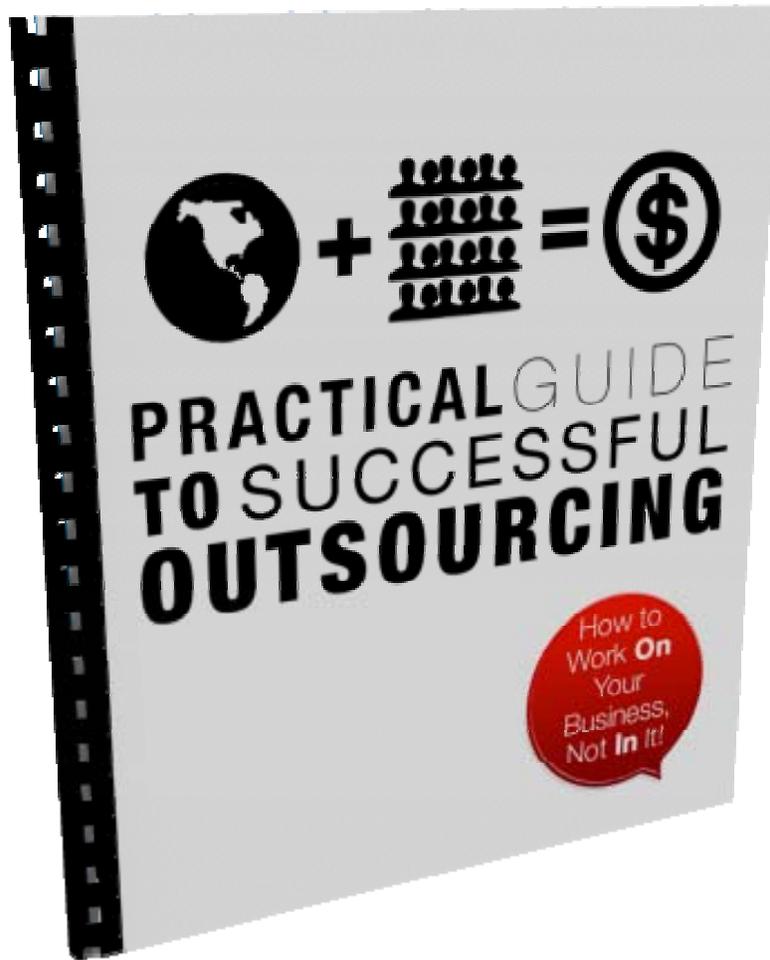


Practical Guide To Successful Outsourcing



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Introduction:

Wouldn't you just love to have more time to yourself or to spend with your family? Instead you find yourself chained to your computer for 14 hours a day while running your business.

Discover the world of outsourcing and you will be amazed at how you can free up your time and energy. In fact, if you outsource correctly your business will actually grow. You will end up with more customers, more time to create products, more emails to answer and more requests from JV partners.

If this sounds like the ideal scenario then you are in the right place. This guide will provide you with the top 10 tips to allow you to successfully outsource your work the right way. By following these tips you will discover just how to communicate effectively with the outsourcer so the job gets done right the first time around.

You won't have to deal with horror stories and payment issues. Instead you will know how to choose the right service providers and what's more, you will learn how to keep them working for you long term!

Happy reading and successful outsourcing.

Tip #1

Why Outsource?

Probably the first thing you think of when you hear the word outsource is how much it is going to cost. All you see are dollar signs going off in your head. You may be surprised to find out that outsourcing is not that expensive and really worth the money.

Running an online business take time and energy, you can easily be spending 18 hours a day strapped to your computer. The hours fly by and sometimes you feel as though you have nothing accomplished. This is very true when you do certain mundane tasks, or those that you are not that great at.

Right there you have the number one reason why you should outsource. To get those tasks which you are not competent at done faster. Why spend hours or days creating graphics for a header or website when you can give the task to someone who knows and loves how to do this. Wouldn't it be worth paying someone a few dollars instead of spending two days attempting this yourself?

By freeing up your time you will be able to concentrate on other areas of your business. This includes planning, answering emails, marketing and branding your business and lots more.

