

Why Are You Doing Everything Yourself?

by Alexandria K. Brown, "The E-zine Queen"

When I coach my entrepreneur clients, one problem I often see is that they're not taking enough time to market and grow their business.

It's not that they don't understand the value of those efforts, or they don't want to make the time. It's that they're simply trying to do too much by themselves. They're so busy running their business that they're not working ON their business.

Are You Spending All Your Time on the Little Stuff?

Owning your own business requires wearing a lot of hats. But it seems that when many people leave their jobs to "go solo," they think they must work completely solo as well. They insist on doing everything themselves — even tasks they know darn well they're not good at.

They try in vain to design their own Web sites and brochures, write their own sales copy, process their own orders, manage their own mailing list, personally respond to every customer call and e-mail, ship their own products, and more. Pretty soon they're running around like that proverbial headless chicken.

What eventually happens is their love for their work— the reason they started their own business in the first place— drowns in a flood of administrative trivia. Suddenly one morning they wake up feeling burnt out and without that positive, creative energy they used to have.

When this happened to me a few years ago, I was lucky to learn about virtual assistants (VAs). VAs are freelancers who take care of all that "busy work" for entrepreneurs like us. Because VAs are independent themselves, they work on an as-needed basis from their own homes or offices, saving you the cost and hassle of hiring a regular office assistant.

I now have two VAs — Liz, who lives in Boston, and June, who lives in Georgia. And I can't live without them!

What Could YOU Delegate to a VA?

During next week, keep a log of all your activities. Then sit down and review it. Decide which activities are truly ones that only you can do and which you can delegate.

For example, here are some of the tasks I delegate to my VAs:

- Responding to customer e-mails and phone calls re. downloading my e-book.
- Scheduling business and personal appointments and interviews.
- Bookkeeping: invoicing customers, receiving and paying bills, reconciling bank statements, tracking expenses and tax records, working with my accountant. (This was my favorite to delegate — I despise this stuff!)
- Internet research and fact checking
- Planning my travel for speaking engagements and seminars
- Maintaining my e-zine and customer mailing lists
- Managing my e-zine ad sales
- Handling registrations for my teleclasses/workshops
- Maintaining my Web site (copy edits, additions)
- Creating sales reports
- Shipping customer orders
- Submitting my articles to other publishers and article sites
- Placing ads in publications and at Web sites.
- Formatting e-books and creating PDF files
- Designing PowerPoint presentations

And I don't stop there. Liz and June have also been happy to help me with personal stuff like researching vacations, purchasing client gifts, and reminding me of birthdays and other important dates. Thanks to these two amazing gals, I save my time and energy only for my "genius work."

Worried You Don't Have the Budget?

The good news is you're not hiring your VA full time. A VA only charges you for the hours she actually works. Although VA rates may be more than you'd pay an administrative employee (usually \$30-50 per hour), you don't have the added expenses of employee benefits, office space, and equipment. You're also getting someone who has years of experience, who loves what she does, who already has her own desk, chair, computer, software, fax, phone, stapler, and pens, and who's ready to leap in and start work as soon as you are.

Keep in mind that having a VA will IMMENSELY free up your time to focus on the stuff that matters: marketing and growing your business, developing bold new product ideas and income streams, and servicing your larger clients. You'll think much bigger and will have much more creative energy.

Look for a VA That Matches Your Needs

If you're looking for a long-term partner who is committed to helping you succeed (and I was), look for someone who's graduated from a VA training program such as AssistU (www.AssistU.com). That's where I found both Liz and June, and I highly recommend it. Another resource is the International Virtual Assistants Association. (www.ivaa.org)

Don't wait until it's too late! Most of my clients put off hiring a VA until they "hit the wall." Things like overdue bills, a messy office, late projects, and unreturned phone calls add up until their business almost collapses.

Take action NOW and at least learn more about getting some help. It will be a big relief, I promise!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexandria K. Brown, "The E-zine Queen," is author of the award-winning manual, "Boost Business With Your Own E-zine." To learn more about her book and sign up for more FREE tips like these, visit her site at <http://www.ezinequeen.com>.