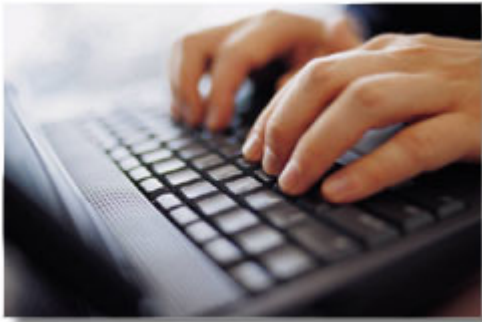


What is a Virtual Assistant?

"A Virtual Assistant (VA) is an independent entrepreneur providing administrative, creative and/or technical services. Utilizing advanced technological modes of communication and data delivery, a professional VA assists clients in his/her area of expertise from his/her own office on a contractual basis."



A **Virtual Assistant** is a temporary worker who works for businesses over the internet. The employer may be at a great distance from the assistant. All the work is performed remotely.

Hire a Virtual Assistant

Building a business can turn into an exhausting treadmill if you aren't careful. The more business you do, the more administrative tasks you have; the more time you spend on administrative tasks, the less time you have to build more business.

The only sensible solution to growth is to bring in more manpower. Yet, you may have a multitude of reasons that prevent you from hiring a personal assistant, even though it's obvious you need one. Wouldn't it be great if you had an assistant that was always ready to work for you, but only when you need him or her?



Meet the virtual assistant, a creative new labor force that provides practical solutions for small businesses and job growth potential for outsourcers.

A Virtual Assistant is an entrepreneur

The virtual assistant takes the role of the temp and elevates it to the status of entrepreneur. The virtual assistant is self-employed, bills you only the hours worked or by tasks completed, and is dependent on referrals and steady work flow from repeat clients, s/he can be the perfect solution for a busy business person.

A virtual assistant offers several advantages over a paid employee.

When you hire a virtual assistant you get all the benefits of outsourcing - no employee tax and benefits issues, coupled with the loyalty and steadiness of a company employee. If you have found that traditional staffing solutions don't work for you there may be many reasons. Temps are a transient solution, and they can be expensive. If you need someone only a few hours a day or week, a temp can prove more costly in terms of training than s/he is worth. Most are also looking for full time employment, so as soon as you find someone you like, s/he has left the temp service for greener pastures.

Paid employees come also come with a host of issues. You not only must provide tech equipment and furniture for them, you also have state and federal obligations, and employer compliance and unemployment liabilities. Then there are the benefits packages - sick leave, vacation time. It is estimated that the true cost of an employee is over double and sometimes triple the cost of their annual salary in terms of benefits and liabilities. Significant for some is also the loss of privacy and personal issues - you are sharing your small space with others. Do they make good roomies?



How practical is a virtual assistant?

As more businesses move their marketing and communications to the Internet, virtual assistants become more and more the obvious solution to staffing problems. For an hourly fee of \$15 to \$35, less than the cost of temps or employees, agents can take advantage of professional assistance and a variety of skills at the click of a mouse.

Virtual assistants are already computer trained, and can assist with your specific needs from traditional office support services to highly specialized areas including Web page design. Call upon your virtual assistant for basic word processing, phone answering, bill paying, appointment scheduling and calendar maintenance. You can train your virtual assistant to go beyond administrative support to client development and marketing support.

There is no need to share space or even for the agent and the virtual assistant to live in the same city. Work assignments are communicated through e-mail, phone, fax, "snail mail," or diskette. The agent can take advantage of Web-based tools such as instant messengers, like ICQ, and online calendars and planners are often used as a means of keeping in touch. Schedule changes, project reports, or customer-service alerts such as new listings for a client can be performed immediately. The virtual assistant can lend "size" to your company, which will impress potential clients.

"As cable Internet, wireless Internet, and other broadband solutions grow in the marketplace, the VA will be well-placed to leverage the additional communications tools and grow even closer to the small business or startup client."

~ Christine C. Durst, president and CEO of Staffcentrix

How to find a virtual assistant

There are several effective ways to find a virtual assistant. Simply enter "**virtual assistant**" in your favorite search engine. Also, the International Virtual Assistants Association website (www.ivaa.org) has a comprehensive directory of virtual assistants.

The screenshot shows the IVAA website's members directory. The page includes a navigation menu on the left with links like Home, About IVAA, and Education & Certification. The main content area is titled "IVAA MEMBERS DIRECTORY" and includes a note about the NO SPAM policy. Below the note is a search bar with filters for "View All", "CVA", "Ethics Check", and "Real Estate". A table lists members with columns for Name, Company, State, Country, and Designations.

Name	Company	State	Country	Designations
Abby, Allison Esq	AMS Consulting, Ltd.	Maryland	United States	IVAA CVA
Ackerman, Susan	VIP Secretarial Services	Colorado	United States	
Adams, Patricia L.		Texas	United States	
Adams, Shannon R.	IV Virtual Solution	Florida	United States	

Contact the virtual assistant who most closely matches your needs via email. Most virtual assistants are used to proving themselves with small projects of an hour or two. Any more than that and they should be paid for their time. You can set up payment arrangements by time or task.

Try a Virtual Assistant, and you might wonder how you ever got along without one!

Who Are You, Virtual Assistant?



You're a valuable, trustworthy office assistant or administrator. You're successful at your job because you complete tasks in a way that makes your boss look good and feel better. But you'd rather work for yourself and be in charge of your own time. Maybe you want to be at home when your kids arrive from school, or maybe you're just tired of commuting. Maybe you dream of living in the mountains or your rural hometown, but you still want to produce an income.

The good news is, the explosion of the Internet and the global economy has produced not only the virtual organization, but also a new business opportunity: the virtual assistant.

As a virtual assistant, you take on the nitty-gritty work for independent professionals and small businesses that don't need a full-time secretary or office manager. Your tasks may include secretarial work, meeting and travel planning, project managing, and logistics coordinating.

If you work as a virtual assistant for a start-up company, you may be busy finding sources of insurance or outfitting an office on a minimal budget. You may help an independent professional like an author or consultant manage his or her hectic life by arranging for pet sitting, calling a plumber, scheduling doctor's appointments, planning a family reunion or coordinating a move. You may do market research, write proposals, send out marketing materials and news releases, handle the billing and bookkeeping, or update your client's Web site.

Depending on the needs and personalities of both you and your client, you may work "on call" or set your own schedule. But in all cases, you're virtual, working from your home for clients who may be based in your community or on another continent, communicating via e-mail, phone, fax and online instant messaging.

Virtual assistants typically earn between \$20 and \$45 per hour, but those with more specialized expertise and upscale clients like attorneys may charge more than \$100 per hour. Some VAs have retainer arrangements with clients who commit to paying for 10 to 20 hours a month, sometimes at a discounted hourly rate.

Most importantly, you are an entrepreneur, and the sky is your limit!