

A large African elephant with small tusks stands in a savanna. The elephant is the central focus, facing forward. Its skin is a reddish-brown color, and its ears are large and spread out. The background consists of green trees and a blue sky with white clouds. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

What Elephants Know About Hiring a Marketing Consultant

Robert Roth, PhD

Introduction

Did you know that elephants' brains have three times as many neurons as human brains?

According to many legends, they are extremely wise. In Asia, the Hindu god Lord Ganesha (the god of wisdom) has the body of a human and the head of an elephant. And, in Gabon, Central Africa, legend has it that elephants are past human chiefs.

Whether you believe that elephants house the souls of legendary chiefs, or possibly not . . . it is still a good idea to take advantage of their legendary wisdom. After all, elephant wisdom is certainly as valuable as the wisdom provided by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

To be sure I covered all my bases while writing this E-book, I consulted with *both* AI, and also with several very wise elephants. AI was helpful, no doubt about it. But the elephants proved far wiser. So, in the next few pages, I will share what elephants know about hiring a marketing consultant.

Hope this information is helpful.

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Some Good News

The Good News about hiring a marketing consultant is that they can help you increase customer attraction and retention, and the financial return (ROI) on your marketing investment.

The right marketing consultant can help you:

- Conduct research** that makes marketing and communications strategies less expensive and more productive.
- Develop a strong brand** that builds competitive advantage.
- Create and manage marketing campaigns** including digital and non-digital advertising, public relations, social media, promotional events, e-mail marketing and collateral materials.
- Track and report marketing results.**
- Improve the impact of marketing content** including search engine optimized website copy.
- Reduce marketing expense** by reducing full-time staff salaries and overhead.
- Help you avoid costly marketing mistakes.**



A lot of good things can happen if you hire *the right* marketing consultant. But before you pick up the phone, or write that email, to make an offer you might want to consider the bad news and perhaps even the ugly news contained in the next few pages.

Some Bad News

The truly Bad News about hiring a marketing consultant is that your newly hired consultant may not be successful.

Here are some tips for increasing your marketing consultant's potential for success:

- ❑ **During the hiring process, ask for recommendations** from clients and professional associates.
- ❑ **Check out credentials** on prospective consultants' website, LinkedIn profiles and professional associations.



Interview several candidates before making a decision. Interview your prospective consultant thoughtfully and thoroughly, asking them:

- **What is your approach to marketing** and how would you adapt your approach to my business situation?
 - **Specifically, what is the step-by-step process** that you envision pursuing while you are working with us?
 - **What is your experience in my industry?**
 - **What are your rates?**
 - **How and when will you measure and report marketing results?**
 - **What are your guarantees** (don't expect any but it never hurts to ask)?
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- ❑ **Get a proposal in writing**, including scope of work, fees, and the terms in the form of a legally binding contract.

What Elephants Know About Hiring A Marketing Consultant

While not necessarily Bad News, you do need to recognize that hiring a *highly experienced* marketing consultant is not inexpensive.

- **Hourly rates** for an expert marketing consultant typically range from \$100 to \$200 per hour and vary based on experience, location, your requirement for on-site versus virtual services. Nonprofit clients may receive 10% to 30% discounts.
- **You will get what you pay for.** Hiring the lowest bidder may both waste your marketing dollars and damage your customer relationships and income.

You also need to recognize that, depending on your work style and the work style of the consultant you hire, you will likely need to give up some degree of control over marketing decisions. Before diving too deep into the hiring process, you should determine the amount of control you will want to retain by considering:

- **The scope of work** to be performed by your consultant. If the scope is broad, you will have less control over marketing decision making. Your degree of control should be determined based on 1) your consultant's experience, and 2) your marketing knowledge.
 - **Your marketing experience** may enable you to retain more control over marketing decisions. However, if you do not have a lot of knowledge or experience, you may need to give the consultant more control.
 - **A consultant with extensive experience** can save you time, and money, and be more successful but they will require more control over marketing decision making.
- **Throughout the search and interview process,**
 - **Be clear about your expectations** about the extent of your involvement in setting, managing, and evaluating marketing strategies. Be honest with your candidates and honest with yourself.
 - **Get everything in writing,** including scope of work, fees, responsibility for marketing decisions and detailed terms of the contract.
- **Always remember that you are the client.** At "the end of the day" *you* must always have *final approval* on marketing strategies, budgets, and responding to outcomes.

