

7 Secrets to Make Hiring a Freelancer (Practically) Pain-Free

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Hi there!

Thanks for downloading this special report on “7 Secrets to Make Hiring a Freelancer (Practically) Pain-Free.”

Whether this is your first time to venture into the freelance community or you are a pro at outsourcing, I hope you’ll find some tips to make this process as pain-free as possible.

If you’ve had a bad experience with a freelancer, I want to encourage you to try again! I can assure you that there are some fantastic, knowledgeable professionals who understand the word “deadline,” who don’t make you sweat bullets, and who can offer you quality work at reasonable prices.

Once you find the right person for your needs, you will be amazed at how quickly you can have a trusted and valuable resource available to you. After a project or two, this person will know a great deal about your organization. You can confidently bring him or her in for special projects or ongoing activities.

The best thing about hiring a freelancer is that you only get what you need, when you need it.

And if the person is experienced, you can count on having an outside source for some lively brainstorming and honest advice. This fresh perspective can infuse your marketing and communications with a “zing” that’s welcome after long hours at work.

Wishing You a Refreshing and Productive Day,

Michelle I. Zavala

MichelleZavala.com, Inc.

Dynamic Writing that Boosts Your Sales & Visibility!



1

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Three important ingredients for successfully hiring a freelancer are:

- Defining an accurate scope of work
- Defining your budget
- Defining your expectations

Be thorough in these definitions before starting your search, and you will have an easier time finding the right person. The more accurate you are, the better questions you'll ask during the process.

For example, if your project requires an in-depth knowledge of your organizational objectives and strategies, are you offering enough time for your freelancer to get up-to-speed? Experienced freelancers can generally handle the task as long as all the information is available for review.

Also evaluate workloads internally. Can you shuffle a few things around to have an employee get this project done? If so, how will this affect other deadlines and projects?

Think about your expectations. Do you need the freelancer to be available at certain hours of the day? Do you expect him or her to attend occasional meetings at your office? Tell the freelancer early on about what you expect in order to avoid any unpleasant surprises as the project progresses.

As you evaluate, keep in mind that freelancers are available for special projects as well as regular, ongoing activities. Sometimes it may be wiser to outsource your monthly e-newsletter or weekly refresh of web content, and keep your marketing team focused on other activities.

2

IN SEARCH OF THE QUALIFIED

A referral from a trusted colleague in or outside of your industry is an excellent way to find a freelancer. It's also the quickest way. You can openly ask questions about the person, his or her work style and fee structures to see if this could be a match for your needs and your organization.



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Some associations like the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the American Advertising Federation (AAF) have job boards where you can post an advertisement or review the resumes on file.

Posting on Craig’s List or one of the many freelancing sites is another possibility as long as you have enough time and staff to follow up on the incoming responses. Your Craig’s List posting can end up on many different web sites, and the freelancing sites can bring in a range of abilities from unseasoned to experienced.

Another choice is a search on the Internet. Again, this may be a time-consuming effort that brings you a range of experience, price structures and portfolio pieces.

Quick Tip: As a rule, your time will be better spent hiring an experienced freelancer who is familiar with and understands client needs and expectations. Realize that less experienced freelancers will require more attention than experienced professionals will. If you choose an unseasoned freelancer, plan on spending more time monitoring his or her work and performance. Generally, you also will need to include more rounds of revisions.

3

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Your research will go a long way in weeding out the good from the bad and the ugly. Check out the freelancer’s web site thoroughly. Experience, testimonials and the number of years freelancing is helpful, but the real test should be the portfolio and references.

Portfolio: Does the portfolio represent a variety of samples? Does the freelancer appear flexible in his or her style of writing or graphic design? Does he or she have the level of experience to adapt to your particular situation?

References: Call two to three references. Ask them questions such as the freelancer’s ability to hit deadlines, how well he or she works with employees and the quality of work offered. Also delve into the freelancer’s ability to understand the philosophies and values associated with a company.

Quick Tip: Don’t limit yourself to finding someone in your city. With email, conference calls, instant messaging and video conferencing, your freelancer can be across the country and still get the job done on time and under budget.



Companies like IBM have been successfully working in virtual environments for years. If you are receptive to working virtually, you will open the door to an entirely new base of freelancers who could fit your needs perfectly.

4 TALKING ABOUT MONEY

Does the freelancer charge by the project or by the hour? Experienced freelancers generally offer flat rate project fees for two reasons:

1. They know how long most projects take, so they can bid accurately and confidently. They will provide a scope of work or description of services, along with timelines, to let you know what is included in the price. Most contracts also include payment terms and associated deposits. If you need additional services, ask the freelancer to include them in the estimate.
2. They know project rates allow clients to budget accurately. This works to your advantage because you will know – from the beginning – what you are paying for. If you ask for additional services after the project begins, you will need to renegotiate the project rate to include these changes.

Estimating hours can be tricky. If you choose an hourly rate, be aware that if the freelancer goes over the estimate, you'll be paying more. The big question is, “How much more?”

After you've discussed the specifications of the project, feel free to tell the freelancer what your budget is. That way, you'll both know right away if this is something you want to pursue.

If your budget is limited, do not dismiss a freelancer if he or she cannot do the entire project for that amount. Many freelancers will work with your budget to offer you the best value possible. Sometimes that means taking the project to a certain point and allowing your staff to complete it. Sometimes it means serving as a consultant to ensure you receive the quality you want and deserve.

5 CONFIDENTIALITY

Most freelancers have no problem signing a proprietary information or non-disclosure agreement. Be clear and specific about what this means for you and your company, and make sure the freelancer understands the scope of what this



entails. This includes any restrictions you have on allowing the freelancer to use the final project in his or her portfolio.

Involve your organization’s attorney in this process as needed. Having this discussion before starting the project protects you, your company and the freelancer from unnecessary complications in the future.

6

APPROVAL PROCESSES & COMMUNICATION

It’s the failure to communicate that makes projects go awry. Another thing that can throw a project off track is the approval process.

From the start, be clear on who is involved in the approval process and the time required for approvals. If you’re the one and only approval, that’s great...and much quicker.

If you have to run the project through upper management or through a number of departments to get approvals, let your freelancer know that upfront. Approval times will need to be built into the schedule to get your project out on time.

Also open the lines of communication throughout the process. Be available to the freelancer, or return inquiries as soon as possible to keep the project on schedule. Your responsiveness can make the difference in hitting or missing deadlines.

7

PERSONALITY & WORK STYLE

One question looms large in hiring a freelancer, but many clients either choose to ignore it or don’t even consider it. Before hiring, ask yourself:

Does this freelancer “fit in” with my staff?

The freelancer should be friendly to your employees and easy to get along with. When interviewing, ask the freelancer to explain his or her work style.

The best freelancers are flexible and adaptable to most work situations. Does he or she seem accommodating...or demanding?



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Do you feel the freelancer’s personality may be disruptive to your staff? For example, gregarious personalities are distracting to some work environments yet they are welcome and fit right into others.

Do you feel he or she may be difficult to deal with? If this is the case, follow your intuition and carefully evaluate your decision to hire. Your “sixth sense” can speak volumes in keeping a smooth, even tempo in your marketing department.