

Outsourcing WordPress Development

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Do you really need to hire someone?

Your time is valuable.

If you are NOT a code monkey, chances are you would be better served to pay someone else to handle the code.

If you ARE a code monkey, you are capped with how many hours you can work in a day.

Outsourcing your development work can multiply your 'hourly' availability.

- How much of your time is it worth to solve a problem?
- Can you actually get paid for all of that time?
- Charge more per hour/project for development than it costs you to pay someone to do it.

Are you building your own WordPress site?

If so, it's probably worth finding a Local WordPress developer you can meet with.

They are easier to qualify, though may cost more per hour(not necessarily per project)

I do not recommend going through Elance, UpWork(ODesk), Craigslist, etc.

There is a much greater likelihood of receiving poor work, losing money, and having a headache.

Try things yourself. Many things you CAN do, just save the 'tough stuff' for your developer.

Are you building a WordPress business?

This normally requires a longer term relationship than a one off project.

Outsourcing does not have to be 'over seas'. It can be as simple as hiring a developer part or full time.

You are 'outsourcing' or 'offloading' the work to someone else.

Sites like Elance, UpWork, and Craigslist become a better option though you need to qualify these workers.

If I can do it, why should I outsource development? I'll lose money.

As a freelance WordPress professional, I'm confident that you've found yourself wearing many more hats than whatever your specialty is.

In a typical website project, we have the following layers:

NOTE: I've included 'titles' for professionals at each level.

- Discovery (Strategist)
- Design (Graphic Designer)
- **Development** (Web Developer)
- Deployment (Web Developer)
- Marketing (Sales, Social Media, PPC, etc)

When have you met someone that absolutely crushed it at each of these?

Even though we specialize in one of those areas, as a freelancer, we often find ourselves doing, or managing each of the additional layers so that we can 'run our own business'.

If you are satisfied already managing each of these layers, this is not for you.

For everyone else, it's time to learn to delegate!

How to find a "good" developer

Remember that your situation will determine the kind of WordPress Developer that you need to hire.

If you are just trying to finish your own website, look for a company, possibly local.

If you have many sites and lots of work, it's worth finding an individual, or company, to offload this too.

Either way, you need to follow similar steps.

- Search for WordPress Developers
- Qualify those that you find
- Deliver work requests appropriately

Trying to finish your own website

The easiest place to start is Google.

Search using these key terms: (Your Location) WordPress Developer

Ex. Atlanta WordPress Developer

- Check out everyone in the top 10
- Read their testimonials
- Look at websites in their portfolio
- Ask them for references or contact owners of the websites in their portfolio directly.

Local Meetups are a great place to meet and qualify developers.

Always ask for references.

Outsourcing for many sites

Similar to doing your own website, you may want to start local following the steps above.

Search Google, attend local Meetups(not just WordPress. PHP or other 'programmer' meetups are good).

Consider college students, though someone that out of college probably has more availability and desire for a paycheck.

Post jobs to Elance, Upwork, Craigslist.

Qualifying your WordPress Developer

This is more for businesses though can be applicable to anyone.

- The Job Application
- Set Expectations
- Short List Applicants
- Create a Test job
- Interview(Skype or in Person)
- Give clear instructions
- Build a relationship and give it time
- Issue Resolution

The Job Application

This is where you will post up the description of the job you are looking to outsource.

- Be as clear as you can about what your needs are.
- Try to give as many details as possible about the project, work load etc.
- Include a qualifier to make sure people are reading the request and not blindly responding

A qualifier would be adding a sentence like the following.

“At the top of your response, please include the following phrase: I Love Tacos”

When reviewing your responses, anyone that did not include that clearly didn't pay enough attention to the details of the request and automatically can be thrown out.

Set Expectations

You should include these things in your job posting.

For example, things like

- Working Time – do you need someone that works during your work hours?
- Hours per day/week
- Do you communicate via email, Basecamp, skype
- What kind of feedback do you require? Daily, Weekly
- Language – can they communicate clearly in your language? Do you need to phone or chat?

Shortlist Applicants

If you are posting to job sites like Elance, you'll have an opportunity to read reviews from other people who have hired these workers.

You can also see how much they charge per hour or project(cheaper is definitely not always better)

Anyone that did not respond using your 'qualifier' should be passed immediately, this will trim down your list fast.

Create a Test Job

Instead of choosing someone and hiring them for a big project right away, it can be beneficial to set up a 'test' job and allow several of your 'top picks' to do it.

Keep it small so that it's cheap and fast. This will give you a great idea of how these developers work with you.

Interview

Once you have chosen one or more possible developers, it's time to meet them IRL(In Real Life)

If they are local, of course a quick coffee can be easy. If not, consider Skype, Google Hangout Etc.

Having a 15 minute face to face conversation will tell you a lot about someone and how easily they communicate.

That said, some people, especially when English is not the first language, may be better through Text.

Give CLEAR Instructions.

This is one of the hardest things to overcome.

In your head, the things you say make a lot of sense.

Say them out loud to someone, and you already lose 50% of the meaning.

Type that same thing out to someone, not only do you lose 50% of the meaning, but you lose tone control, inflection, etc.

- Use simple language
- Short sentences
- Images, screenshots, etc
- Number lists
- One objective per Email, Basecamp To-Do, etc

Build a relationship and give it time

If you've done a good job of qualifying, you should have found a good egg.

