

YOUR GUIDE TO FILLING A DIGITAL MARKETING GAP



*How to find the best gap
filler for your company*



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HOW DO I GO ABOUT FILLING MY DIGITAL MARKETING GAPS?

Only 61% of marketing respondents in the 2017 State of Inbound Report felt that their company's marketing strategy was effective. Meanwhile, according to the CMO Survey, marketers rank digital marketing capabilities as being of the highest importance to companies, while *also* being the source of their largest organizational gaps - Yikes!

But how do you address this gap in digital capabilities if you have it? It may sound fairly straightforward at first — just fill it! If it were that simple, these gaps likely wouldn't exist in the first place. Not only do you need to determine where in particular your gaps lie - is it in developing your strategy? Or having the time to devote to deploying your plan? Or does your team lack the skills required to execute?, but then choosing a gap-filling solution (amongst many) that is the best fit. That's where this guide comes in!



The following chart represents the intersection of marketing capability importance and organizational gaps. Out of the companies surveyed, digital marketing capabilities was marked as high importance, but also the area where they have their largest organizational gaps. The first step to filling digital marketing gaps is to come up with a strategy. However, 39% of marketers feel that their organizations marketing strategy is ineffective, making it even harder to fill the gaps themselves.

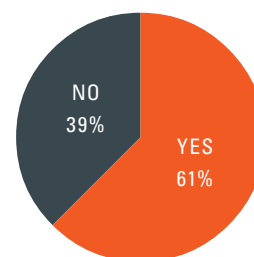
These stats are the reason we created this guide; to help you understand what your gap is and who can help you fix it.

MARKETING CAPABILITY IMPORTANCE BY ORGANIZATIONAL GAPS

	LOW IMPORTANCE RANK	MODERATE IMPORTANCE RANK	HIGH IMPORTANCE RANK
SMALL ORGANIZATIONAL GAPS	» Agency management capabilities	» Creative capabilities	» Customer focus capabilities*
MODERATE ORGANIZATIONAL GAPS	—	» Marketing analytics capabilities » Marketing innovation capabilities	» Brand development & management capabilities » Customer development & management capabilities
LARGE ORGANIZATIONAL GAPS	—	» Omni-channel execution capabilities	» Digital marketing capabilities**

https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2016/08/The_CMO_Survey-Highlights_and_Insights-Aug-2016.pdf

DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MARKETING STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE?



https://www.campaigncreators.com/hubfs/SOI17_Final_Digital

SO, LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS FOR FILLING IN THOSE DIGITAL MARKETING GAPS?

Below we will examine a lineup of the five most viable, common gap fillers to help you determine the ideal solution for you.

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GAP FILLERS AT A GLANCE

On the following page you'll see a chart that lays out all the information you will see in the rest of this guide.

To help you navigate it here's the legend:

LEGEND

Training/Learning Curve: the amount of time needed to ramp the gap filler up to speed

Scope of Knowledge/Expertise: the breadth of knowledge and areas of expertise

Time: typical time required to complete projects

Control: the level of control over the people and processes associated with the work

Strategic Partnership: the relative investment of the two parties and the potential for a continued relationship

Relationship Length: how long the relationship between the two parties typically lasts

Communication: how, and how easily, you will be able to communicate with the gap filler

Attention Span: time and focus dedicated by the provider on your work vs. other work

Access to Technology: who is responsible for acquiring the tools and technology needed for the work

Risk: the nature of the risk associated with the relationship

Budget: how much money each option will cost

RANGE

mild → medium → steep

novice → knowledgeable → expert

short → medium → long

low → medium → high

low → medium → high

low → medium → high

SEE CHART ON THE NEXT PAGE

GAP FILLERS AT A GLANCE (CON.)

	AGENCY	FREELANCER	DIY	EMPLOYEE	PARTNERING
 TIME (PROJECT)	Short	Medium	Long	Medium	Medium
 LEARNING CURVE	Mild	Mild	Steep	Steep	Medium
 EXPERTISE	Expert	Expert	Novice	Knowledgeable	Expert
 TECHNOLOGY	Joint	Varies	You	You	Joint
 COMMUNICATION	Frequent	Frequent	N/A	Constant	Frequent
 LEVEL OF CONTROL	Medium	Low	High	High	Medium
 LEVEL OF RISK	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High
 RELATIONSHIP LENGTH	Long	Short	Forever	Varies	Varies
 ATTENTION SPAN	High	Low	Low	High	Medium

OPTION 1: DIY

“If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself”— the old proverb does sometimes ring true. In certain cases and for certain projects, the do-it-yourself approach may be a fully viable solution to filling your marketing gap. However, it’s important to be aware of the challenges and limitations of this option.



