

NO EXCUSES:

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO BUILDING A REMOTE TEAM

- **Setting up your Remote Team for Higher Productivity**
- **Must-have Resources for Automating Online Business**
- **How to Find the Absolute Best Contractors**

DAVENEVOGT

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by

DAVE NEVOGT

No Excuses: The Definitive Guide to Building a Remote Team

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Introduction

I decided to write this book for several reasons. First, it's my passion... Online business has been my life for over 10 years now. I've built several businesses to several million annually, and in order to do that, you simply can't do it all yourself. So I realized very quickly that I needed help if I was going to remain sane.

But there are several problems that arise once you get "help", and in many cases it's actually the beginning of the downfall of the business. This book is going to help you avoid that.

I'll never have an office again and I am proud of it. I can absolutely do everything virtually that a company can do in an office, run a leaner business that is more profitable, and enjoy my life more without an "office".

I've developed a ton of systems and processes for managing teams online and increasing productivity. This book is going to share them with you and the theories behind them. I'm going to lay a step by step process in front of you that will not always be easy to follow, but it will save your business from many tough situations.

There are several times in this book, that you will probably disagree with me. There are several times where I'll probably sound too harsh or uncaring, but what you are getting is my raw uncut experiences. Welcome to the world of outsourcing and virtual teams. Prepare to toughen up... This is not an easy gig. No excuses. That goes for everyone on the team...

THE 50K FOOT VIEW

Your “Why”

Why are you in business? Why are you doing it and what drives you? Why are you *really* in business? Why are you spending every day of your life sitting in front of a computer screen? Are you living your passion? You only live once after all...

Is your “why” the money? If yes, then prepare to fail...

Business is about much more than money, and these days customers will see right through your BS if all you can think about is profit.

Your business has *got* to have depth to survive more than a few years, and more importantly, you need a “why” in order to create a product or service that people even care to buy.

The idea of “Why” first hit me during an Entrepreneur’s Organization (EO) retreat that I was a part of. EO is a group of over 7,000 Entrepreneurs across the globe, and the keynote speaker was Simon Sinek, who talks about this very topic of “why” and explains it very elegantly. You can watch his TED talk on the subject here - [Simon Sinek’s Golden Circle](#).

Have you ever been to a retail chain that it’s severely obvious that the employees couldn’t care less? It’s the same thing...

Now, what’s the point of all this and how the hell is it related to building a successful virtual team and business?

Because... **Your “why” lays a foundation for decisions across your organization.** And your team makes decisions every second of every day they are working for you. We want to make those decisions focused and correct.

The logic revolves around building a team that has like-minded goals. It’ll lower your stress, it will help your team work towards goals so much faster, and you’ll totally avoid the scenario mentioned above with the employee that could care less. It’s best to demonstrate this point from the employee perspective.

Your “Why” from an Employee Perspective

Setting the Scene: You run a website that sells dog lifejackets and slides for boats that is currently doing \$400,000 in sales annually (if that seems like a lot, consider that \$400,000/\$79 average sales price = 5,063 cages sold per year and 5,063 / 352 days per year = 14 units a day = very doable). Now, back to the scenario at hand... You sell cool things that allow dogs to have fun in the water, and you’ve got a staff of 3 people. Two customer support reps, and a designer / developer.

Now, let's look at 2 different possibilities here:

Scenario One - You started the business 4 years ago because you did some light keyword research and decided that “dogs” and “dog lifejackets” were in demand online. You don't own a dog and you really don't even like online business.

When you hire an employee you are looking for the best rate possible and someone that responds quickly. In general the work that you get back from your developer is fairly error prone (think B-), but it's all for a decent rate so you chalk it up to a “cost of doing business”. Of your two support reps, neither actually owns a dog. One lives in Birmingham, AL and works the day shift and the other lives in the Philippines.

You've never really communicated your actual goals of the business to your people. They assume that you are just trying to make a living and feed your family, etc...

Scenario Two - You started the business 4 years ago because you love dogs and you saw that “dogs” and “ dog lifejackets “ were in demand online in your keyword research phase. You've got two dogs, and you've built entire personalities online around these dogs. They are in a sense the “face” of your brand.

When you hire an employee of course you are looking for someone that has the skills to get the job done, but your first prerequisite is to make sure that they are also a “dog lover”. In general the work that you get back from your developer is fairly error prone (think B-), but because he loves dogs, he's always thinking of other items to move the business forward. This includes taking pictures of dogs with lifejackets on and playing a pool, creating content for your blog, and writing emails to previous customers.

Because you only hire do lovers your two support naturally have dogs. One lives in Birmingham, AL and works the day shift and the other lives in the Philippines. Because of their experience it allows them to speak in the first person to your clients, and create a bond with them. The support reps seem to generally care about the well being of the customer's pet, and it shows through in the communication.

Are you seeing the differences between these two situations?

In scenario one your business is foundationally screwed. It's only a matter of time before someone else figures out that they can make a decent profit selling dog water gear online and they build it better and completely run you out of business. Your people are completely transaction related. There is no loyalty and to these employees it's just a job.

How do you motivate these people? How do you make sure that they aren't trying to lie to you? How do you train them on all the questions that the customers will ask?

Conversely in scenario two, your people are actually excited to get out of bed in the morning because part of their job description is directly related to their passion... and that's the key right there... Because they are dog lovers, it's easy for them to adapt and provide better answers to clients. When it comes to making decisions in the organization, they generally make the right decision because they ARE the customer. They KNOW the market. This is huge when it comes to lowering your stress levels.

In addition, you've clearly spelled out your “why” to them and they agree with it. Your why is “We help dogs have fun and stay safe in the water”. Now your employees get out of bed in the morning with a purpose that provides a non-monetary reward.

There are so many benefits to this, and hopefully you can see the relation to virtual teams here. While this point applies to all businesses, it's especially important to virtual businesses.

Virtual businesses are inherently hard to run because you have less touch points with your team. Developing a deeply rooted reason for existence and hiring employees that agree with that "why" is the very first step to building a successful virtual team. You simply have to be on the same page without speaking and this will get you 50% of the way there. You need your team to make the same decisions you would make, not on your next strategic move, but in the trenches of your business. That's where they operate. They are the foundation.

The Challenges of Managing a Remote Team

Remote teams are awesome for speed and running a lean business, and I fully believe that they are the "future" of work. Things will continue moving more and more in the direction of virtual teams in the coming years because of advances in technology, increased access to skilled workers, and more "technology" type businesses. However, with this fairly new idea of a "virtual team" there are new challenges presented.

The most obvious problem is that you have less touch points, and less control over what is actually happening with them on an hour to hour basis. This includes everything from driving projects forward to making sure that they are not trying to pull one over on you by reporting more hours than are actually worked to communication issues.

But for every problem, there is a solution. Here's a very brief list, and I am providing this list in the beginning to make it clear that YOU CAN DO IT. THERE IS A SOLUTION. So don't be afraid of it, instead, embrace it.

Problem - It's harder to communicate with a virtual team.

Solution - Get [Basecamp](#) going and actually improve communication (even with a team that is physically right next to you) with the added benefit of documentation on the cloud.

Problem - It's hard to keep track of the time that an employee has worked in a given week and pay them on an hourly / contractor.

Solution - Get [Hubstaff](#) which will allow you to see screenshots, track activity levels, pay employees and more. Again, this is massively beneficial even if the employee is sitting right next to you. While Basecamp helps improve the quality of your communication, Hubstaff actually works in a different direction. It reduces the time you spend following up with employees, and hassling with figuring out exactly what your people are doing. This app tracks the time your team is working for you down to the exact minute so you pay only for what you get.

Problem - It's harder to meet and discuss individual projects

Solution - Skype and Gotomeeting both allow you to see video of the other person and communicate directly with them. You can even share screens and "look over their shoulder". Google hangouts are now equipped with "remote desktop" which you can use for customer support.

You probably picked up on the trend here. For every problem, there is a technology solution popping up that can make your team even more productive. It's now possible where you can almost do everything "in the cloud" that you can do in person. Not every individual is willing to accept this, but the world is changing and it's changing quickly.

The "Push"

If you are going to create a virtual team, be prepared to develop some thick skin. Firing someone over email isn't quite as hard as firing them in person, but it's still not easy, especially if they are trying hard and you've gotten to know them personally.

You've got to develop a mindset of "No Excuses" (the title of the book came from this mindset). The people that can help you make your business a success are out there, you just have to find them... No excuses. The right models are in existence that can lower your stress and reduce your management time. You just have to implement them.

What does "No Excuses" mean? It means that you have proactively created a situation where everyone on your team is in agreement on what a finished product looks like and the deadlines are clear. In addition, it's clear that upper management is always available, and will answer very quickly, if questions exist.

Your job as a manager / owner of an organization is to leave absolutely no room for excuses from your people. There's a super quick 5-step process that I use in my business to make sure that I am leaving no room for excuses...

1. **Describe** the project to your team, making sure that they understand what the finished project looks like
2. Get their "**sign-off**" that they understand exactly what needs to be done
3. Set a **deadline** for project completion
4. Get their "**sign-off**" on project completion date
5. Make it abundantly clear that you **make yourself available for questions**, and live up to it.

Can you see the way this simple process pushes everything back on the contractor / employee. It leaves no room for excuses.

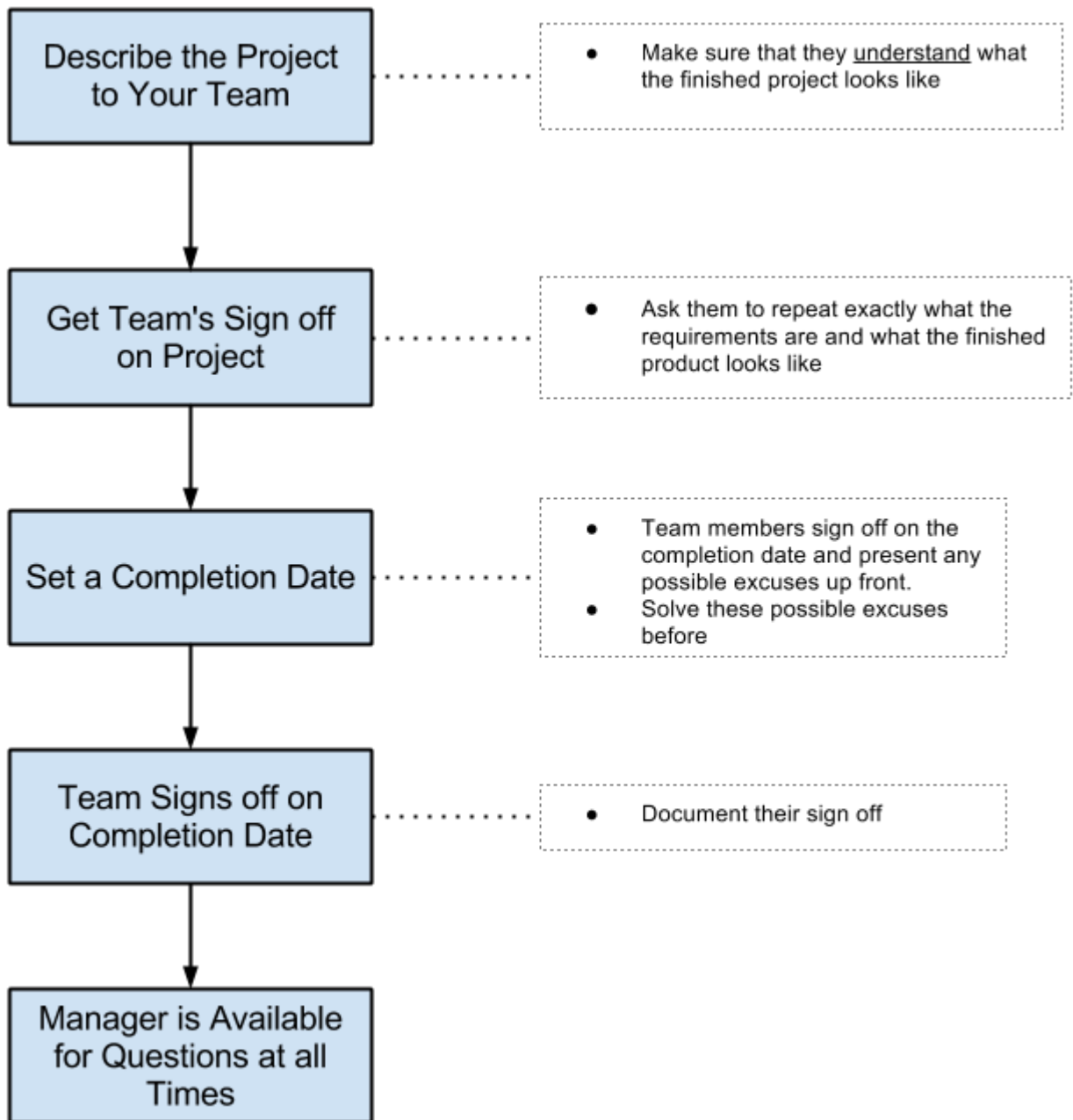
In short what you are doing is setting expectations up front, getting their agreement up front that the dates are realistic and that the project is fully understood. Then you are backing this up in case questions come up (which they always do) with your support and clarification. The end result is that the project should be tested and ready to hand off on or before the due date.

