



THE BUYER'S GUIDE TO

**CONTENT  
AGENCIES**

# Well, hello there!

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This guide is written for marketers, advertisers and content strategists who are searching for an agency to assist in bringing their vision to life. After reading this guide, you should have the knowledge and tools necessary to decide if an agency is right for you and to help you choose the right one.

## **Self-Assessment**

- ⬡ Have you worked with an agency before?
- ⬡ Do you have a content strategy?
- ⬡ Are you prepared to invest in your content strategy?
- ⬡ Can you trust others to bring your vision to life?
- ⬡ Do you have goals defined for your content?

If you answer “yes” to all of these, you’re ready to work with an agency! If you answered “no” to some of these questions, don’t worry! This guide will still help you identify gaps that you may need to fill before you engage with an agency.

# What is content marketing, anyway?

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First, it is important to understand what content marketing is all about. The Content Marketing Institute defines it as:

## **content marketing**

[kon•tent mah•ki•ting]

noun.

*a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objectives of driving profitable customer action*

The most sophisticated content strategies are those that have specific and useful pieces of content for every step of the buying process... from awareness to point-of-sale. These pieces of content deliver true value to your audience while, at the same time, moving them further down the sales funnel.

# Why do you need content marketing?

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## **1. Value to the audience**

One of the biggest challenges of content marketing is conveying the value that your content provides. After all, you're asking someone for their time and attention. You'll see more results if they know they're getting something of value in return.

## **2. The right content at the right time**

The further a prospect gets down the sales funnel, the more difficult it is to create relevant, consistent content. Timing is everything so it can be rather challenging to create content that resonates during each step of the buying process. The key is to create content that can serve as a tipping point between all of these steps.

## **3. Meeting marketing goals**

On top of it all, most marketers have specific goals they're trying to hit. So, not only are you tasked with creating content that evokes certain behaviors from your audience, you have to be able to track it too.

## Game on! Enter content agencies.

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Content agencies help you accomplish your goals by bringing your ideas to life through multiple channels. Whether it's design, video, interactive or in-person experiences, creative content agencies can help you create content that your prospects will remember. Their business is to keep up with the latest trends and figure out innovative ways to use those trends to their clients' advantage! Partnering with an agency allows you to focus on the message while they focus on how to make your audience care about that message.

## The Agency vs. The Bro Shop

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What is The Bro Shop? It's Tim from the sales team's brother-in-law who does freelance graphic design. Or, it's Emily's best friend's brother, who shoots great video with his iPhone 6S. Both of the "Bros" here can absolutely help with the execution of creating content but the experience is far different from that of an agency. Below you will find a chart that lists different steps of the content creation process and how The Agency compares to The Bro Shop.

	<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>BRO SHOP</b>
Strategy	✓	✗
Equipment	?	?
Depth of Team	✓	✗
Price	✗	✓
Professionalism	✓	?
Creative	✓	✗
Turnaround Time	✓	✗

## The Agency vs. The Agency

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If you've moved passed the last page, then you've already decided that The Bro Shop isn't right for you. You need The Agency... but which one? With so many things to consider, it can be overwhelming to try and decide. Consider these criteria when evaluating multiple agencies:

- Have they worked in your industry before?
- Do they have a current portfolio?
- Do they use modern trends?
- Do they have a full team?
- Do they dedicate enough time to the discovery phase?
- Are they concerned with your goals?
- Do they know what success looks like to you?
- Have they created the type of content you want before?
- Are they familiar with current content marketing trends?
- How long does a typical project take?
- Do they have references?

## How should you pay?

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Pricing varies from agency to agency. While some offer one standard pricing model, others may adjust their price structures to fit the needs of the project. Here are some typical pricing models and the types of projects that work best for them:

### **Time and materials:**

Cash for time. Also known as “hourly,” this is a great pricing model for projects where the scope is not clearly defined or for open-ended time lines. The agency will charge you an hourly rate based on the actual time spent on the work. The hourly model gives you the flexibility you might need to move a project forward.

### **Retainer:**

All your needs for a monthly fee. The agency charges you a monthly (or quarterly) fixed rate for services that aren't limited to a single project. The retainer model works well for marketers with multiple simultaneous projects who need access to a variety of agency resources on an ongoing basis.



## **Fixed:**

One project for one price. The fixed model is an especially good option for big projects with specific budgets. The agency will work with you to outline the scope of the project in detail and offer you a fixed fee for services rendered. As long as the project stays within scope, your budget remains intact.

## **Value-based:**

Price is determined by potential value of the project for the client. The agency will determine what the value of the services provided are and charge accordingly. Things like strategic counsel, creative, or anything where a project's success depends on the expertise of the agency would fall into this pricing model.

## What does success look like?

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Once you've chosen an agency, this checklist can be used to solidify your decision. If you can check all the boxes, go ahead and give yourself a big pat on the back and let your agency take it from here.

### **Success checklist:**

- ⬡ Does your agency understand the goals of the project?
- ⬡ Does your agency have a clear view of what your company does?
- ⬡ Is your agency aware of all of the elements of this project, even ones they are not involved with?
- ⬡ Does your agency clearly outline the time line and scope of the project?
- ⬡ Can you easily communicate with your account manager and everyone involved with the project?
- ⬡ Is your agency invested in the overall success of the project?

## In Conclusion

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That's all folks! You should now understand the benefits of working with an agency, how you should evaluate them, and what to expect once you start working with them. Use this guide whenever you are vetting a new agency to determine which route is the best for you and your needs. Sometimes an agency is best, other times, it's not. Now you're prepared to make that determination on your own.

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