

7 Questions to ask your digital media partner: From an agency MD

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Digital marketing is by far the most popular choice for brands looking to reach existing and new customers. However, where it can become pricey is when you spend money on digital media. This spend is used to promote a brand using various digital media platforms like Google, Facebook, or LinkedIn.



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The reason why digital media marketing works so well is because it can be tracked unlike other more traditional above the line marketing initiatives like TV, radio or print advertising.

Since nobody likes to part with hard-earned cash, it is important to carefully consider who you partner with to run your digital media campaign. And to do this, one must ask the right questions.

As a digital marketer and agency owner, I suggest asking your prospective digital media partner the following seven questions before making your final choice.

1. What services do you offer?

You must look for an agency that either offers a group of specialist functions running congruently or specialises in a specific function. It reduces the ability to hide poor performance across services and ensures all other suppliers are working towards the same goals but are measured independently.

2. How do you define and measure media performance?

There are many ways to answer this question, but I suggest looking for a partner that focuses on performance gains consecutively with a KPI metric of a business aligned goal, which can be improved on over time.

3. What factors will affect the media performance?

This question shows whether your media partner understands the integrated factors affecting their delivery and how those can and should be mitigated to achieve their performance.

4. Do you have a risk model or incentive structure to propose?

The best in the game often has a view and understanding of how to drive performance for a business. It shows they understand and are aligned to your business needs and has some skin in the game. There are some complexities that link back to the performance levers and the dependency on other partners, but these can be defined in advance and helps the marketing manager understand the key elements to manage between partners.

5. How do you charge?

This is a tough question that will have many answers, most, if not all, are valid and fair. I would look for an answer that is between a set cost to cover overheads and the servicing of the account with a performance driven percentage that will drive alignment to the business.

If spend is particularly complex and large, a percentage of media spend would also be applicable. Set percentages on fluctuating budgets is a red flag, especially if that is the only method of fee structure.

Long predefined media spends and commitment to channel would also be of concern as it means they may be lacking transparency in the pricing structure.

6. Can you share your list of media partners direct and programmatic as well as transparency of media buying with me?

What does this mean, and why would you ask this question? It is a longer, more involved conversation but the crux of it is; if your media partner is charging a management fee for buying media and your agreement is there should be no further costs then you have the right to ask your media partner for insertion orders or view access to your media channels they are managing on your behalf.

If it is transparent, then access should not be a challenge. I have seen too many accounts where media is arbitrated into the reporting and the media partners are taking extra margin. This question also shows the breadth of media reach your partner could and would offer.

7. Do you currently have a client in this category, or have you ever had a client in this category AND if you had a client in the past, are the team that worked on them still in the business?

This is not that simple to explain but from the onset, because I am not convinced that media buying should have exclusivity

from running category competitors. In many countries and sectors, agencies have more than one or two competing brands.

I also do not want to know that you have “experience” on a previous brand in my category, but that the people that have the experience in that category are still with the business. This is often missed in the way the question is asked and how the prospective agency partner answers.

While there are many more questions one should be asking a prospective digital media partner, these seven should be enough for you to shortlist your top few.

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