

How to hire an Inbound Marketing Agency for your Company

9 SIGNS TO LOOK FOR WHEN
HIRING AN ONLINE
MARKETING AGENCY

with *Kaylene* **GRIEVE**



with *Kaylene* **GRIEVE**



How NOT to Gamble with your Marketing Budget –

9 WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS

A lot of Clients we speak with tend to experience similar challenges when it comes to marketing, lead generation and bringing in more opportunities to their business:

- Not enough time
- Not sure which elements of online marketing would work for them
- Not understanding the potential for online marketing for the business
- Who is going to do the work?

These concerns are understandable as most business owners are so busy just running their business, they don't have time for anything else!

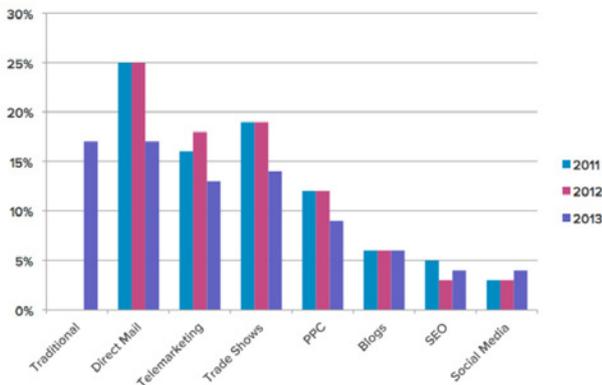
The purpose of this document is to share some insights with you on why online marketing is a must for any business and to help you find the right resources so that you can implement the best strategies that suit your requirements. Working with a marketing agency partner can often bring faster and more cost effective results than doing it on your own. The trick is finding the right agency that understands your business, goals and objectives. Firstly let's look at why Online Marketing is critical to any business.



Why Online Marketing Works

The return on investment a business experiences when shifting its marketing investment strategies from outbound to inbound is well documented. Look at the trends in lead sources that have happened since the online world revolution in the table below.

Interruption Marketing Losing Market Share
Traditional advertising, direct cede more ground in 2013



"It's clear — profitable companies are adapting to the 21st century and migrating the majority of their marketing to where their ideal buyers are doing their buying research and discovery — on the internet. Today 79% of online shoppers are spending at least 50% of their shopping time researching products."

(Source: PowerReviews, Feb. 2012)

SMARTPHONE USAGE

- 65% of the Australian population owns a smartphone
- 78% of smartphone users research products and services on their phone
- 41% of users have made a purchase via their phone

INTERNET INDICATORS

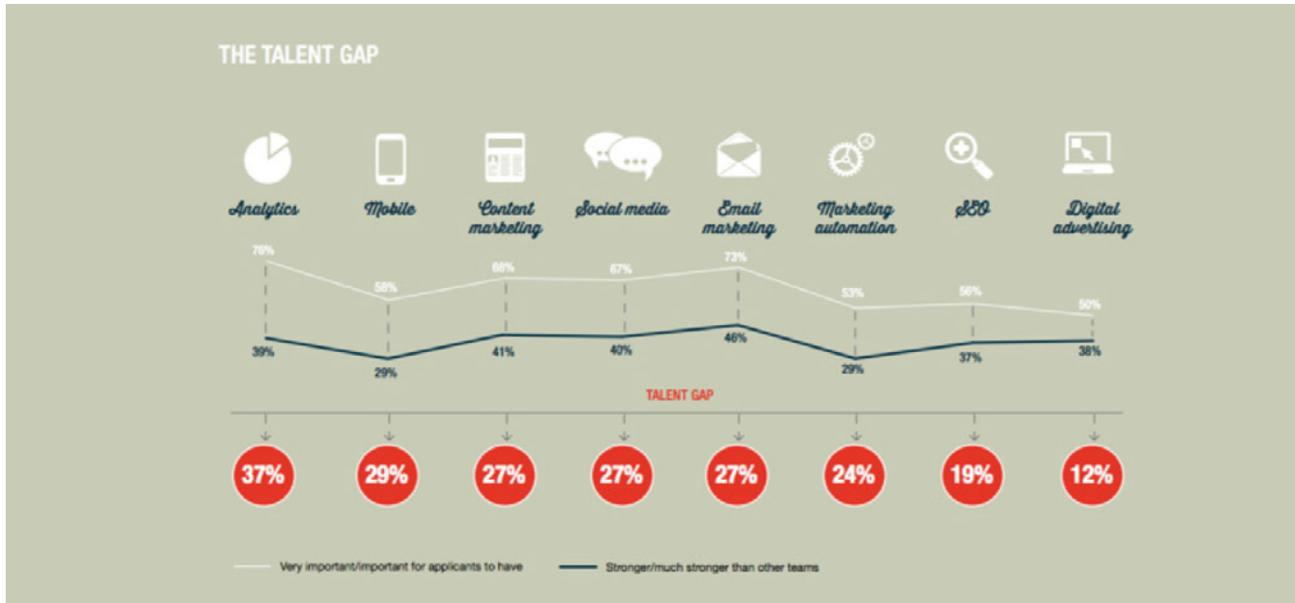
- Australians spend 4.5 hours a day on average using the internet on a desktop or laptop
- Australians spend 1 hour and 40 minutes per day using the internet on their mobile device

