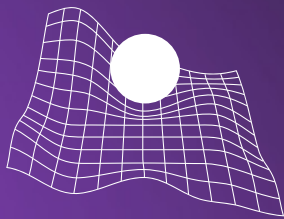


Transform

Outsource vs in-house: what delivers the best marketing value?

A GUIDE FOR OWNER-FOUNDERS



transformcomms.co.uk



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The scaling challenge you face as you grow

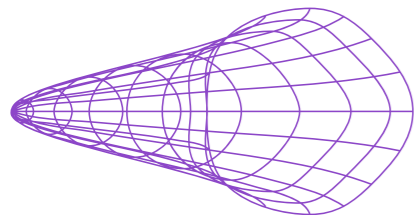
As your business grows, you face many scaling challenges – hiring the right people, managing cash flow, operational complexities, meeting ever-increasing customer expectations and reaching new markets. The more successful you are, the more likely you'll feel these growing pains. And these pains often hit hardest when it comes to marketing.

In the early stages of a business, you often wear multiple hats – sales, operations, product or service development, finance, even marketing – often, all in the same day. Campaign ideas are brainstormed over half-finished coffees and execution happens in the gaps between everything else. But there comes a stage where you need to concentrate on steering the ship, rather than working in the engine room. As the business grows, capacity inevitably strains, gaps begin to appear, and marketing slips down (or even off) the priority list.

When you're experiencing growth, you might be tempted to treat day-to-day marketing as non-essential. After all, if you're growing, doesn't that mean marketing has done its job? The short answer is no. The consequences of neglecting marketing at the growth stage can be costly. Ineffective campaigns, misaligned channels or missed partner opportunities can damage reputation, stagnate brand visibility and allow competitors to capture greater market share.

In the growth stage, marketing becomes essential. You need a function that can flex with evolving objectives while keeping pace with expansion. This raises a common dilemma: should you build your marketing capability in-house, or outsource it?

The decision shouldn't be made on cost alone. Factors such as capability, scalability and the ability to deliver marketing that supports growth all play a critical role. Choosing the right model can influence everything from speed to market, brand consistency and long-term competitiveness. This paper examines the practical realities of building an in-house team versus outsourcing your marketing function, helping you decide the most valuable approach for driving growth that lasts.



Why marketing matters for growth

Marketing is a critical growth engine for any business. Yes, it generates leads, but it also does much heavier lifting: building long-term brand awareness, strengthening reputation and communicating your story in a way that resonates with your target audience. When you execute it strategically, marketing directly contributes to visibility, credibility and revenue growth.

Modern consumers expect brands to show up consistently, deliver high-quality, value-driven content, clearly articulate value and present as polished and professional across every channel. Maintaining these standards relies on the right expertise and skills.

Achieving and maintaining impact requires a strategic, integrated approach, including:

- ➔ Strategic planning with clear objectives and deliverables.
- ➔ Branding and messaging development.
- ➔ Content creation, thought leadership and strategic storytelling.
- ➔ Digital marketing, SEO and AEO.
- ➔ Analytics, measurement and reporting.
- ➔ Graphic design, videography and web design/build.
- ➔ Media and public relations.

Marketing isn't a 'set it and forget it' activity. It requires creativity, continuous momentum, ongoing execution, rapid flexibility and continuous testing and adaptation. If you only tackle it after everything else, this process doesn't work.

The benefits and challenges of an in-house marketing function

An in-house marketing function offers businesses greater control over processes, closer alignment with company objectives and the advantage of deep internal knowledge.

In large organisations, a full in-house team can operate like a well-oiled machine – developing and executing complex strategies efficiently and consistently. That said, even the biggest players usually keep a roster of agencies on hand for strategic support, specialist expertise, creativity and speed.

For smaller businesses with limited time, budget and resources, building the right in-house team can be far more challenging. And even once a team is in place, it's tough to cover the breadth of skills, strategic thinking and pace of execution needed to keep growth on track.

Benefits of building an internal team

For owner-founders ready to scale, building an in-house team can be an appealing option. A marketing manager or small embedded team offers several advantages:

1. Cultural alignment

Internal staff are immersed in the company's mission, values and vision, helping maintain a consistent brand voice and ethos.