If the project is not done, and you received no questions, then you have a problem with an employee. See the way that works? You simply leave no room for excuses and force full accountability. You do your work up front so you can move on to other areas of your business.

If you find that an employee is consistently not meeting deadlines, then you have a decision to make. You can take corrective action and try to train further, but it's important to realize that at this point, if the work is not done, it's not your fault. You've set the system up for

success, but you have a person in your team who is ok with NOT being accountable. This is unacceptable, and you need to cut ties, and find an employee who produces does what they say they are going to do.

If this is a consistent pattern, there is a chance that this could be your fault due to hiring someone who is under-qualified, setting unrealistic deadlines (maybe the contractor doesn't feel comfortable speaking up), or lack of experience on your part. You need to be aware of these factors, but don't be afraid of them. Your job is to push the organization forward. There's not a successful CEO in the history of business that hasn't needed push hard in order to accomplish goals.



How to Virtually Guarantee Success

Let me be extremely clear here... I've been on both sides of this. I've been a part of unsuccessful teams and a part of successful teams. I've led unsuccessful teams and I've led successful teams. After starting 7 businesses over 10 years, I can say with 100% certainty, that there is nothing more important to your business than your team.

As any businessperson progresses in their career it seems they tend to lean more and more towards working only with "A Players". It's not essential when starting out, but over time, you start to realize that if you're going to attack something it's best to attack it full force, and in order to do that it's best to have a great team.

Check out this quote:

*"I don't pay good wages because I have a lot of money;
I have a lot of money because I pay good wages."*

~Robert Bosch

Think about that quote for a minute. Now I fully realize that not every business can afford the best players. But, I also know for a fact that smart people will totally revolutionize any business. The way they think is different. They can tackle larger problems, they can move faster, and they are more accurate.

I would challenge you to search out the very best and at least talk to them about getting involved with your business. If you can find a way to make it happen, you should consider it very closely. This is especially true of programmers and marketers.

Even if you cannot get the best of the best, then you should seek out the best of the rest. You do this by constantly building a better team. It should be a never ending cycle. That's next...

Always Be Building a Better Team

As I lead my companies forward, one of the most important things that I do on a daily basis is test new potential team members. If they are good, then I usually find work for them, and if they are not so good, then I simply don't hire them. This serves so many important roles and is possibly the most important thing that I do as a leader and manager.

The basic idea is that you want to continue moving towards a more productive, agile, broad and smarter team of resources that you have at your disposal to tackle tasks as needed.

I have designers, developers, writers, video producers, PPC specialists, on-site SEO people, link builders, managers, and accountants on contract constantly. They are my team of trusted contractors. I pay them only when they are doing work for me and I treat them well. I give bonuses, great recommendations and other things in order to get preferential treatment when it comes time to start another project.

I always keep an eye out for new talent, until I find that one person that does work that I just love for the rate that I can justify. Don't fall into the trap of being satisfied with what you have, and believing that there is not someone better out there who would love to work on your team.

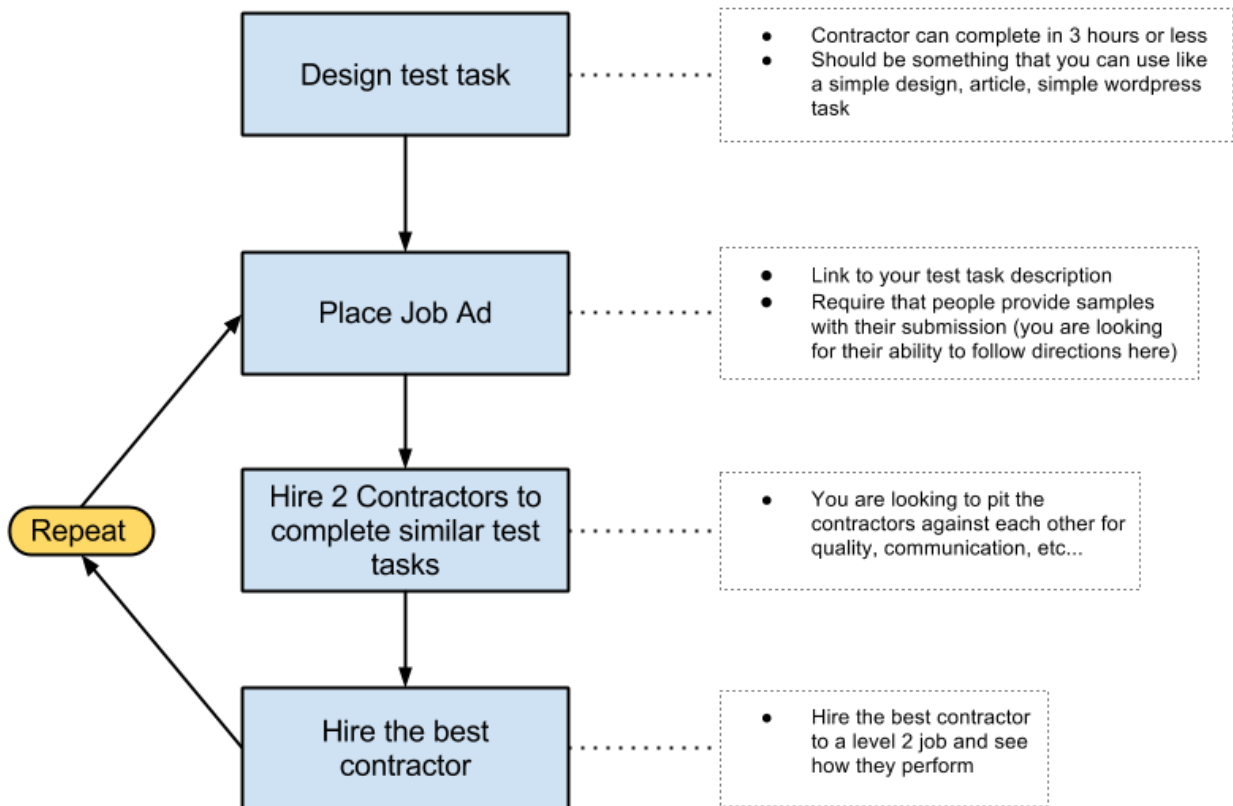
Here are some specifics on how I manage this process:

- Hire for evaluation periods - I am constantly looking for smaller type tasks that are not totally intertwined with my code base that I can use as a test task. I'll post this task on a job site and interview the people. I'll usually give the same task to 2-3 people. I will generally know within 2-3 hours whether or not this person is someone that can help my organization move forward or not. You'll be amazed at how telling this process can be. You are paying between \$12-\$50 per hour usually. So for \$36 - \$150 you can find someone that can be with your organization in a very specialized manner for years to come. This is very powerful.
- Let the most talented rise to the top and the least talented fall off. Most people fold under pressure. They see competition and shy away. Let them know that you have others working on similar tasks and just see what they do and how they perform. Many will not even show up to collect the check. Guaranteed.

When you find someone you like, add them to your team. Give them work, introduce them to your code base, your designs, etc... and get them started. The world has changed. You no longer need to commit to someone for a full time work schedule. Many great people enjoy working from home, working on their own time, and there is [technology](#) in place to make this all possible.

Here's a quick challenge: Find two people this week that might be able to help your company get something done that it's been struggling with for a while (could be as simple as migrating your site to a new host or getting a good blog post out). Give them a small test task to see how they perform and how they communicate. You may just find that person that is going to make your team better for years to come, and allow you to work on your strengths instead of continually being spread too thin.

Here is a flowchart that I have developed to show the process of how to constantly add new and better players to your team:



Do What You Love and Outsource the Rest

Let's say you are a great marketer. You know how to drive traffic, write copy, generate content, and convert web visitors into buyers.

If that's the case, then why in the world do you have an HTML manual in your hand trying to figure out how to code your own site? Outsource it! You will get a better result without the stress.

I have personally managed developers for ten years now, and I have never written a line of code from scratch in my life. I wish I could develop and that it came naturally to me, but I have learned that some things are just not worth learning because of opportunity cost. Focus on what you do well, and spend almost all your time there. This process will drive more results to your business.

Answering these three important questions will provide a lot of insight:

- What are you doing on a day to day basis that you flat out are not good at?
- What are you doing on a day to day basis that you despise doing?
- What are you NOT doing that you know you SHOULD be doing because other tasks constantly get in the way?

I challenge you to make a list of the answers right now. This list will be a very large indicator of the areas where A players could move your organization forward. You can use this list to start developing your test tasks.

You should only be performing tasks that you really enjoy doing because the chances are that those are the same tasks that you are actually good at and your love for the work will show and attract customers. Continually performing tasks that are not in your skill set adds stress, lowers profits and wastes time for your organization.

Specialists

We live in a world where you have easy access to top-notch talent all over the globe. The really cool thing is that most of these people are freelancers and they are willing to do small tasks for you at an hourly rate. When you encounter tasks that need to be done on a one-time basis, my opinion is that it's best to get a specialist to do these jobs instead of employing a "jack of all trades" who really doesn't specialize in any one particular area.

It's very rare that a good designer is a great developer. They are two really different skill sets. It's rare that a good communicator and marketing person is a great accountant. It's just the way that it works. When you realize and accept this, it's like a weight lifted off your shoulders.

Here are some example scenarios:

- You want to start advertising on Adwords, but really don't know where to start. Adwords alone is a challenge to learn, and when you throw Bing, and all the other PPC engines into the mix it even gets more confusing. But there are people that are trained to set these accounts up. You can find someone that has worked at

an agency setting campaigns up every day all day. Get them to come in and set up your account the right way. A general cost for this could be \$50 an hour for 6 hours. So for \$300, they will do keyword research, build adgroups, set up tracking, and possibly design some image ads.

- You want to have a logo designed but you don't know Photoshop or Illustrator. Again, these programs have a learning curve, so find a contractor that can look at your brand, and redesign a logo. You have to have an eye for this stuff, it's not only the technical side that is an issue. For about \$150 you could have a logo created, and delivered in Photoshop format so you could then hand it off to one of your "jack of all trades" people for editing and replication across your website, business cards, and more.

The main point here is that you've allowed your business to get top-notch work at low rates. These people are *specialists* at what they do. They've spent years learning their trade, and now your business can benefit. Don't half-ass these things. There are countless other examples. Sites like odesk, elance and freelancer allow you to see previous work from these people in an matter of minutes, and highly recommend that when it comes to highly specialized items like this, you find specialists that can set your business up the right way.

Interchangeable Work

The two-week notice "rule" is B.S. In reality, you cannot replace someone in two weeks, and there is a great chance that if you are outsourcing you'll get more like zero notice. What if the employee or contractor that you are most reliant on tells you tomorrow that they are leaving?

I want you to pretend right now for a few minutes that you just got email from the employee that you most rely on stating that they are leaving for another job, and that you didn't see this coming. In most cases this turns into a mad scramble, the next 2-3 months are spent trying to find, train and hire the replacement (you've probably got to go through two or three people). In the meantime, work is not getting done.

Here's how to avoid the above scenario:

1. Document everything. All tasks, procedures, and job functions need to be documented in Google Drive, Dropbox, Basecamp or some other cloud-based system that accessible and editable by all members of your team. Your team members are responsible for documenting their own tasks.
2. Never have only one person trained to do any single task. Anything repetitive needs to have several people in your organization that can perform that process. Never have one person be the sole "owner" of that process. It absolutely sucks when that person leaves. The more people or teams that know your code base or processes the better. This makes it easy for you to fill gaps when someone on your team leaves.
3. Be open with your people. What I mean by this is simple. If you like a contractor and you find yourself reliant on them, send them an email with the below info or similar.

"Hey {insert name}. I just wanted to tell you that I really enjoy working with

you. I want you to know that as long as things continue as they are currently are, there will always be work for you at {organization}. I am bringing this up because I am starting to rely on you and your skills more in this organization and if you ever needed to leave, it would be a big blow for us. We'd need a few months to recover and re-train. I understand that you will always have to do what's best for you and your family, but if you were ever thinking about leaving, would you be so kind as to give me as much notice as possible?

I am not going to freak out and stop working with you if you tell me you are searching for another job opportunity. I understand, and I want what's best for you. But it would really be appreciated if you could give me a lot of advance notice. We can even keep a contract open on a freelance basis if you ever move on if that would be ok with you. Let me know. Dave"

Doing these three things really will help your business thrive and lower your stress levels. Your business is so much more secure after you have these things out in the open and everyone is on the same page.

Why "Accountability" is the Most Important Word in Business

When you make a request of someone, take a little extra time to explain why you are making it. Put it in context and explain why it's important to the goals of the business. Then the person can provide a more robust solution because she understands the purpose of the task and how the information will be used. Ask what the person needs to complete the task. This approach removes excuses, reduces rework, and is a great way to build relationships. It's also a great way to develop future leaders by increasing responsibility and encouraging decision-making and creativity. By holding others accountable, you are teaching them to accept responsibility.

- Bob Prosen.

If you've not read Bob Prosen's book, "Kiss Theory Goodbye," I highly recommend doing so. It's changed the way I think about managing employees.

