

# INTERMEDIATE GUIDE TO OUTSOURCING (Level 2)





## 1 IS OUTSOURCING WORTH IT

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 HOW MUCH TO PAY FOR STUFF

How much should you pay contractors for their work? Anything is possible, but here are my general guidelines, and examples of what I've previously paid.

## 3 FINDING RELIABLE FREELANCERS

Finding Reliable Freelancers can be a tough job. I've had to learn from trial and error, so I hope you can benefit from my years of mistakes and wasted money.

## 4 BEING A GOOD CLIENT

Part of the deal with outsourcing is that you have a role to play too.

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How outsourcing can help you scale your business beyond anything you could produce as a one-person act.



# IS OUTSOURCING WORTH IT



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!

Ask yourself, what are your goals for running a business?

Do you want to 'spread the word' for whatever your niche is? If you are super passionate about your niche, then outsourcing may take the fun out of your business. As an expert, you are super knowledgeable on your topic, so any general freelancer will not be able to produce content up to your standards.

I ran into this problem with buying beer articles.

The freelance writers are basing their information from what they read online. Many times, what they read online is also written by freelance writers who just write for larger publications like Huffington Post or Forbes.

I can't remember how many stupid articles I've read on Forbes about craft beer and homebrewing.

I had to edit these articles so much that it wasn't worth \$40. I should have just done it myself.

However, if you don't have the time to do the research, or you want to hire an expert with more knowledge than yourself, then it could be worth it.

Hiring an expert could actually improve your own knowledge, and though the price of the articles will surely be much higher than general writers, some of that money is going towards your education, and thus growing your expertise in the field.

With regards to cost and value, you MUST look at how much money the content will produce. Do not just spend \$100 because you need content. What's the goal? How long will it take to break even? How well should the article rank and how much money can it produce?

Some articles will just be for the purpose of driving traffic to a money page. That's fine. Just have a plan in place so you can identify whether or not your strategy is working. I spent about \$25 grand on content over the course of three years building out a niche website, and it's taken 3 years to break even.

I have the stomach for that. I didn't plan on it taking so long, but I know long-term it will work out. With a smarter strategy I probably could have broken even earlier and been in the positive territory in terms of profit.





IS IT WORTH IT?

## 1. IS OUTSOURCING WORTH IT?

Most of the time the answer is, 'Yes', in one way or another. Even if it's just getting someone to fix code, make an infographic, or fix a problem that's happening.

Though you may be an expert on your topic, you do not have to be a WordPress expert. You could spend Monday trying to figure out how to remove the empty space in your header and bring more content above the fold, or you can pay someone \$25-\$50 to do it while you work on other stuff.

Boom. Done in a day and you never have to think about it again.

You can outsource everything. I've hired contractors to make graphics, edit content, write content, modify images, change theme design, build plugins with specific functions in mind, manage social media accounts, email image owners for permission, and many other things.

The more you outsource, the more of a "manager" role you begin to take on. There are positives and negatives to this role, but in my mind, it does seem less like "busy work" and more like you are getting stuff done.

However, it's a lot more expensive too. If you make \$10k in a month, and spend \$2k on content + \$500 on development, then you just cut your net profit by 25%.

Of course, you've also created the potential to grow much faster, so you may see that \$10k grow by more than 25% in the coming months.



# HOW MUCH TO PAY FOR STUFF

**W**ith regards to writing, in Upwork, for a 1500 word article, you can pay between \$30 and \$100 per article. Sometimes I can pay about \$20, but the writing is usually low quality and requires edits. Be suspicious of deals that are too good to be true!

One trick I do is to NOT close the job right away. Hire two potential writers, and have them do 2-3 "test" articles. Of course, pay for them as normal, but the "testing" part is just to see how they react to the job.

Many people will over promise and under deliver. Many people will deliver late, or ignore multiple requests for changes. Lots of people will start strong, then fade out after two weeks. It's a challenge to hire a good writer for a long time, but when you do it will make your life so much easier.

Of the two writers, pick the one you like the style the best. You can have them write different articles, and just go off of "feeling" which style you like better, or you can have them write the same article topics for more accurate comparison.

Another choice you need to make is whether they will upload to your site or if you will do that. For a higher price, you can have the upload, find images, do links, do SEO/tags/categories, etc. Anything from \$3 to \$20 per article is possible for these tasks, but obviously try to negotiate this down.

For your budget, look at what your site is making versus how much you're spending. If you can hire a writer for \$x but you are making \$x + \$100, then you can set your site on autopilot and have it generate a little money while someone else makes the content for you.

Just be aware that if they are writing reviews for you, YOU are responsible for what they write. If they say a product is a low quality, and the owner gets mad and threatens you, it's under your name, and you have to be responsible for it. Check all articles before publishing!

Regarding development, there's a huge range of prices. Anything from \$5/hour to \$200+ per hour is normal. Hiring from Eastern Europe, the Philippines, and other developing countries is a great way to save on costs.





