

The 10-Question Agency Stress Test

A weighted scorecard across five dimensions. Score every agency on your shortlist against the same ten questions, side by side, instead of relying on how each pitch meeting felt.

How to use it:

Score each question 1–5 per agency (5 = strong, evidence-backed answer; 1 = vague or no answer).
Sum the two scores per dimension × 2 for a subtotal out of 20; add all five subtotals for a total out of 100.
Before trusting the highest score, revisit any single question scored 1 or 2 — it's worth a direct conversation regardless of the total.

Question	Wt.	Agency A	Agency B	Agency C	Agency D
1. Relevant Experience	x2				
Have they shipped products in your category and for your audience type before?	x2				
Can they show outcomes from similar-scale projects, not just polished visuals?	x2				
1. Relevant Experience — subtotal (out of 20)					
2. Structured Research Process	x2				
Do they run user interviews before design work begins?	x2				
Do they usability-test with real users before final designs ship?	x2				
2. Structured Research Process — subtotal (out of 20)					
3. Business Impact Metrics	x2				
Can they cite specific conversion, retention, or task-success gains from past work?	x2				
Do they define success metrics with you before the project starts?	x2				
3. Business Impact Metrics — subtotal (out of 20)					
4. Collaborative Process	x2				
Will your product and engineering teams be looped in throughout, not just at handoff?	x2				
Is their communication cadence and process transparent from day one?	x2				
4. Collaborative Process — subtotal (out of 20)					
5. Transparent Pricing & Ownership	x2				
Is pricing structured clearly — fixed scope or retainer — with no hidden add-ons?	x2				
Do you retain full ownership of files, source designs, and IP after the engagement?	x2				
5. Transparent Pricing & Ownership — subtotal (out of 20)					
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)					