The basic idea of accountability is that there are no excuses. Not from employees, not from managers. It's the ability and willingness to accept responsibility.

Your job as a manager of a business is not to shove things down the throats of our employees or bully people around. That doesn't work. What DOES work is encouraging accountability in your organization. Hold people to what they commit to, and most importantly, establish a culture where there are no excuses.

How do we make sure that there are no excuses? It's a simple multi-step process:

1. Blueprint the project. Explain the project very clearly.
2. Explain why the project exists. This gives the employee a deeper sense of understanding about the project, and let's their creative side come alive, which will possibly give an even better solution than was originally intended.
3. Make sure that the employee has at their disposal everything they need in order

to complete the project. We get their buy-in and commitment up front. This step removes any possible excuses.

4. Hold the employees accountable.

It's our job as a manager to set up our employees for success. It's our job to make sure that they have everything they need in order to complete projects successfully. If you can do this, you'll see a total transformation in your projects getting done.

When Your Employees Become Accountable - What to Expect

So now that we know what accountability is, its importance in business, and the "basics" of how to achieve it, I'd like to give you a quick synopsis of what to expect when employees become accountable in your organization. There are a few high-level changes that take place.

First, I think it's important to realize that in general, your employees DO want to help the business succeed. They just need structure in order to make that happen. It's your job to give them that structure. What you will find is that as soon as you provide the right "structure" a light switch will flip on and you'll hear things like "that's all you wanted, well that's easy" and "I wish we had this a long time ago." You'll hear these things because there is an automatic structure in place. It's fast, easy and effective for the employees. Everyone realizes that, especially the employees.

Second, the employees start actually putting their time into the right priorities and tasks. They do this because they now understand the "why" behind what's driving the project, and they understand their role within the larger picture. Define the project.

Third, you will get fewer emails. The communication is done up front. You don't have to rely on email or be held back by the corresponding lags email creates. You also don't have to monitor your inbox 24/7 anymore.

Finally, you get to work on projects that move the company forward instead of spending time "managing."

These are all benefits of developing a culture of accountability in your organization. I truly believe that it's the most important aspect of running a business assuming that the overarching idea of your business is sound, there is a market, etc... After that it comes down to execution, and execution comes down to having a team that is accountable.

You Can't Change People

People are either driven to achieve success or they are not. Neither type of person is better than the other on a personal level, but in my experience they are mutually exclusive. It's an either / or scenario.

Now, does this mean that everyone who is driven will be successful? Absolutely not.

But it does mean that you'll have an extremely hard time relying on people that are not driven by their own means. See, not everyone is afraid of their boss or losing their job. Not everyone responds to email when they receive it, and almost no one other than you cares

about the success of your business. This is the reality that you'll have to accept before you expect to take the next step in your business.

So what do you do about it? Well, luckily there is a simple solution.

You simply search all candidates until you find someone who is driven, and you hire that person. You can train someone, you can give them the SKILLS it takes to improve, but you will never be able to teach DRIVE. It's God given. Accept it and only add people to your team from now on who have this gift.

Your life, Your Business, Your Terms

I've got bad news: if you are successful, you are ALWAYS going to be pulled in 100 directions. There are always going to be time suckers out there, and they are looking to benefit from your knowledge and success. You have to learn to shut this off and say no.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I am all for giving back. I've had so many successes come because in general I give first. But I give on MY terms.

The people looking to get your time are not looking to "waste" your time but they are also not thinking of conserving it. Accomplishing your goals for the day, is not at the top of their priority list right? Everyone has their own agenda.

The point of this is to keep you on track with YOUR agenda. Not someone else's. Avoid distractions and distracting people like the plague. These are tough choices to make, but as we move to a world where even more people and things can compete for your time and attention you need "filters."

You need filters for your email. Social media and your phone need to be inaccessible at times. You need to be focused.

Here's how you decide what you should do and what you shouldn't (in very simplified terms). Determine what you want to accomplish and what has the highest potential payoff (payoff can be money, time, freedom, happiness, or a number of other things). Then, if you are being distracted by items that are not related to your most important goals (the things that YOU want to accomplish), simply make those items inaccessible during working "blocks" of time.

Need examples?

- **The phone.** I am working on ad copy for a business and the phone rings. That phone call was not on my agenda right? Just because the phone rings doesn't mean that I answer it. Is this rude? Some people think so, but I stayed true to my agenda. I don't need to speak to a sales person for GoDaddy or even my best friend. I need to write my ad copy (my phone is ALWAYS on silent and I miss calls by default).
- **Social media.** Sure it can be used for business, but it can also waste several hours a day. By nature, it makes everyone else's schedule more important than yours.

- **The news.** For the most part, the news is so distracting from your own schedule. Ask yourself this: If you live in New York, what does a wildfire in Colorado really have to do with you? Unless you are going to volunteer or do something to stop the fire, what does knowing about it really accomplish? The news exists because NBC and CBS make money from advertising. The more people that watch the news, the more attention NBC and CBS have. The more money they make, and the less your goals get accomplished.

You need to make your life about YOU and the things that matter to YOU. I have three or four people that will get my attention on the phone and that's it. I have Google voice set up and get an email immediately if someone leaves a message on my phone. This allows me to simply ignore all calls unless they are pre-scheduled of course.

HIRING PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

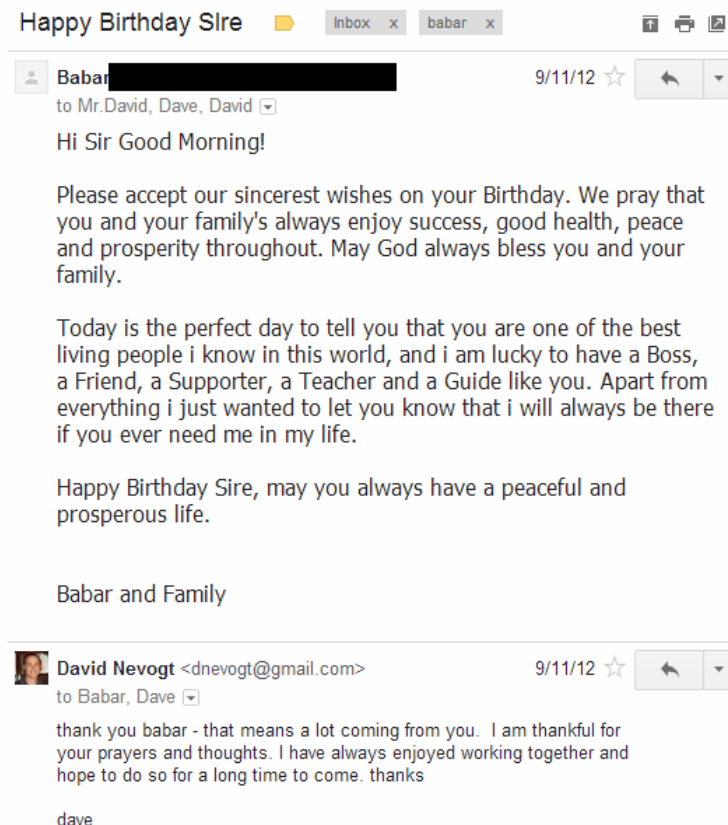
Developing Your Personal “A-Team”

In section one we laid a lot of foundation. Now it’s time to start focusing on some specifics regarding your hiring processes. But first, I want to take minute to introduce you to the overall goal of your hiring effort. Why you are doing all this, what your team looks like after a few months of focus, and some general theories.

12 months from today, I want you to have developed an “A-team” of around 7 -10 contractors that you trust with your life (or your business). These are people that you’ve been through thick and thin with and you’ve enriched their lives in more ways than one.

You know their family members by name, important dates in their lives, their religious beliefs. You follow them on twitter, they follow you. You respect them, and they respect you. These are the kind of relationships you need in business.

The below is from one of my trusted team members named Babar. He is in Islamabad, Pakistan and I am in Indianapolis, IN.



Now moving from the “culture” side of your team to the “strategy side” I want to give you some high level items to keep in mind. These are opinions, but these are the principles I have found to work for me.

- I believe the best and most efficient way to build your business is to get contractors and not full time employees. This is because you generally pay for what you get and there is more accountability built in. I also find it to be much less stressful. You can scale it up and scale it down.
- You want to have one or two trusted people in every function of your business. They need to be trained and ready to hop into your systems whenever you want. This allows you to cover when someone leaves or simply goes on vacation. It also allows you to shoot a quick email out to one of your people for example if you need an info-graphic produced.
- I am a big proponent of “part-time” work. It’s good for everyone and allows your team to be extremely flexible. An example would be having people in different parts of the world answering support questions. Give me a team of one support rep in the US for 4 hours a day, and one support rep in the Philippines for 4 hours a day over a single person any day of the week. So much more flexible.

This is an ongoing process... and you have to really work at building your team. But once you have your team, and if you are following these high-level principles above, you should end up with a team that is:

- Flexible
- Fast
- Full of “A-Players”
- Diverse in skill sets

Of course it depends on your business model, but here’s what my team looks like currently:

- Two individual writers and two large writing teams
 - Blog posts
 - Social media
- One copywriter
 - This is a much different skill set than research based writing
- Four Video producers
 - One for long form instructional video
 - Three for web based videos

- Three marketers
 - PPC
 - Email marketing
 - SEO
- Two graphic designers
 - Infographics, logos, layouts
 - Web design and CSS
- Five programmers
 - PHP
 - Ruby on Rails
 - Perl
 - MySQL
- Four support agents
- Three utility players
 - These are my “jack of all trades” people. They can pick up just about any task that doesn’t require hard core programming or design. This section is listed last, but really I rely on them more than anyone else in the org.

Try Before you Buy

It’s very important to test a potential employee / contractor out before getting them too involved in your business or becoming too reliant on them. You should give them a good 3-4 week test to fully understand their personality and work ethic before really starting to “plan” your business around them. You can of course have them working on projects that move your business forward, but just make sure that they are not a “integral” part of these projects until they have been fully tested. This is because in the world of outsourcing there is a good chance they will not fit the bill no matter how well they interview or pass the first few steps of your process.

This is important when deciding on a partner as well. Never decide on a partner before working with them for at least a few months. This is the worst thing that you can do, as they are the person that you will rely on most. It can cause all kinds of issues when one partner is willing to work more than the other, one partner has more projects than the other, etc...

We’ll get into more specifics on the tactical ways to do this in the coming chapters.

Posting a Job

Posting a job on the freelancing sites is a pretty simple process, but there are a few rules to follow when posting on freelancing sites.

First off, don't post the specs to your entire project because there are people that just scan elance, odesk, etc.. on a daily basis looking for projects to steal. Instead, focus on posting a general description of what you want to build with your required coding languages and

Specific descriptions are very important because they do three things.

- First, they keep some of the under-qualified contractors from applying because they show right away that you are someone who knows what they are doing and not easily scammed or taken advantage of.
- Second, they force you to think through the project in advance. There are tons of requirements that come out during this phase usually.
- Third, they allow the applicants to give you a more accurate bid.

Here's a sample post that I would make on Elance:

We are developing a custom real estate website that will focus on lead generation and SEO. Applicants will need to be able to plug into the IDX framework. The API documentation for IDX is here - <<<<link to IDX>>>

The design for the site has been completed and can be found here - <<<<link to image that shows the design>>>

Requirements:

- PHP
- minor design knowledge
- mySQL
- wordpress plugin customization

Plusses:

- experience with IDX or related real estate listing site

Please include relevant experience with your application. Those that do not include experience will not be considered.

Now that job listing is nothing special, but it is specific. They can pull from it that IDX is a large requirement, and in the interview I'll want to know about their experience with it and

at the very least, I would want to hear that they looked at the API documentation and they are confident with the programming.

Notice that the design and the programming are two different projects. This will save a lot of money in the end.

Also notice that there is not a lot of fluff here about the company, and how great we are, and how much fun we are going to have on the project. It cuts right to the chase and lays out the requirements, and tells them what I expect in the next phase (to get back with me regarding their experience).

Weeding Through

Anyone that has posted a job on Elance, odesk, freelancer, etc... understands how many applicants come with each job listing that you put out. Depending on the type of job you list and the keywords you use, you could expect to get anywhere from 5 to 200 applicants (large range I know).

It's to the point now where I can post a job that may get 70 applicants and I can weed through these applicants in a matter of minutes. Here's my process:

- 1. Wait at least 24 hours.** This is so you can weed through all applicants at once, instead of multiple sittings.
- 2. Know your budget.** You don't have to clearly state the budget in the job description (I prefer to be as vague as possible here), but you should have a good idea if you are looking to spend \$2 an hour, \$20 an hour or \$200 an hour. There's that large of a range, seriously... So anyone above or below (below is just as important as above) simply decline. Don't even look at their application.
- 3. Filter by Geography.** This one is a little bit tougher and it's up to your personal preference. It's up to you, but I usually use this as a filter. Example, is that if I am looking for an editor for this book, I'm looking for someone in the U.K., U.S., or Australia... Period.

Once, you have finished cutting applications by the above criteria, then you start actually reading the cover letters or application.

