



## MARKETING AGENCIES

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### Annotation:

There are three main types of customers of marketing agencies' services within the company. First, the owners or directors – this case is often found in micro and small businesses, as well as in solving strategic issues. Secondly, the functional managers / responsible persons in the field of marketing and sales. Finally, the third option is when the order of services is carried out by specialists in the field of procurement, which, as a rule, is associated with the regular acquisition of relatively standard services for a given company (usually a large one) on the basis of outsourcing. Each type of customer is guided by its own considerations and logic when choosing a service provider, which does not exclude the importance of a comprehensive understanding of the market of marketing agencies.

**Key words:** Advertising agencies , marketing agencies, functional managers, marketing, market.

To make an effective purchase of a marketing service, you need to be well-versed in the suppliers of such a "product" and their assortment policy

Why is it difficult to compare marketing agencies with a full-time marketing service?

The question of selecting a marketing agency to perform a certain task (as a project, limited in time) or to assign a certain marketing function (as a regular activity) arises as a result of an internal need for the company, the expression of which can be both the head of the enterprise and the first person in marketing. However, in any case, first of all, the possibility of meeting such a need at the expense of the company's internal resources, which can be either available or acquired in the labor market for a new line of activity or project, is considered.

Hence, the objective task is to compare two solutions-to outsource the marketing function or to expand the staff of the marketing service (to increase the load on existing employees).

The seemingly simple economic task of calculating and comparing two "efficiencies" turns out to be very non-trivial in practice.

If you make a simple intersection, then there are four possible situations:

- 1) the project task-the load on the staff increases,
- 2) project task-an employee is hired to the staff,
- 3) the task is regular – the load on the staff increases,
- 4) the task is regular – an employee is hired in the state.

There are also combined options, but it will not complicate the already difficult task of choosing too much. At the same time, remember that with efficiency, you need to count both the costs and the result. Let's start with the costs.

It is most simple to measure the cost alternatives for solving the problem on your own and by attracting an outsourcing company in the second and fourth options - by calculating the cost of the services of a marketing agency and the remuneration of newly engaged employees, taking into account all tax



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payments and deductions (for example, if the service provider, as well as the customer, work under the general tax system).

When increasing the workload of existing full-time employees, especially within the framework of a project task, it is much more difficult to compare costs, since the accounting of employee workload in Russian companies is often not very high-quality, and in the case of project (temporary) employee workload, it is also unclear how to correctly organize a permanent change of tasks and their correct intersection with the rest of the activity. Given that the volume of the current workload of marketers is often very indirectly related to the level of their remuneration, it is difficult to ensure comparability of cost calculations.

But it is much more difficult when comparing the effectiveness of two solutions to calculate the expected result, which is often difficult to quantify at all. More or less accurately, you can predict the return from an existing full-time employee or from a marketing agency with which work has already been put "on stream". When we talk about attracting new employees or outsourcers, the opinion about their effectiveness is formed rather by experts or intuitively.

As a result, the comparison of options for attracting a marketing agency or working with your own is quite conditional. Therefore, the choice of one or another option is more in the field of intuition and managerial experience of decision-makers.

Why is it difficult to compare marketing agencies with each other?

After passing the first "fork", the second one arises – how to compare marketing agencies with each other. In our opinion, we need to start with the fact that with all the diversity of such organizations, there are the most common types of them that are suitable for various tasks. And, knowing what task we want to set for a marketing agency, it is worth looking for a performer not in the entire market of marketing services, but in a specific segment, where the probability (but not the guarantee) to find a suitable counterparty is higher.

The following is not a typology of marketing agencies that claims to be universal. Let's talk about who customers of marketing services encounter more often in the market.

## **1. Advertising agencies.**

Many marketing agencies are advertising agencies in practice, which does not exclude the importance of advertising activities as well as promotion in general. You just need to clearly understand that a good specialist in the field of advertising, like an agency, can often not be used to effectively solve other marketing tasks. It has become a practice that rare organizations working in the field of advertising speak of themselves as advertising companies. Most mimic the marketing ones. Probably, this comes from the fact that in the understanding of many potential customers, marketing and advertising are about the same thing, but the word "marketing" seems to give more weight, sounds more solid. It is important not to pay attention to these formal features, but to understand the essence of the organization that is considered as a service provider. Many types of advertising are really good to do on outsourcing, but this does not mean that such a contractor should be trusted with strategic marketing issues.



## **2. Digital agencies.**

This should include marketing agencies that specialize in working online. If the main portfolio of the company's services includes the development and development of websites, the organization of contextual advertising, SEO promotion and similar work, then we are dealing with this kind of marketing agency. As a rule, this type of marketing service providers do not try to present themselves as a performer for different tasks, clearly indicating their areas of responsibility.

## **3. Agencies engaged in quantitative research.**

Quantitative research focuses on various dimensions of market processes, such as brand awareness or consumer preferences. Most often, this segment employs fairly large companies that have their own technologies for working with certain markets (specialization can be expressed to a greater or lesser extent), as well as a significant staff and an extensive partner network. Many of them are federal players and are well known to marketing professionals. Given the large capacity of the market, quantitative research rarely goes beyond the boundaries of its segment, developing it and increasing its competitiveness through the improvement of the proposed product.

