

# How 12 Big Brands Chose Their Marketing Agency

Lessons from Hilton, Patrón, Office Depot, and 9 More

No two brands look for the same things in an agency. These stories show how 12 brands chose agencies based on their goals, their product types, their company size, and the maturity of their marketing operations.

Two common factors stood out—brands love agencies that can execute on marketing, and brands often chose agencies where they felt relationship chemistry.



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# 1 Hilton Worldwide

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## Got Their Conditions Straight

Before they began the creative search process, Hilton Worldwide underwent a formal preparation period. The hospitality company defined what they needed in terms of confidentiality, fees, idea ownership, and non-compete clauses before they were ready to negotiate. Getting their legal issues clarified was their top priority.

But they were also transparent about how their organization operated. They took the approach that their agency should act like an extension of their company, so trust levels needed to be high.



**“The way [brands] should think about this is that they're picking a strategic partner that will be an extension of their team for the next several years.”**

Nancy Deck, VP of Multi-Brand and Loyalty Marketing at Hilton Worldwide\*

\*From <http://www.inc.com/guides/201108/how-to-choose-an-advertising-agency>.

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# 2 Patrón

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## Split Activities Across Multiple Agencies

Patrón chose their lead agency from two top finalists. The runners up were about six agencies who had specific experience in marketing luxury brands. The tequila brand also used a third party, Select Resources International (SRI), to manage the search.

Interestingly, Patrón divides their marketing activities between multiple agencies, using different agencies for their different strengths. Their lead agency plans and buys media for TV and outdoor ads, while they use three other agencies to manage print buying, digital creative work, and public relations.



**THE PATRÓN**  
SPIRITS COMPANY

**“[We want a] highly strategic and creative agency partner. Our selected partner will possess a track record of success in marketing luxury brands.”**

Lee Applbaum, Global Chief Marketing Officer at Patrón\*

\*From <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/patr-n-picks-new-creative-agency-161146>

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# 3 Mars

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## Consolidated Media Planning Into A Single Agency

Mars took the opposite approach of Patrón: they consolidated the activities of their eight media planning units into a single agency. Agency Starcom had handled the bulk of their work, but they were not selected in the approval process.

The candy and pet food manufacturer cited communication and the ability to adapt to change as key reasons for the shift to a single agency. Also, using one agency to handle media planning was similar to the structures in place for their other marketing agencies.



**“With the constant change in the media landscape, this model will allow us to better collaborate across our global business to drive efficiency, effectiveness, and coordination in our media planning.”**

Mars Press Release\*

\*From <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/mars-looking-one-agency-handle-its-global-media-planning-161963>

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# 4 Office Depot

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## Sought Category Experience

Office Depot reorganized after their merger with OfficeMax and changed their marketing strategy: instead of choosing agencies on a per project basis, the office-supply retailer selected a single agency to manage creative and media accounts.



Agency McCann Erickson had handled Staples' creative business in the past, which made them a prime candidate for their competitor. Office Depot cited consolidating resources and differentiating the Office Depot and OfficeMax brands as deciding factors.

**“[The agency] brings proven strategic and integrated marketing expertise that will help us build a strong communications platform to deliver innovative creative work that will resonate with our customers and help us stand apart in the marketplace.”**

Mark Crosby, President for North America at Office Depot\*

\*From <http://adage.com/article/agency-news/office-depot-taps-interpublic-s-mccann-um/295207/>

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# 5 Nationwide

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## Aimed to Connect With Fans

Nationwide brought back Ogilvy & Mather to their agency mix to manage a marketing agreement with Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning. The insurance company's first new campaign launched at the start of football season in 2014.

While Nationwide partners with six other agencies, Ogilvy & Mather was their choice for "developing compelling creative" that could connect with football fans as insurance consumers.



**“As the agency that originally helped develop our famous On Your Side slogan 50 years ago, we’re confident in Ogilvy’s unique ability to bring to life the authentic connection that Nationwide shares with Peyton Manning to drive meaningful business results.”**

Matt Jauchius, Chief Marketing Officer at Nationwide\*

\*From <http://www.nationwide.com/about-us/061314-nationwide-advertising.jsp>

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# 6 Wix

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## Bypassed Ad Agency Hierarchy to Get Results

When Wix wanted to produce their first Super Bowl spot, the web platform provider teamed up directly with production company Committee LA, leveraging longstanding relationships with members of the production team to create the TV spots and related online content.

Most important to Wix was finding the creative concept and being able to deliver on it. They associated the agency world with hierarchy and cost projections, which discouraged them for seeking one out.



**“Wix was looking for a creative idea and a unified production/creative team built specifically to deliver that idea—not an office full of account executives and cost consultants.”**

Frank Samuel, Founder at Committee LA\*

\*From <http://www.campaignbrief.com/2015/01/super-bowl-countdown-wixcom-ta>.

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# 7 YouSendIt now Hightail

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## Looked to Create Aggressive Growth

Two months after YouSendIt (renamed Hightail in 2013) hired a new CMO, the file-sharing service began an aggressive search for a new creative agency.

