



OFFSHORE TIPPING POINT

**Real Estate
Business Owners
MUST READ!!!**

**“WHEN SOMETHING NEEDS
TO CHANGE!”**

- STEPHEN ATCHELER

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1. Introduction

Who this book is for



I've written this book with two specific kinds of Real Estate Business Owners in mind.

You're either **starting out on your own** for the first time and you've got too much on your plate, or you've **expanded too fast** and you feel like your business is slipping out of your control.

You feel like you've reached a **tipping point** and you're not sure if that's a good or a bad thing.

The Real Estate industry changes slowly. Let's face it, when it comes to some tasks, we're still doing things the same way we always have.

But there are some business owners who recognise that **something needs to change**.

Basically, you're looking at your business, and you know that you could be running it better. You could be getting more leads, meeting more clients, and wasting less time.

More importantly, you could be making more profit by improving your margins.

The way to do that, is to be more efficient. You know that, but you're not sure what the next step is. You simply don't have the time or brain power to figure it out.

For **new Real Estate Business Owners**, you've probably been running your agency for less than a few years. Although you've got some staff, you still seem to be spending a lot of time doing a bit of everything yourself. You've got too much work and zero time to do it in. You're seriously starting to wonder if you made the right decision. Some days you want to chuck it all in - but you've invested too much already, and you can feel that success is so close.

For **bigger agencies**, somehow your growth is not reflected in your bank account. You are doing more sales, your turnover is massive, but your margins are getting smaller. You're making less profit than before. Your rent roll is too big to be managed efficiently, your sales team doesn't have the support staff it needs, and you find yourself having to hire more and more people, just to keep pace. You know that throwing people at the problem is not a solution, but you can't see any other way out.

If you fall into either of these categories, this book is for you. I know, because I've been there. As you'll hear in the coming sections, I've worked in agencies, been a contractor with Re/max, and then started my own agency. I reached a point where I knew that if I kept running my business the same way, I would collapse under its weight.

The thing is, unless you're incredibly lucky, just about every Real Estate Business will go through ups and downs. Not everybody's story is the same. But at some point, you realise that you have to change your business, or it will destroy itself - and you, at the same time!

There are critical moments in every business, fine lines where you could slip and fail, or smash through and succeed. Every little thing you can do to tip the scales in your favour, is worth doing.

The Real Estate Industry is getting more and more competitive. You need to run a leaner system. Costs are going up and margins are getting lower. It's imperative to cut back on your costs somewhere.

That's why I truly believe that, outsourcing parts of your real estate business, makes sense. And by the end of this journey, I know that you'll agree with me.

In this book, I'll introduce you to the concepts of outsourcing or offshoring so that you can start to understand how it can radically change your business. I don't want to bore you with some long-winded essay. This is a short introduction and it'll only take you a few hours to read. But I know that by the end of it, you'll recognise that offshoring is the new reality - it's time to get on board.

About the author



My name is Stephen Atcheler and I've been in the Real Estate Industry for about 14 years.

I got started in this business in Brisbane in the mid 2000's, kind of by accident. I've worked in new agencies and old, contracted with Re/max, and started up and run my own agency.

I've got an unfortunate knack for learning things the hard way. I just jump in and give it a go. I've had some pretty spectacular failures and some huge successes. But I've also learned just about everything there is to know about running a Real Estate Business in Australia.

Around 2013, I reached a tipping point in my own business. I realised that something had to change or I was going to lose the whole thing. I started dabbling in outsourcing some of my office admin, and I was hooked. I saw immediately how moving parts of my business offshore, made everything run more efficiently and my profit margin soared.

In 2016 I moved to the Philippines to develop an offshore team for a new real estate offshore business venture. What can I say - I fell in love with the country and have settled here. Over the past few years, I've managed to make every mistake possible, when it comes to outsourcing. And that means that I've also learned the right way to do everything. Basically, I've done all the dumb things, so that you don't have to.

