BEWARE THE FAKE MARKETER

YOUR GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONSULTANT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

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During my years as a marketing professional, I have noticed a growing breed of marketing consultants who call themselves marketers despite having little or no experience or qualifications.

While it would be nothing short of shocking were a business to entrust their accounting or legal matters to anybody but a qualified professional, there is a common misunderstanding that anyone can be a marketing expert and it won’t be damaging to a business, to scrimp on its marketing efforts.

Why am I so passionate about this? Because I have witnessed first hand how unqualified people who pretend to be ‘marketers’ do more damage than good. Therefore, I decided to examine this phenomenon of ‘the fake marketer’ in this eBook and have identified the warning signs for business owners to be aware of.

With this resource at hand, you can weed out the fakes and help your business find a professional marketing consultant who won’t just do the job, but will do it right the first time.

HAPPY READING!
When considering the things you want your marketer to do for you, I dare say branding would be almost on top of the list.

WHY IS BRANDING SO IMPORTANT?

Consumers look at a brand for an idea of what your business is about; it is the first impression, name and symbol, an instantaneous way you can entice people to really consider becoming a client of yours. Your brand is also one of the very first things your repeat clientele form an emotional relationship with.

What’s more, your branding acts as a foundation for all subsequent marketing and promotional activity. The message that is formed with your branding will be built on, developed and made stronger through the rest of your marketing strategy.

Consider luxury fashion house Chanel as an example of the importance of branding. Those two C’s mean so much more than just ‘Chanel’. This is an example of branding that, with time, has became nothing short of iconic; a beacon of class, sophistication, opulence and wealth. In fact, the Chanel branding is so effective that people all over the world attempt to copy it with cheap knock-offs, but the branding remains synonymous with luxury. Even those who are virtually clueless about fashion and the history of the brand know what those two C’s imply.
DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO

If your marketing consultant does not have a brand of his or her own, ask yourself what kind of a professional marketer would run a business without an identity? A marketer with no brand has clearly underestimated the importance of the brand in his or her own business, so why would you trust them with your own? Furthermore, if your marketing consultant is advising you to invest in a brand when they don’t have one themselves, they have a ‘do as I say, not as I do’ attitude which could prove harmful to your business.

A marketing consultant is hired as a professional advisor so if they are not taking their own advice, one can’t help but begin to question the legitimacy of that advice.

Take Next Marketing as an example. The brand and logo are both trademarked within Australia, and we wouldn’t dare to suggest to a client that they should do anything less than this.

TIP!

REGISTRATION OF BRANDS - The first sign of a fake marketer is a lack of brand, but you can even take this a step further and look for registration of that brand.
I have noticed an alarming number of business owners who are seemingly unaware of the differences between a graphic designer and a marketing consultant. This is a precarious misunderstanding because, while having a graphic designer can help create professional and original graphics for your marketing, they certainly don’t have the skills or qualifications necessary to establish a great marketing strategy for your business.

THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GRAPHIC DESIGNERS AND MARKETING CONSULTANTS

Graphic designers focus solely on the visual representation of your marketing communications while marketing consultants focus on your marketing holistically, including the look of your marketing materials.

The marketing consultant plays an overall role in the strategic process of your brand, unique selling proposition and target audience. This must be understood before the graphic designer works their creative magic.

A marketing consultant uses their business and marketing knowledge as well as consumer expertise to establish what sort of message is going to separate your business from others like it. The graphic designer takes this information and turns it into a visual. That is the difference.
If you are to hire a graphic designer who is doubling as a marketing consultant, you are running the risk of having great branding that no one ever sees, and really, what is the point of that?

**TIP!**

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE - A great graphic designer will request to speak with your marketing consultant. Look for a graphic designer who knows their role and the results will follow.
Normally, I err on the side of caution and try to avoid sweeping statements, but when it comes to social media, I say with conviction that any marketing consultant who is not aware of the huge and constantly growing impact of social media marketing is not a forward-thinker and should be dismissed immediately.

There are some veteran marketing consultants who are, let’s be frank, stuck in the past; working under a philosophy that social media is ‘just a phase’. If you sense this is the case, bring up Twitter and see what happens. We are in a new era of marketing and denying that will only result in you and your business being left in the dust of all the businesses that are willing to embrace change.

WHY IS SOCIAL MEDIA SO IMPORTANT TO MARKETING?

Although it is just one aspect of the marketing mix, social media marketing is not only about getting your name out there. It’s an entire new conversation, which allows your business to receive qualitative information directly from your consumers and engage with your clientele on a more personal level by establishing a relationship with them.

The sort of emotional hook could very well be the thing that creates a repeat customer and it is repeat customers and their connections that often become the lifeblood of your business. Sound good to you?
Many marketing consultants will have their own website, a Facebook page, Twitter account, and an active blog as well as LinkedIn profile.

If they don’t, you can be fairly sure they do not see just how important these platforms are to any new marketing strategy. If you want all of these things for your business but it’s clear your marketing consultant doesn’t have them, how can you trust they’ll know how best to use them?

Once you’ve checked out your potential marketing consultant’s own social media platforms, have a look at some of their other clients. Reconsider your choice if you notice all their clientele have half filled in LinkedIn accounts, inactive Twitter pages or, even worse, nothing at all.

