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B A L A N C E

W I T H P A U L A H A U F

Looking for a
Digital Marketer?

*Your complete guide to hiring smart, avoiding costly mistakes,
and finding the right marketer to grow your business.*

Welcome from Paula

Hey there! If you're reading this, you're probably at a crossroads. Your business is growing, your to-do list is overflowing, and you know deep down that your online presence needs real attention. You've been thinking about hiring a digital marketer — but where do you even start?

I've been in the digital marketing world for years, and I've seen it all — the good hires, the bad ones, the “gurus” who promise the moon and deliver nothing, and the quiet professionals who quietly 10x a business in six months. This booklet is my honest guide to help YOU navigate that world.

“The right digital marketer won't just grow your numbers — they'll grow your business.”

— Paula Hauf, PH Balance

Use this booklet as your hiring roadmap. Save it, share it with your team, and come back to it every time you're ready to level up your marketing.

Chapter 1: Do You Actually Need a Digital Marketer?

Before you spend a single dollar, let's get clear on whether hiring is the right next step for you right now.

Signs You're Ready to Hire

- ✓ You're turning down clients because you're too busy managing social media yourself.
- ✓ Your content is inconsistent — posting when you “feel like it” instead of strategically.
- ✓ You've hit a growth plateau and can't figure out why your audience isn't growing.
- ✓ You're running paid ads but have no idea if they're actually working.
- ✓ Competitors are showing up everywhere online and you feel invisible.
- ✓ You have a clear budget set aside for marketing (even if it's modest).

Signs You're NOT Ready Yet

- ⚠ You haven't clearly defined your offer, target audience, or brand voice.
- ⚠ You expect a marketer to fix a broken product or service.
- ⚠ Your budget is less than \$500/month (consider a marketing coach first).
- ⚠ You want someone to “do everything” with no direction from you.
- ⚠ You haven't documented your brand guidelines, colors, or messaging.

PH Balance Tip: Before hiring, spend one week documenting your brand voice, your ideal client, and your top 3 business goals. A great marketer will hit the ground running. An unprepared client will slow everyone down.

Chapter 2: Types of Digital Marketers

Not all digital marketers do the same thing. Hiring the wrong type is one of the most expensive mistakes business owners make. Here's your cheat sheet:

Type	What They Do	Best For
Social Media Manager	Content creation, scheduling, community engagement, posting strategy	Businesses needing consistent, on-brand daily presence
SEO Specialist	Keyword research, on-page optimization, link building, search ranking	Businesses wanting long-term organic traffic growth
Paid Ads Specialist	Facebook, Instagram, Google Ads — targeting, bidding, creative testing	Businesses ready to invest in fast, scalable lead generation
Email Marketer	List building, automations, newsletters, sales sequences	Businesses with an existing audience needing nurture & conversion
Content Strategist	Content planning, brand voice, editorial calendar, storytelling	Businesses that need a strong content foundation & messaging
Full-Stack Digital Marketer	Covers multiple channels — social, email, SEO, ads, analytics	Small businesses needing one person to oversee all marketing

PH Balance Tip: Most small businesses (under \$1M revenue) need a Social Media Manager or Full-Stack Marketer first. Don't hire a paid ads specialist before you have a strong organic presence and a tested offer.

Chapter 3: Where to Find Good Marketers

Great marketers are everywhere — but so are mediocre ones. Here's where to look, and how to look smart.

Top Platforms & Sources

- ✓ **Network:** Your own network — Ask for referrals from business owners you respect.
- ✓ **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn — Search by speciality, filter by location, check endorsements.
- ✓ **Upwork:** Upwork — Great for freelancers. Filter by Job Success Score (aim for 90%+).
- ✓ **Facebook Groups:** Facebook Groups — Industry groups often have hiring boards with real reputation.
- ✓ **Instagram:** Instagram — Look at who markets well in your niche and reach out directly.
- ✓ **Agencies:** Marketing agencies — More expensive but offer a full team and accountability.
- ✓ **Local:** Local business networks — Chambers of Commerce, co-working spaces, BNI.

