

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MARKETING AGENCY IN 2023



WHY ASK QUESTIONS?

Are all agencies created equal? Absolutely not.

While it seems that every agency out there claims to have its own “secret sauce” for driving results, it can be difficult to weed out the pros from the “fly by night” charlatans.

This is the reason you can have 10 different agencies all running Google and Facebook ads for your brand and get 10 completely different sets of campaign results.

The strategic approach your agency applies to your specific campaign is the key to agency differentiation. And there is not enough marketing or business jargon in the world to mask the reality of a campaign that fails to meet (or exceed) expectations.

It is for these reasons that we wanted to provide you with 10 questions you need to consider (and ask) your agency (or prospective agency) to ensure you've found the perfect partnership for your business.



#1

WHAT ARE MY BUSINESS'S TOP 3 TO 5 PROBLEMS?

*Because not all problems are the
same - or created equal...*

Whether you are years into a relationship with your agency or starting out fresh, you should always be able to ask this question and get a straight answer.

Sure, you may get different responses for different campaign types like SEO, PPC, or paid social media advertising, but your agency must be able to identify the problems they are trying to solve.

BEYOND THIS...

These pinpointed issues should align with the obstacles that you need solved as a business owner.

For example, hearing, *“Well, you need more brand awareness, more ad clicks, and more conversions”* is not an acceptable answer because it can apply to anything.

You are looking for answers similar to the following. We will use an ecommerce SEO campaign as an example...



EXAMPLE #1 LOW SITE ENGAGEMENT

"We are not seeing the engagement we should be seeing on your website. While we have been successful in driving traffic, the amount of time customers are spending on your site is minimal, and we are not seeing your traffic flowing to your product pages at the rates we want. So, you are getting traffic, but we need to work on your content to drive visitors further down the funnel and convert them into sales."

EXAMPLE #3 SHOPPING CART DROP-OFF

"Further down the funnel we noticed that 75% of your customers abandon their shopping carts when they reach the shipping stage. This could be due to the limited shipping options you provide or not being transparent about shipping fees earlier in the process. So, we are considering applying a "free shipping for orders over \$50" banner notification on your homepage and product pages."

EXAMPLE #2 CONVERSIONS/ SALES

"Related to problem one, the traffic going to your product pages is not converting like your competitors'. Prospects are spending time on these pages, which is great, but the "add to carts" are relatively low. So, we need to pinpoint if this is a UX issue or perhaps a device-specific issue (mobile or desktop) that is contributing to lower conversions."

YOU ARE LOOKING FOR TWO THINGS FROM YOUR AGENCY:

- 1. IDENTIFICATION OF GRANULAR PROBLEMS**
- 2. STEPS THEY ARE TAKING STEPS TO ATTACK THE ISSUE**



#2

***DO YOU KNOW
WHAT MY GOALS
ARE?***

Without goals - how do you measure success?



Before you sign on the digital dotted line (and after), make sure your agency knows what your goals and pain points really are. Some agencies may try to push their solutions on you without truly understanding your core goals.

This is akin to going in for an oil change and then getting the bill for a new transmission—not exactly what you asked for, is it?

NOW...

your agency might offer strategies and solutions you may have never considered, which is great, but they need to be able to show you how their solutions align with your goals.

Going back to our ecommerce SEO example, if you tell your agency, “I need to increase website sales,” and they immediately reply with, “Sure, we can drive more website traffic for you.” They do not understand your goals.

Your objectives are what matter. If your agency is not using your goals as their North Star, move on and find a new marketing partner (keyword: partner).

