

The Top 10 Ways to use a Virtual Assistant

Category: Business Administration, Operations (AK7)

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A Virtual Assistant is just like an executive assistant or personal assistant, except that the Virtual Assistant handles your affairs from a distance, and electronically. This Top 10 List reviews the 10 most common ways to utilize the services of a Virtual Assistant. I've included my own experience below, when appropriate. (And, in case you're wondering, my VA isn't available for new clients...sorry.)

1. Get your bills paid.

I haven't paid a bill for two years...my VA/bookkeeper, Irene, does all of that for me, using Quicken and CheckFree, via her computer. ALL of my bills use a mailing address at a mailbox-type place minutes from her home; she picks up the mail/bills and pays the bills each week using my pass code from my BankOne business checking account. She sends me the bank statement monthly which is one way I have to verifying my bank balance. Of course, embezzlement is ALWAYS a risk, so don't turn over your checking account to someone who you don't know well or trust....Also, you may want to simply wire in or transfer funds from another account each month to your bill paying account if you're concerned about full access to your checking account funds.

2. Screens and forwards your mail.

Irene is sharp; she knows what I want to see and what I don't want to see, snail-mail wise. I get a weekly Priority Mail envelope from her with just the goodies. What a relief! She uses her good judgment.

3. Solves problems that you don't want to solve.

I have a coach on contract who I pay \$100 each time I have a problem that I don't want to deal with. I just tell my VA/Coach what outcome I want, answer her questions and wait for the email that it's done. Now, this isn't always perfect, but it works most of the time. Just knowing that I have someone to delegate problems to is such a great feeling!

4. Screen and handle email.

I know of several business owners who have a Virtual Assistant look at all of their email and handle what they can, leaving the rest for the business owner to handle. This can free up an hour or two a day and is reason enough to have a VA. Your VA just goes into your incoming email queue and does his/her magic several times a day. Dealing with confidential matters? Just set up a secret/private email address that you only give out to selected people.

5. Manage projects or reporting.

My VA has a weekly checklist of the information, statistics or reports that I need for a number of my projects. Sure, I could compile them myself, but why? I'd much rather the VA do this, and

follow up the folks who haven't reported in (I'm not a good 'chaser). Sure, it's cheating, but what's wrong with living an insulated life?

6. Follow up with clients or other contacts.

I'll email my VA to follow up with a client who missed a call or to ask a colleague how I can help them do something that I know they are working on, or to schedule a time to chat with a colleague. Do the colleagues mind that I've delegated this to my VA? Yes, they are offended sometimes, but only until they get their own VA.

7. Remind you of important dates.

I don't use my VA for this, but some of my colleagues do. In some cases, the VA handles all of their scheduling/appointments and even reminds them of anniversaries, birthdays, reporting dates, etc. Why NOT!?

8. Point out what you cannot see/give advice.

My VA sometimes says, "Hey, Thomas, did you know that....." I love this! Let's me focus on what I want to focus on instead of having to keep my eye on everything or manage my own reminder system.

9. Screens/handles your phone messages.

Your VA can tap into your voice mail several times a day and 'clean it out' leaving you the calls that you need to handle. Again, your VA is more than your assistant and more than a message taker or message deliver. Your VA **is** you and acts on your behalf, protecting you and your time/space from the demands of the public/customers. You'll need to train your VA on how to **be** you, but this will pay off handsomely. I empower my VA to set policy, make exceptions, solve problems, make mistakes, coordinate efforts, screen heavily, anticipate my needs and be a partner, not just a VA.

10. Develop systems of support.

I don't just ask my VA to do stuff or handle tasks, but also to create systems so that things of a similar nature get handled automatically in the future. Most VAs need support and training on how to do this, but once they get it, you're all set for a lifetime of a problem-free and task-free environment.

About the Submitter

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