

THE AGENCY AUDIT

Is Your Marketing Agency Wasting Your Money?

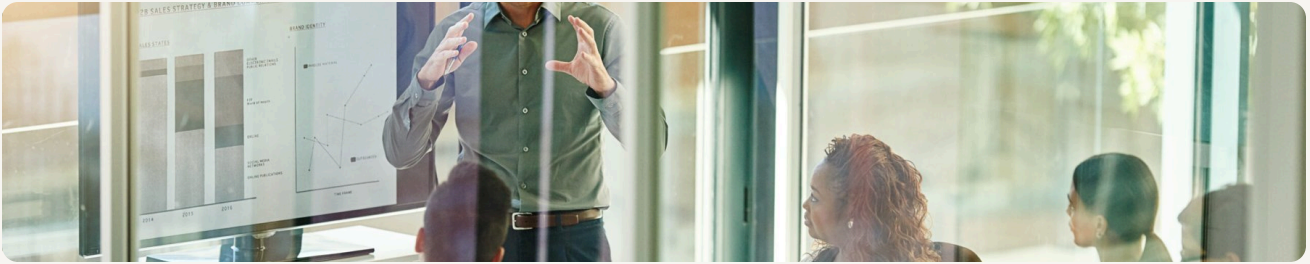
12 questions to ask before you renew, a 10-minute red flag check, and exactly what to do if the answers are bad.

Written by an agency owner. Which is exactly why you should read it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Agencies think you leave over budget. You leave over results.

When clients and agencies were asked why agency relationships end, they told two completely different stories. That gap is where your money goes.



61%

of clients who ended an agency relationship said the reason was the value they were getting. A year earlier it was 36%.

Setup, 2025 Marketing Relationship Survey (about 100 clients and agencies)

75%

of agencies believe clients leave because of budget cuts.

Same survey

44%

of clients said their agency didn't understand their business.

Same survey

What it means for you: a lot of agencies don't know they're failing you. They see the invoice getting paid and assume it's working. The 12 questions in this guide give you a way to find out for sure, in plain language, without needing to be a marketer.

QUESTIONS 1 TO 4

Do you actually own your marketing?

Start here. If you can't answer these four, nothing else matters yet.

QUESTION 1

Is everything in your name?

Your website domain, website hosting, Google Business Profile, Google Analytics, ad accounts and social pages.

- **Good answer:** "Yes, you're the owner. We're added as users."
- **Bad answer:** "We set it all up under our account to keep it simple."

QUESTION 2

Can you log in to each one today, without asking them?

Owning it on paper means nothing if you can't get in.

- Try it this week. Make a list of every login that fails or needs the agency's help.

QUESTION 3

If you left tomorrow, what would you walk away with?

Read the contract. Look for who owns the website, the content, the photos and the ad history.

- Watch for "proprietary platforms" you can't take with you. Your website should never be held hostage.

QUESTION 4

Who does the work, and have you met them?

You met the salesperson. Do you know who writes your content, runs your ads and answers your email?

Not sure where you stand online?

Take the free 2-minute visibility score. 10 questions, instant result.

[Get my free score](#)

QUESTIONS 5 TO 8

Can they prove it's working?

Activity is not results. A busy agency and a profitable one look very different in a monthly report.

QUESTION 5

How many leads did their work bring you last month, and from where?

Calls, form fills, booked consults. Broken out by source: Google, Maps, ads, social, email.

- **Bad answer:** "It's hard to track that." It isn't. Call tracking and form tracking are standard tools.

QUESTION 6

Does your report show business numbers or vanity numbers?

Vanity: impressions, reach, "engagement," followers. Business: calls, booked appointments, new clients, cost per new client.

- If the report never mentions a phone call or a new client, it's measuring the wrong thing.

QUESTION 7

Was there a written goal, with a number and a date?

"Grow your brand" is not a goal. "20 booked consults a month by June" is.

- No goal means there's nothing to measure them against, which is convenient for them.

QUESTION 8

What did they change last month because of the numbers?

A good agency tests, learns and adjusts. If the plan hasn't changed in six months, nobody is steering.

QUESTIONS 9 TO 12

Are they straight with you?

These four are about money and honesty. They tell you whether the agency is working for you or for itself.