***INCREASE
REVENUES 40%
YEAR OVER YEAR***

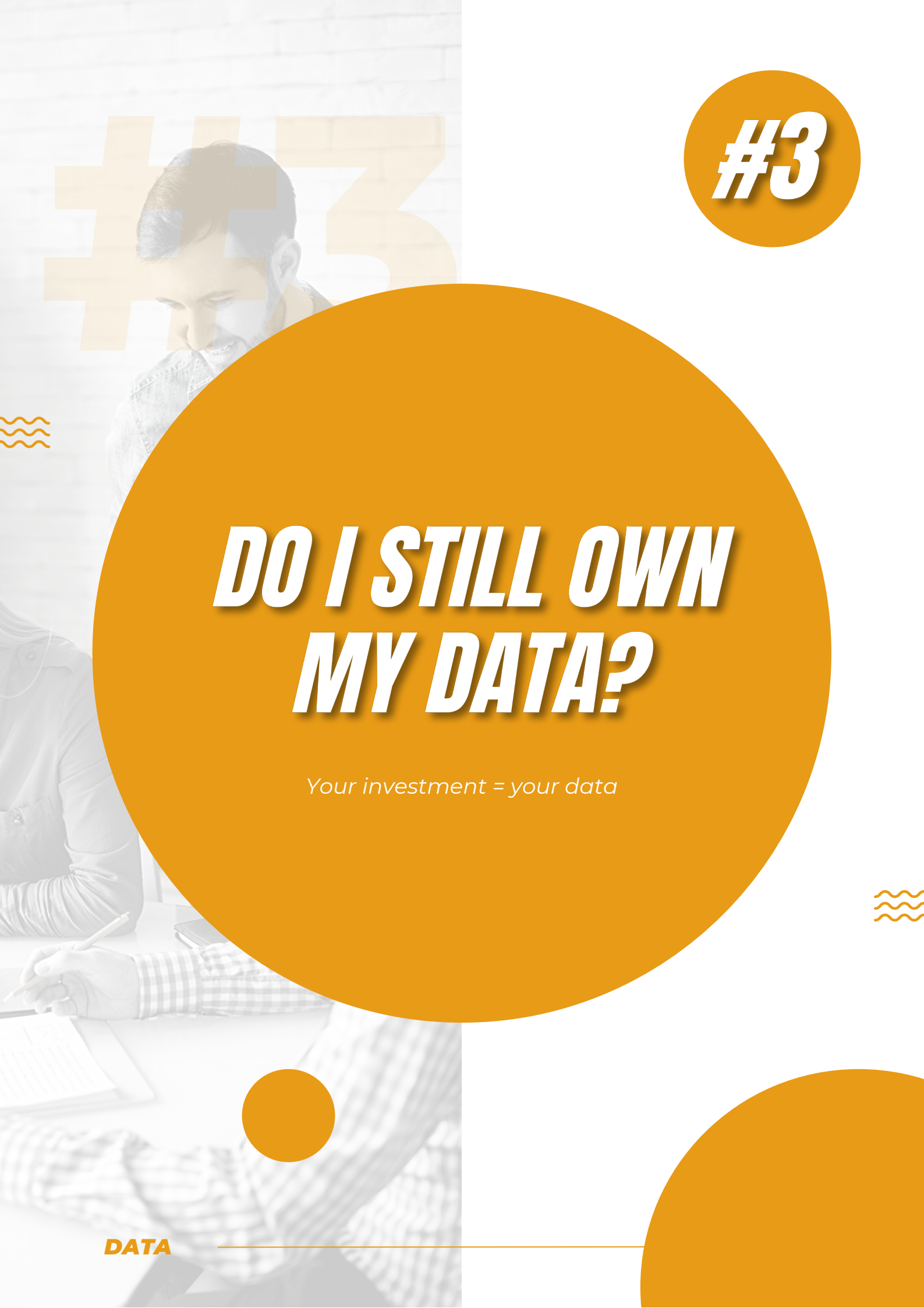


***IMPROVE
CONVERSIONS
20% ANNUALLY***



***IMPROVE LTV BY
30% YEAR OVER
YEAR***





#3

DO I STILL OWN MY DATA?

Your investment = your data

DATA

Let us say this loud and clear—any agency that hides, obfuscates, or in any way limits your access (or future access) to your data, does not have your best interest at heart. And if this is the case, find a new agency. Full stop.

The art, science, and results you get from your marketing all come down to the data. Google Ads data, reporting data, CRM data, email contact data, etc. All of this data belongs to you and any restriction of this data (in our opinion) is akin to theft.

IF YOU BOUGHT...

a new car only to realize that the dealership was holding a lease on the engine, not only would this be unethical, it would most likely be illegal.