2. Deep organisational knowledge

In-house teams understand your products, services and customers inside out – and have immediate access to company insights.

3. Visibility

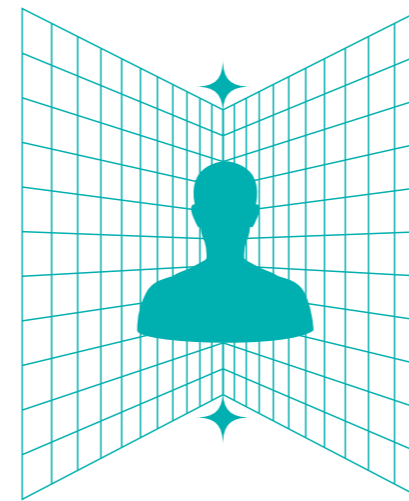
Day-to-day priorities, availability, budgets, timelines and performance data are easy to see and manage, keeping marketing closely aligned with business goals.

4. Fast communication

Direct contact allows for quick decision making, easy adjustments and fast approvals.

The challenges of building an internal team

However, building and retaining an effective in-house marketing team also comes with challenges – especially if you've got limited resources and ambitious growth targets:



1. Skills gaps

One person, or even a small team, can't master every marketing discipline. In fact, the more experienced a marketer, the narrower their speciality will tend to be. Strategy, creative design, content production, paid media, digital marketing, social media, analytics, (and the list goes on), all require different skill sets. Capturing this breadth and depth within a small in-house team is challenging.

2. Recruitment challenges

Attracting and retaining skilled marketers can be difficult, especially when competing with larger organisations that can offer higher salaries, broader career pathways and more resources to support professional growth.

3. Capacity constraints and competing priorities

In-house teams may struggle to manage peak workloads, run multiple campaigns simultaneously or execute across a variety of channels. Juggling multiple deadlines can stretch bandwidth and impact the ability to scale.

4. Limited exposure to innovation

In-house teams may lack access to the latest tools, techniques and best practices leading to slower innovation.

5. Risk of strategic blind spots

Internal teams can become comfortable with established practices, limiting creative thinking.

The outsourced marketing model

For many businesses – big and small, across every sector – outsourcing marketing is both practical and strategic.

Rather than building a full internal team, you partner with a full-service marketing agency. This gives you access to a wide range of skills and experience across multiple disciplines – capabilities that would be costly, time consuming and often unrealistic to develop in-house.

Outsourcing also gives you flexibility. Need to scale up communications for a product launch or event? An agency can provide additional resources quickly. Need a new website or branding for a fresh product? That is exactly where agencies excel.

If growth is your priority, an outsourced marketing model delivers expertise, scalability and speed that an internal team may struggle to match. You gain access to specialists, advanced tools and on-demand resources without the long-term costs and commitments of building a full internal team.

Key advantages of outsourcing marketing

Access to specialist expertise: Agencies employ experts across multiple marketing disciplines.

Faster impact: Agencies hit the ground running. No need for training, research or additional resourcing, just momentum from day one, accelerating campaign delivery.

Broader perspective and innovation: Working with multiple clients and industries ensures agencies are across emerging trends, tools and creative approaches.

Access to state-of-the-art tools: Agencies invest in premium platforms and analytics software that can be prohibitively expensive for an internal team.

Cost efficiency and flexibility: Outsourcing reduces fixed costs, such as salaries, benefits and training. Support can scale up or down depending on campaigns, seasonal peaks, budget constraints and evolving business priorities.

Clear accountability and measurable results: Agencies operate within defined project milestones, KPIs and reporting frameworks, so you can easily track performance and ROI and hold teams accountable for results.

Results focused: Agencies are driven by outcomes. Their success depends on delivering measurable impact for clients.

Perceived challenges (and how to manage them)

Some businesses hesitate to outsource marketing, worried about oversight, communication or cultural alignment. However, with the right agency and the right structure, these concerns are easily overcome.

Loss of control: You can maintain oversight of priorities and deliverables through clear onboarding, structured communication frameworks and regular reporting.