What to Look for on Their Profile

- A clear niche or area of focus (beware of those who “do everything” equally)
- Case studies, results, or portfolio with real before-and-after data
- Client testimonials that mention specific outcomes, not just personality
- An active and well-maintained social presence of their own
- Clear, professional communication in their bio and proposals

Red Flag Alert

If a marketer can't clearly articulate their results — in numbers — keep looking. Anyone with real experience will tell you exactly what they achieved for previous clients.

Chapter 4: How to Vet Candidates

Your interview process is your first filter. Use it well. Here's what the PH Balance hiring process looks like:

The 3-Round Process

Round 1: The Application Screen

Ask candidates to answer these in writing before any call:

- What platforms do you specialize in and why?
- Describe a campaign or strategy that didn't work as expected. What did you learn?
- What's your process for understanding a new client's brand voice?
- What tools do you use daily and how do you track results?

Look for:

- Specificity over vagueness — real answers with real examples
- Willingness to admit failure (a great sign of self-awareness)
- Match between their speciality and your actual needs

Round 2: The Strategy Call

A 30-minute video call. Share a brief overview of your business and goals, then ask:

- How would you approach growing our presence in the first 90 days?
- What metrics would you prioritize and why?
- How do you communicate progress and report results to clients?
- What do you need from ME to do your best work?

Round 3: The Paid Test Project

Always pay for test work. A small, real project reveals everything:

- A content calendar for one week
- A short competitor analysis
- A mock caption or email in your brand voice

Budget \$100–\$200 for this. It is the best investment you can make before a long-term hire.

Chapter 5: Red Flags to Watch For

The digital marketing industry has more “gurus” and empty promises than almost any other field. Know these warning signs before you sign anything.

- ⚠️ They guarantee specific follower counts or viral results within a fixed time.
- ⚠️ They can't explain their strategy in plain language without jargon.
- ⚠️ They don't ask about your business goals, audience, or current content.
- ⚠️ Their own social profiles are inactive, inconsistent, or poorly branded.
- ⚠️ They pressure you to sign a long-term contract immediately.
- ⚠️ They can't provide references or don't want you speaking to past clients.
- ⚠️ They use vanity metrics (likes, reach) without connecting them to real business outcomes.
- ⚠️ They disappear for days at a time with no communication.
- ⚠️ Their pricing is suspiciously low (under \$300/month for “full management”).
- ⚠️ They ask for your login credentials before signing a contract.

“Good marketers are transparent about what they can and cannot promise. If someone guarantees you 10,000 followers in 30 days — run.”

— Paula Hauf

Chapter 6: Questions to Ask Before You Hire

Print this list and bring it to every interview. The quality of a marketer's answers will tell you everything.

About Their Experience

- What industries have you worked in, and which do you know best?
- What's the biggest result you've gotten for a client? How did you achieve it?
- Have you worked with a business at my size/stage before?
- Can I speak to two or three past or current clients?

About Their Process

- How do you onboard a new client? What do you need from me in week one?
- How do you handle it when a strategy isn't working?
- What does your reporting process look like? How often will we meet?
- Do you work independently or will other team members touch my account?

About Fit & Expectations

- What types of clients do you NOT work well with?
- How do you prefer to communicate — Slack, email, Voxer?
- What's your turnaround time for requests and revisions?
- How do you handle creative differences or pushback from clients?

About Results & Metrics

- What KPIs do you track, and how do you decide which matter most?
- How long before I can expect to see meaningful results?
- What does success look like at 30, 60, and 90 days?

Chapter 7: Contracts & Protecting Yourself

Whether you're hiring a freelancer or an agency, always work with a contract. No exceptions.

