



Things to consider or ask when hiring a Creative Professional

mar·ket·ing

Noun: The action or business of promoting and selling products or services.

Technology today affords businesses with a wide of array of powerful marketing tools. Understanding what those tools are and how to best use them to reach your customers and increase your profits should be your key marketing objective.

A marketing or creative services professional should be your **expert advocate** for your business.

Choosing a professional that is a good fit for your business is an important part of the process. This decision should be given the same detail and consideration that you give business decisions as it should directly affect your bottom line.

Here is a list of some critical aspects you should consider and some important questions you should ask prospective creative professionals to help you in the decision process. Keep in mind that you are hiring expertise to anticipate and prepare for all possible scenarios that might impact your business in the short and long term.

Needs Assessment: What do you really need? What does the expert think would be the best options to start with and why? If you are not sure what you really need, what process do they suggest to develop a concrete assessment and plan?

Samples: Do they have samples of their work you can see?

Support and Maintenance: How are instructions and technology support handled? An on-going relationship and ability to communicate well when you need it is critical to effective use of your marketing tools and making sure tools are worth the investment/payoff.

Expertise: How does the professional stay current with technology and industry trends to help them support their clients? Are they able to prepare files and products for all platforms and devices and understand the key industry “best practices”? Are they able to communicate what those key pieces and tools are so that you can understand how they relate to your business model? Can they effectively communicate what tools are available to your business and provide appropriate strategy?

Collaboration: Will you be working with an individual or a team? If you have a specific need or assistance with part of a project is that possible? Will the professional be willing to work with and train staff and empower any appropriate team members? Is documentation included with the project to make sure you feel comfortable going forward?

Time: Is a clear project timeline given? What expectations are given for returning emails and phone calls to keep the project moving and get questions answered?

Quality: Are files created and provided in vector and high resolution format with color designations assigned?

Customer Service Style: Is the professional a good fit for the personality of your business and style? How empowered do they make you feel? How approachable are they when you have a question or concern?

Experience: How long has the professional been in business and field?

Testimonials and Recommendations: Ask for a list of references that it would be ok for you to contact if you wish. Especially helpful would be a client in a similar industry or business set up.

Assurances: How do you ensure my satisfaction? What benchmarks can be used for measurement on the success of any given project now and in the future?

Interview multiple creative professionals—and don't forget, chemistry is important as well. Build a relationship to ensure expectations and communication are clear and ideally pick someone who you will want to work with.

Deliverables: Ask for a detailed project description that includes the full scope of the work and if appropriate what additional options or products are available to add on later and what is their cost?

Investment: This can vary to a great degree and is important to navigate to fit your needs.

When comparing the cost of a project or any service, make sure you are comparing the same project needs and quality level. Ask for a detailed estimate of what the project includes and what items can be added later or are necessary that are not included.

Compare "raw costs" of physical out of pocket dollars, but be sure to take into account labor (yours or who you hire) and most importantly the cost of lost opportunity that a substandard branding message or web presence can cost you.