



A User's Guide to Working With a Virtual Assistant!

- or -

What, How, Why and When?

The first time I used a Virtual Assistant, I was amazed. I had thought that using a V.A. was the same as hiring someone! Horrors! Nightmare visions of thousands of outgoing dollars and IRS machinations danced in my head, making me fearful. Instead, that first time, I saved myself hours and hours and **hours** of work, and I paid the whopping sum of...\$40.

I did a happy dance, you BET!

Now that I am a Virtual Assistant, it is time to initiate you into the joys and creative responsibilities of hiring (and, when you have to, firing) Virtual Assistants to help you get back to doing what you love to do the best!

Most have some serious questions about what a Virtual Assistant *is*, and how and when to use one. Let me offer you some serious answers!

What is a Virtual Assistant, anyway?

This may be a no-brainer for some, but it certainly isn't for all. A Virtual Assistant is a business professional who brings her or his expertise to your business, for your particular types of business needs, for a particular time period.

There are V.A.'s (Virtual Assistants) who do nothing but set up websites. There are V.A.'s who do nothing but transcribe. There are V.A.'s who do nothing but graphics. There are V.A.'s who handle a range of projects. And so forth. If you do a search on the web or on LinkedIn for Virtual Assistants, you are going to learn more than you thought was possible.

The Project Cheetah is a Marketing and Communications Project Consultant, which means that – because of the breadth of our knowledge, from digital to design to copywriting to marketing, and because we are incredibly dedicated and caring collaborators - we **partner** with you, even if it's just for a very short time indeed, to help you move your business wheel forward to whatever degree you need at any given time in your entrepreneurial or your small-to-medium sized business journey. We bring all of our knowledge, our suggestions, our support with us to help you move forward. We are your safety net, your resource, and your lookout.



How do I know when it is time to use a Virtual Assistant?

Although the simple answer is, “When you need expert help, and can’t hire a full-time employee” there is more to consider. Just as I experienced in considering hiring a V.A. for *my* company, others experience some resistance. That is due to an understandable lack of understanding about what a Virtual Assistant actually is, and the resultant hesitation.

The first, most common, resistance tends to be along the lines I experienced myself: that of, “I don’t have the money to hire an employee!” The second resistance tends to be, “I know *I* will do it right, and I don’t know if *s/he* will!” [see: “Do a trial run!”] The third resistance tends to be pure control freakishness, of which, if you are an entrepreneur you have a healthy dose: “I want to do it myself!” The fourth resistance tends to be: “But I don’t know who to hire!”

1. If you think that hiring a V.A. will turn you into a business with an employee, think again. Your V.A. will come to take care of exactly what you want her to, and leave when that project is finished! As for money concerns, even if your V.A. charges a sum per hour that concerns you, do yourself this favor: When you talk with her, ask how many hours it will take her to do the work. Imagine the “worst” – someone who charges \$30/hour. Now imagine that the work that would take you two days and interrupt more important tasks you need to accomplish, will take her 2 hours. You have invested \$60 and bought yourself time, peace of mind, and a completed project that you only have to look over and approve. I don’t know about you, but in my opinion that is \$60 well spent.
2. For those of you who are the I-will-do-it-righter types, I want you to know: At some point, you have to trust that you will chose wisely, or that if you make a mistake in your choice, you will learn how to handle that until you *can* choose your help wisely. Would Steve Jobs have gotten anywhere if he had insisted on doing absolutely everything himself? Not a chance.
3. For those who are accustomed to control, I want you to know something: You are STILL doing it yourself! Why? Because when that work is done, *you* have to check it! You’re the boss! And you get to take a look at what has been going on. You just don’t have to do both the overlook, and the creation!
4. For the I-don’t-know-who-to-hire folks: Ask! Ask your friends. Ask your business associates. Ask people in your Facebook business Groups. And ask your gut. Put all of that together, and then start interviewing! Once you have chosen something, **do a trial run**. If your V.A. doesn’t suggest it, tell her or him that you will give them one part of a project, or a specified period of time, to see if your partnership will be mutually beneficial. Then stick with that.



Virtual Assistants may be Administrative Assistants, or they may not be. You choose which type of V.A. you want to work with depending on what you need done, and who you like to work with.

Once upon a not-too-long-ago-time, there were “secretaries”. Secretaries became “Administrative Assistants” when computers arrived on the scene, and the projects we worked on went far beyond any definition of “secretary” that had existed previously. For many of us, becoming “Virtual Assistants” became the natural transition as we take our extensive experience and skillsets to the global marketplace. And the final step that the most effective V.A.’s take is knowing that we are not glorified secretaries, but temporary- to long-term business partners and professionals with exactly the types of experience and skills that maximally assist other businesses in their growth.

With that information in mind, consider these guidelines as to the timing of hiring a VA:

- When you feel overwhelmed by all that you have to do, all alone.
- When you are spending close to 100% of your time doing what you “need” to do, and almost no time – or too little of it – doing what you really “want” to do, and what you are truly gifted at doing.
- When you are ready to ramp up your business by delegating, so that you can personally undertake the tasks that will bring visibility to your business; things that only you can do.

