

Top 6 Best Marketing Consulting Firms in 2016 (Detailed Comparison Review)

Finding the Best Marketing Consulting Firms

Marketing consultants are highly skilled in understanding what motivates consumers, how to target an audience, and what measures a business can put in place to more effectively reach their desired consumers.

There's some level of interchangeability between a marketing consulting firm and an advertising firm.

However, an advertising consultant or firm helps companies find innovative, creative ways to reach new potential customers and markets within the framework of one campaign or a short-term objective.

By contrast, a marketing consulting firm helps clients use analytics, technology, and data to explore the present state of their business and see how they can more effectively engage existing customers over the long-term.

Additionally, a marketing consultant goes beyond simply advertising or public relations and instead takes a more holistic view of a business based on analytics and the development of strategic objectives.

Marketing consultants not only implement strategies; they will also measure the effectiveness of said strategies to refine marketing plans over time.



Award Emblem: Top 6 Best Marketing Consulting Firms

When Do You Need to Hire Marketing Strategy Consulting Firms?

There are any number of reasons you might opt to pair with marketing strategy consulting firms:

- You need a plan that's in line with your overall business goals. Many times, people will advertise without any clear strategy, which won't optimize the return on your investment. Marketing gives you a tactical foundation on which to build your public relations and advertising.
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- If you're running a small business, you may not have time to dedicate to marketing. It can be difficult to focus on marketing at all when you're wearing so many other hats in your business, so consultants can step in and take the reins in this area.

- Marketing consultants have a strong grasp on the trends, technology, and innovation needed to develop a successful strategy. Marketing consultants may introduce you to new software, new industry trends, or new ideas.
- Perhaps you need to limit your plans. One of the biggest problems businesses face in marketing is their desire to do everything at one time while not doing any of it that well. Marketing consultants can show you how to narrow your efforts but maximize the impact.

For example, maybe your strategy includes trying to use every social media channel. A consultant could come in and give you data and research that will show you how to limit your social media marketing to perhaps just two or three platforms, which will save you time and money while also having more of an impact.

- You might have a strategy in place, but it isn't working. Marketing is a rapidly evolving landscape; businesses that find their current strategy just isn't getting the job done may feel it's time to change strategies. That's a very good time to partner with a marketing consulting firm.

See Also: The Best Healthcare Consulting Firms This Year (Ranking and Review)

Selecting a Marketing Consulting Firm

When you've decided it's time to utilize marketing consulting services, how do you choose the right firm?

Selecting a consulting firm is going to depend largely on your requirements, your budget and your expectations.

Many of the top marketing consulting firms have a few things in common:

- A team of industry experts with many years' experience in diverse areas
- A strong reputation with clients
- The ability to integrate traditional marketing knowledge and know-how with the newest and most cutting-edge technology
- Professionals willing to think outside the box and do things in new and exciting ways

So how do you select from the many marketing consultancy firms to find the one that is best for your needs?

AdvisoryHQ's List of Top 6 Best Marketing Consulting Firms

To help you get started, we created this guide to six of the best marketing consulting firms. These firms include:

- **[Bain & Company](#)**
- **[CMG](#)**
- **[LEK Consultancy](#)**
- **[Nielsen](#)**
- **[PwC Digital](#)**
- **[ZS Associates](#)**

List is sorted alphabetically (click any of the names above to go directly to the detailed review section for that marketing consulting firm)

AdvisoryHQ's Selection Methodology

What methodology does AdvisoryHQ use in selecting and finalizing the firms, services, and products that are ranked on its various top rated lists?

Please click "[AdvisoryHQ's Ranking Methodologies](#)" for a detailed review of AdvisoryHQ's selection methodologies for ranking top rated firms, products, and services.

Detailed Review – Top Ranking Best Marketing Consulting Firms

Below, please find the detailed review of each firm on our list of top marketing strategy consulting firms. We have highlighted some of the factors that allowed these top marketing consulting firms to score so high in our selection ranking.

Bain & Company Review

Bain & Company is an internationally recognized consulting firm focused on creating client results that deliver value. Bain strives to work across boundaries, utilize actionable insights, and help engage teams to maximize their success.



Image Source: [BigStock](#)

An Overview

Bain's customer strategy and marketing services focus on creating growth by uncovering and implementing the best ways to reach customers.

Bain approaches marketing consulting services through elements of expert experience, practicality, and economics. The results of partnering with Bain are strategies that are not only sustainable over the long-term, but ones that truly drive growth organically.

Services

With Bain, you can expect the following experience areas, which fall under the umbrella of marketing consulting:

- **Customer insights and segmentation:** Bain's consulting team takes a deep look at customer wants and behaviors using their signature approach, and then creates actionable segmentation.

