



PEACHTREE CONSULTING GROUP, INC.

STRATEGIC MARKETING ADVISORS
Identification, investigation and evaluation of business growth opportunities.

What Is Marketing Consulting?

There are few service businesses as misunderstood as marketing consulting. Even seasoned executives are not completely clear on what differentiates true marketing consultants from those that practice some facet of marketing. To make matters more confusing, it is now the vogue for most specialized service firms to position themselves as marketing experts! In fact, they commonly believe their particular expertise is the solution to every marketing problem.

For example, advertising agencies are no longer advertising experts; they are marketing experts. Public relations firms are no longer just "PR", they are marketing experts. Promotional firms are no longer purveyors of hats, horns, pens, pencils and calendars; they are marketing experts. Even industrial design firms are into this change of hats; they are "marketing based" product designers.

That question is: Exactly what is marketing? Is it advertising, website creation, follow me on Facebook, hats and horns, merchandising, selling, public relations, market research, product design or is it "strategizing?" Just like on all those college multiple guess quizzes, the right answer is... "all of the above."

Your marketing consulting firm should have no vested monetary interest in any particular element of the marketing mix.

Without digression into heavy marketing theory, it is sufficient to say a marketing consulting firm should be well versed and competent (not necessarily the ultimate expert) in all elements of the marketing mix. By marketing mix, I am referring to the Seven Ps of marketing... positioning, product, price, promotion, place, people and prayer. Your consultant should be able to objectively consider all elements and have no vested monetary interest in a specific element.

The list is growing with social media advisors and website designers also claiming to be marketing experts. So... What does a real marketing consulting firm do and how do they differ from those previously cited? This is a good question but one which raises another question that is also hazy and of greater importance.

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What to expect from your marketing advisor...

Regardless of the firm's size, industry concentration or functional specialty, a client should expect the consultant to do certain things during the course of a project:

1. Quickly grasp the current business situation.
2. Import (bring) marketing knowledge and techniques.
3. Provide a level of objectivity not achievable within the company
4. Conduct thorough research (if and when necessary).
5. Analyze all relevant data.
6. Make recommendations.
7. Initiate the proper action.

In actuality, there is no magic involved in the marketing consulting process. A broad range of experiences combined with education, innovative thinking and intuition are requisites for successful practitioners of the *art* and *science* of marketing.

While advertising agencies, PR firms, web designers, social media experts, sales reps and product design firms may have important roles in the marketing process, the marketing consultant can help their client determine if and when to bring their skills into the action to produce an optimized program. Too often advertising agencies opt to solve the client's marketing problem (or opportunity) with a megabucks ad campaign and a clever slogan.

Too often, industrial design firms try to "save the client" with new product designs that will be the best things since motorized jogging shoes and taste free underwear.



BOTTOM LINE: Advertising firms are advertising firms, sales reps are sales reps, industrial designers are industrial designers, etc., etc. They should be hired to do what they do best.

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Why hire a marketing consultant?

After considering the SEVEN MAIN THINGS a marketing consultant actually does, executives *will still say*, "why can't we do this ourselves?"



This appears to be an attractive alternative in that the personnel to do the jobs are already on the payroll. No bills from a consultant! This can work on certain types of projects and in some large firms with their own internal consultants. The *fallacy* is... it is much cheaper (less expensive) than using an outside firm. The *reality* is... using company personnel is likely to cost more provided all the hours consumed by the project are logged. Beyond financial considerations, there are other very practical reasons an outside firm can be the best choice.

Executives, especially owners and presidents, seldom realize the full effect they have upon subordinates. Without knowing it, the wrong words here and there will tilt the results of the project toward what the troops think the executive wants. Good consultants are not affected by internal politics, personal agendas or personalities; they are paid to be thorough and objective. They deliver unpopular news, when necessary, in a tactful and constructive manner.

Company personnel, even if they have the time and inclination, seldom have the diversity of experience to be the most effective importers of marketing knowledge. As a dedicated member of an organization within a certain industry, one's vision, experiences and scope are more focused and limited. As a result, the full range of opportunities (or solutions) are never surfaced, and therefore, not explored.

Marketing consultants with diverse, in-depth experiences,

are not bound by conventional company wisdom nor the "rules-of-the-game" within a particular industry.

Consultants are engaged on a project basis. Once they complete the tasks at hand, they are on to the next challenge and off the monthly income statement. It is a clean and efficient arrangement. The project is often completed and paid for in the time it takes an internal effort to be marshaled.

Like other professionals, the best marketing consultants have an innate flair for marketing and the ability to spot opportunities and assess problems that are not readily apparent to others. Anyone can swing a bat and qualify as a ball player, but a few can do it much better than anyone else. They are known as the "BIG LEAGUERS." The same is true of marketers. The best marketing consultants will bring another dimension to the game that will augment and possibly enhance the skills of the company's marketing team.

IN SUMMATION: There are sound reasons for engaging a consulting firm. What they do and say often has a profound effect upon their client's business. It is a *noble profession* that, for the most part, is practiced by individuals with broad experiences, advanced academic backgrounds and business accomplishments that demonstrate a high level of competence and career dedication. By nature, professional consultants are tenacious and confident when it comes to whipping a challenge and when the project is completed... they are off the payroll and on to the next challenge! While consulting fees are important to them, successfully completing the assignment and earning the respect of the client is their driving force and the source of their greatest psychic reward.

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4



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