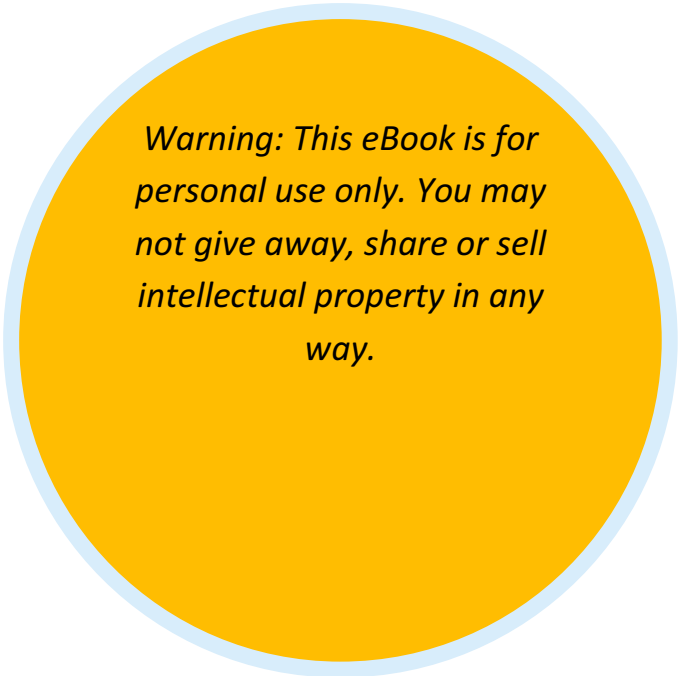


LET'S GO VIRTUAL



APEX'S GUIDE TO WORKING SUCCESSFULLY WITH A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

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What is A Virtual Assistant (VA)?

A virtual assistant, typically abbreviated to VA, is an entrepreneur that provides administrative, technical or creative assistance to clients from their own places of business (which is quite often their home). Virtual assistants provide ongoing and per project based support.

Virtual assistants come from a variety of backgrounds. Backgrounds like administrative assistant, executive assistant, bookkeeping, real estate, office management, paralegal, etc.

VAs often need little to no training and typically have all the equipment necessary to support the average small business owner.

It's always good to remember that no two virtual assistants are the same. Each of them comes with their own special set of skills.

Virtual Assistants are generally categorized by specialty, some excelling in more than one. A list of such specialties are:

- ✚ Paralegal
- ✚ Advertising
- ✚ Bookkeeping
- ✚ Real Estate
- ✚ Advertising
- ✚ Communications
- ✚ Data Entry
- ✚ Transcription
- ✚ Social Media
- ✚ Public Relations
- ✚ Grant Writing
- ✚ Event Planning
- ✚ Human Resources
- ✚ Networking
- ✚ Media
- ✚ Medical
- ✚ Finance
- ✚ Desktop Publishing
- ✚ Research
- ✚ Word Processing
- ✚ Translation
- ✚ Editing
- ✚ SEO
- ✚ Website Design
- ✚ Writing
- ✚ Database Creation
- ✚ Law
- ✚ Graphic Design
- ✚ Education
- ✚ Word Processing

A Virtual Assistant, A Full Time Employee or A Temp?

Virtual Assistant – Great choice for businesses with small budgets or companies trying to cut costs. Below are the advantages and disadvantages of using a virtual assistant.

| ADVANTAGES | DISADVANTAGES |
|--|--|
| You only pay for the time spent on your project | Your virtual assistant will most likely have other clients you are splitting time with |
| No commitments | Instant turnaround may not be available, most VAs are not able to start on your work as soon as you send it because they have multiple clients |
| Save money with reduced overhead costs | A VA is not a good option if you need someone at your office |
| There's no need for you to purchase additional equipment for your business. You don't have to have a physical office. | With VAs you generally have to schedule times to talk, they may not be in a position to answer the phone every time you call |
| Little to no training – most VA are already trained in the basics like administrative, email marketing, bookkeeping, customer follow up, etc | You may never meet your virtual assistant face to face, so you'll have to learn to trust someone you've never met. |

A Full Time Employee- The best option for businesses with a substantial budget. A full time employee is best suited for companies that have a full-time workload and need onsite assistance on a day to day basis. Below you will see some advantages and disadvantages for hiring a full time employee.

| ADVANTAGES | DISADVANTAGES |
|---|--|
| Onsite help | You will have to pay employee overhead costs--- salary, workmen's compensation, FICA and other employee benefits |
| You may have to do training, but not continuous because this will be a permanent employee | You will need to purchase equipment and office space |
| You have total control over project turnaround times | |
| | |

A Temp – A temp is generally the best option for companies that have seasonal work and need onsite support. Below are the advantages and disadvantages of using a temp.

| ADVANTAGES | DISADVANTAGES |
|--|---|
| Only hire on an as needed basis | There will be constant training, every new temp will have to be trained |
| Onsite help | You'll need to provide your temp with the equipment needed for them to do their job |
| Save money with reduced overhead costs | |

When Is It Time To Hire Virtual Support?