Take a look at it this way, say you are an incredible writer and enjoy creating e-books. Even if you write fast you would be lucky to write two books a month. If you were to use outsourcing services you could potentially create unlimited books. Think what that could do for your income potential?

You can also potentially save money on resources by outsourcing. For example graphics software can be really expensive and requires a huge learning curve. Outsourcing can be a great alternative in this case.

Outsource Before You Need It

This would probably be the smartest advice I could give to anyone. Start outsourcing before your business grows too big and you are totally swamped with work. The larger

you grow the more emails you will have to answer, the more customer service questions and issues you will have to deal with.

If you are into affiliate marketing then you will end up with a barrage of websites and blogs which all need to be maintained. This can get to a point when all you are doing all day is updating, editing and creating new posts.

One of the easiest ways to start outsourcing is to make a list of all the jobs which a) you dislike doing and/or b) which you are not good at.

Then start looking for someone to help you with these tasks. Doing this will get you used to the process of outsourcing and it could help you find reliable staff members. Finding someone that grows with your business is fantastic and they become accustomed to how you work and the type of results which you expect.

Don't make the mistake of waiting until you have a thriving busy with tons of day to day tasks that have to be done. Outsource **NOW** and you will easily learn how to hire the best people for the job effortlessly.

Tip #2

Types of Tasks to Outsource

Many companies outsource these days as a way to save money. The type of outsourcing they do includes:

- Payroll
- Hiring
- Call Centers
- Customer Service

The same can apply to a small business as well. You can outsource the basic running of your business to a VA or Virtual Assistant or secretary. This person can then take care of the small daily tasks such as answering emails, placing ads, writing blog posts and providing customer service to your clients.

Additional outsourcing jobs that are popular for online marketers include:

- Setting up a Shopping Cart

- Installing Blogs
- Website design
- Autoresponder message creation
- Email list management
- Creating a membership
- Setting up affiliate software
- Traffic generation
- SEO both on and offline
- Research
- Copywriting
- Transcriptions from meetings, videos etc
- Secretarial duties
- Graphics for e-books, sales pages etc

The list is endless and you could pretty much outsource any task at all.

Off Shore Outsourcing

Outsourcing to people in other countries is popular and is seen as a way of saving money. This is why currently outsourcing to places like India and the Philippines is on the increase. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this but take a close look at the task which you want completed.

The biggest issue can be a language one. They may not completely understand your instructions and what you get back is not what you wanted. This is why communication on a daily basis is key.

Even if you live in the U.S. and outsource to the U.K or Australia especially for a writing project, you can run into problems. The project can be returned with spelling mistakes and idiosyncrasies. This boils down to citizens in these countries calling things by different names and terms. Then you need to account for the variations in spelling from North America to Europe and Australia.

To combat this issue try to have the person use North American spellings and maybe even give them a list of commonly used terms which are often changed. For a U.K. writer this could include Drug Store instead of Pharmacist or Chemist and flashlight for torch. In England chips and potato chips are not the same thing!

Tip #3

Be Clear on what you Want Done

The number one thing that you need to remember is that you must be explicitly clear with your instructions. You are so accustomed to doing a task that you perform it without thinking. A good way to overcome this is to write down detailed instructions the next time you actually do the task.

Your goal should be to create a two or three page instruction booklet on each task. This may seem a little extreme but it will help to eliminate problems. There is no point in outsourcing if all you do all day long is to answer questions.

Create Guides or Manuals

Another good idea is to create step by step videos or guides on what you want done. This is easy to do and having a visual can be extremely beneficial to a new person.

If your outsourcer is going to post to your blog or add Autoresponder emails for you, show them the complete process. This includes logging into your account, creating a blog post, adding keywords and tags and publishing or scheduling your posts.

Your best bet is to assume they have never done this task before and it is better to provide them with too much information, than not enough.

