

20 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Digital Marketing Partner

A practical checklist for small business owners



1. Have you worked with businesses like mine before?

Look for someone who understands your industry, business size, and the challenges you face. Experience with similar businesses means they can hit the ground running.

2. What's your process before you make any recommendations?

You want someone who starts with research and questions, not someone who pitches the same solution to everyone.

3. Can you walk me through what your first 90 days would look like?

This forces them to get specific about priorities and timelines, not just talk in generalities.

4. Can you explain your approach without using loads of marketing jargon?

If they can't explain it simply, they either don't understand it well enough or they're trying to confuse you.

5. Can you share an example of a recent client and the results you achieved?

Real numbers and outcomes matter more than fancy case studies or vague success stories.

6. How will we know if this is working?

They should be able to explain what success looks like and how you'll measure progress together.

7. How long does it typically take to see results for businesses like mine?

Different marketing activities have different timelines. Be wary of anyone promising instant results.

8. What happens if something isn't working?

You want someone who monitors results and adjusts quickly, not someone who keeps running failing campaigns.

9. How often will we talk, and what will those updates look like?

Regular, clear communication keeps you informed without overwhelming you with data you can't use.

10. Will you be doing the work yourself, or will it be someone else?

You deserve to know who's actually working on your account and what their experience is.

11. What do you need to understand about my business before we start?

Good partners will ask about your customers, goals, and what makes you different, not just technical details.

12. What access and information will you need from me?

Get clear on what they need upfront so there are no delays or surprises later.

13. How do you handle it when priorities or budgets change?

Business needs shift, and you want someone who can adapt without drama.

14. Who owns the accounts, passwords, and files we create?

Everything should belong to you – your website, ad accounts, email lists, and any strategy documents.

15. What happens to everything we've built if we stop working together?

Make sure you keep all the strategy, content, and progress – you've paid for it, after all.

16. What's included in your service, and what costs extra?

Make sure you understand exactly what you're getting and what might require additional payment.

17. Do you require a long-term contract?

Understand the commitment and what happens if you want to end the relationship early.

18. How do you stay current with all the changes in digital marketing?

Platforms and best practices change constantly. Your partner should have a plan for keeping up.

19. Can you provide references from current or recent clients?

Any decent partner should be able to connect you with past clients who can share their experience.

20. How do you handle clients who aren't happy with results?

This reveals their problem-solving approach and whether they take responsibility or make excuses when things don't go as planned.

Reminder: The right marketing partner will answer openly and honestly. If they get defensive or rush you to sign, walk away. Take notes, ask questions, and give yourself time to decide.