

Are there too many location marketing agencies?

A myriad of place marketing agencies

From a corporate perspective, it seems that whichever way you turn in 2005 there is a place marketing agency trying to tell you that their place has all the attributes that your company needs. Place marketing agencies for countries, states, regions, cities, parts of cities, towns, districts – the list of new agencies grows significantly year on year. But does all of this really help and does it actually make any difference? Most successful companies of course know perfectly well what they need and more often than not they also know where to find it.

So what is the point of a place marketing agency? – and is the rapid growth in the amount of new agencies in recent years bringing clarity or merely serving to further confuse the corporate and individual investor?

Partnership and coordination

National and regional agencies have a responsibility to take a strong lead in the co-ordination of the place marketing approaches in their geographic area of responsibility. But equally, the regional, city, town, district agencies have a responsibility to ensure synergy between their approach and that of the agency above them in the national hierarchy. Lack of co-ordination only serves to further confuse and irritate the individuals and companies that each agency is seeking to impress.

Weaknesses in the chain within this hierarchy of agencies from large place down to small place is one of the primary causes of the profusion of place marketing agencies – different locations feeling that they are not getting their 'fare share' - normally from a larger agency above them in the hierarchy - or that their place is not being, in some way, properly represented.

Instead of setting up another agency, it might be simpler and more cost effective to address with the larger agency why that 'fair share' isn't being achieved. But of course, politics often gets in the way at this point and the need and temptation – in a high profile way – to be seen to be 'doing something' becomes overwhelming.

If you are going to do it – do it well

It is a standard maxim in life and it applies just as much to place marketing as it does to anything else. It seems that all too often there is a 'me too'

approach to the promotion of place – with everybody trying to tell you that they have the same strengths (but, of course, slightly better) as that other place down the road. Understanding early on what are the real strengths, the real competitive edge of your place, is vital. Instigating, where possible, development activities to support and strengthen that competitive edge and shouting about it as loud as possible is then the route to success. Do not assume that, because that other place is talking big about something, you have to too – the more distinctive (even if you unavoidably have to talk about similar headline sectors as the places that surround you), the better.

There are of course many things that contribute to establishing a place marketing agency with impact and which delivers results - other briefing notes discuss this in more detail. One good way to reduce the multiple and often confusing messages that a myriad of agencies can present is to work in partnership with others who have similar interests as your own

Motorsport Valley

A collaboration between different Regional Development Agencies and other place marketing initiatives in the midlands and the south and east of England – along with the national government. This initiative brings together different interests and combines those in to an overall interest in supporting the development of the Motorsport industry in their locations. Critically, the initiative has the strong support of the industry itself and begins to not only create more effective support for the industry that is already there – but also begins to develop a more coherent – coordinated and less confusing message for potential new individual and corporate investors.



For more on how to create distinctiveness and clarity in a crowded market place and how The Place Marketing Company can help you more effectively promote and market your place, please contact us on:

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