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## 6 Tips for Managing Your Outsourced Marketing Agency



Posted by [Liz O'Neill](#) on March 26, 2013

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Ready to hire an outsourced marketing agency? *Great!* Think you'll never have to mention the word "marketing" again? *Not so fast...*

While it's true that your outsourced marketing agency will take a huge chunk of work off your plate, you still want to sit at the table and be a part of the dinner conversation.

So here are six tips to effectively manage your outsourced marketing agency (plus some more mixed metaphors, just to keep you on your toes).

**1. Understand that marketing is not a business accessory.**



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If you've been too busy to get your company on LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook, you're not alone. Many small and growing businesses are hiring outsourced marketing firms to help [establish a stronger web presence](#) and to reach wider audiences online. But before you hire an agency to bring you "up to speed," you should be confident that you're not spending money just for the sake of doing what other businesses are doing.

Marketing is not a business accessory. It's not like hanging your diploma on the wall or ordering a magazine subscription for your waiting room. As more and more customers expect to find products and services online—along with ratings, reviews, and conversations—[your Internet marketing campaign](#) is every bit as essential as the person who answers your office phone. It needs to be a part of the work you do. An outsourced marketing team can guide the process, but you need to bring them into the huddle.

## 2. Start with clearly defined goals.

Good marketing is not subjective. Good marketing professionals are not freeform artists, all trying to exercise their creative muscles on your dime. Don't let your agency talk you into disco balls and fireworks unless they can tell you how those efforts will translate into measurable results.

Better yet: take the initiative. Tell your agency how you plan to make more money this year. Maybe you want to [improve your organic search rank](#), so that your website appears as one of the top five results after a specific keyword search. Maybe you want to generate 15 percent more online leads every month. Maybe you want three new touch-points in your sales funnel, so your sales team can spend time working with more qualified, informed prospects.

Make a list of goals that all include numbers and percentages. A good outsourced marketing department will tell you which figures are reasonable, and propose targeted strategies. If anyone seems offended or mystified by the idea of concrete objectives, send him and his disco ball packing.

## 3. Set your expectations for updates, reporting, and input levels.

Just like a good marriage, a good marketing partnership starts with clearly communicated expectations. This is different than goal-setting. This is day-to-day relationship stuff. Like, do you expect flowers every week? Dinner and dancing? Two sets of presents if your birthday falls on a major holiday?

As an outsourced marketing client, you can be as low or high-maintenance as you want to be. You can ask for weekly traffic meetings or quarterly reports. You can request your own dashboard login and do your own performance analysis, or you can wait for scheduled updates. You can personally review every word of [content marketing](#) that's written on your behalf, *and* you can ask for revisions—times ten. But whatever you do, it's best to communicate your expectations at the outset.

Marketing agencies often employ different types of account managers, writers, and designers. Some are expert collaborators; others are better at producing

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with minimal directives. This doesn't mean that you can never change your mind, just that these are good questions to start asking yourself now.

#### 4. Expect a bit of give and take.

There are lots of [great benefits that come with outsourced marketing](#). Instant satisfaction is not typically on the list. Remember that marketers are trying to balance your input and preferences against the many best practices that have proven effective across all business sectors. There's a learning curve on both ends of the equation.

If the first effort is less than stellar, judge your agency by its ability to incorporate feedback. Grade them on listening skills and follow-up. Give and take is the best way to ensure you agency will *consistently* meet your expectations, and deliver even better work in the long run.

#### 5. Share your industry finds.

You are the business pro... the subject matter expert... the SME. (Although you shouldn't let anyone call you a "smee." It undercuts the distinction.) Your agency will do its research, yes. The agency may already have some industry-related clients. Still, they aren't walking in your shoes every day.

So share your secrets! Send links to the articles and reports you love. Forward any samples of great competitor work that you find. When you're jolted from sleep by a brilliant, brand-based epiphany, call your marketing team. They're probably up anyway, studying infomercials.

#### 6. Tap different team members to review agency work and collaborate.

Part of the reason you're hiring an outsourced marketing department is to avoid overloading your team with additional duties. As a part of that team, YOU are also susceptible to overload, burnout, tunnel vision—and other horrible, terrible fates.

Don't be afraid to pass the baton. Everyone on your staff has unique insights. Some employees may even have a knack for blogging or an active interest in social media. (An astonishing number of women now have Pinterest accounts, for example.) These are great opportunities to start merging outsourced strategies with in-house talent. And somewhere down the road, you may find you don't need so many dedicated hours from your agency.

Ready to take the next step? Download [7 Signs You're Ready to Outsource Your Marketing](#) for even more advice on a well-managed marketing partnership. And visit the PMG blog again next week, when we'll discuss some of the common red flags that clients observe when working with subpar agencies.

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