Almost every entrepreneur at some point will feel overwhelmed with their business. It's hard not to when you're faced with the tasks of wearing multiple hats and being a one person operation. But when is it time to hire a virtual assistant?

The first step is to look at all the tasks you do on a day to day basis. How many of those tasks are not in line with generating revenue? It's really easy to get trapped into thinking that you can do things better and faster than outsourcing. It's not always a question of who can do it better or faster. The question is whether or not you should be doing it.

The objective is to delegate the tasks that keep you away from projects that will bring income for your business. If you're stuck doing data entry, bookkeeping, or email marketing campaigns; who's in front of your prospects (since it's not you, I'll go out on a limb and say your competitor).

The next step is to look at your budget. How much can you afford to comfortably spend? Remember when configuring this number to calculate in the fact that you'll be able to generate more income with the time that has now been freed up by getting a virtual assistant.

Finding Good Virtual Support

A savvy business owner understands that they can't run their business alone. It has nothing to do with the skill set of the business owner; it's more of a point of time management and productivity.

- **Look at their website.** It's important to look at your virtual assistant's website, especially since you probably will never meet him/her in person. A website can tell you a lot about a person or company.
 - Does it have a professional, polished appearance?
 - Do they seem credible?
 - Is the content well-written?
 - Does it give you an abundance of information?
 - Is there concept clearly explained?
 - Is it easy to navigate through?
- **Testimonials.** Any professional virtual support company will have testimonials displayed on their website. If they don't have testimonials published on their website, ask if they have any referrals that are willing to verify the quality of their work.
- **Disposition:** You want to work with someone you "click" with because you want to view your Virtual Assistant as someone who is committed to making sure you are successful (they are in some sense, your partner). The Virtual Assistant will listen and anticipate your needs and make suggestions that they feel would benefit you. If your business is successful both parties will benefit.
- **Experience:** You are probably wondering, "Why didn't you list this first?" If a Virtual Assistant's demeanor is not professional—chances are you will not even make it to this step. Regardless, of how much experience someone may have, you will not want to work with them if your personalities don't mesh. Therefore, if the Virtual Assistant passes the disposition test, then you should proceed in finding out more about their experience and skill set.

Where to Look for a Virtual Assistant

- Networking events
 - ✚ Chamber of Commerce meetings
 - ✚ Local Networking events

- Referrals from other business owners

- Search engines
 - ✚ Google
 - ✚ Yahoo
 - ✚ Bing
 - ✚ Dog Pile
 - ✚ Alta Vista

- Virtual assistant forums
 - ✚ www.virtualassistantforums.com
 - ✚ www.vanetworking.co
 - ✚ www.findvirtual.com

- Business Directories
 - ✚ www.allbusiness.com
 - ✚ www.yellowpages.com
 - ✚ www.google.com/localbusinesscenter

- Classified Advertisements
 - ✚ www.backpage.com
 - ✚ www.craigslist.com
 - ✚ www.oodle.com
 - ✚ www.kijiji.com

- Social Networking Sites
 - ✚ www.facebook.com
 - ✚ www.twitter.com
 - ✚ www.linkedin.com

- Freelance Sites
 - ✚ www.guru.com
 - ✚ www.odesk.com
 - ✚ www.elance.com

Decide What Qualities You Want in a Virtual Assistant

Make a list of things you think are important qualities you want in a virtual assistant. Although, a VA is not an employee, you want them to have some of the same qualities you'd look for when hiring. I've listed a few that might be on your list. You can use the chart below to compile your own list.

| | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------|
| good organizational skills | professional | punctual |
| ability to Multi-task | fluent English | reliable |
| | | |
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Questions to Ask Your Potential Virtual Assistant





Below are some questions you can use when trying to find the right virtual company or assistant. It may not be necessary to ask all of the questions, just pick out the ones that are important to you