SO, MAKE SURE...

that you not only have direct access to your accounts but that you have it in writing that if you ever decide to move to a different agency all of your historical campaign data goes with you.

It is your right to retain every drop of your data from your marketing investment. If they can't commit to full transparency here, keep searching for a partner who will.



#4

***WILL YOU REPORT
ON “PROCESS” OR
“RESULTS?”***

Process matters - but the outcome is the punchline

Love it or hate it, reporting is how you will know what is working and what is not. This is not unlike looking at the performance of your investment portfolio. Reports are your window into the reality of how your marketing campaigns are performing.

However, there is one key area that matters the most in your reporting—your results. As mentioned previously, these results need to be directly related to your overarching goals. In the world of marketing, there is an abundance of metrics and acronyms, and it is important that you don't have the big picture clouded by too many frivolous metrics.

METRICS LIKE...

conversions, ROAS, CPA, and ROI are great metrics that can show the bottom of the funnel impact no matter the type of campaign. There are many other fantastic metrics for sure, but at the end of the day, they need to show the relationship between your monetary investment and profitability.

What do you not want to see in your reporting? A superfluous recap of what is being done with nothing to show for it. So if your agency is showing how many ads they are running along with impressions and clicks—but conveniently are leaving out monetary returns—this is a red flag.

The process is crucial, and you can't get returns without it. However, like with our car analogy, do you care how the engine processes the gasoline into energy, or do you care more about your MPG? The output is what matters.





#5

CAN YOU PROVIDE TIMELINES?

*You need to know what is happening - and when
it's happening*

How long will it take to launch my campaign? Finish my website? Reach my goals? One of the most difficult pills to swallow when it comes to marketing is that things take time.

That being said, your agency should always be able to provide you with rough timelines, especially for specific projects. And you also should feel comfortable questioning anything that feels “off.”

REALLY...

what you are looking for here is an agency that is willing to consistently provide realistic timelines and then (hopefully) overdeliver.



If you are given a timeline of 2 weeks for a landing page and it is delivered in 7 days, fantastic!

