

Top 10 List:

How to Hire a Research or Messaging Agency

If you are involved in **developing messaging** or delivering **customer insight research**, at some point you will be responsible for hiring an agency to assist. No matter how many times you may have done this, choosing an agency is not an easy task. The stakes are high and it's crucial to make the right decision.

We've been there. Here are our 10 recommendations to walk you toward the right choice.

🔖 Check out our blog posts around messaging and customer insights research [here](#).

#10

Be Prepared

If choosing an agency is your job, be sure to stay informed. Do your homework first. Keep a running list of firms, agencies, etc. whose work impresses you. Look at messaging campaigns, big and small, **that make you feel inspired**. Seek out content that's **authentic, remarkable and engaging**. You'll know it when you see it.

#9

Be Honest

A new agency relationship requires a commitment from your internal team. **How much bandwidth can you commit?** If you're looking for an agency to drive YOU, not the other way around, you need to be very upfront about this in the selection process.

#8

Get Specific

There are a lot of great agencies out there, but each has a different focus. Think about what types of messages you're testing: Media? (streaming, film, radio) High-stakes messages? (Political or advocacy messaging, CEO keynotes and the like), Consumer or Direct response messaging? (from advertising to infomercials). Each firm has expertise. **Knowing what you need is how you find the right fit.**

#7

Size Does Matter

Make sure that the **agency's size matches your expectations** and needs. Personally, I'm less comfortable working with BIG agencies because I don't like to be one of their smaller clients. Speaking from experience- It's too easy to be ignored...or be relegated to their B-Team.

#6

Go With Experience

In a perfect world, you find that agency that becomes a true partner. That will only happen if you start in the right direction. I work for a small-ish company that works in B2B services space. If an agency I'm considering hasn't done b2b services work, there's too much ramp-up time to make the relationship worthwhile. Make sure the agency you choose has **related experience in your field**. You'll be sorry if you don't. This comes down to asking the right questions.

#5

Secure Top Talent

An agency might woo you with the bigwigs, but who will really be managing your account? Who will be the strategic mind on the project? You need to **meet with all of the stakeholders** upfront and know what you're getting. Again: do your homework. Network on LinkedIn and find clients of theirs you can connect with. This way you can get a first-hand account of their client management.

#4

Know Your Status

Does the agency have one big client that keeps them afloat? If so, your project could very well be at the mercy of someone else's schedule. Ask upfront **who their big clients are**, what % of their business they represent, and how much demand they are currently putting on the agency.

#3

Know Your Budget

Let's face it: **money is a major factor**. Keep in mind that most agencies are eager to get a new client and prove themselves. If they're cutting you a deal for the promise of future business, you need to be prepared to budget more for the next job.

#2

Trust Your Gut

Do you like them as people? Do they have a sparkle in their eyes that lets you know "Hey! This is gonna be fun!" **It's not all about the work**; you're choosing a group of humans you'll need to spend a lot of time with. Make sure they're people you can get along with.

#1

Pull The Trigger

Your final decision will still likely involve a leap of faith. But fear not, if you follow the steps above, you'll likely end up with **an agency partner you can work with**.