

# HOW TO HIRE, BRIEF AND WORK WITH A

# MARKETING CONSULTANT



# INTRODUCTION

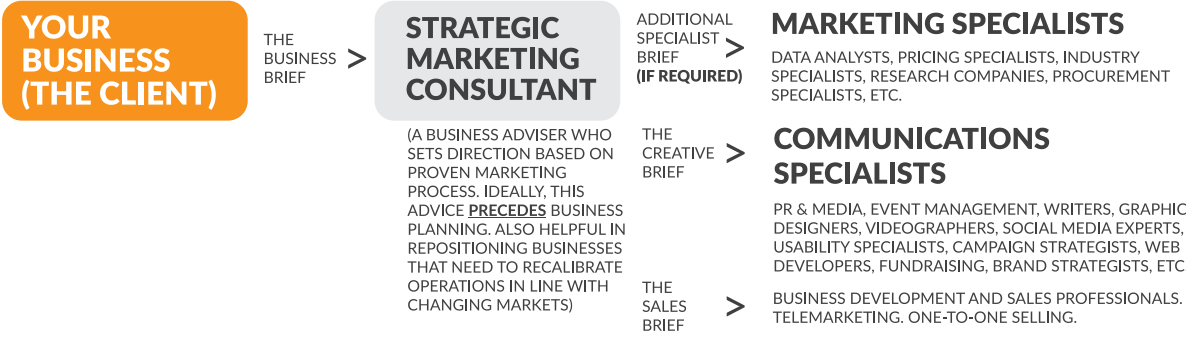
Finding the right marketing adviser for your needs can be daunting.

Marketing is a complex discipline with scores of specialist fields. There is no one marketer who can do it all with equal skill, but a skilled senior marketing consultant can be expected to know a bit about all of these fields. Bringing their own areas of specialisation, they can coordinate all the other elements that might be required.

Like ANY OTHER BUSINESS TASK, briefing a marketing resource requires clear goals, a clear brief and a reasonable understanding of the options.

This guide has been created to help with that. It will help businesses understand what they are paying for when they hire a marketing consultant, how to brief a job or project, what to budget to allocate, and what to expect from the engagement.

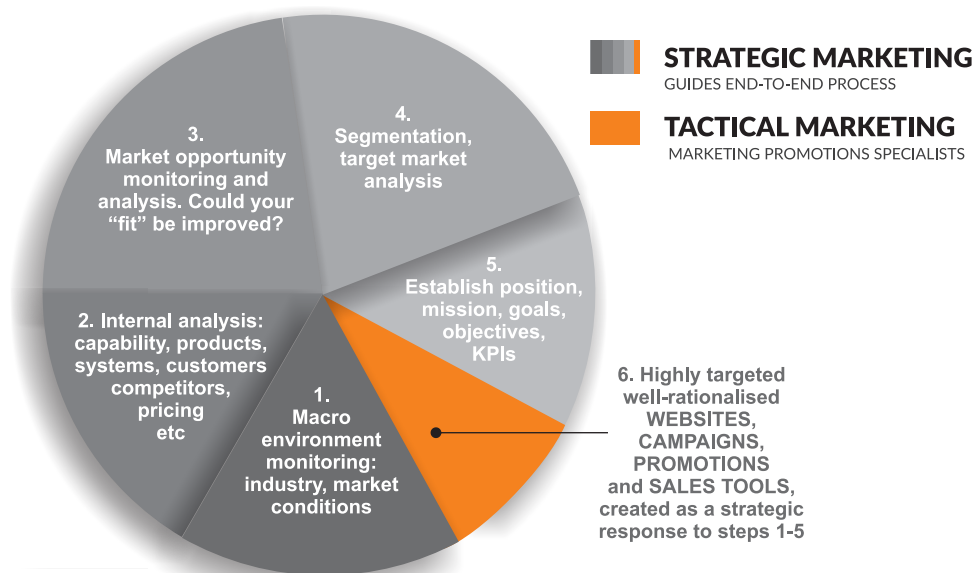
## WHO DOES WHAT IN THE MARKETING “ECOSYSTEM”?



