10 Critical Tips For Choosing Your Digital Marketing Training Provider

Provided by: MarketMotive.com

We've talked to hundreds of marketers and marketing team managers,

and they've shared the 10 critical features you need to consider in choosing a digital marketing training partner.

Sure, we hope you'll choose us to provide your team's training. But more importantly, we believe that properly trained marketing teams provide better marketing results for their clients, and that's good for the whole industry. So if we can help you find the very best solution to your training needs and it's not us, we're okay with that.

At the end of this overview, we've provided a handy spreadsheet for comparing your potential providers.

Is education the provider's core competency?

There are many small training programs available that are secondary offerings from agencies and tool providers. If education isn't their primary focus, then training courses can be a temporary campaign to generate leads for services and tools; and they may not be focused on maintaining and updating the courses. Education providers put all their resources into building and maintaining quality training courses, and give you more strategic direction that is tool agnostic.

- *Use a secondary provider if: You'd like your team to be guided to use a particular tool, to further engage an agency for solutions, or supplement with in-person training.*
- *If you want more for your team: Look for a provider whose sole focus is designing professional training curricula, and isn't also distracted by selling agency services, coordinating live events, or developing tools.*

Is it just a collection of tips and tricks, or is it a course?

Some providers are simply aggregators: they gather a handy collection of training materials from a variety of other sources rather than delivering structured courses. Gathering a group of videos from different content creators is convenient, and many of the tips and tricks may be current and valuable. However these collections are not necessarily thorough and the aggregator isn't in control of the consistency, quality, or currency of the lessons.

- *Use an aggregator if: You need a collection of assorted videos, and don't have time to search YouTube yourself.*
- *If you want more for your team: Look for a provider who offers thorough, comprehensive courses.*

Are the courses designed by education professionals to be outcome based?

Many courses are simply an organized collection of assets – videos, forms, and white papers; this is "input based" education. Structured "outcome based" training curricula are designed by professional educators to build on knowledge through the course, and monitor and test the learner's understanding and retention of materials.

- *Use unstructured materials if:* *You're comfortable viewing assorted materials ad-hoc, improvising your learning experience as you go, and aren't concerned with specific measurable learning goals.*
- *If you want more for your team:* *Look for training programs designed by education professionals that are organized to build on your knowledge and skills in an orderly structure, and that focus on empowering the learner with actionable strategies and skills.*

Does training include quizzes and tests to confirm student success?

It's important to find a provider who is not only committed to delivering structured courses, but who is committed to student success by measuring performance through content-derived quizzes and testing. Empirically testing performance means that student progress and understanding is verified, and that you can be assured that you're getting a return on your training investment.

- *Choose training with no progress checks if:* *You're not concerned with monitoring meaningful progress during the course, or with measuring the overall success of the training.*
- *If you want more for your team:* *Look for courses that test comprehension with progress quizzes, and provide a final test to ensure that new knowledge and skills are retained and understood.*

Does the provider cover all essential disciplines and skill levels?

There are some great training courses that are focused on a single discipline like SEO or Social Media. But digital marketing is now by necessity a multi-hyphenate industry. Today's marketers must have a firm grasp on how SEO works with content and conversion, how social media and mobile enhance one another, and how analytics can measure and improve the success of them all. A provider who can deliver a comprehensive solution embracing all disciplines, at a variety of skill levels to accommodate specialists, generalists, and new hires, may be critical to your success.

- *Use a limited focus provider if:* *You're certain you only need training in a single discipline and won't require a consistent reliable source of training for all aspects of digital marketing, or are comfortable managing relationships with multiple single-discipline providers to meet your needs.*
- *If you want more for your team:* *Seek a single provider who embraces a cross-discipline approach to digital marketing, and offers a comprehensive, integrated catalog of training resources. Also confirm that courses are relevant to all skill levels, to accommodate your entire team's training needs, from team leaders to on-boarding.*

Are the teachers working professionally in the field?

The industry is in constant flux: Google is always updating algorithms, Facebook is changing their features, and new social platforms are gaining influence. That's why instructors should be working actively in the field as consultants or marketers. Being in the trenches means instructors understand the current state of the marketing world, and can adjust their materials accordingly. Otherwise, they may just be repurposing their own book learning, which may not reflect trends in the industry.

