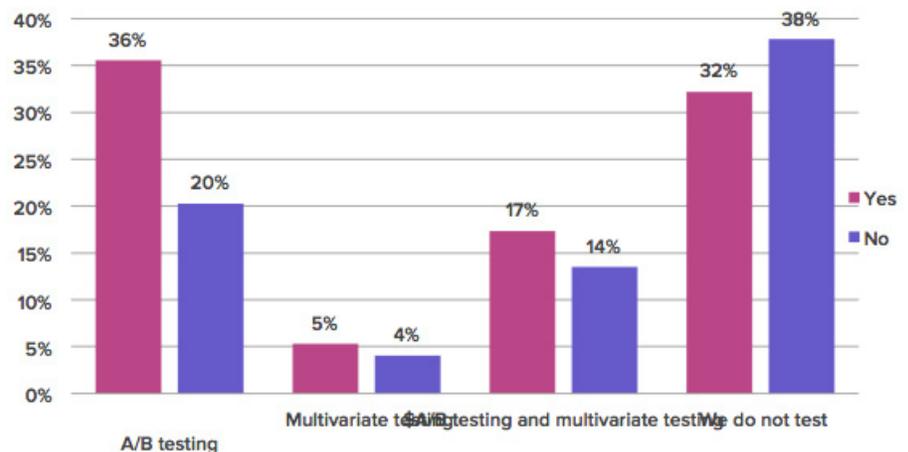
Hire an Agency with Compelling Examples of their Inbound Marketing Prowess

You're sitting at a conference table. A prospective agency partner is projecting some flowchart-heavy PowerPoint slides and outlining the inbound marketing strategy they've designed for you. While you're following the arrows and considering their capabilities, you should be asking yourself two key questions: "Have they done this before, and if yes, can they replicate that success for me?"

Any inbound agency truly hell-bent on delivering ROI for you will be eager to show you how they've done it for others. They should be sharing client success stories early on — if not, ask for them. They should be able to share the testing they've done and the results they got by tweaking tactics for their clients. The more testing they've done, the better they'll be at testing and adapting strategies and campaigns for you to optimize results. Such testimonials should include not only glowing remarks from their clients, but also numbers and campaign briefs that summarize the impact of their work with charts like the one below.

Make sure you consider the Four Core Services of inbound marketing when looking at these numbers and testimonials. Do these case studies cite proof that this agency was able to increase their customers' website traffic? Did leads increase? How did they help turn those leads into customers? Make sure the accomplishments they boast about match up with the outcomes you expect for your business.

A/B Testing Improves Bottom-Line Performance
Marketers conducting A/B tests 80% more likely to show inbound ROI



Source: 2013 State of Inbound Marketing

Ask prospective agencies for references. As long as there isn't a conflict of interest or a non-compete or non-disclosure in place, they should gladly hand names over. Award them bonus points if the client they refer you to you is still actively working with them.

Retainer work means that an agency has delivered and earned an ongoing commitment. Award them still more bonus points if the client has been working with them for multiple years.

Key Questions to Ask

- What case study materials and references from other clients can you share with me?
- What lessons do you plan on applying to our business from the inbound successes and failures you've had with other clients?
- What do you see as the critical success factors for inbound marketing?

Characteristics to Look For

- Relevant case studies available on their site.
- Able to provide you with a list of client references without hesitation.
- Clients who can speak specifically about the results this agency has delivered.

Red Flags to Avoid

- No examples of how they've been able to reproduce successes more than once. (You want to avoid a one-hit wonder.)
- Difficulty in proving the ROI they've achieved for clients.
- Unwilling to discuss any errors or problems and how they've recovered from them.