1. How long have you been in business?
2. Where are you located? What time zone?
3. What is your relevant background experience?
4. What type of education do you have?
5. What industries have you worked with?
6. What are your specialties or primary skills? What services do you offer?
7. How many clients do you currently support? (for the solopreneur) How many clients are assigned to each of your staff members? (for the virtual assistant company)
8. What type of projects have you undertaken over the past year?
9. What is your average turnaround time?
10. What are your hours of operation?
11. What are your fees and package options?
12. What are your contract terms?
13. How do I communicate with you regarding my projects?
14. How often will I get updates on my projects?
15. What items are not covered in your standard fees or rates?
16. Are you available for short-term and long-term projects?
17. What are your policies for 24 hour turnaround projects?
18. In relation to my needs, what type of software applications do you use?
19. What type of backup plan do you have in place for times when you are sick or on vacation?
20. Do you have any references that I can contact? (This question is best suited for an independent or solo virtual assistant. Most virtual assistant companies won't offer clients for you to contact because the relationship they build with their clients is generally not as personable as an independent virtual assistant.)
21. Ask about policies, including late penalties and interest.
22. What is your response time to emails and phone messages?
23. Is it ok for me to call you or would you prefer email?
24. Do you outsource any of your work? (If yes, is it within the US?)
25. Will my information be secure with you?
26. What happens if I want to cancel my contract?

Turning Your Material Over to Your VA

When you have decided the best option for the work; at the beginning you will have to share with your Virtual Assistant. Information needed to complete your projects like passwords, usernames and information about your business. Just make sure to get Non Disclosure Agreement with you Virtual Assistant. You will have to open your business up to another person that you have never met physically. The confidence will grow and develop with the time.






Typical Ways to Submit Your Material to Your VA:

-  Email
-  Fax
-  Mail
-  Google Docs (file sharing program)

Communicating with Your Virtual Assistant

The key to having a successful working relationship between you and your virtual assistant is good communication. Being that you're not working face to face, it's important that the communication is clear and that everyone is on the same page. Every virtual assistant has their own preference for communicating with their clients. Make sure there's a clear understanding as to how you and your virtual assistant will communicate. The whole idea behind virtual assistance is that everything is done virtual; don't get offended if your virtual assistant prefers email contact (most of them will). If a virtual assistant is on the phone all day with clients, it's impossible for them to get their work completed. Remember that you are not their only client. Some virtual assistants will bill you for any type of phone communication, so be careful about calling all day long; know their POLICIES.

Types of communication include:

-  Instant Messaging
-  Email
-  Web conferencing
-  Skype
-  Telephone

Training Your Virtual Assistant

The first mistake most small businesses make is thinking that your VA will be able to pick up where you left off without any training at all. In some cases, this may work, but if you like things done in a certain way, you'll need to train your VA. Here are some tips that you might find helpful.

- ✚ **Use current resources.** Direct your assistant to online tutorials or documents on the web. There are tons of training available online for various types of software. Try using search engines or YouTube for training materials.
- ✚ **Create your own tutorial.** If you can't find what you need online, make your own tutorials for your assistant. Creating a step-by-step list of how you like things done is a great way to train your VA and if they get stuck, they can just revert back to the list.
- ✚ **Video Training.** A screen cast is invaluable. A visual is always better than written words because they get to see it and hear it. Some good programs for making video tutorials are [Freez Screen Video Capture](#), *Wondershare Demo Creator*, [Ambrosia](#), *Camtasia*, *Adobe Captivate 4* and [Cam Studio](#).

Once you get your virtual assistant trained, SAVE the training material you used and make sure you keep it updated. If you end up changing assistants, you won't have to waste valuable time making tutorials or training charts again. Another good tip is to ask your VA to make tutorials or training documents as they go along for you.

What to Expect

Once you have found the Virtual Assistant or company that is right for you, go ahead and hire them so you can get back to doing what you need to do to grow your business. Don't expect things to be perfect right out of the gate. You'll need to go in with realistic expectations.

When you hire your Virtual Assistant make sure to address the following:

- ✚ **Reiterate the project:** This is one time when it is okay to sound like a broken record. Repeat the scope of the project (preferably in writing) so both parties are on the same page.
- ✚ **Billing:** In order to avoid any "surprises," you need to address how you will be billed by your Virtual Assistant (i.e. hourly or project). Have an understanding if they bill in minute increments or a minimum of an hour, etc.
- ✚ **Agreement:** Review the agreement that the Virtual Assistant sends you and return it in a timely manner so services can commence. Likewise, if you have a confidentiality agreement you want your Virtual Assistant to sign, send it to them as soon as possible.
- ✚ **Deadline:** Make sure you inform your Virtual Assistant of when the task(s) needs to be completed. Set realistic deadlines.
- ✚ **Status Updates:** Determine how frequent you will need to communicate with each other (i.e. how and when would you like to be updated on the status of your project).
- ✚ **Payment:** Pay your Virtual Assistant according to the agreed upon method outlined in the agreement (i.e. credit card, check, PayPal, direct deposit, etc.).

Other Tips for Working with a Virtual Assistant

Below are some things to be aware of when working with a virtual staff.

