

Seven Things to Consider When Hiring a Small Business Marketing Consultant

1. **Is the Marketing Consultant competent?**
2. **What is a reasonable cost for a small business marketing consultant?**
3. **Will the marketing consultant commit to timely results?**
4. **How can you manage a marketing consultant?**
5. **What is the marketing consultant's method for analysis and diagnosis?**
6. **How much of your time will the marketing consultant need?**
7. **Does the marketing consultant coach and train?**

Competency

You want your marketing consultant to be highly competent. You don't need someone to tell you what to do (coach), you want someone to do it (consult). Will he just blab away or can he get the job done? Set up the agreement so it is clear you expect them to perform. Ask them for examples of their successes and failures. Someone without failures may not be being truthful.

Cost

Cost is relative to your return on investment when hiring a small business marketing consultant. If you want a 10% increase in leads and it means thousands of dollars in profit, what are you willing to invest for those leads? Is it a onetime hit or is the consultant leaving you with a system? We have our prospective clients set up a simple system for figuring out the bottom line impact before we make an agreement. That way we both know what the ROI needs to be to make a reasonable agreement.

Results

The last thing you need is a "permanent" consultant. That is someone who gets just enough in results that you don't fire him, but not enough that you are happy. We like to set up a review every three months. During this review we can determine if we are on the right course, if the team is supportive, and other important elements of having a successful venture. Be wary of a consultant who gives you the line "It's really dependent upon a wide range of factors...."

Managing

Managing a marketing consultant is a bit different than managing an employee. On one hand you want their honest and open opinion but you don't want them running your business. Giving them a set time every week for a discussion keeps you both on track. Make sure that when they work with your staff, you both understand the ground rules. But don't expect them to work exclusively on your business. Just when they do work on your business, make sure they are putting 100% effort into it.

Analysis

Determining your company's marketing situation is the first step. We use our BEST Marketing Evaluation to start digging out important points. Then planning, which may be a simple one sheet plan, and implementation. Most small company B2B marketing clients want results in the form of sales not image building. We start tweaking your current marketing right away to find a few extra bucks. Getting cash coming in is important in small business marketing consulting. Be wary of a marketing consultant who is a one trick pony or has a one size fits all program.

Time

Your time is the single most valuable asset you have. You are hiring a consultant to do the work you don't have time to do but know it will have a big payoff. Your marketing consultant needs to be organized and respectful of the value of your time. Having a set schedule for review and discussion is critical. This avoids multiple calls at inconvenient times. We prefer a weekly call or calls schedule and quarterly review.

Teaching

You are hiring the marketing consultant to do a job you don't have time for or maybe are not as much an expert. The consultant needs to get the job done but should be able to teach you how to do it if you want to learn. We like to transfer knowledge to our consulting clients by adding in a coaching program when they are ready. In fact, some clients like this option. Do you want to buy fish from the fisherman or do you want to learn to fish?

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