Do I have to “hire” a V.A. for a specific period of time?

No. You don’t have to hire anyone for any particular amount of time if you don’t wish to. You’re the boss, so you get to decide: (1) what you want to have done, (2) how much of what you want done, to be done, and (3) how much money you want to spend! You also get to decide what type of V.A. you want.

How do I choose a V.A.?

It starts with making a few decision:

Do you want a quick task done by someone that you will rarely or never see again? Or do you want to form a relationship with someone upon whom you can depend – someone that you can ask opinions of, and communicate with?



If you want a quick task done, that's easy to find. From fiverr.com to assistants who like project work that is very focused, or one-and-done, you can find someone who will accomplish a quick task for you with no problem.

If you want to form a relationship with someone upon whom you can depend, and who you feel comfortable calling on, that is a bigger job.

Either way, you may want to start with a list.

Types of Knowledge

If you are quick-task focused, make a list of the **types of knowledge** that the V.A. would have to know to get this task done.

Qualities of Professionalism

If you are working-relationship-focused, you should make a list of those qualities that you want to have in the **personality and professionalism** of the V.A. you hire.

Location

Think about what time zone you would like them to be in, in case that is going to be a hold-up for you. Some people find it very helpful to send things off to a V.A. in India, from – let's say - the Eastern U.S., and find the work completed and in their inbox in the morning. Others would rather be able to converse with the V.A. on email throughout the business day during U.S. times.

Why would I want to use a "Virtual" rather than an actual/local assistant?

Sometimes it's a better choice and sometimes it's the only choice.

If you have room in your office to have an in-person assistant, even that can be a V.A.! "Virtual" Assistant doesn't mean "virtual only" – just that clients can be served anywhere in the world.

How do I make my Virtual Assistant choice a good one?

First, have a chat!

Even if all Virtual Assistants were created equal – which we are not – not all of them are going to be equally fabulous for *you*! Don't hire "sound"-unseen. There is always a risk when you hire someone to do something for you, so get a sense of who this person is.



Don't be shy! Ask your questions!

Decide ahead of time what is important to you to know and to have.

- Is this person dependable?
- What is her work ethic?
- Does she believe in meeting, or in exceeding, expectations?
- Is she a creative thinker, or a scientific thinker, or both?
- Is she going to be available to you, time-wise, when you need her to be?
- Does she have other clients that will encroach on your needs?
- Does she handle the work herself? If she doesn't, what parts of her work does she share, and with whom?
- Is she someone who will do what she is told, or will she bring you her expert suggestions for upleveling what you have asked for?
- Does she offer a trial period?

Do a trial run!

Ask your V.A. to do a small job for you – something that will take a couple of hours – and then decide if you would like to continue! This gives *both* of you a chance to discover if this working relationship is going to ... er ... work!

What on earth can I ask a Virtual Assistant to help me with, anyway?

The list is literally endless, but let's start with this limited list of what you could ask someone to do for or with you:

Setting up a website	Setting up a Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Pinterest header	Inputting data into a spreadsheet
Setting up a landing page	Setting up a Twitter header	Designing a Speaker One-Sheet
Working on your LinkedIn profile	Scheduling Twitter and Facebook posts for you	Creating business forms
Setting up MailChimp, Constant Contact or Aweber (autoresponders)	Research projects	Making and tracking business calls



Writing copy – for website, newsletter, social media postings, etc.	Setting up a database	Creating/designing a resume and cover letter
Creating a logo	Creating a brochure	DIY Trainings
Make a video	Write a speech	Edit a script

Whatever you want to have done, or want to learn to do yourself, there is a V.A. out there to help you. We do almost all of the above. If you wonder which we do, don't hold back: ask us!

I feel hesitant to give away the entire task!

Don't do it! Break up your tasks into smaller tasks!

Only have enough money or comfort for a smaller task? Break up your larger tasks. I know that it is sometimes difficult to imagine doing this, but the amount of time you save is worth the time you spend breaking it up and handing it off!

Is more time the only payoff in using a Virtual Assistant?

Surprisingly, no! You might be surprised to hear that the amount of time you spare by working with a V.A. is not the biggest payoff! The truly biggest payoffs are:

- (1) the amount of relief you are giving your brain; with those extra details in someone else's hands (and on someone else's mind), your mind is free to expand into the creativity it yearns to use on what you truly *love* to do in your business;
- (2) the community you are gaining; you now have someone on your *team!* Someone else is there who wants you to do well, and is there to do their best to make that happen.

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Your Virtual Assistant, Simply, is someone who can help you, from anyplace in the world, with exactly what you need, as long as s/he is the right person for the job, and the right person for you!

When you are ready to call in a professional to handle your marketing and project management projects, contact *The Project Cheetah* at ProjectCheetahHelp@gmail.com to set up a consultation.

Good business to you!

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