I can say with confidence, that I'm the only Offshore Real Estate Expert in the Philippines, who has actually owned and managed my own Real Estate Agency in Australia. I don't want to spin you a lot of garbage. I just want you know that I understand the pain of growing a Real Estate Business. I

have been there, I have done that, and I have come out the other side with a wealth of knowledge.

So let's get started. Let us get you excited about how offshoring can set off your own tipping point in the right direction.

2. The tipping point

What is a tipping point?

You might have heard the phrase 'tipping point'. It's one of those phrases where you kind of feel like you know what it means, right? You're at an edge, you're on a seesaw, you're at the top of a rollercoaster - but you have no idea - which way is this baby is going to go? Is it going to go backwards and send you crashing back to earth? Or, are you going to be propelled in a forward momentum of success?

A lot of time in businesses, tipping point refers to that moment when all your hard work pays off. All those leads, all that networking, all that marketing, all those long nights and boom! Finally, you feel like you've got enough momentum and things start working on their own, almost like magic. And to everyone else, it looks like an overnight success. Ha!

But a tipping point can also be that moment when it all falls apart. You've put in ridiculously long hours, you've given up all your hobbies, most of your relationships are suffering, you can't remember the last time you did some exercise - and yet, it's just not coming together. You are one failure away from quitting it all. You go crashing back to earth and hit every rock on the way down.

That's one way of thinking about a tipping point.

The phrase became famous a few years ago in a book about climate change by the American writer Malcolm Gladwell. In that book, tipping point is "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point" when a small idea finally becomes a big one.

When I talk about the tipping point, I think you know what I mean. Like I said, it's the top of the rollercoaster. Is it all going to be amazing? Or is it all going to be an unmitigated disaster?

But I also mean the tipping point, in terms of Real Estate Outsourcing. There are a few people - and you must be one of them - who are dabbling at the edges of the idea. Maybe you've already tested out a VA or you've gone to a seminar about outsourcing your bookkeeping.

One thing is for sure - a change is coming. The only way to get ahead in this ruthless business is to find an edge. You already know it. You know you need to get more efficient. You know you need to stop agonising over small stuff so that you can concentrate on what you're good at. You know it's time to put your business first.

You know this.

That's why you're here.

A tipping point is coming in the Real Estate Industry, and if you're not part of it, you'll be left behind.

When I reached my tipping point.

I had this realisation after I'd been running my own agency for just over a year. Things were going pretty well but I had my fingers in too many pies. I wasn't moving forward.

It was like this - I was doing sales, and also trying to manage my sales people. I had to train them the way I wanted them to be, but then that meant I didn't have time to do any sales, which meant I was not making money and the business suffered.



And you know, I'm a salesman, I want to close deals, so I'd gravitate back towards sales. But then I'm paying for staff who aren't selling anything because they haven't been trained properly, but I don't have time to train them, unless I stop selling...

You know what I'm talking about. The Real Estate Roundabout.

So how do you solve that? The simplest answer is to take away the operational stuff.

It felt like I was wasting my time sorting out contracts or creating a listing agreements, marketing spend needs to be invoiced, money coming in needs to be reconciled, commissions need to be dispersed, settlement cheques need to be sent off, and figures sent to solicitors.

There are all these tiny things that build and build and build until they threaten to topple right on top of you.

But staff are expensive. If I'm doing six sales a month, sure, I can take on an extra person. But then I'll have to spend a month training them to do something that takes me 10 minutes. It didn't seem like a valuable use of my time. I'll just add that 10 minutes to my daily task list.

Yeah, well, you know what that daily task list looks like. That 10 minutes plus another plus another plus...

All of that makes me less productive i.e. I'm pulling in fewer sales.

In the end, I couldn't afford to take on an employee, but then again, I couldn't NOT afford to. I was in a bind.

And that was when I discovered offshoring.

New Biz tipping point.

If you've recently set up your own business, your story might sound a bit similar to mine.

You've probably put everything into your business. And not just you. Your whole family is involved. Your sister-in-law is doing the marketing, your nephew built your website, you hired a few sales people from one of your old agencies. You're making enough sales and you're doing okay - you're profitable.

