

Breezeway - Whitepaper:

How to choose a marketing partner that brings the most value

No matter which agency you ask, the answer is always the same. Whether it is a modern marketing agency or a traditional advertising agency, a new media agency, a brand new content marketing agency that publishes countless posts in the social media or a PR communication agency, they all feel that they are the best partner for you. They all think you should choose them.

As a result, a company easily ends up with too many partners, with conflicting advice and work. You spend a lot of money but get very little in return.

In reality, the most suitable agency might be one that has never contacted you. The one with world-class know-how but no skills or need to market itself to you.

One strong lead agency might be enough. Or you might need a group of top agencies that specialise in different areas.

It is not about what you are being sold but what you should buy.

The greater the number of choices, the more difficult it is to choose

The shift in marketing is strongly visible in the agency field. New agencies are being established. Novel agency categories are being born. Media and consulting houses have started to offer marketing services. And agencies offer solutions that are no longer based on traditional bought media.

It is no wonder that buying marketing services feels harder than before. How do we know if we have the best partners? How can we make sure that we are exploiting all the opportunities offered by marketing? How can we tell that we are not wasting money or paying for overlapping work?

For this reason, a growing number of marketers are using a consultant to help them choose an agency. At the same time, they want to make sure that they keep up with the shift in marketing.

The best marketers are most concerned

Marketers are concerned about their ability and their organisation's ability to keep up with the change. The more experienced the marketer and the more competitive the market, the bigger the concern.

This is where Finland could learn from the US, the UK and Sweden, where the competition is fierce and success is a necessity. New solutions and better partners are keenly sought. The sense of urgency is high.

And it is based on hard facts. Typically, a marketing director works in one place for an average of 3.8 years. During that time, it's results or out. For managing directors, the corresponding period is only a few years longer.

In the recent years, the best marketers have also become more active in Finland. Now people want change and need agency partners to spur them on.

The goal is no longer to find the nicest partner but the one that brings the best results

Marketing and partner agencies are facing growing demands. Marketing efforts are more extensive, more transparent and, if successful, more productive than ever before.

It is no longer enough to have a pleasant partner you have good chemistry with. Results are everything. Studies of the internal dynamics of teams and the relationship between customer companies and marketers have revealed that difference is power. Teams with high diversity gain better results, although the work might not be as pleasant. At its best, a good agency partner can have an enriching effect, provide different perspectives and significantly improve the results.

Broadening your horizons?

Is your business expanding beyond Finland? Do you feel that it is impossible to find state-of-the art expertise in marketing in Finland? A growing number of Finnish companies are looking for marketing expertise from abroad. Nowadays, costs do not necessarily prevent anyone from looking for expertise from Sweden, for example, our master marketing neighbour.

We have already extended the agency search abroad for our trendsetting customers. And the results are very promising.

Raising the bar

In our experience, Finnish marketers settle for too little. They continue their stale relationships with their mediocre agency partners. They might not know better. Or they can't or won't demand more from their partners. The aim must be to significantly increase the sales. The value of the brand must grow measurably. The launch of new products or services must be a success. Strict indicators can and should be used to measure the performance of an agency – often the same KPIs as in business operations.

Seven tips for selecting the most useful agency partner

- 1 .Ask an agency consultant to define the kind of agency partner(s) the company needs. An objective and demanding consultant can raise the bar of the company and its partners.
- 2 .Define what would bring you the most business benefit. Do you need more customers? Should you persuade the existing customers to buy more? Is the bottleneck the awareness in Sweden or the customer experience in Lapland? Choose a partner who is most able to provide exactly what you need.
3. Limit the search to agencies that have credible references in solving similar problems. Save time and ensure the best result by using a consultant to shortlist potential candidates and present only the best ones.
4. Demand the agency's best people. Make sure that they are genuinely involved in addressing the challenges of your company or making the most of opportunities.
5. Draft appropriate NDAs. After that, share as much information as possible to allow the agency to solve issues together with you. Keeping information to yourself or making things look better than they are only makes matters worse.

6. Choosing an agency partner is not a beauty contest. Don't choose an agency based on beautiful images or enticing videos. Ensure added value by working in workshops and planning together.

7. Don't choose the partner who is nicest and goes along with everything you say. Demand ability and courage to challenge and debate. Remember that a high-diversity partner with high added value might not always be the easiest choice but is always the most productive.