

# Is outsourcing right for you?

Exploring your marketing options

How to choose the right B2B marketing resource  
for your business – and get the most out of it



SALES + MARKETING

Keeping you informed on the latest in sales and marketing trends and best practices for Australian B2B businesses.



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## INTRODUCTION

# Why is choosing the right B2B marketing **so important?**

Marketing is a vital part of business. Get it right and it can support business growth and continuously propel your company forward. Get it wrong though, and it can be an expensive, long-term headache.

Whether you're an SME business owner or a Sales or Marketing leader in a bigger organisation, it can be tough determining what the 'right' marketing looks like. What sort of marketing do you need, how much expertise does it require, and how much should you be investing in it? These can be tough questions to answer. And to make it even trickier, the answers can change over time.

Choose the wrong marketing resource and it's almost a guarantee you'll end up with:

- Wasted money and poor ROI
- Wasted time and effort
- Marketing that isn't suitable (and doesn't work)

On the other hand, the right marketing resource can take your business to new heights, deliver predictable ROI, effective positioning, consistent sales leads and year on year growth.

This eBook will explain everything you need to know about choosing the right marketing resource (both now and as your business grows or changes), and how to ensure you get the most out of it.

Read on to discover the different marketing options available, how to avoid disappointment and choose the right one for your business.



## CHAPTER ONE

# What are your marketing options?

You've got a few options when it comes to deciding how you want to run marketing for your business. Each of them has their own pros and cons that need to be weighed up against your wants, needs, goals and limitations.

The four most common options for B2B marketing are:

## 1. Internal Marketing Team

This might be one person or a team of many who are hired internally and work in the business to plan, execute and report on all marketing strategies and activities.



**Pros:** Most bigger companies (\$20mil+), will invest in at least one or two internal resources to manage their marketing activities – and some smaller business will too. It can be great to have someone completely committed to the business, 40 hours a week, who knows it inside and out and it truly part of the team.

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**Cons:** For those with budget limitations, it is too expensive to hire and maintain a full internal team – and it's unlikely just one internal marketer will have the breadth of skills you need (nor should you expect them to!). For super small or new businesses without an established brand or a clear go-to-market strategy defined, an internal marketing function is completely unnecessary.

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## 2. Outsourced Marketing Team

This is an external agency or provider you bring on to be your entire marketing team – they do everything an internal team would do but are based remotely from you (and you'll likely share them with other businesses).



**Pros:** Outsourcing offers an incredibly flexible and affordable alternative to internal marketing. Often, you'll get access to an entire team of experts for around the same cost as one in-house resource.

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**Cons:** It can take an outsourced team longer to get to know the intricacies of your business and won't be able to dedicate a full 40-hour week to you – you'll also need to spend the time to manage and nurture the relationship. On top of that, outsourced B2B providers can be hard to come by; many agencies specialise more in consumer marketing.

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## 3. Contractors/Ad-Hoc

For those with minimal or highly specialised marketing needs, contractors can offer ad-hoc work or precise expertise.



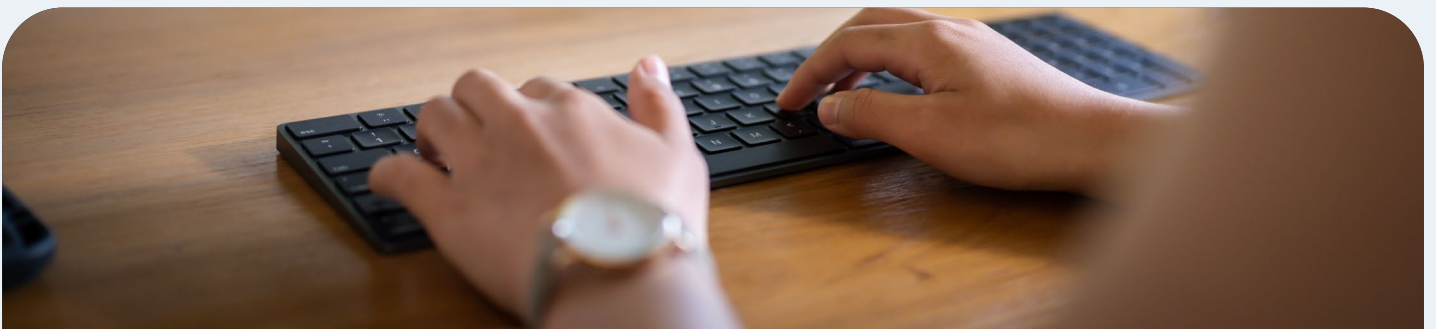
**Pros:** They are usually highly flexible, deliver quick turn-around and can be an affordable option.

