



# How to Choose the Right **Digital Marketing Agency**

There's no one-size-fits-all digital marketing solution for all companies. Here's what to consider when it's time to look for a digital marketing agency.

# Partnering with a digital marketing agency is an important decision that many organizations are faced with.

Whether the decision comes from a need to accelerate growth, supplement strategic or tactical skill sets, or simply to act as a trusted digital advisor, finding the right agency partner can be challenging. Let's examine how to select a digital marketing agency that can take your online efforts to the next level.

## What Does a Digital Marketing Agency Do?

Simply put, a digital marketing agency helps businesses and other organizations succeed through online marketing. Businesses can turn to digital agencies to outsource their online marketing efforts. Digital marketing agencies can vary in terms of the exact services they provide – some specialize in a service or two while others offer a comprehensive suite of services.

Regardless, every agency is designed to support your online marketing efforts and achieve your goals, such as building brand awareness, developing customer loyalty, and driving lead generation and sales.

## What to Look for in a Marketing Agency

Let's face it, there's no one-size-fits-all online marketing agency that works for all companies. There are numerous digital marketing companies out there, but not all of them are the right fit.

It's important to know what you want to get out of a digital marketing agency. For example, are you looking for an ongoing partnership or more short-term assistance? Do you want full-service digital marketing support or just need some help with a few critical areas? Once you understand your overall goals, you can better examine some key factors when it comes to choosing a marketing agency for your online efforts.

# So why hire a digital marketing agency instead of handling these key responsibilities yourself?

There are several good reasons that would make you a good fit:

**You don't have the time or expertise to handle these critical tasks.**

**You want to drive more leads and qualified traffic and don't know where to start.**

**You don't have the budget to hire several digital marketing specialists.**

**You don't know the best way to communicate your expertise on the web.**

**You want to focus on more specialized or comprehensive digital marketing efforts.**

**You want to stay on top of all the latest digital trends and best practices.**

# Digital Marketing Services

While there are hundreds (if not thousands) of so-called digital marketing agencies in the U.S. alone, certain companies won't matter if they don't offer the right services. It's important to evaluate each potential agency based on the services they provide, such as:



## Digital Advertising

Look for an agency that can help you understand the right digital ad platforms for your specific business and goals. For some, this might be Facebook Ads. For others, it might be search advertising through Google and Microsoft Ads. A B2B-centric marketing strategy might include LinkedIn Ads. Ensure that your agency has experience on the platforms that are right for your business.



## Content Marketing

Content often goes hand-in-hand with SEO, but it's really at the root of all good digital marketing. Find an agency that has strong writers who can write for a variety of mediums, including website and blog content, digital ads, email, social media, and more.



## Reporting/Analytics

Ensure that your agency is providing you with a good snapshot of your digital marketing performance. If you're getting a report each month that you don't understand, that's not good enough. Find an agency that uses reporting and analytics to help you understand how your digital marketing efforts are impacting your business success. ROI? Yes, please!



## Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

If your goals include growing traffic, search engine exposure, and ultimately leads or sales from search engines, you're going to want an agency that knows how to perform search engine optimization. An agency that promises you a No. 1 ranking for specific keywords is a red flag. Find an agency that can talk more holistically about your business goals related to search, not just a fleeting ranking that might not result in new business.



## Social Media

Organizations often take on social media internally, relegating it to a junior employee. The problem with this approach is that it is often absent of a strategy. Look for an agency that can help you identify the right social media platforms, leverage tools to automate social posting, and develop content specific to each social network.



## Email Marketing / Automation

Most agencies – in fact, most individuals – can find a cost-effective email platform and start emailing a list of contacts. Find an agency that can help you choose the right email platform, design custom mobile-friendly emails, curate segmented email lists, and write high-performing email copy.

# Strategic Experience

In simple terms, there are two types of agencies – those that do the work, and those that do the work and explain the **why** behind it. If you have an experienced in-house team that is comfortable developing an ongoing digital marketing strategy, then you may not need a strategic advisor.

If you're like most organizations, you're looking to partner with a digital marketing agency because you need a trusted resource to guide your digital marketing strategy.

Here are some key things to look for to evaluate strategic experience:

## Employee Background

Find out about the makeup of each agency's digital marketing team. What kind of experience do they have? Have they been in strategic roles before?