If nothing about any of their previous clientele shows up in Google - run away!

**TIPS!**

*IF YOU’RE SUSPICIOUS* - If your marketing consultant nods at the mention of Twitter but then brushes over the idea, the best way to find out if they are really going to engage in the technology is to look to their other clients or their own business.
Sometimes it is difficult taking constructive criticism especially when you are the business owner. However, when it comes to your own business, there is no room for pride to get in the way of improving your operation and your own marketing activities.

PICTURE THIS

You are in a preliminary meeting with a potential marketing consultant discussing the ways you would like to use inbound marketing to reach more consumers in your target demographic. This meeting is set up as a way for you to get a feel for the consultant, and find out how they can help you set up a successful marketing strategy that will ultimately expose your business to as many potential customers as possible.

To get the ball rolling, you tentatively raise some of the ideas you have had.

As you speak, your marketing consultant agrees to every single thing you say. This gives you confidence to keep talking so you go into further detail and find yourself on a bit of a tangent. Your marketing consultant keeps agreeing.

They nod, say yes and maybe input a few ideas but they always seem to be extensions of the ones you’ve just discussed.

After you leave the meeting, you feel like everything went really, really well and you are quite chuffed that all your ideas were so well received. However, there’s something that isn’t sitting right though you can’t work out exactly what it is.
WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?

When you hire a professional, you expect them to use their expertise to come up with new ideas for your business. You expect your consultant to deliver professional results that come from professional experience.

When your marketing consultant is simply executing your ideas without any creative input of their own, what’s the point?

Imagine if you took your car in to be fixed and suggested to the mechanic what you thought it might be wrong. We’ve all done this before and we’ve all received the same answer, “let me have a look.”

This is the sort of answer your marketing consultant should give you. It is the crucial difference between being open to your ideas and using your ideas.

The most dangerous thing about this type of fake marketer is their ability to distract you with praise. Keep in mind the reason why you hired one in the first place and never allow flattery to bring your business down.

TIPS!

EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS ASIDE - One of the major reasons people hire a marketing consultant is to bring a fresh perspective to the table. You can be sure this is not happening if you’ve got an overly agreeable consultant on your hands - so steer clear!
It is generally very rare to pay for anything in full in advance but there are some business owners who get caught up in this trap, especially with fake marketers.

**IS ASKING FOR 100% UPFRONT TOO MUCH?**

Put quite simply, no marketing consultant worth their weight will ask you to pay up front, sign a long term contract, or sign over copyright.

If any of these things are so much as mentioned in your first meeting, I suggest you look elsewhere. Should they come up at a later date, question their motives and be firm in telling them this is not what you want.

If you are being asked to sign a long-term contract, it’s clear they are not relying on their skills to keep you as a client, but rather a legal document to keep you ‘staying with them’.

Should they ask you to sign over copyright, be wary of what this means for your business and question why they wish to keep copyright. It may not seem like a big deal now but when your business takes off and you want to sell or franchise in the future, copyright is crucial.

**TIPS!**

NO INCENTIVE - if a marketing consultant has received payment in full before doing the job, you run the risk of them disappearing, and that is precisely what many fake marketers do.
The simple rule is, if the price is ‘too good to be true’, it probably is. You get what you pay for when it comes to marketing professionals and it’s an area you shouldn’t be scrimping over. I cannot stress enough the difference a qualified professional can make to a business because I see so many great businesses stuck in a rut thanks to bad marketing.

HOW ARE MARKETING CONSULTANTS PAID?

Generally speaking, marketing consultants are paid via a flat rate for their services or an hourly rate based on the time it takes to complete a project.

Creating a successful marketing plan takes time. The competition needs to be analysed, industry research performed, meetings held and a strategy needs to be created, reviewed and finalised. If your marketing consultant is accepting a very small payment, it’s obvious they have cut out some of these steps and the results will reflect that.

If a marketing consultant can afford to have you pay a bargain price, it is possible they are giving you a rehashed plan rather than one that caters specifically to your business.
In time, your marketing will pay for itself; so keep that in mind while you look around. Hiring a bad marketer doesn’t only mean decreased profits but could also result in the likelihood that you will need to hire someone else at some point down the track. Therefore in effect you will have spent more money than if you had just been a little more cautious in the first place.

TIPS!

GOOD MARKETING WILL PAY ITSELF OFF - If you hire the right consultant for your business and they take the time to create a well-developed and well-researched plan for you, it will be a success.
Remember pay peanuts, get monkeys. Marketing is something worth investing in.

• Treat hiring a marketing professional exactly as you would any other professional.

• Shop around and find someone you trust.

• Use this, as a guide for the initial alarm bells so you know your marketing consultant is legit.

Use this checklist to help you shop for your perfect marketing consultant. If you tick all the boxes, it looks like you’ve found yourself a genuine, qualified, experienced marketing consultant!

☐ They have a brand
☐ You believe their branding is effective
☐ Their brand is registered
☐ There is an obvious business mindedness about them
☐ They have discussed social networking as a marketing tool
☐ They offer constructive criticism about your marketing plans
☐ You have not been asked to pay 100% up front
☐ You have not been asked to sign over copyright
☐ You have not been asked to sign a long-term contract
☐ The price seems realistic
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