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

- 89% of the internet using population has some sort of social media account
- 53% of Australians are active on Facebook
- 42% have a Twitter account

Source: <http://3rdsense.com/blog/09012014-1121/australian-digital-statistics-2014>

Marketing dollars have moved away from traditional strategies such as direct mail, print advertising, and telemarketing. Unfortunately, the skill sets of many internal teams lag behind these new marketing strategies and essential technologies by as much as 37%.



For most small and mid-sized businesses, the time and money required to train internal people on how to master inbound marketing must-haves such as SEO, analytics, and email marketing do not exist. If you are like most businesses you are flat out trying to service your customers and develop new opportunities through sales teams, referrals and other mediums that used to work before the online world of marketing took over.

As a result, smart businesses want to take advantage of these new ROI-charged online strategies such as blogging and social media and are turning to outside agencies for help.

Agencies use their online experience expertise to help organizations that are short on time and internal resources to increase their brands' online visibility and lead generation efforts.

Marketing Agencies come in all shapes and sizes, with different specialties and talents. Yet there are core values and skill sets that will make some better suited to your company than others. What are the most important values and skill sets you should consider when choosing an inbound marketing agency? Let's have a look...



1 The Initial Steps in choosing an Agency –

THE SALES PROCESS

To find the right Agency, you are going to have to go through a selection process. The sales process with a good inbound agency will start with your goals and challenges, and dovetail into how they can help you. They should understand that their services are most compelling when they can be seen as potential answers to the business challenges you are facing.

They should begin by asking about your goals, challenges, and the timing and urgency around meeting those goals. Questions such as:

- How are you measuring the success of your marketing?
- What metrics and benchmarks are most important to you?
- What does the size and makeup of your internal team look like?
- What results do you need to achieve and by when?
- What are you doing now to reach them?

- Are you on track for reaching those results?
- What will you do / what will happen if you don't reach them?
- What challenges might keep you from reaching those goals or getting the resources you need?

So you can see that if they are not asking you the right types of questions, a good question to ask yourself is "whose best interests are being looked after here?" A good Agency will want to know as much as possible about your business before they start telling you about theirs!

Now that we have gone through the initial sales steps, here are some things you need to be aware of so that you can get a clearer picture of what you are being offered and how it will be delivered.



2 What matters most to your Business & Budget?

No two businesses are alike. Each business has its own set of challenges, objectives, goals, budget expectations and day to day stresses to work with.

To deliver real value and maximum impact, an Agency must use marketing strategies that are integrated and executed in optimal sequences. Seeing that an agency can fold all of these tactics together into one cohesive strategy is a good sign they know how to execute efficiently and get results.

There are four Core Elements to look for when selecting an Agency to work with:

Core Element 1

Generating traffic to a website using SEO, blogging, and social media sharing.

Core Element 2

Developing the premium content needed to attract site visitors' interest and convert them using landing pages and managing online lead generation efforts.

Core Element 3

Constructing targeted lead-nurturing campaigns aimed at converting leads into customers.

Core Element 4

Measuring and conducting analyses at every step in the process for continuous improvement of results.

Ensuring that the Agency you choose can provide all of these core elements points to the critical success factor - the capacity to set metrics, track results, and dig into them for insights on improving performance.

