

# Good Business Run Wisely

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A newsletter to help you Maximize Value Creation in your business

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[www.Robert-McKinney.com](http://www.Robert-McKinney.com)

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## Quote of the Month

“An organization’s ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.”

— Jack Welch

## Outsourcing Lessons Learned at GBRW

The *Good Business Run Wisely* mailing list continues to grow, and with this growth has come some operational problems. Specifically, Microsoft Outlook, our e-mail program, has crashed while sending out the newsletter. This means sometimes multiple copies of the same e-mail have been sent, and sometimes it is unclear whether Outlook has sent to everyone on the list. To solve these problems and to better automate the addition of new subscribers, we enlisted the help of Constant Contact, an E-mail Service Provider (ESP). Nevertheless, this outsourcing did not pay.

An ESP is a company that sends e-mail promotions (like newsletters, coupons, sales notices, etc.). Companies often delegate this promotion function to experts so they don’t have to hire full-time resources. It allows companies to focus their resources on what they do best—making goods and providing services.

We encountered three main problems with the ESP. First, was formatting. The standard *Good Business Run Wisely* format could not be duplicated. This meant we needed to alter the standard formatting to fit our needs, but it still didn’t look right.

The second and more significant problem was sending the e-mail. Each company that sends e-mail has an internet address, or IP address. When you use an ESP to send an e-mail, your e-mail is automatically associated with the other companies that also use that particular ESP, and, therefore, IP address. If we send out GBRW through an ESP and you have previously marked another e-mail from that same ESP as spam, say an ad from Bill's Wild World of Used Cars, you may not receive GBRW. That’s because your e-mail client may mark all e-mail from the ESP's internet address as spam. Furthermore, corporate addresses systems may not allow mail from an ESP at all.

The third problem had to do with record keeping. An ESP will let the sender know if the e-mail made it to the desired inbox. This is a nice feature, but our ESP showed that GBRW only made it to half of the addresses. We asked a few people we know personally and discovered they had indeed received GBRW even though they weren’t on the ESP's "delivered" list. Because the ESP's data was only half correct, it was of no use to us.

## Contact Us

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The lesson here goes beyond that of an ESP. Outsourcing can help you run your business efficiently, but outsourcing presents its own learning curve. Here are a few things to keep in mind when you delegate functions, whether an e-mail service or other:

- **Do your research.** Look online for information about reputable providers of whatever function you need, ask other small businesses for recommendations, or pay attention to who provides those services for other companies. For example, Constant Contact was one of three we investigated by looking at the reliable e-mail promotions we received.
- **Take advantage of trials.** Many services providers, like ESPs, offer free trials with extensive service to help you. When using a trial, be sure you test it extensively and are completely honest with your service representative about what works and what doesn't. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and never feel obliged to stick with something that doesn't meet your needs.

And remember, delegating and outsourcing are great ways to **Maximize Value Creation**. But being flexible enough to change plans when things don't work out as planned—that's **Good Business Run Wisely**. Δ