- **Product and category management:** Eliminate innovation barriers while increasing product development, all leading to a unique and customer-centric value proposition.
- **Pricing:** Pricing is a significant challenge that Bain can help businesses solve.
- **Sales and channel effectiveness:** Bain will partner with companies to look at customized solutions for the short-term, as well as identifying where strategic and long-term operational changes can be made.
- **Marketing and brand strategy:** The goal of Bain's marketing consulting services is to engage companies while aligning their marketing strategies with their larger business objectives.
- **Customer experience:** Customers require regular positive interactions, so Bain develops ways to ensure these interactions are occurring to drive growth.
- **Loyalty:** Loyal customers are the key to maximizing profitability, and Bain works to nurture those potential loyal customers.
- **Go-to-market strategy:** Working with Bain will allow you to develop robust go-to-market strategies, which will serve as that road between strategy and customer experience.

Approach

Bain features a signature approach to their marketing consulting services, which is based on what they define as three building blocks of customer-led growth.

These [three blocks include:](#)

- Designing a customer experience that's unique and tailored to their needs. This is done by looking at the most important clients of a company and creating a value proposition that appeals to that segment.
- Deliver on promises the client makes by making sure the customer experience is optimized at each and every touchpoint.

- Reprogram their DNA to ensure customers and employees are always first. This helps Bain partner with clients to develop both short- and long-term strategies for growth.

In addition to this three-step approach, Bain & Company also created the signature NPS and Loyalty methods, which are proven ways to assess the health and value of customer relationships.

Don't Miss: Top HR Consulting Firms This Year (Ranking and Review)

CMG Review

CMG is one of the most reputable marketing consulting firms, with an 18-year history.

The company has helped clients drive more than \$1 billion in revenue, and their focus lies in helping new industries and market developments receive the results they want and need.

Overview

CMG prides itself on having expertise and reputation while also being a company where people and their unique ideas and personalities are crucial aspects of their approach to marketing consulting.

CMG has been working since 1998 and pairing with rapidly-growing companies to deliver results. They combine inventive thinking, collaboration in execution, and agility.

CMG has offices in Chicago, Denver, Lexington (KY), Philadelphia, Portland, Washington, D.C., and their headquarters in Durham, NC.

Services

CMG, one of the country's top marketing consulting firms, specializes in strategy, commercialization, and performance.

We'll explore these services in detail below:

- **Strategy:** The aim of CMG's strategy-based consulting services is to help clients find new ways to connect with customers. This could mean anything from designing a new brand position to looking at the client's experience in new, more objective ways.

The strategy phase of CMG's consulting services is where this marketing consulting firm unites insight, inventions, and plans to then drive marketing strategy forward.

- **Commercialization:** As CMG specializes in working with dynamic and often new companies, commercialization is an important aspect of their marketing consulting services.

CMG partners with clients to bring products to market efficiently while simultaneously uncovering new streams of revenue.

- **Performance:** Within this consulting service, CMG dives into working with marketing teams in a hands-on way to train them in the ultimate in marketing tactics.

They collaborate with teams to deliver their signature approaches to performance improvement while integrating concepts of flexible planning and collaboration. This is all done in the framework of measurable objectives, defined roles, and rapid learning.

Approach

The CMG approach seems simple, yet it has allowed them to work with Fortune 1000 companies and transform the way they see and do marketing.

This approach is defined as the following: Think + Do + Move = the ability for clients to move not just forward but upward.

The following components also define the CMG strategy:

- CMG fosters true partnerships with clients, and they work hands-on to implement the ideas and strategies they propose.
- Serious thinking and insight, as well as interdisciplinary, groundbreaking research, are the foundation of everything at CMG.
- CMG's team pushes clients to realize their maximum potential while becoming more efficient and agile, all while utilizing the right tools and

methodology.



Image Source: [BigStock](#)

Related: Top Best Consulting Firms (Review: Best Management Consulting Firms)

L.E.K. Consulting Review

[L.E.K Consulting](#) is one of the top global marketing strategy consulting firms, with offices in not only the Americas but also Europe and Asia.

They advise clients on a range of strategy issues, bringing to the table deep industry knowledge, and analytical expertise that leads to the making of value-producing informed decisions.

Overview

L.E.K. was founded in 1983 and now employees [more than 1,000 top professionals](#) at their worldwide offices. They specialize in delivering marketing consulting to international companies.

Working with L.E.K.'s marketing and sales consulting team ensures clients will receive comprehensive insights to identify new opportunities to expand growth.

The ultimate goal of all marketing consulting services is to improve performance and gain market share.

