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## What To Do When DIY Is No Longer Strategic

Posted: Apr 01, 2019 2:06 PM EDT

Updated: Apr 02, 2019 7:00 AM EDT

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Want to fix a kitchen sink, restore a broken dryer to health, or create the perfect crème brûlée? A quick trip to YouTube will give you dozens of do-it-yourself videos.

People like the DIY approach because they feel it empowers them and saves money. Entrepreneurs in particular love to boast about “bootstrap” approaches to their business needs, taking pride in handling every aspect right down to cleaning the office toilets themselves.

While DIY approaches may make some sense while your company is finding its feet, there quickly comes a time when trying to be a jack-of-all-trades begins to constrain your business and its potential for growth. A healthy business that’s experiencing growth begins to place more demands on your limited time and your internal resources. If you’re lucky, that growth will almost seem to be out of your control.

That’s when you’ll need to make some important decisions. First, if you’re not already exhausted, you’ll need to have a heart-to-heart with yourself about how you’re spending your time and whether that’s the best use of the limited hours that are available to you. Second, you’ll have to think about what it will take to keep up with your growing business.

Entrepreneurs also take pride in their ability to make quick decisions. Again, in the early days of a business, that can be helpful, but as the business expands, it can be a liability. One of the most common knee-jerk reactions is staffing up. If the demands of business are outstripping what your team can deliver, the key is to make the team larger, right?

That can work, if you can identify and afford the right people. As you know, that’s easier said than accomplished. All too often, companies hire whoever is available and lower their expectations to reflect the new team members’ limits. Or they get the right people in place but watch their staffing costs swell and impact the profitability of the new business.

Fortunately, there's another option that often makes more sense. Rather than rushing to increase headcount, consider the strategic value of outsourcing specific tasks or functions. For example, one of the first places many growing businesses perceive a need for more internal help is anything related to marketing. The sales team is too busy keeping up with customers to give thought to longer-term goals and steps that will grow the business even further, so hiring someone to focus on marketing should be a magic solution.

It rarely is. One reason is the gap between what those companies are willing to invest in an in-house marketing person and what the expertise they need will really cost them. Maybe your company really needs senior-level expertise -- the kind that would come with a \$120,000/year staffer -- but there's no way you can afford someone who draws that kind of paycheck. You might be able to pay \$40,000, but that means settling for someone who's well-meaning but relatively inexperienced.

Strategic outsourcing gives you a third path that allows you to pay less for the level of expertise you need. Just as important, it allows you to focus on your core talent -- using your limited time where it's most effective. In this case, turning to a marketing agency gives your company the high-level expertise when you need it for about what you'd pay a lower-level staff member. By outsourcing, you gain the specific skills and support needed at this time, along with the knowledge that the agency can continue to support your needs as they grow along with your business. Eventually, you'll be in a position to hire that top-tier person internally, but you won't have to settle for less in the meantime.

This type of strategic outsourcing can also give you access to a broader range of talent. The in-house person you hire may be a good marketing strategist, a solid writer, a creative graphic designer, or a whiz with technology, but not quite as well-versed in the other areas. The outsourced firm offers people with expertise in all those disciplines, so as your needs shift, all the right skills are close at hand.

Strategic outsourcing isn't meant to be a permanent solution. It gives you a cost-effective alternative to hiring and training internal staff in the short run and provides a bridge to higher-quality staffing down the road. It's also a prudent way to transition between being a do-it-yourselfer and creating a strategically focused company. And that's a lesson you won't find on YouTube.

*Deborah Daily is co-owner of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based advertising agency.*

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