But all these freebies that you're pulling in, none of those people are working for your business. You are not their priority. Things that are important to you get overlooked, because they're not important to them. Like, you've been asking your nephew to integrate LockedOn into your website for months and there's no movement. Or your sister keeps promising to set up your Instagram, but it hasn't happened yet.

And then when it comes to your sales staff - look, they're fine. They're converting five out of ten leads which is great for someone who is self-trained. Of course, you want to get them to nine out of ten, but that takes training and you're too busy actually doing sales to train them. Ideally, you'd go through every presentation and see what worked, and what didn't. Reiterate and improve on every pitch. Shape them into the best sales people you know they can be.

You've got all the ideas, but you're too busy implementing the day-to-day stuff to even have time to think.

Do you know that whole idea about **working on your business not in your business**? What does that even mean, right? Just management mumbo jumbo.

But let's get down to it. What it means is you need to take a breather. Step back from your business, take your fingers out of some of those pies, and start working smart.

I'm not saying you're working dumb. Just that you're so busy trying to keep 10,000 plates spinning that you don't even have time to think. **And if you're not thinking about your business, why would anyone else be?**

Big Biz tipping point



If you've been running your business for a while, your tipping point is going to look different.

You're lucky. Your turnover is super healthy. Stratospheric, even. Your top sales people are pulling in incredible numbers.

But somehow, that's not reflected in your profit margin.

Don't believe me? Go run your numbers for the past 12 months. Compare your turnover against your profit. I'm willing to bet that the profit margin has been going down as your sales have gone up.

If you're happily banking 300k on a 3 million turnover, keep in mind that that's only a 10% margin. *That's average for a small business.* If your profit is not at least 20%, you're vulnerable.

But why? How can you be killing it in sales but not be pushing up the number in your bank account? You know exactly what you're pulling in each month, so why isn't that showing on your statement?

The truth is, in Real Estate, we love to spend money. Admit it we are always throwing money at new ideas to generate more business and get excited doing so in the hope that there will be a pot at the end of the rainbow. But think about this:

Every saving you make adds to your profit.

I'm not talking about cutting corners. I'm talking about working more efficiently so that your money goes further.

You still need to spend money and time. Making savings is not the same as being cheap.

Here's the thing - when your turnover is high, so is your workload. As the paperwork builds up, you need to hire more staff. As your rent roll increases, you need to hire more staff. As you take on more vendors, you need to hire more staff.

There's no getting around it - every time you take a step forward, your overheads go up.

You don't want to lose momentum. It's not good business to turn away good clients. But you are just a few sales away from needing to take on *yet another* support staff - and that means money, training time, and less profit.

What is the point of growing if you're making less money?

3. Why outsource?

You're probably thinking, *yeah, okay Stephen. You get it. I get it. Something in my business needs to change.*

But why outsourcing? Isn't it more hassle than it's worth?

Well, yes and no.

When it comes to Real Estate Outsourcing, I'm a total evangelist. But don't get me wrong, there's a lot you need to know if you want to do it successfully.

The good news is that once you try outsourcing for some small tasks - grab the low hanging fruit, stuff that doesn't require a lot of brain power - you'll find that you finally have the time to see how you can apply the concept to more parts of your business.

I don't want to hit you with too much stuff all at once. In this book, I just want to give you a feel for how outsourcing can change your business. The truth is, if you're at a tipping point, you don't want some guy talking at you for hours. You want to know if the whole idea is even possible.

Well it is, and here's why.

Possible solutions

1. Hire more local staff

When your business is going through growth or expansion, your first port of call is to take on more staff. It's a big outlay, and usually your instinct is to put it off to the last possible minute. But your sales people are asking for assistance and your property managers are struggling. Your team doesn't have enough support, and of course you want to give it to them.

Often your receptionist takes on appointment scheduling but starts missing calls. Property managers take on more properties but fall behind on sending out inspection reports. Your best salesman has a pile of paperwork that he will never get through.

And you don't have time to think about how you could do things differently or what can change. Your only option is to hire a few more people.