Lack of alignment: Good agencies invest time in understanding your values, mission, voice and commercial objectives. This ensures marketing is consistent with your internal culture, aligned with sales strategies and designed to support growth goals.

Fragmented communication: Clear points of contact and consistent check-ins keep collaboration smooth, feedback flowing and the agency in sync with your internal teams.

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The right partner will spend time understanding your organisation, your market and most importantly, your people, becoming an integrated part of your team.

DANIEL O'CONNOR
CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, TRANSFORM COMMS

What an outsourced partner can do for your business

A marketing consultancy is far more than a service provider. Its function is to execute your business strategy to drive revenue growth. Delivering expertise, guidance plus relentless campaign execution. So you can focus on what you do best – leading and developing the business.

High-level strategic insight

Consultancies bring deep strategic expertise, helping businesses navigate complex markets and make informed decisions. Typical services include:

- ➔ **Market and competitor analysis:** A thorough review of your business landscape to identify opportunities and threats.
- ➔ **Brand strategy and positioning:** Defining a compelling brand that resonates with your target audience.
- ➔ **Integrated commercial marketing:** Aligning campaigns with sales targets, available resources and growth ambitions.
- ➔ **Access to multi-disciplinary teams:** End-to-end execution across strategy, creative, digital, content, paid media and analytics.

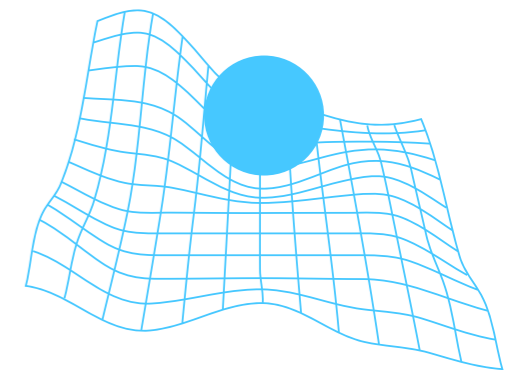
A results-driven approach

A consultancy's success is tied directly to delivering measurable results. This focus on outcomes ensures that:

- ➔ Marketing initiatives are planned, executed and measured against clear objectives.
- ➔ Regular reporting keeps you informed and aligned with outcomes.
- ➔ Ongoing partnerships are driven by performance, as consultancies are motivated to deliver tangible growth.

A long-term, scalable partner

Beyond strategy and execution, a consultancy acts as a long-term growth partner. As your business grows, a consultancy provides scalable support, additional capacity and specialised expertise. This allows you and your leaders to remain agile in fast-moving markets, optimise ROI and maintain consistent marketing quality without the need for a resource-heavy internal team.



Case study: scaling an owner-founder business

Kidd Aitken advises top tier law firms around the world on achieving better legal directory rankings. In the early days, the founders' biggest challenge was finding time for marketing. They trialled managing it in house but found their efforts were sporadic and inconsistent. They engaged Transform to provide an external marketing function that was both strategically minded and results driven.

The key objective for Kidd Aitken was to increase market visibility – to become the first name people think of in legal marketing. Their goals included:

1. Attract new clients and leads.
2. Establish a consistent, authoritative presence in the market.
3. Support growth following a recent rebrand.

