

Tasks You Should Outsource—Immediately

By [Marissa Brassfield](#)

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/7-tasks-you-should-outsourceimmediately>

In an ideal world, most of our workday would revolve around using our best skills and doing the tasks that excite us. We'd then delegate the other stuff to someone else (ideally, someone for whom that task might be fun).

While this may seem like a lofty goal, at least until you score the corner office, the truth is, you can outsource more than you might think—for less than you'd imagine—using the tons of online virtual assistant and delivery services out there. After dabbling in the practice over the last 18 months, I've discovered how dramatically it can affect my productivity.

So, how do you know when to outsource something? I use three criteria:

Am I procrastinating on this task? If I'm procrastinating, I usually don't have the resources, knowledge, or skill proficiency to do it well.

Do I dread starting this task? If I view the task with dread rather than excitement, this signals that I don't actually want to do it. This means that I won't bring the level of passion and ownership that I would if I were exciting to me.

Am I awesome at this task? If the answer is "no," chances are good that you can find an expert to help you out. If the answer is "yes," it's time to reshuffle your priorities and outsource something else to free up time. Here are a few tasks that I've outsourced to great success, that have helped me gain back precious free time, and that have immeasurably improved my overall happiness, stress level, and satisfaction.

1. Appointments, Reservations, and Logistics Coordination

Imagine what would happen if you never had to make calls for dinner reservations, hair appointments, car services, doctors' appointments, price-checking at local stores, USPS re-delivery, or sharing information with potential new clients.

Pretty great, right? So, wipe your plate clean of all of these tasks, and delegate them to a virtual assistant. I've saved hours of time by doing so, and you'd be blown away by how affordable this is. With [Fancy Hands](#), for example, you'll pay between \$3 and \$5 per task. Similar services, like [TaskRabbit](#), [Task Bullet](#), [MyTasker](#), [Zirtual](#), and [TimeSvr](#), take care of everything from calls to data entry to transcription.

2. Research

Whether you're looking to create a database of accounting firms in your city for market research or just find a couple of peer-reviewed studies that support a hunch for your next presentation, there's no reason that you should take the first step in researching anything these days. Services like [Fiverr](#), [Freelancer.com](#), and [Elance](#) connect you with talented professionals around the world who are willing to complete that task faster and for less money than you'd imagine. In 2011, I hired my first part-time virtual research assistant to curate some shocking statistics to add extra punch to a blog post I was working on, and I haven't looked back since.

3. Graphic Design and Digital Presentation Preparation

Unless you're a skilled designer yourself, your digital presentations could probably use some pizzazz. But instead of frittering your time away on PowerPoint animations and mulling over the merits of Arial Bold, spend a few bucks on [Fiverr](#), [Elance](#), [99 Designs](#), [Guru](#), or [DesignCrowd](#) to have a professional design your slideshow. Use the time you've just saved on rehearsing your presentation, instead.

4. Putting Together Furniture, Dry Cleaning Drop-Off, and Other In-Person Tasks

What about the pain-in-the-rear errands that can't be done virtually? Enter services like [Zaarly](#) and [TaskRabbit](#), which connect you to people in your area who are willing to do simple tasks in their spare time. You could hire someone to stand in line for you to pick up your iPhone 5S or put together the flat-pack furniture you just purchased. You could even have someone do all your Black Friday shopping. Name the task, and someone's already outsourced it.

5. Shopping for Fresh Produce

We know that a diet full of fruits and vegetables is essential for maintaining our brains and bodies, but let's be honest for a moment: Do you have the time to reliably a) head to a farmer's market near you, b) sort through the offerings and pick a diverse assortment of fruits and vegetables, and c) repeat this process weekly? If your answers to any of the above were "no," look into CSAs that offer delivery services.

CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. You essentially purchase shares of a local farm's harvest, and each week you get a box full of whatever's in season. Visit WUSM Farmer's Market on Thursdays to sign up with one of the local vendors.

To level up this concept, consider getting your [groceries](#), wine, and beer delivered. Most St. Louis supermarkets have a delivery option with online shopping: Schnucks, Sams, Dierbergs, Whole Foods.

Liquor Delivery: Randalls uses [Drizly](#)

6. Meal Cooking

You might think that personal chefs are just for celebrities, but I learned a trick from bestselling author Brendon Burchard that flipped this theory on its head. He and his wife went to a local cooking school and asked the instructor to recommend a talented student-chef who wanted to go into catering. In exchange for a modest stipend and a testimonial, they hired a chef who worked with their weekly budget, purchased and prepared a week's worth of healthy, nutritious meals for them, and even cleaned up afterward!