TRAINING/LEARNING CURVE: Depends greatly on the nature of the project and your skills background. You would need to devote time to self-training, potentially distracting from other crucial elements of running your business. Depending on the difficulty of the skill being learned, training time could be anywhere from a couple of hours to several days. And other skills are simply not accessible on a realistic timeline; design, web development and marketing strategy can take years to master.



SCOPE OF KNOWLEDGE/EXPERTISE: You may end up with an incomplete marketing strategy missing key elements, such as blogging, social media marketing, or even visual appeal. There is, however, an opportunity to learn high-level or very specific information that can be applied in the future, but it may take a more time than you are willing to wait to see an outstandingly positive ROI.



TIME: Training time plus natural inefficiency as a DIYer in more intricate tasks is somewhat inevitable. Your various other responsibilities may leave insufficient time to accomplish your project, or vice versa. An ability to realistically assess your own capabilities is key for a DIYer.



CONTROL: You have a maximum degree of control with this option. On the other hand, you are responsible for approving your own work at whatever level you consider it to be “done.”



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: Non-applicable.



RELATIONSHIP LENGTH: Non-applicable.



COMMUNICATION: Non-applicable.



ATTENTION SPAN: Dependent on how many other duties/tasks you are juggling at any given moment.



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY: All costs and configurations are your personal responsibility. If you or your company lack the financial resources to put towards more comprehensive, time-saving tools and technologies, higher costs can stack in other areas, particularly time. Alternately, if a specific task does not require the use of costly materials this is not an issue. The evaluation is up to you!



RISK: The risk is in ending up with a low quality output that took a lot of time to produce. Ultimate autonomy comes with the flip side of a completely undistributed workload. Even with technical knowledge in hand, you may simply lack the “artistic” intuition to be able to execute a successful digital marketing plan, unlike a full team of members with various balanced strengths.



BUDGET: The cost of DIY is really dependent on the skills needed. In some cases, a 1-hour free training webinar may suffice, while in other cases, a couple hundred dollar class may be needed. However, you need to consider your own hourly rate to determine the cost for you. For example, if your hourly rate is \$200, that hour spent watching a webinar will cost you \$200!

DIY is a great option for those who have a technology skills gap but no time gap. If you're looking for an extra helping hand on your team, however, you may choose instead to...

OPTION 2: HIRE AN EMPLOYEE

An in-house employee can be a valuable asset to your company and a viable option for filling in your digital marketing gap if they possess (or can quickly acquire) the skills needed. The biggest benefit to hiring in house is the constant face-to-face interactions you and your team can have with them. Here are some factors to consider when deciding whether a full-time hire is the right choice for you.



TRAINING/LEARNING CURVE: Depending on the learning curve, which can be steep particularly in regard to technology, certain tasks may still require outsourcing to agencies or freelancers. However, employees can be screened by skill set during the hiring process.



SCOPE OF KNOWLEDGE/EXPERTISE: If you have a volume of tasks similar to one another, an employee may be the most cost effective option. Employees have various skills and can be specialized in certain areas depending on previous job experiences, but unsurprisingly it would be exceptionally hard to find one person that possesses *all* of the skills required to create and execute a complete digital strategy (you are basically looking for a unicorn).



TIME: Acclimation time needs to be accounted for. As your new employee is attempting to gain insight into the entire company, they will need anywhere from a couple weeks to several months to become fully familiarized with how everything is run.



CONTROL: Employees can be controlled and watched quite easily thanks to their physical presence in your workspace. They are also obligated to conform to your company's approval process. If your company needs to handle a great deal of red tape, an employee may be your ideal option.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: The long-term benefit from the relationship is inevitably imbalanced. While working at your prestigious company may be beneficial for an employee's future, the experience is not likely to greatly expand your company's own network through the employee's glowing testimony.



RELATIONSHIP LENGTH: Employees are dedicated to their companies, but only for the amount of time they're working there, which varies. Notably, the "personal factor" of their physical presence in the office affects your ability to quickly "drop" an employee that you realize to be a poor fit.



COMMUNICATION: An in-office job streamlines communication considerably. Face-to-face interactions ensure nearly constant availability to discuss updates and answer questions, with less risk of information being lost via online communication. A "live-in" specialist could learn a lot about the internal operations and real-time happenings in your company from on-site immersion.



ATTENTION SPAN: Standard 8 to 5 office schedule, but will often be available to work overtime.



