



EVERYTHING YOU NEED
TO GET STARTED

WORKING WITH
VIRTUAL
ASSISTANTS AND
AGENCIES

FOR THE **FIRST TIME**

MIHIR SHAH

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Contact the author at:

info@offsite-team.com

www.offsite-team.com

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INTRODUCTION

The world changed. There is no doubt about it. When the pandemic hit worldwide, almost all businesses shut down. Many commercial spaces were vacated, businesses halted their operations because authorities did not allow the workforce to go to their respective offices. Almost everyone was panicking because of the COVID-19 virus, hospitals were full of patients, the medical staff was overworked. Because of this, the economy dropped. Not everyone has the buying power since some people, unfortunately, lost their jobs.

Imagine being a new business owner in 2020 when the disease hit the US and other countries; how would you have survived? You haven't got to your target profit margin yet, and your capital expenses are taking their toll on you and your business. What a headache!

The pandemic did not only bring about a negative impact on the community and businesses around the world. It also brought to light positive things. It proved how resilient we were when the world adjusted and thought of solutions that fit the current situation. When COVID-19 started to eat away at businesses, entrepreneurs and business owners had to think of a better way to keep their companies going. Since physical locations or offices are out of reach due to lockdown restrictions, some companies started to work at home or virtually.

But working at home or virtually poses its own challenges. How will you be able to monitor productivity at home? What about the equipment that the employee will use? What if there are technical issues? What happens to traditional marketing? How will you manage sales? What about logistics?

Nobody is an expert at everything. As a business owner, your pain points never end, and knowing when to ask for help is one of the many traits that a good leader has. You may have already considered hiring employees to help you run your business operations. Still, if you are reading this guide, probably, you thought of working with virtual assistants as well. But if you've already hired one, congratulations! You are one step ahead of your competitors who don't utilize a virtual assistant yet.

In this guide, we will further elaborate what a virtual assistant is, the differences between hiring a traditional in-house employee and a virtual assistant, the many talents of virtual assistants that you can tap on, what's in it for you, plus tips and best practices when working with virtual assistants.

Running a business is no joke. Especially if you do everything by yourself. If you are not yet ready to operate your business full-scale, then this guide is for you. Running a full-scale operational business includes renting an office or warehouse space, applying for business loans (if you don't have enough capital), hiring on-site employees, planning and strategizing, spending money, etc. I'm sure the last few things mentioned are inevitable factors of running a business. Spending money hurts anybody's pocket, but you can do something about it.

Operating costs are one of the most overlooked factors of a business. Just because you wanted your business to take off doesn't mean you have to spend a lot on it more than you can afford. Avoiding operations overhead costs is possible.

Did you know that according to statistics, hiring a virtual assistant compared to a traditional employee can save you almost 50% on operational costs? If that does not convince you into hiring a VA today, I do not know what will.

Nevertheless, the whole point of hiring a VA is to have a business partner (not financially). But someone who will care and spend time learning the ins and outs of your business. Also, they might help you discover stuff that you didn't know you needed! Sounds fair? Let's get started with your journey in working with virtual assistants.

A BUSINESS OWNER'S REALITY

The competition in the business world is tough. You're not sure whether you really need a VA or if the one you recently hired fits what you needed for your business. Doubts are natural; however, if you're looking for a sign that will tell you if you did the right thing of hiring a VA, then this is it!

Quick scenario: You want to be able to do everything and reach your goals as soon as possible, but you feel overwhelmed by the number of tasks that need to be accomplished. Also, you feel like 24 hours in a day is not enough time to do everything you need to. Sounds familiar?

The reality for every business owner is harsh.

Aside from not having enough time, there are also other harsh realities that start-up founders or business owners face:

- They need someone else with different expertise
- They are having a hard time handling their businesses alone because it's growing

- Administrative tasks and other time-consuming activities are taking a tremendous amount of time from more important tasks like closing a sale or meeting potential clients
- They are missing their business targets resulting in unnecessary losses
- A lot of great ideas and plans, but no proper execution
- The business is expanding and will require getting more work done

These are just some of the pain points you may have experienced or are experiencing right now. But worry no more! Virtual assistants are here to help.

REAL PEOPLE, REAL TESTIMONIES

Are virtual assistants really the right fit for you? Below are testimonials of real CEOs and Founders who hired and worked with virtual assistants in the past and are still doing so today. Read below!

24-HOURS OFFICE TEAM WORKING ON YOUR SIDE.

“We use VAs to help us compile data to venture into new areas of practice. By using the VA, we can avoid overworking our existing staff, and the work can generally be done overnight. Our marketing team compiles the request, and places it and by the next morning we have the data we need to do the meeting and make strategy decisions. We also use VAs to categorize our expenses for our bookkeeping team. The time shift really helps as the data is ready for us the next morning. It’s like having a 24-hour office team working on your side. We are currently exploring the use of a legal VA for legal research. If we are able to secure that there will be no stopping our litigation team!”

- **Jay Ruane, Ruane Attorneys At Law**

THREE MAIN BENEFITS

“We have 9 years of experience in online entrepreneurship in South America, now with 34 employees and more than 21,500,000 users internationally in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Colombia. I am thinking about sharing what we have learned working on the

Internet through all these years. What are the benefits to using a virtual assistant? For 3 years I have a virtual assistant and these have been the main three benefits:

1. I have 45 minutes per day to focus on long-term strategic decisions, rather than micro-day-to-day problems.
2. I can go home 30 minutes earlier every day to be with my family before the kids go to sleep.
3. I have an agenda that allows me to organize 2 weeks in advance.”

- **Cristian Rennella, elMejorTrato.com**

GET BACK TO DOING WHAT YOU LOVE

“As a business owner, the workload can often become so overwhelming that you no longer have the time to partake in the aspects you love about the company. By hiring a virtual assistant, you are able to delegate the busy work/ routine tasks and get back to doing what you love. Having the extra support of a VA will free up several valuable hours a day, allowing you to focus on the more important aspect of the business, like ensuring overall growth and tending to your staff. Virtual assistants are also generally very flexible in terms of hours worked and skill set, making them a great source of help 24/7.”

- **Sacha Ferrandi, [Source Capital Funding](http://SourceCapitalFunding.com)**

HELPS YOU GROW YOUR BUSINESS

“Hiring a VA helped me grow my business before I was able to commit to hiring any staff in house. I'm a commercial real estate broker and, in the beginning, revenue was spotty

at best. I couldn't commit to hiring an assistant that was going to be dependent on me being able to pay them each week. Besides, I didn't have quite enough work to keep somebody busy every day. Hiring a virtual assistant allowed me to get the help I needed with the tasks that were taking away from me being able to generate new business. I had my VA putting together reports for clients, bookkeeping, posting listings on different websites, research, and spending the time looking for the best deal from vendors for things I needed to purchase for the business. I even had them responding to certain e-mails while I was out of the office. Some weeks I would keep my assistant busy for 20 hours while other weeks, when money was tight, I would only have three- or four-hours' worth of work for them. Being able to delegate the tasks that took up a large chunk of my time without the stress of figuring out how to pay them during long stretches between commission checks was exactly what my business needed.”

- **Kevin Vandeboss, Vandeboss Commercial**

ALLOWS YOU TO FOCUS ON MORE SPECIALIZED TASKS

“For me, the main benefit of using a virtual assistant is that it takes the routine work off my plate. I use my VA to manage tasks such as posting and engaging on social media, handling emails and creating simple graphics for blog/social media. While this work is quite straightforward, it still needs to be done. Giving this work to a VA allows me to focus on more specialized tasks, such as creating content, recording videos, and building relationships with influencers. Since hiring a VA, I have witnessed a higher ROI on the time invested in my online business.”