Once you have your process written down or captured on video you must then clearly define what the 'job' or 'task' involves. You don't want to tell someone to post one blog post to your blog each day for a month. You need to do the following:

- Provide them with a guideline as to how many words you expect 250 -300 or more
- Give them keywords or subject headings to work with
- If you want photos, provide resource links and give a few examples

If someone is creating a report or e-book have them submit an outline to you first. It is very easy for two people to come up with a different take on the same subject. This is very true if your idea is not completely worked out in your head first. This can actually be a good thing, as someone else's view point can provide you with some great new information and opinions.

Once you have a step by step guide or manual created then all you do is give each new member a copy. They will have all the information at their finger tips. If issues do arise then you can easily make amendments and keep your guides up to date. This will become a huge time saver as your business grows.

Tip #4

State Your Expectations & Explain Your Terms

Always remember you are the one doing the hiring and paying. Therefore, you must explain what you expect and what your payment terms are. Again be explicit don't say I need this article or header in a few days. Tell them you need it by a certain date. This way you both have a deadline to meet. This will also give you the opportunity to see if this person can meet deadlines or if they always make excuses and ask for extensions.

Payment terms can be tricky but they must be agreed upon before the job is started. There is nothing wrong with haggling for a price with the person. You can ask for a quote and then respond with what you think is reasonable.

Here you don't want to forget about research or finding photos to use. This can easily add into a person's time and is part of any creation process.

Once you have the payment amount agreed upon, confirm it via email, so you both have a copy of it. It is also a great idea to start a spreadsheet for each employee and you can list your payment rates and methods along with jobs assigned.

You will also want to discuss payment dates. Some outsourcers wish to have full payment upfront while others are happy to wait until the job is completed. One good method which often pleases both parties is to pay 50/50. Remember many outsourcers have provided clients with work and then never gotten paid. So you need to approach this from both sides, the provider and the payee.

Contracts and Agreements:

Drawing up contracts or agreements has its benefits and this will depend upon how you run your business. Having a contract in place allows both parties to feel confident about their business relationship.

A contract can be useful for long term assignments and will contain all the information regarding payment and delivery of the jobs to be completed. It will also allow each party a specific time in which to cancel the agreement if necessary. Most contracts can be drawn up on a monthly, semi monthly or yearly basis. It will allow for renewals and for withdrawal of services, without worries from either side.

Many people prefer not to use a contract and just rely on a verbal or email contract. Again this is going to depend on how you both feel about the work that has to be completed.

For small tasks and jobs a contract is not always necessary or viable. But if you wish to hire someone exclusively then it can be a good option. It provides you with the knowledge that you have a regular employee and the other person is guaranteed an income. You can then also have them sign a non disclosure agreement if necessary.

Tip #5

Get them to Explain the Project to You

All you want to do here is to get the person to reply to you with an understanding of what they are going to do. This will include the task to be done, graphics, writing or installing a word press blog. What they are doing and how long it is expected to take.

This step is very helpful if language might possibly be a barrier. It is a simple way of knowing whether or not they will have any issues with the job.

At the same time be sure that they can contact you at any time with questions. One of the best ways to do this is by using a service such as Skype. It is free to install and you can communicate via text or by talking directly over the internet.

When you do receive questions be certain to answer them right away. Otherwise this could cause a delay in your project.

If your project is technical then having them explain what they need to do back to you is very helpful.

Request Reports

This is another important step and depending upon the project you could request either a daily or a weekly update. It is a helpful way to ensure your project stays on track and it provides a way for you to check upon the progress the person is making. If two days later they are still working on the same section, then they might have run into problems. You could easily offer suggestions and advice if necessary.

Tip #6

Posting Your Projects/Tasks

Once you are ready to begin the hiring process you will need to actually post your job offer. There are certain requirements that you will want to look into ahead of time including:

- Finding out how much it costs to post your project
- What is the fee and commission structure and what this will cost you
- What payment methods do they accept?
- Do they have an Escrow system in place?
- Can you communicate away from the site?

There are benefits to keeping your communication on site, as this gives you a record of all your emails and messages. Normally you have the choice to use other communication channels as you see fit.

When placing a job or project you are not normally required to make a payment. Once you hire someone then fees and commissions come into play. Percentage rates will vary from company to company so look at this closely before making your final decision.