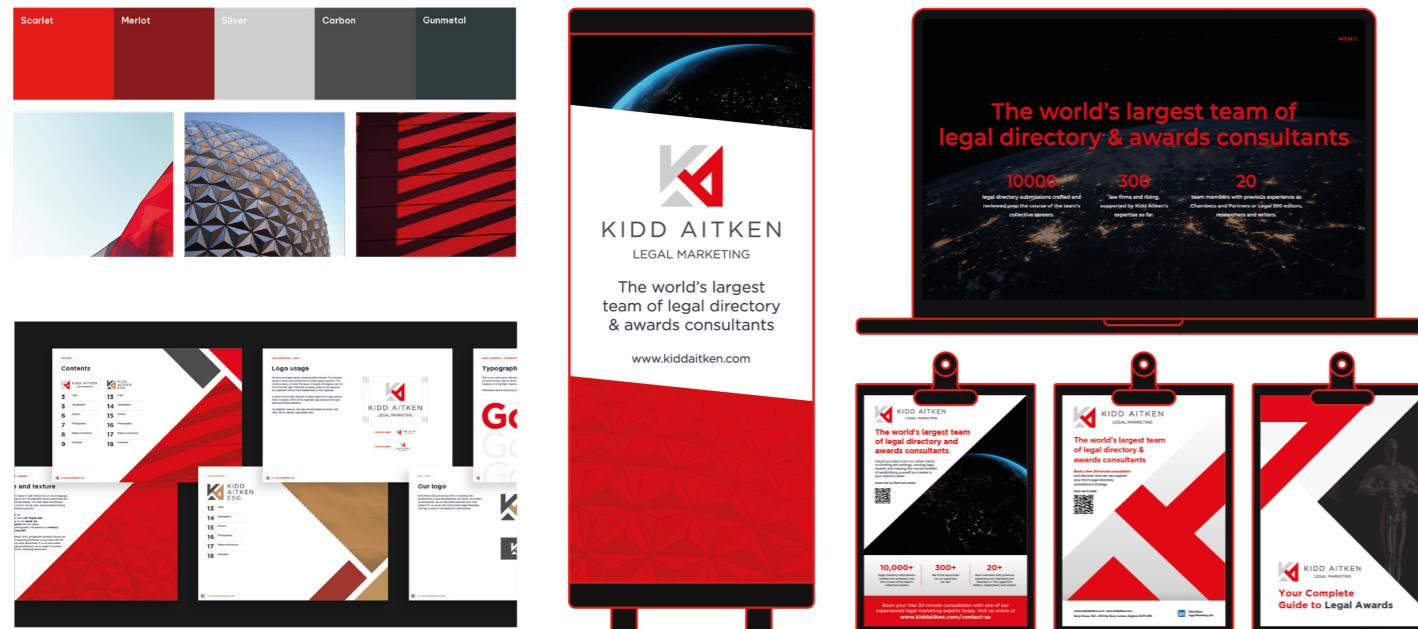
To achieve these goals, Transform Comms implemented a content-driven strategy focused on:

- ➔ **Thought leadership** – creating engaging, relevant and insightful content tailored to their audience.
- ➔ **SEO-optimised evergreen content** – designed to attract new, unique visitors and encourage repeat visits.
- ➔ **Lead conversion** – converting returning users into qualified leads through strategically placed calls-to-action and informative resources.

Today, Kidd Aitken is the largest firm of legal directory and awards consultants in the world.

Key achievements include:

1. Tripling the size of their consultant team and attracting world-class talent.
2. Growing the number and scale of international law firm clients.
3. Growth in key markets including America, South America, the UK and Europe.
4. Expansion into the Asia Pacific region.



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Within a year of working with Transform we achieved more than we had in five years of working alone. The figures are remarkable – off the scale. And now, we are world-leaders in our field.

