BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO OUTSOURCING
(Level 1)

ONE MORE
CUP OF COFFE

ONE MORE
CUP OF COFFEE

INTRODUCTION

The main two pieces of advice for anyone thinking that they want to start outsourcing some work is:

1. As a business owner, you need a plan. A contractor will not build your business for you

2. Start slowly, especially if you are on a budget.

I know there's a quote floating around about how Henry Ford said that he didn't have to know everything to be successful and he just had to hire the right people to get the job done. There's some truth to that. But as a complete newbie to online business, it's also very easy to spend money on stuff you don't understand, and therefore cannot provide clear instructions about.

Plus, I'm sure lots of you will start out hiring from the cheap labor pool rather than the professionals, so it's very important that you have a clear idea of what you want, and how much it's worth to you.

O utsourcing work is something a lot of us hear about in our research about how to build online businesses. You may have read 'The 4 Hour Work Week", or seen on someone's blog about how they have writers and coders do all the work for them while they vacation in Bali.

Hiring contractors to take care of part of your business can definitely lighten your work load. Best of all, it means your business becomes more scalable, meaning that you can get more work done, but actually spend less time doing it.

Outsourcing done right can help you grow your income significantly. However, outsourcing done wrong can be a huge money pit. I've wasted thousands of dollars on projects over the years that made me think afterwards, "Wow, I could be $1000 richer right now and my business would be no different." At the same time, I've spent money on things that made me think, "OMG I'm so glad I spent money paying someone else to do that."
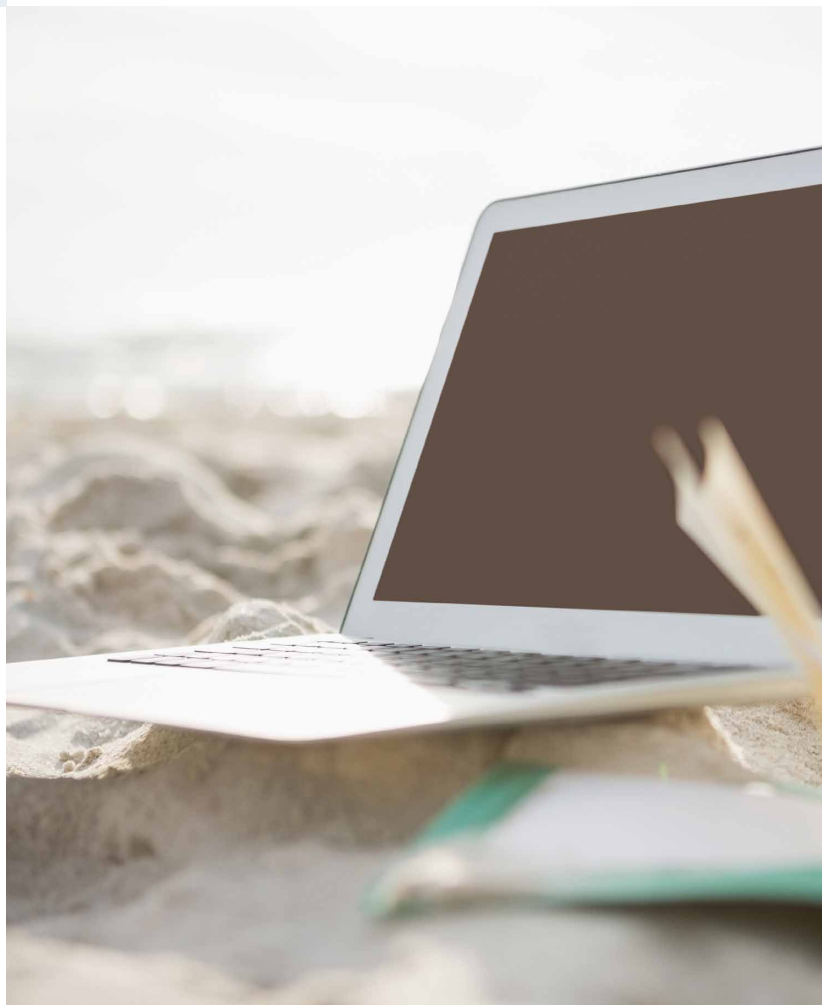
WHAT TYPE OF WORK TO OUTSOURCE

IMAGES

Some of the first work I hired for was having someone create a logo for my website. It was an easy decision for me. Rather than spend hours learning photoshop (or gimp), or creating a sloppy version in MS Paint or free logo makers, I could just pay someone to get a sharp looking logo exactly how I wanted it.