YouSendIt had seen accelerated growth in the past year, and they planned for the new agency to capitalize on their momentum. Their overall marketing goal was to become the category leader, so growth was the bottom line.



**“We are on a mission to be the category leader in our space and to do that and to get there fast, advertising is a key part of what we need to invest in. We’re looking for a very strong creative firm to take us to the next level that we can scale with over the next several years.”**

Sandra Vaughn, CMO at YouSendIt\*

\*From <http://www.inc.com/guides/201108/how-to-choose-an-advertising-agency>.



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# 8 Infiniti

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## Looked For a Global Presence

Infiniti identified their priority markets as the U.S., China, and Hong Kong, although their cars are also sold globally. The luxury automotive brand sought a “foundational” creative concept that could translate to media channels beyond TV— their RFP noted that Infiniti could not outspend their competitors in TV markets.

In the end, they narrowed their pool to a few agencies. Crispin Porter + Bogusky won their global creative account thanks to their international presence. Roth Observatory International helped facilitate the search.



**“[Infiniti is a] provocateur that owns the future of the premium car category by winning the hearts of young-minded premium consumers [through] featuring seductive styling, attitude, exhilarating performance, emotive design and intuitive technology.”**

Infiniti creative RFP\*

\*From <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/infiniti-last-picks-new-global-lead-agency-160669>

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# 9 Mophie

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## Wanted the Best For National Exposure

Mophie sought to go beyond organic growth by producing a Super Bowl spot that introduced their mobile battery case brand to a national audience. In addition, they wanted a supporting campaign that included digital, social media, and media planning.

The mobile-device accessory manufacturer selected Deutsch L.A. as their creative agency because of their track record producing Super Bowl spots for major brands like Volkswagen and Taco Bell.



**“We’ve accomplished much on the strength of our products and integrity of the brand, and now we feel it’s the right time to boldly introduce our solutions to the largest audience possible.”**

Daniel Huang, CEO & Co-Founder at Mophie\*

\*From <http://www.mophie.com/press/mophie-charges-toward-super-bowl-with-new-teammates-deutsch-l.a.-as-creativ>

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# 10 Outback Steakhouse

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## Felt a Strong Connection With The Agency

Bloomin' Brands (parent company of Outback Steakhouse) chose a new lead agency for media planning and buying.

Although several agencies performed well during the review process, the restaurant company's team found agency MediaVest easy to work with and full of ideas, which edged them over the competition.



**“Our decision came down to our confidence in the quality of the team, insights on our brands and business building ideas. We also felt a strong sense of connection with them.”**

Michael Kappitt, Global Chief Marketing Officer at Bloomin' Brands\*

\*From <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/bloomin-brands-appoints-mediavest-as-lead-media-agency-300012801.html>

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# 11 Johnsonville Sausage

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## Decided Based on Track Record

Johnsonville Sausage reviews their marketing partners every few years as part of a push to grow their brand faster than the market. The sausage manufacturer hired search firm Avidan Strategies to manage their latest agency review.



After a seven-week review and four finalists, Johnsonville chose agency Droga5 based on their track record in transforming brands. They also cited Droga5's ability to understand their corporate culture and their brand's relationship with consumers.

**“With their history of developing great break-through work that transforms brands, we are thrilled about the prospects for this new partnership.”**

Fabian Pereira, VP at Johnsonville Sausage\*

\*From <http://www.johnsonville.com/news/johnsonville-names-new-creative-agency-of-record>

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# 12 American Marketing Association

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## Focus on Fit

The American Marketing Association (AMA) changed agencies approximately seven years into CMO Nancy Costopulos' tenure. She and her team made a list of goals and identified 15 agencies that fit. The AMA notified the 15 of the opportunity and invited them to complete RFPs.



Based on responses, the AMA narrowed the list to invite six agencies to pitch. The final decision came down to which agency felt like a good fit.

**“Finding the right agency takes time and rigor. You really have to spend time with the finalists and, if possible, visit their offices. Meet the people who are going to be on the account to make sure you have the right fit.”**

Nancy Costopulos, CMO at the American Marketing Association (AMA)\*

\*From <http://www.bizjournals.com/dayton/print-edition/2013/07/05/how-to-smartly-choose-a-prad-firm.html?page=all>

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# About the Author

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Karl Sakas ([@KarlSakas](#)) helps digital marketing agencies grow without breaking. He founded and runs [Inbound.org's](#) Marketing Agencies group, with 800+ agencies in 48+ countries.

As president of global consulting firm [Sakas & Company](#), Karl advises agencies worldwide about strategy, operations, and leadership. He is the author of *The In-Demand Marketing Agency* and has written 125+ articles on agency management. When he's not helping clients, Karl volunteers as a bartender on a 1930s railroad car.

Get a [free copy of his eBook](#) *Don't Just Make the Logo Bigger: Taking Clients from Painful to Profitable* when you [sign up](#) for Karl's email newsletter.



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