



HOW A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT
CAN GROW YOUR
BUSINESS

...and how to use one

By Gina Buchanan

Buchanan Virtual Office

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What is a Virtual Assistant	3
Virtual Assistant vs. In-House Employee	4
Signs that you need help	6
How to delegate to a Virtual Assistant	9
Virtual assistant tasks that can be outsourced	13
How a Virtual Assistant can make you more Productive and Grow your Business	17

What is a Virtual Assistant?

A **Virtual Assistant** (VA) is generally self-employed and provides professional administrative, technical, or creative (social) assistance to clients remotely from a home office. Because virtual assistants are independent contractors rather than employees, clients are not responsible for any employee-related taxes, insurance or benefits. Clients also avoid the logistical problem of providing extra office space, equipment or supplies. Clients pay for 100% productive work, and can work with Virtual Assistants, individually, or in multi-VA firms to meet their exact needs. Virtual Assistants usually work for other small businesses but can support busy executives.

Virtual Assistants are becoming increasingly popular for startups, entrepreneurs and small business owners. A virtual assistant (VA) is an affordable way to hire an experienced assistant without having the expense of an employee. Virtual assistants are great resources for startups and small businesses because they don't just do administrative work. Today's VA's are project managers, personal assistants, social media managers, bookkeepers, researchers and more.

Virtual Assistant vs In-House Employee

One of the struggles many business owners face when trying to decide on hiring a Virtual Assistant vs and in-house assistant may be misunderstanding on how the virtual relations works. Many people feel a sense of security in having an assistant they can see every day and in some ways be able to monitor their activity. When weighing your options between hiring an in-house employee or a Virtual Assistant, it is important to have all the facts. There are many arguments to be made for and against each side.

The Numbers:

Below is a graphic comparing the costs between hiring an in-house assistant and hiring a Virtual Assistant.



Virtual Assistant Comparison Chart

	Rate	Yearly	Overhead	Total
Full Time Employees – Salary	\$62,320 / year <small>*as of March 2018 Salary.com</small>	\$62,320.00 Yearly = \$62,320	+ 46.5% (taxes, benefits, equipment, etc) + 28,978.80	\$91,298.80 <small>*Boston Business Journal</small>
Full Time Employees – Hourly	\$30 / hour x 40 hour week = \$1200 Weekly \$1200 <small>*as of March 2018 Salary.com</small>	\$1200 x 52 weeks in a year = \$62,400 Yearly Yearly = \$62,400	+ 46.5% (taxes, benefits, equipment, etc) + 29,016	\$91,416.00 <small>*Boston Business Journal</small>
*Virtual Assistants	\$40 / hour x 10 hour week = \$400 Weekly \$400	\$400 x 52 weeks in a year = \$20,800 Yearly Yearly = \$20,800	NONE	\$20,800.00

*Only pay for the hours you use and NO benefits or overhead!

Other Costs:

There are also many costs that are not easy to quantify or may not be quite as tangible. For example, the time you expend to train them, the cost to advertising for your search, the time it takes to interview and hire someone, etc.

When you are looking for downright efficiency in the hiring and learning process of an assistant, a VA is the right choice for the following reasons:

1. They will already have the skills and experience in areas you are looking for or be knowledgeable enough to learn quickly.
2. They will already have a home office in place which will save you and your company money from having to purchase any additional equipment.
3. You will not have to worry about conflicting work schedules. You can assign your tasks or projects with a deadline and your work will be ready. Sometimes having someone in a different time zone allows a VA to be either working before you are out of bed, or past the time you have left.
4. They only charge for the time they have spent working for you, not for the time spent with in-office distractions.
5. Virtual Assistants are proficient with the latest technology and can typically jump into a project with little distraction needed.
6. They are typically an independent contractor whether they are working for an agency or freelancing. They take pride in their work because it is their reputation on the line as well as yours.
7. There are no commuting issues with a VA. Your work will always be done regardless of snow storms or traffic delays.
8. There are no paid leave, sick time or vacation time. Virtual Assistants are only paid for the time they work.
9. They have a very low turnover rate. One of the main reasons people are leaving the 9-5 workday is due to obligations at home. A VA can still work efficiently from their home office and be available when necessary for other obligations.

