

ADVANCED GUIDE TO OUTSOURCING (Level 3)





1 CREATING INSTRUCTIONS TEMPLATES (SEO, IMAGES, FORMATS)

Whether or not outsourcing is worth it will be a personal question for you and your business. Hopefully these tips can help you make that decision accurately!

2 WHEN TO PAY EXTRA FOR EXTRA WORK

Should you always pay extra when they do extra work?

3 HOW TO FIND EXPERTS VS “WRITERS”

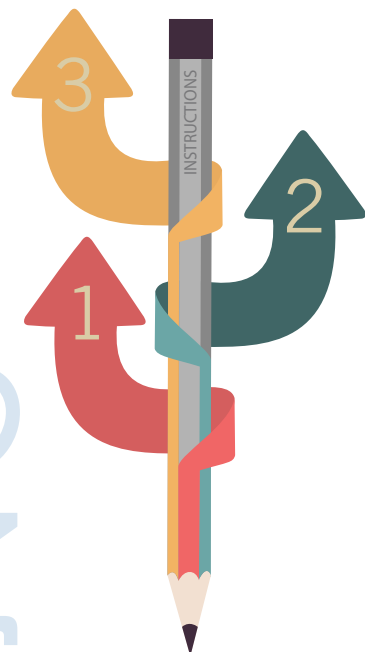
Sometimes a writer just doesn't cut it, and you need an expert.

4 PAYING PER HOUR VS PAYING PER ASSIGNMENT

Should you pay per hour or per assignment?

5 RANDOM TIPS FROM EXPERIENCE

Things I've learned from outsourcing 10's of thousands of dollars in projects.



CREATING INSTRUCTIONS TEMPLATES (SEO, IMAGES, FORMATS)

Now we're going to get a bit advanced with our outsourcing. Not that this section will be "harder" to implement, but I mean that you probably won't need these strategies unless you really start outsourcing a lot.

A lot of these tactics I've learned just within the last year or two, as I started spending more, working with more people, and managing as many as 12 writers at one time.

If you are sure you want to do a project for a 3-6 month period, then I highly, highly recommend you create a template for any instructions you send out to your writers and VA's.

Why 3-6 months? It often takes that much time to see any traction. In fact, I did a 3 month project with a guy, saw not results, quit the project, then saw rankings in the following summer (it was a seasonal topic).

WHY WRITE TEMPLATES?

People quit all the time. It was a freakin' nightmare trying to explain everything that I wanted done to my posts. For example, just with uploading images, I have a separate file to send people with specific instructions. Look at these sets of instructions. You can edit and use these for your own freelancers, but please do not distribute these.



IMAGES INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make sure all images are "full size" and 700px wide. Smaller images are fine if they need to be smaller than 700px, but please do not choose "medium" or "custom size" for image size.

Images should be resized before uploading. Do not upload large images then select "medium" or "custom size".

2. Image file names should be descriptive

- "man-walking-across-the-street-with-black-pants.jpg" VS "image_1234.png" or "man.jpg"
- main image should contain the main keyword phrase
- use .jpg unless transparency is necessary (.png)

3. Add alt tags, captions, descriptions

- When uploading, in box labeled "alternative text" add a description of the image. This is for seeing-impaired users who have computers that read out what an image is because they can't see it. It's also so search engines know what a picture is about. This should be one sentence to describe the image.
- Add a "caption" to the image. This should be an comment about the image. All users will see this. It could be an interesting thing to say about the

image, or how it relates to the surrounding text. This is to add "skimmability" if users are just skimming the page, they can understand the context of the image without reading too deeply into the content. 1-3 short sentences per image

- Descriptions: 1-2 sentences describing the image and context in this article. Do not copy/paste from Caption or Alternative Text.

4. Put a main image at the top of the page. The image title should be the main keyword, like "Product X Review" or "Make Money With Service X". Add a "featured image" on the right side of the WP dashboard. It should be the same as the top image.

5. Images should be relevant to the context of the area of the article. They can be under headings or between paragraphs. All images should be center-align.

6. If there is a lot of white space in the image, please use a border. (jagged cut or straight line is fine).

7. Use 2-4 images per post (including top image) unless otherwise noted in the project instructions.



That's just for the images.