It's a great compromise. A developer in Ukraine may ask just \$15/hour to edit your WordPress theme and that could be a "good" wage in that country. Someone in NYC might charge you \$100/hour for the same work because that's what his standard of living is used to.

However, communication can be an issue. If you don't understand their questions and they don't understand your answers, then the project may not turn out as you want. Also, work ethics or habits may differ. You may not like the level of communication because cultures differ, and expectations from both parties could be different.

For dev work, I usually go non-USA, non-UK because like math, the work is the same. It's coding, so it's pretty straightforward. For writing, I usually go US/UK/CA/AU only, unless it's something small like product descriptions.



# FINDING RELIABLE FREELANCERS

This can be a tough job. I've had to learn from trial and error, so I hope you can benefit from my years of mistakes and wasted money.

The first thing to keep in mind is that just because you outsource something, doesn't mean you do not have to work.

It's YOUR job to to plan, oversee, and check the project.

Don't trust that a freelancer will care about your website, article, or whatever as much as you do, and don't assume they have the same vision as you

One super important thing is to make sure your instructions are crystal clear and redundant if possible. Again, no assumptions.

This is why I try to hire long-term projects most of the time, unless I really need a one-time thing done which I simply cannot do myself.

Explaining to someone how to log into WordPress and use the text editor for the first time is a nightmare. Very boring. However, if you only have to do it one time and the person will work for a good price for the next six months, it's worth it.

Just make a video tutorial, Skype with them for 20 minutes, and triple check their work for month #1, then they'll be good to go for the next five months

with minimal intervention from you. You're basically training an employee at this point.

Another thing I do is to not assume they can deliver what they promise. Ask to see examples of their work, or ask probing questions just to get a reaction and see what they say.

There's been numerous times where I explicitly state that I want a fluent English writer, and someone from non-native country says how good their English is. Their profile and example work are great, but as I speak to them during the hiring process, I can see the grammar mistakes. This tells me they had an editor fix their profile and resumé, but they cannot deliver perfect English on a regular basis.

You can also tell a lot by how a person applies to a job. If they are a graphic designer and have their own website set up to show potential clients, that's some real motivation to do a good job and impress! If they send you a couple of crappy PDF files with unfinished graphics to get "an idea" of what they are capable of, then they may not be top quality.

Another part of being explicit in your requests are to provide examples. Even if you want something unique, find a thing that is similar to what you expect. It at least provides some kind of starting point, after which you can modify things bit by bit.



# BEING A GOOD CLIENT

**P**art of the deal with outsourcing is that you have a role to play too. On many sites, the client will have a star rating just like the freelancers, meaning you have to behave as well.

Some standard, simple things to do are:

- Respond in a timely manner
- Use professional language
- Give clear instructions
- Offer criticisms politely and clearly

Most of all, pay on time. A surprisingly high number of people I've hired have thanked me profusely simply for paying on the day they finish the project. With UpWork, you have a week or two to release funds that are held in escrow, and I guess some clients are just lazy about releasing the money.

I always pay the day of, or set a "pay day", like "I pay out every Sunday, so please finish the work by Saturday evening."

Aside from paying someone on time, the other magic bullet for forming a happy relationship with your freelancer is clear instructions.

I know I've hit this point a couple times, but it's really important!

Good instructions not only provide the freelancer with a clear picture of what how the project should turn out, it also allows them to be happy with their

work. A happy freelancer is more likely to give you more leeway in terms of putting in a few minutes extra after the hour is done, or allowing for a few sneaky changes at the end even though you already paid.

They take more satisfaction in their work, and are happy to make you happy.

Clear instructions also provides you with a better idea of what you're paying for. You'll know exactly what you want them to do, in what amount of time, for how much money, and what the purpose of this project is in relation to your overall business goals.

Posting a project like "I want 1,000 words on the topic of Global warming" is asking for trouble.

A project should look like "I want 1000-1200 words on the topic of how global warming is affecting sales of gasoline cars. There should be an introduction paragraph and conclusion. Each paragraph should be no more than 2-3 sentences. Please include specific outcomes from American and non-American car companies. Include at last two reference sources (links). Use at least 3 headings (paragraph titles) to divide the article into section topics to make the reading more skimmable"





# FIXING PROBLEMS

**F**or sure, you are going to run into problems from time to time. Hopefully, if you did a good job during the hiring process, these problems will be easy to fix.

A good freelancer will be humble and make changes based on your request. It's your money. It's your website. They are here to make you happy so they can get future work from you.

Simply be clear about what the mistake was, how to fix it (in general), and you can even sneak in some compliments to show them that they didn't completely screw up.

My main un-fixable problems were due to my own inadequacies as a business owner. For example, I may not have giving clear enough instructions, and they did not do what I had in mind. Another example is where I didn't give a clear delivery date, assuming they would finish by the end of the week, and it ends up taking them more than three weeks.

Another problem I run into is "satisfaction fatigue". This is when a freelancer promises "unlimited edits", but after 4-5 requests because they can't get it right, they become more and more impatient, sometimes even making MORE mistakes that previous versions!

Hopefully, you've filtered this type of person out by getting someone with a decent work history, or by having good discussions beforehand during the hiring process.