- **Sumit Bansal, Trump Excel**

ALLOW YOU TO WORK EFFICIENTLY AT LESSER COSTS

“There are many benefits to using a VA. I run a travel business so having virtual assistants in different countries throughout the world allows us to have a global footprint. My company is embracing the fully remote team structure so having VAs allows us to work efficiently and effectively without having to spend money on physical office space. The VAs on our team play a crucial role on our community team. They are incredibly smart and have a great eye for content. Our VAs never complain about tasks being too large or too small. They never ever complain about tasks being too hard or too monotonous. Having virtual assistants has allowed us to start a company and stay lean to keep costs down. Our VAs are extremely educated and reliable. They infrequently ever miss a shift.”

- **Chase Dimond, The Discoverer**

ALLOWS YOU TO FOCUS ON THE CORE OPERATIONS OF THE BUSINESS

“Hiring a VA allowed me to focus on the core operations of my business. I start each week with a mental list of time-consuming tasks that I shouldn’t be doing on your own. These tasks, as appropriate, I assign to my VA. I have learned that not everything requires personal direct attention. My VA provides personal as well as administrative support, providing me with more time to focus on the most crucial aspects of running my business.”

- **Ian McClarty, Phoenix NAP Global IT Services**

DELEGATE PART-TIME JOBS.

I've realized that no matter how important a task is to the success of my business, if I don't want to do it, I'll put it off for a long time and then agonizingly do it, all while beating

myself up about how much I suck at doing it. Once I started outsourcing those tasks, it was amazing how much better I felt about myself, but more importantly, how much better the business ran. These tasks are not full-time jobs (yet), thus it is completely beneficial to using a virtual assistant. To me, the benefit of using a VA is that I can outsource a specific task, rather than a role. Then I'm not managing a person for that role but rather managing the completion of that task or series of tasks. This has made life much easier for me because the virtual assistants are doing the work much better than I can since I hate it and that leaves me the time and energy to focus on what I enjoy doing in my business.

- **Laura Renner, Freedom Makers**

PEACE OF MIND

“I've actually found my virtual assistant to be very helpful. I have a day job that is separate from my company that I run on the side, so I'm not really ever able to answer calls or complete tasks that pile up during the day. I used to have to do it all when I got home from work. Since then, it's been awesome not having to worry about letting calls go to voicemail during the day. It's really more about the peace of mind for me that if I get a call, they are going to actually speak to a real person that has a good understanding of my business and how to answer client questions and schedule meetings for me if a client shows that they are potential quality lead.”

- **Chris Jones, Davinci Virtual**

PROVIDE ESSENTIAL BUSINESS SUPPORT TO BUSINESS PEOPLE

“VAs provide needed business support to business people who need extra assistance but don't have the bandwidth or resources to add an employee. One advantage of a VA is that these are skilled professionals who can bring their expertise to bear on a problem. In many cases, particular marketing expertise or deeper knowledge of how to use software enables these professionals to finish projects more efficiently than the business person can do them. As a result, a VA is more than simply somebody to whom busy work is delegated; the VA can improve work product quality and expand the capabilities of the business. VA services are also scalable – business people can use them for only a few hours a week and then increase usage as their business grows.”

- **Eric Wall, Equivity**

It is a well-known fact that virtual assistants are a great help to business owners like you. Whether a start-up or an established business, you can take your business further by hiring dedicated people who will become a great asset to your company. The benefits you will reap when you hire virtual assistants don't end here.

WHAT IS A VA?

We established that many people loved working with virtual assistants. Before anything else, let's define what a virtual assistant means.

A **Virtual Assistant (VA)**, also known as a *remote executive assistant* or *virtual personal assistant*, is a skilled professional who provides administrative, technical, and creative support to clients remotely. They are independent contractors that have different expertise or niches. The upside of hiring VAs is that clients (YOU) are not responsible for employee-related taxes, insurance, or benefits. Also, virtual assistants are accountable for their equipment like computers, printers, their own internet connection, and the like. Depending on the client's needs, they can work part-time, full-time, or project-based.

A large pool of virtual assistants worldwide is waiting for you to explore and take what you need for your business.

VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS

VS.

TRADITIONAL EMPLOYEES

In every business decision, there is a risk. The same goes with hiring either a virtual assistant or a traditional employee. There are plenty of factors that need to be considered before choosing to hire a virtual teammate or an officemate. Although both virtual assistants and traditional employees are capable of carrying out different tasks such as administrative, social media, sales, customer support, etc., the undeniable differences kick in with regards to costs and the quality of work.

You spent a lot of time thinking if a virtual assistant is the right fit for your business, but in this chapter, we will analyze if, maybe, a traditional employee is what you actually need. We're not trying to plant seeds of doubt into your mind, but instead, we want you to succeed once you decide to hire a virtual assistant.

Since you are the MASTER of your business, you know exactly what your business needs. You are the one who knows if the type of business you have can operate at home or if you need to lease office space. Also, you know if your business strategy can be executed with or without an office space. Lastly, can your tasks be done virtually, or is it required to be completed physically?

These are some factors that you will think about before jumping into searching and hiring a virtual assistant. So, let's start with the advantages and disadvantages of hiring a virtual assistant.

ADVANTAGES OF HIRING A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

Virtual Assistants have many advantages, which is why we will be tackling this topic first. They are versatile when it comes to their services for almost half the price of how much a full-time in-house employee will cost. Below are seven benefits a Virtual Assistant can contribute to your business.

1. Most virtual assistants offer a huge variety of services compared to the usual role of an in-house employee. In-house employees are usually hired for carrying out administrative services and are bound with a specific job description. However, Virtual Assistants have already expanded their skill set and specialized in other fields like social media marketing, search engine optimization, content writing, photo and video editing, logistics, and technical support. Just by looking at their skill set, you can already see that you are getting more than your money's worth when you hire a Virtual Assistant.
2. Virtual Assistants do not follow fixed working schedules. Their work schedule will depend on your arrangement, and plus virtual assistants will adjust according to your needs. You are the one who'll determine their working hours. This means that they only get paid for the actual hours they used to work for you or the project you assigned them. You can also choose to pay them on a per-project basis.

3. Hiring a Virtual Assistant is a great choice when you are on a budget. You can hire a Virtual Assistant for part-time, short-term, or project-based contracts. As a solopreneur, you know the limitations of your business. Just note that your job offer should be reasonably proportionate to the work that needs to be done. Offering to pay lower than the average will only get you entry-level Virtual Assistants. Not that hiring newbies are bad, but you can't expect them to do the job the way experienced virtual assistants can.

4. Freelancing is a market full of competition. Virtual Assistants raise their value by investing in leveling up their skills. They pay for training and seminars to get certified as specialists in a specific field. They improve their credentials to stand out among the other freelancers out there. They maintain their competitiveness by consistently learning new skills. You can just choose a virtual assistant with the best credentials with the most experience.

5. Virtual Assistants can be hired for a specific purpose only as there are part-time freelancers out there looking to work for just a few hours a day. You can hire a Virtual Assistant on an as-need basis. This means that you can hire a Virtual Assistant to work for you only when you need them. There may be times during peak business hours or seasons when you need extra manpower to be able to improve the speed of deliverables. Or you might have some work or project that needs to be done over the weekend. You may hire Virtual Assistants to help you finish these tasks without paying them for the whole month. You just pay them for completing the specific project or task.

6. A Virtual Assistant can come from anywhere in the world as the job does not require one to report to the office every day. Therefore, this opens up a wider talent pool you can choose from. This is the reason for the flexibility of the work schedules of Virtual Assistants. They can adjust their working hours according to the needs of their clients. Since there are many choices, your chances of finding the "one" who will meet the

needs of your business are increased. You do not have to worry that the best Virtual Assistants are already hired by other companies or that you will not be able to afford them. You just have to keep looking, and you'll be able to find the right fit for your business.

7. Financial losses are not a thing when it comes to hiring a Virtual Assistant. The only thing that you have to worry about is lost productivity. There are times that you will make mistakes in choosing the one you hire. You might realize later on that they are not the right fit for what you need. You can terminate the contract and pay them for hours they used to work for you. After that, there is nothing else to worry about anymore. Since you only lost a minimal amount of money and a small amount of time, your losses are always kept minimal. This is so because the cost of hiring a Virtual Assistant is also minimal as compared to hiring an in-house employee.

