

**HIRING A NEW AGENCY IS AN INVESTMENT OF TIME AND RESOURCES. WE DEVELOPED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO HELP ORGANIZATIONS PLAN FOR AN EFFICIENT AND DILIGENT HIRING PROCESS.**

## **Why Hire an Agency?**

A good agency can provide expertise and resources that are not available within an organization. Many in-house teams are working at or above capacity so they don't have the resources to work on multiple projects. Some organizations don't want to take on the challenge of bringing certain marketing services in-house. And with today's expanding and fragmented media landscape, it isn't realistic for most companies to have expertise across all traditional and digital platforms. A specialty agency is likely well versed in the details and will be of great value to a company in need.

Agencies can give fresh perspective and insight into a client's customers, products and business.

An agency can keep its client fully updated on the "big issues", while not bogging them down with the details of project execution, management and administration.

## **Niche or Specialty Agencies Can Make Sense**

In some cases, even when a company has one or more agencies in its network, it may bring in a specialty firm that can help target a specific demographic, such as the youth market. A niche agency can successfully execute a certain type of program efficiently and develop relevant creative. The right agency working within its area of expertise should be able to execute fresh, exciting work with creativity and efficiency.

## **Agency Hiring Process**

Once the decision to hire an agency is made, the following are valuable steps in the agency hiring process:

## 1\_ Request For Proposal (RFP)

A good first step is for the company to document its needs. Doing this gives a prospective agency insight into the company's situation and goals. It also can help stake-holders within the company's organization align on key elements of the program and prevent unmet expectations later. The approach to documenting your needs can vary from listing a few key points written in an email to a detailed Request for Proposal.

### A good RFP will outline the following:

- Business and brand background and positioning
- Summary of desired work and objectives (include any special expectations and considerations)
- Details on targeted consumers
- Budget
- Timelines for responding to the brief and for the program

Some clients don't like to provide budget information, however a budget cap or range is helpful in guiding the agency to develop feasible solutions to your marketing challenges. Agencies will spend a great deal of time and energy responding to an RFP, therefore potential clients should be clear with the agency about the following:

- If an agency may not be hired as a result of the process
- If funding has not been approved for the agency's proposed projects

In these circumstances, many agencies will gladly respond to your request, but they deserve to know these details in advance.

## 2\_ Research Agency Candidates

There are a few ways to research potential agencies. You can network within your organization or with other businesses or experts. You can read trade publications or conduct research. When you have a potential candidate, you should have an initial phone interview with the agency to discuss your project and the agency's capabilities. As you conduct this interview, consider the following:

- Does the agency really do the things you're looking for or are they just saying "we can do everything"?
- Can the agency provide examples of past work (done in the last three years) that is relevant to your needs?
- What other clients does the agency work with that you think can serve as reference point for your own needs?
- Is there chemistry and personality fit?
- How does the agency have a formal system to manage work and update clients on progress?
- How does the agency staff client accounts?
- How does the agency bill for services?
- Do they mark-up client expenses?

### **3\_ Provide the RFP**

When you select the agencies that you will invite to respond to your Request for Proposal, be available to discuss it with each agency. Remember, the more clearly you communicate about your project, the more likely you will get the kind of proposals you are seeking. Give each agency a reasonable RFP due-date of at least two weeks.

### **4\_ Evaluate the Agency Proposals**

You should plan to receive agency proposals in person or via phone conference, allowing the agency to present the proposal and not just email it to you to read. Criteria for evaluating proposals should be identified in advance and consistently applied to each agency. This typically includes agency expertise, topline concepts, ability to execute, how the program will be measured, budget analysis and other factors specific to the project.

### **5\_ Hiring**

Hiring the agency typically involves signing a service agreement, agreeing on a payment schedule and having a kick-off meeting to address program start-up issues.