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY: Your company is responsible for providing the necessary resources for the job. This mainly involves purchasing technologies, typically investing in a few premium-level tools.



RISK: As with any employee in any company department, there are liabilities. During the hiring process, there is less reliable information available on the competence of an individual than that of a freelancer or agency, which likely receives customer reviews. Your new employee may not have a great grip on all of the required skills mentioned during the interview process. Furthermore, their productivity and efficiency levels may be lacking, especially if they are on a salary or have insufficient motivation to meet timelines.



BUDGET: On average, employers pay around 1.25 times of what the employee's hourly rate actually is. This makes hiring an employee one of the most expensive options. The figure accounts for the external costs of taking on an employee, like the recruiting process itself— including in interviews, drug screenings, background checks, etc., training, various worker's benefits, and even physical workplace integration.

If you can find the right person, hiring an employee can be a great option for those who have a time, technology skills or strategy gap. But what if you're looking for a more short-term investment for a specific project or don't have the time to find and train a new employee? Consider whether the right decision for you is to...

OPTION 3: HIRE A FREELANCER

Freelancers are a great option if your gap is small or in only one specific area. Hiring a freelancer requires less up-front investment in hiring and training. However, many of the same downsides of an employee are present, along with a few additional, ambiguous factors created by a freelancer's greater independence and flexibility.



TRAINING/LEARNING CURVE: Freelancers are experts in one or two areas (for example design or Facebook Advertising), and will only help you in those specific areas. If a company finds itself needing a wider set of services, they may find themselves hiring many freelancers. The more specific the skills required for a particular project, the higher the chance of a freelancer's expertise being the right fit.



SCOPE OF KNOWLEDGE/EXPERTISE: You run the risk of ending up with an incomplete marketing strategy missing key elements. Freelancers are unlikely to see the “full picture” and will place greater emphasis on the area of marketing they are familiar with, which can cause a disjunct experience for an outside observer of the resulting marketing content.



TIME: Many freelancers don't work full-time and lack additional personnel to rely on, so project timelines can be stretched several times over. The timeline for a project varies depending on how many other projects a freelancer is dividing attention between. There are also limits on how much time/energy a freelancer can devote to training or gaining insight into your business; if additional time is needed to incorporate themselves into your processes, it will come at a cost.



CONTROL: Freelancers can be controlled, but they typically have their own methodology to get projects completed. Closer management is possible with additional effort and the development of clear standard operating and communication procedures. There are also legal classifications of a freelance contractor that need to be considered.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: There is a low likelihood of a recurring partnership in the future unless the freelancer decides to reposition themselves as a full-time employee for hire.



RELATIONSHIP LENGTH: Freelancers typically work with companies on project-to-project basis which can be short or longer term. This format can prove advantageous to offsetting the aforementioned “personal factor,” which may affect a your ability to drop an unfavorable employee.



COMMUNICATION: Face-to-face communication is available, though freelancers will spend less time physically in your company than an employee. Freelancers should communicate frequently with you, typically to ask questions or provide updates. The risk of information being lost via online communication is decreased somewhat if communications are done face-to-face. However, there always exists an unfortunate possibility of a freelancer taking advantage of the remote work element of their position, resulting in dishonesty about the time it takes to get tasks done. As their client, it is your personal choice to decide whether, and how much, to monitor your freelancer.



ATTENTION SPAN: Full attention is given during every paid hour spent working.



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY: As with an employee, you would most likely be responsible for providing your freelancer with necessary resources. Freelancers might have preferred technologies, but will typically work within the company’s technologies. However, they will be limited to the technology you already possess or are willing to purchase.



RISK: The main source of hassle in hiring a freelancer is the flexible nature of their position. Because the job is supplemental income for many freelancers, your company’s project is not guaranteed to be at the top of their priorities list. It is also possible for them to take on full-time employment mid-project, leaving you last on their list.



BUDGET: The average cost of a specialized freelancer is \$50/hr.

Hiring a freelancer is a excellent option if you have a solid strategy in place but a time or technology skills gap. It’s important to understand, though, that your options aren’t limited to hiring individual team members. If you think you could benefit more from a collaborative effort, you may be looking for...

OPTION 4: COMPANY PARTNERSHIP

Another often overlooked option to consider is co-marketing— that is, partnering with another company to create a symbiotic, cross-promotional campaign. Finding a company with complementary products and goals can be a challenge, but if you do it can result in a highly successful campaign for both parties. In an optimal situation a company can halve its costs and double its reach with this option.



TRAINING/LEARNING CURVE: When a partnership begins, some time is needed to learn about the other company and their strategic goals. Companies also need to work around each other's schedules or otherwise communicate digitally.



