

Ask SCORE

Presented by Fox Valley Chapter 289

Issue: 27

www.ScoreFoxValley.org

December 2009



Entrepreneurs wear many hats. But there are limits to what you can do for yourself. Outsourcing is the key to leveraging your own resources and abilities. Here's how to do it successfully...

Operations

Some Insights on Successful Outsourcing

Outsourcing is a common practice in today's business world, but it's not the domain of large companies. Small business owners use outsourcing for a variety of reasons --to handle work overflows, receive specific expertise in a new or unfamiliar area such as marketing or IT, or take on more routine administrative tasks that are taking up too much of their time and attention.

The decision to outsource certain functions requires a professional approach, particularly since the small business owner may be understandably leery about relinquishing control over a task that he or she has handled from the outset. Developing a successful long-term relationship with an outsourcing partner requires effort on both sides. It's important to treat it like a partnership, because that's what it really is. A vendor who supplies a vital service for your business is like part of your staff, so you should go through a similar interviewing and reference checking process before you "hire" them.

Using outside service providers who have experience working with your particular type of business is important. You'll also want someone with the technology and expertise to deliver cutting edge services.

Be sure to ask detailed questions about the service you will receive and your access to someone who can answer questions and solve problems as they arise. For most small business owners, this kind

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of accessibility and service are top priorities. If the firm you are considering won't be available when something goes wrong, look elsewhere.

Also ask your candidate firms for current and past clients who received services of a scope similar to what you're looking for. If possible, ask for clients similar to you to properly gauge how well the company understands your needs. And, always meet with the service provider's leadership as well as the people who will be working directly with you. You don't want to have any doubts about their ability to handle what may be critical tasks for your business.

The "go-to" resource for help is the Outsourcing Institute, the world's largest professional community dedicated solely to outsourcing. The Institute's Web site www.outsourcing.com, provides a wealth of information about outsourcing trends, articles on securing IT and business processing services, and tips for ensuring your outsourcing partner delivers the level of performance you want.

To learn more about outsourcing successfully, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business."

The Fox Valley SCORE Chapter offers *free, confidential* counseling to small businesses, including startups. Affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE has counselors available in eight locations in the counties and suburbs west of Chicago.

To sign up for an appointment at the location closest to you, go to ScoreFoxValley.org.

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Meet with us to explore ways you can grow your business without growing your staff -- through smart outsourcing.

Sincerely,

The Counselors at SCORE

Grants provided by the Alfred Bersted Foundation, Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley and Kane County Riverboat Fund.



Legal Corner

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Business Expense Deductions

As you approach the end of the year, it's time to separate business expenses from personal -- and sort out capital expenses from ongoing trade expenses. Here's a review of what's deductible and what isn't as you prepare your taxes.

[Details here](#)



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