

The agency *playbook*

How to become an agency ChatGPT names when clients ask who to hire



Ross Williams

Co-founder, non-executive, Fortitude Media

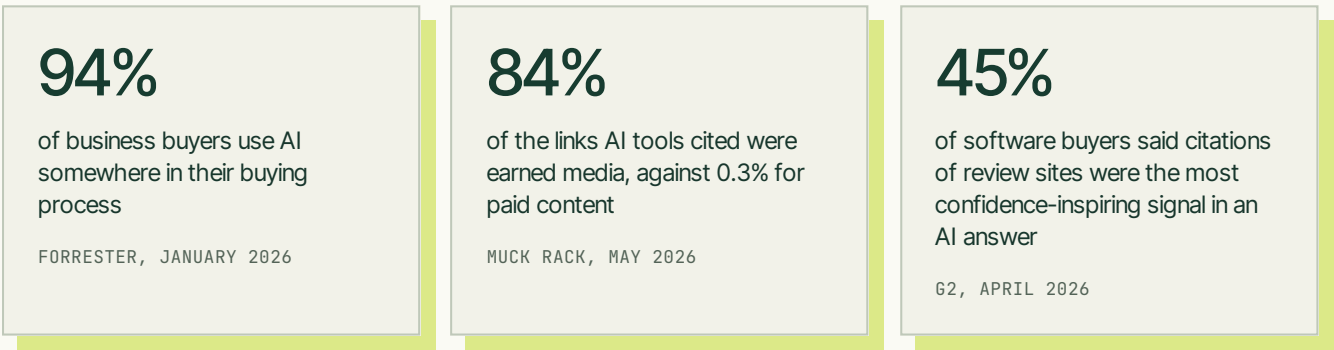
SEPTEMBER 2026 EDITION
FORTITUDEMEDIA.AI

AI assistants name agencies they can match to a specific question, so lead with one clear specialism by sector, discipline or problem. Publish case studies in plain text with the client's problem and approved results, and keep your Clutch, IPA, PRCA or CIPR listings consistent. Say plainly who you are for and how you price, because buyers ask assistants both.

For founders and managing directors of UK marketing, PR, creative and digital agencies.

Most agencies were built on referrals, pitches and the odd award. That route is narrowing. More of the people who hire agencies now start by asking ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini or Perplexity for a shortlist, such as which B2B branding agencies in Manchester work with tech companies. Forrester found in January 2026 that 94% of business buyers use AI somewhere in their buying process.

The assistant names three or four agencies. If you are not among them, you are not on the list, and you rarely learn you were ever considered. Prospects who meet you at a pitch increasingly check you by name before the second meeting. Many excellent agencies are close to invisible, because image portfolios and lines like 'we make brave work' give a machine almost nothing to read.



02	What your buyers ask	P3
03	Where they check you	P4
04	Where you stand	P5
05	The plan	P6
06	Questions and proof	P7
07	Read more	P8

The questions that decide *who gets the call.*

Marketing directors combine a discipline, a sector, a location and a worry, and the last question is often about you by name.

BUYER ASKS

Which B2B marketing agencies in Manchester specialise in SaaS?

BUYER ASKS

Which PR agencies are good at fintech launches?

BUYER ASKS

Best branding agency in London for a professional services firm

BUYER ASKS

What does a B2B marketing agency cost per month in the UK?

BUYER ASKS

Should a founder-led B2B firm hire a specialist agency or a full-service one?

BUYER ASKS

Which UK agencies specialise in getting brands recommended by ChatGPT?

BUYER ASKS

Is this agency good to work with?

TRY THIS

Ask five of these in ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Copilot and Perplexity, each in a fresh chat. Note who is named, and who is named instead of you. Answers vary from run to run, so only count a result that repeats.

How the assistants choose

01 One clear specialism

An assistant matches a specific question to specific evidence. 'Full-service for ambitious businesses' gives it nothing to put forward over an agency that says it does exactly what the buyer asked.

02 Case studies it can read

A client's business problem, what you found, what you did and what changed, in text. A hero image and a gallery give a crawler nothing to work with.

03 Directory and body listings

Clutch, the IPA Agency Finder, the PRCA, the CIPR and the PRWeek UK Top 150 give assistants independent proof of who you are and what you do.