8. 24/7 online. Hiring a virtual assistant is like having your business run 24/7. Since VAs can come from different time zones, they can work even outside your business hours. Traditional in-house employees can be easily burdened by the number of tasks they have to finish at the end of their 9 to 5. VAs are also a great asset for one-time projects or projects that can be done overnight if needed right away. Hiring a virtual assistant can significantly ease the burden, all while saving you the costs of hiring a seasonal in-house employee.

The advantage of hiring a virtual assistant is not limited to this list. There are plenty more benefits that you can experience once you decide to hire one.

DISADVANTAGES OF HIRING A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

It is a fact that hiring a virtual assistant has its advantages. However, hiring them also come with some disadvantages. Although some of these disadvantages are somewhat negligible, they will still depend on the needs of your business. This list will help you determine whether hiring a Virtual Assistant is the right decision for your business.

Below are the four disadvantages.

1. Time tracking. Although you can ask your virtual assistant to track hours, there is just no way to know if they were the ones who did the job or if they were able to accomplish it. There are so many applications or websites that can track hours. However, some of these trackers can be manipulated. Virtual Assistants can put in more hours than the actual hours they used to finish the task.

Now, you may resort to asking for daily progress reports of the actual work done. This may work most of the time. They may send accurate reports since it is hard to manipulate an actual report about the progress of a task, then you will check for results. However, as a solopreneur, you may not have the time to go through these reports every day to confirm if the tasks were really accomplished based on the report.

Since there is no way to accurately track working hours and confirm if the work was actually done, business owners just have to rely on the honesty of their Virtual Assistants. This is a disadvantage because you do not really know if you are getting the value of your money. That is why it is important to screen your prospective Virtual Assistants first before you hire them. Trust your gut.

2. Regular communication. Every business owner knows the importance of regular communication when running a business with a team. If your team consists of Virtual Assistants and other freelancers, this may pose a threat to the productivity and efficiency of your business. Reaching your Virtual Assistants when an emergency comes up will sometimes be a problem, especially when they do not have fixed working hours. Your Virtual Assistants will not be available 24/7. Part-time Virtual Assistants may only be available for only three to four hours. You will then have to wait for their next shift before addressing the emergency you encountered the previous day. This will result in a delayed response which means productivity can possibly decrease.

3. Stable internet connection and equipment. Since Virtual Assistants work remotely, their performance and productivity will depend primarily on their internet connection. But several factors can be considered, like the specifications of their computers or laptops, the accessories they use, and their workstation environment. The disadvantage arises when technical difficulties occur. A good example of technical difficulty is an internet connection problem. Obviously, when Virtual Assistants lose their internet connection, they will not be able to accomplish anything. Although some tasks may be done offline, they will not be able to submit or upload their work. No work uploaded is equal to no work done at all. This means that the productivity of Virtual Assistants highly depends on their internet connection.

Another example of technical difficulty is when a virtual assistant's accessory breaks or malfunctions. A Virtual Assistant whose work assignment is focused on Customer Service will spend most of their working hours on a call with one of your customers. When the headset they use breaks or malfunctions, they will not be able to make or answer calls from your customers. This will cause a delay in addressing your customers' complaints and requests, which will also lessen the productivity of your business.

The thing that is common between the two examples is that they are both out of the control of an employer. This is where the disadvantage comes from. There is nothing that you can do to fix their technical problems. Once your Virtual Assistants encounter serious technical difficulties, they can't accomplish any assigned work. Unlike in a physical office, you may call a technician or any customer service for that matter to get it fixed immediately. This way, you can still salvage the remaining time after the technical problem gets fixed to accomplish any work that may still be done.

Having no control over the technical difficulties that your Virtual Assistants may encounter will prove to be frustrating at times. There is just no way to reach them, especially when they have poor to no internet connection at all. This is one of the disadvantages that you have to wait out.

4. Natural Disasters. These are inevitable events caused by Mother Nature. Most countries in the Southeast Asia where most VAs are located are part of what is called the "Ring of Fire." This means that parts of these countries, like the Philippines, are prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In addition, since a large body of water surrounds the country, typhoons are common. Climate change is also an additional factor that makes Mother Nature unpredictable nowadays.

The loss of internet access and electricity becomes a disadvantage for business owners if a VA cannot work for a day or week. Operations can halt, and tasks that are due can be delayed. This is out of the control of both the employer and the virtual assistant. That is why it is important to have a backup plan if any natural disasters happen that can affect your VA. To mitigate this disadvantage from majorly affecting your business, one strategy you can implement is hiring VAs from different geographic regions.

Unlike employees who go to the office every day, if they become affected by any natural disaster, there is a strong chance that everyone in your area is affected. Thus, it is

easier to address the situation since the community and government can help and provide relief if the situation worsens.

ADVANTAGES OF HIRING A TRADITIONAL IN-HOUSE EMPLOYEE

Hiring traditional in-house employees is the conventional way of creating a team that will help run your business. It has long been the way things work. Employees come to the office every day during office hours and get paid. Below are the advantages of the traditional setup wherein everyone goes to the office to do their work. The four advantages listed below are some that you may already know. However, we'll still go over them for you to measure if traditional employees are a good fit for your business.

1. The first advantage of hiring an in-house employee is that you will be able to meet them in person. Meeting your prospective employees in person for their interviews will give you a lot of advantages. One of which is that you already get to assess their capabilities and personality during the interview. You will be able to have a glimpse of how their overall character will be when they start working for your business. It is easier to identify when the person you are talking to is lying when you talk to them in person because of gestures. When asking questions during the interview, there is a way to tell if the information that they have provided in their resume is accurate or not.

Meeting your prospective employees is an advantage in itself that leads to more advantages. However, these advantages are only present during the hiring stage. This is so because the things you can do in face-to-face interviews are not that big of a deal when the in-house employees you have hired start working in their office spaces. Meeting them in person only means that you get to make sure that you are hiring the right person

even before seeing their performance. You can already gauge their skill set during the interview.

2. Most employers would prefer to work and interact with their employees in person for several reasons. They view personal interaction as an advantage when it comes to productivity and establishing good relationships in the workplace. This is because physically interacting with your colleagues will make communication a lot easier and personal. We all know the difference between talking to a person face-to-face instead of online meetings or chat messages. A healthy relationship between the employer and employees is key for running a business smoothly. This means faster completion of assigned work or projects, which will eventually lead to your business's success.

3. As discussed earlier, one of the disadvantages of hiring a Virtual Assistant is that it is difficult to track their progress accurately. That is the complete opposite when it comes to a traditional employee. Since in-house employees go into the office every day, an employer will be able to supervise their work and performance on a daily basis. They get to see what they are working on in real-time. They can identify the areas or types of work that a particular employee has a hard time doing. Thus, real-time feedback can also be given.

This is a huge advantage for an employer because they will quickly identify who performs well and who does not. They can accurately track the work progress of all their employees whenever they want to. Since all the files or documents they will be working on are already in the office. Questions can be asked directly to the in-house employee, and they will be getting an immediate response. Communication is more straightforward, which means finding solutions to the problems will also be faster.

4. As seen from the previous point, effective communication is another advantage of hiring an in-house employee. A more specific example would be having a personal secretary or assistant. As an employer, you will be able to immediately talk to your secretary when you need to ask for your schedule, among other things. Miscommunication can be avoided, and mistakes will not often occur since questions can be asked right away if some things are not clear. Also, when an emergency arises, clearing up schedules or making room for one meeting can be made immediately without delay. As mentioned earlier, Virtual Assistants can be hard to reach and are not very useful when it comes to emergency situations.

