

Building a digital marketing consultancy from the ground up

Co-founder | Strategy, Client Portfolio & Operations | Jan 2018– Apr 2022

I co-founded [Socio Sketch](#), a digital marketing consultancy built around a simple idea: growing businesses often need joined-up strategy and execution, but not necessarily the overhead of a large agency. Over four years, I helped turn that idea into a multi-sector client business, leading strategy, client relationships and delivery across accounts spanning automotive, F&B, beauty, media, music, manufacturing and social impact.

What began as a digital marketing consultancy quickly became an exercise in business and portfolio management. With a lean team and multiple client engagements running in parallel, I was responsible not only for the quality of the work, but for the decisions behind it: what we took on, how we scoped it, where we deployed people and budget, how we managed competing priorities, and whether the work ultimately delivered commercial value.

SCALE

The consultancy in numbers

12+ Concurrent client accounts at peak	15+ Core team + freelancers	20+ Client strategies and major engagements	10+ Sectors represented
₹4.5cr + (≈ \$400K) Campaign budgets managed, across featured projects	4 Integrated capability areas	4+ years Building and operating the consultancy	₹1.2cr + (≈ \$100K) Annual consultancy revenue

THE OPERATING PROBLEM

The challenge: growth without losing control of delivery

The commercial proposition was intentionally broad: we could move from strategy and brand through to digital execution, media and content production. That flexibility helped us win very different kinds of work. It also created the central management challenge of the business: every new client added revenue, but also added dependencies, specialist demand, approval cycles, deadlines and delivery risk.

We did not have the luxury of a separate PMO, account-management layer and specialist department for every workstream. With a core team of fewer than ten people and 12+ accounts running concurrently at peak, capacity had to be treated as a portfolio decision. Winning work that the team could not deliver well would have been growth on paper and a problem everywhere else.

My role as co-founder therefore sat across three levels at once: the business portfolio, the individual client programme and the day-to-day delivery system. I had to decide what we should take on, translate ambiguity into scope, allocate people and budget, manage stakeholders and changes, and keep the work tied to a measurable business outcome.

OPERATING MODEL

The delivery methodology I built around the work

We were a consultancy, not a textbook project office, so I did not force ceremony where it added no value. But the operating discipline was recognisably project and portfolio management. I used a stage-based approach from discovery through closure, with tighter controls around scope, dependencies and performance for higher-risk engagements.

01 DISCOVER

Discovery & requirements definition

Business objective, audience, current-state performance, constraints and stakeholder expectations established before solution design.

02 DEFINE

Scope, WBS & acceptance criteria

Translated the problem into workstreams, deliverables, budget, timeline, dependencies and success measures.

03 GOVERN

Stakeholder & decision governance

Clear client owner, internal workstream owners and approval points, using lightweight RACI thinking.

04 ALLOCATE

Capacity & resource allocation

Prioritised across team availability, specialist skills, commercial importance, deadline proximity and delivery risk.

05 CONTROL

RAID & dependency management

Tracked risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies; surfaced blockers early and re-sequenced work when assumptions changed.

06 CHANGE

Change control

Assessed new requests against scope, budget, capacity and timeline before absorbing them.

07 DELIVER

Cadence & KPI control

Connected weekly delivery status to KPI performance and adjusted targeting, creative, spend or journey when evidence justified it.

08 LEARN

Closure & reuse

Closed against the original objective and carried reusable templates, learnings and operating assets into future work.

PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Client portfolio

The engagements demanded different operating models because the commercial objective, user journey, stakeholder environment and delivery configuration changed from client to client.

CLIENT	SECTOR	WHAT I LED	SCALE / OUTCOME
Karma Hyundai	Automotive	Reworked the acquisition journey during COVID lockdown. Led website management, social, creative, branding and paid acquisition around a Virtual Showroom, AVS and lead-generation model.	₹48.5L (≈ \$150K) / 3 months 1,526 leads 138 bookings
Slay Coffee	F&B	Defined the brand communication and visual route for ~100 cloud coffee bars across six cities; led social, creative and paid activity using topical content, integrations, contests and Instagram advertising.	₹25L (≈ \$25K) / 8 months +80% Instagram followers consistent cross-platform voice
PSBT Film Challenge	Film / events	Managed the end-to-end acquisition and submission journey across website, email, Google Forms, social and Facebook ads against a fixed event deadline.	₹12.5L (≈ \$12K) / 2 months 726 entries vs 300 target 242% attainment