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**Cons:** They won't have the in-depth knowledge of your business and will require detailed briefs to deliver high quality work. Their field of expertise and capabilities is also often narrow, so they won't necessarily be available for ongoing work or be able to offer expert advice like an internal or outsourced marketer would.

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## 4. DIY

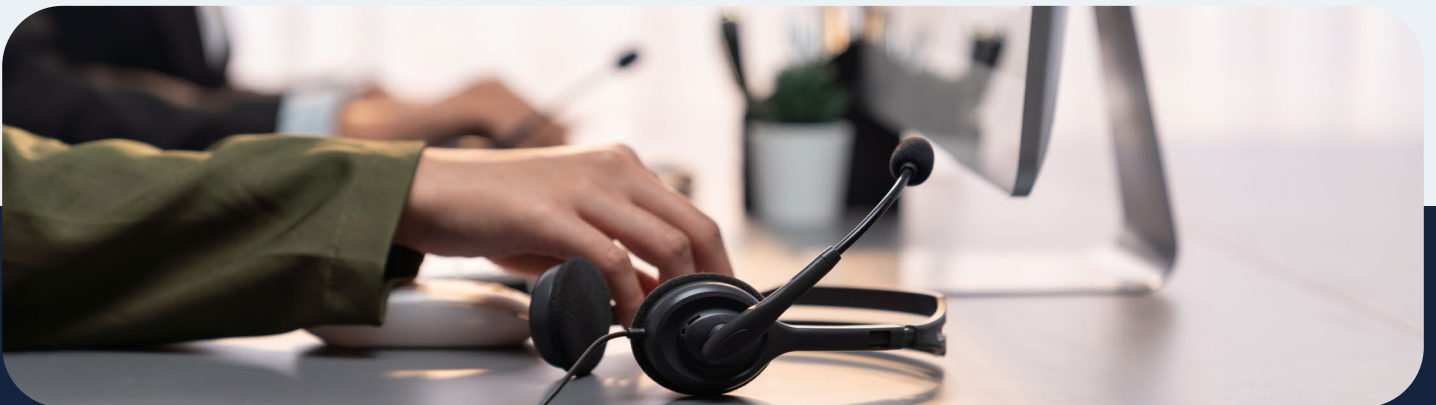
If someone has a small team, small budget or a small business, they might decide to take on the marketing role themselves. Internal DIY marketing usually falls to business owners or executives.



**Pros:** It can be a good way to maintain control and keep marketing in house without forking out to pay for a full-timer.



**Cons:** If the person taking on marketing has limited expertise, there are limitations to what can be achieved. It can also mean marketing loses out to other priorities when time or capacity is limited.



“When you outsource your marketing, you know it is sorted and you can focus on growing your business. Thanks to align.me, we’ve grown our user base 63%.”

– Robert Cox, Director

# Choosing the right marketing option

As you can see, there's no one way to approach marketing. There also isn't necessarily a 'wrong' or a 'right' way to do it – it all depends on your business, your current needs, and your future goals. By choosing a marketing option that aligns with your business position, you set yourself up to get the most out of your marketing (and your investment).

One of the best ways to determine what sort of marketing support you need is by the stage of growth your business is in, and the amount of annual revenue you're achieving. This is a good indicator of how much marketing support you need, the required breadth of your marketing tactics, and the expertise needed to achieve them.

## Start-up mode - \$1mil or less

This is when you should be taking the DIY approach and keeping every cent in-house. It's ok to do the bare minimum to make room for all the other things. Focus on one tactic, master that, and only then add a second. Keep it simple and small. This is true no matter your marketing expertise. You could also look into using contractors for cheap ad-hoc support.

## Focus on growth - \$1mil - \$100mil

When you've gotten to this point, you need more and better capability. This is when you should outsource your marketing to a multi-service agency – a single marketing partner that can take on the lot. Once you climb above \$20mil, you can start looking at bringing on an in-house resource (if you want) but keep your agency onboard for extra support.

## Major Player - \$100mil +

This is when many shift towards an internal marketing team. But some can still benefit from outsourced support – particularly for specialist areas or expertise that doesn't yet exist in the internal team – whether that's individual tactics (like SEO) or overall strategy and planning.