DISADVANTAGES OF HIRING A TRADITIONAL IN-HOUSE EMPLOYEE

Hiring a full-time in-house employee has a lot of disadvantages as compared to hiring a Virtual Assistant. However, keep an open mind as you go through this section. These are all facts about how costly it is to hire an in-house employee. There are a lot of expenses that are not necessary when it comes to hiring in-house employees that can be avoided. All these disadvantages will be discussed in detail for you to better understand why other CEOs or Founders prefer hiring virtual assistants.

1. Hiring a full-time in-house employee is an expensive investment. A full-time in-house employee will need an office space in which they can operate. An office space will need cubicles, desks, chairs, and other office equipment. Every traditional employee will need their own computers for their work assignments. The office will need office supplies like paper, pens, staplers, and all other typical office supply that is needed. In order to provide comfort and boost productivity, some offices will require refrigerators, coffee makers, and water dispensers. All of these things do not come for free and are deemed as essentials in a workplace.

2. As opposed to Virtual Assistants who are responsible for their own training to stay competitive in their profession, in-house employees are the responsibility of the business. As a solopreneur, you would want your employees to possess skill sets that are up to date. If you hire an in-house employee, you are responsible for the development of their skills. In order to boost their productivity and improve their performance, you have to require them to attend seminars and other training that is appropriate for them and their role in your business. The training and seminars would help them acquire new knowledge and skills that they may use to contribute to the success of your business.

This is another risky investment since the results of attending seminars and training are different for everyone. The training that in-house employees attend may not prove to be useful at times. There will also be times that in-house employees does not take these training sessions seriously. They treat their out-of-town training as vacation, which causes them to lose focus and forget the real reason why they were given time off from work.

Their time away from work is the main reason why paying for training and seminars of in-house employees is a disadvantage for some employers. Since the time that should be spent for work is used for attending seminars and training, no actual work is getting accomplished. However, even if there is no work getting done, an in-house employee is still entitled to the whole of their salary. In addition to that, the employer will pay for all the expenses of the in-house employee during the said training like food and lodging. Instead of earning money, employers lose money by investing in these seminars and trainings.

Investing in your people is one thing but investing on stuff like seminar or trainings is another thing that some employees don't take seriously is a waste of time and money.

3. In-house employees mostly do routine work in the office every single day. Therefore, an in-house assistant would normally expect that they would be doing the same thing again and again every time they come to work. If things are going normal, noting aside the day-to-day business operations are the only tasks that are to be done. This is a disadvantage for in-house employees because they are already so occupied with their day-to-day tasks during an 8-hour work shift. Traditional employees follow a work schedule in order to meet deadlines. Therefore, added load to their plate might result in the delay of the accomplishment of their day-to-day task.

Delay lowers productivity and lowered productivity would result to poor performance or service that is rendered by the company or business. Unlike with a virtual assistant, they are mostly willing to take on new tasks outside of they're regular tasks since they get paid by the hour or per project.

4. Full-time in-house employees are required to report to the office every workday regardless if they have work to do or not. There will be times that most of the work has already been accomplished and employees only report to the office because they need to even if there is nothing to do. Since they always report to the office, they need to get paid for each day that they are at the office.

They have a fixed work schedule that is eight (8) hours a day, which depends on what the employees and their employers have agreed upon. Nevertheless, they are going to get paid for their work for forty (40) hours a week on a regular basis, regardless of their workload. Not only do they have a fixed work schedule, but they also have a fixed hourly rate or salary. Therefore, they are entitled to their salary for just being physically present in the office.

As a solopreneur, you would want to save as much money as possible and funnel it into other aspects of your business that are worth the investment. Paying for an in-house employee's salary without any work getting accomplished is something that a solopreneur would want to avoid. Therefore, this is a disadvantage because a solopreneur would not

be able to maximize the money that he/she has spent in paying the salary of the business's employees. This would reduce the efficiency of the business because money is getting wasted on idle employees, which is not a good investment for a business.

An example of a scenario that demonstrates paying a full-time in-house employee as a disadvantage is somehow connected to what was discussed in the preceding paragraph. Idle time is equal to time wasted and wasted time would mean that other resources are also being wasted. If your business is at a stage wherein the amount of work can be handled just by spending a few hours in the office, then hiring an in-house employee would be a waste of resources. Instead of spending money to pay for a few hours of work, you would be required to pay for the whole 8 hours that an in-house employee has spent inside the office. This leads to less productivity.

On the other hand, when you need something to be done that would require an employee to work beyond office hours, you would need to pay them for their overtime which would be more than their normal hourly rate. This can be a turn off for some business owner who are working with a tight budget.

5. If an in-house employee underperforms, you will need to terminate the contract of the employee at some point. When terminating the services of an in-house employee, productivity will be lessened from the time of the termination of the employee until the replacement is hired. While you are still looking for another employee, no one will do the work assigned to the terminated employee. Although the workload can be distributed to the other in-house employees, they would prioritize finishing the work that was already assigned to them before giving attention to their additional assignment.

Since a replacement is needed for the vacant position, you would need to pay for advertisements that would state your intention to hire another in-house employee that would be able to fill the position. You would either post advertisements in the newspapers or online platforms. You would also spend money on recruiter fees in order for you to quickly find a replacement. Hence, all of these are additional expenses that could have been avoided by hiring a Virtual Assistant.

6. Last but the most important one is the legal consequences of hiring a traditional in-house employee. It involves unemployment payments, potential lawsuits from employees if the company misses a payment due to liquidity problems, unionization of employees that can tarnish a company's reputation, and many more. Indeed, you are not oblivious to the fact that these are all possible when you hire traditional employees for your business. Apart from benefits you are already required to provide to the employees, they can also demand pay increases yearly compared to a VA who you can hire for project-based work. You need not worry about an increase every time or pay for benefits.

The disadvantages mentioned above are the common situations that business owners or solopreneurs encounter when they start operating a business with traditional employees. Know that there is also an option to hire both a virtual assistant and in-house employee if the business needs to. You can still save on operational costs by hiring a mix of VAs and traditional employees in your business.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WORKING WITH A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT AGENCY

Let us not forget that apart from hiring virtual assistants directly, you can employ VAs from agencies like Offsite-Team. There are also advantages and disadvantages to using

an agency to find your virtual assistant. Let us discuss these advantages and disadvantages below:

First off, hiring. If you have experienced hiring your employees before, it is almost the same as the process of hiring a virtual assistant. The only difference is that it needs more work since you will be doing it alone. Online hiring platforms are available. However, they can cost. Some hiring websites require you to pay a membership fee or subscribe to yearly plans just so you can post that you are hiring. Plus, most VAs that apply from these platforms are already working for several clients, dividing their focus among others.

So, using a virtual assistant staffing agency can lessen the load and stress of finding and hiring a VA. Agencies have a rigorous vetting process that screens and tests candidates' abilities to ensure that they are the right fit for what business owners need.

The second is trustworthiness. How much do you trust a person you just met online? Since VA agencies have a thorough screening process, you can trust that the virtual assistants the agency will present to you have the right skills and personality that you are looking for. Think of agencies as matchmakers. They test the VA candidates based on their technical skills, personality, and emotional intelligence. They also conduct background checks to separate bad apples from good ones. Therefore, becoming your filter to guarantee that you will interview only the best virtual assistants.

Third, using an agency can save you time and money. It was mentioned earlier that agencies act as your filter in finding the right fit for your business. The virtual assistants have already gone through a series of tests and have been pre-selected by the agency for you. These processes save you time from going through the whole hiring process and

selection of candidates. Moreover, there are no upfront fees or membership fees that need to be paid when agencies start their hiring process for you.

Next is when you hire freelancers directly, you are solely responsible for monitoring, training, providing feedback, and managing their payroll. With agencies like Offsite-Team, they manage the virtual assistant's performance, manage payroll, help them with training, and coach them to improve their productivity, making the onboarding process seamless. The VAs can quickly pick up the pace of the job -- performing better than hiring a freelancer directly.

