



10 Questions to ask your next content marketing partner

01 Which of the following content marketing services does your company provide?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Working with multiple vendors for your marketing and operational needs typically slows down the creative process and reduces the amount of end-to-end transparency across your internal departments, affecting everyone from marketing to compliance to the executive team. Without an holistic approach, these teams have to learn different systems and work with vendor-side account managers just to complete basic creative tasks.

02 Can your services scale as our organization or interdepartmental needs grow?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Finding a content marketing partner that can work with your organization across departments or across countries makes it much easier to capitalize on what's working by adding a "velocity" element to the content formula. As you perfect the voice and style of your content, you'll need to ensure the rest of the organization can quickly take advantage. Whether that means quickly translating content into five languages or giving your sales team immediate access to the best-performing assets, a system that lets you publish quickly is often the best path toward marketing results.

03 Can your platform measure content effectiveness beyond traffic, social shares, and clicks?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

While it's great to show content marketing efforts have led to increased traffic or more social media shares, those are just table stakes in 2015. To take the next step, marketers need to monitor more in-depth engagement insights, which pinpoint the key reasons why certain content pieces are more successful than others, and then double down on those factors when creating future content. Examples of these key elements for performance can include attention time, author, topic resonance, rich media type, distribution channel, and A/B headline testing.

04 How well does your platform integrate?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

When content marketers can reduce the number of steps it takes to publish, they can focus more on creating awesome content. Simple as that.

05 How good is your freelance network?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Content marketing best practices typically involve a hybrid team of internal content marketers and vetted freelance contributors who create the best possible original content. Freelancers with expertise related to a particular industry can often provide a richer, more balanced point of view, adding greater credibility to your efforts. Also, hyperlocal freelancers from around the world may have intimate knowledge of particular subjects that will bring relevance to your content.

06 Do you have an efficient onboarding process?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

The first three months of working with your content marketing partner are critical for future success. You need a company that understands how to help architect the best possible content operation so you can scale up efforts across all departments easily and efficiently. For example, your internal content champion, legal department, digital team, and agency all have to work in lockstep with your content marketing partner. Otherwise, adjusting certain roles and responsibilities can be a very drawn-out and complex exercise.

07 Implementation & onboarding, any hidden costs?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

If an organization charges for white-glove services every step of the way, your total cost of ownership will be a lot higher than you may expect. Make sure the premium pricing matches up to your budget and the quality of service you're expecting from them. Also, verify the time it takes to go live, because if it takes longer than expected, you will probably incur more charges.

08 What is the average payback period clients see when they work with you?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Besides being able to produce quality content at scale, successful content marketing efforts should also drive top-line business results and outcomes. Whether that takes the form of brand lift, prospect leads, or actual customer revenue derived from what you produce, your content marketing partner should have the tools, specialized talent, and the business-minded expertise to help you achieve these goals.

09 What guidelines do you have in place to ensure the content is meeting standards?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Your organization may be vulnerable to penalties associated with publishing content that is false, misleading, or even illegal. Your partner should understand the risks that are unique to your vertical. Common content infractions include plagiarism (yes, this still happens in an adult world), false advertising, trademark and copyright infringements, and regulatory violations.

10 What's on your product roadmap?

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Your content marketing partner should have a very regular cadence of new product releases and be very transparent about them because they should also be keeping up with the dynamic pace of digital marketing industry overall.