



5 Ways You're WASTING Money on Your B2B Marketing (AND What to do Instead)

- Not Measuring
- You're working with an agency
- Technology - wrong tech/redundant tech/underperforming/etc
- Underskilled (people/team, etc)
- Lack of cohesive Strategy (lack of balance)
- BONUS - Outdated strategy

Think of this as way to “peek behind the curtain” on how agencies work and how you can accomplish 3 things:

1. Know what to ask
2. Be a better marketing agency client
3. Raise your awareness



I share your pain

I've been where you are today: a hopeful business owner spending 10's of 1000s of dollars with a marketing agency, wondering every month if I've made the right decision. I'd have a periodic "update call" where they would go over what they did since my last call and how much they want me to spend until the next call. I'd get a new chart or analytics report by email which was their way of justifying the spend.

I admit to seeing some "movement" here and there...we did get a few new leads from our website. But we got a few leads from our website before them too. I also noticed some great new graphic design, but what I never knew was if those new designs ever translated into the growth I was promised.

I would say they were consistent - every month I got a new invoice for a different amount than the previous month, and I consistently felt like the "performance reports" in my inbox were cultivated to only show the data THEY wanted me to see.

I kept a close eye on my renewal date and after 10 months, I gave them notice that I did not intend to renew and I did something fantastically moronic: I succumbed to the pitch of another marketing agency promising me the same things I was promised before using a new set of marketing terms I had heard about but did not deeply understand...and the cycle would start over.

My business was not in marketing back then, it was in transportation compliance software...so my expertise was in the problems of my customers, not marketing. I had to rely on the expertise of others - as my customers relied on me for DOT compliance.

1.



Gotta have marketing

I understood marketing was important, and I also knew it was complex enough to have experts doing it. I also knew I was not big enough to have a multi-talented, full-time, marketing staff. But I did hire a few folks here and there - great individuals who brought some marketing expertise into the company. But while they were very good employees, they were only great at 1 thing, very good at 2 things and could hold a conversation about the rest. I remember one guy who was great at Graphic Design and we had some great things created that year. We still hired out the rest. He did some SEO on the site, but we never saw any results that made me think we'd "solved SEO." How do you even measure SEO?

One woman was great at Social Media and she always said that a good social presence would positively affect our SEO. I figured, we'd kill two birds with her. She did well: our Likes and engagement increased every month on our social channels - and I admit, we had a lot of new conversations with new businesses. However, after 8 months she moved on and we asked ourselves - are we a bigger company because of her? And SEO? Not sure.

Of the questions we had, the most important one was, would we invest in her replacement hire? Our business is technical and it takes awhile to bring someone up to speed. Also, trucking compliance is not the sexiest topic in the world, so we weren't attracting top talent. So two quarters passed before we made our next marketing move.

That was our marketing pattern: "clunky guessing" at what to do next, never feeling like our questions were getting answered and never truly believing our choices were making the BEST use of our money. But we were also committed to marketing. I mean, a little good SEO, a little good graphic design, a little good social media...it's something, right? We never wanted to "do nothing." But we were also never "wowed" by any result. Ever.

Sound familiar? Which part?

I eventually sold that company and started a marketing company.

2.



WTF?

I know, sounds weird. But I was a software guy, which meant I was a process guy and I was looking for a new place to invest my energy. While I was looking, a previous client asked for help making a new website for them. I asked myself why not generate that income and learn how website marketing works? So I dug in to help a mid-sized roofing company get more leads through their website.

At the time, I'd wondered why the hell they trusted me to do a website. I was clear that I hadn't done one before. They countered by saying that my old website worked on them and they had used our software for years - reasoning that my track record of solving their problems would translate into website success.

(No pressure.)

That was 13 years ago, and I never stopped doing 2 things:

Learning about digital marketing
Applying the software discipline of "predictable processes" to marketing

It's because of #2 that you may notice we don't talk like other marketing companies...we talk like software nerds or business consultants. We say, "get a demo" instead of "talk to a sales person" or "get a quote." We ask business questions. We ask "why" to an annoying degree. We learn the ins and outs of each business...then we apply marketing tactics to solve something specific.

It's no-fluff, no BS work.

Why can't marketing be like that? It's a problem. It's definable. It's solvable. And shouldn't you know very early if it ain't working?

3.



How about a little payroll math?

We pay \$256,800 in annual salaries, taxes and benefits for a typical four-person team (we call them a “hive”). These hives get assigned to clients. Most of our clients would never hire those four individuals to get work done. Plus, the hive is just the start. Depending on the work, we may switch people in and or broaden the hive as work expands. For instance, a graphic designer, it was determined, would only be needed in the initial 90-day for the most part. The designer will “roll-off” the hive and be replaced with, say, a social media expert after that.