# WHAT IS MARKETING, ACTUALLY?

Marketing promotions (advertising, campaign strategies, web sites, events etc) are the most visible and noticeable part of marketing. So naturally, this is what a lot of people have grown to think marketing is. Many companies mistakenly turn to marketing looking for these effects to lift flagging sales or launch a new business. They think of marketing as a provider of “better sales tools” and believe the “wow factor” that marketing can provide will drive revenue growth.

This is partly true. It can, short term. If you are willing to throw a lot of money at generating marketing “noise” without really trying to solve underlying business challenges or investigate tried and proven theories behind business success, you have to keep it up. Like shoveling coal into a fire to keep it bright.



This is actually a very small part of marketing (see orange section of pie graph above), and it always comes at the END of quite an involved investigation process (Steps 1-6 above). Strategic marketing is mostly a highly analytical pursuit where time is invested in advance to ensure ease of operations down the line. It circles around refocusing your capabilities, processes and high level goals on customer needs, and understanding how to leverage strengths with the minimum marketing expense.

**The real job of strategic marketing is build you from top to bottom to be market and customer focused, ensuring your business never endures poor sales in the first place. It's thinking is far longer term. Strategic marketing is not a “quick fix”.**

# A BIT MORE ON THE STRATEGIC VS SALES APPROACH TO WINNING BUSINESS

Expanding on the concepts on the previous page, so many businesses get this wrong, its worth taking a moment to extrapolate on these two approaches. Misunderstanding repeatedly leads to poor returns on well-intentioned investment.

## **Strategic Marketing Approach:**

*This is heavily focused on trying to locate that elusive “slipstream” into which goods and services can be naturally exchanged with the minimum of effort, expense and friction.*

The process usually requires a lot of research and digging, and the results and insights can often compel *organisational change*. It relies on proven business science and tools. It’s a “build your offering and company around market need” approach. It comes FIRST; before you write your business plan and build your website. If you are an established business, you can expect first-time strategic marketing involvement to invoke change. It will open your eyes to new ways of looking at things.

Its an effort that pays for itself over a much longer term, delivering ease of decision-making, clear understanding of your target market, better relationships with customers, and systems that reflect your purpose.

## **Sales/Business Development Approach (supported by marketing promotions)**

*The Sales/Business Development disciplines are more concerned with the art of selling what is already there; building awareness, using compelling messages, closing sales.*

Sales and promotions have to be applied with ongoing, consistent intensity, (and \$\$). At the end of the day they provide no strategic insight or oversight about how things could be done better. It is a “build it and they will come” approach. So many businesses just “add marketing” to the sales effort.

**The balance of focus in either area will very much depend on your industry life cycle, your competition, your capacity for clear differentiation and many other factors. Your marketing consultant should be highly skilled in understanding the influences of these factors, and advise you accordingly.**

# ARE YOU READY FOR A STRATEGIC MARKETING APPROACH?

Certainty about your market position and a plan that is designed to leverage your core capabilities to achieve goals with your most attractive markets pays big dividends. Just think how much time is spent on every difficult decision you make - structure changes, diversion of key staff on opportunity analyses, etc. Strategic marketing will help you structure your business, and set your direction around known market conditions and customer demand. This forms the basis of sound financial planning and marketing decisions for the next 3-5 years.

If you have gotten to the point where you are no longer willing to waste money and time on trial and error, you can visualise the returns you will reap by investing in a clear strategy, and you are willing to play a “longer game”...

THEN YOU ARE READY TO TALK TO A STRATEGIC MARKETING CONSULTANT.



# HOW TO BRIEF A STRATEGIC MARKETING CONSULTANT

Answers to these questions will inform the perfect first contact brief, and the questions that can't be answered are a clear guide to work that might need doing.