By following these tips, you can eliminate a great deal of the bad news that can result from a less than productive marketing consultant engagement.

Some Ugly News

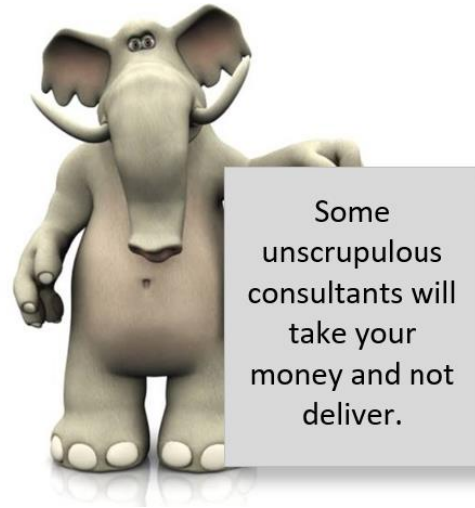
Maybe the ugliest news (that you will hopefully never need to confront) is that some unscrupulous consultants will take your money and not deliver.

There are a few commonsense things you can do to protect yourself and your organization from unscrupulous consultants:

- Do your research.** Before you hire a consultant, learn as much as you can about them. Read online reviews, check their website, and see if they have any experience in your industry.
- Get everything in writing.** Once you've decided on a consultant, get everything in writing, including the scope of work, the fees, and the terms of the contract. This will help avoid any misunderstandings down the road.
- Be wary of upfront payments.** It is generally best to pay marketing consultants in installments or only after they have delivered on their promises.
- Check references.**
- Be prepared to walk away** if you have any doubts about a consultant. There is an ample supply of well-qualified, reputable, and trustworthy marketing consultants available, both virtually and live and in-person.

Some additional things that you might want to keep in mind when hiring a marketing consultant:

- Confirm the consultant's experience in your industry.**
- Ask about the consultant's methodology** and how they will measure success.
- Get everything in writing.**
- Be prepared to commit to a long-term relationship.** By following these tips, you can increase your chances of finding a marketing consultant who is a good fit for your business and who can help you achieve your marketing goals.



What Elephants Know About Hiring A Marketing Consultant

Unfortunately, ugly things can happen in any business relationship and that brings us to the last topic in this section of the E-book . . . getting out of a contract.

It can be difficult to get out of a contract with a marketing consultant if you are not happy with their services. The process will vary depending on the specific terms of the contract. These are a few of the most important things you can do:

- ❑ **Review proposed consulting contracts** carefully to make sure there are provisions that will allow you to terminate the contract early, for any reason, or for specific reasons.
- ❑ **Be clear on the timeframe for terminating the contract.** Some contracts may require you to give the consultant a certain amount of notice before you can terminate the contract.
- ❑ **Be clear about fees** you may be required to pay the consultant for terminating the contract early. The amount will hopefully be specified in the contract.
- ❑ **Keep good records** of all communications with the consultant, including emails, letters, and phone calls.
- ❑ **Talk to the consultant** if you have an existing contract that does not have a termination clause. Explain your reasons for wanting to terminate the contract and see if they are willing to work with you.
- ❑ **Send a letter of termination** if the consultant is not willing to work with you. This letter should be formal and state your reasons for terminating the contract.
- ❑ **Be prepared to go to court** if the consultant refuses to accept your termination letter.

It just makes good sense to protect yourself and your organization from unscrupulous consultants. Doing that may take a little extra thought and work. But the extra effort can save a great deal of disappointment and money if things get ugly.

Wrapping Up

So, wrapping up what elephants know about hiring a marketing consultant, here are 7 tips:

Tip #1 – Be Clear and Trust Your Gut

- ❑ **Be clear about** your goals . . . what you are looking for.
- ❑ **Invest time** to do some research and interview several candidates.
- ❑ **Trust your gut** when you're interviewing. If you don't feel comfortable with a consultant, *don't hire them.*



Tip #2 – Do Your Research

- ❑ **Research online** on websites that share information on consultant's experience, qualifications, and fees, such as LinkedIn, GoodFirms, Upwork and Fiverr.
- ❑ **Research industry associations** memberships including:
 - American Marketing Association (AMA)
 - International Association of Marketing Consultants (IMAC)
 - Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP)
 - Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS)
- ❑ **Ask your business associates** for recommendations.
- ❑ **Contact candidate's past and present clients.**
- ❑ **Get quotes** for providing the services you need to screen candidates.