CHAPTER SIX

SHOWCASES A SPECIFIC FOCUS AREA

Your Agency Should Specialize, not Generalize

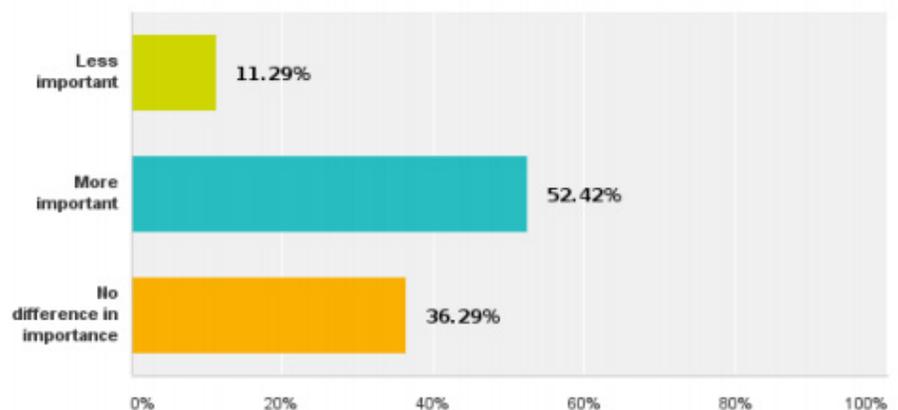
Does the prospective agency you're talking with have a sweet spot? If yes, is that sweet spot service or tactic-specific? For example, maybe they've done SEO for years and gotten phenomenal results. Or is their sweet spot industry specific? Meaning they have had numerous client engagements in your industry (or a close relative to your industry) before. If they do have one of these sweet spots, see if they align with your challenges and goals. They should, or that lack could reduce your ROI and give you migraines later on.

Use the sales process to get a solid handle on your prospective agencies' specializations. If they have a service sweet spot — take social media for example — they should know the fastest and most surefire ways to leverage it for traffic and leads. Or if they've worked in your industry, it's likely they know key industry terms, trends, and thought leaders – which will make content easier to create at the outset.

Specialties, such as the examples above, can make an enormous difference when implementing a comprehensive strategy spanning the Four Core Services. You may agree with the 52% of marketers in the adjacent [RSW/US study](#) who feel it's more important than ever before that their marketing agency have a specialty. If so, whatever that specialty turns out to be for your chosen partner, be sure that specialty makes you stronger instead of depleting your resources.

Marketers

Do you feel it is less or more important to use a marketing agency with a specialty today than it was 3-4 years ago?



Key Questions to Ask

- What industries do you specialize in? Have you worked in my industry before?
- Which part of inbound marketing is your strongest capability, and how does the strategy you plan to lay out capitalize on that in particular?
- If you have worked in our industry before, who do you consider to be our thought leaders and what key blogs do you follow? If you don't know them, how do you plan to go about finding them?

Characteristics to Look For

- Lots of industry specific content on their site.
- Thought leadership evidence on their site (marketing industry awards, their leaders quoted in the press or have published articles on industry sites).
- In-depth examples of their expertise in your discussions with them and from their references.

Red Flags to Avoid

- A "jack-of-all-trades" attitude and company culture.
- Dismiss specialization as unnecessary – "we're quick learners."
- Fill specialization gaps with consultants or contractors.



CHAPTER SEVEN

TEACHES AND TRAINS YOUR INTERNAL TEAM

Hire an Agency that Wants and Knows How to Leverage Your Team's Industry Expertise

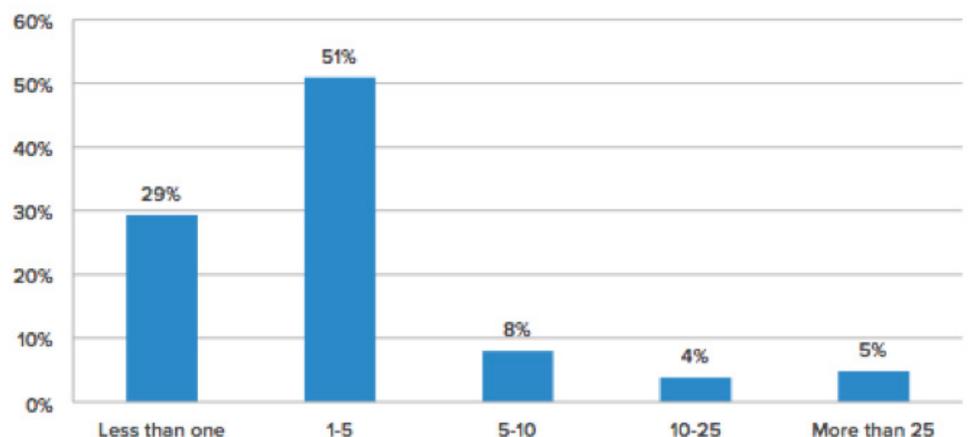
Inbound marketing hinges on effort. Effort to create content. To tweet. To research keywords for SEO. To blog. To think about conversion events on your site and how lead nurturing campaigns could be tuned to better perform. Lots of effort. Any agency you hire will need to spearhead and facilitate all these efforts, but should also be ready, able, and eager to train members of your internal team on how to blog and use social media, among other things.