## A Portfolio of Quality Work

A top agency should be proud to display the work they do. Look for a list of previous clients, case studies, and examples of their work to get a better sense of their experience.

## Industry Background

Does the agency have experience working in your industry or a similar industry? If so, what kind of success or insights can they share with you? If not, do they show an ability to understand the dynamics of your industry?

## Process

It's important to understand how a digital marketing agency is going to learn about your company, industry, audience, products, and services. You'll likely want an agency to be an extension of your company, so finding out how they approach the discovery process will be important.

Beyond an agency's background and process, you need to understand how each digital marketing company approaches crafting a digital marketing strategy. **Ask questions like:**

- **How do you create a digital marketing strategy for a new client partner?**
- **How often is strategy reviewed, revised, or updated?**
- **How do you track strategic performance on an ongoing basis?**

# Customer Experience

Many organizations that look for a digital marketing partner are doing so because they're unhappy with their current or past agency. Alternately, some organizations will be choosing an agency for the first time. In either case, it's important to find a partner that aligns well with your organization.

Here are some things to consider:

## Communication

You can take cues as early as initial conversations. How well do they communicate with your team? Is the agency responsive? When you think about partnering with an agency, who will be your point of contact? Can you get a hold of someone if something goes wrong?

## Pricing Model

This will obviously be a significant factor in your decision-making process, so it's critical to find out about each agency's pricing model. Go beyond retainer fees and understand what will happen if you go "outside of scope." Will you be receiving unexpected invoices for work each month?

## Partnership Model

Agencies offer a wide variety of partnership models, including project-based, retainer-based, fee-based, etc. You'll want to make sure you not only understand the partnership model but that it also aligns with your expectations. Be cautious about locking yourself into a two-year retainer contract without proof of results. Understand whether you need to work on a project basis or require a long-term strategic digital marketing partner.

# Company Values

Sometimes there's more to finding the right digital marketing agency than just services and experience. Take some time to see if potential partners have any core values that guide the way they do business.

If you're looking for a long-term marketing partner, it's best to find an agency that feels like a true fit. A company's values and culture can help you determine how well their team will work with

yours. That's an extremely underrated aspect of a successful partner – this agency is going to end up being an extension of your business, after all.

Listen closely to see how an agency describes not only what they do, but how and why they do it. The answers they give can help you decide whether they really care about your success or have similar values to yours.

## Putting it All Together

We know that choosing a digital marketing agency is one of those big decisions that an organization makes. It requires due diligence and careful consideration to find the right partner.

In addition to the items above, have each agency you're considering share relevant case studies and examples with you. Meet members of their team – digital marketers, strategists, and web designers – and not just salespeople. If you're in the process of evaluating digital marketing agencies, feel free to reach out and see if we're the right fit for your needs.





# How to Choose the Right Digital Marketing Agency Checklist



## What digital marketing services do you need help with?

- ☐ Digital Advertising
- ☐ Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- ☐ Content Marketing
- ☐ Email Marketing/Automation
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Reporting/Analytics

## Do you need help strategizing a digital marketing plan, executing a plan, or both?

- ☐ Strategy
- ☐ Execution
- ☐ Both strategy and execution

## What do you hope to achieve by partnering with a digital marketing agency? What are your goals?

## What is your budget?

## When evaluating a Specific Agency:

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### What digital marketing services do they offer?

- ☐ Digital Advertising
- ☐ Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- ☐ Content Marketing
- ☐ Email Marketing/Automation
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Reporting/Analytics

### What is their communication style?

- ☐ Very responsive
- ☐ Delayed
- ☐ Sporadic

### What is their partnership model?

- ☐ Project-based
- ☐ Retainer-based
- ☐ Fee-based

### Do they offer strategy services as well as execution services?

- ☐ Strategy services only
- ☐ Execution services only
- ☐ Both strategy and execution are available

### Do they have experience in your industry?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Are they transparent about their pricing model?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Are their prices compatible with your budget?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### What's their policy for ending the terms of a contract?

## Questions to Ask:

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What kind of experience does your digital marketing team have?

How do you create a digital marketing strategy for a new client partner?

How often is strategy reviewed, revised, or updated?

How do you track strategic performance on an ongoing basis?

What is your agency's project turnaround time?