

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

### WHY HIRE A VA?

#### Are You Thinking of Hiring a VA? What next...?

- You have heard of the concept of VAs but have no idea what to do next?
- Who do you trust?
- Who is any good?
- How do you start?
- What can your VA do?
- How do you pay them?

...and many more questions that have just flown through your mind.

This little guide is an attempt to answer all of those questions and also to give you a few more tips on how to proceed and successfully start a **working** relationship with a reliable Virtual Assistant

Our goal here is to succeed in putting your mind at rest.

#### A Quick Definition and What to Expect from your VA

A Virtual Assistant utilises today's technology for the administrative solutions sought by a client. In addition, a good VA will empower the client by introducing him or her to acquire ongoing online solutions that were hitherto unavailable to the client for whatever reason.

These online solutions are generally readily available on the market today and many will be well recognised whilst others will be new to you. Either way, your VA will show you how these can be employed to effect an improvement in administering your business needs.

By hiring a VA, you are not employing anybody. You are outsourcing your requirements and it is a good way for business owners, like you, to:

- Have tasks performed by experts in their chosen field resulting in increased and reliable productivity
- Save time by having those tasks performed by specialists
- Save money for the very same reasons as above

...and more, but before we go further...

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

### Dispelling the myth

A common misconception about outsourcing that needs to be clarified is the one that may expect us to employ some sort of clerical sweat shop in an under-developed nation that sub-contracts work to people who are paid peanuts.

Critically, and apart from the very important moral issues at stake, that's not what we're about. We will ensure that our work is performed by qualified personnel in their chosen fields. An independent VA, wherever in the world they may be, is only influenced by the market forces governing us all. They can dictate their own remuneration and their working practices.

We do not use anyone that we do not have a personal relationship with.

There are proven ways to outsource work to professional VAs in their respective fields, and they will work to give you above-par results – wherever they live.

### Eight Parts to Hiring a Good VA

Part 1: The Benefits of Outsourcing – Why Do It?

Part 2: Outsourcing to get Up and Running

Part 3: Outsourcing to Generate Traffic

Part 4: What's Outsourcing Going to Cost Me?

Part 5: But, I Can't Afford to Outsource

Part 6: Paying a VA

Part 7: Finding the Right Person for the Job

Part 8: Don't Outsource Just for the Sake of Outsourcing

#### 1. The Benefits of Outsourcing – Why Do It?

Now that we have defined outsourcing, let's recap five of the many benefits of outsourcing in your business:

- You will accomplish more
- You can save time
- Something we all want -- save money
- You'll be able to focus on your strengths as a business owner
- And, most importantly, you'll grow your business

Now, let's look at each of these benefits in a bit more in depth.

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

First (this one is pretty obvious), by outsourcing you will get **more done** in your business that is critical to your business.

Let's face it, there are only 24 hours in a day, but when you enlist the help of a VA you can actually add hours to your day. You have recovered hours that would have been lost forever and you can now put them to better use.

You can also **save time** when outsourcing in your business by recovering the time lost to learning new administration skills and with the furious pace of technological change around us at the moment that could add up to a substantial amount of time. Do you really need to learn how to do something that you may only use sparingly in your business life?

Now let's **save you some money**.

Another myth is that if you think you can do it yourself then you should and that you can't afford to outsource.

If you subscribe to this notion please ask yourself a couple of questions, namely:

- a) If you charge your services at say £60 per hour surely you could employ someone for a lot less to complete your task and, again, wouldn't you be likely to take twice as long as an expert? The direct cost saving is substantial. Furthermore couldn't you do something more lucrative with the time you have just recovered?

And secondly:

- b) Would you buy a business from someone who does everything themselves? This could be critical. If you take that person away from the business, there may well be no business left to sell. The worth of the company could be just you. And you're no longer there.

So are you feeling overworked and underpaid? Or do you need to sit down and give yourself a good talking to?

**Let's get you some help and you can start or continue to grow your business again.**

Another way that you save money when outsourcing is in the levels of investment that have been traditionally required to run your administration. You will be **buying less software**. For instance, if you outsource your graphics, you no longer need to purchase a high-end graphics program or high end hardware to support it.