Then you've got a conundrum. If you take on someone experienced, they're going to cost more. The payoff is that they won't need as much training. That's always the plan, anyway. Truth is, they'll still come with ingrained habits that will need to be ironed out. They'll still need to understand how *your* business runs and get to know the habits of *your* people.

Or you take on some fresh new graduate, someone who doesn't cost very much but who needs to be shown everything.

Either way - big costs, plus overheads like desk space, computers all adds up and you're not even sure if it's helping or not.

2. Multi-tasking

Yeah, we've all tried this one. It's not as smart as it seems, is it?

When I started my own agency, I got to a point where my rent roll was just too big for me to handle on my own while still doing sales. But it wasn't big enough that I could hire a fulltime property manager. So what did I do? I got my receptionist to start doing property inspections.

Yep.

And how do you think that went? She did a great job, but then there were hours where she was out of the office. That's hours where phone calls didn't get answered and leads were lost. You can't convert a non-existent lead.

Unless you're really small, multi-tasking devalues your staff and their roles.

When you ask a staff member to take on several different roles, there's a conflict going on.

You think you're saying: ***I believe in your capacity to do two jobs at once.***

But what you're actually saying is: ***Both of these jobs are so insignificant that I think they can be handled by one person.***

And don't forget, switching between jobs takes brain power. I'm not talking about switching between tasks - like from email to phone calls. I mean *switching jobs*. Taking off the receptionist hat to put on the property manager one is literally shifting gears in your brain. It's tiring and at some point, someone or something will break.

3. Outsourcing

Yes! Finally, we're here. Outsourcing. My baby. My solution to all your problems :)

But seriously, if anything I've said so far rings true to you - and I'm sure it does - then it's time for you to really consider outsourcing.

I'll go through the benefits and realities of outsourcing below. Right now, I want you to just keep in mind all of the stuff I've talked about already.

First, that strain that you're under and the feeling that something needs to change.

Second, deciding whether or not to take on new staff - overheads, outlays, training, culture fit, staff management, HR, and all the headaches that come with that 'solution'.

Outsourcing definitely means a change for your business. There's no question about it. And that second part, all the pain of hiring new staff - I'm not going to lie. You'll still have that. The difference is, it will be at a significantly lesser cost. And with the right preparation, you will iron out any of the issues that are always associated with hiring staff much faster than you will domestically.

What is outsourcing?

Very simply, outsourcing is hiring an employee overseas to work on your domestic business.

Anything that can be done on a computer or by phone can be outsourced.

In this book, I'm using **outsourcing** and **offshoring** interchangeably, but they are different. Depending on your needs, you might choose to go either model.

Outsourcing

A lot of people start out by getting a Virtual Assistant (VA) on a site like Upwork. I started this exact same way. I found someone who I offloaded a bunch of little tasks to. Things like making forms editable or converting files. It was slow going at first - neither of us really knew what we were doing. But after a month of working at it, she was taking care of stuff that I no longer had to worry about.

When you use a site like Upwork, you're paying simply for time. Your VA will work a set number of hours, or on a set task, at a set hourly rate. It's like hiring a casual, except there's no loading, no OH&S, and no agency fees.

In those early days of virtual assistance, you could get someone for \$2 an hour. Don't get your hopes up, because those days are over! Online assistance is a global market, and the market has responded.

The downside to this is not just increased rates. Good VAs know what they're worth so their loyalty is to the dollar not the client. If one of their other clients ups their rate, they'll expect you to do the same or they'll ditch you. If they have several clients, they have competing priorities - and you may not be their number one.

Get around this by hiring people with low rates and no ratings, the freelancers who are just starting out. Yeah, okay, they might not be great, but at what you're paying them you can afford to take that chance.

I totally encourage you to start dabbling in outsourcing like this for small tasks. The one thing I will caution you on is, that it's not a long term solution. Once you start seeing the value - which won't take long - you'll want to take on more VAs. But you can't build a team that way. It doesn't leave you any room for expansion.

Which leads us to...

Offshoring

The next step up from a VA is offshoring. This is where you hire one or more full time employees to work on your business from an office in their country.