QUESTION 9

Do you know where every ad dollar goes?

You should see the ad spend and the agency's fee as two separate numbers, and be able to see the spend inside the ad account yourself.

QUESTION 10

Are you locked in with no way out?

Long contracts with no performance clause protect the agency, not you.

- Fair: a short starting term, then month to month, with a clear notice period.

QUESTION 11

When something broke, did they tell you first?

Websites go down. Ads get rejected. Tracking breaks. Did you hear it from them, or find out yourself?

QUESTION 12

Have they ever told you NOT to spend money?

An agency that only ever recommends more services is selling. One that says "don't do that, it won't pay off" is advising.

SCORE YOUR AGENCY

Count your clear yeses

Give one point for every question where the answer is a clear, confident yes. "Sort of" and "I think so" count as zero.

Score	Verdict	What to do
10 to 12	Keep them	You have a good partner. Tell them. Share your goals for next year and let them plan against real numbers.
7 to 9	Have the talk	Fixable. Send them the questions you scored zero on and ask for answers in writing within two weeks. Use the script on page 8.
0 to 6	Plan your exit	Secure your logins first (page 7), then give notice. Don't sign a renewal while you figure it out.

The two that matter most

If you scored zero on question 1 (you own everything) or question 5 (they can show you leads), treat it as a red flag no matter what your total is. Those two protect your business and your money.

Want a second opinion?

Book a free 30-minute call. I'll run these 12 questions on your current setup with you, live. If your agency is doing a good job, I'll tell you to keep them.

[Book my free call](#)

THE 10-MINUTE RED FLAG CHECK

Check these yourself, today

No marketing knowledge needed. Each one takes a couple of minutes.

- ☐ **Your domain.** Log in to where your web address is registered. If you can't, or the account belongs to the agency, flag it.
- ☐ **Your Google Business Profile.** Go to business.google.com. You should be listed as the Owner, not just a Manager.
- ☐ **Your analytics.** In Google Analytics, check Admin, then Account access. Your own email should have Administrator access.
- ☐ **Your ad accounts.** Log in to Google Ads and Meta. You should see the spend yourself, in your own account.
- ☐ **Last three reports.** Line them up. Do they measure the same things each month, or do the numbers change to whatever looks good?
- ☐ **Any promise of "#1 on Google."** Google's own guidance says: "No one can guarantee a #1 ranking on Google." Anyone who promised it was selling, not advising.

Before you say anything to your agency

Get admin access to every item on this list first. It's your right, it's normal to ask for, and it protects you whatever you decide next.

The conversation

Copy this, fill in the blanks, and send it by email so you have it in writing:

"Hi [name], I'm reviewing all of our vendors before we plan next year. Can you send me, in writing: (1) a list of every account you manage for us and who owns each one, (2) how many leads your work produced each month for the last 6 months, and where they came from, and (3) the goal you're working toward and how we're tracking against it. I'd like this by [date]. Thanks."

A good agency will be glad you asked. A struggling one will get vague. Either way, you'll know.

If you decide to leave

#	Do this, in this order
1	Get owner or admin access to the domain, website, Google profile, analytics and ad accounts.
2	Download your reports, ad history, content, photos and any logins they created.
3	Give written notice as your contract requires. Stay polite. You may need their help with a handover.
4	After the handover, remove their access and change the shared passwords.
5	Don't let your ads or your website go dark in between. Line up the next team first.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want an honest second opinion?

Book a free 30-minute call. I'll look at what your agency is doing, run the 12 questions with you live, and show you where your money is working and where it isn't.

If they're doing a good job, I'll tell you to keep them. If they're not, you'll leave the call with a custom plan for what to do next.

You keep the plan whether we work together or not.

[Book my free second opinion](#)

[Get my free score](#)



Max Bergstrom, Founder
Level Next Consulting & Marketing, San Diego
(651) 253-6960
levelnextconsulting.io



SCAN FOR YOUR
FREE SCORE

Sources: Setup, "The 2025 Marketing Relationship Survey Results," setup.us/blog/2025-marketing-relationship-survey-results (about 100 respondents, 57% clients, 43% agencies) · Google Search Central, "Do you need an SEO?," developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/do-i-need-seo