Signs That You Need Help

1. Spending too much time on admin

Do you spend all day tidying up your inbox, answering phone calls, recording expenses, invoicing, arranging travel, and doing other repetitive tasks?

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you're the *only* person that can work on your business. Sure, it's your business, and you're the one that's going to make it succeed. But to give yourself the best chance, you need to prioritize how you spend your time.

By hiring a virtual assistant to take care of routine, administrative tasks, you have more time to work on the important things that will really *grow* your business.

2. Missing the high-value opportunities

If you find yourself spending too much time on administrative tasks, then you're likely to be missing out on some high-value opportunities.

And to really grow your business, this is where you really need to focus *your* efforts. To succeed, your business needs a leader. Not just an administrator.

Think about the high-value opportunities for your business and make the most of your unique talent as a leader. This might be calling new prospects, attending local networking events, or speaking at a conference.

Online there are literally hundreds of potential businesses you could invest in, tons of networking groups and Slack channels you could be contributing to, and about a million-potential high-worth connection. Don't miss out — you will regret it later!

If you are spending too much time on day-to-day tasks so you don't have time for these activities, it's time to hire a virtual assistant. By focusing on more valuable opportunities, you are leading your business to real success.

3. Not working on those lofty ideas

Does that big idea, that next awesome project, keep slipping down your to-do list? You've been thinking about it for six weeks now, but the distractions of the day-to-day routine tasks always get in the way of doing anything about it.

This is where a virtual assistant can help. By hiring some help to take care of the repetitive tasks, you can free up your time to not only work on the obvious high-value opportunities but on new projects too.

You could even hire a virtual assistant to specifically work on your new idea with you. This way, you know you can focus on the important bits from the start.

4. You feel stressed and notice health effects

Are you noticing an increase in stress? Every entrepreneur and business owner in the world takes a burden of worries to bed with them every evening.

These worries are understandable, but some of them can be prevented. There is no point in waking up in the middle of the night thinking about that invoice you haven't sent, or that social media update you still haven't posted – these are all tasks that a virtual assistant can help with.

Not only will you have help with these tasks at hand, but a virtual assistant will also go a long way to reducing your overall stress. It's a double investment: in your business, and your health.

5. You spend hours on your business but feel like you're accomplishing little

Entrepreneurs and business owners often work long hours, but that doesn't always mean they are successful. Working all hours of the day but still feeling like you haven't accomplished anything? You're not alone, but it's a sign to change.

If the hours you are spending on your business are creeping up and up, but without a positive correlation to growth, you need to review your current working pattern and make a change.

You also need to get some help. It's time to offload tasks which can be outsourced, such as the ones mentioned right at the beginning. A virtual assistant can help; you could book set hours per week, which is likely to take off double the hours of the burden from you.

6. Losing work/life balance

Have you ever had to decide between your business and your family? This is another sign that your current work/life balance isn't quite right.

Entrepreneurs and business owners often feel a sense of responsibility towards putting their enterprises first. This can lead to conflict between work and life, interfering with family commitments and personal health.

Again, this is a sign to stop and get some help. A virtual assistant can bring back some balance in your life and give you more control over your time.

7. You don't have the budget for a permanent employee

Even if you acknowledge that you need help, you might be hesitant to employ somebody because you simply don't have the budget. Taking on a permanent personal assistant is expensive, not only paying a serious salary but committing to taxes as well.

If you have this worry, take it a sign that you should consider a virtual assistant. You can get all the benefits of help without the financial burden of a permanent employee.

Work with a freelance virtual assistant and pay a set hourly, daily or project rate and they handle all their taxes.

8. You don't have an office for a physical assistant

If you're also worried about not having a permanent office for a physical personal assistant to work from, this is another sign you should consider a virtual assistant.

Permanent employees not only require a workspace, but training and personal development support also need to be part of their package.

Virtual assistants enjoy the benefits of working remotely, removing the overheads of a physical premises. You may still need to train them, but only to do their tasks.

