The 7-Point Partnership Pressure-Test Checklist

Purpose:

Use this diagnostic before you sign. Or before you renew.

Why it matters:

Most agency partnerships don't fail because of missed deadlines.

They fail silently — through misalignment, drift, and diluted delivery.

This checklist catches issues before they cost you clients, margin, or sanity.

1. Strategic Goal Alignment

Question:

> **What exactly are we trying to win, protect, or unlock — together?**

- ☐ We've defined a shared vision of success
- ☐ The partner understands our sales positioning and how their work supports it
- ☐ Our internal and external teams are aligned on outcomes

Red flag: "We'll figure it out as we go."

2. Escalation & Response Protocols

Question:

What happens when something goes wrong?

- ☐ They've documented hotfix/escalation workflows
- ☐ SLAs or expectations are defined for client-facing emergencies
- ☐ We know exactly who we'll hear from — and how fast

Red flag: Silence after something breaks.

3. Brand & Voice Fidelity

Question:

Can this partner scale with us — without diluting what makes us distinct?

- ☐ They match our tone, polish, and naming conventions
- ☐ They QA for fit, not just function
- ☐ The client won't detect a handoff — because it won't feel like one

Red flag: The client says, "This doesn't feel like you."

4. Role Clarity

Question:

Do we agree on the role they're playing — and the one they're not?

- ☐ We've defined if they're a Window, Option, or Positioning partner
- ☐ We've set boundaries on client visibility and brand exposure
- ☐ Everyone internally knows their purpose — and their limits

Red flag: They post your client's work on LinkedIn unapproved.

5. Scope Ownership

Question:

> ## Who owns the edges — when the work gets slippery?

- ☐ There's a clear policy for tweaks, rounds, and revisions
- ☐ We agree on what counts as out-of-scope (and what doesn't)
- ☐ There's a process for pricing "gray zone" asks

Red flag: You're mediating budget fights no one pre-agreed to.

6. Trust Integrity

Question:

> ## Will this partner sharpen our edge — or make us look off without being wrong?

- ☐ They catch subtle tone or UX issues before the client does
- ☐ They understand "almost right" can still feel wrong
- ☐ They act invisible — but always accountable

Red flag: You find yourself rewriting work you technically approved.

7. Exit Awareness

Question:

> ## How will we know this is still working — and what happens if it isn't?

- ☐ We've scheduled quarterly fit-checks or scorecards
- ☐ We've defined what "fit failure" looks like — before it happens
- ☐ There's a graceful exit or recalibration process

Red flag: You're still paying the invoice... but your team is routing around them.

Final Score:

Count your ✅s. Count your ❌s. Count your gut flinches.

Then ask: ***Would we trust this partner with our reputation under pressure?***