



Guide:

HOW TO CHOOSE A DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCY

Make sure they practice

what they preach.

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Our team works with hundreds of businesses executives and marketers and we often hear about how challenging it is to find the right digital marketing agency. As businesses' digital marketing ad spend continues to skyrocket, we've seen an influx in agencies purporting to be experts in digital marketing. But how can you prove that a so-called digital marketing agency truly does have the experience and know-with-all to bring your company the results you expect?

One way is to ensure that they are following that age old saying "practice what you preach." These supposed digital marketing agencies may list trendy digital marketing services on their website or try to sell you digital services over the phone but are they just throwing out buzzwords hoping you bite? Are they truly proficient in what they do? We believe one of the best ways to judge a digital marketing agency is to see if they are actually implementing these same strategies for their own agency. In other words, are they practicing what they preach?

In this guide, we highlight the benefits of digital marketing services and a checklist of things to look for in a digital marketing agency. Before you partner with an agency, it's best to do some "homework" to see if they really can help you before making a decision. Follow these guidelines to help you find the best fit for your company.



Website

Having a website is core to any business but especially important for a digital marketing agency because it is the digital storefront that allows potential agency customers like you to research their business, services, clients and case studies. Use these guidelines to determine if your digital marketing agency is the right fit for your next website design.

1. Is the agency's website simple, well-designed and easy-to-use?

Is the content you're looking for easy to find? If it takes more than a couple of clicks to figure out what services they offer or who they are, the agency's website is poorly designed. The site should be free of clutter and have logical paths toward the content you want. Ultimately, you want to provide your site visitors with the best possible user experience. Clutter and misdirection don't meet this objective.

2. Does the website content (text, videos, images, design) speak to the agency's buyer persona?

In other words, is the messaging directed at someone like you? If it isn't, you might not be the agency's target customer. Also, is the content all about the agency or all about you? It should be all about you.

3. Does the site have a good mix of text, images, photography and video?

If not, the agency may lack in certain creative areas.

4. Does the agency update their site frequently or is it stale and out of date?

A quick way to gauge this is checking out how often they blog. When was the last time they posted? If it wasn't this month, they may not understand the importance of fresh content to search engine rankings. It also may be a sign that they don't have a CMS that is easy to use and update.



5. Do they have analytics installed on their site?

Although it can be tough to tell if an agency is using website analytics just by looking at their website, it is worth asking about during a sales call. Digital marketing has become synonymous with analytics so if your agency is not analyzing what works on their website and what doesn't, they won't be able to build you a site that is optimized for your customers. So ask the agencies you are considering if and how they use their website analytics. Are they tracking website traffic, website behaviors and website ROI? They should be.

6. Is the site responsive?

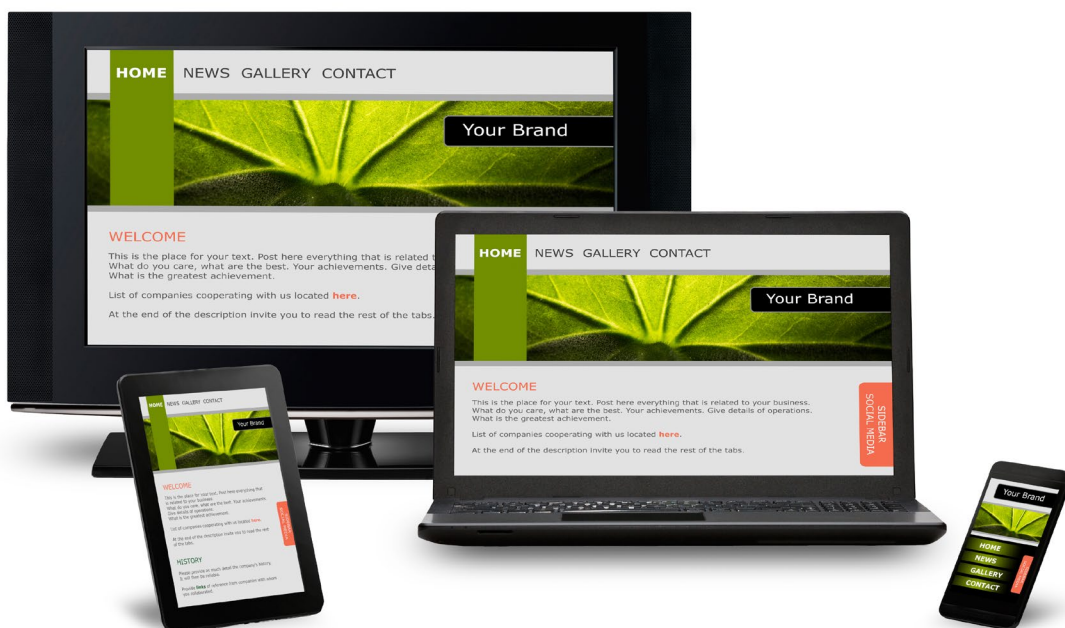
If your potential agency's website is not responsive, they are way behind the curve. Responsive websites (or mobile websites) have become all but mandatory as consumers have migrated in large numbers to surfing the web on their mobile devices. If your potential agency lacks the skillset to create a responsive website or doesn't have a responsive website of their own, they clearly don't value mobile consumers.

