

Are you controlling your outsourcing or is it controlling you?

By [Deborah Taylor](#)

Outsourcing can definitely be a time and money saver, but if you aren't aware of some of its potential problems it can control you rather than you controlling it.

As you are thinking about outsourcing some of your business tasks, consider the following:

Do you know who you are dealing with?

Outsource providers work remotely, set their own hours and schedules, and announce on their website and other promotional materials all the things they can do. However, if the provider doesn't have the knowledge and experience they claim, or they don't take the assignments or your business seriously, all the benefits of outsourcing are lost. Take the time to interview the contractor carefully and well. Check references and ask for work samples. Look at their portfolio if posted on their site. The provider should be knowledgeable and experienced, as well as reliable and trustworthy. Take the time to know who you will be dealing with before you hire.

Are the lines of communication open and honest?

Communication is key in any business. If your workers don't know what you expect, how can they give you what you want or need? Whatever you are outsourcing a great deal of effort must go in to keeping the lines of communication open. This goes for both sides, you and your outsource provider. Keep in mind that your provider cannot read your mind and will need some guidance in order to complete your assignments properly and on time. Take the time to make sure your provider understands the requirements and your expectations, and encourage them to contact you with any questions or concerns.

Can you afford it?

Outsourcing does come with a cost. Knowing what these costs are in the beginning will help you budget for them and avoid any surprises later on. Providers may charge by the hour, by the month, or by the project. This usually depends on the type of service you require. Make

sure you understand what the total fees will be and when the provider expects to be paid. Take the time to figure out what you can afford to spend then budget for it.

Are you outsourcing for the right reasons?

When you decide to outsource it should be because you have a real need to do so and not just because other businesses are doing it. There should be real work to be assigned that will use your provider to their full capabilities. If you have something else that comes up, don't be afraid to ask your provider if they can take it on. A lot of providers will even offer reduced rates for frequent or recurring assignments to keep your business. Take the time before you hire an outsource provider to ensure you need one and exactly what you need one for.

Do you understand your relationship with your outsource provider?

Outsource providers are business owners in their own right, independent contractors hired to act as your assistant. They are not your employees and you are not their boss. You are a client, just like all the other clients they take care of, but it doesn't mean you are any less important. To maintain a good working relationship it is essential to be very clear and concise in your expectations. Detail your assignment instructions well, and invite the provider's questions to be sure the scope of the assignment is well understood. Communication should always be two ways, open and honest. Be mindful and respectful of their time. They have a lot to do too. And when the job is finished, provide feedback. Take the time to let your provider know that you were happy with, and maybe what you weren't, as this helps to build a stronger business relationship.

Outsourcing is there to help you and your business. Understanding all that is involved, and the potential problems, lets you control it, rather than it controlling you.

Here's to your success!!

About the Author:

Deborah Taylor is a diversified administrative professional with more than 25 years of varied and progressive experience in all areas of office management and administration. President of AVA Business Services, Deborah and her team provide Virtual Assistance and local Freelance support for today's global marketplace.