There's no single cure-all to fix all issues with all problems. Each freelancer is unique, as is each project. My main advice for "fixing" problems is to prevent them by doing proper preparation before positing your project, and working with the person rather than disappearing until the delivery date

PROBLEMS



# WHEN TO FIRING SOMEONE

I've had to fire many freelancers over the years. Specifically, I mean that there were several times I had to close the project, dispute escrow, and get my money back.

Most of the time this is due to a freelancer being unreliable. A person being unreliable, as in, not delivering on time more than one time in a row is grounds for considering ending the project. Depending on how much you need this particular person, if they are late to deliver and it affects your schedule, you need to emphasize how important it is to deliver on time, then fire them if they don't comply the next time.

Your time is worth more than that.

A more obvious reason, but still very difficult to do is simply due to lack of quality. If you are not happy with how the project is turning out, simply end the relationship and move on. Cut ties early rather than drag it out.

A huge mistake I've made in the past is to keep on mediocre writers simply because it's easier. "Oh, they know the process and deliver on time, I guess it's good enough."

Keep in mind, you are paying these people to do something. You are not their keeper, or responsible for them. If they are not delivering something

you like, find someone who will, or at least train them properly so they know how to satisfy you.

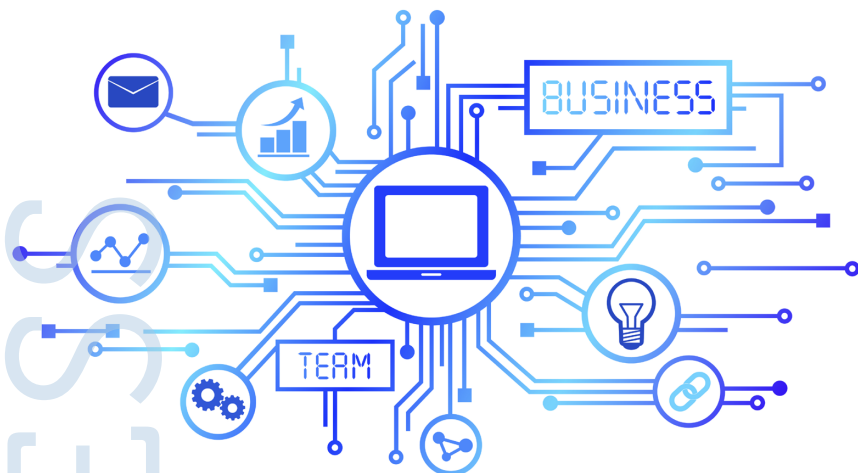
I like to give people a week to a month advance notice, but it's not required to do so. Freelancers generally know what's up, that work can be pulled any time, but it's still nice to allow them to prepare for the income loss.

I look at how long they worked for me. If it's a few months project, I'll tell them a week or two ahead of time. If it's a year long project I'll give them a month or more heads up.

Lastly, sometimes projects just have to come to a close. I have done multi-month long projects that do well for a while, then just peter out. It may have been a temporary traffic boost due to a trend, or other sites in my niche may have picked up on the article ideas and copied me out of Page 1 results.

Whatever the reason, just inform the person they did a great job, but the project is coming to an end, and you will consider them for future similar projects. I find that many writers are versatile, and can write on lots of different subjects.

If you have a writer you like in terms of style, communication, and quality, then maybe pivoting them to a different project is an option.



# SCALING YOUR BUSINESS



Ultimately, the reason you want to outsource is to scale your business. It's a division of labor to produce bigger results.

You do not have to be an expert in everything. In fact, it would be impossible. Do what you are good at, and hire people who are good at the stuff you don't have time for or can't learn in a reasonable amount of time.

Once you are earning income from your website, outsourcing becomes less stressful. Everything is business expense.

My philosophy has always been geared towards building a long term business that will earn me lots of passive income IN THE FUTURE.

In the words, if I lose \$10,000 this year due to failed outsourced projects, that's not a big deal. In the future, I will be earning \$50,000 per month so these early losses are a drop in the bucket.

It's kind of like investing. Would you rather have \$100 today, or put the money into a stock and have \$500 when you retire? I'll take the retirement money and live below my means right now!

The only difference with regards to outsourcing for your business is that instead of investing in someone

else's business, like Apple or Costco, you're investing in your own business.

Don't be afraid to practice outsourcing too!

Do you have an article that performs well and converts visitors into commissions? Hire someone to build an infographic for you and see if you can boost those conversions even higher.

Is there white space in your header and it's been bugging you for many years but you don't know CSS? Hire a developer to customize your site a little and get it perfect. I'll be you can do it for less than \$100 and in less than two days.

Did you already write and publish 5 articles this week and you want to take a break? Brainstorm a few simple keywords or do a Top 10 list, and have someone make 5 articles for you just to see how the hiring process goes.

Much like becoming an online business owner, learning to outsource is a learned skill. You'll no doubt make some mistakes along the way but it's all a learning experience. Better to make a \$100 mistake this year than a \$10,000 mistake a few years down the road.