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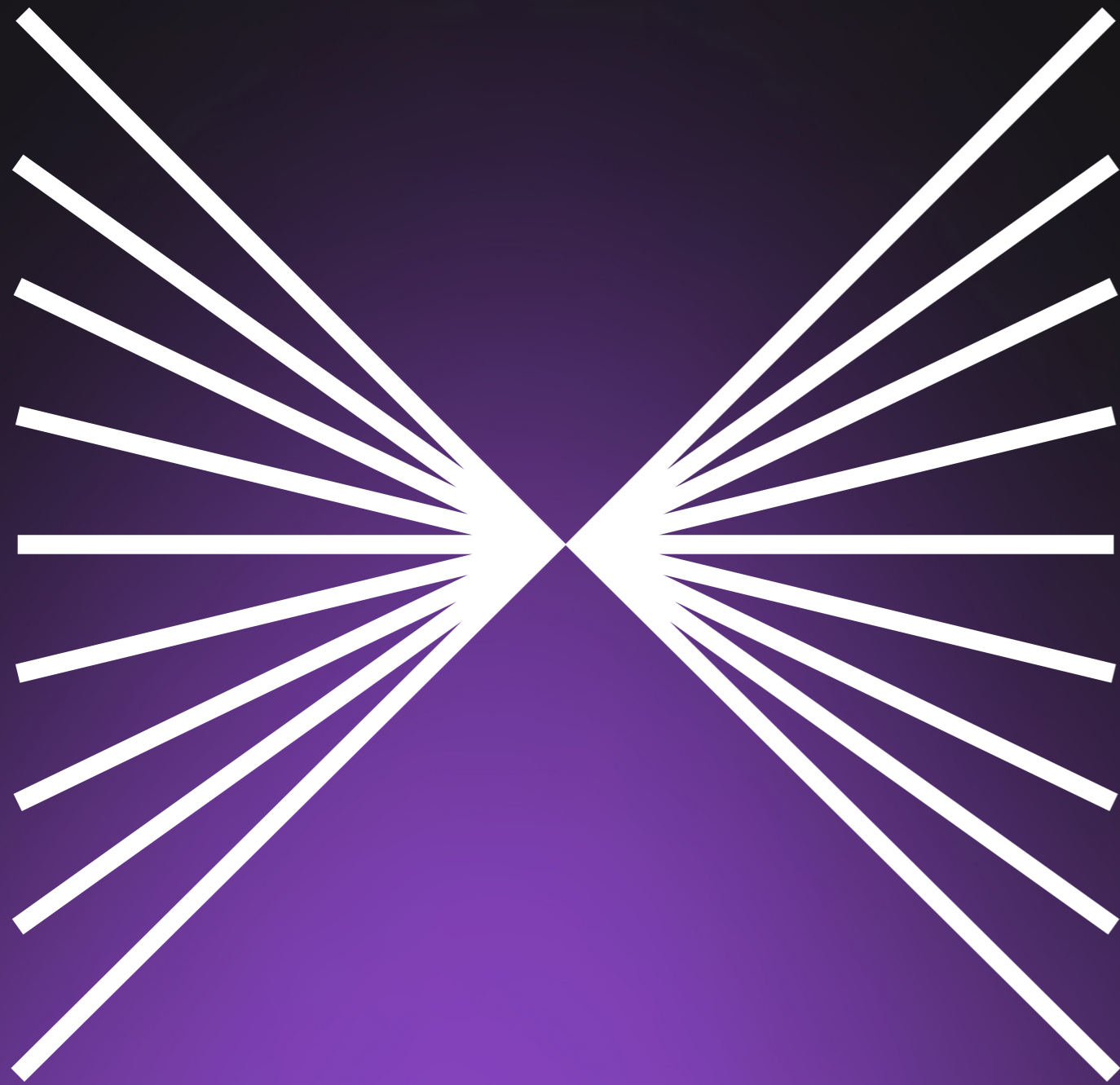
JACOB AITKEN
CO-FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, KIDD AITKEN

“

When we decided to engage an agency, we were worried about demands on our time. But Transform has completely taken that burden away. They generate ideas daily, and most of the time, all they need is sign off. It's freed up a lot of time and made our lives easier.

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DANIEL KIDD
CO-FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, KIDD AITKEN



The value analysis: in-house vs outsourced marketing

When it comes to resourcing marketing, cost is usually the first consideration.

However, decisions shouldn't be based on immediate spend alone. Long-term value, impact and scalability are equally important.

In-house marketing: costs and considerations

The cost of building an in-house team goes far beyond salaries. You also need to budget for recruitment fees, benefits, pensions, training, software licences and ongoing professional development.

The true cost of recruitment is often underestimated. It's not just the cost of a signed contract. Agency fees, your own time spent reviewing applications, interviewing candidates and onboarding new hires all add up. Plus, there's the ongoing investment required to keep employees growing in their roles. Recruitment alone consumes significant time, money and attention.

In-house teams do offer advantages: deep brand knowledge, cultural alignment and direct oversight over strategy, execution and budgets. But these benefits should be weighed against potential challenges. Staff turnover, performance management, limited capacity and slower campaign execution can all create pressure and reduce overall efficiency.

Let's do the maths

➔ **The recruitment process:** £200-£30,000

Recruitment agencies typically charge 20-30% of the salary. For a Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), this can range from £5,000 to £30,000.

