

Top 10 Tips for Small Business Outsourcing

By Robert Gerrish

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1. Get out of the nobody-does-it-like-me mindset

We've all been there and we've been right now and again. But things have to change if our business is going to grow.

Think of it as an automatic garden sprinkler. Do you want to walk round with a hose all day or sit down and enjoy the garden?

Wouldn't it be good to plan new flower beds safe in the knowledge that your garden is being adequately watered?

Start thinking about outsourcing.

2. Remind yourself why you started

Somewhere buried under all that paperwork hides a dream, a compelling reason to start your business. Remember what it was?

Chances are it was a great idea, maybe you didn't foresee the reality of running a business. Outsourcing won't make everything magically perfect, but by clearing some space you'll get added clarity.

Try completing this in 30 words or less:

'I started my business because.....'

Ok, keep those words to hand.

3. Carry out a time and motion study

On a sheet of paper, keep a log of where you spend your time, what you're doing, how long it takes.

Draw up a timesheet that breaks hours into quarters and fill it in every day for a week. The reason we break it into quarters is that it's easy to forget the odd distraction and it's often these that gobble up time.

At the end of a week, break the actions down under headings that capture all areas of your business.

For example:

- Basic phone answering
- Preparing and dispatching quotations
- Responding to emails
- Chasing up suppliers
- Invoicing

Etc., etc., the more detail the better.

4. Call a meeting with the decision-maker (that's you, silly!)

This is serious; we need your full attention. Now go back through your timesheet and group tasks together. Imagine you are planning the growth and development of an efficient and successful business. You are.

5. What are YOUR skills worth?

The next step is to look at what you've discovered and imagine doing primarily what you do best.

Let's say your main skill is selling. What benefit would you create for your business if you had more time to sell? What value would you put on this extra time? This will help you budget when you come to outsource.

In simple terms: If you could generate \$100 an hour by applying your skills, why wouldn't you pay \$30 an hour to a contractor to do other work?

6. Ignore the inner voice

You know, the one reminding you that no one does it like you. Ignore it. Divert your inner voice to your inner message-board and delete!

7. Think laterally, think virtually, be creative

It can be useful to look at large corporations for inspiration when outsourcing. Call Centres increasingly use operators from countries with lower labour rates; staff often work remotely from rural areas.

What about a bookkeeper that lives somewhere with lower overheads, or an admin support who can prepare documents and email them overnight?

Ask yourself these questions:

How many hours work is required?

What skills are necessary?

Do I need this person to be based in my office?

Open your mind to new opportunities; don't be afraid to trial ideas.

8. Caution: Don't delegate that which you don't understand

Let's be honest, we'd love to rid ourselves of stuff we don't understand. That's not delegating, it's abdicating responsibility. Not a good look.

You don't have to know everything, just enough to judge whether what's being done for you is being done well.

If necessary factor in regular reviews and carry out tests.

9. Compile 'Roles and Responsibilities'

As you build a picture of tasks that have the potential to be outsourced, open a file and jot down every action related to that task. In time you'll develop a list that will become the 'roles and responsibilities' of the person assigned to that task.

This will assist you in compiling a job ad, recognising the characteristics of the person you select and will serve as a performance measure.

10. Celebrate

Well done. You're heading to a new level. Admit it, you were never cut out for all that stuff and quite frankly, you weren't that good at it anyway!

Robert Gerrish supports business owners on a path to loving their work. From his base in Sydney, he coaches clients from the US, Europe & Australasia. To receive more of his tips subscribe to his Flying Solo ezine at <http://www.flyingsolo.com.au>

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