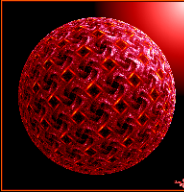


Myths About Virtual Assistants

Unfortunately, there are many myths about virtual assistants. And these myths not only hurt the virtual assistant industry, they hurt the chances of a business to find a competent virtual assistant that will take their business to the next level while not using any more of the business owner's time—in fact freeing up time!

- 1) **I want to use a virtual assistant to save myself money, because they are cheaper per hour than employees.** This is the largest misconception businesses have about virtual assistants. If you compare hourly pay of your employees versus hourly pay of your virtual assistants, you will find the virtual assistants is generally MUCH higher. However, you are saving money in that you don't pay for hardware, utilities, office space, payroll taxes, worker's compensation, and benefits (insurance, vacation, sick days, etc.) for a virtual assistant. Sure you can find virtual assistants for \$10.00 per hour and under. However, they are going to be from another country offering less than stellar communication and English grammar skills. Or they are not going to stay with you long term, when they realize how much money they owe the IRS. You see, as a self-employed independent contractor, they must pay quarterly taxes. When the IRS decides they want their 25% of the \$5.00 per hour those VA's have been earning and not paying self employment taxes on to this point, they will likely have to up their rates or cease to offer services. And believe me, sooner or later, the IRS will catch them.
- 2) **My virtual assistant should be ready to take projects from me 40 hours a week.** Unless you are paying your virtual assistant for 40 hours a week to work for you, he or she must have other clients. She cannot drop other work to rush to what you're doing (at least not always). Be understanding that if you use your VA for about 5 hours a week, it may take them a day or two to get to your small tasks depending on what order and priority your work request falls in the scheme of all their other requests. Hopefully, she will effectively communicate with you when she can get to your project. But no VA should stand by 8 hours a day doing nothing but waiting your email unless you're paying her for all 8 hours that day.
- 3) **My virtual assistant is better because she has completed a VA training program online.** Oh, this is a huge misconception. VA Training programs do not enhance a virtual assistant's skills as far as working on your projects. VA Training programs mean that the VA knows how to run a VA business from marketing, networking, setting up shop, time management, etc. It does not mean she's competent in MS Word, html, ezines, or whatever you need them to do. VA programs don't train virtual assistants in career skills, only business skills. Now, taking classes in MS Excel or being MS Office Certified, those are good training courses to look for in a VA.



- 4) I'm using a freelance site to get a VA. So I will get one that is competent and screened. The freelance sites do not screen applicants to see if they are truly qualified to complete the projects they are bidding on. Some of the sites will call to verify references or credentials, but this in no way means the person is capable of doing what you need them to do. It just means that they didn't lie when they said they were employed by so and so for such and such dates. You take your chances as much with a freelance site as you do with an advertisement online.
- 5) Using a VA means more work for me, because I have to tell me VA what to do and how to do it all the time. In the beginning, you may experience a little more time spent showing your VA how things are done. But if you get one skilled in most of the services you are seeking, the ones he or she has to learn won't be so bad. And the VA should have those new things down by at the very least after the second time performing a certain task. If not, you may need to reconsider your chosen VA.
- 6) There is no way I can trust a virtual assistant with confidential information! This is incorrect. Many virtual assistants are bonded or can get bonded. Also, you can always ask to contact other clients the virtual assistant currently has or recently had where confidential handling was involved. Nothing says reliable like a first hand account from a paying client. A virtual assistant should be willing to give you these references, and if not then you might have cause to worry.
- 7) I have a hard time delegating, so I shouldn't use a virtual assistant. This is the very reason you should use a virtual assistant. Little steps at a time can turn you into the master of delegation. You just have to make certain in the beginning you have an extremely competent and experienced virtual assistant to begin learning how to delegate projects ad hoc. Start out small, and keep adding as you feel your VA has mastered what you've already delegated. Before you know it, your time will be so free you may find yourself starting a second business!
- 8) I can't work with a virtual assistant that lives far away, because I can't afford to pay for the software or hardware that my VA needs. This is a big misconception as well. As long you don't have any custom proprietary software that you use for your business, your virtual assistant should be supplying her own software or her own hardware. Your virtual assistant is also responsible for purchasing a fax line, a phone line, and broadband internet. If they try to get you to pay for those things, consider it a red flag.

Knowing more about what your virtual assistants do and don't do is a great way to make certain your relationship with a virtual assistant is the most successful it can be. After all, a virtual assistant can greatly enhance your business and your productivity.