As you are considered the employer you must make sure that all your tax paperwork is correct and up to date. This is solely your responsibility.

When you post your project you will need to describe the job in as much detail as possible. Make your job description clear, detailed and concise. You want to post your

deadline and your payment price. Take the time to make your offer professional and you will attract a higher quality worker.

Many sites will allow you to upload documents so you can provide examples of how you want something done. Again this just helps to attract qualified individuals.

Once your project is published you will begin to receive lots of applications. You would have also set a time limit on accepting applications and resumes. Go through this list carefully and contact those that you feel meet your requirements.

Setting up interviews on Skype can be extremely helpful. Right away this allows you to connect with people who have Skype and know how to use it. During your interview ask them about their experience, their likes and dislikes. You may find that this person has skills in many different areas, ones that could help you in your business in the future.

Once you have decided who to hire, then award them the job and keep in contact. You can easily give small jobs out to a few people and see what results you get. When you find those that you are satisfied with provide them with regular work and build a good relationship with them.

Before you know it you will have a small team of talented individuals ready to assist you in all areas of your business.

Recap:

- Give the prospect a clear project description
- Show that you know exactly what you want
- Agree upon number of revisions which you expect
- Reply to questions regarding project quickly
- Provide feedback once project is completed

Tip #7

Finding the Right People

The best advice that I can give you here is to test your outsourcer first. If your end goal is to have reports or e-books written give the person a trial or test job first. This could be a short report or one or two articles. Then if you are happy with the work you can offer them a 50 page e-book or more.

By taking the time to do this step you are making sure that you have first hired the right person, second that they can deliver the correct content and third that you are both happy with the payment terms. No one can afford to waste money.

When interviewing a prospect you can ask for references and examples of their work. Most professional freelancers will have their own website with a portfolio on it. One thing to remember here is that many freelancers or ghostwriters cannot disclose who they are working for, as this person is claiming all rights to their work. You will have to be discrete and accept their explanation for this.

Another thing that you can do is a quick search on their name and see what this comes back with. You can see if they are involved in other businesses or if they have blogs or websites created. This is an easy way to check on the quality of their content.

Also take into consideration that many freelancers are just starting out and have no references etc. If this is the case you could offer to provide them with a reference or testimonial once the task or job is completed. Many times a new freelancer will do one small job at no charge just to build up their portfolio.

Tap into your network of business associates and friends and ask them who they use for certain tasks. Many freelancers and virtual assistants simply get work from referrals and never actually advertise their services. This can be a fantastic way to find a wonderful addition to your team.

Payments

The easiest way to pay someone is normally via PayPal. Look into using their Mass Payment service as this can possibly save you money on PayPal fees, which can really eat into a chunk of your money.

If you do decide to use PayPal ensure that the outsourcers you hire have the ability to receive payments this way. PayPal has a huge list of countries which they are active in, so be sure that the country of your choice is listed.

Tip #8

The Best Places to Find Outsourcers

There are plenty of sites on the internet that have a slew of people ready to work for you. Some of the more well known ones include:

- Elance
- O-Desk
- Shelancers dot com
- Freelancers dot com
- VA Networking dot com
- Fiverr – where nothing costs more than \$5 per task
- Write Swaps – hire professional writers at great prices, this can be a fantastic way to test out writers and find ones that compliment your team

Utilizing Forums & Social Sites

One of the most well known forums is the Warrior Forum. This forum provides you with a huge selection of people willing to work for you at reasonable prices. You can either post your task on the site or look through the Warrior For Hire section and see if there is anyone which meets your requirements.

One of the greatest things about using forums is that each posted job comes with feedback. This way you can see if the quality was good, if the work was delivered on time and if there were any type of payment or other issues on either end. This is a great way to check on their reputation before you decide to hire them.

Here are some additional places which you can utilize:

- Digital Point

- Site Point
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Craigslist

With sites such as LinkedIn you can easily connect with different types of people and it is these connections that can lead you to finding reliable outsourcers. Again this method uses word of mouth referrals and can result in some fantastic connections, for both for your outsourcers and for growing your business.