- 1. Read the cover letters.** Now at this point, you've probably narrowed the applications by at least 75%. Start reading the cover letters, and if they address you as "Dear Buyer", or if you can tell they are just spitting out these cover letters in mass, then just decline them. I won't hire someone unless they've done two things in the cover letter. First, they need to have followed directions and discussed their exact experience with me. Second, they need to have looked at my project and addressed it. I'm not dealing with someone that just throws out the same application to every potential employer. Not the type of care and determination that I need in my organization. And no, they don't get a second chance. Decline.
- 2. Send the remaining applicants a message** and get the ball rolling. Once you send the message, you are looking for response time, communication skills, willingness

to discuss the project, etc... I'm looking for someone to give first, and then receive. This means that I am expecting some time up front, and I want them to invest in helping me plan the project via messages. In general I send them a message, saying "Hey Name, Nice to meet you. My name is Dave, and I will be leading the project. Your app looks great, thanks for sending. Would you mind describing what your very high level plan of execution would be for this project?" - Now, if you send that you are going to be separating the winners from the losers really fast.

Once you find the few people that you like the most out of the above process it's time to move onto the test task. We'll discuss that next.

Assigning Test Tasks

So you've got your job posted, now it's time to hire some contractors and make some progress... Finally!

Most entrepreneurs have a long list of things that they just haven't had time to do in the past. This is where you're going to put it to use. Remember that logo that you've been meaning to do, the article you've been meaning to write, or the million other things that are in your "plans"? Ok, go get it, we're going to knock some of that out right now.

If you are hiring for a design project, then obviously your test task needs to be design related and if you are hiring a writer you should grab a task that is writing related. But it doesn't need to be for the same site. It doesn't even need to be for the same organization.

What you're looking to do here is to find an item on your to-do list and give it to the out-sourcer. And here's the thing... give them very limited guidance here because you're testing for more than their skills. You're testing for:

- Their ability to ask the right questions
- Their communication skills
- Their speed
- Their ability to solve problem
- Their skill set

In the first job description, you want to be very specific as we covered earlier, but here you want to be rather vague because it will help you get to know the personality of the person better. Remember, the whole point of this is to find someone that you are going to place on your A-team.

I am very up front with individuals when it comes to the test task. I tell them exactly what's going on. I send them a message that says this, "I would like to bring you on board for a simple test task. I want to give you a few hours of work to see the quality of your work. Trust me, if this goes well, I have a lot of work in this area. I just want to make sure that we are going to work together well first. This will be a paid test, are you ok with that?"

In general, everyone is fine with that and you'll have an item knocked off your to-do list in a few hours.

But how much management did they require? Are their skills up to par? Were they a pleasure to work with? Is this someone that is going to lower your stress levels?

These are the questions that you are going to ask yourself as you work with this person. If you get a product that you don't like, then this is not your contractor. Remember that you are hiring two or three contractors. So you're going to have choices.

If this all seems like a lot of work... it is... This is where you're putting in your time. You are investing your time up front in order to find someone that will help you for years to come.

It's a relationship you are developing.

Fire Fast

Even if a contractor passes all of the above "tests", there is a good chance that they *still* won't make it to your A-team. The reason is usually because they just flake out for some reason before they get there. I've had several people get very close, and then you start to get emails about how they are sick, or they have a baby, or similar. Usually it's some kind of a personal reason.

There are a few other reasons why you'd need to let someone go.

- **Dishonesty** - Just because someone is sick is obviously not a reason to fire them, but if you start to feel that they are sick for a convenience factor on their end, it's generally time to pull the plug. Full transparency is required. If you get the sense that they are not being honest with you, you don't need to put up with you. Remember, we are talking about an "A-team" here. A players don't lie, they don't have a reason to.
- **Lack of focus** - If you start to see someone's work slip because maybe they are taking other work, spread too thin, or something else has changed in their life, it's ok to move on. If you have a solid backup plan, and multiple contractors trained to do the work you require, it will be ok. Go ahead and move on... Because if this happens once, it's probably going to happen again, and again.
- **You made a bad decision** - No one is perfect and sometimes you flat out make a bad decision. Don't get down on yourself, and don't try to "figure it out". Instead chalk it up to a simple bad decision and move on.

The point here is that it's ok to move on. If you've got a backup, the work will continue to get done, and you are free to find a new contractor.

Expect nothing but the best. You are not running a charity, you are running a business. Your goal is to develop the best team possible. It's not a big deal to let someone go and find a replacement. It happens every day.

The worst thing that you can do is to let things drag on because by letting them drag on you

are putting your projects at risk and slowing them down. The faster you let the problem contractor go the better. There's never been a single time that I have regretted this after the fact.

Hiring Based on Constraints

Here's a quick exercise: For two days, write down everything you do for your company. Whether it's checking emails, phone calls, working the books, marketing, selling, or writing code...write it down. If you don't want to write them down, you can get [Hubstaff](#) to do this for you automatically.

Record every half an hour in a journal using general terms. Here's an example:

8:00 - 8:30 - Started off the day by answering emails and clearing my inbox and organizing calendar

8:30 - 9:00 - Commented on Basecamp tasks for my developers and asking questions on progress

9:00 - 9:30 - Met with sales team

Do this for two days straight and at the end of those two days, evaluate it. It's very telling to go through this process. You will learn so much about how your time is spent.

Now match up how you actually spend your time versus what your core competency is. We'll go more into strengths in the next chapter but in general you need to identify the few items that you are very good at and/or enjoy doing for your business.

The items that you dislike or are not good at, you should look to hire them out.

So look at your list of items that you did for that 48 hour timeframe. What can you do in order to make this list more congruent with your skills? Can you offload some of this work that doesn't match your core? Do you see that you are doing low dollar per hour activities? Are you doing things that you actually aren't good at?

If you were going to hire an employee to take this work off your plate so that you could focus on your core competency, what skills would they need?

That's the most important question right there, so I'll repeat it... **If you were going to hire an employee to take this work off your plate so that you could focus on your core competency, what skills would they need?**

This should become your job description, or at least part of it.

Just take the first step. Put that job description out on Craigslist or elance. See what comes back. Later I'll get into evaluating your people and making the right hires, but for now just design that job description and get it out there.

Pay in Arrears

The general accepted format for paying a contractor is in arrears. This means that you as the business will pay AFTER the work is done.

I've been swindled for over \$10,000 before. The thing is that these thieves are VERY smart. They will talk a big game, talk about how busy they are and how the job is so easy they'll have it done in no time.

Here's a list of scenarios that I have personally been through:

- Asking for a retainer - The contractor will usually ask for a few thousand dollars as a fully refundable deposit for security. What that really means in many cases, is that I'm going to cash your check, and then I'll just take my time getting back to you.
- Pre-payment - I was having some golf articles written back in 2005. The contractor said that he needed pre-payment or else he wouldn't write the articles. He had so much other work going on that he just can't do it without pre-payment. I pre-paid in my naive state at 25 years old. I paid him \$2,000 and he never wrote the articles. I followed up 5-6 times. He said he fell and hit his head while jogging and couldn't write because he couldn't look at the computer screen.

Good contractors have absolutely no problem with being paid in arrears. It's the industry standard.

I should say here that it DOES go both ways. I'm sure there are a ton of companies who just do mean things to their contractors (like get a bunch of work and don't pay). I am assuming that you are not one of those people. Pay your debts because karma is real...

But this book is not about that side of the coin. If you *really* like a specific contractor and they are *demanding* that payment is up front, then you need to use escrow.com or something similar. I am not kidding in the least. There are some bad people out there, that are just looking to steal your money, extort, scam, whatever you want to call it. Protect yourself or you will be taken sooner or later. I've personally been taken for over 40k. I've learned my lesson at this point. Pay only after the work has been completed.

OUTSOURCING

What is Outsourcing?

Outsourcing is the “idea” of having someone else complete your business processes for you. The actual “processes” can be a huge range of things, and the outsourcing can be at any location in the world. Many people confuse off-shoring with outsourcing. You don’t have to outsource your email to another country. You can outsource your graphic design to Chicago, if you want. The idea is not to necessarily take work overseas, it is about getting work off your desk. Period.

You do this for one of two reasons:

1. You have too much going on and you need to focus your time on the most productive tasks in order to truly move your business forward.
2. The person that you are outsourcing to is actually better at the desired task than yourself or your internal team.

In this section, you’re going to get my raw and uncut experiences of outsourcing (over \$3MM spent) and how you can use these experiences to become more productive.

Outsourcing is, above all else, a mindset shift. It’s about not having to control everything anymore. It’s about learning to manage people and processes instead of doing all the work yourself. Scary thought, I know, but once you start you’ll never look back.

It’s actually a great thing for your career and your life in general. It’s a great personal skill to have. Outsourcing is really nothing more than becoming a great manager of people and personalities.

If done right, you end up with lower stress, more work done, and a better business. Done incorrectly, it can cost you tons of money in hard cost and more importantly, opportunity cost. It can also *add* a huge amount of stress to your work life. There’s nothing worse than working with a remote team that is not capable.

I’m going to teach you how to do it right.

In this guide you’re going to learn what it takes to be a great outsourcer (and manager). You’ll learn both the tactical side and the strategic side. These are two drastically different things.

You’ll learn what you can outsource, where to outsource, tools for outsourcing and managing, and how to effectively conduct business online.

The Outsourcing Mindset

Let's start with the most basic lesson, but the one you must understand before you can grow an online business. Here's what you do: Calculate the amount of money that you want to make in a year, the amount that you DO make in a year, or the amount your business makes in profit. Let's say that you're at \$150,000 a year just as an example.

Now divide \$150,000 by the number of days that you work in a year... say 250. So, \$150,000 divided by 250 = \$600 a day. That's what you are worth. That's the exact dollar amount that you are trading your time for. Now divide that \$600 by a typical 8-hour day. That equals \$75 an hour.

If you are spending your time doing work that can be outsourced for \$10, then there is a big problem. Whether this is occurring in your own business or your day job or wherever – it's not right, and it's not going to get you where you need to be. No matter how you analyze it, doing work for \$10 an hour when you are getting paid \$75 an hour is not the right thing to do. You need to be doing work for \$150 an hour in order to move along in your career.

What ends up happening, believe it or not, is that the \$10 an hour assignment is almost always more demanding. Getting the accounting done, and answering your inbox are often more demanding than designing the sales strategy for the next calendar year or designing a split test. No one is knocking down your door about becoming more profitable. The important task continually gets pushed back and soon your schedule is filled with these \$10 an hour tasks.

The way to get away from this is to create a blueprint, then delegate. There are tons of tools that you can use to do this and I'll show you all of them in the coming sections. But, starting now, you must start making a shift in the way that you think. No longer will you perform tasks that are "below your pay grade." We are going to teach you how to find people that are awesome at these tasks and ready to help get them off your to-do-list.

Why Outsource?

You outsource because it saves you time and as a result, makes you money. As they say, "time is money."

Let's do an exercise. Think about this: What's the top thing in your business or your job that if you could do this specific task all day long, every day, you'd be a superstar? Doing this task would mean that you're making a ton of money, and your business is flying.

For me, that one thing (and I probably share this with many other businesses) is finding leads.

For my company, I do this one task mostly through advertising, but it can also come from content generation, networking, tuning conversion processes, etc. In general, the more eyeballs that I get on my ads, the more clicks I get, and the more leads I get into the top of my "marketing machine."

Now, ask yourself a few questions...

1. What is that one activity for your business?
2. Is that your core competency? Is that what you love doing? Is that what you are really great at?

I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that you probably aren't doing this cash-grabbing activity all day long, every day. But just imagine if you could. Imagine if every day you were not only doing what you actually like doing, but also what you were good at.

If the "money-grabbing" activity is actually not your personal core competency and there's no one else on your team performing that task, then that's the absolute first task you need to bring a person on your team to do. In my case, I'd need a rock star advertising team member. Just think about all the problems that we just solved. This is the number one thing in your business. You can't afford not to give it attention!

The cool thing is that there are TONS of advertising people out there. People who love "advertising" to their core. And now with a global marketplace, you can reach them.

You could get a part-time PPC master from an ad agency in Chicago or you can get a media buyer from London.

This all depends on your business needs of course, but you get the point. These people are out there. Why are you spending your time trying to do everything yourself when there is someone else that would be glad to work for you, and probably do a better job than you'd do yourself?

You outsource in order to focus attention on your business where it needs to be focused. Outsourcing can help you find a superstar team that puts energy into the most important aspects of your business.

Getting Started with Outsourcing

One of the first things to think about before you find an outsourced worker is the actual work that needs to be done. Is it a software program that needs to be built? Do you need to improve your conversion rates? Do you need help with your bookkeeping? These are all obviously very different skill sets. Chances are that the same person wouldn't fit all of these tasks.

So, step one is detailing the task and deciding on the skills your worker will need to have.

The other item that you'll have to decide on is whether you need to have someone full time, part time, or just as needed. You need to decide whether it makes sense to get a full time person on board, part time worker, or if this is just a one-time project.

