Tool 07: Questions for any marketing provider

Used in "How to hire help without getting burned" near the back of the book, and with chapters 2, 3, 13 and 17.

Purpose

Hire help, or keep the help you have, without losing control of your assets or paying for reports you can't check. For "can't tell" and being burned, and leak 7 (Not owned).

Inputs

- Your completed tool 04 (ownership inventory).
- Your tool 08 numbers, even rough ones.
- The proposal or contract.
- Ask in writing. Keep the answers.

Steps

Ask every question. Write the answer. Ask for the document that shows it.

Ownership

1. Who will be listed as owner of my domain, website, Google Business Profile, ad accounts and analytics?
2. Who owns the phone numbers you put on my site and listings? Can I take them with me?
3. If I leave, what do I keep: content, design, photos, page addresses, data? In what format, and how fast?

Terms and exclusivity

4. How long is the contract, and how do I end it? What does ending it cost?
5. Do you work for my direct competitors in my area? Will you tell me if you start?
6. What's included in the price, and what costs extra?

Who does the work

7. Who will actually work on my account? Who do I call?
8. What do you do in a normal month? Show me last month for a client like me, with names removed.

Reporting I can check

9. Which of my five numbers (calls and forms, booked jobs, close rate, average job value, cost per booked job) will your report show?
10. Where does each number in your report come from? Can I see the raw source myself?

What they won't promise

11. What results do you not promise?
12. If you mention AI or Google rankings, how do you describe what you can and can't influence?

Exit

13. Walk me through the last client who left. What did they keep?

How to read the result

Red flags:

- They won't put ownership in writing.
- The phone numbers, domain or profile will be in their name.
- The report is built on impressions, "visibility" or an AI mention score you can't check.
- They promise a ranking, a map position or a place in AI answers. No one can honestly promise those.
- You can't name the person who works on your account.

What owners have said after it went wrong (verified quotes, credited by platform and year):

- "It should not become the client's full-time job to manage their marketing agency." (Trustpilot, 2026)
- "if you ever want to leave, you risk losing your website and campaign data because they control the assets." (Trustpilot, 2025)
- "wedged itself between you and your customer" (ContractorTalk, 2024)

Limits

- Good answers on paper don't prove good work. Combine this with the vendor's sample report and a reference you find yourself.
- Not every "no" is bad faith. A vendor platform can be a fair trade if the terms are clear and you know what stays behind.
- What AI answers say about choosing an agency ("How to hire help") comes from what AI tools answered when asked how to choose an agency, not from how buyers actually choose one, or how homeowners choose a contractor. Keep these apart.

Next action

- Any ownership red flag: fix it before signing, or walk (chapter 2).
- Reporting gaps: set up tool 08 yourself so you don't depend on their report (chapter 3).

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