Here are my SEO instructions:

SEO INSTRUCTIONS

1. Title = Keyword + Catchy Phrase Or Descriptive Subtitle

- Include keyword in the first paragraph of the article
- main image should contain keyword in image file name, alternative text, and caption if possible

2. Use h3 for template main headings and h4 for template subheadings

3. Remove text formatting

Make sure if copying from Word to choose "paste as text" or use the "erase formatting" button.

Instructions for "erase formatting": Highlight all text and images, then click the "erase formatting" button. See here: <https://www.screencast.com/t/zTlo85sj7f>. This removes all the junk brought over from the Microsoft editor that's lurking in the html code behind the scenes. **Be sure to do this only AFTER images are already full size.

4. Make sure all images are "full size" and 700px wide. Smaller images are fine if they need to be

smaller than 700px, but please do not choose "medium" or "custom size" for image size.

See "**Image Instructions**" for more details

5. Add alt tags, captions, descriptions to images

When uploading images, in box labeled "alternative text" add a description of the image. This is for seeing-impaired users who have computers that read out what an image is because they can't see it. It's also so search engines know what a picture is about. This should be one sentence to describe the image.

Add a "caption" to the image. This should be an comment about the image. All users will see this. It could be an interesting thing to say about the image, or how it relates to the surrounding text. This is to add "skimmability" if users are just skimming the page, they can understand the context of the image without reading too deeply into the content. 1-3 short sentences per image

- Descriptions: 1-2 sentences describing the image and context in this article. Do not copy/paste from Caption or Alternative Text.

- Add a "featured image" (Same image as top image)



SEO INSTRUCTIONS

6. (Meta) Document Title = Post Title

7. (Meta) Breadcrumb Title = Main Keyword

8. Meta Description

- 120 - 140 characters about what the post is about. This description will appear in Google search results. It should be short and descriptive, and should contain the keyword phrase. Each word should be capitalized (camel case). Example: XYZ
- Do not use recommended 160 character limit

9. Categories: X + Y

- specific to each unique topic

10: Tags: X + Y

- specific to each unique topic

11. **Embed one relevant video in the post.** Please check for content of the video as a lot of people post misleading or incorrect information on YouTube as clickbait. Ideally, the name of the video will contain the keyword or product name in the title. Uncheck "Show suggested videos" box when embedding video:

12. **Include one link to a relevant resource if not otherwise included in the post format**

13. Look for opportunities to internally link to previous, related posts on my own website. Use posts you have written yourself, or use the search function to search for keywords. Link 1-3 times internally per post unless otherwise instructed.



Here's what I use for a basic Top 10 post template:

BASIC TOP 10 TEMPLATE

Title Image

- See **IMAGE INSTRUCTIONS**

Introduction: 150-300 words

- See **SEO INSTRUCTIONS**

Bullet Point List (Items 1-10)

Item 1: Title (h3)

Image/Screenshot:

- Please follow Image Instructions

Content: 150-300 words

- Description or review

- Include link to affiliate product, resource, or source

Item 2: Title (h3)

Image/Screenshot:

- Please follow Image Instructions

Content: 150-300 words

- Description or review

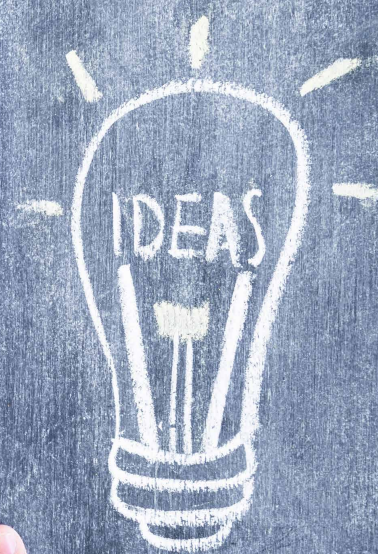
- Include link to affiliate product, resource, or source

...Items 3-10

Conclusion

- include "best of" choice #1

- summarize post, ideas, etc



Are these overkill? For you, maybe. You're doing online marketing, so you pay attention to stuff about SEO and how to get a post ranked in Google. Writers? They don't care. Their focus is content and following instructions. These are your instructions to give them!

