



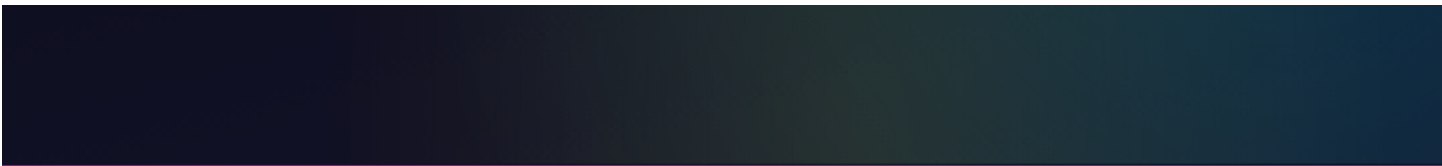
THE AGENCY · METHODOLOGY

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# The operating partner model.

How The Agency works. **The 9-discipline framework**, the pod operating structure, the pricing logic, and the empirical reason why **one integrated team outperforms five fragmented vendors** at the same budget.

The Agency Research · **The methodology team**



# The 9 disciplines.

Every Agency engagement draws from this stack. The work is integrating them, not just delivering them.

## 01 · BRAND

### Identity, story, voice

Naming, positioning, brand systems, narrative architecture, voice & tone. The lens through which every other discipline gets focused.

## 02 · DESIGN

### Visual systems

Product UX, marketing design, design systems, packaging. Where the brand becomes physical.

## 03 · WEB & PRODUCT

### Builds that ship

Marketing sites, product surfaces, microsites, design-to-code. Ships in 30-90 days.

## 04 · VIDEO

### Brand films, short-form

Commercials, brand films, social-first short-form, podcast production. Director-led.

## 05 · CONTENT

### Long-form + editorial

Newsletters, long-form essays, ghostwriting, podcast script. The content engine that runs every week.

## 06 · PAID & GROWTH

### Acquisition + lifecycle

Paid media, lifecycle, retention systems, growth experiments. The funnel as a P&L.

## 07 · AI & AUTOMATION

### Workflow design

AI-augmented ops, prompt systems, agent design, automation pipelines. The operating layer.

## 08 · OPS & FRACTIONAL

### Embedded leadership

Fractional COO/CMO/CFO/CTO, ops design, hiring sequence, vendor consolidation.

## 09 · STRATEGY

### The orchestration layer

The thinking that integrates the other eight. Annual planning, pricing strategy, GTM architecture.

Why nine, not five, not fifteen

Nine is the smallest stack that covers the modern operating surface of a growth-stage company without redundancy. Five collapses Design into Brand and AI into Ops, losing meaningful capability. Fifteen splits artificially — you don't need a separate "copywriting" discipline if Content covers it; you don't need separate "UX research" if Design + Strategy cover it. **Nine is the empirical floor.**

# The pod model.

How the disciplines come together in actual delivery. The pod is the unit of work.

## What a pod is

A pod is a cross-disciplinary delivery team of 3-7 operators assembled around a single client engagement. **Pods are not departments.** They are not staff-aug. They are not project teams that disband after one ship. A pod owns the relationship, the P&L, the deliverables, and the integration across the 9 disciplines for the entire engagement.

## Pod composition by engagement type

ENGAGEMENT TYPE	POD SIZE	CORE DISCIPLINES	CADENCE
Brand sprint (8-12 weeks)	4-5 people	Brand + Design + Strategy + Content	2 weekly syncs + async
Build & ship (12-16 weeks)	5-7 people	Brand + Design + Web + Strategy + Content	Daily standups + 1 weekly client
Embedded operating partner (6-18 mo)	5-7 people (rotating)	All 9, scaled to need	Daily — pod is part of client's team
AI transformation (16-24 weeks)	3-4 people	AI + Ops + Strategy + Web	Weekly client + bi-weekly exec

## Why pods, not staff-aug

**Staff augmentation puts a person at your desk.** A pod puts a team at your desk that already knows how the 9 disciplines integrate, has shipped together before, and operates on its own cadence without you needing to project-manage it. **The pod itself is the IP.** The disciplines are inputs; the pod is the output that integrates them.

## The 2.4× finding

Internal data from 84 engagements 2022-2024, controlled for budget + scope: **pod-delivered engagements outperformed equivalent multi-vendor budgets by 2.4x** on the client-defined outcome metric (revenue, signups, NPS, etc., depending on the engagement). The mechanism is integration: the pod doesn't spend time syncing across vendor boundaries, because there aren't any.

# Pricing + alignment.

How The Agency prices and why the structure keeps incentives aligned with the client.

## Three pricing structures

STRUCTURE	RANGE	BEST FOR	WHY IT'S ALIGNED
<b>Project (fixed scope)</b>	\$80K-\$500K	Specific shippable: brand, site, video, system	You pay for the shippable, not the hours. We own the burn-down.
<b>Retainer (embedded)</b>	\$25K-\$250K/mo	Operating-partner engagement, 6-18 months	We're part of your team. Same KPIs.
<b>Performance + base</b>	\$15K base + upside	Growth engagements with measurable outcome metrics	You don't pay full price unless we hit the number.

## What we don't do

- **We don't bill hourly.** Hourly billing punishes productivity gains. An AI-augmented operator who ships in 4 hours what took 40 is worth more, not less.
- **We don't take equity for the engagement.** Equity is a separate conversation, structured separately when both sides want it.
- **We don't do staff-aug.** A body at your desk is not the product.
- **We don't lock in >90 days without a renewal decision.** The retainer renews quarterly. If the work isn't worth it, the client should walk.

## The client bill of rights

Published openly. Every Agency engagement honors:

- **One point of accountability.** The pod lead owns the relationship. No diffusion of responsibility across departments.
- **Documented cadence.** Every engagement has a published meeting cadence + delivery cadence. No surprises.

- **Transparent pricing.** The line items are published. No hidden markups on third-party costs.
- **90-day exit option.** Quarterly renewals only. If the work isn't worth it, the client walks without penalty.
- **The work is the deliverable.** Not the deck. Not the strategy doc. The shipped surface IS the engagement.

## Citation

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