04 Earned coverage

For PR agencies above all, coverage won for clients and your founders' own bylines are the strongest signal, because the assistant is checking you by the thing you sell.

05 Everything agreeing

If Clutch says social media agency, your site says brand consultancy and LinkedIn shows a name you dropped, the assistant struggles to describe you and describes someone else.

The sources assistants *trust in your field.*

An assistant rarely names a firm on its own website's word. It looks for the same facts in places that have checked you independently. These are the ones that matter most for marketing and creative agencies.

SOURCE	WHY IT COUNTS	WHAT TO DO
Clutch	Its Leaders Matrix scores Focus, meaning how specialised an agency is in the service being mapped, and it checks reviewer identity.	Update your service focus, location and recent reviews, and remove old names and retired services.
The Manifest, Sortlist and DesignRush	Buyers use these listings to build shortlists, and assistants that search the web draw on them.	Use one name, one description and the same specialism on every listing.
IPA Agency Finder	It lists member agencies of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, an independent record of who you are.	Check your membership and location match your website.
PRCA, CIPR and the PRWeek UK Top 150	They confirm a PR firm's standing when a buyer asks for a PR agency in a sector.	Show your membership on your site and make sure the name in the Top 150 matches it.
Google, Meta, HubSpot and LinkedIn partner directories	They confirm your partner tier and the services you offer from a source you do not control.	Keep partner tier and services current on each one.
Campaign, The Drum, Marketing Week, PRWeek and your clients' trade press	Muck Rack found earned media made up 84% of the links AI tools cited in 2026.	Spell your agency name the same way in every byline and mention, and write for the titles your clients read.

Common mistakes

Staying full-service

Listing eleven services and forty clients across every sector hides the thing you are best at. You can still take other work while leading with one specialism.

Portfolios built for creatives

Image and video galleries with one line of text, single-page sites that load content on scroll and headlines like 'Brave ideas, beautifully made' give a machine nothing to match.

Abandoned profiles

An old Clutch profile with a previous name and two reviews from years ago works against you. Agencies rebrand and merge often, and old names linger on directories for years.

Paying for awards with little judging

Independently judged schemes with published shortlists, such as D&AD or the IPA Effectiveness Awards, create records worth having. Awards you pay to enter with little visible judging add much less.

Ten questions. *Be honest.*

-
- 01 Does your homepage say in one sentence who you are best for and what you do for them? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 02 Is that same sentence used on LinkedIn and every directory profile? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 03 Can a stranger reading your homepage with the images switched off say what you specialise in? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 04 Do you have at least five case studies in your specialism written in text, with the client's problem, what you found, what you did and what changed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 05 Do the results in your case studies carry the client's approval and a date? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 06 Is your Clutch profile current, with your service focus, location and recent reviews? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 07 Do your IPA, PRCA or CIPR listings use the same name and description as your website? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 08 Have you published how you price, including your model and what changes the price? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 09 Have you published a plain piece on how AI tools have changed your work, timelines and pricing? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-
- 10 Have you asked a client to write about their work with you on their own blog or LinkedIn? ☐ Yes ☐ No
-

Fewer than seven yeses means clients asking an assistant for an agency like yours are probably being given other names.

What to do this month, *and next*.

This month

- 01 Write one sentence that says who you are best for and what you do for them, and use it on your homepage, LinkedIn and every directory profile.
- 02 Ask your own buyer questions in Perplexity, ChatGPT search and Google's AI Overviews, and note which directories appear as sources.
- 03 Update or claim your listings on Clutch, the IPA Agency Finder or your PR body, and on any other directory that showed up, removing old names and retired services.
- 04 Rewrite your three strongest case studies in five steps: the client's problem, what you found, what you did, what changed and a named client quote, with approved, dated results.
- 05 Publish how you price: your model, what changes the price and, if you can, your starting points.
- 06 Publish one plain piece on which tasks you now do faster with AI tools, which you do not trust them with, and how that shows in your pricing and timelines.