Tip #3 – Interview Carefully

- ❑ Make sure the consultant candidates have experience in your industry.
- ❑ Make sure the candidates fit with your Vision, Mission, Goals, and culture.
- ❑ Ask about each candidate's methodology and how they will measure success.
- ❑ Be clear about your timeline, budget, and expectations.

Tip #4 – Get Everything in Writing

- At a minimum, marketing consulting contract or agreement should cover the following:
 - **The scope of work** in terms of the services the consultant will provide, including a detailed description of the deliverables the consultant will be responsible for producing.
 - **Fees**, including the hourly or retainer rate, the total project fee, payment terms and the process for negotiating, approving and making payments, and the process for invoicing additional expenses.
 - **Clear specification** of the start and end dates of the contract.
 - **A clause detailing terms of confidentiality** that protects both parties from disclosure of confidential information.
 - **A termination clause** that specifies the terms under which either party can terminate the agreement.
 - **A dispute resolution clause** that specifies how disputes will be resolved through mediation, arbitration, or other specific means.
 - **Ownership of intellectual property.**
 - **Credit for work** including retention of rights and trademark and copyright notices.
 - **Insurance** if the contract requires the consultant to carry certain types of insurance, such as liability insurance.
 - **Plain language** throughout the contract that eliminates ambiguous terms.
 - **Everything in writing** with no reliance on verbal agreements.
- **Have a lawyer review the contract** before you sign it.

Tip #5 – Take a Test Drive

When you retain your new consultant, take a low- risk test drive.

- **Assign you consult a well define initial project** that will test their capability and your relationship with minimal risks.

Tip #6 – Be Patient

Be patient and be prepared to commit to a long-term relationship because:

- ❑ **Marketing is a continuously evolving process.** Your consultant will need time to learn about your business.
- ❑ **Consultants need time to build relationships and trust with your customers.**
- ❑ **Consultants need time to adapt to changes.**

Tip #7 – Consider a Long-Term Commitment

If you are serious about improving your marketing results, then it is important to be prepared to commit to a long-term relationship with a marketing consultant.

The benefits of having a long-term relationship with your marketing consultant may include:

- **Building insight and commitment** as your consultant continues to gain deeper understanding of your markets and competitive position.
- **Building trust and rapport** as you and your consultant build shared commitment to serving your customers and building your business.
- **Enabling your consultant to be more productive** as they build expertise and experience in your business.

By following these tips, you can increase your chances of getting out of a contract with a marketing consultant if you are not happy with their services.

What Elephants Know About Hiring A Marketing Consultant

About The Author

Bob Roth (AKA Robert Roth, PhD). is a freelance marketing consultant.

Over the past three decades, his marketing programs have produced **several hundred million dollars** in equity value for corporations and their investors. In addition, my nonprofit marketing work has engaged more than **100 million people** and raised more than **\$40 million**.



Dr. Bob's capabilities, as a freelance marketing consultant, are informed and empowered by more than 30 years of marketing leadership experience gained while serving as:

- President, COO and CMO for the Grand Canyon Railway
- V. P. Marketing for Del Webb Recreational Properties
- V.P. Marketing for Radisson Hotels
- Director of National Advertising for the Holiday Inns System

In the nonprofit sector, Dr. Bob has created brands and marketing programs for the Arizona Office of Tourism, American Humane Association, Arizona Small Business Association, Butte Opera House (Cripple Creek, CO), City of Cripple Creek, CO, Coleville Confederated Tribes, Desert Stages Theatre (Scottsdale, AZ), Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Sedona Chamber of Commerce, the Navajo Nation and Utah Navajo Industries.

Today, Bob Roth is seeking opportunities to provide freelance marketing services to both for-profit and nonprofit organizations that are working to make life better for people, animals and our planet.

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