You'll notice that outsourcing often makes sense, regardless of where business revenue sits – anywhere from \$1mil to \$100mil+. Because of the flexibility of outsourcing, it can move and change as your business does. So you never get stuck with a marketing function that no longer works for you!

Most businesses can benefit from outsourcing, but don't necessarily know what it entails or how to make it work for them.

So, how can it help you? Let's take a closer look.

## Not in the sweet spot for outsourcing?

If you're too small to bring in an outsourced partner right now, or you're a bigger business looking to add some internal marketing power to your team, here are some resources to help you:



THE BASIC MUST-DO'S FOR DIY MARKETING



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MARKETER



 **Terra Firma™**  
INDUSTRIES

Our marketing used to be bits – we would try bits of this and bits of that. align.me delivered the focus we needed. The result, top line revenue grew more than 30%”

– **Ashley Reid, Director**



## CHAPTER TWO

# A closer look at outsourcing

Outsourcing is a strategic practice long used by many B2B businesses. Traditionally, it's larger businesses who have used outsourcing to obtain specialised services for a lower cost. However, more recently, businesses of all sizes have been jumping on the bandwagon to outsource all sorts of functions including IT, HR, Security, Accounting – and Marketing.

Outsourced Marketing specifically took off in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. As businesses were looking to cut costs, sales and marketing teams were one of the first teams on the chopping block. But understanding that it was still an important function, these businesses turned to outsourced agencies to deliver services. 15 years later and facing another period of financial pressure, Outsourced Marketing is facing a new surge in popularity.

Instead of having one or two internal generalist staff, outsourcing allows you to access a whole team of experts without having to manage soft skills of the individuals – instead focusing on outputs and deliverables. That means better support and a wider talent pool at a lower cost.

The scope of outsourced marketing can cover everything from marketing strategy and planning, executing tactics, or looking after highly specialised work – even a mix of all three.





### 1. Lower costs

An in-house marketer can cost anywhere from \$60k-\$120k per year, depending on your business and their experience. If you've got a bigger business, chances are you'll need more than one – things can add up quickly. Outsourcing can often give you access to a whole team of specialists for less than the cost of one in-houser.



### 2. A bigger team (and wider expertise)

An in-house marketer can cost anywhere from \$60k-\$120k per year, depending on your business and their experience. If you've got a bigger business, chances are you'll need more than one – things can add up quickly. Outsourcing can often give you access to a whole team of specialists for less than the cost of one in-houser.



### 3. A wider talent pool

Good marketing talent is becoming harder and harder to come by. Marketers want to work with other marketers, so the best talent is heading to agencies or bigger marketing teams. It's becoming harder for non-marketing businesses to attract great marketers to be the solo in-house expert.



### 4. No training requirements

If you're not a marketing expert, it's incredibly hard to hire and develop a marketing expert. Unless you're hiring senior people, you'll need to know what to look for and how to develop that talent. If you don't know good marketing, you can't train a good marketer.



### 5. Flexible support

A full-time internal marketer sitting around with nothing to do will still cost you money at the end of the month. But any outsourced marketing provider worth their salt will offer flexible service options, so you can flex up and down depending on your marketing needs.



### 6. All of this, just a phone call away

Your outsourced marketing team might not be in the next room but, these days, an internal marketer might not be either. As we embrace remote working, it's no longer necessary to be in the same place to function as a team.



## CHAPTER THREE

# Finding an outsourced marketing partner

For most, the search for an outsourced partner starts where any other search would – Google. Beyond that, it's also common to ask around and get input or referrals from friends, other businesses and professional contacts.

These are both great places to start. The more options you can check out, the better. But how do you choose between them all?

Your outsourced agency should be an extension of your own business, and in that way, they should fit similar parameters you set for your own internal staff. But beyond that, there are also a few specific steps that should be part of your agency hiring process.





## 1. Start with the what (not the who)

Before you run off and try to find a great agency, you need to ensure you know what you need and what you want them to deliver. You might want to improve your organic rankings, so you think an SEO specialist is the way to go. But is it your SEO that's the problem? It could also be your web dev. It could also be that organic is the wrong tactic for your business – that isn't how your prospects are finding you. If that's the case, the best SEO agency in the world won't be able to help you. Nail down the what, before you pick out the who.



## 2. Throw a wide net

Do lots of research and get lots of input when you start your search. It's great to ask business contacts if they have referrals (learn from others' mistakes – or wins!) and Google is a totally acceptable place to go look too. Just make sure you canvas widely and get to know what's out there. That ensures your shortlist you know it's made up of the best.