The next ninety days

- 01 Build your case study library to at least five in your specialism, naming the sector and size of each client even where you cannot name the client.
- 02 Build comparison pages for the choices your buyers weigh up: specialist against full-service, agency against in-house, retainer against project.
- 03 Ask clients whose work went well to mention it on their own blog or LinkedIn, and to leave a verified review on Clutch.
- 04 For PR agencies, turn coverage you won for clients into case studies that name the titles, with client approval, and place founder bylines in your clients' sector trade press.
- 05 Add sector pages and team pages to your site, and put a date on every thinking piece.

How to tell it is working

- Track a fixed list of 20 to 50 buyer questions, each run several times a month in a clean session.
- Watch the quality of inbound enquiries, which is where most agencies notice it first.
- Count a win only when it repeats, and record losses as well as wins.
- Expect changes within weeks in assistants that search the web live, and months for answers drawn from a model's own memory.

Straight answers.

Is Clutch a reliable way to choose a marketing agency?

It is a useful filter rather than a verdict. Clutch checks reviewer identity and has an editor check every review, and its rankings weigh verified evidence and how focused an agency is. But agencies choose which clients to invite, so reviews are a sample of the happiest ones. Use Clutch to build a shortlist, then check case studies and speak to clients.

Should a founder-led B2B firm hire a specialist agency or a full-service one?

In our view, usually a specialist for the problem that matters most, because the people doing the work will know your buyers and your channel. A full-service agency can suit a firm that needs many things done at a basic level and has no one to coordinate several suppliers. Whichever you choose, one person on your side should own the result.

Should an agency publish its prices?

It helps more than most agencies expect. Buyers ask assistants what agencies charge, and an assistant can only give your figures if it can find them. Typical project ranges, a starting point for monthly retainers and an explanation of what changes the price are enough. Prospects then arrive with realistic budgets.

How do I check an agency's results before hiring them?

Ask for case studies with dated figures the client has approved, then ask to speak to that client. Check whether the client mentions the agency on its own website or LinkedIn, and read the agency's verified reviews on Clutch. For AI search work, ask to see the question list and the month-by-month record behind any claim.

arum®

arum is not an agency. It advises banks, governments and major brands on collections technology, but its problem will be familiar to any agency with a strong track record and a website that undersells it.

310

pages rebuilt across three regions, in weeks

PROBLEM	A 28-year track record, more than 500 projects in 23 countries, and a website that undersold it.
WHAT WE DID	Rewrote every word, sharpened the brand and rebuilt 310 pages across three regions.
RESULT	A website that finally does the firm justice, delivered in weeks rather than months.

"It was obvious from day one that they are founders themselves."

Jamie Waller, CEO and Executive Chair, arum

[READ THE CASE STUDY](#)

Collections and recovery techn

arum®

COLLECTIONS AND RECO

Techn
invest
We're

For 28 years, we've l
world's largest bran
AI and data across c

Book a conversation

TRUSTED & ACCREDITED

ISBC NatW

500+

Projects delivered
For banks, governments and m
brands

The full guides, *free and dated.*

How does our agency get named when clients ask ChatGPT for one? ↗

Should I still pay a marketing agency now that AI can do the work? ↗

Does ChatGPT trust press coverage more than our website or our ads? ↗

Do awards and accreditations make ChatGPT more likely to recommend us? ↗

How do we choose a firm to help us get recommended by ChatGPT? ↗

How do we find out whether ChatGPT is recommending our firm? ↗

SOURCES

[Forrester, B2B buyers make zero-click buying number one \(January 2026\)](#)

[Clutch, Methodology \(September 2026\)](#)

[G2, The Answer Economy: half of B2B software buyers now start with AI chatbots \(April 2026\)](#)

[Muck Rack, Generative Pulse: earned media consistently drives AI citations \(May 2026\)](#)

[IPA, Agency Finder \(September 2026\)](#)



WRITTEN BY

Ross Williams

Co-founder, non-executive, Fortitude Media

Ross built and ran a subscription business for twenty-one years, bootstrapped. He wrote *Subscribe and Conquer* and established the Fortitude Foundation.

Want to know where you stand?

A free Growth Review is thirty minutes with a founder. We check what Google and the AI assistants say about your firm and two competitors, and send three fixes in writing.

[Book a Growth Review ↗](#)