7. Does the website have a clear purpose with obvious conversion points?

Is the agency trying to get you to visit a contact us page or sign up for their email notifications? A website is a great lead generating machine but it must be designed so that it encourages site visitors to exchange their contact information for something that is of value to them. You can read more about this in the Inbound section.

8. Does the agency use its website to talk about its people, its culture and its philosophy?

When you partner with a digital marketing agency, it is important that the website describes not just the services that will be offered but also the people that will be offering them.



Content Marketing

Content marketing allows a business to position itself as an industry expert while educating the customer along the buying process. Below are some things to consider to determine if your digital marketing agency is right to handle your content marketing.

1. Are they blogging frequently and regularly?

Content marketing relies on a consistent production of quality content. Your agency should be blogging on a regular schedule.

2. Do they give blog visitors a chance to sign up for emailed blog notifications?

Keeping current and potential customers in your eco-system is vital to content marketing. Make sure your agency allows visitors to subscribe to their blog.

3. Do they have a well-designed blog overview page with author bylines, tags and calls-to-action?

A well-organized blog overview page is key to a quality website visit. Your agency's blog should have a simple design with clear organization. Calls-to-action promoting other content are also key in keeping the visitor on your website.



4. Is the blog and any other content well-written, insightful and unique?

The key to a successful content marketing strategy is producing quality content for your customer. Your agency's blog should position their expertise while educating the customer.

5. Do they include images with their blog posts?

Your content should be packaged in an engaging way. Images are a nice touch and visualize the content for your reader.

6. Do the blog posts have internal links?

Promoting other blog posts and webpages within your content is key to keeping customers engaged on your website.

7. Are the blog posts educational or promotional?

A successful content marketing strategy focuses on the customer not boasting about your own products or services.

8. Does the content on the blog keep up with industry news and trends?

You want your digital marketing agency to be well-versed in the industry and new trends. Check to see the content on their blog reflects the agency is knowledgeable and keeps up with the industry.

9. Is there a mix of quality content on their website?

Content marketing doesn't just entail blogging. Your agency should have a mix of content like webinars, eBooks, infographics or other types of content on their website.



Inbound Marketing

Inbound Marketing helps attract potential customers to your website and keeps them engaged through a constant feed of quality content relevant to their buying process. When searching for an agency to partner with for inbound marketing, you should consider the following