9. Treat yourself

Why are you running your business? Because you choose to, right? Running businesses, being entrepreneurs. It's awesome. We're totally in control of our lives and our destiny. We get to make our passions our work, so it shouldn't even feel like work.

Don't forget to stop and be mindful of this. Remember that where you are now being where you once dreamed of being. So, treat yourself: hire a virtual assistant. It will increase your control and make you feel good about giving work to somebody also keen to sustain themselves entrepreneurially. You will soon notice the benefits in productivity and improvements not only in your business but in your personal growth and health.

Enjoy your life, take a breath, and enjoy your business too.

How To Delegate To A Virtual Assistant

Learning how to delegate work effectively can be challenging, but the rewards of enhanced productivity and cost savings can be significant. Delegating also allows your business to focus on core objectives instead of non-value added repetitive tasks. The biggest challenge however is understanding how and when to delegate tasks. First, you have to decide when a task has reached the point where it's worth delegating. Then you need to teach your virtual assistant how to perform the task satisfactorily.

Once you have learned how to successfully delegate tasks, your options to get the best out of your virtual assistant increase exponentially — giving you the added flexibility of utilizing skills that no one in your business possesses.

Getting started with a virtual assistant

Before we explain how and when to delegate, we'll quickly look at how to integrate new virtual assistants into your business. This checklist will help to ensure that your virtual assistant is ready to be a productive member of the team.

* **Have a task schedule ready to go**

Planning is an important part of learning how to successfully delegate. You should either have a process in place for scheduling tasks with your virtual assistant or they will be able to supply you with assorted options for doing this.

* **Have a plan for sharing work documents**

Set up a DropBox or Google Drive folder to share instructions and work documents with your virtual assistant. You might also like to use an online collaboration tool like Trello. If you already use a customer relationship manager like SugarCRM, you may wish to give them access to certain parts of it.

* **Evaluate their success regularly**

It is particularly important to assess the success of a new VA team regularly in the initial stages. Agree to have your virtual assistant send you a timesheet periodically. This will help you understand where their efforts are focused and how effective they are.

Discovering What to Delegate

An important part of learning how to successfully delegate is identifying which of your tasks can be handed off to other people.

First, spend a week to a month recording the types of tasks you are commonly performing. It might include things like replying to emails, helping customers with problems, sending tweets, updating your business website and so on.

Then sit down and review what you did. You might be surprised by how much time these repetitive non-value-added tasks are taking from your day! Now, highlight the tasks that can and must only be performed by you. Everything else on the list can be delegated.

You can delegate your way to success by outsourcing the repetitive and time-consuming tasks that your business performs. Go through the list and give each item 2 ranks out of 10 — one for the task's simplicity and one for its duration/repetitiveness. If the task is simple, rank it highly (10/10) and if it time consuming, rank it highly (10/10).

Now, look for the items that have a high number for both simplicity and duration. They are the tasks that outsource very easily and will save your business a significant amount of time each day!

Some of the tasks which can usually be delegated very easily include:

- **Time management tasks** – Scheduling meetings and appointments, managing your work diary, managing your personal to do list.
- **Administrative support** – Managing emails, answering the phone, entering data, secretarial services, dealing with suppliers.
- **Business finance support** – Expense management, book keeping, invoicing clients, filling in tax returns, credit control.
- **Marketing support** – Performing market research, creating content, email marketing, social media management, website management, CRM management and search engine optimisation.
- **Sales support** – Lead generation, telemarketing, lead qualification, business appointment setting, proposal generation, and sales pipeline management.
- **Travel and event planning** – Business travel planning, event planning and event research.

Additional tips for delegating effectively

You are almost ready to delegate your way to success! However, before you begin here are a few more useful tips.

Have very clear tasks and goals

It is important that you be crystal clear when describing the task to the virtual assistant. They must understand:

- What you want them to do and what the overall goal is
- When the task needs to be completed or how much time they should spend on the task each day
- What processes should they use to complete the task
- What results you expect in the short term and long term

By communicating the task and related goals very clearly, they will understand precisely what needs to be done — leading to better outcomes for all parties.

Have very clear work standards for the virtual assistant to follow

If you have certain standards or guidelines for how work should be presented, make sure they are clear to the virtual assistant. Use a shared document for them to record these standards and update them when they change.