They are exactly like any other employee you hire. They'll have a desk in a secure office with a computer and printer. They'll have set shifts and hours. It also means paying taxes, pension and health insurance.

However, there are no more competing priorities. They are there 100% for you. They have an office that they go to each day. They attend your weekly staff meetings via Skype or Zoom. They sit with their colleagues. As you grow, you can add more people to your team. They're another one of your employees - they're just in a foreign country.

You can start by throwing little tasks at them. But eventually you'll want to get more strategic, have a proper job description, set KPIs and priorities.

If you take this route, you'll find you settle into it pretty quickly. Yeah, there are challenges to on-boarding any new staff member and an offshore employee is no different. But there's less stress involved when the outlay is so minimal and when you know you can quit the experiment at any time.

Which brings us to...

Benefits of outsourcing

1. Inexpensive

Let's get it out of the way. Outsourcing is cheap. That's why we consider it. That's why we do it. That's the number one appeal.

When you're running a lean business, any cost saving you can make is worth pursuing. Even if your profit margin is healthy, you can always nudge that percentage in your favour.

I have a saying. ***If it's not making money, it doesn't belong in the office.***

If staff or tasks or processes in your business aren't showing demonstrable value, why are they hanging around? Why are you still doing things the same old way if it's not bringing in the cash?

When it comes to outsourced staff, the cost savings are insane. For example, a bookkeeper based in the Philippines will cost around \$1700/month. That includes the person, their benefits, and their workspace. Think about how much you're currently spending on that. An admin person, someone to follow up emails, schedule appointments, follow up leads, update databases, place ads - that person will cost about \$1500/month all in.

We go through the cost savings in more detail in ***The Ultimate Guide to Offshore Cost Savings***. For now, just know that yes, they're much cheaper than a domestic employee.

2. Low barrier

If you're nervous about moving some of your tasks offshore, you're not alone. It can seem like a scary proposition. But you know what? Everything in business can be scary at first! Remember your first sale? Remember your first hire? Remember your first failure?

The great thing about starting off with outsourcing is that the barrier is low. It won't cost you much to get started. And if you're not happy or if that nervous feeling doesn't go away, it's easy to extract yourself. You don't have to fire someone you work alongside. There's no severance pay, no employment tribunal, no HR hassles. If, after a few months, it's not working out, you just stop.

Let me tell you how I kicked off. Because I'm a pretty enthusiastic guy (to put it mildly) I went all in. I hired five people straight off. I only had seven staff in my Australian office! The cost was so low that I thought, well, why not?

Of course, I failed. I had no strategy. I had five people and no idea what to do with them.

The great thing was, though, it was easy to downsize. I moved down to using just two people, one for sales admin and one for customer care. Then when I had learned a bit more I started to expand the team again.

Think of that freedom. You can take on one low-cost employee and slowly feed them more and more tasks. If something isn't working, scale it back again.

Can you imagine how easy and convenient it would be to do that with all your staff? But when you're paying

them award wages, it's not really feasible. You need your domestic staff to be working from day one due to the expense and cannot afford to have any one sitting around twiddling their thumbs.

But you can hire a VA on Upwork tomorrow and for \$5 an hour - literally less than a cup of coffee these days - you can delegate some task that has been sitting on your to do list for weeks.

And it doesn't matter if they take five hours to do it when it would only have taken you an hour. That's an hour of time *you* didn't have to spend. That's a tiny investment for an immediate success. And how often does that happen in life?

The low barrier has another benefit - you can **experiment with new roles and tasks**.

Maybe you've been considering having a person dedicated to social media. You're not 100% certain it's right for your business, but it seems to be the way people are going. Well, you can give it a go. Hire someone for a few months and test it out. Is the new role adding value? If not, you can scale it back easily.

Or you've been wanting to do your reports differently or introduce a new process into one of your departments. With a low-cost offshore team, you can try it out. Does the new form work better? Has the process improved efficiency?

Having affordable back office staff doesn't just give you room to grow, it gives you the freedom to experiment.

3. Free your business

Think about that example from before, about all those little tasks that are building up on your to do list. They're messing with your mind, aren't they? Little things that pile up into big things until it starts to stress you out. Not a lot of stress, just a little. Just enough to be *annoying*.