- *Use scholastic resources if: You're comfortable with instructors who are non-professionals, and whose experience is derived by studying the activities of others.*
- *If you want more for your team: Look for instructors who are industry recognized working professionals, keynote speakers, and authors who are actively involved in the business of digital marketing for themselves or clients.*

Is the material up-to-date?

It's easy for training lessons to get out of date quickly, and it's expensive and difficult to continually update curricula with new materials: especially when training is not the core competency of the provider. It's important that the lessons are current and applicable to the latest industry trends.

- *Use historical materials if: You're comfortable with dated lessons that may still provide some relevant evergreen concepts, and are otherwise prepared to research more to learn how things work today.*
- *If you want more for your team: Look for courses that are updated at least quarterly, if not monthly or weekly, to reflect the very latest tactics and strategies relevant to the current state of digital marketing. Focus on vendors who maintain staff dedicated to curriculum development, and incentivize their instructors to keep courses up-to-date.*

Does the provider offer a manager's dashboard to track team progress?

If you're looking for training for your whole team, you'll want tools that at the very least let you track your marketers' progress through the training. Better yet, a more robust dashboard will let you customize their training curricula and assign priorities. If you can't monitor your team's progress, there's no incentive to study and no accountability for advancement, making it difficult to ensure that you're getting the most from your training initiative.

- *Choose against management tools if: You merely need access to materials, and aren't concerned with qualifying the value of training through oversight and accountability.*
- *If you want more for your team: Look for a provider who provides a manager's dashboard to help you and your team get the most out of your training investment.*

Are the courses in use by respected institutions?

Look at who else is using the vendor. Are the courses embraced by higher education institutions and top tier corporations? A community of respected users can indicate that the provider has already been vetted by demanding clients, and successfully implemented for groups like yours. In particular, courses embraced by recognized educators likely adhere to the rigorous demands of curriculum development and delivery.

- *Use unvetted materials if: Your methods of vendor qualification are distinctly different from those of any other organization, and the endorsement of notable users will have no impact on the allocation of resources for training.*
- *If you want more for your team: Look for a provider who is already in use by companies, organizations, or educators whose opinions and success you respect.*

Can the courses be white labeled or cobranded?

If you're a higher learning institution or professional organization providing training to your end users, flexibility of implementation is crucial.

- *Use a cobranded model if: You don't have your own LMS, or need a simpler implementation path.*
- *If you want to white label courses: Look for a provider who can stream the courses into your LMS. You'll maintain your own brand and serve your students on your platform, while the vendor maintains the content.*

Does the training result in a respected certification?

First, not everyone needs or aspires to earning a certification – what's important is the quality of education they gain. And virtually every training course available offers some sort of self-defined Certificate of Completion, so that alone is no meter of value. But a certification can provide simple proof to colleagues and customers that you've completed a training program that keeps your skills relevant and valuable.

So assuming that a certification is offered: do the course and its certification (if any) carry any weight in the industry? Do other marketers respect the quality of the training? Is it recognized by an independent third party? Look for a provider whose courses and certifications are embraced by professional marketing organizations.

- *Ignore certification if: You're unconcerned with providing verification that you or your team have completed valuable training that keeps you relevant in the industry, or with finding training that will be considered valuable by potential clients and partners in the industry.*
- *If you want more for your team: Choose a provider whose training (and its certification) is considered an asset by potential colleagues and customers, and is recognized by respected professional marketing organizations like the Online Marketing Certified Professionals Organization (OMCP®) or the Direct Marketing Association (DMA).*

MARKETING TRAINING PROVIDERS – FEATURE COMPARISON MATRIX				
Feature	Market Motive	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4
Is education the provider's core competency?	✓			
Is it an organized and structured course?	✓			
Are the courses designed to be outcome based?	✓			
Do courses include progress quizzes and final tests for completion?	✓			
Does the provider cover all essential disciplines and skill levels?	✓			
Are the teachers working professionally in the field?	✓			
Is the material updated at least quarterly, if not weekly or daily?	✓			
Does the provider offer a manager's dashboard?	✓			
Are the courses in use by respected institutions?	✓			
Can the courses be white labeled in my LMS?	✓			
Can the courses be cobranded on the publisher's platform?	✓			
Is any resulting certification recognized by OMCP® or another 3rd party?	✓			
Add more comparison points below				