7 TIPS FOR MANAGING OUTSOURCING PARTNERSHIPS AND VIRTUAL TEAMS

1 Figure out what you're good at and focus on doing it well

Decide what you need to control and do yourself, and make sure you set up your business to do that really well.

Then decide what activities could be provided by virtual resources, advisors or outsourcing parties and service providers on a more efficient, marginal-cost basis to help support your business.

2 Regularly revisit tip 1 – it's not 'set and forget'!

When deciding what to outsource and what to maintain control of in-house, understand that your needs will change over time as your business changes – it's not a 'set and forget' task.

3 Where you can, get agreements documented

These agreements need to detail the expectations on both sides of an outsourcing or virtual team relationship.

This will ensure you follow Tip 4...

4 Ensure your expectations are aligned

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

5 Brush up on your project management skills

Many operations are now run as a 'project' to deliver a particular outcome – consider your outsourcing and virtual resources in this project management sense. (And remember, they're running services for a range of parties, so you're competing with other clients for their time.)

Ensure expectations are clear on both sides regarding projects, services and timelines for delivery.

6 'Conduct' your team

Managers must be able to 'conduct' a diverse team, with an equally diverse set of requirements, from ethics and culture to virtual team performance, managing specialist and technical resources, delivery to business requirements, role and job diversity.

You may not see them regularly, but outsourcing parties are key to delivering projects, so you must think of them as part of the team.

7 Nurture a shared, positive organisational culture

Managers need to understand and influence teams containing members with a diverse range of values and cultures.

A culture of shared vision, flexibility and adaptability will provide for a more performance-driven business, while managers who fail to strike the right cultural balance will hinder their business's operations.