1. Does the agency's website have CTAs? How many?

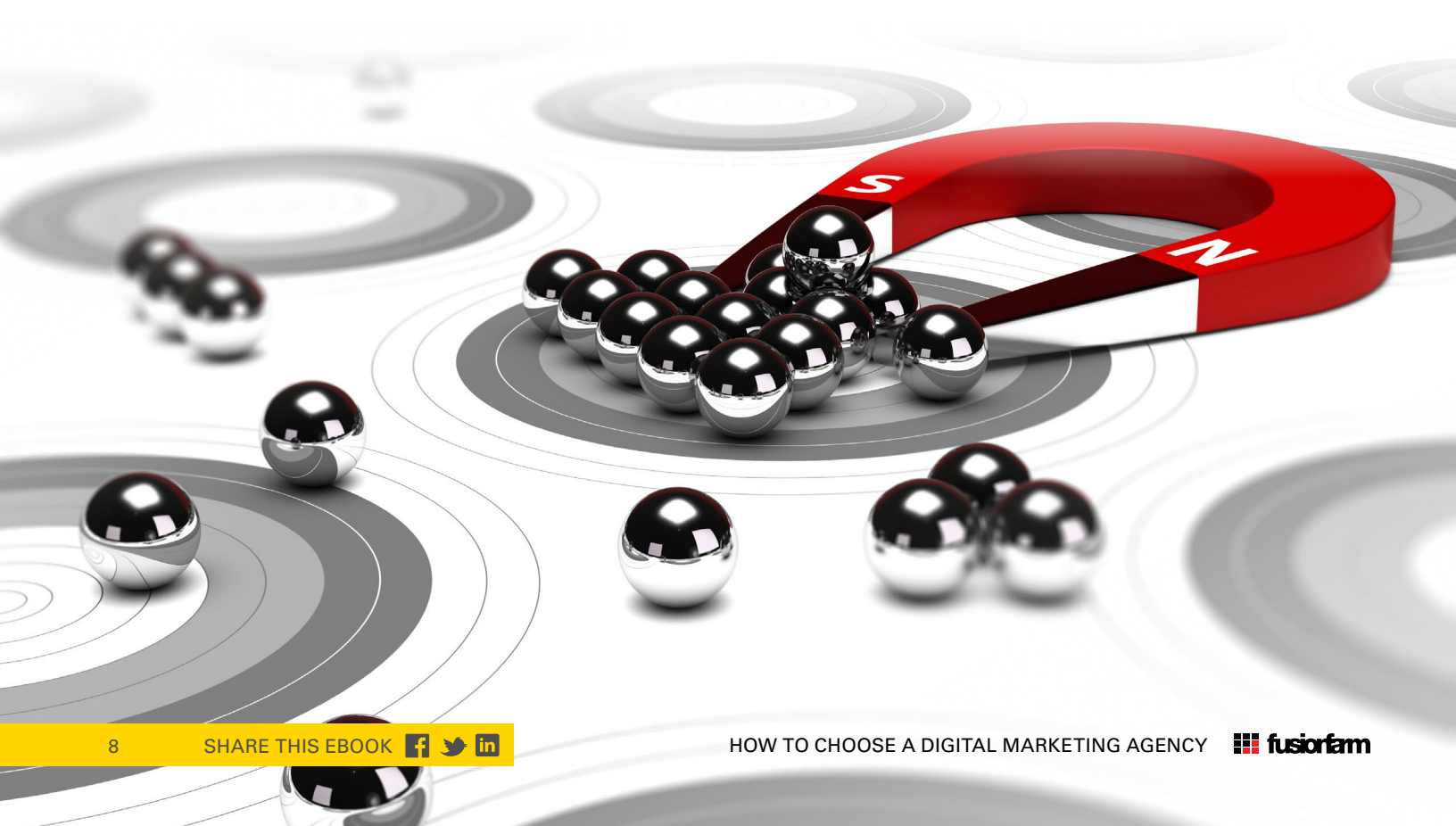
Calls-to-action promoting other content such as blog posts or offers are key in the inbound process. They keep visitors on your website and can lead to forms that capture the customer's information.

2. Does the website have landing pages?

Landing pages promote your content offers like eBooks, white papers, seminars etc. Most importantly, they play gatekeeper for your content offers and capture your customer's information so you can continue nurturing after they've left your website.

3. Do the blog posts have relevant CTAs that align with the content?

The more CTAs on your website the better, within the scope of good design and relevance to the page. Make sure the CTAs you find on an agency's website relate to the content of the webpage.



4. When you download an offer, are you taken to a thank you page AND send a thank you email?

After an offer is downloaded, it is inbound marketing best practices to send the customer to a thank you page and thank you email.

5. Does the agency have any marketing automation software such as HubSpot, Marketo or Pardot?

Marketing automation software strengthens the inbound process by facilitating email marketing, workflows, analytics, contact information, etc. Your agency should be well-versed in this type of software. Bonus: Check if the agency is certified in any of the marketing automation tools.

6. Are they using progressive profiling on their forms?

Progressive profiling enables you to designate which questions appear on the form based on what you already know about the lead. They are critical in the inbound process as they save time, minimize conversion friction and allow you to collect meaningful data about your leads.

7. Do they talk about proving ROI?

You are likely looking for an agency who can prove the ROI for inbound marketing. Check their service pages and blog posts for mention of inbound ROI, analytics or metrics.

8. Do they understand and practice the comprehensive nature of inbound marketing?

The inbound marketing methodology is comprehensive and extensive. Make sure the agency is well-versed in all of the components from attracting visitors to delighting customers.



SEO

Search Engine Optimization adds tremendous value to your website by making it more attractive to search engines. It can occur both within your website and off-site and increases your brand's visibility. If you're looking for an agency to help with your SEO, make sure they follow the best practices below

1. Do they have unique meta titles & descriptions for each page?

Every page should have meta titles and descriptions that include relevant keywords. If you searched for an agency online, think about your experience and if the agency's website came up in your search results. What title and description were displayed in the search results? Were they informative? To check to see if the agency's website has meta titles and descriptions, simply right click on the page and click "page source." Do a search (ctrl + F) and search "meta title" and "meta description."