➔ **Recruiting internally:** handling recruitment in-house may cost £200-£400 for job board promotion, plus the time it takes to sift through applications and conduct interviews. On average, UK employers spend between 4-6 weeks hiring a new worker.

➔ **Make-up of a typical marketing team:** in the UK, the average salary of a **CMO** is between £100,000 and £150,000.

Marketing Manager: one person cannot manage the entire marketing function alone – they need support from a Marketing Manager, average salary £35,000+.

Marketing Executive: average salary £27,000+.

And salaries are just the start. Pensions, training, equipment, sick leave and holidays can inflate the true cost of each employee by up to 50%.

➔ **Specialist roles:** then you might need specialist roles such as Graphic Design, Digital Marketing (including website design, SEO/AEO, Paid Media, CRM/Email Marketing). The list goes on...

Outsourced marketing: costs and value

Marketing agencies tailor programmes to fit your budget. They rarely operate on an 'all in' approach, instead working via retainers or project-based fees. This makes costs predictable and flexible while giving you access to multi-disciplinary teams at a fraction of the cost of building a full in-house team.

Let's do the maths

Working with an agency on a project basis is a low-risk way to test value. Typical project costs include:

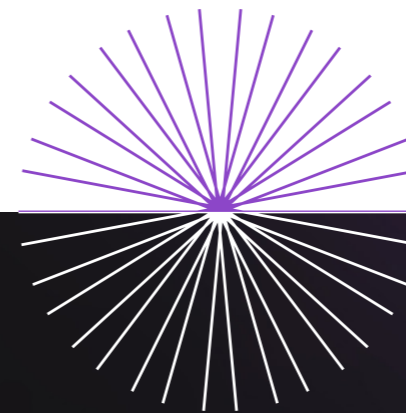
➔ **Brand brief:** from £5,000

➔ **Thought leadership:** from £8,000

➔ **A full year programme:** £50,000 to £150,000

For the cost of a single CMO, or less, you can access a full marketing team covering strategy, lead generation, content, social media, PR, videography and more – with starting costs typically from £4,000 per month. Agencies also provide access to premium tools and platforms without extra investment. Beyond the cost savings, they deliver speed, scalability and the agility to respond quickly to market shifts, driving faster ROI.

In many cases, outsourcing provides stronger immediate and long-term value.



Value comparison: in-house vs outsourced marketing



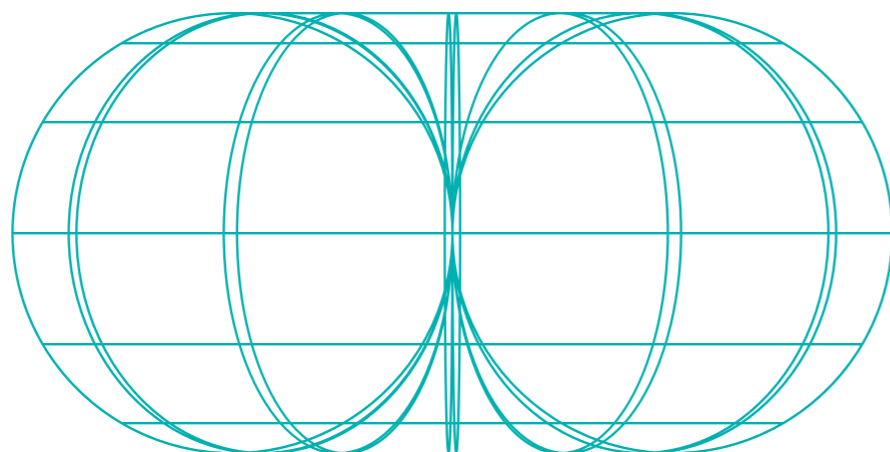
Value consideration	In-house team	Outsourced team
Monetary value	Higher fixed costs including salaries, benefits, recruitment, training, tools and software.	Lower fixed costs. Access to premium tools and software included. Spending is flexible based on needs.
Expertise and skills	Knowledge of brand, culture and customers but limited by team size and potential skills gaps.	Access to specialist expertise across multiple disciplines.
Strategic alignment	Close alignment with internal business priorities and leadership. Quick internal decision-making.	Strategic insight from an external perspective. Objective, data-driven recommendations. Alignment requires onboarding and ongoing communication.
Scalability/flexibility	Less flexible, adding resources requires recruitment and training. Capacity constraints in a small team.	Highly scalable, adjustable resources based on needs.
Speed/execution	Speed can be quick, although slower if the team is stretched across multiple tasks.	Fast and agile response to market shifts. Can manage multiple campaign and channels concurrently.
Control/oversight	Full control over strategy, execution and budgets.	Less direct control. Requires strong channels of communication to ensure alignment.
Ease of management	Integrated with the organisation, teams absorb through osmosis. But difficult and time consuming to manage.	Requires onboarding but agencies are experienced in getting to know their clients' businesses.
Value/business impact	Long-term investment with deep brand knowledge. Potentially better cost effectiveness for larger companies with continuous, high-volume campaigns.	High immediate value, flexibility and speed. Opportunity for long-term partnership. Frees up internal teams to focus on core business functions. Retained based on the results they achieve.

