

A Roboticist's Guide to Hiring a B2B Marketing Agency

How to find the right marketing partner, ask the right questions, and set the relationship up to actually work.

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So, it's time to hire marketing help.

You've got a great product, a solid sales team, and enthusiastic customers. And yet, something isn't working. Sales cycles are getting longer. Lead volume is flat. The most common question your SDR's are asked when they call a prospect is "Who is this again?"

You know you need to do more with marketing. But what does that actually mean, and who can help you do it?

Marketing is a lot like robotics: complex, poorly understood by non-experts, and easy to get wrong if you don't know what you're buying. There are plenty of agencies out there. So many, in fact, that searching for the right one can feel nearly impossible. If you're a robotics or automation provider, it also becomes obvious very quickly that few of them understand your industry. Fewer still will be the right fit for your business.

This guide is designed to help you navigate that. It won't tell you which agency to hire (although careful readers will detect that we have a strong opinion about that, too). What it will do is help you ask the right questions, evaluate what you're hearing, and set your new marketing agency up for success.



Know What You Need

“Marketing” covers a lot of ground. Strategy, content, brand, advertising, SEO, trade shows, sales enablement; these are all marketing, and they require different skills. One of the most common mistakes companies make is hiring for the wrong thing, because they haven’t clearly defined the problem they’re trying to solve.

Four questions to ask yourself before you talk to a single agency:

- ✔ **Are your teams internally aligned?** Do Sales, Product, and Engineering agree on what your product does, who your customers are, and what problems you solve for them? Marketing can’t fix a story that isn’t agreed on internally. A good agency will help you build that alignment, but you’ll save significant time and money if you’re honest about where things stand before you bring them in.
- ✔ **Do you have a strategy that isn’t being executed? Or do you have no strategy at all?** These are different problems. Don’t confuse a lively LinkedIn presence or a successful trade show circuit with strategy. A strategy is a plan built on real market conditions, with clear goals and a logic for how you’re going to reach them. Are you hiring someone to execute a plan you already have, or to build one from scratch?
- ✔ **Where are your gaps?** Do you struggle with search visibility, trade show presence, social, or something else? And do those answers change when you think about where you want to be in one year? Three years? Five years?
- ✔ **Who on your team is handling marketing today?** Someone has stepped up to take care of event planning, social media, press relations, etc. Are they doing it well? Are they burning out? Do they need support, or total relief so they can focus on their core role? Are you hiring an agency to lead your marketing function, or to supplement an existing team?

A note on “I don’t know”

“I don’t know” is a completely acceptable answer to any of these. A good agency can help you work through them during the proposal process. But the more clearly you can articulate your situation before the conversation starts, the faster you’ll be able to tell whether a given team is right for you.



The Agency Landscape

There are a staggering number of B2B marketing agencies. Finding the right one for a robotics or automation company is a narrower search than it might appear, but you still need to know what to look for.

2.1 — Industry Fluency Matters

Most B2B agencies specialize in technology broadly, not in any specific industry. That's not necessarily disqualifying, but there's a real cost to working with a team that has to learn your world from scratch. You'll spend the first months of an engagement educating them instead of growing. An agency that already understands how automation is bought, by whom, and why will move faster and make fewer expensive assumptions.

2.2 — Experience Isn't Just a Client List

Don't just look at the logos on the agency's website. Ask about the people who will actually be working on your account. Where have they worked? Have they been embedded in this industry, or are they coming from somewhere adjacent? A team with one automation client and a decade of SaaS experience is a different thing from a team that has spent years in manufacturing and industrial tech.

2.3 — Market Fluency Matters As Much as Industry Fluency

If you're selling into North American manufacturing and logistics, either as a native business or an overseas corporation looking to expand, you need a team that understands how those buyers think, search, and make purchasing decisions. American automation buyers have different needs, and operate under very different pressures and incentives than European or APAC buyers. They're even different than other US B2B buyers. Fluency in your market is essential.

2.4 — Ask Your Peers

The robotics and automation industry runs on relationships. Before you sign anything, ask around. Even someone who hasn't worked directly with an agency might be able to give you a sense of their reputation, their team, and whether they're the kind of people you want representing your brand.



What to Ask

A well-run agency pitch will tell you a lot. So will a poorly run one. But neither will tell you everything. Here are the questions worth asking, and what to listen for in the answers.

3.1 — What does your strategy process look like before you start work on content or creative?

You're looking for a team that asks hard questions, challenges assumptions, and builds a plan that reflects your goals and constraints. Getting started quickly is critical, but a team that leads with deliverables and fills in the strategy later won't be a good steward of your brand or your budget.

3.2 — How do you define and measure success?

