

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT MARKETING COMPANY



INTRODUCTION

Have you decided to hire a marketing company to help your business grow? For business-to-business companies (like manufacturers, business service providers and companies who sell to other businesses rather than individual consumers), it's a great **choice** – more B2B companies are starting to put the power of marketing to work in growing their revenues.

The only challenge is figuring out which company to work with. If marketing is a new undertaking for your company, you don't have a yardstick to measure success – and since there are many different kinds of marketing and **literally** thousands of companies to choose from, it's a complicated choice.

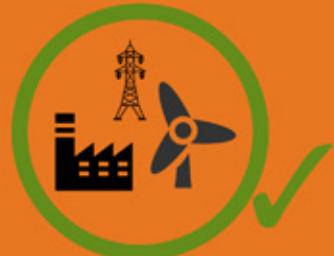
This ebook provides important criteria to evaluate each of the marketing companies you're considering working with. The answers will help you determine which company will be a good partner for you – and which ones are more likely to spend your time and money, without delivering solid results.

DOES THE COMPANY HAVE EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS TO BUSINESS (B2B) MARKETING?

The majority of marketing companies are consumer marketing agencies – they know how to market products and services to consumers (think consumer packaged goods, restaurants, hotels, personal electronics, movies and the like). The challenge for B2B companies is that **consumer and B2C marketing are very different**, so a company that is fantastic at consumer marketing might be a novice when it comes to B2B marketing. Worse yet, they might not understand the differences between B2B and consumer marketing, and apply their consumer marketing principles to your marketing – which is a potential recipe for disaster when it comes to getting results from your marketing investment.



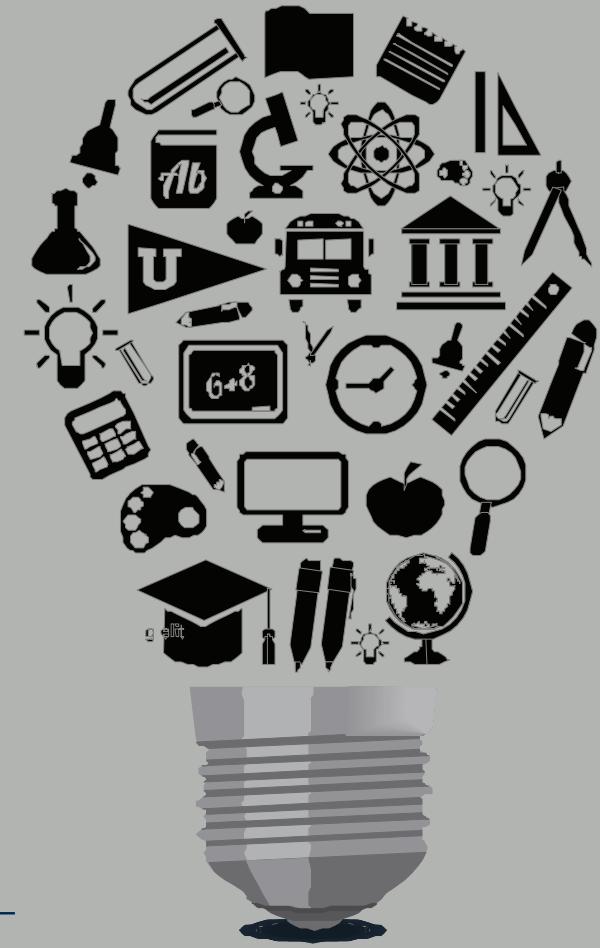
Make sure the marketing company you're considering has ****strong experience in B2B****, and even better (but not essential) if they have experience selling to the kinds of buyers that your company targets.



DOES THE COMPANY HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH RELEVANT TOOLS AND TACTICS FOR MARKETING YOUR COMPANY?

All marketers have experience with particular tactics – sometimes traditional tactics like trade shows, lunch 'n learns and direct mail, and sometimes with digital tactics like email marketing, webinars and social media. Most B2B companies need multiple tactics working together in an integrated way to get the best results.

Discuss the kinds of marketing tools and tactics that the company has used and has had particular success with. They're most likely to talk about the ones they have the deepest experience with. Make sure those are the right kinds of marketing for your business. Just because a firm has deep experience with direct mail or social media doesn't necessarily mean those tools will deliver results for your company. If you aren't sure which tactics are right for you, Read [How to Choose the Right Marketing Tactics for Your Company.](#)



WHAT IS THE FIRM'S CORE COMPETENCE – CREATIVE OR CONTENT?



The majority of marketing companies are creative agencies. Their staff have titles like Creative Director and Designer. They usually have incredible design expertise and a portfolio of beautiful marketing work – it's what they're great at. But when it comes to B2B marketing, creative isn't critical. Yes, marketing collateral needs to portray a company effectively, but overly creative work can come across as too slick and turn off B2B buyers. Content is more important than creative.

Find out from the companies you're talking to what they consider their strength to be – content, or creative. If they tell you they're excellent at both, be cautious. Great content marketers will happily tell you that creative is important but ancillary - and that their primary strength is in B2B content development and distribution. Make sure the firms you're considering know how to use content to raise awareness and generate leads. You want marketing that will deliver business results – not just look nice.

WHAT BUSINESS MODEL DOES THE COMPANY USE?

Different companies have different ways of working with clients. Some work on a project basis, others work on an ongoing basis. Some work from afar in a virtual-only model, and others work on-site or a combination of onsite and remote.

There are pros and cons to every way of working, so there's no 'right' answer. What matters is what will work for your business. Many B2B companies offer complex products and services, so the marketers need to develop an intimate understanding of the nuances of the business – which can be difficult if they work only virtually. Some companies need a marketing project completed as part of their overall plan, in which case choosing a firm that typically works on an ongoing, retainer basis with clients won't work well.



Find out what model the company uses. And be cautious if they say they do both projects and ongoing work equally well. That's rare, as the two models have different cost structures – so you'll either be overpaying, or getting underserved.



IS THE MARKETING COMPANY THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOUR BUSINESS SIZE?

In the marketing industry, there is a wide spectrum of service providers. There are many boutiques with one to five employees, and there are marketing agencies with hundreds of employees. There are some firms in the middle. What's the right size for your company, knowing that with small comes personalized attention but often resource and expertise gaps, and with large comes consistency but potentially a budget that doesn't make sense for your company.

Make sure that your business is going to be big enough for the marketing company to care about you, but not so big that you will be stretching the company beyond its capabilities. You're looking for a partner that is just right.



SUMMARY

B2B company leaders are used to making decisions about operations, engineering, HR, finance and IT – all areas where they have experience. Marketing is a new tool, which means a learning curve in finding a good marketing partner. The questions here aren't exhaustive, but they'll help you start the process and talk with a few different companies to find out how their styles and approaches differ. You'll be better informed of what to expect and avoid choosing a firm that won't deliver results for you.

Want more information?

Read 5 Questions CEOs Should Ask Marketing Firms.

MORE ABOUT THE MEZZANINE GROUP

The Mezzanine Group is a new kind of marketing company that provides an alternative to hiring full-time marketers or retaining a traditional outside agency.

Mezzanine provides a complete marketing department service that combines senior strategic marketing expertise with execution resources and know-how on an ongoing basis. For mid-sized B2B businesses we deliver marketing that is effective, affordable and accountable.

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