Another plus factor is when there is a natural disaster, agencies can provide backup VAs, which can save the business when one of their staff is affected by a typhoon or other natural disasters. Backups are also applicable when the VA is sick, unavailable, on vacation, or experiences unscheduled outages.

Lastly, virtual staffing agencies are customer-centered. Thus, they have the human resources to build an entire virtual team that minimizes the room for errors and increases the possibilities of scaling the client's business.

COSTS OF HIRING A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT COMPARED TO THE COST OF HIRING A TRADITIONAL IN-HOUSE EMPLOYEE

This is the most exciting part. Expenses. Who doesn't want to know how much they will shell out?

Anyone would want to know how much the difference is between a virtual assistant and a traditional in-house employee. Below are rates and other expenses you would incur when you hire either of the two. This is an estimate from the website myva360.com.

The following page will give you an example of the rates and how much it would cost you to hire a full-time in-house employee.

TRADITIONAL IN-HOUSE EMPLOYEE

Rate: \$15.00 per hour

Hours of work per year: 2,080 hours

COST

Annual Salary: \$31,200

Payroll Taxes at 12%: \$3,744

Benefits at 30%: \$9,360

Paid Leave at 13%: \$4,056

Admin Costs at 7%: \$2,184

Total Cost Annually: \$50,544

VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

Rate: \$19.00 per hour

Hours of work per year: 720 hours

COST

Annual Salary: \$13,680

Payroll Taxes at 12%: \$0

Benefits at 30%: \$0

Paid Leave at 13%: \$0

Admin Costs at 7%: \$0

Total Cost Annually: \$13,680

From the data given from the previous page, it is clear that hiring a full-time in-house employee is far more expensive than hiring a Virtual Assistant. Given that the hourly rate of the Virtual Assistant is 4.00 dollars more than that of the in-house employee, an employer would still be able to save \$36,864 in a year when hiring a Virtual Assistant. That is a huge amount of money that can be used to find new ways to innovate and improve the business. With all the advantages and disadvantages discussed in this section, the list of benefits of hiring Virtual Assistants obviously outweighs the advantages of hiring a full-time in-house employee.

In addition to comparing costs that would be incurred, the termination of the contract of either Virtual Assistant or traditional in-house employee is also worth looking into. When you terminate a full-time in-house employee, there is this thing which we call the “cost of turnover.” This would include all the fees you would pay advertising companies or websites and recruiting agencies to help you find a replacement for your employee.

This cost also includes the interview and post-interview expenses. Such as pre-employment tests, background checks or checking references, and other similar things are done to gauge your prospective employees' skills. There are additions included in the turnover cost after the in-house employee gets hired. These are the signing bonuses. Most employers use signing bonuses to attract the best candidates to consider taking the job rather than work somewhere else. Some other expenses are the onboarding and training costs already discussed earlier. Training costs for full-time in-house employees are always shouldered by the employer.

After considering all of these, the cost of turnover for replacing a full-time in-house employee can be as high as thirty-three percent (33%) of the employee's annual salary. For example, the annual salary of your full-time in-house employee is a total of \$50,000.00, the turnover cost can go up as high as \$16,500.00.

The huge difference in the cost between hiring a Virtual Assistant and a full-time in-house employee is evident during the hiring stage, when either of the two are hired, and even when it comes to their termination. Both a Virtual Assistant and an in-house employee indeed have their own advantages. However, Virtual Assistants always have the upper hand when it comes to costs.

When it comes to the termination of a Virtual Assistant, the turnover cost is lower than that which comes from the termination of a full-time in-house employee. Since Virtual Assistants are hired through online platforms and are not entitled to any other benefits -- the turnover cost would not even reach as much as fifteen percent (15%) of their annual salary.

The only expenses included in the turnover cost would be the job advertisements and contracting through an online platform. Aside from those, there are no more expenses to worry about. Once the virtual assistant contract ends or is terminated, the only thing you have to pay for is their salary for hours worked before contract termination and nothing else. That is one of the reasons why hiring a Virtual Assistant is a lot cheaper than hiring a full-time in-house employee.

COSTS OF WORKING WITH A VA AGENCY

Earlier, we compared the data between hiring a traditional employee versus a virtual assistant. The costs mentioned were based on hiring a VA directly without going through an agency. You know the advantages of using a VA agency to find the right fit for your business, but you are wondering, how much will it cost? Surely there are no upfront or membership fees in using a virtual assistant agency like Offsite-Team but will

it be more expensive or cheaper than hiring directly? We will answer these questions as you read along.

It was discussed that directly hiring a VA can cost around \$19 per hour. Honestly, it is costly to use a VA agency to hire a freelancer. Most VA agencies charge approximately \$25 - \$30 per hour, depending on the specialty of the virtual assistant. Let's take a quick look at the computation below:

VIRTUAL ASSISTANT STAFFING AGENCY

Rate: \$25.00 per hour

Hours of work per year: 720 hours

Cost

Annual Salary: \$13,680

Payroll Taxes at 12%: \$0

Benefits at 30%: \$0

Paid Leave at 13%: \$0

Admin Costs at 7%: \$0

Total Cost Annually: \$18,000

Agencies will cost you \$4,320 more than hiring a virtual assistant directly on your own. Not to mention the fees you will pay if you choose to use an online hiring platform to find your VA. You may be thinking, that's a lot! It is a big amount. There is no denying that.

But think about it. Is \$4,000 worth if you are going to find the right VA for your business? The time you will save in the hiring and selection process can be allotted to other activities that you can do for your business to earn you more money. The hassle-free service that you will get from the agencies is that you do not have to scramble for a new VA if your current one becomes sick or goes on a vacation and you have important tasks that need to be done. VA agencies can provide temporary replacements with the same caliber as your VA and still get the work done just how you like it.

Besides, it is still \$32,544 cheaper than hiring a traditional in-house employee for your business. Plus, the virtual assistant's hours can still lessen depending on the business need.

Now, the question still remains. Which is the right option for you as a business owner? It will all boil down to the current needs of your business.

What are the services that your business needs? Do you think a Virtual Assistant can effectively provide the service that your business needs or is a full-time in-house employee more appropriate to fulfill that role?

There is already a long list of the advantages and disadvantages of hiring either a Virtual Assistant or a full-time in-house employee. Keep those in mind and weigh the

advantages and disadvantages concerning your business. In making your decision, consider the goals and budget of your business. If you are hiring a full-time in-house employee just for the convenience of having your employees with you in the office, then reconsider.

After knowing the pros and cons of the two options, the final decision still lies with you. Which of the two do you think will best benefit your business?

THE MANY THINGS THAT A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT CAN DO FOR YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS

It is established that a virtual assistant can do many things the same as regular onsite employees can. There are two kinds of virtual assistants. While some Virtual Assistants may have refined knowledge in their own fields or niches, for example Social Media Marketing, others can take up all sorts of tasks on a general level. That's the difference between a General and a Specific VA.

Virtual Assistants have a wide array of expertise that spans different industries. Below are some of the most common industries that VAs can work on.

MARKETING

Almost everything is now living in the digital space, and because of Meta (formerly Facebook), soon we might be, too. Because of technology, marketing has become one of the most sought-after industries that include social media. Through digital marketing, companies have opened their doors to a global market of approximately 7.1 billion Internet users. The challenge for digital marketing is how to reach out to these markets and drive traffic to their company websites or social pages.

Digital Marketing has several tools to offer. Among the popular online marketing strategies are SEO or Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Pay-Per-Click Advertising, Blogging, Social Media Paid Ads, and other forms of content creation and advertising.

Honestly, planning a digital marketing campaign is not the hard part; implementing the strategy is. This is the part where a Virtual Assistant would be an invaluable addition.

A Marketing VA has direct knowledge and vast experience running digital marketing campaigns. In addition, they can manage and implement a digital marketing campaign even outside of the company's business hours.