- ✚ It's important to remember that your virtual assistant will more than likely be a business owner too. With that being said there has to be a certain level of respect from all participating parties.
- ✚ Understand that your virtual assistant is not your employee, but a service provider. They have other clients and will not be able to jump every time you call, email or text.
- ✚ Set realistic goals. Ex: It's impossible for them to add a list of 1000 names and addresses into your database in 30 minutes.
- ✚ Be aware of the different times zones if your assistant isn't in your state or time zone. 9am to you may be 12pm for them.

Some Helpful Tools for Working with Your VA

- ✚ [Skype](#)- A great tool for communicating. Skype supports instant messaging, incoming and outgoing calls and file transfers.
- ✚ [LogMeIn](#)- Allows screen sharing and remote access. Great for bookkeeping if you already have software on your computer and want your VA to pick up where you left off.
- ✚ [Google Docs](#) – File sharing and document saving
- ✚ [You Send It](#) – Send files too large to email

One Hour Projects

Sometimes clients experience sticker shock when they see a virtual assistant's hourly rate. It may sound like a huge fee at first, but you have to consider the fact that a virtual assistant works the entire hour and you're not charged for breaks or lunch. Most small businesses typically only really need 10-60 hours on a monthly basis. You have to also factor in no cost for employee insurance, no payroll taxes and there's no equipment to purchase. Here's a short list of tasks that a typical virtual assistant can complete in one hour or less.

1. Warm Call 25-30 prospects.
2. Create a viable prospect/lead list of 25-30 contacts.
3. Create a PowerPoint presentation.
4. Research travel, hotel and meeting facilities.
5. Article and press release submissions.
6. Convert documents to PDF format.
7. Research a specific project.
8. Data entry at a minimum of 60 contacts in an excel spreadsheet.
9. Create a newsletter, blog, press release or article from content provided by client
10. Book flight, hotel, and/or car reservations.
11. Set up the process for an ezine, press release or newsletter.
12. Conduct a training seminar for a specific software program or service.
13. Type 4 pages of handwritten text.
14. Create an email marketing campaign from content provided by client.
15. Edit and proof a 5-page report.
16. Build a custom spreadsheet.
17. Input data into a spreadsheet and produce charts/graphs.
18. Balance a monthly bank statement.
19. Complete follow up research on a client, prospect, applicant, or competitor.
20. Complete a resume or cover letter.

About Apex Bizness Solutions

Apex Bizness Solutions is an online global support firm that offers a variety of services to small to medium size businesses. Our primary services include administrative support, advertising, bookkeeping, branding, marketing, website design/maintenance and printing services. We also offer a host of specialty services to cater to the unique needs of our clients. Our company services a wide range of individuals, entrepreneurs, corporations, partnerships, non-profit organizations and more. We are experts in the day-to-day operations necessary to take a business to the next level.

Our Team

Apex Bizness Solutions consists of a team of business specialists from various backgrounds and industries. Each member is thoroughly screened; Apex Bizness Solutions hires only the cream of the crop. Our staff receives ongoing training. It's our job to stay on top of the latest technology and procedures, so you don't have to. We stand by the services we offer 100%.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide our clients with adequate office assistance so they can focus on activities that generate revenue. Every client is a priority regardless of the size of the company. Apex takes pride in the services we provide for our clients. We expect nothing but professionalism and excellence from our team. Our goal is to not just meet, but to exceed client expectations. We are continuously striving to be one of the leading outsourcing companies in the U.S.

Why Hire Apex Bizness Solutions?



- You get a **TEAM** of specialists. Get peace of mind knowing that you have the support of a full staff and not that of an individual. If one person is ill or on vacation, your work is still done **ON TIME!**
- Apex has a **HIGHLY TRAINED** staff. All of our specialists are professionals that have training in the corporate, small business and professional world and have tailored their skills to meet with the needs of the modern day business professional.
- You get the individual attention that you need in order to develop and grow your business.
- We are a U.S. based Business Solutions Company.
- Whether you need one letter typed or need monthly billing to clients, we can perform these duties. Apex Bizness Solutions is set up to fit each individual client's needs. Fees are arranged for one-time tasks to retainer of 10-60 hours per week or month. Regardless of what your needs are, Apex Bizness Solutions can create a custom solution for your business.
- Save your company money. Apex Bizness Solutions can be an all in one solution for your business needs. Why hire an administrative assistant, a marketing specialist, a web designer, a bookkeeper, a human resource specialist and a customer service representative? Apex Bizness Solutions is **ALL OF THAT BUNDLED INTO ONE!**

Contact us today for a FREE consultation. Mention this pamphlet and receive 10% off of your first invoice.

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