2. Are there internal links sprinkled throughout the website?

Internal links are instrumental in keeping users on your website by promoting other relevant content



3. Is their website content relevant and optimized?

Content is key when it comes to search engine optimization. The search engines “read” the content to understand what is on the page to deliver relevant results for the searcher. The agency’s website should have plenty of relevant content that is search engine friendly.

4. Do the page URLs include keywords?

Every page has its own URL and each one should be unique. Keywords should be in the URL so that search engines can connect it to the searchers queries. Furthermore, URLs should not have strings of numbers and special characters.

5. Are the website images tagged with alt tags?

Since search engines cannot read photos, alt tags are a way to make photos searchable. Check to see if the website has an alt-tag by hovering over the photo. Take it a step further by reviewing what it says. It is recommended that it includes relevant keywords, geographic locations or phrases to describe the photo.

6. Can you find the agency’s contact information?

Every website should have the vital contact information in an easy to find place. Placing addresses and phone numbers in the footer of the website will not only help search engines find the contact information, it will also make it easy for the user.

7. Are the agency’s online directory listings up-to-date?

It is very important to ensure your name, address, phone number and web address are consistent across the web. Each time a variation is found, it counts against your SEO ranking. An easy way to do a quick check is to type the business name into Google.

8. Does they have reviews, case studies and testimonials?

Reviews connected to other listings, such as Google, pull into search results and help with ranking. Also check the reviews to see if the agency has any reviews, case studies or testimonials to see if it’s the right fit for your business. Understanding other’s success may help you make the decision of whether or not to partner with them. But also shows they are following a white-hat SEO best practice.

Social Media Marketing

Social media allows you to connect with your potential and current customers directly by building a community that offers content catered to them. When considering an agency to manage your social media accounts or develop and execute a social media marketing campaign, do your homework first and consider the following.

1. Are they present?

Check to see if the agency you may partner with is present on social media networks. Start by searching the agency's website for social media icons or doing a quick search on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to see if you can easily find the agency. Being present on various networks is the first step to knowing whether an agency understands social media.

2. Are they active?

Even if the agency has various pages, social media marketing goes far beyond just being present. They need to be active and social to be successful. How frequently are they posting updates or sharing content? You will want to partner with an agency that understands the value of quality content and shares it frequently. The frequency can differ based on their audience and goal, but at the very least, there should be at least one post per week, per platform.

3. Do they have a strategy?

An effective social media marketing campaign is only as strong as the strategy behind it. Don't be afraid to ask the agency questions about their current strategy, measurement techniques and successes they have seen with their own social media marketing.



4. Is the content relevant?

The key to being successful with social media content is to share and create content that is relevant to your brand and valuable to your audience. As a potential consumer of the agency, take a look at the content, is it relevant to you and your interests/concerns? Original content should not only be promotional, but also provide helpful tips, showcase their work, link to their website and highlight an event they sponsor or promote an award they won.

5. Do they have a balance of original content and third party content?

An ideal agency to manage your social media would have a balance of content they've created vs. content they share from another source. If they are only sharing content from others, they might lack the skills to develop unique content for their social community. Or worse, they might not have the resources to devote to social media marketing. When you're reviewing their content, remember to look for a balance of topics as well as type of content.

6. What type of content are they creating, sharing and curating?

Just like having a balance of original content vs. third party content, there should also be a variety in the type of content. Posting different types of content – blog posts, images, videos, etc. – makes for a dynamic social media page that keeps customers engaged. That being said, the content should reflect the brand. Posting memes or photos of cats will not result in success for every brand. You'll want to look for an agency that has a mix of quality content that engages its followers.

