

Service Industry Outsourcing Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and Managing Outsourced Projects and Freelancers

Every outsourcing project should create and make a WBS available to all its outsourcing staff. What is a WBS and how can it help you manage your outsourcing project? All projects consist of small tasks and quality control procedures. A Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) breaks down all the tasks that must be performed on the project and estimates timing and resources for each task as well as the order the tasks should be done in. It pays to have a clear and effective WBS in all your outsourcing projects.

An effective Work Breakdown Structure starts with high level activities (these may be your milestones) and breaks these activities down into lower and lower levels until you've covered every conceivable step in the process. Before you ever begin work on a project, also confirm with your outsource staff that they understand the overview and the individual components of your WBS and give them the opportunity to ask questions. It is never helpful to assume that they have it all under control. It is preferable that if any questions or problems arise they do so before the project has even started.

An example of a WBS is if one of your milestones is submission of the first draft of chapter one of a book someone is ghostwriting for you. You would then break that down into its smaller steps, like research, outlining, and writing. These steps would then, in turn, be broken down into even smaller steps, like types of research, verification of facts, and so on.

For each low-level task, estimate time needed for completion, start and end dates, human resources required, and in what order each task should be completed. Obviously, facts can't be verified until the research is done but you get the gist.

If you have the knowledge and background to begin a WBS during the planning stages for your project, please do so. Regardless of whether or not you've already started the WBS, work with your provider to nail down the details and finalize the breakdown.

A well thought out Work Breakdown Structure is of immense help to any project, small or large. It enables your freelance staff to work with confidence and it enables you to know that your outsourcers can carry out the work competently. A good Work breakdown Structure will also minimize hiccups, saving time, money and energy.

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