Below are the specific jobs that a Marketing VA can handle:

- a. Social Media Marketing:** Having a social media account is the first step towards building a global reach. A dynamic presence on different platforms with constant customer engagement is necessary. But social media marketing is a task that is labor-intensive and not meant for business owners to handle because it is time-consuming. A virtual assistant specific to this will attune your accounts with your social media marketing strategy. They will create and schedule relevant posts at regular intervals using social media management tools, reply to customer comments, and constantly engage your audience.

A skilled digital marketing virtual assistant will also identify talented writers, maintain an editorial calendar, and identify the right keywords for your social media campaigns. Content marketing can include blog posts, videos, e-books, social

media posts, infographics, and more. The more varied content types you create, the higher your chances to attract more visitors.

- b. Market Research:** Knowing your audience is key to a good marketing strategy. Market research is critical when you are trying to create a product or provide a service that is going to strike a chord with the users. You must know your target audience and what they want to create effective marketing campaigns.

Whether you're a startup or a big corporation, using Virtual Assistants to do the right market research is essential for your company. A VA experienced in research will be more efficient and well versed in different ways to look up information online. This will take a huge chunk of time off of your work schedule and will save you from doing tedious research.

- c. Graphic Design:** Not everyone has a keen eye for design. Using high-quality aesthetic designs for your social media posts or marketing ads is eye-candy for most consumers. If it is not your expertise, let a graphic design virtual assistant create artistic and eye-catching images and GIFs for the business' social pages.

If you prefer creating the designs, ask yourself: Is this really the best use of your time? Creating a compelling design takes a lot to put together. Surely, there are many other money-making things on your To-Do list that you can focus on. So, it is probably a more practical choice to outsource the graphic designing aspect of your business.

Important: *If you are worried about the costs of hiring a graphic designer, it doesn't have to be permanent or long-term at all times. Graphic design VAs can be hired on a per-project basis without a hassle.*

d. Web Development: Hiring an expert web developer and designer is the key to a converting website. Leads or potential clients often look up your company on Google before interacting or availing of your products and services. Note that the website is your company's business address online.

Web developer VAs are experts at several web developing platforms like WordPress and programming languages such as PHP. If you're not an IT or a graduate of any Computer related course, better not take your chances on this one!

Even though there are DIY websites like Wix, where you can create and design your website. It still hits different if an expert web developer takes over any web-related tasks. There are more interesting features that you can unlock if you entrust the work to a web developer VA. Plus, keeping your website secure from hackers or viruses at all times is a web developer's job.

SALES AND CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Money makes a business run. (Obviously.) You can't run a business without money. That is why sales are important and provide support for your potential and existing customers. Good customer service can ensure long-term relationships with clients and entice your target market to buy from your business.

A Sales VA can generate leads for your business and take care of the time-consuming part of sales: cold calling and prospecting. Customer Service VAs can handle customer complaints or queries, chat support, and technical support, among others.

Below are some of the specific niches of Sales and Customer Support VAs:

- a. **LinkedIn Prospecting:** B2B companies mostly focus on LinkedIn as part of their marketing strategy. Aside from that, LinkedIn is also the perfect avenue for finding leads who are CEOs, Business Owners, and Founders. Researching leads on LinkedIn can take a lot of time. Because the platform is also used for job seeking, you must cut through the clutter and find leads that really matter. This is where a Sales VA can help. The VA will do the research of finding the leads, reach out to them, and you, as the business owner can work on the conversation.

- b. **Lead Generation and Cold Calling:** Apart from LinkedIn, there are other ways to generate leads for your business. Others say that cold calling is DEAD. But you would be surprised at the number of companies that still utilize this lead generation strategy. For example, offshore call center companies or BPOs utilize this strategy.

Cold calling is a process wherein VAs can reach out to leads via a call at a time that is convenient for your prospects. Since leads can be anywhere in the world, calling them can be one of the most effective ways of reaching out and offering your products or services. VAs can adjust to different time zones, which is also an advantage for your business. Many experienced BPO employees have switched to freelancing. Luckily, Offsite Team has a vast number of virtual assistants who have extensive experience with cold calling.

- c. **Customer Support:** Virtual assistants not only handle day-to-day repetitive tasks but are also equipped with good customer service skills. Customer service is the heart of every business; without it, your business is dead. Hearing out your clients' concerns and answering queries from potential customers in a timely manner is crucial. Customer service does not only revolve on taking in calls, but it can also

be email support, live chat support, tele-receptionist, and full helpdesk support. Hiring VAs that can work at different time zones will make your business available 24/7, creating a positive impact on your client base.

ECOMMERCE

Nowadays, having an online store is normal for every business, especially those that sell products. Even those that offer services have a website where you can book your appointment in advance, make a payment, or send an inquiry. Since you can't be online 24/7 and have other matters to attend to, hiring an Ecommerce virtual assistant will surely help you be more productive.

Several tasks can be assigned to an Ecommerce VA:

- a. **Product research and sourcing:** The competition will always have something new to offer to your target market. Continuously researching items that you can include in your online store can help increase sales and add variety to your products. Knowing where to source these products is another thing. Hiring an expert eCommerce VA will know the right keywords to research and the right places to find the items you need for your business. An eCommerce VA has a knack for knowing which items are popular and which products will best suit your buyers' needs and demands.
- b. **Product description writing:** Writing a product description may sound easy. But do you know that it needs skills to make sure your products will come up in a search? That's what product description writing is for. Product descriptions are short and only allow limited characters. That is why whoever writes it must be able

to catch the buyer's eye and persuade them into buying it. SEO or Search Engine Optimization techniques are also needed in this kind of job. If properly done, your product will come up on the first web page of the search in just one click.

- c. **Product Listing and Optimization:** The presentation of your products online matters. After the product descriptions are written and finalized, the items will be listed on your online store. There are a couple of websites that you can put up an online shop or store. Some of them are Etsy, Shopify, Amazon, eBay, and many more. Some of these online stores have a complicated setup because prices must be calculated and assigned for each product plus tax. Aside from that, downloading barcodes and labels are part of an eCommerce VA's tasks.
- d. **Inventory Management:** Who wants to run out of stock for an in-demand item? Ensuring that you have the right number of stocks for each item is important. Having less or excess of any product can greatly impact your profits. Knowing which items sell a lot and which items don't is part of inventory management. Having a VA to watch out which items are in-demand and which ones are not can help you determine where to put most of your budget. Also, knowing when to restock, especially for holiday seasons and promotional periods, can be controlled if your inventory is properly managed.
- e. **Order processing or fulfillment:** This is the best part of having an online store, making a sale. Once a customer orders from your online store, it must go through a process for the item to be delivered. If there are plenty of orders on your website or online store, one person can't handle it alone, mainly if it includes inquiries about the products before buying. Knowing which order goes to whom is one of the many tasks of an eCommerce VA. They are also responsible for tracking the order, follow-ups, and updating the customer if in case a delay happens to an order.
- f. **Processing returns, exchanges, and refunds:** One of the most inevitable parts of online selling is the requests for returns or refunds. If not addressed correctly, it

can be a pain and can result in a low rating or negative feedback for your online store. Having a VA to oversee returns and exchanges can greatly help in ensuring a smooth process for refunds requested by customers. Additionally, an eCommerce VA can analyze your refund policy based on the consumer habits that they observe. This will save you time and money in the future.

- g. **After sales support:** Customer reviews and feedback are vital for both the business and buyers online. Since online shopping depends greatly on the reviews of other consumers, it is important that you have a good after-sales support system in place to address any negative feedback or bad reviews from clients.

The shopping experience of a customer does not end with the item being purchased and delivered. It goes past how happy and satisfied they are when they use the product to leave a positive review. The VAs role in after-sales support is to answer any inquiries that may come up about the product as well as address complaints before it becomes a bad review for your online shop.

- h. **FBA:** Amazon FBA or “Fulfillment by Amazon” is the process of outsourcing your product shipment to Amazon. Amazon will handle the receiving, packing, shipping, and returns for an order. Even though it sounds like that everything is done by Amazon for you, hiring an FBA VA still makes sense as you cannot watch your online store 24/7 to function. At the same time, take care of other business aspects.

