

How to Outsource All or Part of Your Marketing

By Blair Entenmann, President of MarketingHelp!

During the top and bottom of an economic cycle or a high-growth phase of a company, many managers don't have the internal marketing expertise or people resources to accomplish critical business objectives. In a contraction mode, they are trying to get more done with less – to reduce costs. Outsourcing some or all of your marketing can be a cost effective and flexible solution. Three basic ways exist to outsource marketing:

Marketing Consultants:

Marketing consultants are independent professionals with extensive experience in planning and managing of the marketing function. Using a construction analogy, they are two-thirds architect and one-third general contractor. As an "architect," they perform higher-level marketing functions such as marketing audits, marketing planning, new product development, and marketing program development. As a "general contractor," they can assemble a customized team of specific marketing resources such as graphic designers to printers to produce your company brochure or new packaging. Consultants can be hired on a project or retainer basis. The going rate for marketing consultants in a large metropolitan area ranges from \$125 to \$175 per hour for project work and \$95 to \$120 per hour for retainer relationships.

Marketing or Advertising Agencies:

A full-service agency has all the management, planning, and creative specialists under one roof. Some agencies also use free-lancers to supplement their internal team when needed. Agencies by nature tend to be very tactical in their approach, although there are exceptions. Agencies generally work under an annual "agency of record" contract. You don't have to hire a huge agency. Many small agencies with less than 50 people do great work for small-to medium-sized companies. They may be paid a "commission" of 10% to 15% of your advertising budget, plus production costs and/or \$150 to \$250 per hour fees for "consulting."

Specific Marketing Resources: If you have internal marketing expertise and time to coordinate a project but need specific professional help, many marketing specialists are available without the overhead of a larger general agency. You can hire a graphic designer to develop and print your company brochure or sales materials. You can hire a marketing research company to hold focus groups on your new product. You can purchase advertising specialties from an ad specialties broker for your trade show. If you have the time, talent and contacts, this may be the most effective and efficient way to get your marketing projects completed.

Reputable marketing resources can be found through your various sources such as marketing directories like The Gold Book or the local American Marketing Association or by asking a business associate for a referral. You should interview several resources to find the firm that shares your business philosophy, values, and style; has the appropriate skill set; and has *transferable* industry knowledge.

There is a saying in the advertising and marketing agency world that the work is as good as the client. Having worked on both sides of the desk (on the client and agency side of the business), I believe this is true. Most clients accept this concept of mutual responsibility.

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