Only use virtual assistants that you can trust

Only use a virtual assistant agency where all workers have been vetted. This allows you to gain access to a talented virtual assistant team that is also a safe pair of hands.

Be clear with deadlines

If your project has a very tight timeline, make sure your virtual assistant understands this early on. By using project management or online collaboration tools, your VA will constantly be aware of how much time is left on the project.

Don't constantly look over their shoulder

The whole point of delegating is to help you save time! Avoid micro-managing the work efforts of your virtual assistant. If your instructions and objectives are clear, they will be fine. Instead of micro-managing, concentrate on activities which only you can perform.

Use the creative skills of your virtual assistant

Don't forget that your virtual assistant is a highly experienced and skilled worker. They might have some fantastic ideas on how to improve processes and enhance the productivity of your business. Ask them for their feedback and you will be surprised at the useful information you receive!

Regularly give feedback to your virtual assistant

Give your virtual assistant constructive feedback on a frequent basis in the early days of the relationship. That helps them to adjust their workflow and make improvements. They won't need feedback as often once the working relationship has been established, but constructive feedback is always helpful.

Virtual assistant tasks that can be outsourced

Managing emails

Emails are probably one of the biggest time wasters for most entrepreneurs. Imagine working hard on a task, getting into the zone or into the flow, and suddenly, a new email appears.

You start answering that email and before you know it, you've totally lost the flow in the previous task. It takes you a minimum of 20 minutes to get back to the previous task. That's what interruptions do to focused workflow. Just imagine how many hours you have lost by getting interrupted by emails.

It's best to have someone handle all your emails. Getting interrupted by emails is almost never worth it. Your virtual assistant could handle most emails for you. And even if some of the emails were urgent, your assistant would let you know.

Telephone calls

Telephone calls interrupt you in the same way as emails. Most entrepreneurs have customer service departments, but that's just not enough. Even most 'personal' calls that you get are still not worth your attention in most cases.

Real emergencies are rare. That's why you need to get a virtual assistant to help you with personal calls. Without telephone interruptions, you will get to save valuable time. You'll realize that even most so called 'emergency' calls are simply distractions.

Schedule management

Every entrepreneur needs a secretary. A secretary answers calls and keeps an eye on your schedule. If there are places you need to go to and people that you need to call, it's best if someone reminds you to do it.

Sure, you can download some software that does it for you, but procrastination can keep you stuck. You'll complete your chores much faster if you let your virtual assistant remind you.

Data management

Whether you need to enter data in Word or Excel, you lose time on such petty tasks. Let's say that you are preparing a PowerPoint presentation. You know what you're going to talk about, but you haven't assembled the actual slides yet.

Fetching the data and doing research is the hard part. But it's quite likely that you'll also spend a couple of hours doing the actual PowerPoint slides themselves.

A virtual assistant could do the slides for you and save you a few hours. Heck, if the topic isn't too complicated, a virtual assistant could even handle the research part.

Bookkeeping

Bookkeeping is not an easy chore. It takes up a lot of time since it consists of recording bills, invoices, payments etc. If you hired a virtual assistant for this job, you would need to really trust them.

You're going to be giving over your confidential information, such as passwords, to a virtual assistant. **It's important to hire someone whom you can rely upon.**

Bookkeeping is probably going to be the hardest task to give up to someone else. But if you do find a trustworthy virtual assistant, expect to save an additional few hours on bookkeeping every week.

Online research

If you're doing research by yourself, why wouldn't you let someone else help? The only thing you need to do is to provide clear instructions for the research project and that's it.

If you're working on a project where you need to research assorted topics and subtopics, imagine how fast you would be able to do it if you already had most of the information.

Writing an article is so much easier with virtual assistants. They will gather most of the relevant information for you and you'll have a nice head-start. You can even tell them to write a summary for each topic or subtopic to help you get the subject fast.

Client and partner management

It's always a clever idea to send a gift card to your clients on holidays and anniversaries. That can be a real chore because it takes up time and it requires creative effort. But you cannot afford to ignore your partners or clients.

