

THAT #@%!\$#! AGENCY!

How to Avoid Disaster When Picking a Brand Partner

FIT & FINISH

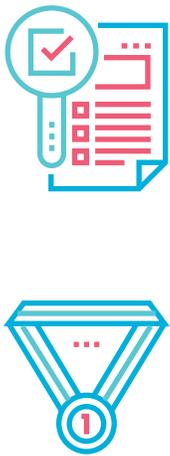
Eighteen months. Less than two years. Five-hundred-and-some-odd days. That's the average relationship between brand and advertising agency. And it's getting even shorter.

So, why have relationships that previously spanned years—or decades—dwindled down so much? Like the car industry, it's all about **Fit and Finish**.

First, the **Fit**. When an agency pitches a piece of business, it trots out senior leadership—people skilled and experienced at craft, as well as adept at communications and relationship building. Meetings are scheduled. Strategy sessions are hammered out. Connections are made. And just when the client is comfortable with the players in the room, the old switcheroo occurs. Senior leadership and the pitch team disappear, replaced by junior-level folks who become the day-to-day contacts. And that leads to **Finish**.

With junior-level people at the helm, there isn't enough experience in the room to ensure the **Finish** of a project—the thinking, the details, the assembly of elements and the execution—will be up to snuff. That's when things go awry. And that's when a brand jettisons their agency partner. It doesn't take long.

So how do you ensure you're getting a great fit—and a focus on finish? Here are the top questions to ask when scouting for brand partner resources:



1

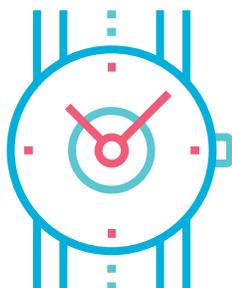
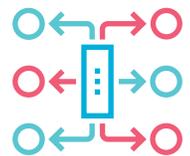
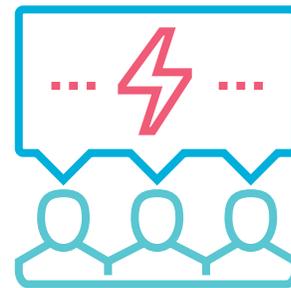
WHO'S FIRST?

Here's a simple test for your prospective agency. Have them rank, in order of importance, the following: Agency, Client, Consumer. If the agency answers anything but **Consumer first**, run.

2

WHAT'S THE MIX?

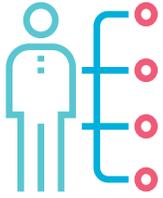
Ask about staffing resources, because no one deserves the bait-and-switch of senior-level execs at a start-up meeting who are never heard from again. A good mix of **younger** (read: enthusiastic) **staffers** and more **seasoned pros** is ideal.



3

EXPERIENCE OR EXPERTISE?

There's a difference between an agency that has experience in a discipline and one that has an expertise in said discipline. After all, you don't want to bet your marketing budget on an agency that kinda-sorta knows the web because it once did a design for a friend's blog. That's experience. **Expertise?** That's the agency that has created all sorts of results-driven interactive projects, based on set objectives and measurable results.



4

INTEGRATED, OR INTEGRATOR?

There are shops that have **integrated** offerings, covering a number of marketing disciplines in-house. Then there are **integrators**, agencies specializing in one discipline but outsourcing work in other disciplines to third parties. There are benefits and drawbacks to each, but it all depends on what level of engagement you're looking for and the type of marketing activities you want developed. Beware however, of the hungry agency that is all things to all people, because that means its answer to "Who's First?" is always Agency.

5

DOER, THINKER, OR BOTH?

There are shops that are **doers**. Give them a tightly defined creative brief and they'll hit every note. Then there are **thinkers**, the kind of agency that will take the slimmest sliver of a marketing need and think up a great strategy. Then there's the agency that does **both** equally well, pushing the client's business forward through incisive thinking, trend spotting, breathtaking creative and incredible execution. **That's who you really want.**