Fiverr is actually a good place for this. A lot of the guys on that site will use template stuff so don't expect someone 100% original, but for your first site, it's good enough. They can create something that will stun you for just $5 or $10, including one or two edits.

You can also go to actual freelancer websites for more creative designs, where a designer might make 3-4 mockups for you, then unlimited re-dos until you're satisfied. A cheap logo there will cost between $30-$100. A professional done logo that's 100% original can cost several hundred dollars.

Infographics is another cool thing you can have done, and can be worth the money. I recently had one done for about $300, which took about a week to make and included several changes along the way. The result was beautiful, and now that I can use it on my site forever, I think its value grows with time!

ONE MORE CUP OF COFFEE

ARTICLES

Unless you are a real avid writer, typing out articles day after day can get tedious. Coupled with the fact that content is your main weapon for getting ranked and driving traffic to your money pages, having good articles in high quantity on your website is crucial.

Prices for articles vary wildly. It's crazy. You can get a $500 word article for $5 or you can get one for $50. Quality is the main factor determining price.

For cheaper articles, you will generally get non-native English speakers that will re-write other articles they find on the web. I used to order these. They are not worth your time at all.

For mediocre articles, ranging from $10-$30 per 500 words you can get some native English speakers that are not experts in their field, but will put in some time to research and write articles on the topics you choose. These can be pretty good depending on who writes them, and their passion for the topic. I find that a lot of these types of writers are quite bland. Although they get the job done, the writing isn't that interesting.

For excellent articles, you may find yourself paying more than $50 per 500 words. For a 1000 word article, it could cos you $100! You'd better make sure that it's a good writer, and that they know what they're talking about. For specialized subjects, it could be worth the price though. Remember - if that article ranks in Google and converts traffic to sales, it could be earning you income for years to come.

ATTN: These are just approximate prices! I have met some excellent writers that will do a 1000 word article for $30-$75 just because they are familiar with the topic. Sometimes familiarity translates to, "Meh, I can type this out pretty quickly so I'll charge less." Sometimes it means, "I know what I'm talking about, so I'll charge more." It just depends on who you're working with.

Also consider that prices vary based on whether the person is writing just an article, or writing a full blog post, including images, links, formatting, etc.

One of my biggest mistakes over the years was paying for "fluff". I just wanted content on my site, and wanted something published every week. I didn't care what it was. I gave a group of writers some minimum requirements and then didn't pay attention for 6 months. At the end of it, my website was filled with vanilla articles that didn't rank or convert for me.