If your mind is taken up with all these little annoyances, you are not working at your best. You can't think about the future, you can't work on your business strategy, you can't find better ways of working.

Basically, you don't even know what you don't know because you haven't had time to think about it.

Take a minute right now to think about what you could do with an extra five minutes, ten minutes, two hours a day.

You could finally work on a marketing plan that makes sense for your clientele. You could re-allocate tasks or review job descriptions. You could spruce up your website. For once, you could actually have the time to work *on* your business instead of fighting fires.

Hell, you could have a *holiday*.

4. Free your staff

The key to a successful business is to have delighted customers and happy staff.

We've touched on what *you* could do with that free time. But what about your team? Are there tasks that drive them crazy? Things that they're doing that feels like time wasting, even though they're essential to the business. Paperwork and forms that pile up, making them feel stressed?

If your top salespeople didn't have to worry about their calendars, if there was someone else who could slot in appointments, arrange viewings, deal with cancellations and rescheduling and all they had to do was show up - how much extra time will they have? How many more people could they reach?

This is especially true of your rent roll. How many properties do each of your PMs currently manage? In our experience, a property manager with a real estate virtual assistant can go from 150 properties to 300. Yep, you read that right.

This isn't about making your domestic staff do *more* work - it's about getting them to do more of the work they love and less of the crap they hate.

5. 100% uptime

Your staff work standard hours. With split shifts, you might have people available from 8am to 6pm. But when is your customer actually online? When are people looking at properties and trying to line up appointments? Have you run the analytics? How often is the phone ringing after 5pm and not getting picked up?

Let's go through a scenario. A *potential vendor* emails on a Sunday evening wanting information about selling her apartment. Before she's even had time to close her computer and pour a glass of wine, she gets a reply.

Our sales staff aren't available right now, but I've passed your details to our best salesman who specializes in your area. When is a good time for him to call you?

A personally crafted email response from a real human. By the time your sales guy arrives into the office in the morning, he's already got a warm lead and she hasn't had time to contact anyone else.

Here's another. A *potential buyer* is looking at properties. They're a young couple and they've just finished dinner. They're scrolling through Domain and they see one of your homes. It's perfect for them. They love it. They shoot off an email asking if they could arrange a viewing, but they don't expect a reply until tomorrow sometime. They go on with watching Netflix when - ding! They get a reply straight away saying they can view the house in the morning. This is perfect. The property is still fresh in their minds. They have time to arrange their schedule. You have just delighted your customer.

People are reaching out for information all the time, not just nine to five. You need to be online when your customer is, and with a VA you can do just that.

Realities of outsourcing

Those are just some of the benefits of outsourcing part of your Real Estate Business. There are loads more, and I'm sure you're already starting to think about some ways that you can save time and money.

But I'm not going to lie to you - it is not all sunshine and roses.

Anything worth doing, is worth doing right. And this is definitely one area where you want to make sure you do it right!

With that in mind, let's go through some of the realities of outsourcing.

1. They don't know REAL ESTATE

The first thing to keep in mind is that your offshore employee or VA will not know anything about the Australian, New Zealand or US Real Estate Industry. It's different in every country and it's certainly different somewhere like the Philippines!

Your chances of finding someone with Australian real estate experience is pretty low. They're unlikely to know the programs that you use and the standard processes.

You're better off getting someone green, someone that you can train properly to do things the way you want them done.

In any case, you'll probably find someone with other admin experience - insurance processing, finance, telcos, etc. They'll have lots of relevant business process and problem solving skills that are readily adaptable to your business.

I always say that in terms of experience, hiring an offshore employee is a bit like getting a 19 year old at home - except that these guys have degrees.

2. You have to know your own business first

To get the most out of outsourcing, it really helps to know your own business first.

As I've already said, I just jumped in and hoped for the best. And I did see some payoffs immediately. But it wasn't until I sat down and thought about how my business ran that I really got traction.