Consider how many people work in your business and all the different things they do and perspectives they bring. Think beyond marketing and sales. How about manufacturing? Research and development? Shipping? Distribution? Logistics? Engineering? Customer support? Human resources? IT? Finance? Think about the remarkable content that folks from these different departments could contribute to your firm's inbound marketing efforts. Consider how much more visibility a tweet will get if it's tweeted out by 15 or 20 employees, rather than just the company's account.

If you're like most companies (see adjacent chart), you have a very small marketing team and can't possibly do everything yourselves, even with a marketing partner to help. You need to tap into the collective wisdom and energy of your entire firm if you want to get the most value from inbound marketing.

Inbound Marketing Teams Average One to Five Members

51% of all inbound teams contain fewer than 6 people



Source: 2013 State of Inbound Marketing

An agency truly worth its weight will be eager to talk with all of your folks — no matter what department they work in — and willing to train them on inbound marketing best practices and harness their brain power. The more “hands on deck,” so to speak, the quicker you can build momentum and begin showing results.

Key Questions to Ask

- To what extent do you plan on using members of our team for content creation, etc.?
- How do you plan on setting those folks up for success and ensure the pieces they work on with you are a good use of their time?
- How has involving a client’s team members to do inbound marketing worked in the past?

Characteristics to Look For

- Natural educators — they effortlessly explain how to do something and why it works (or doesn’t) and how to do it even better.
- Suggests and looks for ways to leverage your existing assets, whether they are people, content, or ideas — and doesn’t care where they come from, only how well they support your goals.
- Has one or more people on their team dedicated to supporting and teaching clients about inbound marketing and how to do it well.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Insists that they are the best source for content creation.
- Devalues other departments’ inputs and contributions as helpful to reaching your goals; claims complications and problems will happen.
- Points you only to online training resources saying it’s better than anything they can do and more convenient for you.

CHAPTER EIGHT

KEY CAPABILITIES RESIDE EITHER IN-HOUSE OR WITH A TRUSTED PARTNER

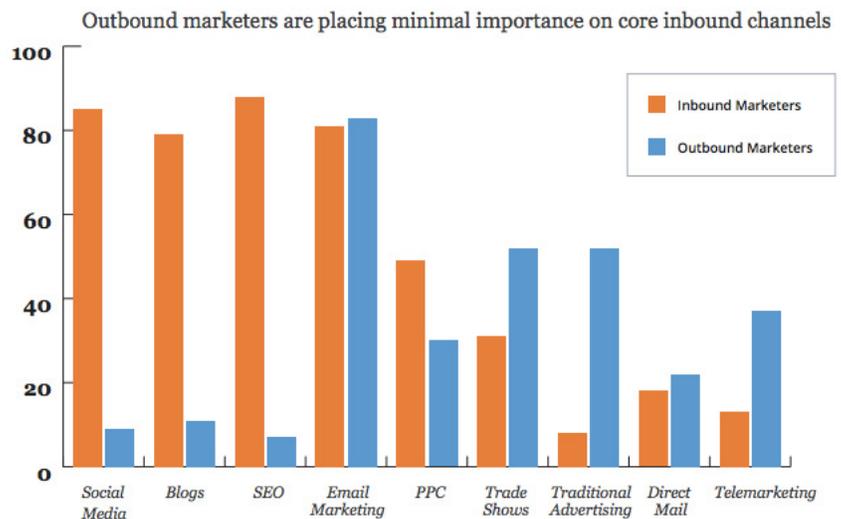
Hire an Agency that Can Explain How it Does What it Does

A complete inbound marketing strategy is comprised of many different tactics. It's like a puzzle – but not because it's confusing. It's a puzzle in the sense that it's got a lot of constantly “moving” pieces. Pieces, which while they might stand on their own, are far less effective and efficient than when combined together in a comprehensive and cohesive strategy. And to truly succeed online today, every business will need to leverage all the right pieces to create a comprehensive marketing strategy that's right for them.

Assembling the pieces together into one, cohesive strategy is the job of your agency. Each piece is crucial to ensure that you are generating the optimal number of leads and driving your costs per lead down. So it's important you understand a potential partner firm's capabilities at the outset of your relationship. Make your prospective agency provide details around how each step of the strategy will get done.