Services

Services offered by L.E.K under the umbrella of marketing consulting include:

- **Product Strategy:** Product strategy includes portfolio optimization, product development, innovation capability development, and support for process and organizational delivery.
- **Marketing Strategy:** These services include market development, customer insights, profitability analysis, and marketing optimization.
- **Customer Relationship Management:** This area of service is based on customer loyalty, design and delivery, value-based segmentation, and the design of a CRM program.
- **Pricing:** Clients working with L.E.K. can access services like pricing dynamics, framework and optimization, as well as yield management.
- **Brand Strategy:** Under this service are brand management and portfolio optimization.
- **Sales and Channel Management:** This includes channel strategy development, sales channel configuration, operations design, resource prioritization, and program implementation.

Approach

Every aspect of marketing consulting services available from L.E.K. is focused on the creation of real results with a significant impact.

L.E.K. starts by partnering with executives to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges they're facing. They gather the most relevant information and from there design value-producing strategies.

Their approach combines the following essential components:

- Evidence-based philosophy, as opposed to opinion
- Best-in-class analytical capabilities
- Real-world expertise
- Strategic foresight

Nielsen Review

[Nielsen](#) is one of the most respected and well-known names in analytics and marketing. They specialize in knowing what consumers want, whether regarding the media they're consuming or the products they're buying.

Nielsen studies customers in [more than 100 countries](#) so you can understand audiences and trends on a global basis.

Overview

Nielsen provides highly scalable marketing consulting services to companies, whether they're a single-location operation, or a large enterprise operating in locations around the world.

Key to their philosophy and approach to marketing consulting is a belief in innovation and the constant creation and evolution of solutions that meet the needs of the contemporary customer.

Nielsen's team of marketing consultant professionals has garnered the company many awards:

- Number 22 ranking in *CEO Magazine's* list of 2015's Best Companies for Leaders
- Listed on *Diversity Inc.'s* Top 50 list
- Appeared in the *CIO Review* as one of the top 20 "Most Promising CPG Technology Solution Providers" for 2015

Services

As one of the world's top marketing consulting firms, Nielsen offers a broad range of services. These include:

- **Advertising Effectiveness:** This service area is designed to show clients what works and what doesn't, to ensure they're able to get the results they want from any and all advertising methods.

- **Audience Measurement:** Nielsen audience measurement services are designed to deliver real insight into who's watching what, regardless of when or what device they're using.
- **Marketing Mix:** The goal of this service area is to provide clients with the maximum impact based on the marketing dollars they have available. This service relies on statistical analysis to look at past trends while predicting future effects.
- **Price and Promotion:** This service area creates a definitive path toward optimal price and trade promotion strategies.
- **Product Development:** Leading-edge strategies are put in place, allowing product placement that's primed for success.
- **Reputation Management:** It's vital that successful companies keep up-to-date on the pulse of how stakeholders view their organization. Nielsen delivers practical reputation measurement and management services.
- **Segmentation:** Nielsen looks at a plethora of data points from diverse sources to show clients who their customers really are and what drives their behaviors.
- **Shopper:** Shopper services take account of the buyer's journey and then deliver actionable insights allowing brands to grow.

Approach

At the core of every service offered by Nielsen is a reliance on cutting edge data. This is their central focus area.

Nielsen has created standards for measurement unique to each service area, ranging from delivery through electronic channels to tools like in-home scanners that let them assess how shoppers are behaving on their shopping trips.

Also part of the multi-faceted Nielsen approach to marketing consulting are the use of more traditional data collection tools, such as surveys that demonstrate customer sentiment.

Channels measured by Nielsen during the marketing consulting process include:

- Television
 - Book sales measurement and analytics
 - Retail measurement
 - Social TV
 - Online
 - Music sales measurement
 - Mobile
 - Global consumer confidence
 - Audience
 - Audio measurement
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PwC Digital Services Review

[PwC Digital Services](#) is a marketing consulting firm that aims to help clients discover new success, innovation, and value. They have [31 worldwide digital hubs](#), are the ninth largest agency and first in mobile, and have earned more than 500 awards.

Overview

PwC Digital is comprised of more than [2500 creative professionals](#) who work to design and implement sophisticated strategies, as well as complete end-to-end digital solutions.

They look at not only technology but also trends, markets, and economies and rapidly respond to shifts.

The goals of all marketing consulting services from PwC include:

- Knowing your customer and the environment you operate in
- Defining what success looks like to you
- Innovation in your business
- Creating new value
- Acceleration through technology-driven change
- Protection of your business from risks present in the digital economy

Some of the many [awards and recognitions](#) garnered by PwC Digital include 11 consecutive years of being named one of Fortune's "100 Best Companies to

Work For,” and one of Advertising Age’s Agency Report rankings for marketing services.

