



How to Choose a **Brand Strategy Firm**

Use this scorecard to quantify the abstract, evaluate your options, and select the partner that's best for your brand.

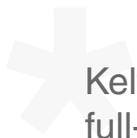


Choosing the right branding agency can feel like an impossible decision.

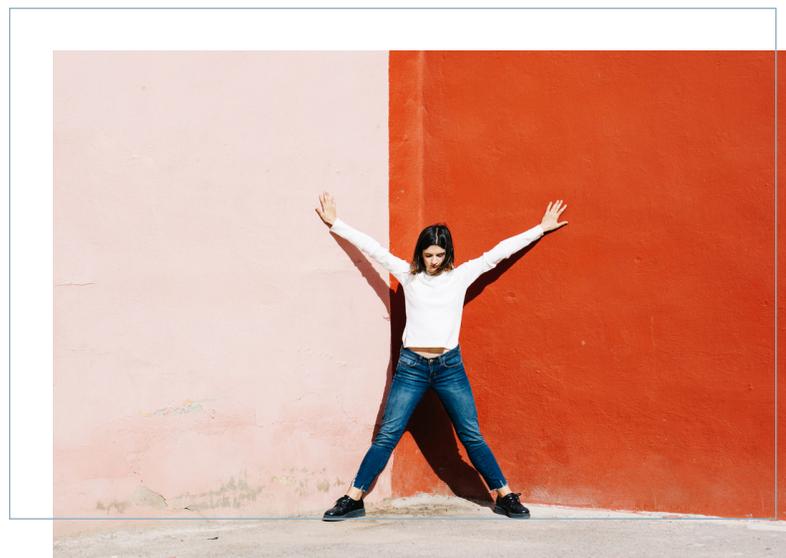
It doesn't have to.

High stakes, little clarity. That's what you're up against when choosing a brand strategy consulting firm or branding agency. Finding the right team to trust with something as precious as your business' brand can be a nerve wracking proposition. It's foundational work, so you have to get it right. At the same time, you don't have all that much to go on. Comparing proposals and pitches from one shop to the next often feels like an apples/oranges situation, and even the best decks and presentations can't truly tell you what you're going to get.

That's why our team of strategists decided to create this scorecard — we wanted to put an end to the anxiety. In the following pages, we'll cover the key criteria you can use to assess which firm will be the best partner for your brand. In a world without guarantees, it's the next best thing: a tool designed to help you weigh your options with rigor, consistency, and confidence.



Kelton Global and Salt, our full-service branding division, help brands be essential to modern consumers. Our proven approach helps both emerging and established brands transform businesses, create differentiation, engage B2B and B2C customers, change perceptions and drive growth. If you're not essential, you're irrelevant.



The criteria to measure

We've been in the branding world for a long time. Across our decades of experience — working both for and with a variety of agencies — we've learned which criteria are the most important to measure when choosing a brand strategy partner. As you review proposals and pitches, here's what you should evaluate:

- 1 Approach:** Do you feel like the firm has thoughtfully considered the problem your business is trying to solve? Do you believe their proposed solution will succeed? If you're looking for a collaborative process, do you have reason to believe that's what you'll get? If the proposal feels like a cookie cutter response, or if it doesn't really address your brand's concrete needs, that should give you pause.
- 2 Chemistry:** This one's easy to overlook, but it's vital you feel a connection with the agency you choose. After all, in any creative endeavor, there needs to be a spark between partners. Are you excited about the idea of working with a particular team? Follow that instinct.
- 3 Team:** Consider this one chemistry's practical counterpoint. Excitement is essential, but so are the logistics. How will the agency staff their team? How will meetings be structured? Who will be your main point of contact? The day-to-day details need to work for you, or your project could prove a real struggle.
- 4 Experience:** It's essential that the firm you choose has relevant experience and a track record of success. Do they talk about their previous work in a way that inspires you? Do they have a particular case study that caught your eye? Even if it doesn't line up with your particular industry, maybe there was something — the growth stage of the business, the nature of the challenge — that you connected with.
- 5 Outputs:** How tangible are the deliverables outlined in the proposal? Are they specific, and rooted in the challenge your brand is trying to solve? Do you feel confident they'll drive growth and lead to real action? Or do they sound vague and unclear? Don't choose a firm that isn't going to provide your team with something useful. Sophisticated methodologies are useless if they don't earn results.
- 6 Cost:** Of course, none of the above will matter if the proposed solution doesn't fit your budget. Don't think of the first quote as the final — it's worth negotiating or adjusting scope. But if after some healthy back-and-forth you and the firm still can't agree on price, it might not be a good fit.