SCOPE OF KNOWLEDGE/EXPERTISE: If your business is the “smaller” of the two, the partnership is advantageous because of the potential to learn from the more experienced company. But ideally, both parties are specialized in certain areas that the other company needs help in.



TIME: This is needed not only to establish the initial relationship and set up a contract, but to adjust each company's goals toward a singularity. Co-marketing arrangements require both parties to sign on to marketing and distribution initiatives, which requires specific financial commitments.



CONTROL: In the beginning of the partnership, both companies typically need to determine how much control they are giving up. Agreement to compromise can limit one company's hand in its own success, but on the whole it is absolutely essential, with good communication and cooperation needed at every stage of the process.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: There is a potential for a symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship regardless of the companies' respective sizes. The “larger” company may provide exposure for the “smaller” one, who has the main advantage in the relationship, but the smaller company may also improve the image of the larger or bring a particular skill set.



RELATIONSHIP LENGTH: Partnerships can vary in length, as should typically be determined in the creation of the contract. Arrangements can be long-term commitments, or shorter term agreements (a one-time campaign) so that the parties can facilitate key initiatives but also have an emergency exit strategy.



COMMUNICATION: Compromise is integral! Good communication and cooperation is needed at every stage of the process. A long period of relationship building time may be needed before entering into a specific co-marketing project.



ATTENTION SPAN: Depends largely on each company's self-interests. If one company decides halfway through the campaign that the project is not particularly high-value to them, there will be no attentive commitment and their partner will be forced to take on more responsibilities.



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY: There is no guarantee that your partner company possesses the necessary technology for your campaign. Depending on who the partner is, they may have access to premium technologies that the other partner doesn't have access to.



RISK: In partnering with another company, it is crucial to ensure that both parties understand each other's goals and intentions in the partnership. Goals and strategies run a fairly high risk of ending up incompatible. Poorly planned co-branding in particular may hurt both companies if it confuses consumers, or one company if their clients associates the other brand with a lower quality.



BUDGET: Partnering has the potential to maximize value and save money IF done correctly. The exact distribution of costs may not come down to a 50-50 split, so you should settle on a specific cost breakdown before proceeding with any campaign. Partnering with another company can save both companies money by allowing them to provide equal services to each other; neither company will have to pay the other.

Engaging in a partnership is a great option if you have a time or technology skills gap, and of course if you can find the right partner. Last, but certainly not least, you can “outsource” your marketing by deciding to...

OPTION 5: HIRE AN AGENCY

For a business, the main advantages of hiring a marketing agency lie in its abundance of experience and a variety of resources, both human and technological. The potential reward of a symbiotic, long-term relationship is great. The biggest thing required of you is a willingness to trust in the competency of the agency and surrender some control to an external party.



TRAINING/LEARNING CURVE: The agency will have been established in marketing for some time, and can boast expertise in a specific area you need filled. Agencies are specialized and will typically only need training in the technologies a company is using—and this is only in the case that the technologies differ from ones they already use. You always have the option of seeking out an agency that is already familiar with your preferred tools and tech, shortening the learning curve.



SCOPE OF KNOWLEDGE/EXPERTISE: Agencies are experts in many areas and are typically made up of multiple people who effectively combine a range of very specialized talents. Members' backgrounds in a marketing agency can range from business strategy to content marketing, graphic design, web design, internet marketing, or SEO, providing a well-rounded collection of perspectives on a particular project. Thus, an agency can be hired to suit a company's very specific needs, coming in with insight into all relevant industries through hands-on knowledge of marketing trends.



TIME: Marketing plans are executed immediately, giving particular advantage to short-term or urgent projects. When you start working with an agency, completing your project in the best quality takes top priority. Even if your company itself is distracted by other, more pressing business matters or projects, the marketing agency doesn't stop.



CONTROL: While the company hiring has a say in the process and outcome, agencies typically follow their own structure and protocol. They are variable enough to potentially conform to approval process, but typically have some restrictions due to their own proprietary processes. Also, while a single hired employee cannot boost productivity for your company past a particular threshold (even with the promise of promotion), an agency can be paid to recruit more employees to dedicate themselves to your project, or bring a particular skill set.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: Because agencies depend on referral and repeat business, they are highly motivated for you to not only be satisfied with their work, but to grow. On a longer-term scale, the agency and your company can potentially cross-promote through links on their blogs and social media.



RELATIONSHIP LENGTH: The level of flexibility in the length of a professional relationship with your company varies widely. This can be short-term, long-term, or recurring as needed. Some agencies only offer monthly retainers, while other work on a project-by-project basis.