## **GROWTH (Your growth record and ambitions are a good indication of appetite)**

- Current turnover and growth in past/next 3 years
- If you have a business or strategic plan that you share?
- If you don't can you outline your business objectives for the next period - how will you measure success?

## **POSITION (How well do you understand your differentiated, winning position?)**

- What are you known for?
- What do you want to be known for?
- Can you articulate your value proposition?

## **SEGMENTS AND PRODUCTS (Indications of marketing "complexity")**

- How many products/services to how many customer segments?
- Which are the most profitable and the least cost to serve?
- Are there "priority" products, segments and customers?
- Do you clearly and intimately understand what customers are looking for when they find your product or service, and how they make decisions about whether to engage?

## **MARKET (How well do you understand your playing field?)**

- What is your market size and share? What is your accessible share? Why?
- Anything in the sector that you see impacting on how you do business - negatively or positively over the next period?
- Who are your competitors? Who of your competitors impresses you most? Why? How easy/difficult is it to enter this market? How much power over your business do buyers and suppliers have?
- What are the topics your sector is talking about the most? (Trends)
- What marketing have you done to date? (Bring samples to discuss)
- Has that delivered measurable results?

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

- Paint a picture of the client that is "ideal" for your business.
- What other relationships are key to your business? What is its "ecosystem"?

## **WHAT DOES YOUR MARKETING INVESTMENT NEED TO ACHIEVE?**

- What do you think needs to be done and how do you decide on budget?

# UNDER THE BONNET

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CONSULTANT

A strategic marketer with the confidence to give you honest advice will have at least 15 years experience implementing strategy in a wide variety of industries and business situations. Experience in your industry is nice, but not necessary. (Marketing principles are tried and true, and parallels between your business and other industries can add invaluable insight). They will preferably have executive experience working with cross-functional exec teams to deliver business outcomes, understanding all of the internal implementation issues. They are financially literate; used to querying monthly performance reports and understanding bottom line business imperatives and costs.

## OTHER SKILLS REQUIRED

Marketing consultants are used to directing a wide variety of specialist subcontractors (see small print in diagram page 2). Ask your consultant what skills might be needed, and what budget to allow, once they have absorbed the requirements of your project.

## CONTROLLING COST BLOW-OUT

Ask for a task list with milestones. Where possible, allow your consultant to subcontract to their own experts. Stress-tested relationships reduce risk, bring additional insights, and your consultant is then more accountable for quality of outcome. If working with your team, brief your team about expected outcomes, draw up clear roles and clearly state your expectations in investing in the consultant. These simple things can save thousands.

## WHAT BUDGET TO ALLOW?

Generalist marketing consultants on the promotions side will charge \$60-100/hr. Experienced strategic consultants that lead this process cost a minimum of \$150/hr (home office rate). Consultants with Tier 1 consultancy or blue chip experience will command more as these are higher budget, higher stakes environments. Marketing consultancies will add layers of cost but the extra resources and accountability they bring is relevant for larger companies/jobs. A great consultant working in a home office with a freelance network might be charging \$50-100/hr less than an agency consultant, and their work may be just as good. You should think about these costs as a "lite" marketing director. I.e, a full-time marketing director will cost you a minimum of \$130K per year. A freelance strategic consultant can lay out your key business issues plus a plan for 1/4 - 1/3 of that. Promotions costs (sales people, adverts, websites, etc) are extra.

## GETTING STARTED

A low-risk way to engage can be to start with a small job to test the relationship, (ie, *Research a Key Competitor*, or, *Map a Key Customer Journey*. Something useful that won't be wasted). You should expect to pay a minimum of \$2K for either of these tasks.

# OUTSOURCE OR IN-HOUSE? HOW TO DECIDE

## 1. THE BENEFIT OF INTELLIGENCE FROM OTHER BUSINESSES

Consultants look at lots of businesses, all the time. They bring lots of wisdom gained from other businesses, to your business.

