

Should I outsource my marketing?

By [Bernard Jansen](#)

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It's a question we often get: "Should I outsource my marketing to an agency, or bring it in-house and do it myself?" Although the obvious answer is "both" - as in, you should have both an internal marketing management function and an external implementation partner, this is typically not where many companies start.



Source: www.unsplash.com

So, if you have to choose, how should you navigate this decision? The below pointers are based on our experience working with SMEs to build sustainable marketing functions.

B2B vs B2C

Businesses focused on serving other businesses (B2B) typically offer more complex offerings requiring an insider to handle the marketing. Few external marketing providers will be able to properly immerse themselves in industrial, professional services or technology offerings and be able to communicate it properly. For this reason, we recommend that in B2B, SMEs first start with an in-house marketing person and then gradually build it out with the addition of external partners.



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Contrary to B2B, in B2C (i.e. end-user-focused consumer markets), it is often easy to understand the product or service and much more feasible to outsource the marketing to a third party. Since the product is often consumable, it is even possible for outsiders to try it themselves, making the communications role much easier.

Small vs Medium-sized

This is an obvious one - but also misunderstood. A tiny business should do its own marketing not only because of budget limitations but since the marketing function is still part of the overall founders' role of building the company. Put differently,

marketing in a young business is not yet an independent role – it is still part of the overall entrepreneurship function. Even if the budget is not a concern, the role of understanding customers and learning what messages resonates should not be outsourced.

Particularly within startups, the founder is directly responsible for promoting the company with the help of a small selection of support services, such as website development and copywriting. Communicating with customers is a critical learning opportunity that allows the owner to refine the business and thus should not be outsourced.



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Inside established small businesses (so-called lifestyle businesses) or medium-sized companies, the marketing function can be separated from the founders' role, and it becomes feasible to consider outsourcing it to a third party. So-called product-market fit has been established, and a precise brief can be provided to the marketing supplier around target markets, messages and creative angles.

How big is the sale?

Marketing must enable sales, and the type of sale determines the marketing function needed. When a deal is of a high value and cost to the client, the marketing activity preceding the sale must be much stronger than a low-cost, low-risk purchase. You'll struggle to sell a luxury consumer product or critical part to an industrial buyer on the back of low-quality marketing communications.



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The higher the quality of the marketing required, the more specialised the implementation becomes, and you need to start working with professionals—an accomplished graphic designer, copywriter, social media manager, search marketer and public relations agency. You may even require a boutique agency to help create impactful campaigns. At a certain point, marketing activities become too specialised for a generalist inside the business and outsourcing large parts of the implementation becomes necessary.

Marketing is not optional

To be fair, no matter the state of a business, even the smallest marketing effort will likely require input from both insiders and outsiders. This article's primary concern is the day-to-day management of the marketing function, and in our experience, the answer to this depends on the factors above.

Ultimately, marketing is not an optional function for an ambitious business – it must happen. The only question is how you implement it so that it becomes an ingrained part of the company. Too often, we see companies take a haphazard approach that does not generate lasting results. The key is to intentionally and gradually move in a direction, starting with either an internal function or an external partner.

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