You can also try this with a group, splitting the cost three or four ways, and dividing up the portions accordingly.

Or, look into delivery meal services like [Blue Apron](#).

Other meal services: Time for Dinner in Brentwood

If you're new to outsourcing and aren't sure where to start, pick just one or two tasks from this list, and invest the time you would have spent doing these items on a restorative activity you enjoy: a coffee date with a dear friend, an extra-long shower, a mani-pedi. In a few weeks, try to outsource another couple of tasks. You'll soon find that you have more hours in your week to devote to what you really want or need to be doing. As a bonus, you'll also build awareness of the types of activities that leave you feeling happy and energized, rather than listless and exhausted.

About The Author

Marissa Brassfield helps solopreneurs and high-performance teams dramatically increase their effectiveness so that they can free up the time to work hard and play harder. As the founder of [Ridiculously Efficient Inc.](#), she leads dynamic, high-energy productivity workshops and efficiency coaching programs that leave participants inspired and empowered to reshape their workflows—and their lives.

(*Recommended by Peds Faculty Member)

St. Louis Errand Companies

- At Your Service <http://atyourservicestlcounty.com/>
- Rent-a-relative <http://rent-a-relative-stl.com/>
- Errands etc <http://errands-stl.com/index.html>
- City Pace <http://citypacestl.com/>
- St. Louis Concierge <http://stlconcierge.com/>
- When and Where Concierge service <http://www.whenandwhereconcierge.com/index.html>
- Life Simplified STL <http://www.lifesimplifiedstl.com/home.html>
- Check Craigslist

National Errand Companies

- Do my Stuff <http://www.domystuff.com/>

Home Repairs

- *Get it Done Inc. <http://Getitdoneinc.com>

Lawn Care

- *Irreco <http://irreco.com/>
- *Tennant <http://www.tennantlawnservice.com/landscaping.shtml>

Pet Care

- Creature Comforts, Great and Small, LLC <http://www.creaturecomfortsgreatsmall.com/>
- *St Louis Dog Walkers <http://saintlouisdogwalkers.com/>

Laundry Pick-U and Delivery

- *Frontenac Dry Cleaners, 9908 Clayton Rd., St. Louis, MO 63124 (314) 942-8118
- Banner Cleaners, <http://bannercleanersstl.calls.net/>
- West Oak Cleaners, multiple locations, <http://www.westoakcleaners.com/chesterfield-dry-cleaning>
- Pleats Quality Dry Cleaning <http://www.getpleats.com/>

Childcare (Outside of WUSM Bright Horizons)

- *Nanny.com <http://nanny.com/nanny/>
- *TLC Family Care <https://www.tlcforkids.com/landing.php>

Travel

- TSA Precheck <https://www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck> The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) manages and operates an expedited security screening program, allowing certain travelers to move through security more quickly and easily when departing from participating airports in the U.S. The TSA, not United, randomly selects travelers for expedited screening.
- Global Entry <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry> Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Members enter the United States through automatic kiosks at [select airports](#).

Meal Services (Just a sampling of options)

- ***Fit Flavors-Pre-cooked meals**
- ***Time for Dinner-** <http://www.timefordinner.com/general-information/> At Time for Dinner we provide the option for customers to assemble their own dishes in a scheduled session or to purchase our ready- made dishes by either pre-ordering or simply stopping in and grabbing from our freezer.
- **Friend that Cooks** <http://www.friendthatcooks.com/weeklymealprep.html>
Chefs will come to your home for a half day every week to shop, cook, clean up and stock your refrigerator with a week's worth of healthy premade meals to reheat. We do not have set packages or a limited menu to select from like other personal chef and meal delivery services. Each family gets to decide how many portions they need to make it through the week. They are welcome to change that amount week to week, or even take the occasional week off for vacation if necessary. The average Friend That Cooks family requires between 3.5 and 5 hours for service (\$125-\$220 depending on the city), plus the cost of groceries, depending on the size of the family and other choices made.
- **U-Kitchen Food** www.ukitchenfoods.com
Email from Alvin Chen: A few of my fellow WashU students and I (Alvin Chen) started a new business in St. Louis to help busy people, like yourselves, save time and hassle on everyday cooking. With all the studying, tests, and work, we understand you don't always have time to cook or go shopping for food, but you still want quality meals without having to pay for expensive food at restaurants. So we thought it would be really helpful if we could make it easy for anyone to cook delicious meals in just 15 min! All you have to do is go to our website and choose the dishes you'd like to cook for the week. We'll shop, prep, portion, and deliver all the ingredients you need right to your door! Our ingredients stay fresh in the fridge for up to a week, so feel free to stock up on multiple