Consider this person part of your staff, which is basically part of your family. How would you treat them?

Take the time to nurture the relationship and be clear and specific about your expectations.

Over time, the developer will learn how you work and be able to anticipate more and more.

Offer praise for good work.

Do not reprimand for bad work, instead, work together to find the cause of the problem and a solution.

Issue Resolution

If you are having a hard time with your good egg, chances are it's your fault.

Most likely there was a miscommunication somewhere that needs to be resolved.

When starting the relationship, be clear about how you will handle mistakes.

- Bugs
- Re-work
- Bad code
- Past deadlines
- Etc

Make sure you are doing the best you can to deliver the work requests in clear and simple terms.

Meet with your developer before starting this work to answer any questions they have.

Always have your developer reiterate the request to make sure of clear understanding.

Delivering Work Requests the Right Way

Nothing is worse than killing the excitement of new work by having little to no actual useful information about the project.

This causes things to take longer to deliver, as well as cost more time to complete.

Following these three concepts will help you hit it on the head the first time.

1. Unless something is WELL DEFINED & IMPORTANT, no one should do it.
2. Sentences should have one possible interpretation and be suitable for a 2nd grade reading level.
3. Will someone who has never been to this website know Where to Go, and What to Do after reading the task?

Has anyone ever hit contacted you with something like this?

"Hey, my website is broken, can you fix it?"

Is that enough information for someone to actually solve the problem?

Make sure you are not 'that guy' and you are clear about what needs to be done. You'll save yourself and your team a bunch of time and money.

Work Request Outline

Here is the exact outline that I give to our customers who send over work requests regularly. Having them follow this method has eliminated over 50% of the 'back and forth', which is extremely time consuming... so we both save time.

Include the following information

NOTE: This assumes we already have access to wp-admin, MYSQL, and FTP.

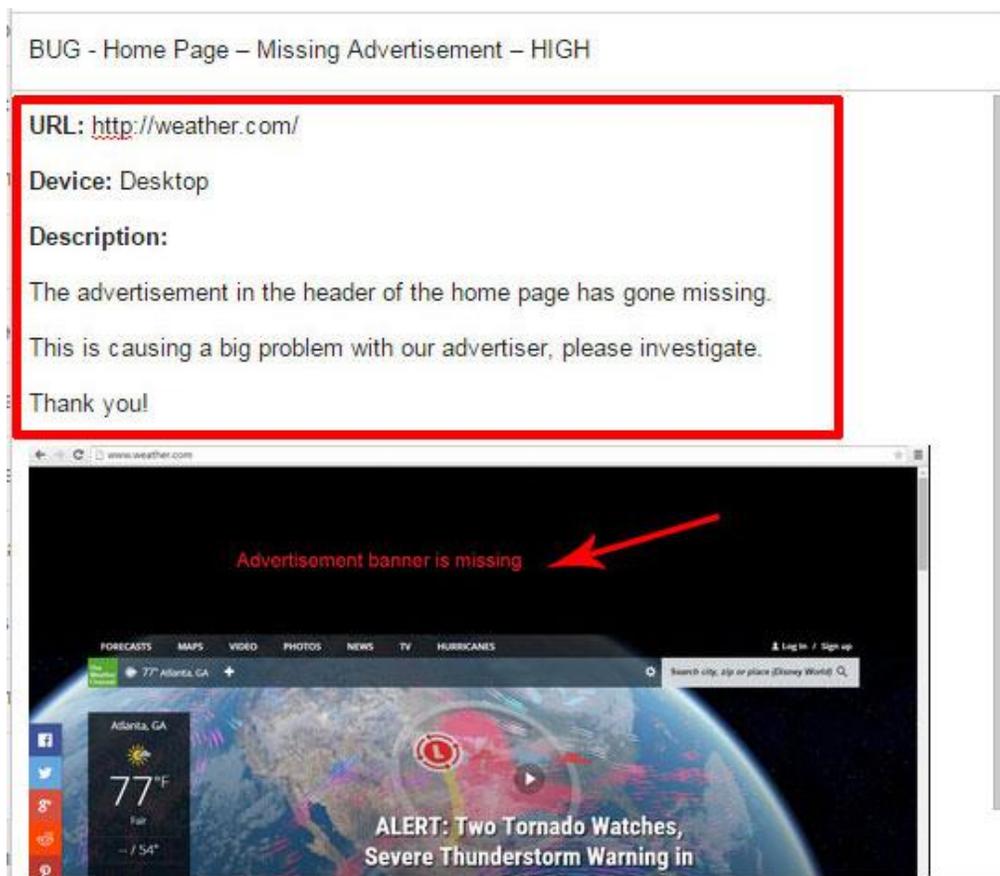
URL: URL to page with issue

Device: Desktop, Tablet, Mobile, or All?

Long Description: As many specific details as possible, include deadline

Attachments: (images, documents, etc)

A good work request looks something like this.



The image shows a screenshot of a work request form and a browser window. The form is titled "BUG - Home Page – Missing Advertisement – HIGH" and contains the following text:

URL: <http://weather.com/>

Device: Desktop

Description:

The advertisement in the header of the home page has gone missing.

This is causing a big problem with our advertiser, please investigate.

Thank you!

The browser window below shows the weather.com homepage. A red arrow points to the text "Advertisement banner is missing" in the header area. The browser window also shows a weather forecast for Atlanta, GA, with a temperature of 77°F and a severe thunderstorm warning.