Every agency operates slightly differently. As we mentioned earlier in chapter 6, many agencies will specialize. That means they might not have the talent in-house to deliver a service entirely on their own. So it's always a good idea to ask who is responsible for creating/executing each piece. They might outsource different parts. Agencies that use partners for technical pieces of the work, such as web design and programming or application integrations, will be relying on that partner's schedule.

WHICH LEAD SOURCES HAVE BECOME MORE IMPORTANT (OVER LAST 6 MONTHS)



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

Probe the agency about who their partners are, how long they have been working with them, general timetables, and specifically what pieces of work will be assigned to them. Ask the agency why they chose this partner and about their track record on previous projects.

Find out the details of their back-up plan and who their go-to partner will be if this partner can't meet your schedule or their work isn't satisfactory. And do the same exercise again with this new partner until you're satisfied that this agency can meet their commitments to you.

Key Questions to Ask

- Do you do all your inbound marketing work in-house?
- If yes, who on your team specializes in what?
- If no, to whom do you outsource what? And how long have you worked with them? What's their performance track record?

Characteristics to Look For

- Clear explanation of who is responsible for creating and executing each element of inbound marketing.
- A well-defined back-up plan showing how execution will continue for each element, regardless of the circumstances for the interruption.
- If any work is being outsourced, the prospective agency readily discloses to whom they outsource and for what, their reasons for doing so, and can provide evidence of a successful track record with that partner.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Lack of clarity about who in the agency (or their partner) is responsible for each element of your inbound marketing strategy and the tasks associated with it.
- Reassurances that "we've got it covered, don't worry about it" without adequate proof of why you need not worry.
- More work is being outsourced than being done by the agency itself.



CHAPTER NINE

HAS STRONG PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

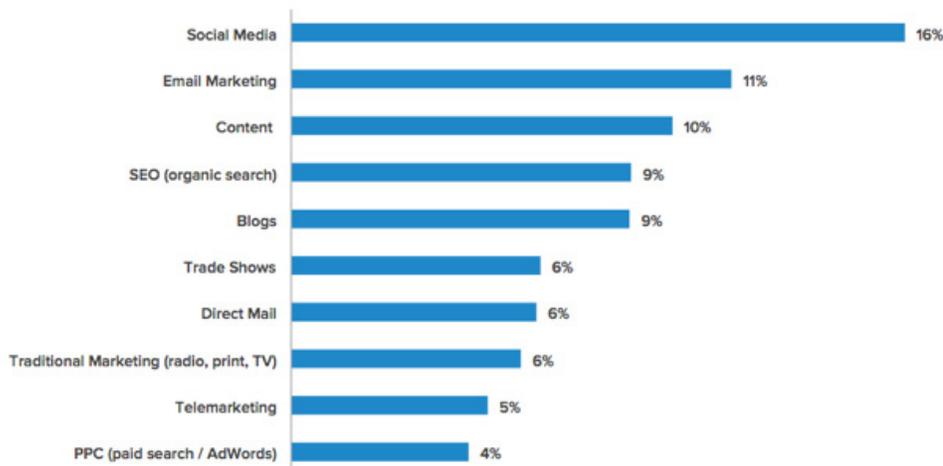
Inbound Marketing is a Serious Production and the Marketing Agency You Hire Should Want to Run the Whole Show

Inbound marketing is an organic process. It requires time, elbow grease and coordination. Any inbound marketing agency you choose will need you to invest quality time with them. This will be especially true at the beginning of your relationship to get up and running fast, and at regular intervals to ensure their methods stay sharp and inline with your business. As is true with most companies (see chart below), they'll also expect that some members of your team will be dedicated to certain elements of inbound marketing. They'll want to educate them to ensure that these people have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their assigned tasks.

They will need to understand who your customer is and get a sense of the types of content that will be most effective in attracting qualified prospects to your site. They'll also be adding forms and other inbound elements such as call-to-action graphics (CTAs) to your site to help convert those qualified prospects into leads.

Companies Focusing Energy and Personnel Time on Channel-Specific Marketing

16% of marketers allocate a full-time marketer to the social media channel



Survey N
=3,339

Q: How does your company dedicate its full-time marketers to the following channels (as a percent of total time)?



To operate effectively, an agency must get inside your customers' heads to understand what motivates them and drives their decisions. At the same time, they'll also have to develop a close working relationship with you and your team so they become familiar with how everyone works together. And don't forget the need for a productive working relationship with your website admin/ webmaster and your sales ops / CRM administrator, so they can coordinate tasks.