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

Finance and accounting can be different depending on which state or country you are in. Tax laws vary, and managing your assets and liabilities is important. Many virtual assistants are accounting graduates who are well-versed in taxation and bookkeeping. So, adjusting to the different tax laws will not hinder hiring a virtual accounting assistant.

At the end of the day, managing your financial books, generating invoices, paying bills, payroll management, and keeping track of loans and insurance payments are crucial for a business. Of course, you can manage this yourself. But having a fresh pair of eyes available to ensure you don't miss anything financially that can result in losses will always be a wise decision. Virtual assistant agencies like Offsite-Team have VAs that have experience in accounting in a professional environment. Most Offsite Team's VAs are already knowledgeable about different accounting software that doesn't require additional training from the business owner's end.

Accounting VAs are also knowledgeable about different accounting software such as QuickBooks, FreshBooks, and Xero. You are probably aware that hiring an accounting firm to manage your taxes can be costly, especially if you are just starting out. Plus, managing the taxation and finance of a business may not be your strongest suit. It will definitely save you time and money working with an accounting VA as they are already trained and easy to reach when you have questions or need some financing work done.

PERSONAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE

Virtual assistants are not only for specialized niches like marketing and accounting, but they are also flexible and can work as your personal assistant. A busy entrepreneur has a lot of things on their plate; thus, keeping a clean and organized schedule is a must. However, there are times that even keeping a well-organized schedule is impossible, especially if the business is growing. That is where a virtual administrative assistant can help.

Some of the tasks that a VA can help you with are:

- Email Management
- Calendar Management
- Travel Arrangements
- Event Planning
- Project Management, etc.

On top of that, personal or administrative virtual assistants serve as your trusted right hand. They can also oversee the operations of the business or delegate tasks to other VAs that you hired or will hire in the future. Admin VAs are also capable of making sure that your business is still aligned to its goals and working towards meeting your expectations. They will also help keep your business process organized and keep your systems in place.

HOW TO HIRE A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT?

Now that you know the different tasks that a virtual assistant can do for you and your business, let's discuss the most important part: Hiring. If you are not handling the hiring process before, this can be new and tedious for you. When hiring a Virtual Assistant, you must think prospectively. Anticipate the future needs of your business. You might need someone to do data entry at present, but later on, you might need a salesperson or a customer service representative. Make sure that you are hiring the right Virtual Assistant for your business to avoid frustrations and failure in the future.

Hiring a Virtual Assistant doesn't have to be hard. But surely, the hiring process will be time-consuming, including the deliberation and decision-making that has to be done when selecting a VA. Below I shared some steps to follow to ensure a smooth hiring process.

1. Identify your need

Knowing the kind of virtual assistant you want and the tasks you will assign to them is important. This way, you will be able to tailor fit the type of VA according to your business needs. It is also critical to identify the tools you want your virtual assistant to know if you do not have the luxury of time to train or teach them new stuff.

2. Create a description

Creating a detailed description of what you need will make the hiring process easier since the only applicants you will get are those who think they are qualified for the specific needs that you stated. Think of this as if you are creating your target avatar

for your business. Indicating whether you need 'X' years of experience for a certain field or the list of apps and tools you want them to be familiar with are the few things you can start writing. It will also help if you list the soft skills you want them to have, including the responsibilities you wish the ideal VA to handle. Whatever it may be, writing your description of the ideal VA helps.

Here is a sample description that you can create for your ideal VA:

HIRING SOCIAL MEDIA & COPYWRITER VA

Shift: PART-TIME - 10 hours/week

Time Zone: US Central

- *Must have strong English communication & excellent written skills*
- *1 year experience in copywriting (Send 1-2 samples)*
- *Experience with working with coaching businesses and selling coaching packages*
- *Experience with growing a community on FB, IG, and LinkedIn*
- *Knows how to use LinkedIn Sales Navigator & Lead generation*
- *Knows how to use Microsoft programs or Google workspace*
- *Knows how funnels work and have experience with clickfunnels, landing pages, and email campaigns*
- *Highly organized and strong attention to detail*
- *Can work with minimal supervision*

The description above is just a simple example of listing the several qualities and responsibilities that you want your ideal VA to have and handle. You can tweak it to your liking or create a different, more fun way to make the job posting attractive to job seekers.

3. Determine your budget

Virtual assistant rates are different depending on their niche or expertise. You can pay them per hour, at a fixed rate, or per project. Allocating a budget will help you not go over your operating expenses and know how much time you want a VA to work per day or per week. Still, VAs are always budget-friendly and are a good choice when it comes to preventing overhead operational costs, as established earlier in this eBook.

4. Begin the search

Since you have already identified your needs, the type of VA you want, and a written description of skills and responsibilities— it is time for you to begin the search. You must know where to find these VAs, or else the first few steps will be meaningless. Signing up for online job platforms is one option, but some of these websites charge for posting a job hiring ad or a membership fee. Thus, posting on social media is a big help since it is free and can also reach the right candidates if you have the right connections.

Whatever option you choose, posting your job ad will begin the search process. Another important point when beginning a search is to give out clear guidelines to the applicants. Letting them know how to send in their applications and what is the initial information you need from them is essential to lessen the questions you need to ask.

Another thing is including a short set of instructions to test an applicant's keenness on small details.

5. Review applications

Once you start receiving applications, reviewing each resume and cover letter you receive is a must. Scrolling through them and inviting them all for an interview might be a waste of time. If you have a short assessment you can have the potential VAs take, it can help narrow the number of applications to review.

6. Schedule Interviews

If you opt for an assessment and they pass, scheduling them for a one-on-one interview will be the last step. However, if there's no assessment and you reviewed their resumes and cover letters thoroughly, you could start inviting them for an interview to get to know the VA. Prepare your questions beforehand and observe the way they present themselves during the interview. Also, check how good their internet connection is during your interview.

Ask yourself these questions: Does the video lag? Do they freeze or disconnect? How good are their video and audio quality during the call? If you need someone with a reliable internet connection, then this is a factor you cannot disregard.

7. Trial period

Once you pick the best candidate, you can offer them a PAID trial period that can last 30-60 days, depending on your arrangement. This is the test phase where you can decide if you are a fit or not if you can't determine it during the interview or you are just unsure. Uncertainties are inevitable; that is why having a trial period will help both you and the VA know whether you make a good team or not. You will also be able to measure the virtual assistant's capabilities as to how they manage their tasks and if they can accomplish what you agreed upon.

8. Hiring

Last but not least is hiring your virtual assistant permanently. If the results end up as what you wanted or expected them to be, offering a permanent contract to your VA will seal the deal. This is the part where you can negotiate the pay and working hours. Have a contract ready to discuss and sign during your meeting with the virtual assistant.

The 8 steps mentioned above may look easy but contains a lot of work. It will take time and effort for you to find the right VA for your business. Using a virtual assistant outsourcing agency like Offsite-team can ease the stress of the hiring process and save you time from selecting the right VA. Offsite-team takes care of Steps 1 to 6, and you just have to show up for the interviews and select the candidate who you think will best suit you.

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

Congratulations! You are now on your way to reducing your operational costs by almost 50%. Now that you've made a hire (assuming), you may be at a loss at where to start.

So, what is next?

First of all, a VA is like a personal secretary but works remotely. Apart from a personal secretary, the VA can be your Marketing Assistant, Sales VP, Customer Service Rep, etc.

Since virtual assistants work remotely, some differences can't be helped but noticed.

Personal Secretary



- Will work full-time or part-time and complete their hours even if there are no tasks left
- Benefits are required like 401k, life insurance, health insurance, etc.
- Paid vacations and sick leaves are part of their benefits
- Office space and equipment will be provided by your company

Virtual Assistant



- If there's no work left for them to do, they will stop working and you will not be billed
- Virtual assistants have their own equipment ready
- You are not required to pay them if they take a holiday off or sick leave
- Benefits are not required upon hire

COMMUNICATION

The ones mentioned above are just some of the differences between personal and virtual assistants. Now let's talk about how you will communicate with your VA effectively. Constant communication is important, especially since virtual assistants work remotely and are mostly on the other side of the world.

