

SME Checklist

Fractional CMO & Interns V Agency

Areas To Consider

- Cost and Flexibility
- Strategy V Activity
- Speed, Agility & Execution
- Data Measurement & Accountability
- Communication and Transparency
- Cultural Fit & Long Term Value
- Real Outcomes



Cost Efficiency & Flexibility

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency
Cost Structure	Pay only for strategic leadership + flexible execution hours	High fixed monthly retainers regardless of results
Overheads	No bloated teams or unnecessary roles	Layers of account managers, creatives, admin overhead
Scalability	Scale hours up or down based on business stage	Long-term contracts and cancellation penalties
Transparency	Clear hourly rates, no hidden markups	Bundled "service packages" with vague deliverables

Result: More value, less waste — spend tracks performance, not promises.

Strategy V Activity

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency
Focus	Commercial strategy linked to business outcomes	Tactical execution with limited strategic insight
Leadership	Direct board-level involvement	Reports to mid-level marketing contacts
Decision-Making	Data-driven and agile	Often reactive, waiting on client briefs
Ownership	Full accountability for ROI	Activity-based reporting with no clear responsibility

Result: A CMO focuses on outcomes. Agencies focus on outputs.



Speed, Agility & Execution

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency
Execution Model	Agile teams led by the CMO, powered by AI and trained interns	Rigid processes and dependency on multiple departments
Responsiveness	Changes implemented in days	Changes take weeks and require approvals
Innovation	Rapid testing, iteration, and learning	Fixed campaign plans and slow reporting cycles

Result: Real-time optimisation replaces “next month’s update.”

Data Measurement & Accountability

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency
Reporting	Transparent dashboards (Looker Studio, Databox) linked to KPIs	Vanity metrics (clicks, reach, impressions)
Accountability	Every metric owned by someone — tracked to revenue	Little or no link to business outcomes
Visibility	Live dashboards accessible to leadership	Monthly PDFs with limited detail
Decision Cycle	Data → Action → Adjustment	Reports → Meetings → Excuses

Result: Evidence-based marketing replaces guesswork and spin.



Communication and Transparency

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency
Structure	Direct access to your CMO — no account manager middle layer	Communication through account teams
Meetings	Focused, data-driven, short	Long, reactive, and retrospective
Clarity	Plain language, commercial focus	Marketing jargon and “performance stories”

Result: You know exactly what’s being done, why, and what it delivered.

Cultural Fit & Long-Term Value

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency
Engagement Style	Embedded as part of your leadership team	External supplier mentality
Knowledge Transfer	Builds in-house skills and processes	Keeps expertise locked in the agency
Longevity	Relationship grows with your business	Often replaced every 12–18 months due to frustration
Cultural Alignment	Shared goals and accountability	Conflicting incentives (billable hours vs ROI)

Result: You grow capability — not dependency.



Real Outcomes

	Fractional CMO + Interns	Traditional Agency	
Goal Alignment	Board metrics — revenue, pipeline, CAC	Marketing metrics — clicks, views, followers	
Success Measurement	Lead quality, conversion, sales velocity	Activity volume and creative output	
ROI Proof	Full-funnel visibility	Fragmented, channel-specific reporting	
Result: Growth that can be proven — and scaled.			

Summary: Why SMEs Are Moving to the Fractional CMO Model

- You get **strategic leadership without full-time overheads**
- You gain **complete visibility** over marketing performance
- You **remove agency dependency** and regain control
- You build **internal capability** through AI and training
- You focus on **pipeline and growth**, not vanity metrics

The outcome:

Less cost | More control | Faster growth.