Does the agency you're considering have the process and communication skills that give you the confidence they'll make respectful, reasonable, and realistic requests of other people? Have they set clear expectations around what each inbound component will require in terms of time and resources? Do you feel secure that they can manage campaigns with lots of moving parts? They should. A good agency will make your life easier — not harder.

Key Questions to Ask

- What types of requests, technical or otherwise, do you anticipate making of me and my team as our engagement kicks off?
- What types of requests do you anticipate making of me or other members of my team on an ongoing basis?
- What project management software, spreadsheets, or other orientation materials should we expect to receive and when?

Characteristics to Look For

- Highly organized — they should be using an online project management system of some sort and be very happy to include you and your team on it.
- Eagerly provide samples of timelines and project charts.
- Can give you confident estimates of average time it takes for any particular task to be done.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Disorganized in their thinking and how they present information to you.
- Casual about timelines and deadlines.
- Uncertain about / reluctant to disclose / don't know the average amount of time a task typically takes.



CHAPTER TEN

PLACES AN EMPHASIS ON MEASUREMENT

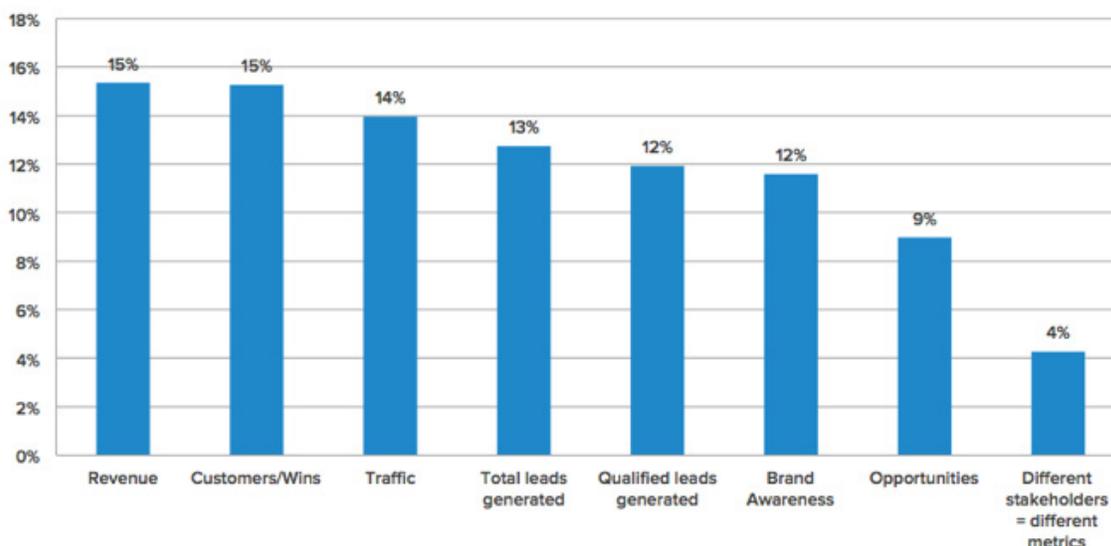
Agencies that Measure Everything Succeed

The Internet is an infinitely measurable place. This makes each element of the inbound methodology trackable and interpretable. This fact should be leveraged heavily by any inbound agency with which you are considering working. Your prospective agencies should have presentations littered with the words “tracking,” “metrics,” “benchmarks,” and “analytics.”

You have goals — and there are lots of ways to define success (see the chart to the right). Whatever they may be, you’re trying to meet (and hopefully beat) them by hiring this agency. Therefore, your agency should be even more focused on charting success in a data-driven way than you are. Progress made toward your goals should be measured every step of the way, and an inbound marketing agency worth its weight will be able to track all campaigns and report on performance regularly.

No Single Variable Dominates How Marketers Define Success

While 15% of marketers track revenue or wins, no clear pattern emerged to measure success



Source: 2013 State of Inbound Marketing

Key Questions to Ask

- How will you measure the success of the campaigns you are proposing?
- How often will you report back to us on these campaigns and progress being made towards other key metrics?
- What adjustments can be made if certain metrics are over or under performing?