Some proven tips for communication are shared below:

- Know the best time that both of you and your VA can meet. Since VAs sometimes work flexible hours, communication is key if you want to be able to have time to talk and sit down about tasks.
- Use a communication tool. Messaging them on their personal social media accounts can be unprofessional for some. So, using one permanent communication tool will be useful. Sample tools are:
 - o Skype
 - o Slack
 - o Telegram
 - o Microsoft Teams, etc.
- Even though you are using a communication tool, you may expect delays from your VAs replies. One major cause of this is the time zone difference. One thing you can do is to schedule regular meetings. You can send a calendar invite to your VA via email. This way, you can both update each other about the progress regarding the business.

- Create a project management board or list that you and your VA can edit. By doing this, your VA understands the tasks that she needs to do, and you will be updated about the progress of the projects even when you can't meet with each other.
- You also have the option to ask your VAs for 'End of Day' reports or EODs to track their progress and supervise their work even if you cannot meet or your messaging time doesn't sync with each other. At the end of each day, you can read reports and make your comments, suggestions, or observations to the VA without having to be at an actual meeting, and both of you can proceed with your day.
- Be responsive as much as you can. Both you and your VA are busy once they start working. Keeping an open line of communication will help both of you be more effective and efficient. There are no stupid questions for someone who is trying to learn.
- Ask questions when you need to. If you want or need to know something, be sure to ask the appropriate questions. If you do not understand why a certain task was done in a different way or why a task took longer than you thought it would, all you have to do is ask and listen to your Virtual Assistant carefully. You will surely know if they are only making excuses or if their reasons for their performance is valid. By asking, you will be able to avoid making rash decisions that might result in irreparable mistakes.

GETTING TO WORK

When you establish that solid communication with the virtual assistant, it's time to get into the actual 'work' and take a step forward to achieve your company goals.

Before jumping into bombarding your VA with tasks, first, recognizing that your VA is human and not a robot (since they work virtually) is important. Why is there a need to mention this? Just because you haven't met them personally doesn't mean that they don't need to feel like part of a team. Making a virtual assistant feel that he/she is part of the team greatly affects a person's performance. This is true across all scopes, even for traditional employees. So, we recommend this step not to be skipped.

Setting boundaries. This is a very important topic when it comes to working with virtual assistants. With traditional employees, once you are outside the building, you can be friends with your colleagues. But when working with virtual assistants, you might not know when you can act as a friend to your VA or when you will be their boss. It is important to let your VA know about your schedule and when you are available. Also, let them know what kind of decisions you want them to be able to make independently or what stuff you want to know first before making a final decision.

Then, you can start with **setting goals** for both you and the VA. Setting goals are not only for the business but also for those who work in the business. Doing so will keep both of you on track and ensure that the business will be headed where you want it to be. Communicating this with your VA will give them a crystal-clear picture of what you want and how you want it done.

Create a to-do list. In the first place, you hired a VA because you need help with the tasks that you cannot do alone. Listing the tasks you want the VA to accomplish will help you start working. Delegate it to your VA during your meeting so that if there are any questions, they can be clarified right away before he/she starts working on your tasks and avoiding confusion.

Set deadlines. This can't be reiterated further as this will help both you and the VA stick to a certain range of working hours. Be clear about their schedule or the number of hours that they can work. So that if they have the need to go over for a certain pay period to finish certain tasks, you can advise them that it can be done for the next, so you don't go over your budget. Also, setting a deadline will keep both of you on track with your business goals.

Know your virtual assistant's availability. Some virtual assistants juggle multiple jobs since they are hired contractually. It's no surprise that there are VAs who work 4 jobs at a time as long as their time permits. That is why it is important to know when they are available. Ask them if they can work during the hours you need them, particularly because of the time zone difference.

Provide online training. Surely, not every VA is a know-it-all. There might be some aspects that they are lacking, and providing online training or teaching them yourself can help them grow and benefit your business in the long run. It is not a requirement to teach or purchase paid training for your VA. Some virtual assistants personally opt to attend training and webinars to further their expertise. However, you can ask them to take paid courses or free webinars depending on the need of your business. These kinds of stuff will help with their transition and familiarize them with the different tasks you will assign to them.

Patience is a virtue. This is true across all scopes, even in business. Do not let your emotions or frustrations get the best of you. Some Virtual Assistants may not fully understand how you want things to be done in your business at the beginning. But once he/she gets a grasp of the whole process, everything will flow smoothly. Be patient in explaining the job every once in a while to help your Virtual Assistant be proficient in his/her work.

Avoid canceled meetings. Time is money. Respect each other's time and make sure not to reduce the efficiency of your business by setting up meetings that will get canceled in the end. The canceled meeting will more than likely result in more idle hours and less work done.

Be reasonable. Let's not forget that we are all human, and we make mistakes. Your emergency may not be your Virtual Assistant's emergency. The priority of your Virtual Assistant is to assist and provide quality service to your clients, and they spend most of their time doing so. Therefore, you must understand that not all urgent matters that come up on your end should be delegated to and addressed by your Virtual Assistants.

Build a relationship. A good working relationship can take you and your VA years of working together. Communicate about issues that may arise and be sensitive about your virtual assistant's situation. Of course, a relationship is a two-way street, and your VA should also understand your situation. In order to do that, open communication is a must. You can both achieve this once you are comfortable with each other and know when to listen.

Make working with your virtual assistants fruitful and meaningful. They can be your business partners for life and benefit your business more than you imagined. Just like the golden rule, *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*

FINAL THOUGHTS

Hiring a VA, whether for your personal, administrative, or specific tasks, can result in various advantages. These advantages include but are not limited to: giving you more time in your hand to focus on core activities, more personal time for your family or for doing things that you love, and delegating tasks that can also lead to reduced pressure and so on.

More importantly, when you work under optimal pressure instead of being overburdened with routine tasks, you can successfully avoid experiencing burnout. People can break from the pressure, and business owners are not exempt. That is why employing the help of skilled workers will greatly help ease the pressure or burden you might be feeling when starting or running a business.

Most business owners who experience overwhelming pressure are those who are building start-ups. It is never easy to let go of those hard-earned dollars to something you are not sure will take off in a short amount of time. Building a business can be costly and time-consuming. This is why thinking of ways to save must be a priority, especially if you are working on a limited budget. What better way to save than to reduce operational costs by hiring virtual assistants right?

Moreover, since virtual assistants come from a large pool of candidates from all over the world, there is a higher chance for you to find the right fit faster than searching and

hiring traditional ones. The process of hiring a VA is also more cost-efficient in the sense that it involves lower or no recruitment costs and lowered operational costs, which in turn leads to a reduction in your expenses eventually. As well as being able to work with virtual assistant agencies like Offsite-Team with no additional costs compared to paying headhunters or advertising agencies to post your job hiring on social media and other platforms.

You might be convinced that a virtual assistant is a perfect fit for your business by this time. But earlier in this eBook, the advantages and disadvantages of hiring a virtual assistant were listed in order for you to calculate how much risk you are willing to take for your business to succeed. We also tackled the difference of costs between hiring a virtual assistant yourself or using an agency like Offsite-Team. Though agencies cost more than doing it yourself, they can offer stability and hassle-free service compared to doing it yourself. Using virtual assistant agencies like Offsite-Team will allow you to have more time to focus on the more critical aspects of the business.

Risk is inevitable in the business world. For every decision you make, there is a risk. You just have to minimize it or be willing to take a larger calculated risk based on your assessment of the situation and decision-making skills.

All in all, hiring a virtual assistant is cost-effective, efficient, and beneficial for every business.

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