If the answer is heavy on impressions, follower counts, engagement rates, or other vanity metrics, press harder. What does success look like for your business? How does their work connect to that?

3.3 — What does a typical engagement look like, and what will you need from us?

Good agencies are direct about what they require to do good work: access to your team, timely feedback, a real point of contact. If they're not asking anything of you, that's worth noting.

3.4 — Can you show us work you've done for a company like ours, and walk us through the thinking behind it?

You're not just evaluating the work. You're evaluating the reasoning. How did they arrive at the strategy? What did they learn along the way? What would they do differently?

3.4 — What don't you or won't you do?

This one catches people off guard, but the answer is revealing. A team with real expertise knows the limits of their approach. If an agency says yes to everything without acknowledging their limits, that should give you pause.



How to Evaluate What You're Seeing

The difference between an agency that's a good fit and one that's just good at selling is one of the harder things to detect, especially if you don't have a marketing background. Here are some signals worth paying attention to.

✓ Green Flags

- ✓ They ask more questions than they answer in the first meeting
- ✓ They push back on your assumptions, and they explain why
- ✓ They are honest about any limitations to their capabilities
- ✓ They ask about your goals and your sales process before they talk about execution
- ✓ Their level of creative ambition matches your appetite for risk

✗ Red Flags

- ✗ They lead with aesthetics without much strategic substance. A beautiful deck or impressive-looking case study is great, but does it display expertise or just design talent?
- ✗ They make guarantees about performance, or tie their value to metrics that don't connect to revenue
- ✗ They don't ask about your sales process, your buyers, or your competitive context
- ✗ They talk mostly about what they've done, not about what they'd do for you
- ✗ The team presenting is not the team that will work on your account



How to Structure the Relationship

Even a great agency will underperform if the engagement is structured badly. Effective marketing requires total engagement from every level of your business, not just a talented team. A few things worth getting right before you sign anything:

5.1 — Understand the kind of engagement you are entering

Most agencies offer some combination of retainers (ongoing monthly work), project-based engagements (a defined deliverable for a fixed fee), and productized services (standardized offerings with a set scope and price). Each has tradeoffs.

- Retainers offer continuity but require sustained investment.
- Projects are lower risk but can leave you without support once the work is done.
- Productized services are useful for getting started quickly with a defined scope, like a brand diagnostic, social media audit, or brand messaging review, before committing to something larger. They are typically launchpads for a larger engagement, not a complete body of work.

5.2 — Be clear about what the agency needs from you

Good agencies need real access to do good work: time with subject matter experts, honest feedback, a single point of contact who has the authority to make decisions and commit budget. If you're not able to provide that, the quality of the output will reflect it. Marketing requires a commitment of time, effort, and budget from your organization. It takes time, and requires risk and experimentation. Be ready for this reality, and build it into your planning.

5.3 — Align on success before you start

One of the most common sources of friction in agency relationships is a mismatch in expectations. What does success look like at three months? Six months? What's the review cadence? How are decisions made? Getting these things on paper before the engagement starts is worth far more than any contract clause.



Before you Sign: A Decision Checklist

Before you commit to an agency, run through these questions. They don't require lengthy answers. This is a gut-check: "yes" or "no" is enough.

Fit & Trust

- Do I trust this team to represent my brand in public?
- Do they understand my buyers and my product?
- Did they challenge me at least once in our conversations?
- Do I know who will actually be doing the work?

Alignment

- Are we aligned on what success looks like, and when?
- Is the scope specific enough that I know if they're delivering?
- Have we agreed on a review cadence and decision making process?

Readiness on Your Side

- Am I prepared to give them the access and time they'll need?
- Can I provide a single point of contact with authority to make decisions?
- Is my team internally aligned on goals before the agency starts?

Evaluation Quality

- Did they ask more questions than they answered in the first meeting?
- Were they clear about their capabilities?
- Did they walk me through their reasoning, not just their results?
- Did they connect their metrics to revenue, not just engagement?

Industry Fit

- Do they understand how automation is bought, and by whom?
- Do they understand the North American manufacturing buyer?
- Have I asked my peers about their reputation in the industry?

How to score this

You don't need a perfect score. If most of your responses are "yes", and you like the agency team, you're ready to move forward. If several are "no", it may be worth slowing down, either to address gaps in your readiness, or continue searching for the right team.



NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Get a clear picture before you commit

Dwight & Company's Marketing Strategy Report gives CEOs, marketing, and sales leaders at robotics and automation companies a clear picture of their marketing position and an honest path forward.

Ten days, two hours of your time, and \$2,500 gets you a clear assessment of where you stand, and what to do next.

Learn more at
dwrightco.com