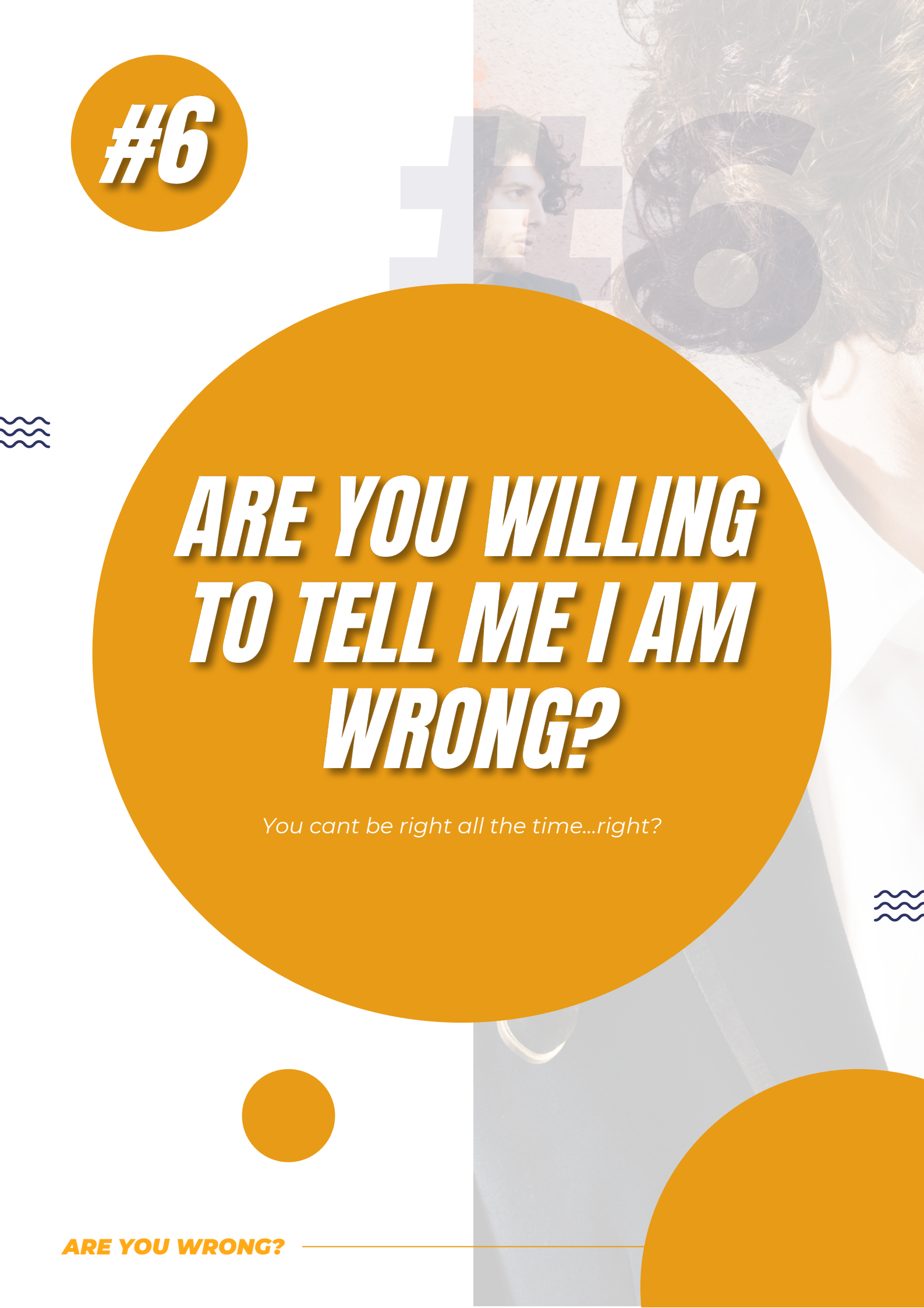


Conversely, if you are given a range of 1-3 months to launch your Google Ads campaign, they better be able to have a breakdown of why this timeline is so vast.

All in all, you want to be provided with 3-5 days, 3-4 weeks, etc. Arbitrary end dates, like 3ish months, do not provide any clarity as to when you can expect to start seeing results.

So, if your campaigns are going to take 2 months to get off the ground, that's fine, but you are well within your rights to know what will be happening month to month or even week to week leading up to your launch date.





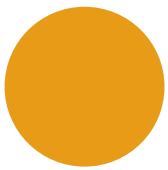
#6

***ARE YOU WILLING
TO TELL ME I AM
WRONG?***

You cant be right all the time...right?



ARE YOU WRONG?



Yes, you read that right. Is your agency willing to tell you that you are wrong? The answer should be yes.

This isn't in reference to goals surrounding revenues, profitability, and business growth—all of this is what you want as a result of great marketing. But the last thing you should be looking for from a marketing agency is a team of “yes-people” that are unwilling to challenge your ideas or assumptions.

A GREAT...

marketing, media, or creative agency should be willing to push back on you if they have a better strategy or idea, which is what you are paying them for!

TAKE GOOD ADS FOR EXAMPLE...

You may think that you just need more ad clicks—end of story.

