

# 7 Common Mistakes to Avoid When Hiring a *Creative Agency*

Finding a creative agency to work with can be very exciting, but also confusing and overwhelming. Many companies and freelancers will claim to be experts and the pricing can range drastically. With so many options to choose from, it's hard to know what's right for your business.

We've worked with many businesses that were burned by another agency or needed us to fix their own mistakes. To spare your business from similar pitfalls and setbacks, we're sharing common mistakes to avoid when hiring a creative agency for your business.

## **1. You Play It Too Safe**

It's vital to create a brand that stands out, gets noticed and disrupts your industry. You need branding and marketing that will be memorable and remarkable in the eyes of your customers. So many companies choose the safe route with their look, name, colors, etc. Despite having every opportunity to stand out, they choose to blend in and look like everyone else. This is not a time to play it safe and be a wallflower. It takes guts to look different and break away from the mainstream—but that's exactly how a brand wins.

First impressions mean everything in marketing and your brand is often the first thing customers will see. When you have just seconds to impress customers, you need to make it count.

At Aviate Creative, we know that your marketing will have a profound impact on your sales, brand message and brand perception. To create marketing that truly resonates with customers and stands the test of time, you need to examine the business from within. That's what our process is all about. We're here to learn as much as possible about your company and design branding and marketing that not only defines your business, but separates it from the rest.

## 2. You Won't Be Able to Trademark or Own Your Own Design

While it's tempting to work with low-priced companies, there's a reason why the prices are so low. Many people are not aware of the shortcuts these companies take and the dangers that can arise from working with them.

Many of these companies or freelancers use purchased stock art and simply change the text to your company name. Because the artwork is stock, the creative agency doesn't own the copyrights or rights to trademark the logo or creative—and neither will you. This means that even though your company is already using the logo or piece, anyone else can buy it and use it however they wish. You'll never be able to own your own designs or logo or protect them with a trademark. Other companies will be free to copy your look and branding and you won't be able to stop them.

Some agencies will go as far as stealing another company's logo, website or design and then throw your name on it. This is far more dangerous because it will make your company vulnerable to a lawsuit. The company can sue your business for using their trademarked and copyrighted material. You'll also be forced to stop using the creative and you'll need to invest in the creative process all over again.

## 3. You Ask Opinions From Too Many People

It's natural to want opinions on your new creative. Maybe you get a couple of logos designed and you're not confident with your choice, so you post them to your social network or send them to your customers, employees or committee members to get their opinions. Instead of getting constructive feedback, calling upon the masses can actually hurt your project and bring it to a standing halt.

It's important to remember why you hired a creative agency in the first place. Your family, customers and friends are not trained professionals and most do not have a vested interest in your company. Everyone will have different opinions and that's detrimental to creative projects. While there is a time and place for crowdsourcing, this is not one of them. Doing so puts way too many chefs in the kitchen and opens the door to destructive criticism. A crowd can easily take a great idea and squash it before it even gets to breathe. It may even lead to bad publicity or nasty trolling on social media.

Additionally, surveying a large group of people always yields safe results. People like what's comfortable. They don't like change and don't like to take risks. But as we said before, playing it safe never leads to strong branding or creative. Trust in the experts. They research, study and live this stuff. They know a lot more about good branding and marketing than your social circle does. More importantly, they're fully committed to ensuring the right outcome and results for your business.

## 4. You Cheap Out

How can some companies charge so little while others charge significantly more? It may seem obvious that lower cost can result in lower quality work. But there are other, less obvious problems to consider as well.

Some agencies offshore all of their creative work to countries that pay their employees just a few dollars per hour. The agency makes all of the money while the offshore worker does all of the work. Such projects are usually riddled with mistakes and the communication is very poor. Oftentimes, offshore companies misunderstand local culture and many things are lost in translation.

Agencies could also be assigning your projects to interns or inexperienced staff. Experienced staff requires higher salaries that some agencies aren't willing to pay. So when the price is low, this can often mean your project is vulnerable to rookie mistakes and setbacks.

Another way agencies keep their costs down is by limiting their communication. You can forget about talking on the phone with your agency or getting help when you need it. If you try to speak with someone, they will just send you to a form to fill out. If your agency doesn't provide strong communication, good listening skills, effective project management and clear expectations, it's a recipe for disaster. As the client, your participation and responsiveness will also be crucial to the process. Clear communication among both parties will be key to creating a successful project where everyone benefits.

Most of these companies focus on quantity rather than quality. The faster they can get you out the door, the better. It's important for your agency to take the time to talk to you, get to know your brand and understand what makes your company different from others in the same space.

Before the creative work begins, your agency should take the time to understand your business inside and out. What are your goals and challenges? Who are your customers? What do they want from a company like yours? Becoming an expert on your company is crucial for the design phase. Before creating an image that speaks to your strengths, we need to know what those strengths are. We also need to establish your brand's personality, market positioning and how you want to be perceived.

## **5. You Get Suckered With Hidden Fees**

One of the ways some companies appear cheaper is by hiding their costs. They get you to start the job with a small fee, but as the project goes on, they start to unveil all of these extra charges. Next thing you know, you're paying more than you budgeted for and are getting half the quality you expected. It can be very stressful and frustrating to discover new charges that you were not aware of, or receive a bill with extra fees in it. Oftentimes, agencies significantly overcharge for these extras because at this point, they got you. You've already committed and invested in the project. You may not even need these other services, but you're more or less forced to trust the agency you hired.

Make sure you fully understand what you're paying for and what's necessary to achieve the results you want. Insist on getting all of the information upfront and don't blindly agree to a proposal without knowing all of the included costs.

## **6. You Overpay**

Some agency owners will see your business and grin as they hear "Ka-ching" in their heads. They know that they can charge you double, triple or even ten times the price, just because it gives the perception of quality. They're likely pricing the project based on your company size and revenue

rather than the value of the product and service. A lot of these agencies are larger and have high overhead costs. They may be top-heavy with too much management, bloated with redundant staff or renting expensive office space. These companies will rack up your bill by passing it around to too many employees, having excessive meetings and adding unnecessary services.

It's important to get two or three quotes on your project to get a gauge on the price range. Don't be afraid to ask what is specifically involved in the process and deliverables. Make sure it's clear what you're getting and don't be fooled by fancy language, industry terms or unnecessary add-ons. You need to know what you are getting for your money. Also, try to talk to someone who is actually going to work on your project instead of just a salesperson, who will just hand your project off as soon as the check clears.

## 7. You Self-Sabotage

While it can be fun to work on your branding and marketing, some people make the mistake of getting too involved. Dictating the creative, micromanaging the project, controlling the process and ignoring professional advice is going to negatively impact the results. Don't get in the way and sabotage your own project. Before you hire an agency, you should have a clear understanding of the agency's process. It will affect both the quality and price of your branding and marketing. So it's important to know what your project will entail and whether the process aligns with your needs.

Over the last decade or so, we've established a unique and thorough process that overcomes challenges, creates successful brands and earns happy customers. Our agency has decades of experience and education that's taught us what works and what doesn't. You're paying us for our creativity and our experience, so why not get the most out of it and give your company the greatest chance for success?

## We Can Help

Aviate Creative is a branding & marketing agency that helps brands soar to new heights. We've been helping companies with high-quality branding, marketing, web design and graphic design since 2005 and we can help take your brand into the future. Please visit our site at [aviatecreative.com](http://aviatecreative.com) to read more about us and see some of our examples of work. We'd love to learn about your company and see how we can help. To get started, give us a call at 908-509-4442, or email [hello@aviatecreative.com](mailto:hello@aviatecreative.com).

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