- Where are your bottle necks?
- What are some tasks that just simply take too long?
- Which tasks are piling up?
- What are your most common customer complaints?
- How long does it take your team to respond to enquiries? Is that good enough? Could it be better?
- What impression do you want your customers to have of you? Is that the reality?
- Is your accountant happy? Your husband, your wife? :P
- What things keep coming up in staff meetings that people hate or want to change (and not just the biscuits).
- Are you punishing your over achievers by giving them more work?

If you haven't even asked yourself any of these questions, you probably haven't had the time. And that's where your problem is. You need more time!

Here's an example that might sound all too familiar. Your best sales guy - he's awesome, he's a great guy, he gets the job done. Except that he's terrible at filling out a contract process properly. The admin staff hate that they're constantly having to chase him up and you're always yelling at him.

You have to know your business. Is he ever going to change? Is this a problem that is going to come up again and again and again?

Or is this a problem that can be solved in another way.

3. You have to have a strategy

Closely related to knowing your business is having a strategy.

What's the **goal** of hiring an offshore employee? What problems will they solve? What do you want to achieve? And how will you measure that?

Here are some examples to get you thinking.

Problem 1: Inspections are being done, but there's a delay in writing them up and sending them out. Landlords have complained about it taking days or sometimes weeks to receive reports.

Goal: All inspection reports are sent out to landlords within 24 hours.

Strategy: PMs make notes on site on their phones. Before leaving the property, they email the completed notes and photos to the VA. The VA turns it into a report and sends it back to the PM for approval. PM approves and sends on.

Success measurement: More than 90% of the reports are sent to landlords within 24 hours. No more complaints!

Problem 2: Staff are too busy to follow up leads from potential buyers. You reiterate that buyers are potential sellers, but emails still aren't being returned for days. Staff complain that their inboxes are overflowing, and they don't have time to go through and prioritise.

Goal: All emails are acknowledged and replied to within 60 minutes during business hours. Every response is handled as though it is a potential lead.

Strategy: Emails that haven't been replied to by a salesperson after 30 minutes will be redirected to the VA. The VA responds to the email. If they can't answer the question, they will make contact with the customer to let them know their query has been received and will be properly dealt with. VA flags this email to the salesperson. With fewer emails to go through, the salesperson has the time to dedicate to the tricky ones.

Success measurement: All emails are dealt with. Staff don't hate their inboxes.

Problem 3: By the time rent roll receipting is completed and the arrears report is run, it's already after lunch. Property managers put off making arrears calls until the following day, giving tenants a free ride.

Goal: Arrears calls are made on the day.

Strategy: VA processes all receipting by 9am. Arrears report is run and calls are ready to be made by 10am.

Success measurement: All arrears calls are made on the first day of arrears.

As you can see, none of these are rocket science. I'm not talking about the Royal Banking Commission. These are simple improvements in your processes that you know will make a difference. Not just to your bottom line, but also to your customer experience and the happiness of your staff.

And you can also see how outlining it like this, even in really simple terms, can make it easier to figure out what you want from your new offshore employee. And if you know, then you'll be able to make *them* understand too.

4. You have to invest in training

And to make them understand, you will have to invest in training.

There's no getting around this. No VA or offshore employee will come to you with all the skills you need (when does any employee?) They will have great skills that you can utilise, but it won't be exactly what you want.

Everything is learnable, but you have to explain it.

When I finally sorted out my goals and made my first two strategic VA hires, I spent about a month training them. Not all day, every day. But I made sure I was available. I made it clear each day what I expected and what they should work on. We had a training plan in place, and they knew they could ask me questions.

You want to make it easy for your new employees to succeed. Set them up for greatness. Be clear about what you want and what they should deliver. Recognise their skill set and adapt it to your business.

Your VA may have done bank reconciliation for an insurance company before - but they haven't done it for *you* and *your* business. They don't know which accounts to reconcile against.

They may have done debt collection for a telco - but they don't know what days you want them to make calls and what they should say in a real estate context.

They may have dealt with email correspondence for a finance executive - but they don't know the tone of *your* brand.

