

A Yael Consulting White Paper



How to choose an Online Marketing Agency / Consultant

Yael Consulting

5042 Wilshire Blvd #18350, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Phone | 424-239-9434 Fax | 1-877-863-7443 www.yaelconsulting.com

Whether you manage online marketing in-house or are changing agencies, here is an effective guide to help you make a decision:

Define Your Reasons

If you are looking for an agency, first make a clear list of why you want to work with an agency. These reasons may include: I want more cost effective expertise, I am not happy with results, I want to grow faster, we are losing market share, etc.

If changing agencies, write down the things your current agency did right, and areas which you wish they did better.

Make a Two Column List

Take these items above and make a bare-necessity checklist with two columns, (1)“What I am looking for” and (2)“Does the company meet my need / rating”. In the left column prioritize the most important items you are looking for and in the right column, as you are interviewing, give a rating from 1-5 or simply check off if they meet the needs (i.e. do they offer SEM and SEO?).

Narrow Your Options

After interviewing at least 3 candidates look at your filled-out list objectively and compare results. Adding up the numbers may not be the best idea since some items are more important than others. Following the list you should be able to begin to *feel* who you want to work with.

Second Round of Interviews

Interview the top three candidates again with more specific questions. Ask specific questions like “who will be my account manager? What is his/her experience? Is the agency full-service? How long will on-boarding take? Do they outsource any of their work, if so what part? Etc.

Outsourcing?

There is nothing wrong with outsourcing **some** of the work but it is better to have someone domestic to manage the core of your account, so you can speak with them in your time zone. The biggest disconnect is

when all or most work is done overseas or by someone else rather than who you talk to.

Do they Speak Your Language? Test it!

Ask specific questions about how they plan to improve your sales and profit. Some agencies obsess about traffic, ranking, and cutting costs but those mean nothing if they can't increase sales and profits. Ask them how they will deal with your competitive landscape. Describe your goals and have them walk you through how they will approach your account. This is a great way to see how the agencies think on their feet and what you can expect.

Long or Short Term Contracts

Most companies are moving away from long-term (annual) contracts to monthly contracts, especially for paid search. This gives you flexibility and freedom, and it helps build a trustful relationship. This will discourage sales people from over-promising, because if the company doesn't deliver then you can always walk.

Setup Fees

In paid search it is normal that companies will revamp your entire Google account and charge a one-time setup fee. Alternatively others may create a mid-term contract (3 months) since they plan to do a lot of work upfront. If a company does not charge a setup fee and has monthly contracts make sure that they still plan to put in the work necessary to perfect the account up front

Conclusion

Hiring an online search agency is hiring an entire marketing team, so take the time to do your research. Once you choose an agency, you should expect nothing but the best from them, that they understand your business and deliver performance that drives your company results where you want them to go.

Have questions, comments, or want to speak to us about becoming an extension of your marketing team, contact me at:

424-239-9434 or lior@yaelconsulting.com

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