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INTEGRATED MARKETING AGENCIES



fabcom
integrated strategic marketing

INTEGRATED MARKETING AGENCIES: MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Why hire an integrated marketing agency over a group of independent suppliers? What are the benefits and advantages? How do the two types compare? Most importantly, how does the end result differ?

The key difference is to be found within the word "integration," which means "to make into a whole by bringing all parts together." An **integrated marketing agency** brings a unified approach to the client—the full sum of its parts. Acting in concert, much like an orchestra, it harnesses a diverse wealth of interconnected resources, knowledge, technology and practices to deliver a seamless marketing and communications experience.

Whereas an ad hoc group of independent providers is at risk of struggling in a discordant fashion, potentially deficient in one or more critical disciplines, an integrated firm, experienced in marshalling the sum of its parts, achieves harmony of the whole. As a cohesive team, it is more capable of taking a comprehensive, strategic approach to marketing and better positioned to help a client achieve its long-term goals, objectives and aspirational vision.

A Consistent Approach Drives Greater Value

An **integrated marketing agency** has already established core processes that have proven successful through its historical track record of working with a diverse portfolio of clients. These repeatable processes offer a level of consistency that surpasses that of even a high-quality assemblage of independent providers.

The more consistent the processes and approaches to marketing a client's brand, the more efficiencies are realized: saving time and money, reducing redundancies, mitigating the potential for mistakes and avoiding unnecessary hassles and stumbling blocks.

For example, a firm can leverage its experience in leveraging complex marketing channels that have already been established over a long time horizon. It can apply end-to-end processes and oversight that have already been developed through trial and experience. It has the practical knowledge of applying the ideal marketing mix for each type of client, whether for PR or social media, content development or messaging, media buys or online activities, **event marketing** or **video production**.

A great advertising and marketing agency also offers one of the most powerful assets: its ongoing body of collective knowledge. How to apply the right marketing mix. What options will work. How to pick the right strategy. How to avoid mistakes. What actually works for each type of client.

Once in place, these types of proven methods carry a continuity from client to client and project to project. The time-tested practices and processes are a mainstay of an integrated marketing agency.

In contrast, when one uses a selection of ad hoc providers, these practices either do not exist or must be created anew, which takes time and experimentation, or function in uncertain terms, since the foundation has not been proven.

With an integrated marketing agency, the foundation, the philosophical framework, the core approach has already been developed, tested and adjusted to reach its optimum level in delivering results. A consistent approach ultimately drives more value for clients, who benefit from the firm's historical track record of experience and expertise in delivering creative marketing concepts and solutions.

Efficiencies of Scope and Scale

Scope and scale are key elements to providing value-oriented, efficient marketing communication services. In essence, a marketing and advertising agency's collective advantages enable it to become larger than itself, a creative network that is much more than just the sum of its parts.

Efficiencies and savings can be realized on a larger, practical dimension than by using a smaller set of independent practitioners. For example, the cost of advanced technology and resources can be amortized over many more client accounts—while all business systems, software and personnel are optimized for the single mission of marketing. This is in contrast to independent, smaller companies who must shoulder a heavier cost burden for their resources, and pass along those expenses to their clients.

With a larger organizational framework, the integrated marketing agency can devote specific resources solely to the purpose of end-to-end marketing. This ensures that a singular focus is continually maintained on the client's goals and vision, unlike smaller firms that must juggle billing, administrative and operational functions among a smaller pool of resources to support the core work products.

For example, independent small company operators may spend four to five hours per day just in meetings and preparation for meetings, in order to manage, review and approve marketing strategies, tactics, materials and deadlines and provide customer service. What about the time needed to administer the marketing programs? When a small company is operated by the creative talent, the players have a hard time managing the deliverables and details required to ensure the quality and efficiencies of integrated marketing campaigns.

Integrated advertising and marketing agencies have dedicated staff that is paid to focus on each and every area of the development and execution processes.

Strategic Perspective

Strategy first. That's the FabCom approach. A great, integrated agency offers a more comprehensive perspective and the strategic knowledge to meet the full gamut of the client's needs—for both short-term goals and long-term goals. In contrast, smaller firms may be more concerned with providing reactive, short-sighted, or limited tactical solutions without the context of a sound, strategic framework. A communication plan is not a strategy; it is merely a tactical approach.