Restaurants

- 569 Dine <http://www.569dine.com/>
- Grubhub <https://www.grubhub.com>
- Food Delivery
 - Green Bean Delivery <http://greenbeandelivery.com/>
 - Schwans <http://www.schwans.com/>
 - Oberweis Dairy <http://www.oberweis.com/web/homedelivery.asp>
- Household Supplies
 - <https://jet.com/>
 - Amazon Subscribe and Save
https://www.amazon.com/b/ref=nav_shopall_subscribe_save?ie=UTF8&node=5856181011
 - Google Express <https://www.google.com/express/>

Recommend checking Angie's List for reviews and Better Business Bureau for complaints

APPS

<http://morganlinton.com/five-apps-i-use-to-outsource-my-errands/>

1. AMAZON FRESH

Grocery shopping is a time-consuming. Think about it, most of the time you're buying 75% of the same things (or more) but you're still spending your time traversing a store to get it. It takes us over an hour every week to shop for groceries in-person, with Amazon Fresh now that we've ordered before it takes less than 10 minutes. In Los Angeles we actually have multiple options as [Yummy.com](#) is also a player in the market. We quickly learned that you just can't beat Amazon's selection and prices. Note that we buy a lot of fruits, vegetables and vegan options all of which Amazon has a very good selection of. This saves us about four hours a month and we spend less since we're less tempted by things we see while walking down the aisle.

2. WASHIO

Next to grocery shopping, dropping off and picking up my dry cleaning is another errand I really don't enjoy. [Washio](#) has completely changed how I do my dry cleaning. I simply open the app, pick when I want them to come and when I want them to return the clothes. Done.

I never have to tell them how many shirts, jackets, pants, etc. I have in the order. Instead someone just comes to my house, picks it up and a couple days later my dry cleaning is done.

3. SHYP

Okay, maybe this should have been #1 but heck it's still in my top five. Who reading this enjoys going to the post office, waiting in line, finding-out you've done something wrong (because you probably did!) just so you can get out of line, fix it, and go back through the process.

Enter the [Shyp](#) app. Just take a photo of what you want to ship and they come to your home (or office), pick it up, and then ship it using the most cost-effective method possible. How cool is that! Now if they would just go to the DMV for me they'd eliminate two of the most annoying places any of us can spend our time.

4. BOXED

Costco is great because you can buy in bulk and lock-in some pretty nice savings. It might surprise you to know that the average Costco club member also makes over \$100,000/year. Yes, the top 10% of earners in the country also happen to be the top savers (coincidence?). Here's the problem though, even though I am a proud Costco Member I find that our trips there take up hours of time and we often leave with way more things than we had on our list. Couple this with how crowded most Costco's are and we found it adding more chaos to our weekend than enjoyment.

Enter [Boxed](#), an app that brings Costco to your iPhone, well not Costco itself but the savings you're used to getting there. Just open the app and buy that 40-pack of yogurt or 24 rolls of toilet paper. Do it all from your phone with no membership fee and save both time and money. We haven't been to Costco in calendar year 2014, why would we?

5. TASKRABBIT

Last but certainly not least is [TaskRabbit](#). Thanks to this handy app you can do just about any errand you could think of. Have to pick-up something at the local hardware store? The sky really is the limit, think of any errand that you don't want to do yourself, post it on TaskRabbit, and you'll quickly find-out how much someone will charge to do it.

The nice thing about TaskRabbit is that you can hire people for individual tasks or monthly errands. If there's something you do every month that you're sick of doing you can easily get a TaskRabbit to do it and reclaim your time.

APPS

- QLess-reserve your place in line
- NoWait-Reserve your place in a restaurant line

Organizational Apps

- Todoist: <https://todoist.com>
- Wunderlist: <https://www.wunderlist.com/>
- Any.do: <https://www.any.do/>
- Google Keep (within Google account)
- Remember the Milk: <https://www.rememberthemilk.com/>