By running these core elements on a regular basis lets an agency repeat successes, and fine-tune underachieving campaigns. Reporting and analysis must be embedded in the agency's DNA and embedded in all tasks. By knowing what doesn't work and what does provides you with lower cost per click, larger numbers clicking onto your site which results in a larger ROI.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PROSPECTIVE AGENCY

1. Do you offer traffic generation, lead generation, leads-to-customers and analytically focused service packages?
2. What tactics does your firm use to deliver each of these service packages?
3. What past or current client example(s) can you show me that best illustrate a success in each of your service offerings?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Make sure they are comfortable discussing metrics, sharing their analytical thinking, and the results they've achieved for clients
- Ask them to share examples of eBooks, emails, and other content
- Can they share and discuss analyses of work and the results they've achieve for other Clients (with confidential information masked)
- Are they asking insightful questions to help you clarify your specific needs

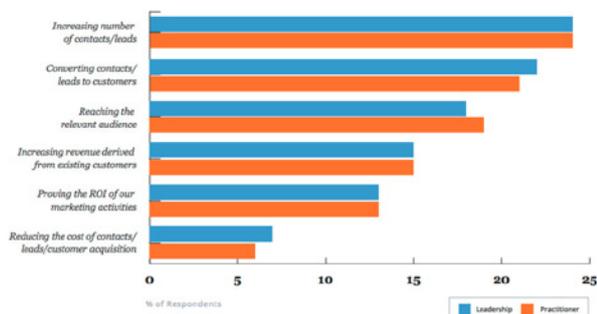


3 Does your Prospective Agency have a clearly Defined Delivery Process?

Any agency worth considering should be able to plot out the specifics and details for the strategy and campaigns they propose for your business. Look at these interesting figures showing the difference between Leaders and Marketing Experts.

TOP MARKETING PRIORITIES BY ROLE

Strong alignment exists between marketing practitioners and leaders



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

Your potential partner agency should be able to outline their approach to your solution in terms of the Four Core Services and explain all the tactics they plan to employ in their implementation. Expect a timeline for each component and a description of the resources they're likely to need along the way.

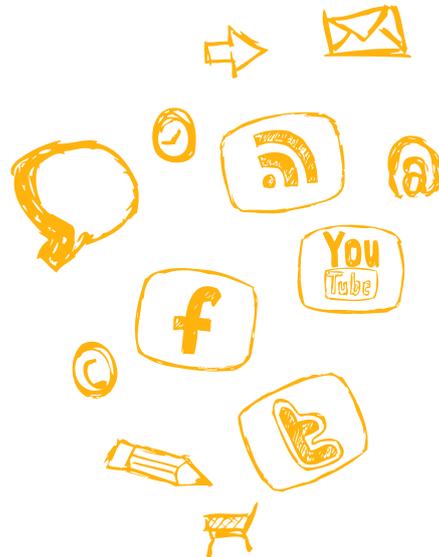
Make sure each component of the strategy they're proposing, makes logical sense.

- Does your business have a limited web presence? Then traffic generation services such as SEO, blogging, and social media need to come first. SEO is the foundation of your web presence and blogging and social media will enable you to strengthen your footprint online.
- Is your website underperforming from a lead generation perspective? One of the focus points with online marketing is reaching more of the right prospects and converting them. Your agency partner will need to ensure that your site has decent traffic and then begin creating premium offers and landing pages to increase the number of leads coming in.
- Are too few sales being attributed back to the website? Your prospective agency will need to look at traffic and lead numbers to ensure quality is present, and begin crafting



targeted lead nurturing and email follow-up campaigns.

The ability to measure and understand data is a baseline skill for each of the core services, and each agency you consider should be able to set benchmarks, identify trends and take action.



KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Given your understanding of our situation, goals and challenges, what do you recommend we do first, second, third, etc.?
2. How does our situation, and the plan you're recommending, match that of another customer you've worked with?
3. What do you see as the most critical piece of inbound marketing for our business and goals?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- They regularly write in their blog about the trends and challenges in industries and share specific solutions for overcoming them.
- They provide detailed flowcharts or diagrams showing how they would make different strategies work for you.
- They show examples of work they did for clients in the same (or similar) industries including details of how they implemented it, as well as charts / graphs showing results as they related to the clients' goals.

