



# Outsourcing Is Not Just for Big Business

By Gretchen A. Magee

Once again, audiology as a career made the list of *Forbes* least stressful jobs in January 2015. Many current professionals in the daily grind, however, might disagree with the consensus drawn from an overview of data compiled by the Department of Labor, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau, trade associations, and private-survey firms. Health-care providers are striving to meet quality standards of efficient service delivery set forth by public and private sector organizations that

force evaluation of care models and cost-cutting measures.

Does the audiology job description bring out the superhero complex? Sometimes leaders in an organization believe that it is entirely feasible for them to complete all of their clinical provider tasks, and to master marketing, accounting, logistics, design, etc., for a dynamic practice.

“Progressive entrepreneurs realize the unstoppable power of outsourcing to handle aspects of their business that are essential but simply don’t make sense for

them to deal with personally,” said David Walsh, entrepreneur and author of *Source Control*, an e-book on effective small-business outsourcing. “Small business, augmented by a global pool of human capital, can compete directly with the biggest players in their space and win.”

## Outsourcing

Outsourcing can cover everything from Web design to bookkeeping and everything in between. Outsourcing for your small business will typically fall into one of three categories:

### Highly Skilled Expertise

Reach out to expert consultants to get their guidance. Even though you wear all the hats in your small business or clinic, you can outsource to a financial expert a few times a month to get CFO-level insight into your business books. The same goes for marketing, strategic business building, or any other higher-level decision-making areas.

### Repetitive Tasks

As the owner of your own business, you don't need to spend your weekends adding new social media

### Analyzing Your Budget

One of the main concerns for small businesses and conscientious program departments is the finances. The first step is to evaluate your available cash flow and budgets for upcoming tasks.

### Special Projects

These would include the launch of a new Web site or marketing campaign that would have to have a complete budget on the forefront. It is possible to get quotes from several providers or run a test project on a freelance job board to find the current rate.

### Referrals

Ask within the community or professional network. Reach out to a few key contacts and let them know what position is available. Finding a contractor through your existing network should be your first stop.

### Social Media

Any social media site can connect you with a potential service provider. LinkedIn is often a great place to start a search because individuals are providing more information about their direct past experiences.

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followers or filing receipts. Repetitive tasks such as these can be outsourced to an assistant—virtual or otherwise—to free up your time.

### Specialized Skills

You are excellent at what you do, but there are dozens of other tasks that go into running your business that you aren't so great at—such as Web design, copywriting, or accounting. Specialized skills can be outsourced so you can get the level of quality that you need to increase effectiveness.

Take a hard look at your core values within the business to determine your strengths and weaknesses. Don't outsource tasks because you don't want to do a task, but rather because it will advance your growth.

### Monthly Time-Saving Tasks

Evaluate the jobs being considered for outsourcing to compare that calculation to your typical hourly rate. Look through your typical business week and figure out where you can save some time. Are you spending a lot of time on routine bookkeeping tasks? Are you scheduling social media updates a few hours each week? Are you blogging when you should be coding? Tasks such as these can be outsourced to save you more money.

### Making the Best Professional Connection

First and foremost, finding the right contacts is critical to making outsourcing work for the business at hand. Consider these options in making the right connections:

### Freelance Job Boards and Bidding Sites

Posting ads on job boards or using a bidding site such as eLance, Guru, or oDesk can put you in touch with a number of different providers all at once. After a job description is posted, various service providers will contact you through the service to give you a quote and show you their experience.

### Considering Virtual Employees

ODesk, eLance, Freelancer.com, and Guru are freelance sites that currently provide a framework for hiring virtual or remote workers. Amazon's Mechanical Turk also allows larger projects to be accomplished with online task management. Each site has its own parameters, but all of these companies serve as an online marketplace for job postings.

Individuals can post a job description, have people bid on the work, negotiate on price, and look at previous ratings and work history before setting a contract rate or a pay-per-hour agreement.

Payment for completed jobs is then escrowed by each of the Web sites and payment is released to the worker when the job is finished. The administrators of the Web site typically take a 10 to 15 percent commission from the sale as an administrative fee. The added flexibility of having to hire staff only when you need the help is another reason why many businesses are turning to outsourcing. You may get access to top-quality people at a much lower rate, and the cost savings can be very significant.

## Starting Your Projects

Success starts with a good project description. Set expectations early within the project and establish a system for monitoring project goals or hourly reporting.

## Tips for Posting Project Requirements

- Write a description in as basic terms as possible.
- Set clear milestones if they are to be used for payment criteria.
- Ask someone else to read the project description before submitting it.
- If you are worried about protecting your intellectual property

or idea, create a non-disclosure agreement and make sure you are exchanging it with a real entity.

- Make the project sound exciting and mention that it will look good in any portfolio.
- Post the job to specific geographic regions depending upon the sort of worker wanted.

## Conclusion

Although there can be risks to subcontracting work, the process of outsourcing projects and/or routine tasks within a business can give owners big advantages. The process allows access to a team of skilled professionals without adding the expense of full-time employees, and helps business owners avoid getting bogged down with tasks that can be completed without direct attention in an office. When you outsource, the individual you hire can focus time, attention, and resources on your company's core competencies, while you spend your time setting new goals and finding ways to achieve them. 

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*Illustration by Johanna van der Sterre.*

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