Remember, **they have the talent, if you have the time.**

5. Your business will change

As you begin to think of your business in this way, as you start outsourcing tasks and providing more support to your local team, your business will change.

I really hope that you've figured this out for yourself!

Some things which have 'always been done that way' will change. Processes that have always been organic will become systematised. Redundant tasks will be eliminated. People's roles will be finessed.

You will very quickly come to rely on your offshore team for their consistency. Despite their distance, they will be essential members of your team and you will value their importance.

All those 'little things' that they get done is important. Those 'little things' is how everyone gets paid!

Some of your staff will be over the moon. *Having someone else follow up simple emails? Yes, please!*

Others will be uncomfortable. *But I like to deal with all my correspondence myself.*

And yes, some will find themselves out of a job.

That's the reality. Hopefully, by reshaping *your* business, you can deploy the talents of those staff elsewhere, to an area that really drives value to the whole team. That's your call as the leader.

6. It is still your business

And as the leader, you have to understand - it is your business

For some reason, this is something business owners struggle with. Outsourcing parts of your business does not mean letting go of any of it.

It is still your business.

That means you need to know exactly what is going on. You have to manage the process. You can't just hand over your contracts to your offshore team and say, *here you go. You deal with it.*

Good management is about delegation. But delegation isn't the same as letting go.

It's your process - you design and deploy it.

It's your data - you decide on your data protection policy.

It's your finance system - you decide on the accounts.

Offshoring is not letting go. It's taking back control of your business by streamlining areas and making economic efficiencies.

You have to own the process. You have to have clear direction, goals and strategies.

Because if you don't, who else will?

4. Next steps

I hope, by now, you've got a little taster for how offshoring can help your Real Estate Business. This was just an introduction to get you thinking.

If you haven't already, go back to the section on getting to know your business. I've made some space in the coming pages so you can go through those questions and answer them. And don't be afraid to add some of your own.

I've also given you a template so you can think about some problems, and goals and strategies to solve them.

Remember, you want to focus on the low hanging fruit. The tasks that you feel okay about outsourcing. In a later book, I'll talk about some more complex roles you can set up, but for now concentrate on the easy stuff.

Before you work on these exercises, head on over to this site which explains in detail all the different roles and tasks that you can outsource. Trust me, once you've read through that, your mind will really open up to the whole deal.

As I said right at the beginning - the whole Real Estate Industry is at a tipping point. Your business might be solid right now, but unless your profit margin is above 20%, you're vulnerable. More and more people are waking up to the value of offshoring. You're either ahead of your competitors, or you're left in the dust.

We are looking at a tipping point of real estate outsourcing. This idea is still only a small one that very few people are taking seriously. But a change is coming. We're at the top of the rollercoaster, the summit of the hill. Will you be at the front of that change? Or are you going to be left behind?

Because if you're not thinking seriously about offshoring right now, everyone else soon will be and you will see your competitors thrive whilst you barely survive.

Here is a very basic template just designed to get you thinking. If you have some time start jotting down some answers and get the creative juices flowing.

Where are your bottle necks?

What are some tasks that just simply take too long?

Which tasks are piling up?

What are your most common customer complaints?

How long does it take your team to respond to enquiries? Is that good enough? Could it be better?

What impression do you want your customers to have of you? Is that the reality?

Is your accountant happy? Your husband, your wife? :P

What things keep coming up in staff meetings that people hate or want to change (and not just the biscuits).

Are you punishing your over achievers by giving them more work?

Feel free to think about 3 things that you can start to set a strategy for and move your business forward.

Strategy 1

What is the problem?

What would you like to be different? What is the goal? Make it short, achievable and measurable.

What strategy or process can you implement to achieve your goal?

How will you know if you've succeeded in meeting your goal?

Strategy 2

What is the problem?

What would you like to be different? What is the goal? Make it short, achievable and measurable.

What strategy or process can you implement to achieve your goal?

How will you know if you've succeeded in meeting your goal?

Strategy 3

What is the problem?

What would you like to be different? What is the goal? Make it short, achievable and measurable.

What strategy or process can you implement to achieve your goal?

How will you know if you've succeeded in meeting your goal?

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