I personally prefer part time, project or task based work. I like this because I think it's better to have specialists working on my projects. I would prefer to hire someone experienced, even if they have a higher hourly rate. Specialists are able to do the work in a shorter amount of time, and you usually end up with a better result. It's easier to have them focus

on the task that you need done and adjust their schedule to your needs as necessary. The other benefit is that you don't need to commit to a certain amount of overhead, and it's easier to scale up and scale down. When I used to employ people on a full time basis, I would find that much of my time was actually trying to design work for the employee. Under the contractor model, I just wouldn't have had that work done and I wouldn't have paid for it.

So at this point, you should have the following developed:

- a clear picture / blueprint of the project that needs to be done
- an idea of how you want to structure the relationship

Now that you have these items in mind, we can start finding some applicants for your business.

Where to Find a Team

There are several places to find people to add to your team. The most important thing to realize here is that a massive world exists past your office, your local community and even your country and it's filled with skilled people.

You might find that the perfect worker is in New York even if your office is in California. Just a few years ago it would have been very hard to work with a person at that distance on a consistent basis. Now, thanks to software, email, and collaboration tools, it can feel like that person is right next to you instead of thousands of miles away.

Think about the opportunity that you have here... You can build an absolutely killer team on a contract basis with specialists for every item that your business needs. In general, I believe that the company with the best team wins.

Ok, so back to where to find these workers. You have several options.

I'm going to start with the best way to find rock stars for your company which is:

Online Communities - This could include forums, blogs, or social media sites. The reason why it's the best is because these people are by nature accountable and helpful. The people that hang out on these sites are generally answering the questions of others simply because they are knowledgeable and they love what they do. They are contributing to a community at no cost because they have something to offer and in some cases, they like to create, etc...

So here's what you do... enter a question in that you yourself are having problems with into Google. Example... "how to edit htaccess file stackoverflow". By entering that term in I came to a question that was answered by this user.

Carson Myers less info [network profile](#)

8,595 reputation
6 • 49 • 98

155 Answers votes activity newest

- 86 Django. default=datetime.now() problem
- 36 Is it possible to modify a string of char in C?
- 29 Is "map" a loop?
- 29 What should a software engineer (web) start by learning - Erlan...
- 9 Is undefined behavior worth it?

[view more](#)

8,595 Reputation top 4% overall

- +10 Django. default=datetime.now() problem
- +5 Can you "compile" PHP code?
- +5 Why use a whitelist for HTML sanitizing?
- +5 How can I create a simple message box in Python?

[view more](#)

Now, I don't know this guy, but I can tell that he answers a lot of questions at absolutely no cost to others. He's in Canada and he's 22 years old. This could be a perfect candidate for a development job. A little research and you can probably send him a twitter message or a direct message on stack overflow. These are the cream of the crop type people.

Here are some examples of great online communities that you can start with.

- Stackoverflow.com - developers
- github.com - developers
- Warriorforum.com - marketers
- Copyblogger.com - writers / bloggers
- Webmasterworld.com - overall tech crowd
- Quora.com - social media site for Q&A

Virtual Staffing Companies - Depending on the type of work that needs to be done, you can also go to a full staffing company. These are companies that have basically trained workers to do certain tasks, and you can hire a worker at certain package levels (20 hours a month, 80 hours a month, etc...). In general these sites are great because the employees are for the most part trained. The downside is that you're not going to find a hard core developer on these sites. They are mostly for "light" work like tech support, some SEO, some writing, etc... These are utility type players, which are very important to your business.

Here are some examples of staffing companies:

- 123employee.com - pre-screened employees
- Virtualstafffinder.com - pre-screened employees

Freelance Sites - Freelance sites are the sites where you can list a specific project or job and potential candidates will bid on the job. There is no doubt some talent on these sites, but there is a very clear distinction from the freelancing sites vs. the online community sites. The distinction is that the freelance sites simply provide access to people that are looking for a “job”, which is in once sense what you are giving them. But in another sense, they are not in most cases going to be “over-achievers”. They are looking to be paid by the hour. That being said, there is a ton of talented people on these sites.

Here are the biggest freelancing sites:

- Freelancer.com
- Elance.com
- Odesk.com
- Vworker.com
- Guru.com

Classified sites / Job Boards - Classified sites are where you can place an ad or job description and reach potential candidates for your openings. You can also search resumes sections on the sites.

- Craigslist.org
- Onlinejobs.ph - Philippines Job Board
- Bestjobs.ph - Philippines Job Board
- Kijiji.com
- Backpage.com

These are just a few resources. There are hundreds of companies around the world that are capable of helping you find contractors. It’s just a matter of finding the right source for you to continue to build your trusted team of people.

What Tasks Can Be Outsourced?

You can have an outsourced team do virtually anything that your business needs. The name of the game is to start small and scale up.

Look at the very small list below and think about the time you would save if you could bring yourself to have someone else do these tasks for you.

- Advertising
- Copywriting
- Writing Auto-responders / Emails / Communication
- Customer Service
- Bookkeeping and Payroll
- Collections
- Coding / Programming / Development
- Web Design
- Print Design
- SEO
- Link building
- Social media marketing
- Content Development
- Data entry
- Sales

The list goes on and on. There are specialists in each of these large categories. Maybe your business doesn't need all of these tasks done immediately. Start small with one task that is really bringing you down and find someone else to work on it part time.

You'll find yourself with extra time, lower stress and more productivity. You'll start to see the whole picture instead of being involved with the micro-details of your business.

Less Expensive is Not Always Better

When you are starting a development project it's tempting to hire the least expensive developer that you can find on a per hour basis. The theory is that you get more for your money. Let me be the first to tell you that it rarely turns out that way and here's why.

Imagine building a house. You've got a few different contractors that have placed bids on your new home. You have high hopes, but the budget is an issue. You decide to go with the cheapest builder thinking that you can always go back and update the home later on.

What ends up happening is that you get a home without blueprints, faulty electrical, an

uneven foundation and the contractor leaves without completely finishing the job. A complete nightmare.

In the world of software and website development the saying “you get what you pay for” rings very true. It’s not always the case, and you can find definitely find diamonds in the rough (amazing developers for amazing prices), but in general just be aware that this is not a place to mess around with poor developers. There are tons of people that claim to be great and in the end it’s just a total waste of time, effort and money. This has happened to me on several projects and I now know better.

In fact, I would pose it the opposite way in development and design. Your goal is to find the most experienced, smartest, and most amazing developer possible. They will open up your project to amazing ideas. With the right developer, nothing is impossible; projects come in early, and things just work the first time. You spend less time testing and you have a lot less stress. Your product ends up being something you can really be proud of, and they may even be able to get the project done in half the time.

Consider these things the next time you are hiring a developer or designer.

MANAGING A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL TEAM

Managing Tasks and Projects

As a leader in your organization, you need to be able, willing and excited to take the responsibility of moving projects and tasks forward and meeting deadlines. This is a huge part of management, and it's what separates you from the rest of the organization.

In every organization, there are pushers and those that are pushed. Ideally, you would have employees and contractors that always moved themselves forward no matter what, and sometimes it's possible to make that happen. This is one of the reasons you want to constantly work on building your team.

In general, it doesn't happen that way. Here's a cartoon from Dilbert that illustrates what a lot of managers feel.



You've got to accept this and expect to follow up constantly in order to get your organization to move forward as fast as possible.

Here are some general rules to follow and then we'll get into the specific technique:

1. Limited assignments. Never assign someone more than two or three projects at a time. Two or three is a good number because people sometimes get sick of working on one thing and burn out. If you assign 20 projects then you are going to totally confuse them and leave room for excuses.
2. Clearly define priorities. It's important for the contractors to know what are the most important projects to work on and the most important tasks within a project. Do not leave this up to the
3. Follow up, follow up, and follow up. You want to constantly be ahead of the game. That means that you do NOT want to ever have the ball in your court. No one should ever be waiting on you. You should always be waiting on them. This means that you are asking your contractors where projects are and when you can expect an update. You want to do this in some kind of a documented system so there is documentation for this and everyone can see when you asked for an update. You need to PUSH your people, even if they are good.
4. Don't use email. Email is slow, unreliable and undocumented. You need to use a project management system for tracking projects through to completion (see resources section). The best part about project management software is that they are web-based (nothing is on a local computer), so that everyone can see what they need to do at all times and secondly, communication is documented automatically. This way there are no excuses.
5. Always explain WHY. Your contractors will do a much better job for you and you'll get better results if your people understand why they are doing what they are doing. Help them understand the big picture. You'll be surprised how much they can contribute when they understand the reason that they are doing the task.
6. Use examples. Are there other websites doing what you want to do? If so, show your contractors this. It makes everything easier as the contractors are clear on what you want done. It gives them a reference point.

Now that you understand these basic principals I want to get into exactly how I manage my people:

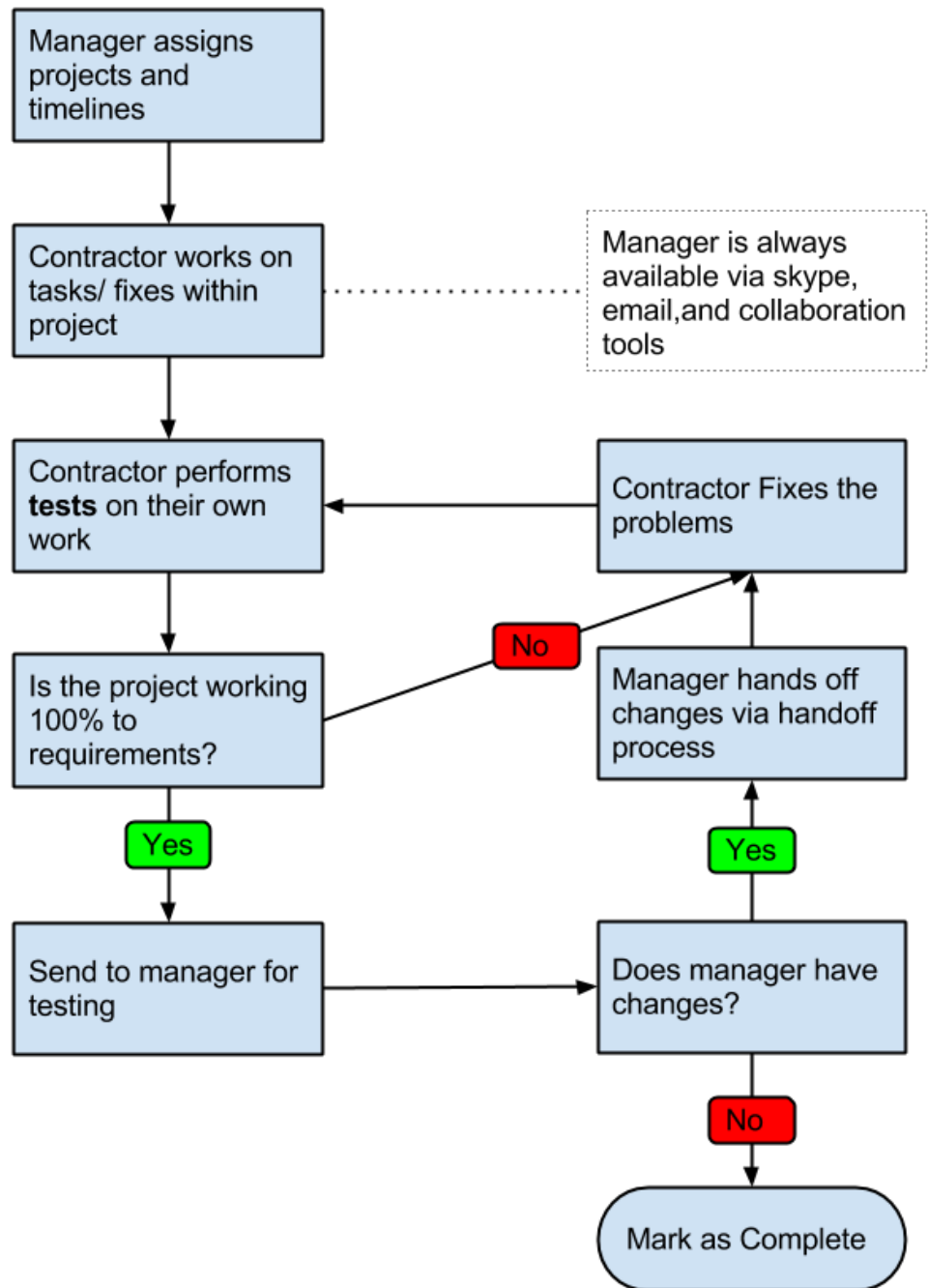
1. Use Basecamp or Pivotaltracker and set all the people in my organization up on the system.
2. Assign each person in the organization about 5-6 projects (only because I trust all of them, usually I would limit to 2-3) and then assign two top priority tasks. Sometimes only one. You can set priorities for each task in Basecamp, and Pivotal. At this point your people are set up with tasks and they know their priorities.
3. Use the files section to upload any word docs, plans, spreadsheets, or mind-maps that can be used for further documentation.
4. Use the description field to describe exactly what I need done for the project and why they are doing it. This usually includes a screen capture video with my voice recording and showing examples.
5. Ask the contractor if they are clear and if they have any questions. I ask them to put together a short document on their understanding of the project and to lay out some requirements.
6. Go back and forth with the contractor on the details of the project if any discrepancies exist.
7. Ask them to start the project and start following up. I use the commenting field (goes to contractors email and they can reply via email) for all correspondence. I start asking if they have made any progress on the task and how long they believe the task will take.
8. Keep following up and ask for testable progress. This means that I ask for something to test, even if it's a small item. It will show forward progress and clear up any misunderstandings on the requirements early.

