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You Don't Really Need a Marketing Agency, Do You?

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By Deborah Daily, Co-Owner, Buckaroo Marketing/New Media



You're a smart businessperson who runs a successful company. You oversee production, product development, hiring, finances, and all the other elements needed to run a healthy business. Why in the world would you need to hire an outside marketing agency?

No matter what business or industry you're in, it's simply impossible for you to know everything about everything. Part of what contributes to the success of business leaders is their willingness to hire people who are smarter than them, or who have specialized expertise in an area in which they don't.

I own my business and I've worked with dozens of company owners over the years. I've yet to meet a company owner who is capable of being completely objective about their products and services or their marketing. That includes me. As owners, we become so emotionally invested in our companies that we fail to see the flaws. It's impossible for us to look at ourselves in the way the outside world sees us.

Another issue is that it's so easy for company owners to base their decisions on what they know and what they've been taught. Experience can be a valuable teacher, but without outside experiences and viewpoints, your perspective becomes more limited than you realize. Just look at all the industries that have been disrupted in the past couple of decades. Did you see smartphones coming? Did you anticipate the arrival of Uber and Lyft? Would you have guessed that Sears and Kmart would be all but gone and some technology company would be dominating retail? So do you know who's on the cusp of transforming your industry? What idea out there threatens to turn everything you know and do on its ear?

That's where an outside set of eyes can help. That's why we need outsiders who act as our reality checks -- people who can tell us what we need to hear, instead of simply what we'd like to hear. You'd never make IT decisions based on the technology that was dominant 20 years ago, and you can't afford to make marketing decisions that way, too.

Many companies work with marketing agencies because they don't have the time, talent, or desire to deal with the many facets involved. But an effective marketing and advertising agency is more than an extra set of hands to handle tasks you'd rather not do. It's that outside viewpoint that can challenge your thinking, bring new ideas about the way you interact with your marketplace, leverage new channels and technologies on your behalf, and make objective assessments of ideas other vendors bring your way.

Take something as seemingly simple as the design of your logo. A lot of companies don't give the symbol of their business much thought. Sometimes they even sketch something out on their own or take something that artistic administrative assistant worked up on her computer. But will that idea work on an embroidered golf shirt? Will it be identifiable when shrunk down to be stamped on a product? Will it hold up when it becomes the size of your trade show booth? Can it be reversed successfully so it looks good in videos? A marketing agency is going to consider all those uses and more, then design a logo which will work well in each.

What about the vendors who supply materials you use in marketing? That photographer did a dandy job of shooting the photos of Model XB-24A for your website, even if he did charge a lot. Hold on -- what do you mean we can't use his photos on our web page or make black and white versions for a press release? Why can't we put a big enlargement on our trade show booth? Marketing agencies are accustomed to working with vendors and will make sure the contracts you sign include the rights you need. We know where the land mines lurk.

Even more important, marketing agencies bring a level of expertise you probably don't have. When they apply that expertise to your projects, they increase the value and enhance your company's reputation.

So yes, it's possible to handle your marketing on your own. You can also negotiate with the IRS on your own, draft important contracts without an attorney's help, or wire your own office for new technology. If you're smart enough to know doing those things on your own is probably foolish, you're smart enough to grasp the value of professional marketing help.

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