The new style of advertising and marketing strategy takes into account the client's vision, company strategy, business plan, goals, brand, history, success factors, financial metrics, sales, resources and a bevy of other components. With an initial comprehensive marketing strategy serving as a guide, every project can be implemented with maximum efficiency and ROI, from day one. Like pillars supporting the overall structure, all activities are undertaken within the overarching context of the strategic framework.

Otherwise, launching into execution of a cluster of one-off tactics, as smaller firms tend to do, will only address temporary marketing needs. An integrated advertising and marketing agency will align the marketing strategy closely with a company's business strategy, so the two work in perfect harmony to achieve the client's vision. Not only is this approach more accurate in supporting the client's goals, but it also saves time, energy and money.

A Seasoned Team

A team of professionals who continually work together in close connected for an integrated marketing firm develop synergies lacking in a smaller, externally assembled, ad hock team. They leverage each other's professional strengths to deliver diverse perspectives and creative insights for clients. Again, this is another example of how the sum of an integrated agency is truly more than its individual parts.

The collective, shared knowledge of a seasoned team working in unison helps ensure a project is delivered seamlessly and timelines are met. In comparison, when an independent group is assembled in various disciplines that are relevant to a project, what is missing is the camaraderie, synchronicity and teamwork of a more established firm. Even if individual contributors are each strong in their fields, they lack the interconnectedness and integration of minds and ideas that can push a marketing program to reach new heights.

Each function in an integrated marketing team works together, in a symbiotic manner. For example, a great Art Director needs a great Creative Director. A great Creative Director needs a great Strategist. They all need a great Copywriter. And nothing would ever get completed without a Production Manager to manage all the details. Each member of a cross-capabilities team of advertising professionals needs the other to produce excellent work because the job is an integrated medley of disciplines that must be dovetailed with precision.

The interdependence of the team is like that of instruments in an orchestra—each sound blends together with the others to produce flawless music. True creative minds want and need to be in that setting. The most creative of our industry usually will not sacrifice creativity and effectiveness for working as a small group where they know their capability to dream and execute is limited by their team and or the teams of others.

The top creative specialists—artists, writers and now creative programmers—would rather work for integrated marketing and advertising agencies. They get a richer variety of assignments and, for the most part, see more opportunity for advancement. That's why integrated marketing agencies are superior "idea factories" when compared to in-house departments or freelance groups.

Keeping abreast of Change

Times have changed. Just a few years ago, one could build an entire marketing plan around one or two media choices of approximately four or five then available and have at least some assurance of reaching the target audience. A few TV spots, a couple of ads, a direct mailer or two and—presto! You've got the market covered.

It's not that easy anymore. Today, not only are broadcast and print media much more fragmented and complex to analyze and buy, but it seems like the next great "new media" advertising vehicle is being launched on a monthly basis. Brands used to have only a handful of decisions to make about media. Now, we are looking at 50 or more media channels, some with hundreds of sub-decisions in order to reach your target audiences in the most meaningful and efficient way.

Marketing, in general, is shifting rapidly, driven by new technologies. Integrated marketing and advertising agencies deliver a down line of task-specific technology, as well as the strategic and creative expertise to keep pace with the latest changes. Plus, a firm as a whole retains its body of knowledge about the marketplace, carries that expertise forward, and is more apt and flexible to navigate future challenges and novel conditions as they arise.

Balance of Talent

When working with small firms or individual contributors, you tend to be pulled in many different directions—a situation that is fundamentally at odds with an orchestrated, holistic approach to a marketing campaign.

Naturally, each team or freelancer will pull you in a way most akin to their area of expertise, and will want to strengthen their contribution and portion of the dedicated budget. For example, a web design company may want you to spend most of your budget on website construction. A media person will want you to commit the budget to a media buy. And video—watch out; a video may be produced that is entirely disconnected to the messaging context of your website and keywords.

This is a mayhem of professionals. On the other hand, connection brings coherence. An integrated agency will ensure a balance of resources for the marketing campaign, without internal divisions, territorial lines or lobbying from each specialty. You deal with one agency that marshals all of its resources to focus comprehensively on your marketing strategy, executes with more efficient processes, and creates consistency that drives further value for your ROI.