Money wasted. Lesson learned.
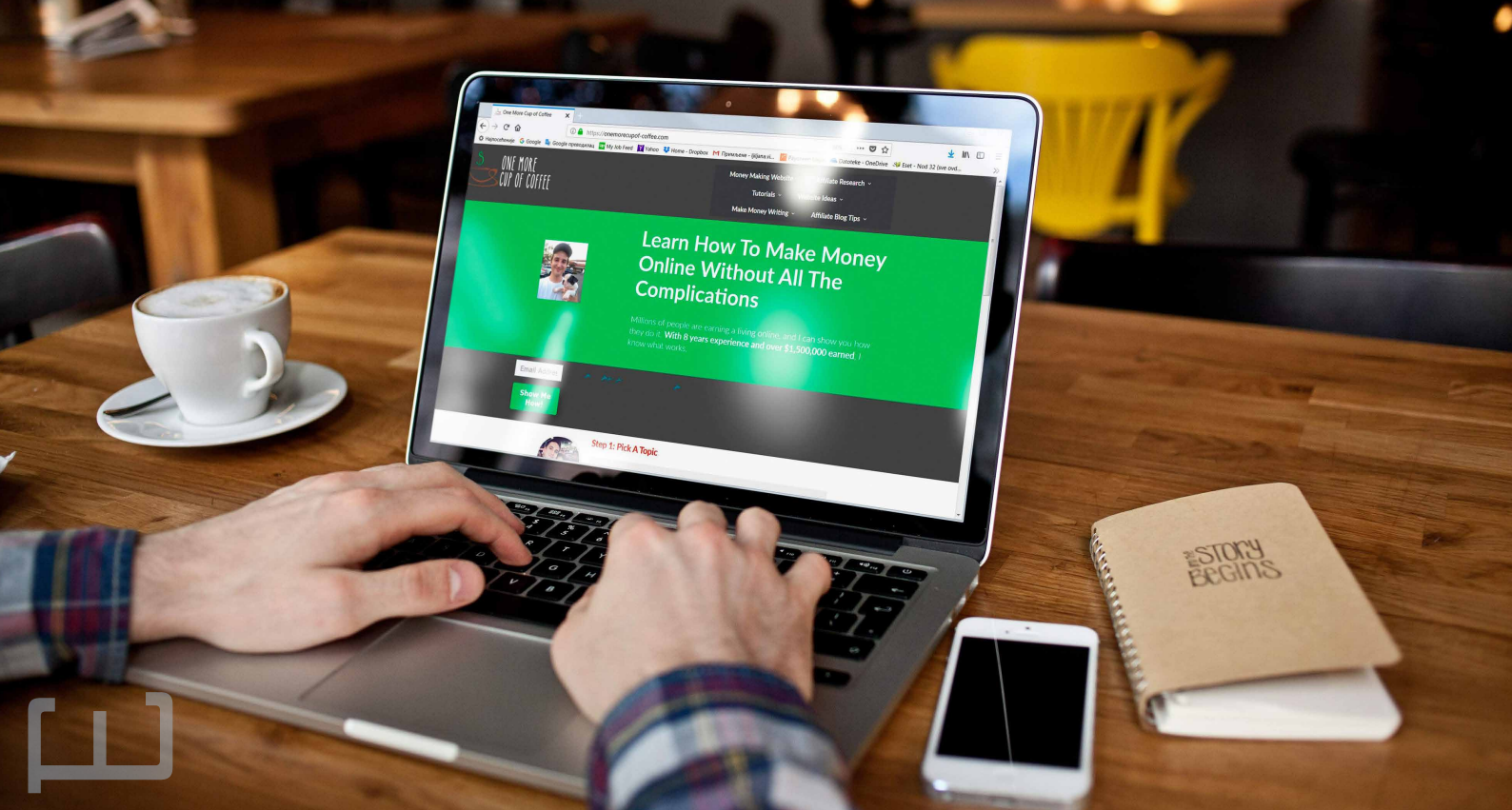
CODING

Having someone edit your website to the way you want it can be really fun actually. Code still makes my head spin, and I'm just not that excited about learning it.

I make a list of things I want done, and have someone do it as part of a list of requests. This is because having one small job can be quite expensive. Imagine paying someone $20 to put one line of code in your site! If it takes them 10 minutes to do it, that means you just paid them $120 per hour to edit your website. Bummer.

So you need to really decide if the code you want edited will just make you feel better because you are a perfectionist, or if it could really affect the user experience of your website.

Also, I only recommend coding jobs for premium themes. Why spend the time to edit a free theme that you may change a few months down the road, or may stop being updated in the near future?

Possible jobs you could get done would be changing blog post width, moving the logo position, adding an image to the bottom of every post, or creating a special page template like a squeeze page. I recently had someone color code my comment section so comments and replies were different colors.

FILLING OUT THE JOB DETAILS

Title: The title is pretty simple. Keep it brief, but descriptive. Make it interesting so the right people apply for the job

Description: Give the job details. I don't give too many details about my website per se, but I try to describe the job as much as possible. Use small paragraphs so it's easy to read, and if you find yourself rambling because it's hard to explain what you want...attempt to shorten the description so you don't confuse potential contractors.

It does take some work to craft a good job description. The harder you work to find good contractors, the better hires you will get.

I sometimes include a small catchphrase that they must include in their application. For example, I say, "include the phrase SUPERDUPER at the top of your application". This way you can see who read the instructions and who is sending you a boilerplate response.

Payment: Some people prefer hourly payments, some prefer a set payment per job. It really depends. I pay hourly for images, and set prices for articles and coding. This really depends on you and the other person.

Time: This is the expected timeframe of the project. Even for big projects, I always start with a small timeframe to test them out, then create a private job with a longer timeline and re-hire the person.

Price: I used to go for the cheapest people just because they were available and I didn't want to spend a bunch of money. But I quickly found out that cheap doesn't mean more bang for your buck. Now I tend to avoid the cheap hires, even if there's a potential to find a diamond in the rough just because I don't want to deal with sorting the good from the bad. I aim for middle of the road nowadays.

There really isn't any secret here as to how to fill out your first job requirements. People will apply regardless, so do your best and see what happens!

ONE MORE CUP OF COFFEE

TIPS FOR FINDING GOOD CONTRACTORS

SHORTLISTING OVER A FEW DAYS

People will start applying immediately. If I create a job at night, when I wake up in the morning I'll have more than 10 applicants. Remember that this is just the first wave! Applicants usually peter out after 2-3 days. Just make a list of the people you think will do a good job, and send them a message with some follow up questions.

