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Insider Secrets to Securing Superior Outsourcing Services

by Angela Allen Parker

Real estate agents, small business owners and other entrepreneurs are expanding the use of outsourcing services. They are discovering that it's a high-impact, economical way to access top-end services while effectively competing in their chosen markets. However, it can be difficult for someone new to this method of working to locate, or even recognize, the best individuals in the outsourcing business.

It's like panning for gold online. How do you know when you have found one of the best - an individual that will help bolster your own business? How can you effectively "weed through" the less qualified and select wisely? Let me share a few "insider secrets" to help you in your search.

When Seeking Individual Offsite Providers:

- **Always require and check references.** Check every single one. Without due diligence, the best you can hope for is good luck. It's not a wise gamble.
- **Don't hire a generalist.** Outsourcing specialists are a benefit to your company only if they bring the specific skills you need. You can hire generalists for onsite work or use temp agencies as needed for general or clerical work.

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Learn How to Compel Prospects

- **Does your potential specialist do outsourced work full-time?** timers only dedicate a few hours a day or a week to your needs and you will split that with any other clients they may have.
- **Get information.** Ask about background and real-life experience in the areas you need and a history of delivering those services via digital means. Consider and weigh formal education, professional experience, and longevity in business and client references.
- **Investigate.** Check into the certification requirements if you seek certified individuals. If everyone passes the "tests" -- do the tests indicate skill? How was the test or the certification conducted and by whom? Is the certification an effective measuring tool?
- **Rates will vary, but your end cost is what matters.** Recognize that specialists may accomplish in 15 minutes what it could take two (or more) hours for a beginner to accomplish - and the pros will deliver a better end product.
- **You get what you pay for.** If a "VA" is charging less than \$25 per hour, they probably aren't seasoned. If they do not yet know the costs associated with running their own business, do you want them helping you run yours? Find an outsourcing professional with excellent skills and appropriate rates.
- **Do they seem too eager?** If so, you may not want them. Hungry often means new or less than experienced. Sometimes you strike gold with a wonderfully experienced newcomer, but often your projects are merely his/her training ground.
- **Do they interview YOU?** Most professional providers will. If they aren't asking questions to help you define how you see their role in your business, you should be concerned. Excellent outsourcing providers ask excellent questions. They help you define your needs.
- **Do they educate you about this way of working?** If you are new to outsourcing, most professionals will take a few minutes to ascertain your level of comfort and will help to explain to you how it works, and how they (or someone they recommend) may help you.
- **Are they busy?** Most professional providers of a certain caliber have a full client load. You know the old saying, "If you want something done, ask the person who is busy?" - it goes double for outsourcers. Remote

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professionals only accept the "cream-of-the-crop" new clients -- and only those they believe they can help.

- **Don't be offended if you are referred on.** Most professionals will send you to another provider if they don't have the time in their schedule to provide the services you need or if they don't offer the specialized services you seek.
- **Professional referrals will help you find a good match.** Someone in this business is careful about referring work to others. Referrals put their own reputation on the line. Not every referral is a perfect match, but your chances are improved when a professional outsourcing specialists makes a recommendation.

A good relationship with excellent outsourcing specialists is a business asset, and it's one you should protect. Specialists in this industry do "fire" clients and they do it more often than clients "fire" them. It happens when the match isn't working, when projects aren't being completed, and for a host of other reasons. Most outsourcing providers protect their success ratios - it's tied to their professional reputations and is reflected in their own bottom line.

Tips to help you keep the best offsite services providers on your team:

- **Don't "forget" scheduled meetings.** If you must reschedule, do so in advance, not at the last minute. Most high quality providers keep tight schedules. The meeting time scheduled for you probably means another client had to wait or was turned away.
- **Don't make it a challenge to get information from you.** Although some client-provider relationships may survive this situation, most will not. Your remote professional doesn't ask for information from you that is unnecessary and few want to "play mom" and continually repeat requests for the necessary information to complete your projects.
- **Provide your portion of the work on time.** If your outsourcing partner has to wait on you, your project will shift down his or her priority list. If you aren't worried about your deadlines, how can you expect your current procrastination to become their future deadline crisis? You can't -- and doing so will damage your relationship.
- **Make decisions.** Don't be "wishy-washy" about how a project should be

approached. Ask for the provider's advice on issues in his/her area of expertise, and then make the call. You are the client - it's your business. The final decision belongs to you. Own it.

- **Pay promptly.** A superior outsourcer is never hungry for work. If you don't pay promptly, you may find that your "client slot" has been filled with someone who does. Every hour spent "collecting" is an hour that's non-billable time for the specialist. Besides, no one enjoys chasing down clients for payment - and most of these independent workers chose this career path to enjoy work more.
- **Be honest.** If there is a problem, just say so. If the project, or even the relationship, is not working for you, it's probably not working for your provider either. Most professionals will work with you to find a solution, or will refer you to another provider to help you make a better match.

Be the client you would like to have. I know it's a bit terse, but in business the golden rule is still golden.

About the Author: Angela Allen Parker has been a full-time remote professional and outsourcing industry advocate since 2000. Her writing and Internet marketing services company, WickedWordCraft.com, located in Dunnville, KY, serves real estate agents, brokers, Realtors ® and entrepreneurs throughout the USA and across the globe. She is a past president of an international trade organization for virtual assistants, consults with those new to the industry, and is the co-founder of RemoteProfessionals.com, a company dedicated to building strong professional networks between career-track outsourcers to offer a full spectrum of specialized services to outsourcing clients.