7. Can you identify the personality?

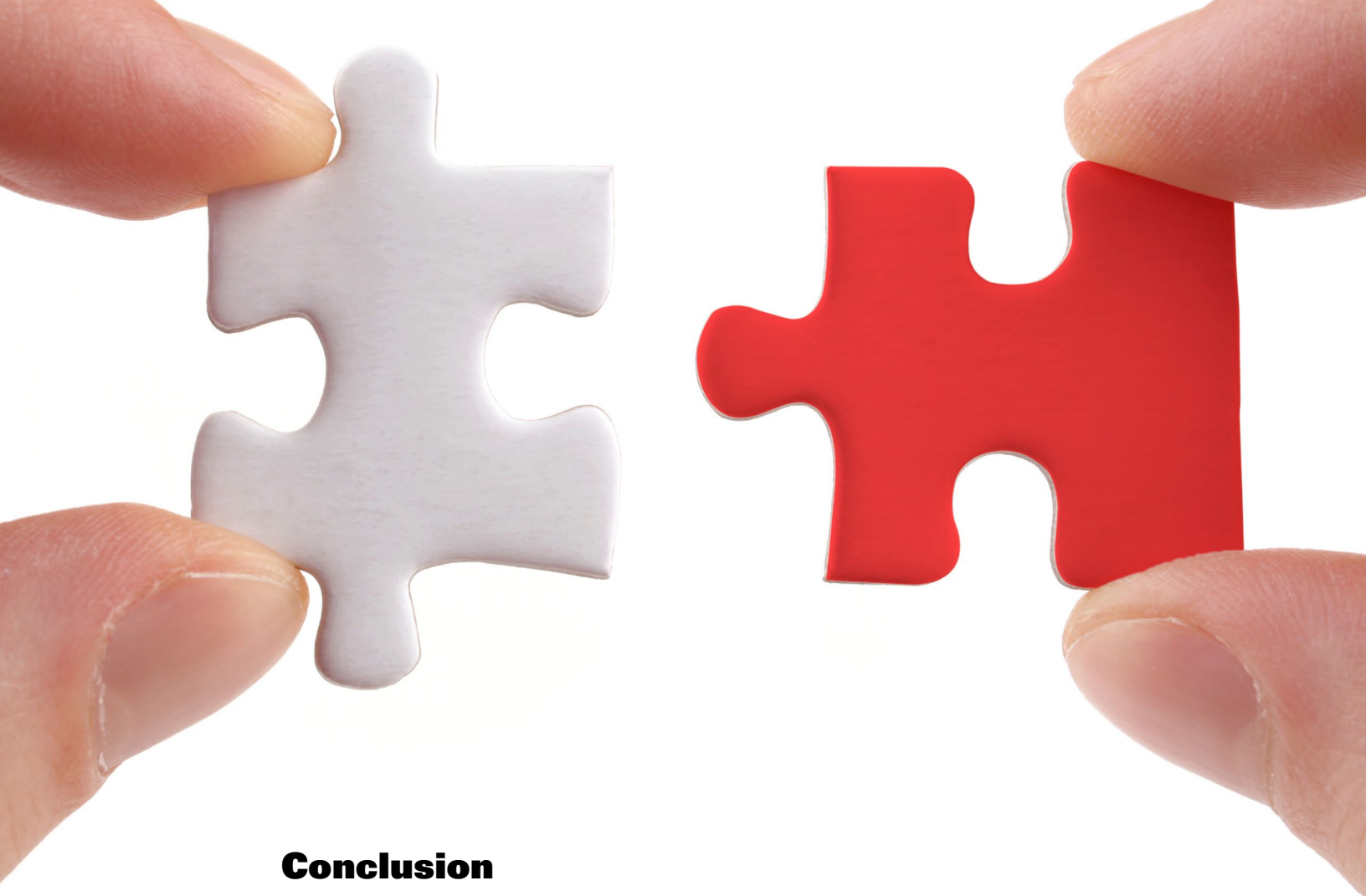
Think about the experience(s) you have had with the agency. Does the voice on social media match your experience that you have had with the employees of the agency? Does it match the brand's voice? Does the tone match other collateral or the content on their website? Consistency is important when marketing a brand. You'll want to partner with an agency that reflects their culture through their content and stays consistent.

8. Does the social media account look professional?

Take a look at the agency's Facebook page. Do they have a good quality profile picture and cover photo? Does it look professional and match their brand? These are signs of social media best practices and the agency you partner with should be following them.

9. Is there engagement?

Engagement is the ultimate goal with social media marketing. Is the agency only pushing out content and leaving people hanging when they ask a question or leave a comment? Or is engagement evident? Social media marketing is about having a two-way conversation with your customers. Make sure the agency engages with their followers on social media.



Conclusion

The digital marketing landscape is ever-changing and can be difficult to tackle on your own. Partnering with a professional digital marketing agency can help you navigate the digital landscape and help you develop the strategies that will serve your brand's goals best.

Other than knowing their stuff about the service you're interested in, you should consider the culture and team. After all, you'll be spending a lot of time with the agency and you'll want to know your brand is in hands you can trust. At Fusionfarm, we pride ourselves on maintaining honest, collaborative relationships with our clients that result in successful digital marketing campaigns.

Choosing an agency to partner with is an important decision that, if you choose wisely, can yield some great benefits for your brand. Keep the tips in this eBook in mind as you play matchmaker with your brand and a digital marketing agency.

Need help making sense of your marketing?

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