Don't respond to pressure to hire them quickly. This is super annoying, but lots of guys do it. They say things like, "I'm ready to start now so please award me the job". It's a bit unprofessional, but I guess I can't blame them for being enthusiastic.

Take your time - it's your money, and don't feel pressured to click the hire button before your'e ready.

INTERVIEWS

I usually just follow up with a few questions related to the job so I can see what their English is like and whether they really understand the instructions. I find a lot of people will say that they understand the job, but what they really want is just to get hired, and then figure out what's going on.

When that happens, it really sucks. You put a lot faith in this person to work on your website, and from the beginning it's clear that they didn't even read the instructions clearly! Avoid getting into this situation.

You could also request a Skype interview if it's a really big or important project. This can show you who really wants the job, and who's going to commit to being available when you need them. However, I find it's unnecessary to go this far with smaller jobs.

ONE MORE
CUP OF COFFEE

START WITH SMALL PROJECTS

As mentioned above, I always start with small projects for myself and for contractors.

For me, it means I can first see if outsourcing this work is actually valuable to me. You could find out that it doesn't really save you that much time to have someone else do it, or that you just aren't getting the results you thought.

For them, it means you can see if they can actually do what you want them to do, in the timeframe it needs to get done. It's a real bummer to start a month long project but realize in the first week that the person isn't doing a good job and you have to correct them every step of the way.

If a contractor does great work in the test period, then I just create a new job and send them a private invite.

CHECK IN POINTS

Even with a contractor you know and trust, it's important to have checkpoints for longer projects. They might have misunderstood some instructions, or you might have forgot to tell them something important. Rather than catch it after the project is completed, which means you have to now pay them to fix the mistake, you can catch the error early.

I always show an example of what I want done in the beginning. Then I have them do one part, and I check it. Then I let them work for one day, then check again. Then one week, and check again. This exact formula might not work for all types of outsourcing, but principle is the same.

For example, you could have them write a 200 word article, then a 500 word article, then a 1000 word article, then a 1000 word article every week based on keywords you send them.

ISSUES TO AVOID + TIPS FOR SUCCESS

SET AND FORGET MENTALITY

Outsourcing is still work. If you think that someone else will just run the business for you, you are wrong! People need instructions, then need checkpoints, critiques, and encouragement. You can't just shove a project in someone's face and say "Do it good" and expect any kind of results.

NOT WANTING TO WASTE TIME

My big mistake when I started outsourcing is that I quickly realized I was spending MORE time teaching someone how to do stuff that I could do myself quicker!

For one, I was hiring too cheap, and so the people were inexperienced. But also, it just takes time to find a rhythm with long-term hires, especially if you have specific requirements of what you want. They may not know how to use keywords, or may not know how to properly space paragraphs, or use headings, or that big images look better.

So yeah, in the beginning, you may spend time teaching people how to do what you want done. But it's time well invested if in the future they are able to do the job exactly how you like it without intervention on your part.

I wasted a lot of money hiring people for stuff that I just didn't want do deal with. I'd say, "I want twenty 500-word articles based on these keywords by the end of the month." That was it. At the end of the month, they delivered some crappy articles that were 500 words long and based on my keywords.

To have a rewrite would cost me more money. To scold them wouldn't make the articles any better. I just paid for the articles, ended the contract, and ended up spending hours re-writing them. What else could I do?

