

How to Successfully Outsource Administration

The more time you spend on the minutiae of running a business, the less time you have to spend on tasks that can earn you money or grow your business. Outsourcing your administration takes off some of the pressure, giving you the freedom to spend more time working on your business rather than just in it.

Taking the decision to outsource some of your administrative tasks won't be something you do lightly. Following this set of guidelines should help to alleviate some of the uncertainty.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROVIDER FOR YOU

The right provider for you will be the one that has the necessary mix of skills to suit your needs and whose people are a good fit with yours. Here are a few things to consider:

- Is the provider on your wavelength and are they someone you think you could work with?
- Do they have the right breadth of experience and strengths to match your needs?
- What track record do they have? How long have they been doing this type of work and what type of clients do they work with? Seek testimonials and examples to back up what they tell you.
- Do they have security measures in place to protect your data?
- What insurances do they have in case something goes wrong?
- Who will actually be undertaking your work and where will your data be kept?
- Who will look after you and is there a back up plan if they're ever unavailable?
- Do they have the capacity for extra work when you need it?

ESTABLISHING TRUST

It's quite daunting when you find yourself having to let go of some tasks and relinquish them from your hands-on control. A manageable way to embark upon an outsourcing relationship is to start by delegating individual tasks or projects. At the beginning each party needs to learn how to work together, how to communicate effectively and how to get the best from each other. As you each start to see the results, you'll get a feel for competencies and/or weaknesses and adapt accordingly. As trust grows it's very likely you'll feel much more comfortable handing tasks over.

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS

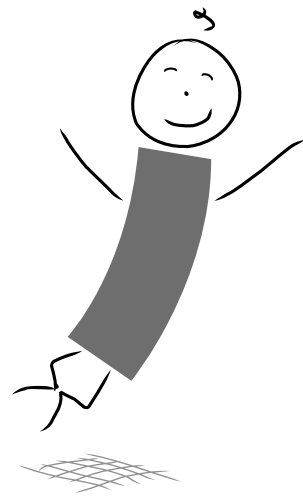
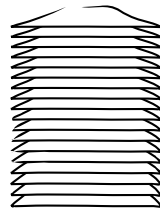
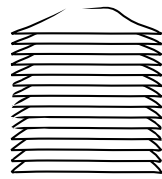
The best business relationships are developed when all parties know [and deliver] what's expected of them. All good providers will have a comprehensive set of terms and conditions along with a good service description, to clarify what should happen, when and by whom. Make sure the following are included:

- how long the contract lasts
- what is expected from each party
- a confidentiality clause
- who owns the copyright for work done
- the security and protection measures in place for your data
- a contingency plan for when your usual provider is absent
- payment terms
- exit strategies / notice periods

MAKING THE INVESTMENT

Once you have started working with your outsourcing partner, it's important to make sure they have all the information they need to do the best possible job. Regularly review the levels and quality of work and give your feedback on likes and dislikes. By doing this you will be building strong foundations for a really productive and reciprocal working relationship. Committed partners will value this information as it helps them to hone the work they do specifically to your needs. Time invested in reviewing and feeding back at the beginning of a working relationship reaps huge rewards later.

With a decent administration department behind you, it's so much easier to concentrate on your core business. By following the guidelines above, you'll be able to confidently delegate the tasks that take up your precious time and focus on the projects that really drive your business forward.



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