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Imagine this.

You are a marketing operations professional who, along with your colleagues, manages your marketing technology systems' day-to-day operations. Your responsibilities run from consulting with internal customers on new projects to building out campaigns, measuring performance, and scheduling campaign review meetings.

While your product marketing and creative teams develop the ideas, you make them real with email campaigns, landing pages, lead scoring models, and CRM integrations- to mention just a few things you do every day.

While your colleagues are at the helm, steering your company down the correct course, you're ensuring the marketing engine runs at peak performance and delivering leads to sales.

By the end of the day, you're tired, overworked, and definitely in need of another espresso shot. Are you and your marketing operations teammates tapped out, trying to keep up with increasing demand? Are you spending too much time on tactical execution and not enough on defining your marketing operations strategy? How do you achieve your marketing goals while not overworking yourself or overburdening your team?

Your first instinct might be to discuss options for hiring another marketing operations expert like yourself. You've been down this path before. Even in the best of times, it takes time to develop a job description, get approval to hire, recruit, interview, extend offers, and onboard a new employee.

Or you could consider engaging a marketing agency that specializes in [Eloqua and Marketing operations](#). In this article, we'll explore a list of questions you should consider when choosing an Eloqua marketing agency for either the short- or the long-term.

Checklist for picking an Eloqua marketing agency

To borrow an axiom, make your requirements list and check it twice. Follow along with this checklist when reviewing potential Eloqua marketing agencies to make sure they hit all the marks. But remember, your company is unique, and what might work for others may not satisfy your needs. So take the time to consider your requirements carefully.

Skills Inventory and Requirements

Determining where you have gaps with your current resources is probably the most critical step in hiring an Eloqua agency. There are two distinct steps in this process:

I. Determining the skills you need and then documenting why you need them

II. Match the required skills to agencies with expertise in those areas

Start with a list of general needs for your team. It's essential to articulate the "why" column fully. No one has unlimited resources, so having the "why" clearly identified will help drive decision-making. Below is an example of a skills needs analysis.

Skills Areas

Skill Area	Description	Level Required	Why?
Strategic Guidance	Customer Journey Mapping, Buyer Personas, MA Plans, Goal alignment, Funnel Definition, MUCH more.	None - we've got this covered	Have primary and multiple backup resources
Eloqua -Technical Capabilities	Adv Lead Scoring, Nurturing, Admin, Custom Objects, Contact Level Security, Basic Integrations	Low - not likely to need help	Primary and backup resource
Project Management	Wrangle team members, budgets, metrics, reporting.	Medium—need all the time	One resource only
Email Creation			
Email Design	The ability to layout appealing emails, landing pages and create beautiful graphics for them.	High—a big gap that must fill	UX designer promoted, no current expertise

Responsive Design	Creation of Emails/Landing pages that visually lays out as designed for Laptops, Phones, Pads, all at once.	None - we've got this covered	Primary and backup resource
Campaign Execution	Someone to create campaigns does import	Low - not likely to need help	Primary and backup resource
Special Skills			
Software Development	Custom development using APIs, Javascript, creating Cloud Apps, developing advanced Integrations	Medium—need all the time	One resource, no backup
Legal and Privacy Compliance	Knowing how to implement GDPR, CASL, CCPA, + other pertinent laws	High—a big gap that must fill	No current expertise

Remember, nobody is equally good at everything. Which is also true of all Eloqua agencies. The more an agency is aligned with your platform and specializes in the skills you need, the better off you'll be.

Skill Definitions

But what do each of the above-listed skills mean, broken out at a deeper level? Let's go through them one by one!

Strategic Guidance:

Having a well-defined [campaign strategy](#) and mapping it to your operational objectives is imperative. You may find yourself needing help building a cohesive strategy or taking your current approach and using it to guide your marketing technology purchases and implementation.



Interfacing with the CMO and aligning marketing operations with your marketing strategy requires a unique skill set. Choose a marketing agency with competencies that range from strategic consulting at an executive level down to tactical integration to connect your systems and data to achieve your strategic goals.



Examples of the areas and projects a Strategic Specialist would lead.

Eloqua Technical Capabilities

Deep Eloqua abilities are a must as this software is the backbone of your marketing automation. Your preferred marketing agency must be able to use Eloqua effectively to execute your marketing campaigns and deliver marketing-qualified leads to sales.

Project management

Almost everyone can manage a project. But, if many projects are going on at once or if the project has complex requirements, putting someone with exceptional Project Management (PM) skills leading the work can dramatically improve on-time performance.

PM is a unique skill best handled by someone who is first very personable, backed by a strong PM skillset. It requires excellent leadership, communication, negotiating, and critical thinking abilities.

Email Design

Design is a deep-rooted aspect of every marketing campaign. If your emails or graphics look sloppy, have not aged well, or are low-quality, it reflects poorly on your company and makes for a less-effective campaign.

If you are already partnered with a digital agency or have internal resources that can design emails, graphics, and landing pages for you, that is fantastic. But if not, you should look for this skill in your next marketing agency.

