



Thanks for downloading this checklist. This document is here to assist you in the decision making process of who to pick when looking for a marketing partner, web designer, branding team or full-service creative team.

The word 'partner' was purposefully used. This should feel like a partnership, not a transaction. It shouldn't be viewed like a quick fix prescription for a cold. Rather, view it like you would a team sport, where everyone has their position (which they rock at) and you play on the same team. The same team whose goal is to win the title for the best company that is doing amazing things for their customers/fans, and in some small way is making the world a better place.

Finding the right partner and working with a creative marketing team can be extremely valuable. Invaluable in fact, but only if you have taken the time to really prepare and do some soul searching up front. So, ask yourself the following questions:

1. IS THERE A GOOD FIT?

Make sure there is a natural fit. Work with people you like and trust to understand you and your business. They don't have to be the top experts in your field, because you know your industry best. But they should be excited, curious and quick to learn what you are all about. In the end, trust your gut to make the decision.

2. DO THEY CHALLENGE ME?

While fit is key, your creative/marketing partner should challenge you. As experts in their field of branding, marketing and design they should demonstrate that they know what works best to get your brand/word out there and they should challenge you on the ideas you are already putting into place. If they just smile and nod, they aren't going to advise you properly on where best to put your time, money and effort.

3. AM I READY?

Is now the right time for this partnership? Are you ready and open to new ideas and ways of doing things? Your mind needs to be open and nimble for a marketing team relationship to work best. It should be a great collaboration between two parties that play off of each other and there by creates great work. But without openness this isn't possible and there is no point hiring someone to present new things if you aren't ready for it.

4. AM I CLEAR ON WHAT I WANT?

CLARITY: Be very clear about what you are looking for. From an objective standpoint, ask yourself what is it that you most need help with to make your business thrive. What do you NOT want? How do you communicate best and what is your company ready for? Try not to speak, or think, in terms of tactical tasks like "post more to social media" or "need 3 more ads this month". While that may be true, the bigger purpose is you need to create a following of people on social media who understand what you do and you need to get word of your next month's event out to these communities.

5. DO THEY HAVE A STRONG PROCESS?

PROCESS: While creative solutions often hit us in random places (like while in the shower or going for a run) this only happens because there is a process in place that we follow each time to set the stage for creative development. The company you are considering working with should have a consistent way of gathering your years of company intel and distilling it. A way of asking the right questions and checking in with you along the way to make sure they are on track. A fancy technological tool should never drive their strategy. A piece of software or an app will never be able to creatively problem solve like a smart group of people asking the right questions.

6. WHAT ARE MY EXPECTATIONS?

EXPECTATIONS: How do you see the relationship working? What expectations do you have of your marketing partner and what is it that you most want them to achieve? Ask yourself, and be honest, if you are good with deadlines and providing others with what they need to do their best job. What work are you willing, and have time, to put into working with this team? What are you willing to implement yourself when they make recommendations?

Sometimes businesses think they should be striving to hand off all marketing related things to a third party, including social media. But most of the time the best results come when a plan is made, thoughtful tools/materials are created, and the company itself implements and shows their own team how important it is to keep working and pushing it. The adage out of sight, out of mind is very true. If you aren't thinking about your goals and initiatives then you risk getting off track. Some things shouldn't be delegated to others outside your company.

7. WHAT ARE THEY CAPABLE OF CREATING WELL?

WELL ROUNDED: look for a creative team to work with that is well rounded. That they can create and develop the exact website you need, but that they also know about typography on packaging and print production. It will serve you better in the long run if they have skills in many of these areas, not just the one. Research what their abilities are before going into partnership to avoid disappointment later.

8. DO I TRUST THEM?

TRUST: This should be an obvious and simple one because trust and communication are everything in any kind of relationship, and this is no exception.

9. ARE THEY FUN TO BE AROUND?

FUN: The fun factor might seem strange, as this is business not a play date, but at the same time they should feel like people you can have fun with. A marketing partner is an extension of your own team and culture in a way, and there needs to be a bit of a fit in that regards. So consider whether it feels natural to interact and share thoughts, ideas and laughter with your prospective marketing partner.

10. ARE THEY REALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT THEY DO?

PASSION: Above all else, your marketing partner should be passionate about what they do. They should demonstrate that they love their industry so much that staying on top of trends, technology and growth is all part of the deal. They keep in stride with the newest and best because in the end they want to create beautiful, smart and effective creative work for you that will do the job and exceed your expectations.

These questions should help you find the right team to grow your business, and more importantly your vision. If you have any further questions, we would be happy to help in any way we can.