## 2. SPECIALISATION

All managers know something about business strategy. But consultants specialise in it. They are constantly reading, networking, questioning and revising tools and methods. They are absolutely dedicated to the fine art of working ON a business, whereas you can get distracted and somewhat submerged working IN it.

## 3. BUSINESS LEADS

Because of the number of people consultants meet in the course of their jobs, it is unlikely they, or someone in their network won't know someone who could be helpful to your business.

## 4. OBJECTIVITY

Can't see the wood for the trees? Employees are settled into your culture and adopt a vested interest in pleasing you, and getting paid for it. That's natural, but they can lose the ability to speak up. Consultants are paid to tell you things you need to hear.

## 5. NO STRINGS ATTACHED

A consultant is just as easy to let go as they are to hire. They come in, they do the work, then leave, but they are usually around and "in the know" if you need them.

## 6. INTENSITY OF WORK

It's a well researched fact that staff only work a maximum of 6 effective hours per day. Often far less as energies wax and wane over the long term of singular focus on a business, and internal politics can get in the way. You pay a consultant directly for hours of work, or by agreed outcomes, to focus on high level issues that matter.

## 7. DO THE SUMS

The opportunity cost of not doing something you know you should do, just because everybody is too busy servicing the customers you have, can be far higher than the cost of a consultant. The cost of diverting specialist staff to research or learn in an area they cannot expect to become expert in, in the time available, is also high. So do the numbers. Be sure to add the cost of someone not doing their regular job to the cost of diversion to a specialist task, and add \$\$ of some of the benefits above.

**If that cost is more than the cost of a consultant, you have a simple answer.**



# THE “BUSINESS SUCCESS” CHECKLIST:

## AREAS OF MARKETING THAT WILL GUARANTEE SUCCESS IF MASTERED:

### COMPLETE CLARITY AROUND:

Vision, values, purpose and your corresponding value propositions across markets, service levels, product & price (4Ps).  
*ie, how does your core strategy “play out”?*

### UNDERSTANDING OF:

Partner/complementor channels  
Marketing channels  
All touch points in the Customer Journey  
Typical length of Customer Journey  
Sales pipeline management/nurturing  
Products/services that match position  
Product/service development capability  
Competitor offerings  
How to open new markets

### DEVELOPMENT OF:

Brand values and personality  
Brand visual identity  
Messaging and tone  
Communications plan  
Sales strategy  
Sales processes & relevant tools  
Sales management & measurement  
Client service program  
Defined, conscious “perfect client criteria”  
Usable database of stakeholder information  
Cross selling opportunities to existing clients  
Aligned client services levels across every facet of your business

### ABILITY TO:

Articulate a market strategy and write a marketing activity plan  
Gain support for strategy across staff body  
Recruit & manage marketing staff  
Set & manage appropriate marketing budgets

## COMMON ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE THIS SUCCESS:

- Research customers, market, competitors.
- Review products, services, pricing. Know where your offering is positioned against all of this and where the opportunities are.
- Understand how your customers access information about a business like yours.
- What other businesses are serving the same markets with complementary products?
- Map the customer journey and intimately understand their thought process as they go through their decision-making processes.
- Analyse the value of the benefits you are providing to customers against those of competitors. Evaluate/devise differentiation.
- Conduct Segmenting, Targeting and Positioning.
- Articulate a positioning statement for the business overall, and adjust for each segment.
- Decide on who your most valuable customers are, and understand the costs of serving them, as opposed to other kinds of customers. Develop strategies that will nurture good relationships and minimise expensive churn.
- Write your key messages to these segments (the core of what you want to say about your benefits to them).
- Create or adjust your brand image to match your value proposition and position.
- Create quantifiable goals for each segment.
- Create strategies to help you achieve goals.
- Decide what reaching those goals will be worth in returns and set a budget for achieving them.
- Set a marketing budget and write a plan of activities.
- Create your marketing collateral (content) across proposed media and deploy.