Do you see the employment risk that a mid-sized company must endure to get the right internal marketing expertise - one that has to shift throughout the year? This is why having broad in-house marketing resources is impossible unless you’re a substantial business (100+ employees) where hiring a full marketing staff may start to make sense. This is why we are best suited to companies \$5 to \$50M in annual revenue.

I told you, there’s a system. So in the end, it can make a lot of sense to work with a marketing firm. Whether working with an outside firm or trying to figure it out yourself, let’s review a few land mines you’ll likely encounter that can blow up good intentions along with a bunch of wasted work.





Land mine #1: Not measuring

This is a very common problem. In working with new clients, we often see that whether they were doing marketing work on their own, or they outsourced to firms smaller and bigger than ours, measurement was a real problem. It either didn't exist, or it was way over-simplified. We believe that "what gets measured gets done." Measurement starts with transparency. You can measure what you can't see. So in all of our work, we do a lot of setup. Most marketing execution these days is digital, meaning online. So on websites, in paid ads, social, SEO – you name it – we do the technical work upfront to ensure that we can measure. Without getting too technical here, it's not enough to field marketing products like websites. Too many good "designers" don't know how to technically program the site on the backside so that everything can be measured appropriately. Pixels, tags, other tools... it's pure discipline, process and quality control.

Then, we deploy an integrated dashboard that pulls in new data from all the digital assets fielded on behalf of a client. Website traffic and conversions, e-mail campaigns, paid ads clicks and conversions ... even sales results and lead generation metrics. It's all in one integrated dashboard that we can see... and clients can see. There's nothing more frustrating than not knowing if anything is happening with your marketing. Wouldn't it just be delightful to leave your dashboard open in your browser and check on it at will. You're then empowered to ring up your marketing team and ask pointed questions on "this or that" result, if you're so inclined. Not all principals want to wade into the measurement and metrics, but they're there for those who do.

More, the ability to measure then gets analyzed. We do a bunch of analyzing, synthesizing, reporting and recommendation. Even if a team has measurements in place, it doesn't mean there's a disciplined process to turn data into knowledge then new actions. And by measurement, we don't mean simply accessing Google Analytics. It's only the start.

5.



Land mine #2: You're working with an agency

A few pointers when talking to agencies about your work. First, look at their LinkedIn page. All agencies claim to be "full service." Largely, most agencies will claim they can provide the full spectrum of your marketing toolkit. So check out their LinkedIn page. RSM has 35+ full-time equivalents. When we talk with prospects who are considering other firms, we'll go look at other agencies' LinkedIn pages together. Why? Well, there you can see how many employees they have. So often these agencies only have a few employees. This means they are freelancing most of the work. And that is bad! Why?

Three things will happen. First, communication about your work will become very strained. You may have a key contact at the agency, but they have to herd a bunch of cats to get updates. Freelancers are typically horrible at communication. They tend to be "doers," meaning when they're building a website (for instance), they may not come up for air for weeks. Seriously. They'll just ignore calls and emails. Second, quality control will suffer. Because these freelancers are working together on the client's work, learning and quality control is not standardized. Let's say the web freelancer applies the right brand identity and brand lexicon. Well, the social team, or the email freelancer, or any of many people executing work need the same learning, too. But they don't talk, so that learning is missed, which will tick you off as the client as you see draft work sent for your review that misses what you might have just shared previously on another project. Third, the work slows down. Freelancers do two things. They sell, and then they get overwhelmed. So when they're overwhelmed, your work just sits there. Truly, no amount of shouting or threatening will make it go any faster. You don't want to work with an agency that claims they can do your work but in reality freelances it out.

Second, will they commit to fixed fee pricing? It's a big one. They may put you on subscription pricing. However, if the hours exceed those provided under the subscription, many automatically bill the overage. You don't need or want these monthly surprises.

Last, project management. Can the agency provide documentation on their processes and project management. If they can't, they're probably pretty loose. Truth is, marketing firms attract a lot of very creative people, in whatever they do. Most creative people are not good managers. And most managers are not very creative. This is why it's the rare marketing firm that can provide good project management with solid processes that ensure on-time delivery of good, quality work.

6.



