

25 Things You Should Probably Outsource

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Freelance creatives typically suffer from two main business maladies: The Superhero Syndrome (“I can do this myself”) and the Scrooge Strategy (“I can do this myself *for free.*”)

Inevitably, these two conditions will lead to burnout, loss of passion, and frustration. Worse, most of us don’t actually think there are parts of our businesses that we can outsource.

You may be a solopreneur, but you don’t have to be an overworked one who does everything by yourself.

Here’s one way to think about it: Say you have a company with two employees—you pay one employee \$100 an hour for high-value tasks that require planning and strategy, and you pay the other \$50 an hour for administrative duties. Would you routinely ask the person getting \$100 an hour to take over the administrative work or vice versa?

That’s exactly what you’re doing when you refuse to outsource.

It may seem unusual at first, but letting go of some grunt work and hiring an assistant can actually help you *make more* money as a freelancer.

There are a few main ways you outsource, depending on your needs and budget.

For one, you can look locally. College students, your neighbor’s sixteen-year-old daughter who’s eager for some extra pocket money, or even that friend who’s getting set up as a freelancer and looking for some part-time work, are all wonderful options when you’re looking for administrative and management help with your day-to-day work.

There’s Craigslist, of course, but if you decide to look at hiring a part-time virtual assistant (VA) instead, you can’t go wrong checking out job boards like [Upwork](#) and [PeoplePerHour](#). What these services help you do is really zero in on the kind of people who will be a perfect fit for the kind of work you do and while you’re going to pay more as you go up in quality, they’re very affordable options for when you’re just getting your feet wet with outsourcing.

While job boards are great for cheap and generic sort of work (formatting blog posts, for instance), when it comes to more technical and graphic work—say, logo design or database management—you’re much better off paying a bit of extra money for the pros. I love [99designs](#) for visual and design work, for example.

So, what exactly can you outsource? Here are some of the things you’re might be better off letting someone else handle for you.

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. **Answering (some) email:** This is one of the first things you should outsource. Be available to clients and editors, of course, but let someone else handle less pertinent communication like responses to blog comments and reader questions, if possible—especially the ones about how to become a freelance writer.

2. **Travel scheduling and booking:** This is one of those responsibilities that’s easy enough to outsource very cheaply. If you don’t, the process could end up taking up half your day.

3. **Calendar management:** Proper calendar management is one of the most important skills you can possess as a freelancer. Outsourcing it can lift a big burden, especially for the organizationally-challenged among us.

Also, if you have someone else schedule your calendar from a more objective perspective, you may be less likely to bite off more than you can chew. A tool like [Calendly](#) can be a big asset if you can't get someone to take care of it for you.

4. **Researching new purchases:** Best backup system? Cheapest hard drive? The ideal printer for your home office? A virtual assistant can handle all that research for you, so you can make a quicker decision on your next purchase.

ON ASSIGNMENT

5. **Proofreading:** Come on, be honest. It's hard to spot the errors in your own work, and that typo in your blog post kept you up three nights in a row. Get more sleep by investing in someone else who can look over your work.

6. **Story research:** Many nonfiction book authors find research assistants to be an invaluable part of their process, significantly cutting down the time they spend on their books. You can hire a student from a local college or through websites like [PeoplePerHour.com](#)

7. **Transcribing:** Very few freelancers these days do their own transcription, especially if they do source-heavy reporting. Companies like [CLK Transcription](#) and [Rev](#) already have a great reputation in the freelance community and can handle complex, lengthy interviews.

8. **Editing audio/video files:** Would you rather spend six days learning this skill or pay someone \$90 to take care of it in three hours?

9. **Following up with sources:** You know you should be sending your sources thank-you notes and links to published stories, but how many times have you simply not had the time? For things that are important but not all that urgent, a VA can be a great resource.

10. **Preparing presentations:** One of the biggest reasons I disliked taking on speaking engagements until recently is that, while I love the act of presenting, spending three hours dealing with Powerpoint is my personal definition of hell. Outsourced!

11. **Any other design or graphic work:** Unless you have an eye for great design (not many people do), trying to do your graphic work is not only painful, but makes for ineffective communications. Hand all your logos and website graphics work to a professional—it will make you more money in the long run.

12. **Updating your blog:** Most freelancers don't run full-fledged businesses from their websites ([though some of us do](#)), but it's still important to keep an updated blog for editors and potential clients to check out. I'd definitely recommend hiring a VA to update this blog regularly with updates about your work, travel, and other exciting projects.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

13. **Invoicing:** Unless you're working with a platform like Contently, you're going to have to invoice. And if you're anything like me, you're perpetually late on sending invoices because you dislike the process of creating them so much. Let someone else stay on top of it.

14. **Tax filing:** In my career, I've worked from four different countries, filed taxes in three, had businesses in two, and written for publications in over 50; there's no way I'm handling this one on my own. Nor should you. Hire a CPA or outsource it to someone who knows what they're doing.

15. **Basic bookkeeping:** I happen to love numbers and find financial targets both motivating and a good reason to keep busting my ass when I don't feel particularly inspired. But if you don't, you can lose hours trying to organize and track every expense.

16. **Collecting payment:** After over a year and 20+ emails to an editor about an unpaid invoice, I recently outsourced this job to someone. and now we're finally on our way. A VA can also help you keep track of outstanding invoices and follow up on them before they become overdue. Apps like Freshbooks will help with this, too, but do require more work.

17. **Receipt management:** If you've got someone doing bookkeeping for you, let them track your receipts as well. Come tax time, you won't regret it.

MARKETING

18. **Web design:** Want to learn coding? Keep up with the latest standards? Learn about the latest trends in design? Me neither.

19. **Email marketing:** No matter who you are and what kind of business you run, an email newsletter is an absolute must. You need to have a way for people to stay connected to you, even if that's only twice per year. If you don't want to add more on your plate, hire someone to handle the nitty-gritty of setting one up.

20. **SEO:** One of my biggest time-drains when I lived in India was my website. It ranked highly for the phrases "freelance writer India" and "freelance journalist India", so I had editors from *US Weekly*, *Marie Claire* (US), and *The Independent* (UK), emailing me about assignments. In other words, SEO is important. Get someone who knows what they're doing since Google is constantly changing its algorithm.

21. **Social media:** If I could, I'd spend my whole day talking to fellow writers and building relationships with readers on social media, but sadly I have to actually, you know, write. If you want to stay connected to your followers and still have time for work, it can be a helpful to work with a social media professional.

22. **Follow and connect with editors:** A fantastic little technique to build relationships, find editor names, and generally be on top of changes in the media industry is to get someone to follow editors on Twitter and connect with them on LinkedIn. You should initiate the conversations, but hire someone to do the initial searching and button pushing.

23. **Looking through ads on job sites:** There are gems to be found on these public marketplaces every now and again, but not if you regularly waste whole days sifting through them.

DAY-TO-DAY

24. **Keeping track of industry news:** You don't have the time to read 30 newspapers and magazines about your industry, but you can pay someone to find the important things and email them to you at the end of the day. Entrepreneurs do this all the time; there's no reason freelancers shouldn't.

25. **Keeping track of industry events:** Still kicking yourself for not attending the major industry event that was held in your city that would have been a perfect networking opportunity? Been there, done that. Don't miss it by having someone else flag it up, buy the tickets, and plug it into your schedule.