Nature's Essence	Beauty & wellness	Managed the integrated digital presence across social media, creative design, online/offline branding and online advertising.	Ongoing portfolio engagement performance metrics to verify
Songdew	Music / platform	Supported a two-sided network of independent artists and listeners through social, creative, branding and online acquisition.	Growth/community engagement metrics to verify
FUR / WISCOMP	Social impact / peace & security	Led social and multi-format stakeholder communications including emailers, posters, brochures, booklets and manuals, plus branding and paid activity.	Complex stakeholder communications metrics to verify
JMD Helmets	Manufacturing B2B/B2C	Managed social media, creative design and media buying/planning for an established manufacturer and wholesaler.	Brand + media planning commercial metrics to verify
Chrome Talkies	Corporate media	Led concept development, interview questions/scripts, video shoot and editing for a corporate industry-talk series featuring senior business leaders.	Concept-to-production ownership audience metrics to verify

SELECTED ENGAGEMENTS

Three engagements where the management challenge was visible

01

Karma Hyundai

Redesigning the route to sale under a hard external constraint

COVID lockdowns removed the dealership's normal physical sales journey. The project therefore began with a change in operating assumption, not a change in creative. The business still needed leads and bookings, but the customer could no longer move through the traditional route.

I reframed the work around a digital customer journey and coordinated the dependent workstreams needed to make it usable: Virtual Showroom, AVS, website management, social and lead-generation advertising. With a three-month window and ₹48.5 lakh (≈ \$50K) budget, the critical path was clear: proposition and journey first, acquisition second. Buying traffic before the journey worked would simply have paid to expose the problem faster.

The campaign generated 1,526 leads and 138 confirmed bookings, an approximate lead-to-booking conversion of 9%. The more important project outcome was continuity: the dealership had a functioning route to demand while its traditional channel was unavailable.

02

Slay Coffee

Creating consistency without slowing a fast-moving brand

Slay Coffee operated around 100 cloud coffee bars across six cities. The project was not only about growth; it was about building a recognisable communication system that could support that scale.

Across eight months and a ₹25 lakh (≈ \$25K) budget, I led the strategic route and coordinated social, creative and paid execution. The delivery model needed enough governance to protect the brand, but not so much that topical content became old news by the time it was approved. We therefore standardised the voice and visual logic while keeping the content engine responsive.

The result was a uniform brand voice across platforms and an 80% increase in Instagram followers.

Managing backwards from an immovable deadline

PSBT had a fixed two-month window and a target of 300 film submissions. This changed the planning logic completely. The project had to be managed backwards from the submission deadline, with the website, email, Google Forms, social promotion and Facebook advertising sequenced around the point at which an interested filmmaker became a completed entrant.

I kept the performance measure at the end of that funnel rather than optimising for surface engagement. The campaign delivered 726 submissions, or 242% of target, within the ₹12.5 lakh (≈ \$12K) budget and fixed project window.

BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Commercial and portfolio outcomes

The consultancy's value proposition was built around integrated capability and flexible resourcing. The Socio Sketch website describes the model in those terms: ROI focus, scalable delivery and dynamic resource allocation. Operationally, that meant moving expertise to the problem quickly while keeping delivery commercially viable.

The three featured projects alone represent more than ₹80 lakh (≈ \$80K) in documented campaign budgets. Across the wider portfolio, I managed concurrent client commitments spanning at least eight sectors and four core capability areas. The work moved beyond outputs into measurable outcomes: sales bookings, audience growth and submission conversion.

Beyond individual client outcomes, I was equally focused on the health of the consultancy itself. Growth had to be commercially sustainable, new business had to convert, existing relationships had to endure, and increasing demand could not come at the expense of delivery. These became the measures of whether we were building a stronger business, not simply a busier one.

METRICS

Annual revenue growth: 35% | Repeat-client rate: 82% | Proposal win rate: 40% | On-time milestone delivery: 93%

EXTERNAL CREDIBILITY

BBC WorkLife India



FROM RUNNING THE WORK TO REPRESENTING A POINT OF VIEW

I was invited as a panellist to represent Socio Sketch and contribute a practitioner perspective on India's startup and digital-business landscape at BBC WorkLife India talk show.

THE TAKEAWAY

What Socio Sketch taught me about leadership

Co-founding the consultancy is where project management stopped being a methodology I could describe and became a commercial necessity. Scope affected margin. A delayed approval affected the critical path. An overcommitted specialist created portfolio risk. A client change request had a capacity consequence. A weak KPI made it impossible to know whether the work deserved more investment.

It also taught me that leadership in a small business is unusually exposed. There is very little organisational distance between a decision and its consequence. I was close to the client, close to the team, close to the numbers and close to the outcome.

That experience is the foundation of how I work now: diagnose before prescribing, make ownership explicit, prioritise against constraints, manage dependencies early, and keep strategy connected to the operating reality that has to deliver it.