Reaching The Right Audience

Just recently, it was enough to simply differentiate your marketing communications based on the target audiences' demographics. Familiar categories such as "seniors" and "boomers" served marketers well in terms of knowing the when, what, how and why of communicating persuasively with each broad segment. But just as the media market has become more complex and difficult to keep up with, so has the segmentation of target audiences.

Now, as our world becomes more globalized and granular, there are specialized and splintering audience segments, in addition to established and emerging multicultural target groups and languages.

A superior, integrated marketing agency will know the audience before even drafting a single communication. As part of the strategic process, they will assess and understand how to speak to a particular customer segment and how that audience will respond. It's not mind reading—just good marketing. An integrated marketing firm will have the technological tools to analyze and find that perfect recipe of demographics for each client, based on psychographics, behavioral and environmental understanding of the audience. This will enable your messages to be heard.

All of these areas of understanding are deep with nuances that require a seasoned team of **marketing professionals** to achieve success. The only way to produce a campaign with the kind of professional certainty provided by an integrated marketing agency is to have detailed expertise in the research, strategy, creative and implementation phases. A freelancer or internal employee is simply too busy meeting the needs of the company sales process. Unfortunately, the cost of this expertise exclusion can be devastating to the ROI of marketing initiatives.

Time Flies

Time flies when you are working with an integrated marketing agency that can manage the overall planning, marketing and implementation process. In contrast to an independent provider, who may require more hours of access to the client simply to plan the fundamentals of a campaign, an integrated advertising and marketing firm will demand less of the client's time.

At FabCom, we understand that clients are busy running their company. That's why a superior firm will ask the client to be available only for regularly-scheduled marketing meetings to approve decisions, materials or provide direction and identify needs to be met the following week.

With a well-coordinated and integrated marketing team, projects can be completed much faster than by a smaller firm. In fact, clients are often very surprised when a project that might have taken their independent small group a month or more to complete is taken from concept to final delivery in just a few days by an integrated marketing agency of cross-disciplined professionals.

The End Result

For these many reasons, the integrated marketing firm will be more successful at producing effective, high- quality and sustainable marketing campaign results than a small, independent provider. Here is how the competition stacks up between the two, in terms of the end result. An **integrated advertising and marketing agency** provides:

- A more comprehensive strategic approach
- Faster, more efficient, project completion rates
- Consistent processes honed over time
- Scope and scale to leverage existing resources
- A seasoned, synergistic team of creative professionals
- Collective body of knowledge gathered over time
- Economic advantages of cost containment
- Coherent "one-stop-shop" approach for clients
- Scientific research methods to analyze target audiences

There's a lot to be said for being more than the sum of your parts. The parts make up the whole, yet it's the integration of the parts within the whole that create an entirely new dimension of efficiencies and creative capabilities that smaller firms simply cannot provide. That's the power of integration. It's the intangible sum of knowledge, experience, process, and expertise that integrated marketing agencies like FabCom deliver to their clients that makes the difference between a client simply executing a tactical marketing campaign—or truly achieving their vision.

About the Author

Brian Fabiano is the CEO and founder of FabCom, a full-service strategic integrated marketing and advertising agency with offices in Scottsdale/Phoenix, Los Angeles, Seattle and O'ahu. He is a nationally recognized innovator, advertising and marketing industry leader, author and speaker, whose insights in dynamic **cross-channel cross-media messaging, business intelligence, strategic planning, positioning, brand mapping, and segmentation/database marketing** are sought by corporations and trade associations alike.

He is now working on his second book on the convergence of technology and marketing strategy, after the resounding success of his first book, *Neuromarketology: How to Develop, Implement and Manage Dynamic, Real-Time, Cross-Channel Marketing Campaigns that Generate Astonishing ROI*. This is the second book in the planned trilogy and will delve deeply into the connection between Neuromarketology™ and the contemporary convergence of artificial intelligence, dynamic messaging, and Distributed Customer Experiences™, driven by Blockchain technology.

FabCom is a full-service strategic marketing, PR, and advertising firm

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*Amortized for media billings as calculated in the Phoenix Business Journal Book of Lists.