## 3. Check for domain knowledge

Your agency doesn't have to be an expert in your domain or industry, but you want to make sure they know enough or have enough experience that it won't mess with your brand. Also remember that there are big differences between B2B and B2C marketing – even more so than between industries – so experience in the right type of audience is important too.



## 4. Go all in

If you've done your prep right, you shouldn't have many reservations when you pick your final winner. Going all in can sound scary, but it's vital if you want a chance of succeeding.

It's more than worth putting in the time and effort to research, short list and talk to the agencies you're considering before you make a choice. Picking the wrong agency, wrong tactic and going down the wrong path for 18 months is a waste of time, money and opportunities. It's something you want to avoid at all costs.



# Managing an external provider

You've found your perfect partner... Now what?

The way you collaborate with and manage your outsourced marketing provider can make a huge difference to your outsourcing experience – and the outcomes you achieve.

While it's important to recognise that there is no definitive method or practice in managing an external agency, there are some absolute non-negotiables.

## You should...

### Set a clear plan.

A full-time internal marketer sitting around with nothing to do will still cost you money at the end of the month. But any outsourced marketing provider worth their salt will offer flexible service options, so you can flex up and down depending on your marketing needs.

### Be realistic.

Being realistic involves identifying constraints. Discussing these develops the agency's critical ability, and how as a partnership these constraints can be minimised and overcome.

### Be prepared.

Developing key documents that will further align the agency with how your business operates will streamline processes and develop a true sense of alignment. A style guide that fine-tunes brand and messaging, as well as a thorough communications document, are beyond valuable to the agency and make the management process significantly easier.

### Nominate key contacts.

Engaging with an outsourced agency requires a lot of collaboration. A common mistake business make is not identifying which team member/s are going to be the drivers of decisions and communications. Establishing a member or team who is knowledgeable, resourceful and can make decisions is extremely important for both the sake of efficiency and effectiveness.

### Communicate.

This point is somewhat of a combination of the above four. Communication should be clear, concise and realistic. From every brief, you should derive what is trying to be achieved, what are the constraints in achieving this, and how the time will be spent. Clarification is always a big yes.

# How to tell the good from the bad

Setting expectations also means being prepared for periods where the outcomes you're receiving are less than ideal. There are always likely to be dips in performance, returns, and outcomes in marketing. But that's the same whether you are outsourcing your marketing or running it internally.

To be clear: this shouldn't be a shift in your relationship or in the effort your provider is putting in, simply the results you're seeing from their efforts.

If or when this occurs, it's important not to freak out. But you also need to ensure your agency has a plan to work through it, and that you trust them to come out the other side. **The best way you can tell if you're onto a winner is if your outsourced partner takes accountability and ownership for outcomes.**

**Every now again, check in and ask yourself:**

Good or bad, are they owning the outcome and taking responsibility?

Are they reporting outcomes back to you?

Are they working with you to use outcomes to drive future marketing direction and decisions?

The sign of a good outsourced agency isn't necessarily always delivering above average outcomes, but how they own the outcomes they do achieve and work with you to present a deliverable you're happy with.

It is without a doubt that partnering with an outsourced marketing agency can be of profound value. With a level of preparedness, highlighting key responsibilities and developing good communication, you'll be on the way to a fruitful relationship.



"We've worked with align.me for 8 years, and over that time they've always been extremely professional, proactive and made a meaningful contribution to our marketing process and business. I highly recommend align.me for any B2B company that wants high quality marketing across the board without necessity to hire your own team."

**- Drew Arthur, Managing Director**





## CHAPTER FOUR

# The align.me difference

Operating sales and marketing in a B2B environment can be challenging. Businesses don't buy the same way consumers do - deals are bigger deals, sales cycles longer, decision makers more plentiful.

align.me is focused on helping B2B businesses overcome these hurdles and not just get their sales and market engine up and running, but roaring loudly.

We have been providing outsourced marketing services, go-to-market planning and sales and marketing training to B2B businesses for over 20 years and helped

create over 4,000 go to market plans. We currently support many growth businesses with outsourced marketing, and dozens more global businesses with planning and training services.

By specialising in B2B marketing, we have a deep understanding of the domains, customers and buying processes to ensure the best marketing outcomes. We focus on offering the right service, to the right businesses at the right time. And if our clients grow out of us, we know we've done our job well.



carbonix™



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SALES + MARKETING

To find out more about how align.me can help you grow your sales and marketing and deliver better support, expertise and outcomes, check out our website or contact the team today.

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