Land mine #3: The friend-foe called ‘technology’

Here’s a key question to ask yourself or your marketing firm. What new technologies have you onboarded in the last 12 months, and what’s your plan for the next 12? We call it new product development. Marketing tech has just exploded. Any marketing tactic should have tech enabling it. Well, technology is a friend here because it just automates and empowers so well. At RSM, we spend six figures each year on good marketing technologies that our clients largely don’t have to pay for. However, the cost is a foe for most companies and firms. The other foe with technology is the ability to master it. It takes special kinds of people who want to get knee deep in software programs. That’s what this is. Software. Not only do you have to pay for the software, but you also have to pay for smart people who can maximize the investment. For this reason, we often see “software orphans.” These are companies who bought great marketing software packages but then don’t know what to do with them. Or orphans from other marketing firms where they didn’t use any advanced technologies and the lack of results reflected it.

Land mine #4: Under-skilled resources

Many middle-market companies have one marketing person. We call these people “unicorns.” It’s the rare person who can do everything: graphic design, copywriting, website programming, SEO, PR, email marketing, you name it. They may touch all of these and do none of them well. As we mentioned earlier, digital marketing means if you miss one little technical point, your entire marketing effort might be for naught. We have seen large companies launch new websites that can’t be found by the search engines. Oh, maybe their homepage. But not all the content that wasn’t setup correctly by unskilled resources. When we point this out, it can be rather embarrassing. So when shopping internally or externally, ask questions like: “what’s the science behind that?” Or, “do you have any certifications?” Or, “when’s the last time you attended a workshop to enhance your skills?” Simple but important questions.





Land mine #5: Lack of cohesive strategy

First off, there's a difference between strategy and tactics, a difference that's mostly misunderstood even by marketing agencies. Tactics are "things." Like email marketing. That's a "thing." Websites are a "thing." Strategies tie the tactics together. Strategies are "how are we going to achieve the objectives?" Strategies are the how and tactics are the what. Now, tactics can work without strategy. However, strategy can make the tactics go nuclear. Here are a few proven B2B strategies: education, leadership, self-assessment. If you have an education strategy, then, you guessed it. Your tactics will help provide education to prospects and clients. Perhaps you heavy-up on webinars and events under this strategy. With the leadership strategy, perhaps you champion an industry issue larger than just your company. Perhaps it's reducing waste. Perhaps it's nearly impossible engineering. Your tactics will then adopt this strategy. If you excel at leading in near-impossible engineering, show it. Your tactics might include video animation showing your processes. If you're a leader in reducing waste, you hold client workshops to help them, invite them to a topical email series. Anyway, amateurs talk tactics. Professionals talk strategy. Does your team talk strategy? If the conversation is only limited to tactics, your marketing is going to cost way more than it should and take much longer to achieve real results.

In conclusion!

Perfection is never the goal. Real progress is. Progress that is measured, communicated, organized, on-time, professional, supported by advanced technologies, and that falls under an umbrella of strategy.

Crossing your fingers is not a marketing option either. Don't rely on luck. Instead, find a resource that provides results you can see and growth you can also see and feel. You should also sense real marketing momentum created by A Working System. That system will be different for each client. But once you hit it, you know it. Getting to a sustainable Working System is a goal for all of our clients at RSM.

8.



What should you take away?

1. Define your problem, and define your result - be specific, but don't define the solution. Your marketing strategy will define the solution that will get the results.
2. Know and focus on the actual, measurables that tell you if you're driving toward your result. Insist on real-time access to INDEPENDENT DATA.
3. Pay less attention to what the marketing company TELLS YOU and more attention to what they ASK YOU. They must know your company, your history, your staff, and how you bring value to your customers.

Finally, don't hire an agency, when what you really need is a real, in-house, adaptable and process-driven marketing team.

We measured and micro-pivoted in SEO, email and Ad strategy. We billed the exact same amount every month for those 8 months (except for the drone work).

Not measuring - 3 examples of how you can measure. (Social media performance/engagement, email stats, installing google analytics, creating utms, etc... I think choose 3 to keep it simple)

Agency- hire a department. Tie this into their difference
<https://rsmconnect.com/outsourced-marketing-department/>

Wrong technology - "you might be using xyz tools because at one point you were told it was the bomb, but most companies wind up over complicating their marketing by using too many programs, the wrong programs, or outdated programs ... do your research, be willing to test softwares, or work with a marketing expert to determine which technology is the best fit for your marketing needs"

underskilled (and maybe under motivated?) team - give team proper training, help them understand mission, give them tools for success, set realistic metrics etc

Lack of strategy - marketing is a huge umbrella that encompasses everything from social media to blogging to Seo to email to copywriting to kick ass design ... work with a marketing expert to develop a unique strategy that fits their unique needs ... not all marketing is created equal ... tie this into working with them to develop strategy that encompasses all they do.

9.