Again, if you outsource your bookkeeping, you may not need to buy Quickbooks or Sage.

The fourth benefit we are going to discuss is **focus**. By outsourcing tasks in your business, you will be able to then focus on the activities you are best at. Is there one aspect of your business that you excel at? Focus your efforts where they are most beneficial to your business and get help with the other areas.

Our final benefit is directly involved in the growth, profitability **and credibility** of your business. If there is an area of your business that you lack strength in or don't enjoy doing, you'll tend to put it off, even if you know it needs to be done. Instead, hire a VA who specializes in that area and let their light shine. This will bring more to the table in your business and will increase the aura of professionalism that surrounds it.

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

### 2. Outsourcing to Get Up & Running

One of the most common outsourcing questions asked is **“What can I outsource?”**

As an online business owner, there are a multitude of tasks that can be outsourced - and keep in mind, each business is different. Today let's talk about tasks that get and keep your business up and running and which can easily be outsourced to a VA:

- call handling
- bookkeeping
- website design and maintenance
- graphic design
- customer service
- content creation
- blogging
- newsletter writing
- shopping cart installation and set-up

These are only a few of the activities (and these are particularly beneficial to online businesses) that can be outsourced to a VA so that you can concentrate on other areas of your business. In order to determine which things you might be able to outsource to keep your business running smoothly, make a list of the tasks that you do every day that eat up your time.

A popular task to outsource is customer service. It can be a very liberating feeling to be able to get away from your business and know that everything is running smoothly. After all, you started your business to live a certain lifestyle, not to feel trapped to your PC every second of every day. So, make this happen.

If you're just beginning a project, make a list of all the jobs that will need to be done in order to launch it, and then choose from them which things you will choose to do and which you will outsource to a VA.

### 3. Outsourcing to Generate Traffic

Here, we're going to discuss more jobs that you can outsource in your online business, but this time we're going to focus on traffic-generating ideas.

The following are some tasks that are typically outsourced by business owners in order to increase traffic to their websites.

- article writing and submission
- forum and social networking site posting

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

- SEO (search engine optimisation)
- press release writing and submission
- setting up a PPC (pay-per-click) campaign

All of the above tasks help to generate traffic to your websites. Just because they are traffic getters doesn't mean you have to do them yourself. You could hire a large agency to execute the requirement but there are VAs who specialize in the tasks above because they enjoy doing them and understand how to make them effective.

SEO, for example, requires a fair knowledge about search engines and it's a constantly changing field. Very likely you won't have the time to spend studying the latest updates, but that doesn't mean that your business has to lose it's contemporary cutting edge. There are VAs who make it their business to do just this so if you delegate this type of task you can be as current and as dynamic as it is possible to be.

What current methods do you use to generate traffic to your website? Could you save time by outsourcing some of the tasks to a VA who does it on a daily basis in order to get the most from your efforts?

### 4 What's Outsourcing Going to Cost Me?

It's impossible to give an exact amount of the cost of getting help in your business but it is possible to give you an idea.

Every single business is different when it comes to the costs associated with outsourcing. Due to the fact that not every business owner will use the same services, need the same amount of help or require the same tasks, there can be no set price.

There are generally two types of payment involved with outsourcing and, depending on the type of work completed and the level of expertise of your Virtual Assistant, you may find yourself paying in one or maybe even both of the following ways.

**Hourly** – Usually, a VA charges an hourly rate for their services. For example, **VA Online** bills on an hourly rate but calculates in quarter-hour segments for accuracy. A more sophisticated approach to billing would be to buy the hours in advance by agreeing a plan. This is likely to incorporate a discount in the pricing structure.

**Set Fee** – When arranging a task that will involve skills such as web design, graphics work, and the more specialised services, a VA will bill you a quoted fee agreed in advance. The nature of the work is very likely to depend on the degree of complexity involved and the possibility that it will be a on-off project.

As for an actual amount per hour, this too will vary with experience and skill set, but you can find VAs who charge from £10 per hour all the way up to £60 an hour.