Hybrid models: the best of both worlds?

A hybrid marketing model – combining an internal marketing lead or small team with external specialists – gives you the best of both worlds. You maintain internal oversight while strengthening your team with strategic expertise, specialised skills and fresh ideas.

If you're a founder in growth mode, this model can be particularly effective. Your in-house team looks after the brand and overall marketing direction, ensuring everything stays aligned with your values and vision. Meanwhile, your external agency adds strategic guidance, commercial alignment, innovative ideas and specialist execution across multiple disciplines.

The result? The flexibility and innovation of an outsourced team, combined with the consistency, knowledge and oversight of an internal one. It's a model that scales as your business grows – while optimising both cost and value.



Nobody can do everything – and they shouldn't try to. One of the benefits of an external resource is additional support, whether that's strategy, creativity or execution. A consultancy provides agile assistance across any, or all, areas with the added benefit of more than one brain's worth of ideas.

VERONICA HANNON
CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, TRANSFORM COMMS

How to get the most from your marketing agency

Maximising the value of an external marketing partner requires thoughtful management, open collaboration and clear communication. By setting up the right structures and expectations, you can ensure a productive, results-driven partnership.

1. Be clear on goals expectations

Know what you want to achieve and ask your agency to agree on how success will be measured. Set key metrics and milestones for review. Be open, about your business goals, growth plans and brand priorities. Set regular reporting so you can review progress, see what's working and adjust when needed.

2. Invest in onboarding

Take the time to ensure your agency fully understands your brand, tone of voice, values, positioning and internal processes. They can even help you define these. Provide access to internal data that they need to work effectively. While this may take time initially, comprehensive onboarding is an investment that drives better results and more efficient processes in the long run.

3. Establish regular communication

Consistent communication builds transparency and trust. Schedule regular check-ins and updates and encourage your agency to build relationships across your business. Your agency should be seen as part of your team. And the easier it is for them to collaborate and get sign-off, the faster things move.

4. Encourage collaboration

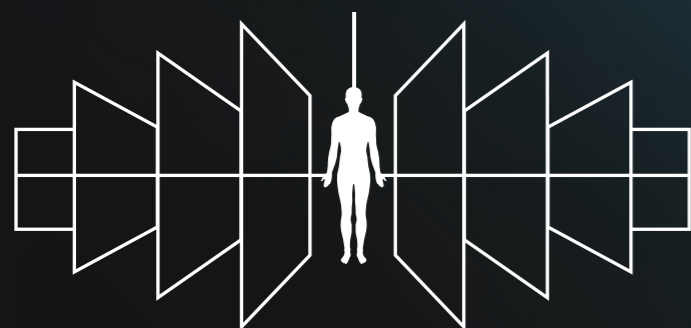
Include your agency in strategic discussions and planning sessions and give them space to challenge ideas and make suggestions. Marketing meetings should feel like a creative springboard. The partnership should be enjoyable. While you may not always be in the driver's seat, inviting fresh perspectives can strengthen your business in ways you may not have expected.

5. Review and adapt

Your partnership should be dynamic and creative. The best results come from ongoing adaptation and refinement. The most successful collaborations evolve over time, responding to changing market conditions, business priorities and performance insights. Be open to change.