COMMUNICATION: Takes more effort than an in-house employee, though it can be simplified and sped up with access to the right technology. It should be noted also that an agency CAN assign an in-house employee if needed. Agencies are in frequent communication regarding project updates, but typically have other client projects to work on at the same time, and a good deal of the communication is conducted virtually. If/once the agency assigns you a designated account manager or primary point of contact, the communication process will be streamlined considerably.



ATTENTION SPAN: Though it will have other clients to manage, an agency will likely have the manpower to continue to research the market on your behalf.



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY: Agencies have access to premium-level technologies. Agencies are more likely to have access to higher-end technical tools, including powerful and in-depth analytics systems. They are also often able to offer you discounted rates on technologies through their partnerships.



RISK: There is definite risk in hiring and investing faith in an outside organization with no personal loyalty to your business— but agencies want you to succeed and will make sure that you do; it's simply strategic. After all, the cost of acquiring customers for the agency stands at around 5 times that of retaining them! A lasting relationship is symbiotic in that way.



BUDGET: The average cost of an agency is \$150 per hour. This is dependent on the services you are requesting from the agency and whether or not your company is requesting access to premium technology. In addition, some agencies may require minimum retainers or project fees at the start of your relationship.

Hiring an agency is a viable option whether you have a time, technology skills or strategy gap. Plus, it comes with some added benefits such as access to premium technologies and experts from multiple disciplines.

IT'S NOT ONE “GAP FILLER” FITS ALL.

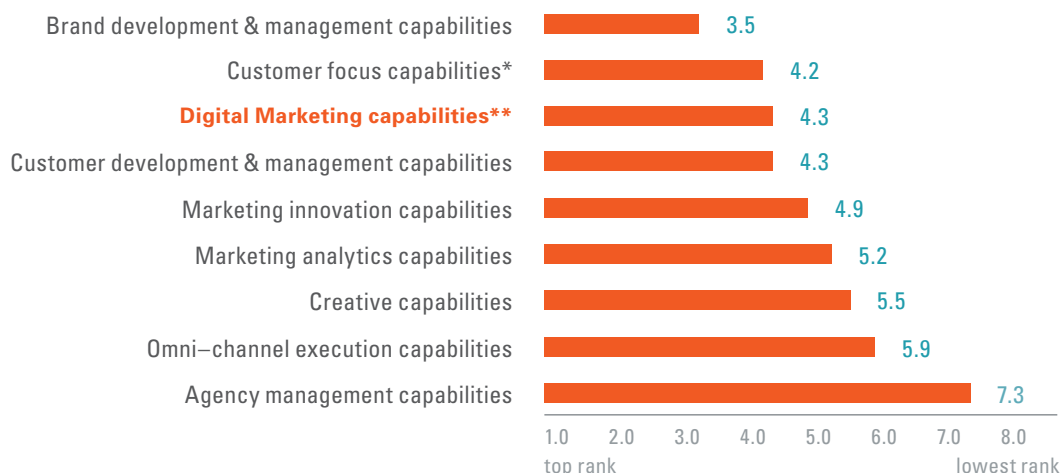
All of us are overwhelmed knowing we can't accomplish everything we need to or want to at work. I don't care how talented or seasoned you are, there is something you can always be doing better, some sort of gap you need filled.

Based on your assessment results and the information provided in this guide, we hope you now feel equipped to tackle your digital marketing gaps with the best solution for your company.



Digital marketing is ranked as one of the biggest gaps marketers have in their organization and also one of the most important marketing capabilities to an organization.

RANK ORDER OF MOST IMPORTANT MARKETING CAPABILITIES TO YOUR ORGANIZATION (1=top rank; lower score means more important)



TOP GAPS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MARKETING CAPABILITIES (1=top rank; lower score means bigger gap)

MARKETING CAPABILITY	MEAN RANK
Digital marketing capabilities**	1.7
Customer development & management capabilities	1.9
Marketing innovation capabilities	1.9
Omni-channel execution capabilities	1.9
Brand development & management capabilities	2.0
Marketing analytics capabilities	2.1
Customer focus capabilities*	2.1
Creative capabilities	2.2
Agency management capabilities	2.4

https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2016/08/The_CMO_Survey-Highlights_and_Insights-Aug-2016.pdf

NOW YOU ARE EQUIPPED WITH ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION ON HOW TO FILL YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING GAP.

THINK A MARKETING AGENCY MAY BE A GOOD FIT FOR YOU?

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