

Shopify CRO Hiring Scorecard

Agency or freelancer: the questions, price decoder and red flags for the first call. By Kaspian Fuad, Shopify CRO consultant.

1. Fit: shape of the work

One leak, one funnel, one store
One senior person. Freelancer.

3+ parallel tests, 3+ specialists
A team. Agency.

Multi-region, 24/7 SLA, dedicated PM
Agency, and budget for it.

Store under \$10M/yr, no internal CRO
Freelancer almost always wins on cost.

2. Price decoder

Freelancer: \$40 to \$75/hr direct
\$3,000 to \$4,000/mo at 15 to 20 hrs/wk.

Agency: \$100 to \$250/hr blended
\$5,000 to \$10,000/mo, \$3K to \$12K range.

Agency project: \$8,000 to \$30,000
6 to 16 weeks. *Ask what ships in week 1.*

Audit: \$500 to \$2,500 vs \$5K to \$15K
Same deliverable, different overhead.

3. Breakeven math

Annual cost / annual revenue
= % lift needed just to break even.

\$4,000/mo on a \$2M store = 2.4%
Clearable in month one on most funnels.

\$10,000/mo on a \$2M store = 6%
Three times the runway to burn.

Under 3% = safe bet, over 8% = wait
Fix traffic or margin first.

4. Five questions for the call

Show a dated before/after like my store
Logo walls prove nothing. Funnels do.

Who touches my theme, at what rate?
Quote must break down to rate x hours.

What ships in week one?
A month of 'discovery' is a red flag.

How and where do I see the numbers?
Weekly, flat-traffic, GA4 + Shopify.

What happened when you were wrong?
A named revert is the right answer.

5. Agency red flags

Flat fee, hours undisclosed
You are paying for the fee to be vague.

Strategist on the call, junior in the theme
Ask who actually writes the Liquid.

Monthly deck, no deployed code
Consulting retainer wearing a CRO label.

Their own site fails Core Web Vitals
Selling what they do not practice.

6. Freelancer red flags

No public rate, no public results
Transparency is the whole advantage.

Design-only, cannot ship theme code
Diagnosis and fix must be one motion.

No plan for leave or overload
Ask what happens in a two-week absence.

Guarantees a % lift up front
Nobody honest guarantees a number.

7. Scope to put in writing

Weekly cross-source audit
Shopify Analytics, GA4, GSC, Clarity, Lighthouse.

Prioritized sprint, shipped to theme
Highest-impact leak first, every week.

Friday report: shipped, moved, next
One page, real numbers, not a deck.

Revert policy for failed changes
Losing tests get rolled back, in writing.

8. Contract terms to check

Hours billed on real time, weekly
Or monthly in advance with rollover.

Cancel with 30 days notice
Never locked past the next cycle.

Theme access via staff account, not shared login
Revocable, auditable.

Work on a duplicate theme, never live
Live edits with no rollback = walk away.

9. The 90-day bar

Week 1: first fix live
Cheapest, highest-impact leak first.

Month 1: one funnel step moved
ATC, reached checkout or CVR, on flat traffic.

Day 90: compounding gains
Checkout + search + speed stacking.

Reference: 8 sprints, ATC +28%, checkout +30%
Shopify Plus store, sessions +4%.

10. Metrics to demand weekly

Revenue per session
The one number discounting cannot fake.

Add-to-cart rate, reached-checkout rate
Where the leak actually is.

Conversion rate vs category benchmark
Fashion 2.77%, furniture 1.29%, beauty 5.32%.

AOV and cart CLS
Catch a CVR win that quietly cut basket size.