

- Little or no response to your questions.
- Few, if any results.
- Deliverables that aren't itemized.
- Reluctance to talk with your contractors.
- Uneasiness with the direction of the work.

If so, it's time to move on. Before you do, however, be sure to review your contractual commitments so the relationship doesn't result in even more lost time and additional trouble. (Month-to-month contracts help to mitigate this kind of difficulty.)

After breaking free, evaluate what you learned. What missteps led to this predicament? Why did you invest \$35,000 over six months and have so little to show for it? Did you put your cart first, hire the wrong vendor or fail to agree on deliverables? Evaluate your mistakes, so you don't repeat them.

#5 - Follow Golden Rule to the Gold

The success of any outsourcing relationship depends in large part on personal interaction, and it's up to you to set the tone. Treat your outsource expert as you would like to be treated. If you want to outsource to someone who is serious, then ask serious questions. If you want a contract, ask for one. If you want your calls taken, take your contractor's calls. If you want reasonable timelines, work them out with your contractor.

The best outsourcing relationships are open and honest. Treat your outsourcers as valuable members of your team. Provide them with the same information about your company's vision and ambitions that you would a high-level executive. Such inclusion will help them do a better job for you and even motivate them to do so. I treat my virtual assistant as a vice president. As a result, she has become a trusted adviser.

Remember, too, you get what you pay for. Outsourcing is not cheap, and it should never be free. If you're tempted to barter, think carefully about what you will get in return. Don't forget that paid work always takes precedence over free work.

Outsourced providers can be of real value to entrepreneurs by providing expertise a company doesn't have or taking over tasks unrelated to a company's primary objective of making and selling a unique product or service. Price is always a factor, but the essentials are expertise, quality, reliability, and service. Focus on those factors. Your contractors will deliver for your company and contribute to its growth.