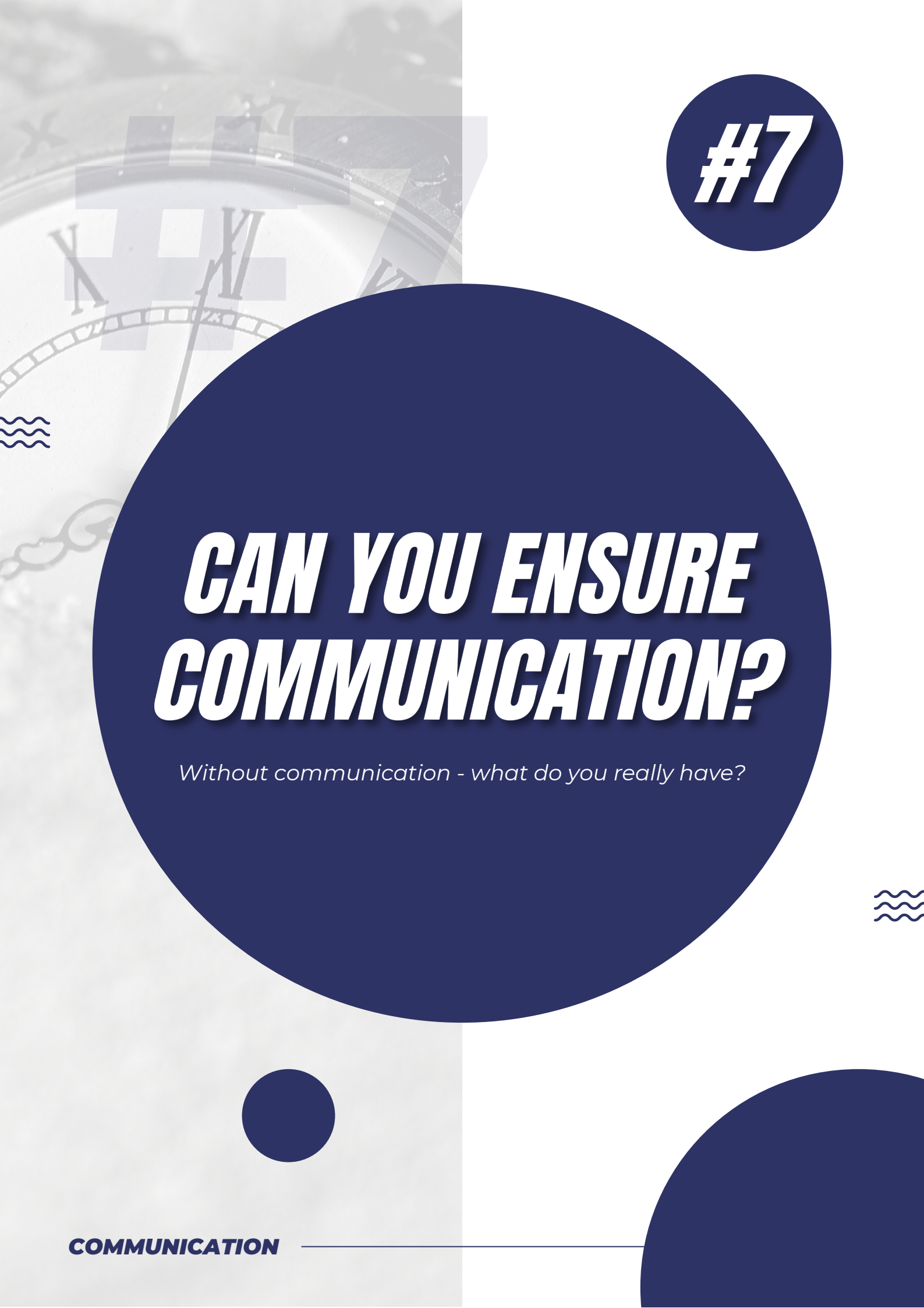
But a great agency should be looking under the hood and asking, *“How is your landing page converting? How are you following up? What is your CPA?”*

They should be digging down deeper to uncover the root causes that can be affecting the results you want.

This is not a dictatorship. **This is a partnership.** And any agency worth their salt will push back on you from time to time in everything from campaign types to how to achieve your growth goals.



ARE YOU WRONG?



#7

CAN YOU ENSURE COMMUNICATION?

Without communication - what do you really have?

In a world filled with endless ways to communicate, we hear too many stories of breakdowns in campaign launches, processes, and creative approvals due to lacking communication.

In this business, there should be no “We will call you when it's ready” or “If there are any issues.” The next phone call or follow-up is always on the books.

THE SPEED...

with which marketing moves means that you should be looking for an agency that is willing to *over-communicate rather than under-communicate*.

This might mean a weekly or bi-weekly call, Zoom meeting, email synopsis, etc. Whatever it is, you should never need to question what is going on with your campaign(s).

Should you expect an agency to spend hours every day discussing every aspect of your marketing plan? No.

Again, this is going to be a partnership and both sides need to trust one another. However, if a baseline of communication is not established, or your follow-up emails are getting no response, this might be a red flag you don't want to ignore.