Services

If you partner with PwC, one of the world’s largest marketing strategy consulting firms, you’ll have access to the following services:

- **Innovation:** This is the primary opportunity for businesses who want to grow their competitive and future success. When you pair with the marketing consultant team at PwC, you can develop innovative ideas and get to the market quickly.
- **Strategy:** PwC’s team of experts works with client-partners to maximize business value through effective, actionable strategies.
- **Experience:** This is the service area focused on creating the best possible user engagements.
- **Technology:** PwC is one of the best marketing consulting firms in the world because they bring robust technology into the equation, ranging from architecture to continuous delivery. Technology solutions are scalable and work with the unique needs of the company they’re working with.
- **Analytics:** Insights are the heart of creating marketing strategies that work. Everything PwC delivers is based on insights; then, they show the best ways to take action on them. The goal of analytics gathering at PwC is to improve performance, uncover missed opportunities, and repair issues.
- **Activation:** This is the service area where PwC’s team finds ways to optimize marketing channels and identify potential growth areas. The end-result is testing and optimizing the promotion of your businesses’ future success.

Approach

While the approach of PwC’s marketing consulting team is completely varied based on each individual company and their unique situation, some elements of their strategy may include:

- Finding ways to sell to new customer segments, stemming from a framework of the digital age
 - Moving from traditional to digital channels
 - Eliminating silos
 - Expansion into new markets all while creating an improved B2B or B2C experience
 - Rethinking what CRM systems and apps are used for
 - Helping businesses tell their story on a global scale
 - Analyzing a marketing ecosystem
 - Creating social campaigns that really drive growth
 - Helping companies make decisions driven by data
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ZS Associates Review

[ZS Associates](#) is one of the world's largest firms that focuses only on helping companies grow their revenue and improve their performance with end-to-end marketing solutions, as well as sales solutions.

ZS employs more than [4,500 marketing and sales professionals](#), located in 22 offices around the world.

Overview

ZS Associates is unique on our list of the best marketing consulting firms, because they focus only on two primary zones that lead to customer demand: sales and marketing.

This gives them an incredibly deep understanding of these areas, and their marketing services are ideal for businesses in many industries.

ZS has been a leader among marketing consulting firms for more than 30 years, and they're largely responsible for moving commercial strategies from being intuition-driven to data-driven.

Their philosophy has remained consistent, which is to find truths based on quantifiable facts, which leads to the best possible experience and innovation.

Services

As one of the best marketing consulting firms, ZS Associates offers an extensive slate of services:

- **Business Process Improvement:** These solutions aim to help companies streamline their sales and marketing operations.
- **Business Intelligence and Technology:** This is about minimizing investments while simultaneously maximizing profits.
- **Customer Experience:** Working with ZS, one of the top marketing consulting firms, will allow you to find ways to improve the customer experience and loyalty as well.
- **Customer Insights:** Valuable customer insights can be used to improve marketing decisions based on data.
- **Customer Segmentation:** Marketing strategies and executions are enabled through actionable customer segmentation.
- **Forecasting:** ZS can combine technology and experience to identify market drivers and how they'll influence clients' future planning.
- **Marketing Mix:** ZS works with clients to improve their return on investment across a wide-ranging portfolio.
- **Marketing Performance Measurement and Optimization:** Timely insights can improve marketing performance and effectiveness.
- **Pipeline Strategy:** These services are specifically targeted to the needs of pharmaceutical and medical products and are designed to generate the returns needed to maximize investments.
- **Value Proposition:** Partnering with ZS can help clients develop appealing, compelling value propositions, based on the needs and preferences of customers.

Approach

As ZS is one of the best marketing consulting firms, it's valuable to look at the distinctive approach that sets them apart from other marketing consulting firms.

One of the most pivotal and impactful aspects of the ZS approach is a focus on problem solving. They like to break apart the areas of a business, assess them,

and then, using science, technology, and hands-on expertise, put them back together in more effective and efficient ways.

They enjoy tackling the most challenging of marketing issues while simultaneously building a strong collaborative relationship with each client that's meant to be a long-term partnership.

The ZS approach doesn't operate in silos, and they don't believe in the creation of unnecessary boundaries or walls. This means each and every team member is at the disposal of all clients, and all are working toward the shared goal of creating a positive impact.

Conclusion – Top 6 Marketing Consulting Firms

This list of the best marketing strategy consulting firms is one that encompasses a broad range of companies, each with their own strengths and focus areas. This list was created with the needs of potential clients in mind.

Our goal was to highlight not just the best marketing consulting firms, but also demonstrate what makes them unique, and what makes them a leader at what they do.

Whether you're looking for primarily digital marketing consulting firms, or you want comprehensive, end-to-end solutions for a global workforce, this marketing consultancy firms ranking should prove valuable as you create a short list of contenders and select a partnership that will meet your needs—presently and into the future.

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