I also have super simple instructions like *How To Log Into A Website* and *How To Edit Images After Uploading*. For some projects, I may need to go in and edit specifics but this strategy saves me hours and hours of time.

There have been several times where I go through the hiring process, work with a writer for two weeks (with the expectation they'll be on board for six months), and they quit early. I just wasted 5 hours training this person and now they're gone. Waste of my time!

With these files on handy I can just say "Open these files, read, and let me know if you have any questions".



WHEN TO PAY EXTRA FOR EXTRA WORK

Sometimes projects don't turn out how you planned. As you outsource more, you'll get more and more confident about not having full control over a project. It's a fine balance between micromanagement and being unclear about what you want.

Many times, projects have gone over time, over budget, or ended up differently than expected. Should you pay more even though you don't want to?

It's hard to say, and this is where your planning comes into play. Did you say "write an article about Topic X" or did you say, "write 1000-1200 words on Topic X?"

If you said write 1200 words and your writer delivered 1350, then I'd say no, don't pay more. However, if the writer contacts you at the 1200 word count and say, "Hey this article is already 1200 words and I'm not even close to covering the topic completely, do you want to increase the word count?", then you need to decide what you want.

For me, I usually just let them run with it and write as much as they want. However, sometimes they end up writing a lot of fluff, and a 2200 word article gets 300 words cut (by me), and I just threw \$10 down the drain.

If I tell them to cut their word count and stick to the project details, I can always add my own input later when I upload and publish, but sometimes it's hard to add to someone else's work without changing a ton.

Regarding hourly work, set parameters first! There's no shame in asking how long they expect the project to take so you can gauge your budget. \$35/hour for a professional WordPress coder can add up quickly if they run into issues. A \$35 project could balloon into \$100 real quickly if you don't set expectations beforehand.

I've found that if you agree to X hours for an hourly rate, if it goes over by 20 or even 30 minutes, many freelancers won't charge you for extra time.

PAY EXTRA





HOW TO FIND EXPERTS VS “WRITERS”

One of the problems I have hiring writers is that they are not “experts” on the topic they write about. They just research information online, and write an article based on their research.

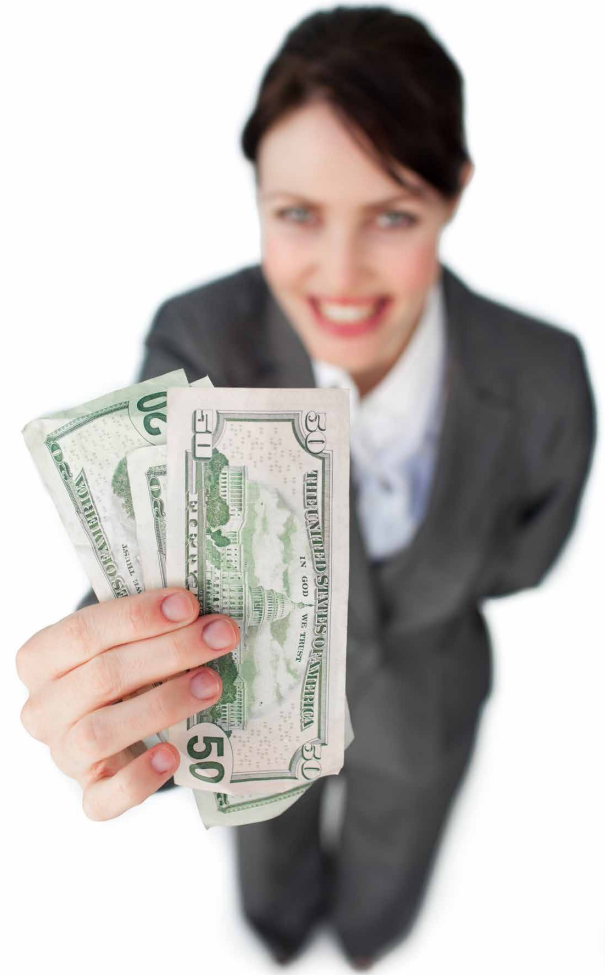
For that reason, these types of articles turn out to be an amalgamation of whatever they can find online, with not a lot of personality or panache. It's just another boring, uninspiring blog which might rank if your keyword was good.