The scorecard

With your key criteria in mind, it's time to see how your top brand strategy candidates stack up. Fill in the scorecard below, scoring each agency 1-5 across categories. If you're struggling to come up with the right numbers, here's a cheat sheet:

1 = Ugh

3 = Meh

5 = Awesome

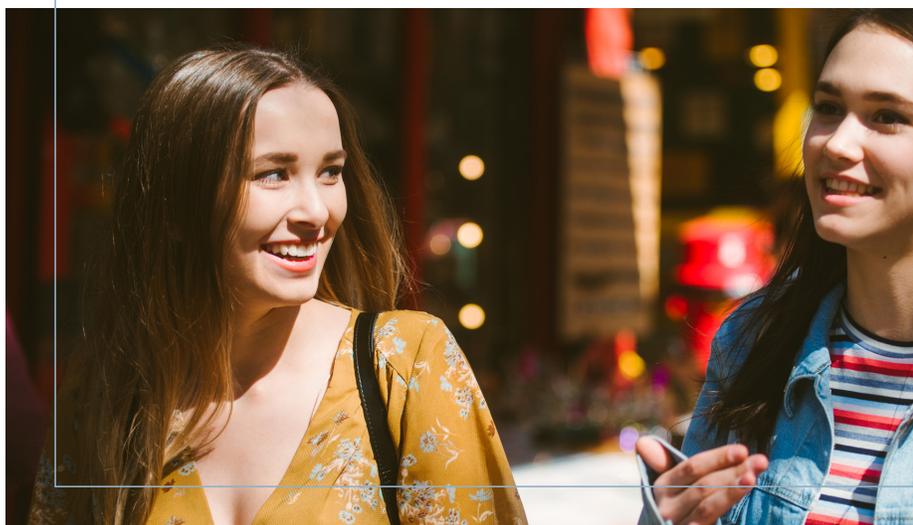
When you're finished, tally the final score for each firm. Then write your overall impressions.

	Agency #1	Agency #2	Agency #3	Agency #4
Approach				
Chemistry				
Team				
Experience				
Outputs				
Cost				
TOTAL SCORE				
OVERALL IMPRESSIONS				



Interpreting the scores

Obviously, the higher the score, the more well rounded the agency. But the goal of this exercise isn't simply to assign a single numerical score to each firm you're considering, then pick the one with the highest score no matter what (as nice and simple as that would be). The goal is for you to see how each agency performs holistically, across the areas that matter most — and also to help you notice particular strengths and weaknesses. If two firms come out on top with similar scores, it's worth seeing how they got there. If one has a much higher score for Experience, and your team feels that's the most important metric, you might consider them your frontrunner. Keep track of notes like these in the “Overall Impressions” boxes.



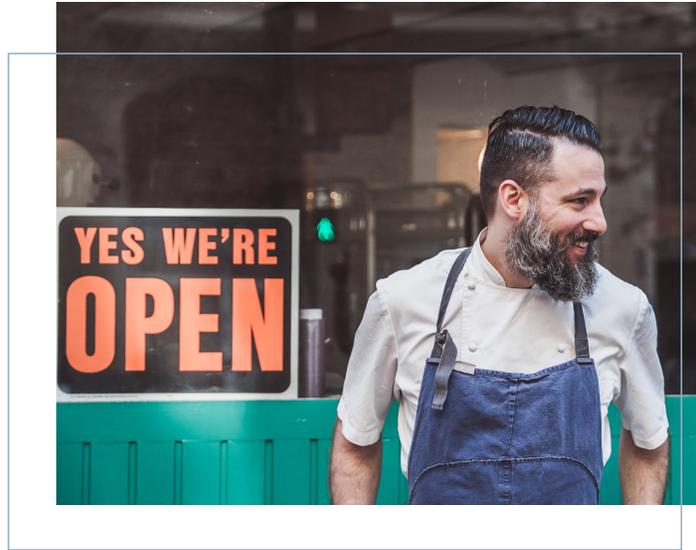
Now what?

We love talking about this stuff. Want to learn how we can help your brand become essential to your customers? Get in touch:

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CLICK HERE to
download an editable
version of our scorecard.