The process above is not perfect and it's certainly not extremely technical but it helps me to accomplish all of the five main principals above and it keeps everyone on track. This is coming from someone who manages 30 people on a day-to-day basis all over the world. There are not a lot of shortcuts here, it's a process of pushing forward the organization daily.

The “No Excuses” Management Flow Chart

This chart illustrates a few things very well. First, it shows the power of visual thinking to guide your team. Second, you can see that everything leads back to the contractor or employee testing their own work (saves time and headaches for the manager). Third, this system leaves no room for excuses.

You state clearly that you are always available for questions up front via multiple communication methods. You state that you expect things to be working 100% before you see them, and if you request changes those changes are to be tested by the contractor. You can have one of these process maps for every process that your business routinely performs in your “training and documentation” section.



Embrace Technology

If you are going to run a virtual organization technology will be the glue that holds your organization together. It's the foundation, and it's what enables you to compete with organizations that are physically together in the same office (they do still exist).

The end goal is for your organization to outperform in-person teams. That may seem like a stretch, but when you consider the wasted time that occurs in meetings, the distractions of having someone being able to walk in your door at any time, and the affects of this on productivity it becomes much more realistic.

It's time to throw the old, structured way of doing business out the door and get on board with the new model. The new model is all about being productive while being mobile and global. You cannot lead an organization under this new model if you don't have solid technology in place. It's the enabler.

There are a few main areas where you must use technology to set up your remote team correctly. It will be very hard to succeed without technology working in your favor.

- Communication - How your team messages, emails, calls, chats, screencasts, and meets
- Monitoring - Time tracking and productivity monitoring

When set up communication and monitoring tools correctly, you'll be able to know exactly what your people are working on. You'll also have updates fed to you automatically so you can check them all on your own time. This opens your organization up to effectively work 24/7 across timezones, and for everyone to be able to see what each team member is working on.

Remote Communication

Ok, communication is the biggest item here. If you implement and subscribe to the management process and principles above, you'll be 80% there. But you the technologies below will help you actually run those processes.

One principle that I live by while managing my team is to never use email. Now, some applications have email built into them. This is basically when you'll receive an email when a new comment is made on a task or project in your project tracking software. You can respond to that email and the response will be shown as a comment in the software. But outside of that, emails should not be used to communicate with your team. There are newer, better solutions that exists.

Why are these solutions better. Once reason... **Documentation.**

You want to make absolutely sure that each and every message that is sent by each of your team members is documented, time stamped, and available for everyone else to see... This

solves so many problems and will reduce your stress.

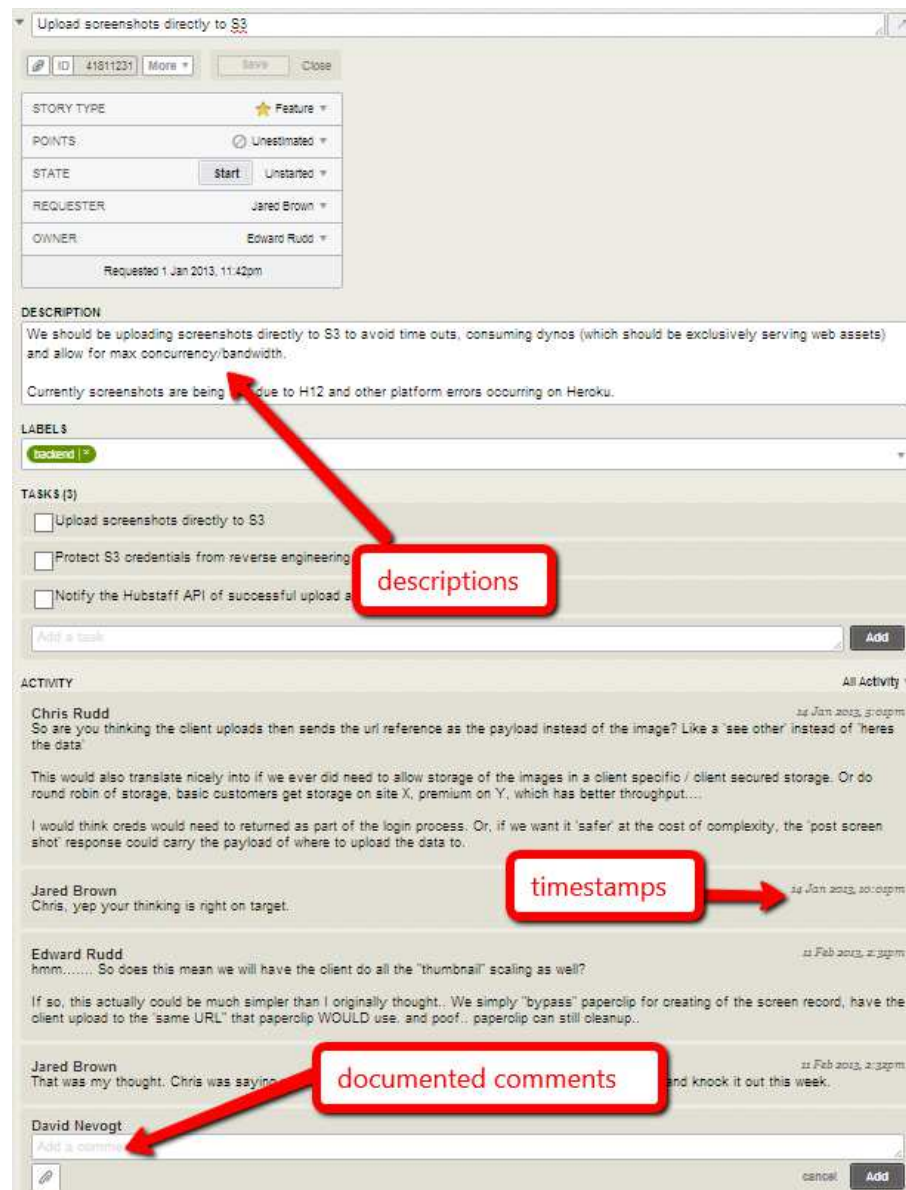
You need to make it abundantly clear to each of your team members that all communications are run through these automatic systems that will document each message. It becomes very easy to know who is working and who is not working. Who communicates well and who doesn't. Who responds quickly and who doesn't. This is the information that you need to gather when running a virtual organization.

You assign the task to a team member, and then they will receive any comments that you make on this task in their email box. They can respond directly in the software or just by replying to the email. These systems make it virtually impossible for items to slip through the cracks.

How many times have you heard:

- I didn't get the email it must not have sent correctly or landed in my spam folder
- I totally missed that in my inbox, sorry about that.

These systems leave no room for excuses. Here's what pivottracker looks like.



Upload screenshots directly to S3

ID: 4181231 | More | Save | Close

STORY TYPE: Feature

POINTS: Unestimated

STATE: Start | Unstarted

REQUESTER: Jared Brown

OWNER: Edward Rudd

Requested 1 Jan 2013, 11:42pm

DESCRIPTION

We should be uploading screenshots directly to S3 to avoid time outs, consuming dynos (which should be exclusively serving web assets) and allow for max concurrency/bandwidth.

Currently screenshots are being blocked due to H12 and other platform errors occurring on Heroku.

LABELS

Backend

TASKS (3)

- Upload screenshots directly to S3
- Protect S3 credentials from reverse engineering
- Notify the Hubstaff API of successful upload

Add a task | Add

ACTIVITY | All Activity

Chris Rudd 24 Jan 2013, 3:03pm
So are you thinking the client uploads then sends the url reference as the payload instead of the image? Like a 'see other' instead of 'heres the data'

This would also translate nicely into if we ever did need to allow storage of the images in a client specific / client secured storage. Or do round robin of storage, basic customers get storage on site X, premium on Y, which has better throughput...

I would think creds would need to returned as part of the login process. Or, if we want it 'safer' at the cost of complexity, the 'post screen shot' response could carry the payload of where to upload the data to.

Jared Brown 24 Jan 2013, 10:03pm
Chris, yep your thinking is right on target.

Edward Rudd 21 Feb 2013, 2:32pm
hmm..... So does this mean we will have the client do all the "thumbnail" scaling as well?

If so, this actually could be much simpler than I originally thought.. We simply "bypass" paperclip for creating of the screen record, have the client upload to the 'same URL' that paperclip WOULD use, and poof.. paperclip can still cleanup..

Jared Brown 21 Feb 2013, 2:32pm
That was my thought. Chris was saying... and knock it out this week.

David Nevogt

Add a comment

cancel | Add

descriptions

timestamps

documented comments

Notice that you can assign a certain person to the task. You can set a priority. You can describe the task or project. You can comment that gets automatically documented. These systems are an absolute lifesaver for virtual teams. No more email. When you send an email it's "lost" until a person replies back to you. The project management systems allow you to assign a task or ticket to someone, and the idea is captured forever.

Here are some other options that you have regarding project management software:

- Basecamp.com - Basecamp allows you to upload files, comment on tasks and projects, collaborate on wikis (writeboards) and more.
- Google Drive/ Sites - Google docs and spreadsheets make it really easy to comment and discuss. But they fall a bit short when it comes to assigning tasks. This is a lightweight solution at this point, but would be a great starting point.
- Pivotaltracker.com - This is really made for software development, but can be applied to any type business. Awesome for building software and getting tasks completed. Not quite as flexible as Basecamp mostly because you cannot assign multiple owners.

So assuming that you are going to set up one of these options for communication, you still have to deal with meetings. Sometimes you'll need to have in-depth discussions with your team on specific topics.

I believe that meetings should almost always be pre-scheduled, and there are only a few people that can enter my calendar without a pre-scheduled meeting. I also prefer to have as little meetings as possible on the calendar (usually around 2 per week).

When a meeting is needed though there are two options that come highly recommended:

- Skype - Most all freelancers have skype installed and you can talk to them at any point. It's 100% free. Pretty amazing really. You can even hook in a live phone number and have it automatically forward to a service rep that can answer on skype. It's great for one on one meetings, or group chats.
- Gotomeeting - This is great for larger teams. You can have video meetings, screen-share so you can actually walk a team member through exactly what you mean. This reduces your management time dramatically in many cases.

Now there are a few other tools that I use on a daily basis to communicate with my team.

- Google chat - this is built into Google plus, and gmail. You can also get a desktop app if you prefer. This is mostly for quick and to the point conversations or very quick Q&A. I prefer to work through the project management tools but chats are great to make a point 100% clear. Sometimes that's a little hard to do without direct communication.
- Screencast.com - this is a totally free tool and it's probably the coolest one that I

have mentioned so far. You can show someone exactly what you are referring to via voice and screen recording. Make video and upload to their server and share the link. I constantly put these links into the project management software as comments to better explain my points.

Remote Time Tracking and Monitoring

Once you get your team up and running the best thing to do is to get a time tracking solution in place that will show you how many hours each of these contractors is working so that you can pay them accordingly. The best solutions usually have some kind of monitoring tools in place as well so you can get more insight into what your contractors are doing and how they are spending their time. These tools add a level of transparency on top of your business.

With these tools, contractors will usually install a small software application on their machines that will track time automatically, and there is usually a web-based component as well that will allow the contractor (and the manager or owner) to log in and see what's going on.

Many also allow users to add comments for better communication, take screenshots of the user's desktop while they are working, track activity levels (mouse and keyboard strokes), active applications, and more.

Along with the tools that improve communication, the monitoring tools will help you build your remote team with confidence. They allow you to immediately see which of your contractors are very active and which are not. Most of these systems will also export to your accounting systems allowing for easy payments of contractors and invoicing of clients.

Here are a few options that you have regarding time tracking and monitoring solutions.