Your virtual assistant wouldn't even need a lot of information for this task. Sending out gift cards or holiday cards is easy.

You could even get your assistant to congratulate a partner or a client on a new job or deal, especially if your client or partner uses social media.

Business trip, anyone?

If you have ever traveled anywhere, you know what a hassle it is to find cheap airplane tickets. It's always cheaper to get tickets if you plan far ahead though.

Instead of looking at airline websites every day to see if ticket prices have dropped, get a virtual assistant to do it for you. You can also get them to find good hotels for you to stay at.

If you're very busy, you can get your virtual assistant to plan most of the trip for you. Specifically, they can find all the places worth seeing and all the possible car rental options.

P.S. Don't be surprised if you start asking your virtual assistant to book private trips for you as well.

Keeping an eye on the competition

When selling a certain product or service, you always must know how the competition's doing. That would include checking out their prices and seeing what they offer for those prices.

Doing it yourself would probably be too exhausting and stressful. But a virtual assistant could perform those chores for you every week. You could also tell your assistant to check out online reviews on you and your competition.

Being informed about your industry

What could be better for your reputation than staying in touch with the latest developments in your industry? Think about it, you probably admire companies which post the latest news and industry developments on Twitter or Facebook.

Guess how much time it would take for you to do it alone? Too much time. It's such an easy task for a virtual assistant. Any virtual assistant could get acquainted with your industry in a few hours max.

With the help of a virtual assistant, you could have at least one news item every few days. This would do wonders for your reputation.

Social media management

Do you have a profile on any of the leading social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook? If you do, you have probably gotten more than a few comments or questions on social media platforms.

Social media management is a perfect task for virtual assistants, especially if you are present on more than one social media website. Virtual assistants can handle comments and questions, and they can regularly share updates about your business.

Content creation for blogs

Blog posting is one of the biggest components of successful content marketing. It's also one of the most time-consuming chores. Just researching the given topic takes up a lot of time. After research, you must write and format the articles.

A virtual assistant can help you achieve a good blog posting frequency. They can do the parts that you hate (for example the research). If you like research and writing, but hate doing the formatting and SEO, they can do that for you.

By hiring a virtual assistant to write a blog post for you weekly, you can save at least 4 hours a week. Your virtual assistant could also help you monitor your website to make sure that your content is up to date.

Website maintenance

Websites require constant maintenance of some sort. And chances are, you aren't really an expert on web design or development. Having a virtual assistant for website maintenance puts you at ease since you're leaving a complicated task to a professional.

Virtual assistants as trainers

Why would you train your employees on how to use a certain software or service when you could leave this job to a virtual assistant? Virtual assistants would be able to train your new employees using Skype, for example.

How A Virtual Assistant Can Make You More Productive and Grow Your Business

One of the biggest secrets about highly productive people is that they do not try to do everything themselves. Extreme multi-tasking is one of the most common causes of burnout and a component in startups and small business failure.

Another reason startups and small businesses fail is because they run out of money. You cannot do everything yourself yet hiring employees and having the space and equipment for them can get very expensive.

DO THE MATH

Roughly figure out what you are making at an hourly rate. To simplify, let's say you make \$60 per hour. Now look at everything you do on a daily or weekly basis. Are there tasks that you are doing that you could pay someone less to do for you? Can you outsource your social media postings, email campaigns, newsletters, client on boarding, administrative paperwork, invoicing, scheduling or your online research and analytics? If so, are you willing to pay someone to do those tasks?

Let's say the work you can outsource takes you 10 hours each week to do. If you pay an assistant \$300 per week to handle those tasks, you have now freed up 10 hours weekly to spend doing what makes you money. Once you pay your assistant, you are now making an additional \$300 per week which is increasing your income by \$1200 per month.

Whether you are selling a product or service, more sales means more money. But sometimes even more importantly, it takes your workload down to a more manageable pace.

BE MORE PRODUCTIVE AND WATCH YOUR BUSINESS GROW

When you outsource the tasks that are time consuming, you are freeing up more time for you to work ON your business instead of IN your business. Virtual assistants often become motivational force that not only help brainstorm new and fresh ideas and creative ways to grow the business, but also bring organization to the work flow.