Responsive Design

It's not uncommon for someone to scan an email on a mobile device and then make a note to review later on their desktop or laptop. If an email arrives on mobile that is difficult to read, you're just a simple swipe away from dropping into the trash. Responsive design ensures your message is easily read on any device.

Campaign Execution

Consistently and reliably cranking out large numbers of campaigns is a skill in and of itself. If getting quantities of work out the door is a critical part of your need, specifically put this proven ability on your checklist. Verify that each of your agency options does this for other companies routinely. You don't want to be the one they learn on!

Software Development

As with all automation processes, there is always a technical side that requires understanding, configuration, and programming. Experience with the Eloqua API and building cloud apps is a must. While [Oracle Eloqua](#) is a fantastic platform, you should think outside the box to meet new requirements. Some ideas may result in needing to extend Eloqua with custom add-ons. An agency that can help you achieve your objectives with custom apps tells you they are serious about marketing operations and satisfying your requirements.

Privacy Compliance and Legal

Increasingly, marketing operations work very closely with the privacy office to satisfy current and emerging privacy compliance regulations. You need to ensure your campaign and lead capture processes work within the law, or there could be severe financial consequences. In today's experience-driven economy, you need an agency with experience working with Legal teams and ensuring you are privacy compliant.

Agency Characteristics

Local and Remote Options

The recent shift to remote workers isn't likely to go away. However, sometimes may want an agency located nearby or in the same time-zone for face-to-face meetings. Being situated in similar (or the same) time zones puts the icing on the cake (i.e., it makes everything better).

If local access isn't your top priority, be sure your marketing agency excels at working remotely with you.

Schedule Compatibility

Different companies keep different schedules.

- Is your company a hard-driving 24x7, "email me at any hour" type of organization? Or does your management focus more on work-life balance?

- Do you have offices around the globe that need Eloqua help during a variety of work-hours?
- Do you often have last-minute campaigns that need over-night processing?

Know in advance what you need from a schedule perspective. Build your expectations into the Statement of Work (SOW) so that you KNOW you'll get. Be careful, though; it's tempting to ask for the moon when you don't need it. Only ask for the schedule that you regularly and routinely will need.

Agency Size

Look for a [marketing automation](#) agency with an adequately sized team for your needs. If you get several high-priority rush jobs simultaneously, can they respond quickly without sacrificing quality? Opting for 2-3 person shops is appealing, and maybe that's what you need. But they may not have the capacity when multiple or larger projects hit at the same time.

What's going to happen when their responsive email developer goes on vacation? How will they handle it if the person with project management skills leaves the company?

One of the reasons you're hiring an agency instead of a single person is that THEY will deal with personnel issues. Verify they have the essential skills you need double-covered (at a minimum) so that they won't let you down when life happens.

Industry Expertise

Look for an agency with experience working with [clients of your size, and hopefully, within your industry](#). The best [Eloqua](#) marketing agencies are well-equipped to handle any size company's needs,

whether yours is a small B2C or large B2B business.

Engagement model

A marketing automation agency's engagement model is just as critical as their skills. It sets the tone for how you and the agency will communicate and do business together. A clearly defined engagement model establishes milestones and checkpoints to ensure that everyone is ready to move forward.



Project experience alignment

What types of projects does your company need? How many of these projects has your chosen agency done recently? Can they provide references, samples, or [testimonials](#) that showcase their past projects and experience?

Sometimes the agency we want to pick is not the one we *should* choose. If their project experience does not match what you are looking for, it is best to go with the agency with a track record for completing projects similar to yours.

Security

Ask to see the agency's security policies upfront before starting any project or signing a contract. Your agency should [publish in-depth, detailed security policies online](#) that you can review before even beginning to talk to a salesperson. Nothing is worse than getting a few weeks into vendor business discussions to find out later that they cannot meet your security requirements.

Suppose your company's security checklist is too large to send early in the selection process. In that case, you can use the [30 Areas of Security](#) that 4Thought Marketing covers as a checklist starting point for your pre-purchase security review.

Executive connection

Are they willing to establish an Executive connection early on in your communications? Good agencies make sure that:

- Executives on both sides have had a one-on-one conversation long before the project starts
- Direct phone numbers and emails exchanged
- Executive cadence calls scheduled so that opportunities for high-level discussions are built-in to the process.

These calls may sometimes be VERY quick. "No problems here." "Yea, we're all good here; see you next month."

But when problems arise, having this pre-existing relationship can help get a project over hurdles that otherwise can be VERY challenging.

Conclusion

Picking the best [Eloqua](#) marketing agency for your organization can be challenging. Your company's requirements are unique, and you're best served by someone with the experience, depth, and available resources to satisfy your needs. We invite you to learn more about [4Thought Marketing](#). We'd be excited to see if we are a good match for each other and would be happy to share our extensive history of successful partnerships to back it up.

[Contact Us](#) if you would like to learn more about how 4Thought Marketing can help you [reach your goals](#) using Oracle Eloqua as the foundation for your marketing operations activities.