Online Search for Outsourcers

The following is a list of keywords which will help you find outsourcers. Don't forget that if you wish to find some local just add your location into the search term.

Toronto or New York + ghostwriter

Keywords

- Outsourcers
- Outsource providers
- Outsourcing
- Out sourcing
- Freelance Web Designer
- Ghostwriter
- Freelancers
- Free lance
- Transcriptionists

- Writers
- Web Designers
- Graphic Artists
- Press Release Writers
- Offshore Outsourcing
- Outsourcing it
- Outsourcing projects

Notes:

Some of these keyword terms will turn up businesses that offer a variety of outsourcing solutions and services. If you have a huge amount of work to be outsourced this could be a way to get more value for your money, as opposed to hiring several individuals. Of course this depends on your needs and your budget.

This list is just a sampling of terms which you can use, try to be as specific as possible to return results that closely match what you are looking for.

Tip #9

Protecting Your Investment

The benefits of using an outsourcing company such as Elance is that they have a payment method called Escrow. What this essentially does is protect both parties, the payee and the service provider. This way you both know that you will receive what you have agreed upon. Plus there is a resolution center should issues arise.

To use Escrow you will need to deposit money into your account for the project. Then depending upon the project money is paid out on a scheduled basis. For a long term project this could be every two weeks or every month. Before payment is taken out you request a portion of the work, so you know your project is being completed.

Using an Escrow type of service allows you to manage your projects and your budget at the same time. Elance provides you with a meeting room where you can both meet and discuss the project with records kept. This is just another way to prevent issues from arising.

The downfall to this service is that the person providing the work normally has to pay a fee to Elance. This is normally a percentage and can reduce the amount of money that the person ends up with. This is one reason why you might see people bidding higher on a project, they are just taking fees into consideration.

Another benefit of using web based outsourcing sites like Elance and ODesk are that they put their providers through a series of tests. The person must then pass the test to be allowed to advertise specific skill sets.

This can help put your mind at ease knowing that someone has the necessary skills to complete the job at hand.

You can also hire a team of workers to complete your project. The benefit to this is that your deadlines will normally be met. The downside is that the person who actually does the work may not be the person who you discussed everything with. This could lead to problems down the road.

Tip #10 – Final Pointers

Helpful Tools for Outsourcers

Below you will find our recommended list of tools and resources that will help you outsource all your business needs.

- Skype – online chat, video conferencing, free computer to computer calls
- Google Docs & Other File Sharing Systems– allows you to share documents online
- Google Calendar – give access to your calendar to see your schedule and to book appointments for you and with you
- Mind Maps & Videos – allow you to explain and plan strategies and procedures
- Online Conference Rooms – use for meetings, discussions and training purposes
- Project Management Systems – Basecamp is an example of this and provides all the tools and resources you need to outsource just about everything

Damage Control Procedures

Sometimes things will go wrong when you outsource and there are some things you can do to protect yourself.

When giving out passwords and access to your accounts create separate user accounts for each outsourcer. Sometimes you may even have the ability to restrict their access and what they can actually do inside your account.

Make sure you have backups of all your sites and documents. You can use an online service to make copies of everything on your computer or save items yourself onto a separate hard drive or USB stick.

Keep copies of contracts and invoices as this can back you up if any project in Escrow gets disputed.

Do whatever you can to protect yourself in case things do go wrong. This way you can easily pick up the pieces and carry on with business as usual.

Most freelancers and outsourcers pride themselves on doing a great job and most love to over deliver if anything. As with any business you just might run into someone unscrupulous so it is best to protect yourself anyway.

Just think of it in the same way as protecting your investment in case your computer crashes!

Conclusion:

These tips have hopefully given you the foundation on which to start outsourcing and growing your business. You will have discovered how to save money and time. In addition you will have enough energy to put into developing a business which you can be proud of.

When working with any individual that considers themselves to be a 'freelancer' of any type, respect their goal of creating their own business. Treat them with respect even though you are 'paying' them. This way you are more likely to strike up a fantastic business relationship and gain yourself a long term, valuable employee or business associate.

To Your Success

Alex Major

www.NicheEmpires.com