#8



WILL YOU ANSWER MY QUESTIONS?

You are entitled to answers - every time.



YOU HAVE QUESTIONS



If there is one question your marketing agency should never shy away from, it's "Why?"

As the brand or business that has hired the agency you should never be shy about asking "Why?" when it comes to campaigns, creative choices, or even particular strategies. Truth be told, good agencies are more than happy to pull back the curtain and explain why they are making the strategic moves that they are.

"WHY ARE WE ONLY TARGETING THIS REGION OF THE COUNTRY IN MY GOOGLE ADS CAMPAIGN?"



"WHY ARE WE TARGETING THAT DEMOGRAPHIC IN MY FACEBOOK CAMPAIGN?"



"WHY ARE YOU SUGGESTING AN SMS TEXT CAMPAIGN INSTEAD OF AN EMAIL CAMPAIGN?"



NO MATTER THE QUESTION...

never be afraid to ask "Why?"

If the agency you are vetting is reluctant to answer questions (perhaps like the ones on this list), consider continuing your search until you find one that will.

Keep in mind, you may not understand every answer—heck, you may not even like the answer—but you are looking for openness and transparency when it comes to questions you may have.





#9

***DO YOU FOCUS ON
STRATEGY OR
TACTICS?***

You never want to conflate the two...

This is a big one.

Conflating strategy and tactics is all too common amongst creative agencies. Tactics are usually “one-off” actions, while strategies are the itemized steps or even a collection of tactics designed to help you reach your goals.

Here is an example of an agency conflating the two when it comes to SEO.

IF AN AGENCY SAID...

“Okay, to get your sales up to where you want, we are going to do some SEO so you show up on page one on Google.”

They are speaking tactically—not strategically. Besides SEO (basically) not working like this anymore, an agency that is quick to treat things like SEO or Google Ads as a plug-and-play solution is not thinking strategically.

And the strategy is what you want!

ON THE OTHER HAND...

if they said, “Well, you want to increase your website sales, so this means that, from an SEO standpoint, we need to drive traffic, convert that traffic into interest, and then convert that interest into sales.

So, we want to build XYZ type of content and fix these UX issues to make your brand easier to find on Google. Then we should use 123 imagery and video to entice visitors on your site. Finally, we should ABC your checkout to make purchasing simpler.”

NOW YOU HAVE FOUND...

A marketing partner that is considering the strategy needed to achieve your goals.

At the end of the day, you want a marketing partner that has a strategic approach with benchmarks they are aiming to hit—not a bucket of tactics with no real explanation of how they will be used.



#10

CAN YOU GUARANTEE RESULTS?

In life (and marketing) there are no guarantees

N

ow we reach one of the greatest questions you can ask. Why? Because it is kind of a trick question, especially in the agency vetting process.

In marketing, there are no guarantees. If you worked with a financial advisor and they guaranteed you 15% annual return no matter what, you would be skeptical, and you should be. As with any type of investment, there is risk. Risk that can be minimized but never eliminated.

IF YOUR AGENCY SAYS...

Yes to this question, close the door, don't move forward, do not pass go, do not collect \$200.

Any agency that's good at what they do can tell you a couple of things.

First, they can likely give you a ballpark of what they want to see happen based on previous work they have done with similar clients.

Secondly (and maybe more importantly), they can show you examples of past campaigns that have delivered success in the form of case studies.

While client confidentiality is often (and should be) a priority for agencies, cleaned-up (sterilized) versions of reports provided to clients may also be available.

Again, you are looking for honesty and transparency. So never expect an ROI, ROAS, or revenue guarantee and steer clear of those who are willing to provide one.



PLANNING YOUR NEXT MOVE

As an agency that is about to cross the 20-year threshold (about 200 in digital marketing years), we have seen clients from every corner of the digital ecosystem.

As such, we want every business willing to take the risk to have an amazing experience and get the results they want.

Questions like these will not only help you find the perfect marketing partner for your brand but can also help the agency decide if they are your best fit.

Be willing to ask these questions of your current agency or possibly your new agency if you are on the hunt. Ask them, and listen closely. Soon enough you will be off to the races with a top-notch marketing partner.

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