An “expert” has an opinion, and reasons for that opinion. They'll still do research, but they have something interesting to say on the topic that can give unique insight and be both share-worthy and link-worthy.

One thing I like to do is chat about the topic before hand. I'll add a custom question in UpWork and ask something like, “What's your experience so far in the world of craft bourbon?”, or “Do you have a favorite small cap cryptocurrency project right now?”

From 15 potential candidates I can narrow down to the 2-3 enthusiasts real quick. Answers like “I don't know much about crypto but I'm interested to learn” is nice, but not what I'm looking for. Answers like “I'm a huge bourbon fan and I actually have a small Instagram account related to American whiskey you can check out” is what you want.

General “writers” are great for general content: top 10 lists, expert roundups, low-comp keyword stuff. Experts are much better for building a solid brand and engaging content. It's a great compromise.



PAYING PER HOUR VS PAYING PER ASSIGNMENT

This is always the big question, and there's no perfect answer. Personally, I prefer to pay per assignment. It makes my job as hiring manager and bookkeeper much easier. I know how much money I will spend, and can calculate in my head whether it's worth it or not.

However, some projects are just hard to gauge at the beginning. Producing video, creating images, editing code...people run into snags. It's not fair to the freelancer to say I'll pay you \$20 for a 1-hour project, but the project ends up taking 5 hours.

Sure, maybe you can argue a good deal, but that'll be the last time you work with that person.

The other advantage to paying per hour is that through UpWork, time is tracked automatically. You don't have to log on, release escrow, and set up the next assignment every time.

I have one writer which is paid hourly, but we have a schedule so she writes X amount of articles in X amount of time each week. I set her limit to something like 5 hours per week, so if she goes over, she works for free, but she seems happy with the pay and we have a good schedule.

I don't have to watch her time tracker because I know she'll hit it each week, and I get articles I like. Very little time is spent managing this person.



RANDOM TIPS FROM EXPERIENCE

Just some random tips that didn't fit into other sections here.

a. Ask a casual question during an interview and gauge response to test English level. If you hire from non-English speaking countries, you can get cheaper hires. However, sometimes people have their profiles and work edited to appear as if they are fluent in English.

If you suspect this might be the case, ask 2-3 interview questions on the fly and see how they respond.

b. Watch out for stock photos. If you see a stock photo as their profile picture, this may be an indication that they are slightly deceptive in their advertising of their services.

c. Avoid writing agencies. They can deliver super, unbelievably cheap content at a decent quality level. However, delivery and editing is a nightmare. Your instructions get jumbled down an assembly line each time, and the articles rarely, if ever, turn out "great".

Your instructions are basically sent to a low-level writer whose job is just to pump out content at .008 per word (less than a penny). This person probably doesn't even understand your detailed instructions. These writers may even engage in copyright infringement and article spinning leveraging Copyscape to check their work.

Then, they send that garbage to an editor which cleans it up. Lastly, it gets a quick final check and sent to you.

You asked for dry aged USDA certified beef and you get back a hunk of meat glob that's been sent through the US mail service. Still edible, kind of what you ordered, but definitely not appetizing.

I very much prefer to work with individual writers because I can communicate more easily, develop a relationship, and work on this project long term or even hire for multiple projects.

d. Don't be afraid to call someone out on missed deadlines and end the project early. My favorite nerd joke is that freelance writing is the most dangerous job in the world. I don't know how many health scares, family incidents, deaths, and other problems come up with writers.



Many times, they'll just go MIA for a week, then come back and say "Sorry I was on vacation.". Um, you couldn't give me a heads up?!

Continually missed deadlines is a sign the freelancer may quit soon. Either that, or they don't respect your project or your money. Numerous times I've had to cancel a project at the protest of a freelancer who couldn't deliver on time or according to specifications.

It's tough, but you aren't running a charity. You don't have to be draconian about it - I usually give people one or two misses if it's a new person I'm working with. Stuff happens. But at the end of the day you are paying them money to do a job and if they can't do it, you need to pay someone else.