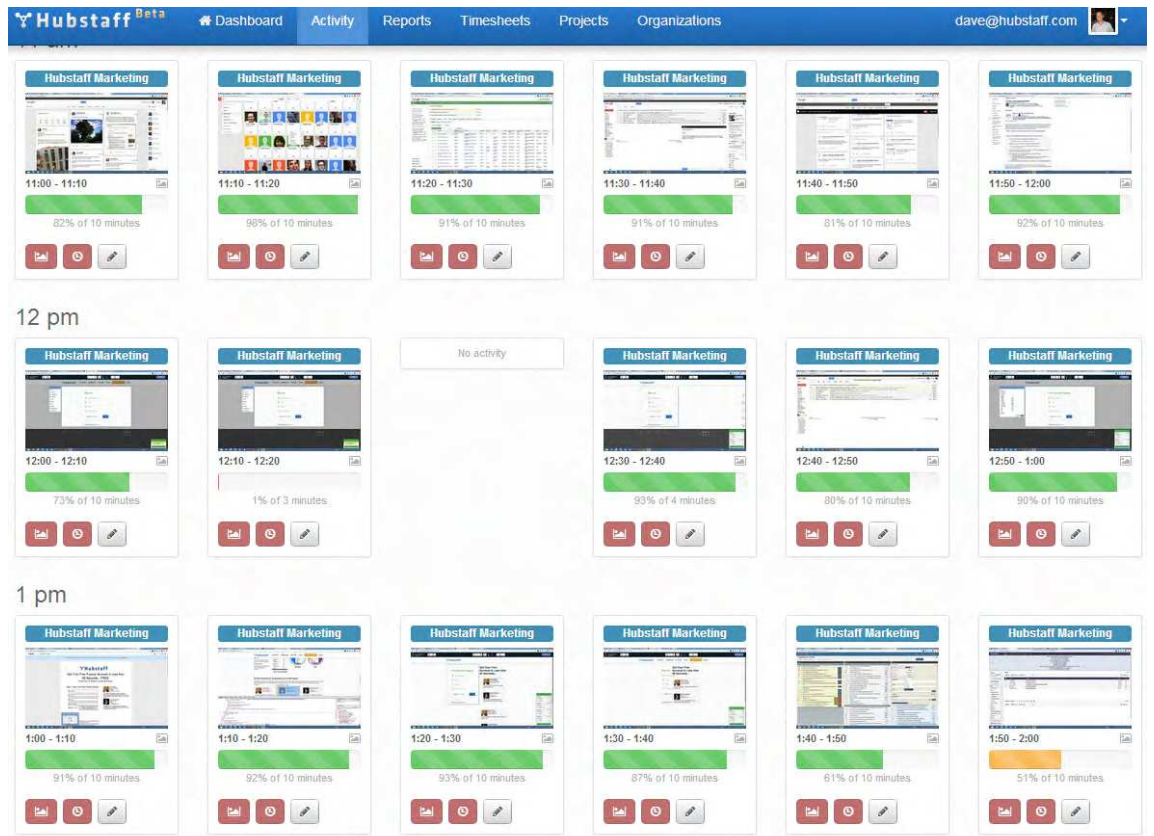
[Hubstaff](#) - Hubstaff includes time tracking, screenshots, activity levels, a web-based admin, manual time additions, employee payments, project selection and more. Trusted by over 2,000 businesses to manage their teams.

[Harvest](#) - This is a great tool for time tracking and invoicing. It includes time tracking, manual time additions, mobile apps, project selection and more.

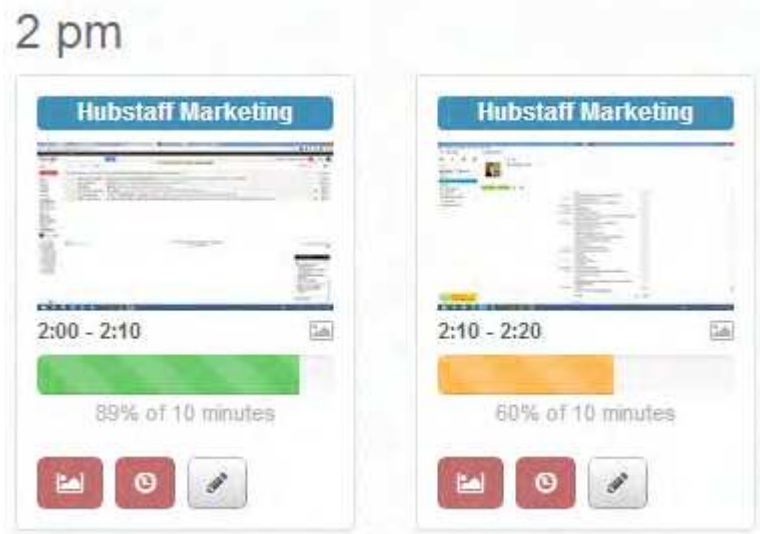
Odesk / Elance- These are cool because you can find a lot of workers here. Though, many of the workers are not extremely skilled, you can still find them. This is a full featured software platform that includes screenshots, time tracking, activity levels and project selection. The downside is that you are charged a 10% fee for every hour worked so if you have a payroll of \$10,000 a month you are now paying \$11,000 a month which is \$1,000/ month for the software.

Whatever you decide, the keys are being able to see what your contractors are doing, and the associated activity levels. Here's a screenshot of the Hubstaff activities page. You can

see that there are screenshots for every 10 minute segment as well as activity levels. This is the zoomed out view.



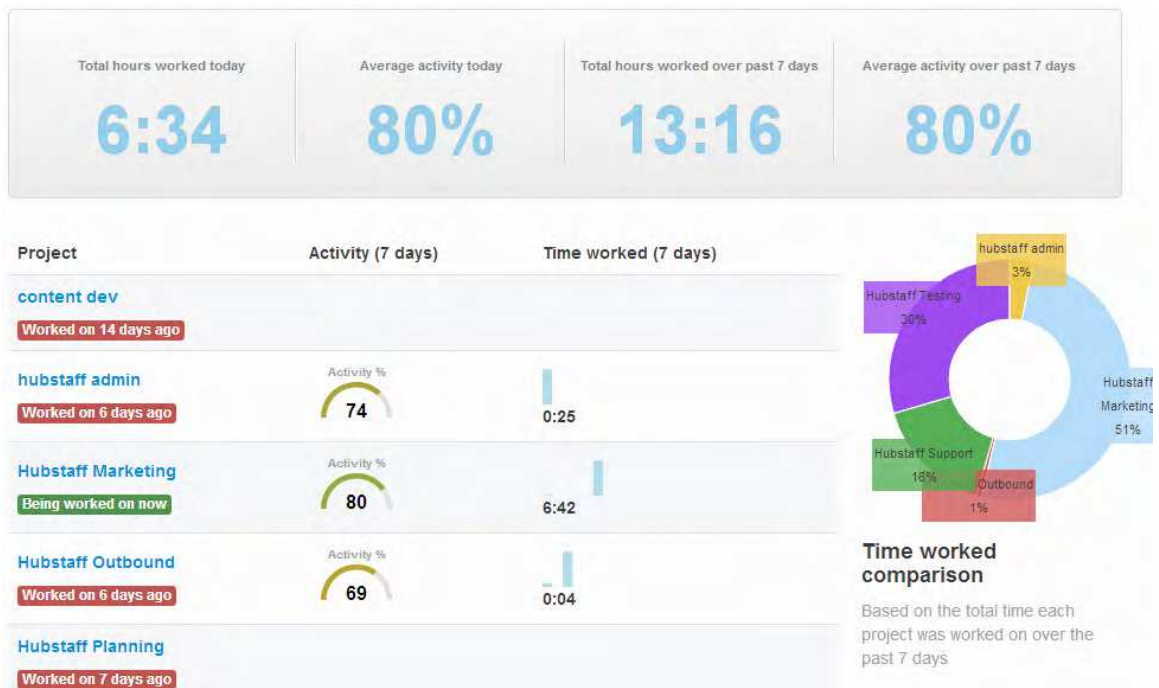
Here is the zoomed in view. You can see that we track activity percentages and the time spent working for every 10 minute segment.



Here is what the Hubstaff timer looks like. You can see that the employee simply selects a project and time starts tracking to that project.



Here is the dashboard view:



If you are serious about managing a successful virtual team you need this kind of data available to you. Without it you are operating blind.

CREATING DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESSES

Blueprinting Your Tasks

Blueprinting is a skill that you definitely need to implement in your business. I blueprint everything in my business—customer service templates, online marketing plans, processes, conversion funnels, releases, hosting setups and much more.

If you don't already, you need to start thinking in terms of process maps, flow charts and blueprints. It's a very effective way for scaling your business. Outsourced contractors and employees need this documentation in order to get up to speed in your business when they are hired.

You can develop a process for everything that is done in your business. Yes, it's a little bit of a pain to do at first, but the great thing is that once a repetitive task is blueprinted, it's done forever. Then you can effectively hand it off to an outsourced employee with minimal communication. The more details you can include the better.

The outsourced worker needs to understand:

- WHY they are doing the task
- HOW to do the task
- WHAT you want them to do with the end result
- FREQUENCY which tells the worker how often to perform the task
- SAMPLE of what a good article looks like

For example, let's consider the task of having articles written for your site. Here is a sample blueprint of how I would lay out my expectations for an outsourced worker in simple text format.

- Blueprint Title - Article Writing Process
- Summary – We are writing articles to attract potential clients. The more quality articles we have on our site and distributed out on the web, the more of an authority we will become to the customer and with search engines. Articles on our site allow for the search engines to index our site for all kinds of long tail keywords that

our potential customers are searching for. Articles posted on other sites allow us to introduce our business to new potential customers. We need to make sure that the articles are written around a “keyword” that we are targeting, and the articles need to include very in-depth, and researched information. No “fluff”. Put yourself in the user’s shoes. Your goal is to write an article that they will share with all their facebook friends or actually post on their own site. You can find the keywords we are targeting in the “keyword research” document in Basecamp (these are all the topics that you can write on). Write the article as if we are trying to help the end user solve a very specific problem and actually teach them how to solve that problem. Ideally we’d like to include one image per article.

- Sample - Link here to a publically accessible finished article on Google docs or even anywhere on the web. You don’t have to own the article that you use as a sample.
- Frequency – One article written per week (per category)
- Length - 500 - 700 words
- Images - at least 1 and more if you are doing a process type article
- Distribution – When the article is completed, please upload it to Basecamp.
- After uploaded to basecamp we will use the “article distribution” blueprint

Ok, now that I have the “blueprint” for article creation, it’s simply a matter of finding the correct writers to pump out the articles. I can now create my own little writing “factory”. I could have 1000 articles written by 50-100 different outsourced writers and I would pretty much get the results that I was looking for.

I’d have to refine the process, promote certain writers and fire others. But there should be no question on what needs to be done. I’ve outlined all the topics, I’ve provided samples, I’ve told them how many words, how many to write, why they are writing the articles and more.

The point is this... Invest the time up front. Document the process. Teach the worker. Invest in them. Then enjoy the results of having a good process versus just telling the worker to “write articles.” If you just tell them to “write articles” you’d be getting articles of all different lengths, without any standard flow at all. It would be a mess. You’d spend more money, and you’d invest a lot of time in redoing a lot of the work.

Invest the time up front and your outsourcing will be much more successful.

Blueprint Types

When you look at your business from a high level, you want to have everything blueprinted. This section will describe the various types of blueprints that you’ll be creating.

There are several benefits of creating the blueprints. Part of it is just for your own reference. You have a good idea, or you are doing a new task. Simply blueprinting it and storing it in a location you can easily access will put it in a memory bank that will always exist. This

reduces your stress levels.

Start off by thinking about who in your organization will be using the blueprints. Here are some of the common answers:

- You (the owner or manager of the business)
- Other managers
- Outsourced employees / contractors
 - Customer Service
 - Marketing
 - Sales
 - Development
 - IT

Now, that you've identified the general people that will be using the blueprints, it's much easier to figure out the actual blueprints that need to be created, the formats that make the most sense, and which to attack first.

The two main types of blueprints that you'll have to create are:

- **Internal Business Processes** - These are mostly used by managers and owners. They include your process for hiring, managing people, paying employees, paying commissions to affiliates, and more. These are all the repetitive tasks that managers in your business need to perform on a recurring basis. They provide a foundation for your business so that if a manager or any other high-level employee leaves, another person is easily able to perform these tasks.
- **Tasks** - These are mostly performed by the employees in your organization on a recurring basis. They are things like writing articles, building links, answering the phone, responding to refunds, calling on customers, and more.

So let's take the example of calling on customers. You'd have two or more maps for this. You would have one map that included the script, the purpose, the goal, frequency, etc... This would be the map that you would give to your employee and is the task. But then you'd need to have another map for the managers in your organization that was an internal map that included items like where your customers were stored, who to call when, and how to add a new contact.

Blueprinting Formats

When you start blueprinting you'll realize that what you are really doing is recording your ideas. You'll start to see that there are many different formats for doing so, and that certain formats make sense for different situations, depending on what you are trying to get across.

Here are several formats that I use and brief summaries of each:

- **Flowcharts** - This is my preferred method of recording ideas. The reason for this is because they are quick to produce, include text for a way to get your ideas across, but most importantly they provide a step-by-step plan for accomplishing the desired action. They allow the viewer to quickly see the steps associated with any process or task. Flowcharts work really well when you need to explain something from a high level and there are not a ton of details.
- **Text / Written** - This format is good when you have more “theory” to explain and there is no specific step-by-step process needed. This also works well for requirement documentation. In the earlier example of the “article writing process”, text was a natural fit because we were just trying to get the general requirements communicated. This format works very well when you need to explain something in depth.
- **Mindmaps** - This format is good when you are brainstorming and building the general plan of attack for a very high level topic with few details needed. A mindmap would work well, for example, if you were considering a new product and how to infiltrate the market. While text maps and flowcharts generally cover one topic or one specific process, mindmaps allow you to include several topics in one map. For example, you could have marketing, development and strategy all in the same document. Mindmaps are very similar to flowcharts but they are interactive and not static, while flowcharts are a more static solution. Also mindmaps don’t require the step-by-step flow that flowcharts do.
- **Video** - This format is good when you need to explain something in extensive detail. Video is great because the viewer can understand your “tone” and emphasis. In general, the preferred type of video to use is screencast where the viewer can hear your voice and see your mouse clicks. This is literally like having someone standing over your shoulder while you show them something. Video has some major downsides that need to be considered though. First, changes are very hard to make. So if part of your process changes, they need to be updated, and that is a time consuming process. Second, it’s not easy for someone to quickly see your process. They instead have to spend the 10 - 15 minutes to watch the video.

