



Webinar Q&A Session

Date: June 10th, 2010 • Outsourcing Intro

1. (MARS) How do you start looking for a liable partner?

If you're talking about wanting to look for or find freelancing Virtual Assistants? If it's freelancers there are two or three websites you can go to immediately. One is freelancer.com, another one is Odesk.com and there is also the "almighty" elance.com, which I now heard is not so big anymore as freelancer is growing quite rapidly.

Basically, there is no secret potion, there is no magic wand that you can waive and you'll get a perfect virtual assistant straight off the bat, it doesn't work like that. It is something you have to work at a little bit, the freelancer route is a little bit trickier because you never really know what their experience level is. You never really know whether they can do the work properly that you're asking them to do until you actually start providing them tasks to perform.

So the one thing I will definitely not do is pay a freelancer in advance— most solutions providers or companies out there will want money in advance in some way shape or form but the bottom line is that when it comes to actually hiring a freelancer, you shouldn't give them any money in advance. And what I would do is actually be very honest with that freelancer and tell them that you're only going to be using them for a week or so to start off with and just to sort of test and gauge their competencies and experience levels and then at that point, you can then take it to the next level.

But you should definitely not rush into hiring a virtual assistant on a freelance basis and try and get references and speak with other people who have maybe worked with them and sort of tread very lightly at first. The large majority of time that you're working with freelancers, you will probably normally have to go with 2 or 3 before you can get to that one freelancing virtual assistant that can do the job the way you want it done pretty much from day one. Be patient and if you want any more tips from working with Vas, I've got the 10 Video Tips on the blog that you can download. They're also in Youtube as well.

2. (PAT) What are appropriate rates to pay for programmers in Php?

If you're talking about Philippines, for full time freelancing virtual assistants that will handle programming, web development and that type of thing, if you want to really keep them and make sure that they're not hopping around from one person to another, and keep them on your team so to speak, you're probably going to have to pay that person at least \$500 or \$600 every month. That's if they've got 2 or 3 years experience under their belt. If they're still quite a newbie and you're just using them for very simple programming tasks maybe like tweaking Wordpress themes and things like that, you could probably get away with a little bit less than that.

But if you really want to keep somebody on your team and not lose them, then you are going to have to pay them relatively well and treat them well and pay them on time and things like that as well. You know, the Philippines is not necessarily as to building a career here, especially for freelancers, it's actually surviving. As brutal as that sounds it really

is very, very true. So you must not pay a Filipino Virtual Assistant late, not even a day late because they truly do count those days down to payday like a lot of people do.

3. (BEN) As an entrepreneur, what would you advise for someone like me who's thinking about starting on their own, set up my own company or freelance?

As any entrepreneur, you will have the option to do everything yourself or you can get someone else to do a certain amount of what needs to be done on a day to day basis. If you're looking at setting up your own company, it's easier now, today, than ever has been, ever before, in the history of mankind, in business. To be very honest with you, all that you need nowadays is to have a good web presence to be able to get clients and you have to be very enthusiastic and productive and work hard. And if you will be able to get to a point of having a virtual assistant, say, to help you with that web presence and particularly more so the promotional and marketing side of that web presence, such as social networking, link building, blog posting, article submissions and that sort of thing, you would probably end up getting a lot more business than you would trying to do it all on your own.

My major tip to someone when somebody says to me "I don't know whether I really need to outsource or not" is a very simple answer, I tell them to make a list of

- A. all the things they hate, or don't like to do,
- B. feel they should not be doing as a business owner
- C. the tasks that you find that you have trouble with completing in a timely fashion.

So if something should take only one or two hours, but because of all the other things you've got going on around you whether it be on your computer, in your office or in your life in general, if you fall behind and that two-hour task rolls into majority of the day—that's a big problem. You're not going to be productive, you're not going to get a lot done and you certainly aren't going to be signing up a lot of clients.

So I'd say in a nut shell, if you're thinking about setting up your own company, first up, good job! The world needs entrepreneurs, the world needs enthusiastic and productive money makers and that's what exactly entrepreneurs are. That's the first thing.