Characteristics to Look For

- Fluent in talking about metrics, probing you for how you want to measure success and offering up ideas and recommendations you may not have thought of.
- Shares lots of data with you, showing you examples from their efforts to market their own agency, as well as of clients.
- Offer examples of how they incorporate A/B and multivariate testing in their offerings and the results achieved.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Avoid talking about tracking, metrics, and especially ROI and are quick to say it's difficult to track and prove ROI.
- Don't push you to describe your goals in quantifiable terms or explain what metrics they can track that are related to your goals.
- Don't show a chart or graph that even remotely resembles the type of metrics related to your goals.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

VALUES TRANSPARENCY

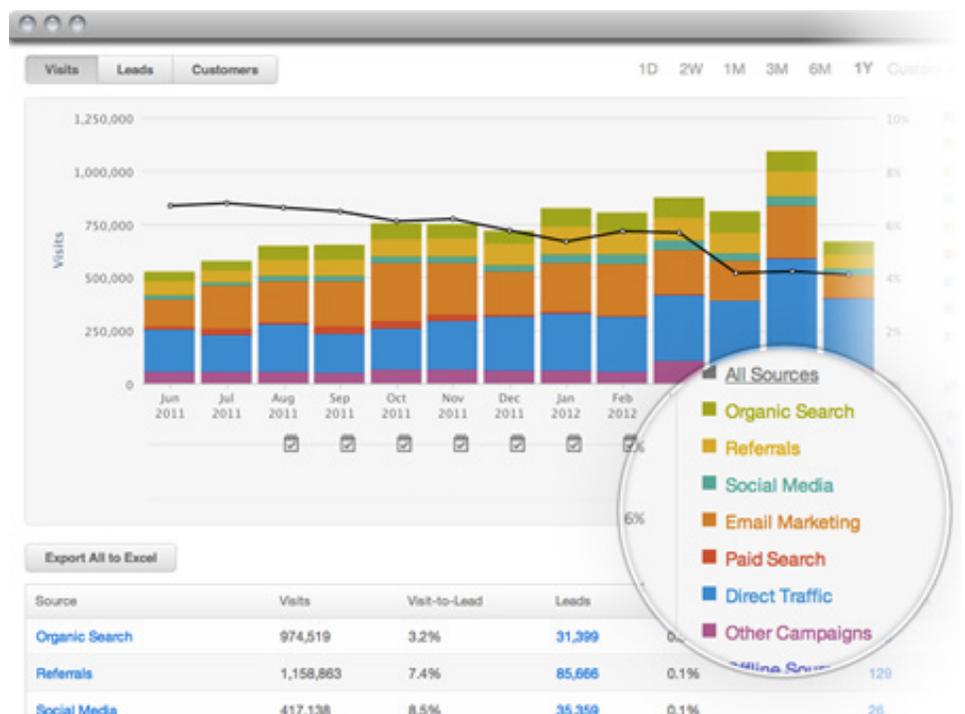
Your Marketing Partner Should Want You to See Everything They See

Make sure the agency you are considering embraces transparency as a core value. While you're not likely to see this word next to a bullet on a PowerPoint slide, an agency can infer and prove they are transparent with their clients by citing and discussing the three main business practices below.

First, they should outline a regular meeting schedule in their sales process. These meetings allow the agency a regular venue to raise questions and/or concerns as an engagement is ramping and progressing.

Second, every agency should jump at the chance to train your people. The more you and your team understand what is being done and why, the more you can thoughtfully partner with your agency and set their efforts up for success.

Third, truly transparent inbound agencies will insist that you have login credentials to the online marketing software they use to run your campaigns. These accounts are loaded with data, and they should be open and comfortable with you walking around in their world and questioning what you see.



Transparent agencies make their client a welcome member of the team and get greater velocity because of it. They solicit input and feedback often, and pair their know-how and judgment with their client's industry experience to craft killer inbound strategies and make tweaks where and when needed.

Key Questions to Ask

- What online software packages do you use to execute and manage inbound marketing?
- Will we be trained on this software?
- How often will you share wins and progress with us?

Characteristics to Look For

- Discuss their required regular meeting schedule, what gets accomplished in those meetings, and won't accept anything less because it affects their performance.
- Demand that you be a contributing, active member of the team – not just a passive approver of work — or they won't take your account.
- Insist that you and your team must become active users of the online marketing software and will provide the training as part of their services.

Red Flags to Avoid

- Don't use marketing automation software.
- Say they'll send regular reports, but don't need to meet regularly unless you feel the need – “we're trying to respect your time, we know how busy you are.”
- Recommend online training for your team members who are interested, and don't proactively offer to train people themselves.

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