An agency should care about the success of your business as much as you do, driven by the same values and working towards the same goals. At Transform, we always say, 'outsourced does not mean outsiders'.

DANIEL O'CONNOR
CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, TRANSFORM COMMS



Selecting the right external partner is critical. An experienced agency quickly understands what makes you tick and brings an outside view on how you can stand out and make a difference in your market.

VERONICA HANNON
CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, TRANSFORM COMMS

Decision time: which model is right for you?

Choosing between an in-house, outsourced or hybrid model requires consideration based on capability, cost, flexibility, internal resources and growth objectives. There's no one-size-fits-all answer – just the right fit for your stage of growth.

Key questions to ask yourself

- What marketing skills do you need in your business now, in the next year and in three years' time?
- Can you realistically afford to hire, train and retain a full in-house team?
- How flexible does your marketing function need to be?
- What skills are currently missing from your internal team? Do you need to build a marketing team from scratch, or add specialist support to what you already have?

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Hiring a marketing generalist and expecting specialist outcomes – a single marketer cannot cover all disciplines at a high level.
- Relying on too few people to cover too many disciplines – overburdened teams can slow execution, increase burnout and reduce campaign effectiveness.
- Underestimating the need for strategic insight – tactical execution alone is rarely enough. Marketing requires a strategy aligned with business objectives.
- Choosing an agency solely on price – value, expertise and alignment are equally important considerations.

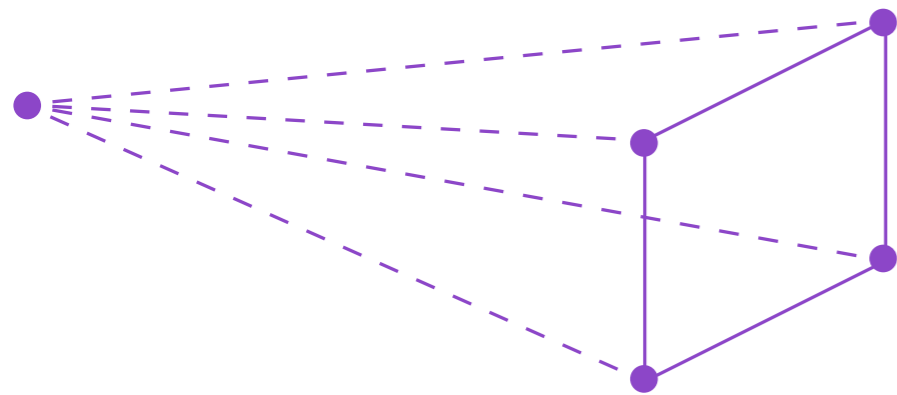
The smart growth choice

Scaling challenges often stem from misalignment. A marketing consultancy helps align your sales and marketing strategies, while driving employee engagement, ensuring everyone in your team is on board and working towards the same goal.

Outsourced and hybrid models deliver multi-disciplinary capability at a fraction of the cost of an in-house team. They offer speed, flexibility, expertise and value that most growing businesses can't realistically replicate internally.

Strategic marketing is the foundation of sustainable growth. And modern marketing requires more depth and breadth than one person – or a small team – cannot deliver alone. For growth-focused founders, the decision is about finding the structure that fits your business, scales with you and maximises impact to deliver measurable results.

Whether you're looking for an outsourced marketing function, or to strengthen your existing in-house team, Transform Comms can help your business grow. Get in touch – we're always up for a chat about how we can transform your communications and build your brand.



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As founders, we know how much your business means to you. We treat every business as we would our own: with care, pride and the utmost attention.

DANIEL O'CONNOR
CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, TRANSFORM COMMS

Transform

We're not just a
marketing agency.
We're your agents
of *change*.

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Transform Comms is a multi-award-winning marketing consultancy delivering integrated communications programmes. We build businesses, brands and reputations on a regional, national and international scale.

Led by Veronica Hannon and Daniel O'Connor, we turn your vision into a workable and results-driven strategy. Drawing on decades of consultancy experience, we create programmes that demonstrate our clients' expertise, to deliver results and achieve your ambition. Our journey takes you from where you are, to where you want to be.

Transform. It's all in the name.