Before you even begin to outsource anything, you'll need to determine how much you can afford to pay and then go from there.

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

### 5. But, I Can't Afford to Outsource

It would be patronising for us to pre-determine the economics of your business but there are understandable reasons as to why you may feel that it is unaffordable. It would be remiss of us, however, not to highlight the areas where value must be weighed against cost.

It would be fair to say that most experts in their field will take a lot less time to complete the task you are envisaging to take on yourself. For example a good audio typist could handle 80-90 words a minute for long periods. Really, could you and would you want to attempt the same?

Therefore, if this particular task was outsourced and it was a single hour's worth of chargeable time, it is arguably very likely to have taken you two hours to complete yourself. How much does your firm earn when you are working at the core objectives for two hours? This needs to be taken into consideration.

The cost implications of hiring someone to do all of your administration continues this economic theme. There are many very capable people who can fulfil this role but how many are experts in each and every discipline? Again, by employing a VA company all tasks could be done in an ultra quick and efficient manner thus diminishing your costs when weighed against time lost and revenue earning opportunities missed.

### 6. Paying a VA

Earlier, we discussed how a VA may charge you when you outsource tasks to them. Some choose hourly billing whilst others charge a set fee for their services. No matter which way is used, there is still the question of how you actually get the money to them.

Since most of the help you will receive in your business will be conducted via the internet, the question of how you'll pay for the services is a frequent one. There are a few ways that a VA may require payment from their clients.

Here are the most requested ones:

- PayPal
- cheque
- credit card
- bank transfer

The majority of VAs with online businesses conduct their billing via PayPal, and you'll see that sending payment is as easy as clicking a button in your own PayPal account. They will invoice you via their account and you'll simply click the "Pay" button next to their invoice.

### 7. Finding the Right Person for the Job

**Where and How can I find a Virtual Assistant who is qualified to help me?**

# VA Online

## Virtual Assistance & Business Support

You can easily search for a VA online to help you with a specific task, or you can even search the words “virtual assistant” - the most popular search term. Most VAs will have a comprehensive website detailing their activities and, as they should be at least online savvy, these sites will be an ideal starting point for them to showcase their abilities.

### There are three types of VA that will be found online:

1. The larger VA company looking for corporate work. These companies can have large resources at their disposal and are often looking for more process driven work than individual consulting projects.
2. The small to medium size company with high levels of expertise dedicated to serving smaller businesses with both process driven applications and flexible project orientated work.
3. The individual VA who is often expert in one particular field and is likely to be hired by either of the two organisations detailed above and the client direct.

**Virtual Assistant Directories** – There are several websites online that list VAs via directories or forums. Take the time to find the perfect person for the job that you need to get done. These are directories that will highlight specific areas of qualifications for individual VAs.

**Trust?** As with the hiring of any person in any field of business and for any reason, the element of risk will always be present. The bottom line is that you will have to trust your own judgement but you will find the vast majority are trustworthy professionals who have chosen the virtual world as their vocation and they won't want to damage their reputations.

Trust will be seen to go both ways and we recommend both clients and VAs to meet each other in the middle. An ideal solution, for example, would be to purchase say a ten-hour plan and pay 50% up front and 50% upon completion of the project. That way, both parties incorporate an element of trust and risk into their negotiations.

### 8. Tips and Advice for Outsourcing a VA

#### Don't Outsource Just for the Sake of Outsourcing

If you are to consider hiring a VA for your business you must have a plan of action to outsource for maximum effectiveness.

The simplest tip we can give you is not to expect your VA to run your business without your input. A VA must work in collaboration with you in order to understand your business. You will benefit from expertise and, where you already have processes in place to handle your requirements, the more fluid the handover will be. However, it is similar to any member of staff you may have inasmuch as the more you put in the more you will get out of outsourcing your work. So don't abandon the responsibility you have to your work, just delegate wisely and keep your input going. You will certainly reap benefits in the long run.

So, from this essential e-guide to hiring a VA, if you remember nothing else, remember this...

**...always have a plan.**