$ ONE MORE CUP OF COFFEE
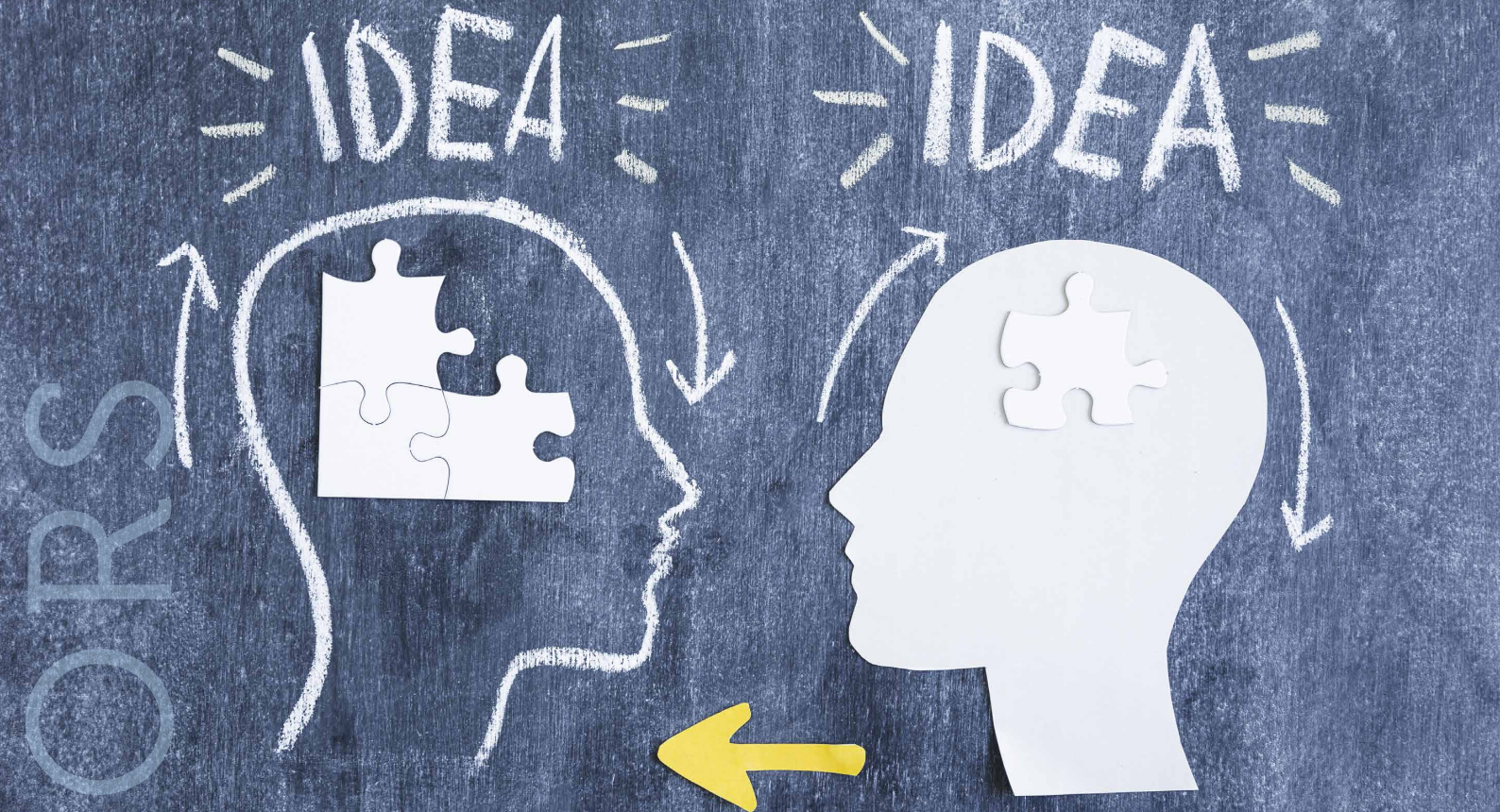
THINKING THEY CARE ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

The tables suddenly turn when you're the boss! Don't make the mistake of thinking that the people you hire care about your business as much as you do.

Don't get me wrong - lots of people have pride in their work and do a good job. But they will work to their instructions, and expect to get paid for their work.

I guess this section sounds a bit rude, but I don't know how to phrase it. Basically, imagine how you feel going to work, getting your job done, and being done at 5PM. Now imagine that the person you just hired thinks the same about the work they're doing for your website.

REMEMBER YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

As a business owner you can't just slack off and expect the work to get done! You have some things you need to take care of.

1. Write clear instructions on how to do the job

2. Provide positive feedback and critique

3. Pay on time!

I find that if I am disappointed in a job that I hired for, there's usually a direct link to some mistake I made. The most common one for me is not providing clear enough instructions or details on my exceptions.

ONE MORE
CUP OF COFFEE

CONCLUSION

Outsourcing can be fun, and can take some work off your plate. Start slow, and just jump in. Learning how to hire people and manage a project is a whole new skill to learn.

Don't overwhelm yourself with too many projects in the beginning, and as you progress with each project, keep track of the price you are paying and what value you expect to get from hiring this person.

MY FAVORITE PLACES TO OUTSOURCE

#1. Upwork.com (Formerly oDesk + Elance)
#2. Freelancer.com (includes the former rentacoder.com)
#3. Fiverr.com for logos or video intros (I don't hire writers from here)

There are many content farms like iWriter but I don't use them.

ONE MORE
CUP OF COFFEE