Second thing, slowly but surely, don't rush into it, don't expect things to happen overnight, you're going to screw up; you're going to feel like shit from time to time right at the beginning. But the bottom line is, if you keep with it, and you keep focused and you keep working hard, you will eventually achieve what you set out to achieve. There's only one person that can get in the way of your success or your failure and that's you!

4. (SCOTT) Is it practical to hire a VA if you only need them for a few hours a week? In other words, 2-5 hours of miscellaneous work, mostly translation and research and not always have work for them to do every week.

No, it's not. Obviously it's impractical to do something like that. The good news is a lot of the freelancing websites like freelancer.com and elance.com will enable you to hire freelancing staff particularly for things like translation or transcription work. Particularly on a project to project basis—now if that project means that they get 5 hours a week of work to do from the same person every week, for them that's regular income. They're not going to knock that back for sure.

And it also means that you don't need to be spending 3, 4, 5 or whatever hundred dollars or thousands of dollars a month to keep that person sitting there waiting for your work. And I think that this is the thing people have trouble with when they look at outsourcing. They think they 'need' to hire somebody full time to get involved in it—that's not the case. You can find people to work on project to project basis. And I think that on the whole, if you start slowly on your outsourcing experience and you can grow slowly and you find the more you outsource, the more you enjoy getting that work done back from your freelancer or back from your service provider completed without any major input from your side of things, the more and more you want to outsource! Coz it feels to wake up in the morning and be able to see your inbox and that PowerPoint presentation is finished or that podcast has been transcribed or whatever the case may be.

So I think on the whole, you might be able to find somebody to work on just beyond here and there and see how things develop from there.

5. (TONY) Do you provide a part-time VA service from Live2Sell?

In a nut shell, no we don't. There are other outsourcing providers that do part time work. It might be something we might be involved with sometime in the future, possibly. But the reason why we've worked on a full time basis because we just find that offering a full time dedicated virtual assistant service from a month to month basis enables us to grow our business with our clients as well. And I think that a large majority of the people that get involved with a full time VA, these are the kind of people that genuinely need full time help. Once they get it, they're not going to want to let it go.

So all we need to do is provide it to them, a vendor or provider so to speak. Just perform our tasks well and make sure that our virtual assistants are trustworthy, experienced and can obviously perform the tasks that they've been hired to do.

So no. No part time VA role at the moment at Live2Sell but maybe in the future. However, I will be launching a new service soon, which I blogged about a little bit in my blog a couple days ago with my monthly report for May and I'll be launching a little bit more detail about that in the next few weeks. And that will probably answer your question a little bit more in terms of a solution because it will bridge the gap between a solutions provider and a freelancer.

6. (WALSH) What about confidentiality, are you having each VA you use sign one before working with them?

Yes, absolutely. In fact not just our Vas—all of our Live2Sell staff had to sign non-disclosure, non-compete agreements with our company. It part of their employment contract. We're very, very strict on that side of things as well. But generally speaking, in the 5 years we've been in business we've never had an issue with anything remotely close to any kind of breaches of contracts or on the confidentiality side of things. So to be very honest, no we generally don't have any issue with it and like I said, everybody and I mean everyone including our admin staff who aren't even in touch with our clients sign non-disclosures and confidentiality agreements.

7. (BEN) What got you into Outsourcing, what's your story?

I would love to answer that question for you; however we only got a few minutes left and it will take a lot more than just a few more minutes however I do plan to put it together in a 2 or 3 part blog post coz you are not the first person who has asked me that in a couple of months or so. So standby on that and we'll be there soon, I promise.

8. (MARS) Are Filipinos in general reliable?

Yes, they are, in general. You know what, it doesn't matter from where you are in the world, there's always going to be some people who let you down from time to time and it doesn't matter if they are Filipinos, English, American, Canadian, Spanish—whatever—you know, it all comes down to personal attitudes and I think that if you focus on the attitude and personality side of things a little bit more than just looking at people's experience and qualifications when you're hiring Vas, you'll be able to have a much clearer understanding as to whether that person is going to be reliable and trustworthy and be with you for a long time.

So to be very frank with you, yes I think Filipinos are very, very reliable when it comes to outsource work.



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