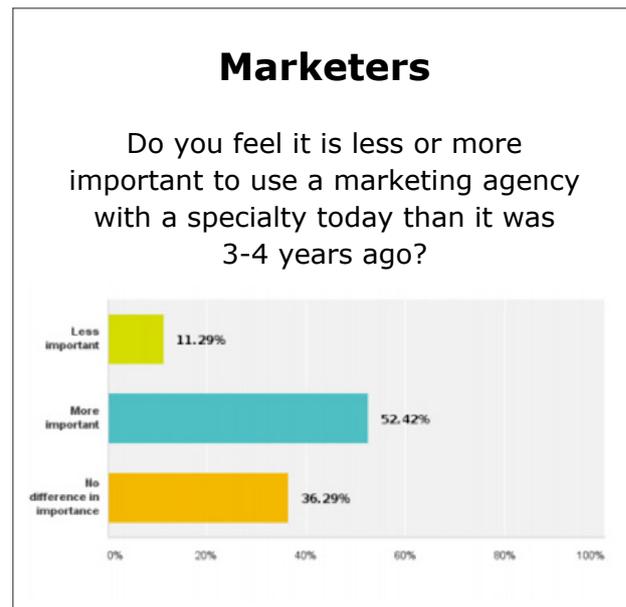


4 SEO and Inbound Marketing are Integral – Is your Agency using it?

When you are in “hiring mode,” your trips to their site have likely been dominated by scouring their services and client testimonial pages. But take a step back from these self-promotion pages and ask yourself, “Do they do the things they’re proposing for me?”

Do they blog with the frequency they say I will have to? Are they active on social media? Can Call-to-Actions buttons and premium content be found throughout their site? If they aren’t walking the talk then you should continue walking!

Nearly 75% of agencies have used inbound marketing in 2013, a truly effective inbound marketing agency should be its own best case study. Your partner agency should be fully utilizing inbound marketing and be excited to show you how well it’s working for them with lots of charts and graphs. Think twice about engaging with a firm that doesn’t make the services they sell a priority for their own business.





KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What have been the results of your own agency's inbound efforts?
2. Does what you are outlining for us match what your own firm does online?
3. What are some key lessons you have learned from using inbound marketing for your own business?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Evidence of extensive use of inbound marketing throughout their website.
- Most of their employees are on social media and use it to share what the agency does for clients.
- When you click a CTA on their site, you see how well they attempt to convert you into a lead and nurture you into becoming a client.



5 How to Leverage Your Team's Industry Expertise

The role of the inbound marketing agency is to create and manage your online marketing activities and then measure the results. The key to working with a great agency is being able to work in a partnership together.

There is an expertise in your business that can't be replaced and it is important to leverage off that expertise as that's why you went into business in the first place, right?

Inbound marketing relies on effort. Effort to create content. To tweet. To research keywords for SEO. To blog. To think about conversion events on your site and how lead nurturing campaigns could be tuned to better perform. Lots of effort. Any agency you hire will need to drive and facilitate all these efforts, but you should also be ready, able, and eager to train members of your internal team on how to blog and use social media, among other things.

Consider how many people work in your business and all the different things they do and perspectives they bring. Think beyond marketing and sales. How about manufacturing? Research and development? Shipping? Distribution? Logistics? Engineering? Customer support? Human resources? IT? Finance? Think about the remarkable content that folks from these different departments could contribute to your firm's inbound marketing efforts. Consider how much more visibility a tweet will get if it's tweeted out by 15 or 20 employees, rather than just the company's account.

An agency worth its weight will be eager to talk with all of your folks — no matter what department they work in — and willing to train them on inbound marketing best practices and harness their brain power. The more "hands on deck," so to speak, the quicker you can build momentum and begin showing results.



KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. To what extent do you plan on using members of our team for content creation, etc.?
2. How do you plan on setting people up for success and ensure the pieces they work on with you are a good use of their time?
3. How has involving a client's team members to do inbound marketing worked in the past?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Natural educators - they effortlessly explain how to do something and why it works (or doesn't) and how to do it even better.
- Suggests and looks for ways to leverage your existing assets, whether they are people, content, or ideas — and doesn't care where they come from, only how well they support your goals.
- Has one or more people on their team dedicated to supporting and teaching clients about inbound marketing and how to do it well.