In general, I suggest starting with flowcharts and text documentation because these formats are extremely easy to change, they communicate the points very quickly and they are easy to produce.

Blueprinting Tools

We’ve discussed the specific types of blueprints, the formats, and why you need to start using them, let’s now learn the technology tools that will help you create the blueprints.

Here are the tools that I use on a daily basis to document every part of my business:

- **Google Documents** - This is the Google version of a word processor. It’s on the cloud but you can also read and create docs offline (without internet access). The really cool part about Google docs is that you can collaborate with others, so if a

change comes up in a process your team member can simply make the change, and it's saved automatically. Google docs also have a great revision history, so there's no need to worry about someone overwriting your work, etc... you can always just revert back to a previous version. Google docs are great for text based maps. The other thing that I really like about Google drive (where docs exists) is that it syncs automatically to your machine. It will accept multiple file types including pdf, images, word, spreadsheets, and more. Finally, it uses the typical folder style organization. So you can have a folder for all your marketing blueprints, and a different folder for all your development blueprints. You can grant access to various people accordingly. This is a really slick system.

- **Google Drawing** - This is what I use to create flowcharts. It's a Google Drive service and completely free. I've tried several other systems as well, but I am moving more and more towards "cloud" based services because they are accessible on all of my machines through a browser. Google drawing has a lot of features, but not enough to become confusing.
- **Smartdraw** - This is a desktop based flowchart software platform. Much more in-depth if you prefer that. It's fast and simple.
- **Mindjet** - This is a desktop based mindmapping platform and they also have a web-based version for \$15 / month. Mindjet is far and away the leader in this space and their software integrates with many other formats.
- **Dropbox** - Dropbox is awesome service. I have all files on Dropbox and pay for their 200GB option. It's similar to Google drive, but Dropbox does not have their own file formats. For pictures, videos, word docs, spreadsheets, videos, etc... it doesn't get any better than Dropbox. The cool thing about dropbox is it's collaboration functionality. You can share specific folders with various people and when they update a file it's shared to your dropbox locally and on the cloud. Dropbox also has revision history. I prefer Dropbox to Google Drive, but it's nice to have the cloud based file formats that Google offers. I use both services all day every day.
- **Basecamp** - This service allows you to upload files and permit access to specific team members. They do charge based on storage levels. You'll want to set up a specific project called "training" or similar. You can also use their whiteboard feature to collaborate with your team.
- **Camtasia/ Screencast.com** - These are the services that I use to record videos of my screen for documentation purposes. Screencast is free, and Camtasia is \$299. The major difference is that Camtasia is a full featured editing suite while screencast doesn't have editing abilities.

There are hundreds of other tools available for use. It just depends on what you prefer. The above tools are the ones that I find the most efficient, but in the end, getting started is what really matters.

Building Your Blueprint Library

Many entrepreneurs and business owners get caught up doing the same task over and over. It's tempting to think that this particular task is too hard, too complex, requires too much

thought, or is just too important to hand off to someone else. I've been caught in this trap before, and it's a hard one to get out of. We all have our morning routines (or whatever time in the day you perform your routine tasks). Many times before we realize it, the day has gotten away from us because of our "routine" tasks.

We can get out of this trap though by having solid documentation of our processes. The goal of this section is for your organization to start blueprinting it's tasks and uploading this documentation to a shared access point where everyone on your team can access.

Get a subscription to Basecamp, or an alternative. You even can use Google sites. Use anything that requires a login and will allow you to upload files and grant access to certain users. Once you get your subscription live, start a little section or project called "training and documentation." This now becomes your employee training area. Use it. It will be extremely valuable as you build your team.

You should never personally do a process more than four times unless it's something that is absolutely related to your core competency. Instead of doing a task over and over again, here's the process that I've implemented into my own businesses.

Step 1 - Open up Jing, Google Drawing, or a simple text editor

Step 2 - Do the repetitive task and record it in your preferred format.

Step 3 - Give the file a descriptive name.

Step 4 - Upload to the "training and documentation" section of your collaboration app.

Step 5 - Make this task a portion of someone else's daily, weekly or monthly job depending on the frequency required.

Now you have the task documented, assigned to someone you trust, and have one less thing to worry about. It's as simple as that. Move your business forward one outsourced task at a time. This takes determination and a lot of patience. Many times it's easier just to get the task done yourself, but you need to bring yourself back to strategy and taking action on those pieces of your business that really move it forward. In no time at all, you'll have a complete library of training documents for your organization.

How to Measure "Knowledge Worker" Production

The most important, and indeed the truly unique, contribution of management in the 20th Century was the fifty-fold increase in the productivity of the MANUAL WORKER in manufacturing. The most important contribution management needs to make in the 21st Century is similarly to increase the productivity of KNOWLEDGE WORK and the KNOWLEDGE WORKER.

- Peter Drucker

Peter Drucker coined the phrase "knowledge worker." During the industrial revolution it was much easier to manage employees. Employee 1 gets 10 units done, Employee 2 gets 11 units done, and employee 3 gets 3 units done. It's very easy to spot problems. But now most of us manage "knowledge workers." Their progress is harder to define. It's more intangible in nature.

A “knowledge worker” for example is a webmaster. The first issue is that the webmaster typically holds a skill set that “the manager” doesn’t have. Second, it’s not nearly as easy to “measure” a webmaster as it is a factory worker. He’s writing code, maintaining servers, and managing traffic. Totally different than what we had back in the industrial revolution.

What the typical business has now is a bunch of employees in front of their computers doing “virtual” work. How do we measure it?

Well, we start by defining a standard set of projects that the “webmaster” should be working on. You want to have as much clarity (on both sides) on the webmaster’s role as possible.

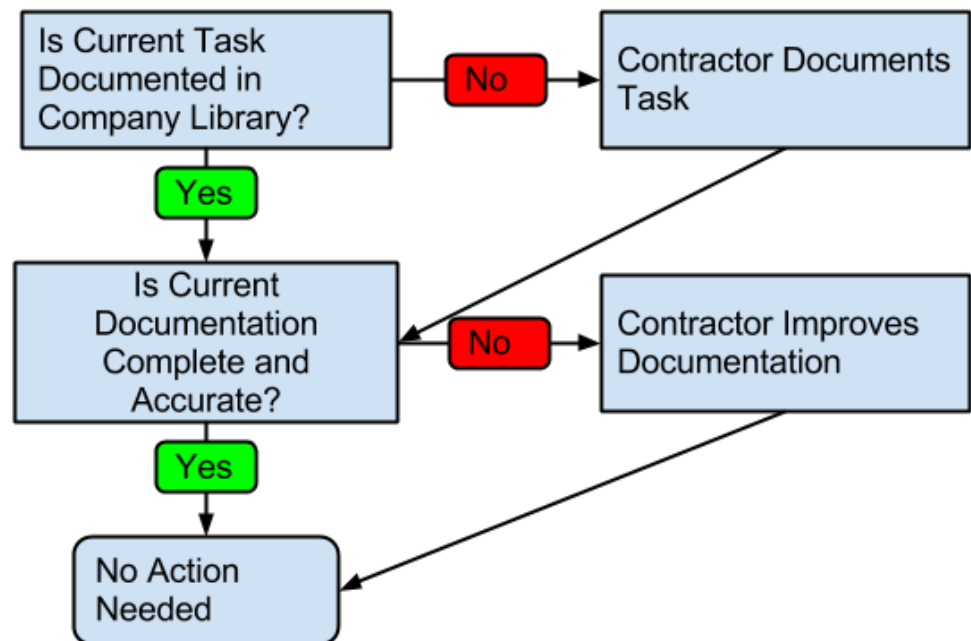
And if they deviate from the tasks agreed on?

If they deviate and are forced to work on a project that has not yet been defined, the webmaster simply defines the project. You (the manager) see this, and you can decide if this something that he shouldn’t be working on, or if it should now be added to the webmaster’s job description. Either way, it’s captured and documented.

It’s a way for you to build automatic job descriptions. You get to see where your employees are “really” spending their time and adjust accordingly.

Now you can use several different automated solutions for this process that we discussed above in the time tracking section. But the important part to realize is that your employees are probably doing 50 things outside of their specific job functions. We don’t always know how they spend their time.

Sometimes a utility player that you want to be working mostly on marketing tasks is really spending 75% of their time on customer support, and other times they are working on tasks that need to be done that you don’t even know about. So it’s important that you discover what they are really doing with their time and documenting the tasks that they are creating on a daily basis. It’s your job as a manager of a business to have a handle on all of this.



About the Author

Dave Nevogt started building internet businesses at the age of 22, and has been working on them since 2003. His start was in online golf instruction in 2003 and grew that business to 1.5MM by 2005. He sold those businesses in 2009, and then started running a larger search engine optimization software company. While building and managing these companies he's managed over 100 virtual employees / contractors concurrently. In order to do this, he's designed several management systems that are included in this book.

He specializes in employee productivity and the marketing side of online businesses. Most recently he's taken these systems and founded Hubstaff around them. Hubstaff is a software platform that makes it easier to manage virtual staff, pay them, and understand productivity levels.

Dave currently lives in Indianapolis, IN with his wife and two kids. He can be reached through his website at <http://www.davenevogt.com>.



Resources and Tools

- Hubstaff.com - Integrates with Basecamp, Pivotal Tracker, Asana.com and more to help you get more details on the exact tasks your contractors are working on and the time these tasks are taking. You can track time, see screenshots, and everything ties out to the exact tasks your people are working on no matter which project management suite you choose. Hubstaff offers a [100% Free Account](#)
- Davenevagt.com - This is my personal blog where I publish posts on how to become a better manager and how to run a successful virtual team. I also publish blueprints and process maps on very specific items regarding how to market your business. I'd love to have you as part of my community... I try to respond to most comments and definitely every email personally.
- Basecamp.com - This is a collaboration software that allows you to define projects, communicate with your team, upload files, and document all of your project management efforts.
- Pivotaltracker.com - Pivotal is a collaboration software that is mostly used for software development teams. It has many of the same features as Basecamp but was designed while thinking of software developers.
- Dropbox - Dropbox allows you to store all of your files to the cloud automatically and sync between several machines.
- Roboform - This is how I manage all of my passwords in order to login as fast as possible. This also syncs across all of my machines.
- Skype - I record calls here and chat with people across the world with ease.
- Google Apps - Google Apps allows your team to easily upload documents, files and work on wikis. They have a totally free version and an option to upgrade if you have a need for more space and other professional features.
- Jing - Jing lets you take screen captures (images and video) of your screen. It's an extremely effective way to communicate to your team and document processes.
- Google Drawing - This is what I use to create flowcharts. It's a Google Drive service and completely free. I've tried several other systems as well, but I am moving more and more towards "cloud" based services because they are accessible on all of my machines through a browser. Google drawing has a lot of features, but not enough to become confusing.
- Smartdraw - This is a desktop based flowchart software platform. Much more in-depth if you prefer that. It's fast and simple.
- Skype - Allows you to communicate, share screens, and chat all for free.
- Gotomeeting.com - Allows you to communicate, share screens, and chat. This is a paid service but in general it's much better than skype and you can get more than two people on the line at the same time.
- Stackoverflow.com - great place to find developers that are self-motivated
- Virtualstafffinder.com - pre-screened virtual assistants
- Evernote - Take notes on anything and syncs with mobile devices. Good for managing lists and being 100% mobile.

- [Talentopoly](#) - Job board for finding top notch developers and designers.
- [Inboxzero.com](#) - Great thoughts on how to manage your inbox and good explanations of the way email has really taken over work.
- [123employee.com](#) - pre-screened virtual assistants
- [Mindjet](#) - allows you to express your thoughts visually in a mindmap.
- [Google hangouts](#) - this is great for getting close to your customers. You can do educational hangouts, and you can also use this for remote desktop support.
- [Desk.com](#) - Great system for customer support for your site. Includes chat, email, social media monitoring, and is totally free for a single user.
- [Visualwebsiteoptimizer.com](#) - Use this to improve the marketing pages and landing pages of your site. Heatmaps, a/b testing, multivariate testing, and more.
- [Simon Sinek's Golden Circle](#) - This helps you understand the importance starting with the "why" of your business.
- [Kiss Theory Goodbye](#) - This is Bob Prosen's book on management
- [Escrow.com](#) - If a contractor requires up-front payment, always use this instead of sending the money directly to them
- [Aweber](#) - I've built a list of over 1MM through Aweber and they have handled it just fine. I've used them for over 10 years now. Have never ran into huge deliverability issues, and they have always treated me in a professional manner from the beginning. So I have to give them some props. The ONLY service I have used for my entire career online.
- [Mailchimp](#) - Mailchimp is cool because it's free to start. They also have a great design, and maybe a slightly easier product to use. Some big downfalls as well though in my opinion (harder to embed forms)
- [Platform](#) - Michael Hyatt - This is a great book for those of you looking to create an audience for yourself or your products. Very straightforward advice that is honest, and presented in a step-by-step manner.

