

Should I be insourcing or outsourcing my digital marketing?

By Jacques Du Bruyn

2 Aug 2022

There is a divide among corporates on whether companies should be insourcing or outsourcing their digital marketing.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Meltwater's State of Social 2022 [report](#) showed that 65% of companies manage all their social media marketing, in-house – while of those that outsource, the top three elements are video production (54%), social media advertising (40%) and content production – text and pictures (37%).

Breaking down digital marketing services

In analysing which option is best for a company, it's important to understand how digital marketing supports the aim of the business. Imagine a ball with several cores: the centre is the customer and the organisation is trying to build a community around them. To support that community building are creative, social media, paid media, public relations and own channels.

The next layer encircling those are data and analytics – key to measurement and iteration. The outer layer to that is the business strategy – what the aim of the business is and how that feeds the marketing strategy in terms of how marketing interprets what the business is trying to achieve. Supporting that is the brand and digital strategies – how we make all these things work online to serve the customer at the centre.



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Understanding trends vs fads

Trends gain momentum over time and tend to stick around. They are often driven by audience needs because they are serving a purpose – think of TikTok as an example. Fads come fast and fade away quickly – remember fidget spinners? Being able to tell the difference between a trend and a fad means you can make discerning choices about whether to jump

in or sit and watch.

Cost vs convenience

Insourcing is often linked to cost as opposed to what serves the brand best. It can be cheaper to insource a resource, but doing so without interrogating what the best answer is for the brand's digital challenges won't solve the problem. It all comes down to a company's digital marketing philosophy. The brands that are winning online have all their marketing integrated, to achieve the greater business goal.

Businesses using SEO effectively are doing so not only to outrank competitors in searches but to inform the content they produce. Understanding what customers are searching for and what is trending gives a company the scope to integrate that info for media strategy, social media, ATL and PR, instead of guessing.



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The pros and cons of insourcing and outsourcing

A business will tell you that the pros of insourcing are things like cost savings, ownership of resources, tools and cost centres, as well as a singular focus on the work. I'd like to counter that by offering the cons list: work can get stale, resources can get comfortable, siloed thinking takes over, you have limited access to best-in-class practice and there can be serious hurdles when it comes to procuring martech (marketing technology).

As an agency head, I'll tell you the pros of outsourcing: a bottomless well of fresh ideas and thinking, the ability to rotate resources, access to best-in-class tech and practice, none of the long-term commitments of permanently employing a resource, no HR or operations implications and access to nimble martech. A company will counter that by saying that outsourcing to an agency is more costly, it offers limited agility, potentially makes timelines longer, offers them less control and may produce ethical dilemmas.

Outsourcing will always exist

Outsourcing will always exist because digital marketing – any marketing – thrives on fresh ideas and perspectives. If a creative sits inside a big corporate, they're able to turn things around quickly and there's no need for the client to constantly 'train' new agency people on the particular aspects of their business. It can work – particularly in telcos and financial services, where speed is of the essence and there's hardly ever a time to assess, brief, create, approve and roll out.

I'd counter that by saying an outsourced team produces better work. None of the best creatives wants to sit in a corporate and work on one brand, all the time – they want to be surrounded by like-minded, creative individuals and have access to myriad creative opportunities and influences.

Where to for digital marketing agencies?

To provide value, we need to constantly invest in our people, our tech and our tools to be able to provide the expert insights that clients demand from us, as paid external resources. It's our role to make sure that we both become experts and develop the ability to share that expertise with clients in ways that support their aims.

No business wants to work with an agency whose culture isn't a fit. As long as agencies can provide the X-factor, energy and light up the room when they interact, clients will want us around because we remind them of the fun side of marketing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jacques Du Bruyn is the managing director at Flume.

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