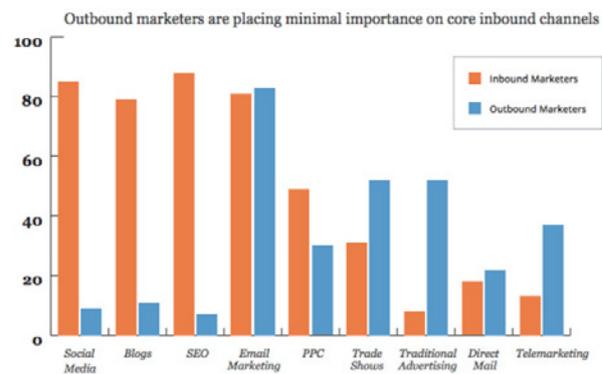


6 Hire an Agency that Can Explain How it does what it does

A complete inbound marketing strategy is comprised of many different strategies. It's like a puzzle in the sense that it's got a lot of constantly "moving" pieces. Pieces, which while they might stand on their own, are far less effective and efficient than when combined together in a comprehensive and cohesive strategy. And to truly succeed online today, each business will need to leverage all the right pieces to create a comprehensive marketing strategy that's right for them.

Assembling the pieces together into one, cohesive strategy is the job of your agency. Each piece is crucial to ensure that you are generating the optimal number of leads and driving your costs per lead down. It's important to understand a potential agency's capabilities at the beginning of your relationship. Make your prospective agency provide details around how each step of the strategy will be completed.

WHICH LEAD SOURCES HAVE BECOME MORE IMPORTANT (OVER LAST 6 MONTHS)



Source: 2014 State of Inbound Marketing

Every agency operates slightly differently and many agencies will specialize in a particular area. This means they might not have the talent in-house to deliver a service entirely on their own. So it's always a good idea to ask who is responsible for creating and executing each piece. Some agencies use partners for different pieces of the work, such as web design, copywriting or image creation and so they will be relying on that partner's schedule.

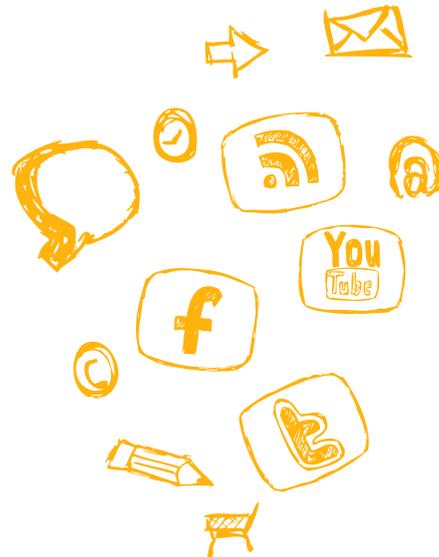
Find out the details of their back-up plan and who their go-to partner will be if a particular



partner can't meet your schedule or their work isn't satisfactory. This ensures you have an understanding of what is being provided, by who and when. It is ideal if the agency you are looking at has a range of providers in each category as this means there will be less downtime for you if something happens to one of the providers. A good agency will have a range of providers in each category.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Do you do all your inbound marketing work in-house?
2. If yes, who on your team specializes in what?
3. If no, to whom do you outsource what? And how long have you worked with them? What's their performance track record?



WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Clear explanation of who is responsible for creating and executing each element of inbound marketing.
- A well-defined back-up plan showing how execution will continue for each element, regardless of the circumstances for the interruption.
- If any work is being outsourced, the prospective agency readily discloses to whom they outsource and for what, their reasons for doing so, and can provide evidence of a successful track record with that partner.



7 Strong Project Management Skills – ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY

Inbound marketing requires time, elbow grease and coordination. Any inbound marketing agency will need you to invest quality time with them. This will be especially true at the beginning of your relationship to get up and running fast, and regularly to ensure success for your business. You should also expect that some members of your team will be dedicated to certain elements of inbound marketing. They'll want to educate them to ensure that these people have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their assigned tasks.

They will need to understand who your customer is and get a sense of the types of content that will be most effective in attracting qualified prospects to your site. They'll also be adding forms and other inbound elements such as call-to-action graphics (CTAs) to your site to help convert those qualified prospects into leads.

To operate effectively, the agency must get inside your customers' heads to understand what motivates them and drives their decisions. At the same time, they'll also have to develop a close working relationship with you and your team so they become familiar with how everyone works together. And don't forget the need for a productive working relationship with your website admin/ webmaster and your sales ops / CRM administrator, so they can coordinate tasks.

