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PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

When Staffing and Outsourcing Make Sense for your Marketing Organization

In today's global workforce economy, staffing and outsourcing models are acceptable alternatives to permanent hiring when it comes to IT, HR, legal, manufacturing and, yes, even marketing, within small and large enterprises. Both organizational models offer the common goals of reduced cost and greater work efficiency, but not every vendor can deliver.

The staffing model may have been around the longest, but outsourcing continues to grow across many industries and functional disciplines. Even core inbound and outbound marketing disciplines such as Product Management, Product Marketing, PR and MARCOM are delivered by an outsourcing model.

Don't mistake the terms business process outsourcing (BPO) or the new buzz word "insourcing," as new. This is just a repackaging and repositioning to avoid some of the ugly baggage associated with outsourcing and the ties to off-shore job loss. The diagram below provides a simple illustration on how outsourcing encompasses the people (staffing model) plus the processes (business, technical, etc.) and programs (functional work material and deliverables). Often you'll hear the process and program components defined as the "best practice" value-add.

Stepping through the Process

To understand when the time is right to staff or even outsource a marketing function, follow these three easy steps.

1) Review your business objectives in real-time.

Staffing and outsourcing are business tools within your portfolio to help you achieve your business objectives now. Cambridge provides a staged approach to growing your business in real-time. At each stage you have real-time objectives that bring people needs and perhaps the infrastructure to match. Where you may lack the business processes or no longer desire to maintain a core competency, you can now extend a staffing need with a broader outsourcing approach. Many high technology companies that maintain an engineering focus consider marketing outsourcing as a natural extension to a staffing plan.

2) Assess your organizational resources and capabilities.

This is where the marketing executive gut check comes in. You have business objectives, and perhaps enough people to fulfill them. Or maybe not. But in the end, do

may come to mind first, and is often called upon to augment your existing marketing expertise for the short-term need. Outsourcing can also be considered to replace a marketing group or in many cases introduce an entire market functioning to the organization. Either model is worth considering as your business grows or, in worse cases, even declines. The task to hire, fire, train, re-train and ramp up in-house expertise can be costly and put you at a competitive disadvantage.

3) Choose a vendor-partner.

The staffing and outsourcing industry has grown in recent years, with many vendors to choose from. We suggest you start by applying the same basic due diligence used for selecting any supplier, especially a vendor-partner. Next, when considering staffing or outsourcing a marketing function, contract with a vendor as if you are hiring for an internal position. Don't contract an IT staffing vendor to provide a marketing person, and don't expect your marketing staffing vendor to provide strong HR resources. Larger vendors offer you a one-size fits all vendor-manager approach that might at the surface reduce costs, but in the end will cause greater inefficiency.

Like hiring the function, choose a marketing staffing vendor that provides both functional and industry expertise. A marketing staffing firm that might help General Motors with a competitive program is probably not nearly as knowledgeable on the enterprise computing or mobile networking competitive landscape as a firm that works primarily in the technology industry.

Your decision doesn't have to be final.

If a staffing or outsourcing vendor is inflexible, then a big part of the value proposition goes away. You like to hire professionals within your organization because it gives you both choice and control over your resources. Marketing is considered to be the "last bastion of creativity" within the organization, and change should be considered a vital part of the process. Vendor-partners should offer you the flexibility to change your staffing needs on the fly. This might even mean bringing those functions back in-house when business objectives warrant it and marketing becomes your competitive advantage.

Make Staffing Work for You

Are you responsible for helping to set direction for your company's people and program resources? Interested in finding out more about Cambridge's staffing abilities?

Please call 800-436-7185 and reference this article. We'd be pleased to review samples of our success and discuss ways to put Cambridge staffing and outsourcing to work for you.