## **4. Agencies engaged in qualitative research.**

Qualitative research is designed to assess the development of the market and collect information about its conjuncture, which is completely or partially not subject to formalization. Unlike the previous type, such agencies are rarely large structures, which is due to both the lack of need to keep a permanent staff (non-standard tasks, irregular loading), and the predominance of the importance of not technology (which must be constantly maintained), but the professional level of the management (expert) staff. They may specialize in specific geographical or industry markets, but are more often highly versatile.

## **5. Agencies that perform the marketing function on outsourcing.**

They mainly work with small businesses (micro enterprises) and take over the organization of the marketing process as a whole, including the selection and training of personnel to work in the customer's staff. They are often engaged in the development of sales in a complex, which is logical given the main goal of marketing activities. In this environment, it is common to work without the formation of a legal entity – on the basis of individual entrepreneurship or under a civil contract with an individual consultant.

## **6. Narrow-profile agencies.**

This can include a fairly large number of organizations that specialize in a specific marketing function or technology. More often, such organizations do not try to explicitly associate themselves in the eyes of consumers with marketing activities. As examples, you can specify companies that provide Wi-Fi marketing services or prepare for the participation of customers in exhibition events.

## **7. Full-cycle agencies.**

The peculiarity of this type of marketing agencies is that they declare the possibility of providing a wide range of services within a single concept of work and interaction with the customer. Unlike the fifth



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type, here the marketing function is not taken outside, but remains inside the company (often if the customer has a marketing service or a marketer on staff), and some universal marketing technology is not sold. At the same time, such an agency undertakes to solve a set of tasks for the development of the customer's commercial activities. A high degree of versatility requires the presence of the performer's competencies in various fields, especially the ability to conduct market research and implement tools in the field of sales development and promotion. At the same time, a partner network is required, which allows you to quickly select co-executors for the numerous tasks of the customer.

How to build the logic of choosing marketing agencies

When the customer tries to compare different performers, he must clearly determine which type of marketing agency is preferable for him in the current conditions and with the challenges of development. Only then do a comparison of potential service providers based on each type, since the logic of the choice will be somewhat different.

Advertising and digital agencies are often chosen by companies, so the price of error here is quite low (especially for advertising agencies). The main problem is the wide choice, which requires considerable time to study the counterparties of this type. It is better not to try to find and evaluate all possible options, which can be measured in the hundreds, but to establish the optimal requirements, compliance with which makes the company a contender to become your supplier.

Larger customers actively use tender procedures when choosing a supplier of advertising products, which simplify the search and selection process.

When comparing, it is good to use the analysis of the reference of applicants, which is especially convenient for comparing the quality of work of digital agencies. In the most significant situations, for example, when developing corporate websites or launching a large-scale SEO promotion company, it is advisable to involve third-party experts to evaluate the proposed options. In fact, we are talking about a project competition.

The selection of research companies is based on different principles. For quantitative research, the company's experience in working in this market and the portfolio of their existing customers are important. In addition, there are a number of ratings agencies that specialize in quantitative research, which allows you to get a fairly clear idea of the level of their work and understand the expected results. In some areas, the brands of such companies are so promoted that the choice becomes essentially non-alternative for the customer.

Assessing the potential of companies that do quality research is more challenging. Here, too, tender procedures are actively used, but it is extremely difficult to choose the optimal contractor based on sufficiently formal criteria, especially if the contract price plays a major role. You can recommend that you develop several key evaluation criteria for yourself, for example, a reference on the specifics of the study, the composition of the project team, the cost of work, and so on, select 3-5 companies that are most interesting for cooperation, draw up a detailed technical task and discuss it with each applicant (in person or remotely, but orally). This approach does not guarantee, but significantly increases the chances of meeting a reliable performer who is interested in high-quality performance of the work.

Outsourcing marketing is a high-risk decision. Here, the degree of integrity of the performer, his reputation in the market, not to mention the quality of the services provided, is extremely important. As a prerequisite, you can indicate the regular availability of the contractor, often-its presence in the



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territorial proximity of the customer. The selection is usually made on the basis of recommendations and confirmed results of work on comparable projects.

Choosing a narrow-profile agency requires immersion in the specifics of its activities, which determines the availability of these competencies for the customer. If they are not enough, it makes sense to request the expertise of an external marketer or agency. Due to the diversity of such suppliers and the different levels of structuring and maturity of the markets in which they operate, decisions often have to be made intuitively or rely on the opinion of a few experts.

It is most difficult to choose a marketing agency to carry out a complex of works that extend from marketing and sales strategy to the implementation of tactical measures (a full-cycle agency). Such a choice, due to its significance, can take months and requires a deep study of all applicants who meet the primary formal criteria.

In addition to the professional level of the team, important attention should be paid to the business reputation of the performer, as well as the willingness to work with non-standard tasks and motivation for such activities. A good signal can be an interest in remuneration, which includes not only regular payments and the development of the budget for the implementation of individual activities, but also a percentage of the achievement of sales performance indicators. It is also desirable that full-service agencies (their managers or those responsible for the project) are available on a regular basis and visit your company, monitoring the execution of work and recording all changes in real time.

The involvement of marketing agencies, implemented in a certain logic and on the basis of rational choice, can become the basis for improving the quality of commercial activity management and even form new growth points for the business. This solution is not a panacea, but an essential tool for increasing your market advantage.

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