Does the agency you're considering have the process and communication skills that give you the confidence they'll make respectful, reasonable, and realistic requests of other people? Have they set clear expectations around what each inbound component will require in terms of time and resources? Do you feel secure that they can manage campaigns with lots of moving parts?



KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What types of requests, technical or otherwise, do you anticipate making of me and my team as our engagement kicks off?
2. What types of requests do you anticipate making of me or other members of my team on an ongoing basis?
3. What project management software, spreadsheets, or other orientation materials should we expect to receive and when?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Highly organized — they should be using an online project management system of some sort and be very happy to include you and your team on it.
- Eagerly provide samples of timelines and project charts.
- Can give you confident estimates of average time it takes for any particular task to be done.



8 Agencies that Measure Everything Succeed

The Internet is an enormously measureable. This makes each element of the inbound methodology trackable and interpretable. This fact should be leveraged heavily by any inbound agency with which you are considering working.

You have goals — and there are lots of ways to define success. Whatever they may be, you're trying to meet (and hopefully beat) them by hiring this agency. Therefore, your agency should be even more focused on charting success in a data-driven way than you are. Progress made toward your goals should be measured every step of the way, and an inbound marketing agency worth its weight will be able to track all campaigns and report on performance regularly.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. How will you measure the success of the campaigns you are proposing?
2. How often will you report back to us on these campaigns and progress being made towards other key metrics?
3. What adjustments can be made if certain metrics are over or under performing?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Fluent in talking about metrics, probing you for how you want to measure success and offering up ideas and recommendations you may not have thought of.
- Shares lots of data with you, showing you examples from their efforts to market their own agency, as well as of clients.
- Offer examples of how they incorporate A/B and multivariate testing in their
- Offerings and the results achieved.



9 Can you see what I see?

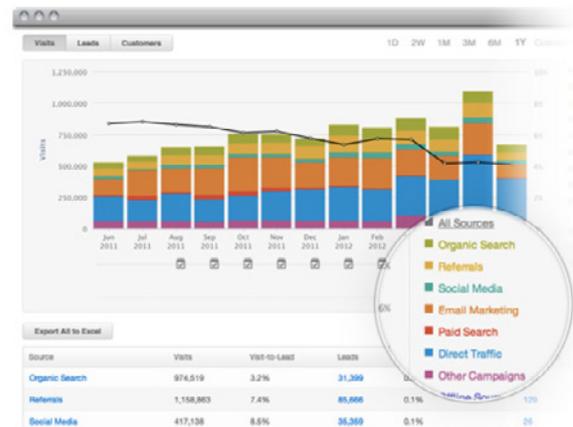
EMBRACING TRANSPARENCY

Your Marketing Agency should want you to see everything that they see.

There should be regular meetings scheduled to allow the agency a regular venue to raise questions and/or concerns as an engagement is ramping and progressing.

Your agency should jump at the chance to train your people. The more you and your team understand what is being done and why, the more you can thoughtfully partner with your agency and set their efforts up for success.

A truly transparent agency will insist that you have login credentials to the online marketing software they use to run your campaigns. These accounts are loaded with data, and they should be open and comfortable with you walking around in their world and questioning what you see.





KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What online software packages do you use to execute and manage inbound marketing?
2. Will we be trained on this software?
3. How often will you share wins and progress with us?

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR

- Discuss their required regular meeting schedule, what gets accomplished in those meetings, and won't accept anything less because it affects their performance.
- Demand that you be a contributing, active member of the team – not just a passive approver of work — or they won't take your account.
- Insist that you and your team must become active users of the online marketing software and will provide the training as part of their services.



We specialise in helping companies attract people to their businesses through powerful inbound marketing strategies and content creation. That's why we're offering free Online Marketing Assessments.

Our Specialists will evaluate your current website and show you how you can get more traffic and leads. We will review your:

- Content marketing
- Search engine optimisation opportunities
- Landing pages & lead-gen forms
- Calls-to-action
- Marketing offers
- Competitor analysis

Say goodbye to unpredictable cash flow and lack of ROI. And hello to an Agency that can help you get the most bang for your buck.

[IF YOU'D LIKE THIS FREE ASSESSMENT, PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)