What Your Contract Must Include

- ✓ Scope of work — exactly what is and isn't included
- ✓ Deliverables — specific outputs (X posts per week, X emails per month)
- ✓ Timeline — start date, milestones, and review checkpoints
- ✓ Payment terms — rate, invoicing schedule, late payment policy
- ✓ Ownership rights — who owns content created during the contract
- ✓ Revision policy — how many rounds of edits are included
- ✓ Termination clause — how either party can exit and with how much notice
- ✓ Confidentiality — protection of your business data, client lists, and strategy
- ✓ Login/access security — how credentials are shared and what happens at offboarding

PH Balance Tip: Use a password manager (like LastPass or 1Password) to share logins. Never email passwords. And always revoke access the same day a contract ends.

A Note on Payment

Avoid paying 100% upfront for any project over \$500. A standard structure is:

- 50% deposit to begin work
- 50% upon delivery or at a specific milestone
- For ongoing retainers: payment on the 1st of each month, in advance

Chapter 8: Working Well Together

Hiring is just the beginning. The best client-marketer relationships are partnerships built on clarity, trust, and consistent communication.

Your Responsibilities as the Client

- ✓ Provide brand guidelines, assets, and examples of content you love and hate.
- ✓ Respond to questions and approve content within agreed timelines.
- ✓ Attend scheduled check-in calls (or send a delegate who can make decisions).
- ✓ Share business updates that affect strategy (new products, promotions, pivots).
- ✓ Give honest, specific feedback — not just “I don’t like it.”
- ✓ Trust the process — give strategies 60–90 days before judging results.

How to Give Feedback That Actually Helps

Instead of: “This doesn’t feel right.”

Try: “The tone feels too formal for our audience. Can we make it sound more like we’re talking to a friend?”

Instead of: “I don’t like the image.”

Try: “We prefer lifestyle photos over flat lays. Here are three examples I love.”

Chapter 9: Measuring Success

The biggest mistake business owners make is not knowing what to measure. More followers is vanity. More revenue is reality.

Metrics That Actually Matter

Metric	What It Tells You	Healthy Target
Engagement Rate	How actively your audience interacts	1–5% on Instagram
Website Traffic from Social	Real visits driven to your site	Growing month-over-month
Email List Growth	Owned audience you control	+100–500/month
Lead Generation	Inquiries, DMS, form fills	Track weekly
Conversion Rate	% of leads who become clients	Depends on your offer
Revenue Attributed	Sales traced back to marketing	Clear ROI

Review these metrics with your marketer monthly. Any good marketer will have a dashboard ready. If they can't show you the numbers — that's a problem.

Your Hiring Checklist

Before you make an offer, run through this final checklist. Check every box.

Before You Post the Job

- ✓ I've defined my business goals for the next 6–12 months
- ✓ I know which platforms/channels I need help with
- ✓ I have a clear budget range in mind
- ✓ My brand guidelines (colors, fonts, voice) are documented
- ✓ I've identified the type of marketer I need

During the Hiring Process

- ✓ I reviewed their portfolio and case studies
- ✓ I spoke to at least one past client
- ✓ I completed a paid test project with top candidates
- ✓ I asked all the questions from Chapter 6
- ✓ I checked for red flags from Chapter 5

Before Signing the Contract

- ✓ Scope of work is clearly defined in writing
- ✓ Payment terms are agreed and documented
- ✓ KPIs and reporting cadence are established
- ✓ Access/login sharing protocol is in place
- ✓ Termination clause exists and is fair

A Final Word from Paula

Finding the right digital marketer is one of the highest-leverage investments you can make in your business. When it's right, it frees you to do what you do best while someone else amplifies your message and grows your audience.

But the magic only happens when you hire intentionally, set clear expectations, and show up as a great client. Use this guide. Take your time. Trust your gut.

And if you ever need help evaluating your options or want a second opinion on a candidate, you know where to find me.

PH Balance · Paula Hauf

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Your marketing. Your business. Your balance.