

The 21st Century Manager: Getting it All Done

By Trenton Hightower

Think for a moment about why you entered your chosen field.

Are you actually doing the job you thought you'd be doing, or have dozens of peripheral duties been turfed your way? As budgets become leaner, many managers admit to an increasing amount of job dissatisfaction as the gap between their actual job responsibilities and their original career goals grows ever wider.

In a climate this busy and frugal, it's easy for managers to get overwhelmed. One solution is to learn how to outsource necessary tasks like training and business communications, leaving you more time to attend to your core business.

This is a strategy I have adapted frequently. With a relatively small staff, strategic partnerships have allowed us to meet our goals quickly and efficiently.

For example, picture the HR manager who has been tasked with developing an employee training program. How can this person maintain the training programs that the company's employees need, deliver them in a way that's fresh and interactive, protect the company's bottom line and preserve her sanity, too?

Many forward-thinking, cost-conscious professionals do it this way: they find creative, affordable partners who can manage their company's training initiatives cost-effectively.

The goal is to find a single partner who can develop, create and deliver programs across as many of the company's training needs as possible-- from technical to interpersonal, from customer service to leadership development. Choosing one partner who can provide broad-spectrum training in supervisory skills, personal development, computer training and job-specific skills will give a company the best return on its investment of time and resources.

Outsourcing can be a great boon to a business or employer, but before you reach out, ask yourself three questions:

1. Does your vision and mission match your potential partner's? If this fundamental fit isn't there at the outset, your chances for a successful partnership are slim to none.
2. How much is it going to cost? Tally the start-up costs and ongoing expenses, and make certain the final number justifies your short-term and long-term investment.
3. How much time, energy and resources will this arrangement entail? The price of the project is only one aspect of its total cost; how much time you will need to invest is just as critical. What kind of equipment—office space, desks, computers, and connectivity—will be required?

Strategic partnerships, when developed thoroughly and carefully, are great investments. The prospective partners who pass your "3 Question Test" will not only save money, they'll help gain you valuable time to focus on your core business.

Before long, you'll find that the job you envisioned, and the job you're actually doing, are closer than ever.