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## Hire a Virtual Assistant

Building a real estate business can turn into an exhausting treadmill if you aren't careful. The more business you do, the more administrative tasks you have; the more time you spend on administrative tasks, the less time you have to generate new revenue.

The only sensible solution to growth is to multiply your manpower. Yet, you may have a multitude of reasons that prevent you from hiring a personal assistant, even though it's obvious you need one. Wouldn't it be great if you had an assistant that was always ready to work for you, but only when you need him or her? Meet the virtual assistant, a creative new labor force that provides practical solutions for small businesses and job growth potential for outsourcers.

### Hire an entrepreneur

The virtual assistant takes the role of the temp and elevates it to the status of entrepreneur. Because the virtual assistant is self-employed, bills only the hours work or by tasks completed, and is dependent on referrals and steady work flow from existing clients, s/he can be the perfect solution for a busy agent.

A virtual assistant offers several advantages over a paid employee. When you hire a virtual assistant you get all the benefits of outsourcing - no employee tax and benefits issues, coupled with the loyalty and steadiness of a company employee.

If you have found that traditional staffing solutions don't work for you there may be many reasons. Temps are a transient solution, and they can be expensive. If you need someone only a few hours a day or week, a temp can prove more costly in terms of training than s/he is worth. Most are also looking for full time employment, so as soon as you find someone you like, s/he has left the temp service for greener pastures.

Paid employees come also come with a host of issues. You not only must provide tech equipment and furniture for them, you also have state and federal obligations, and employer compliance and unemployment liabilities. Then there are the benefits packages - sick leave, vacation time. It is estimated that the true cost of an employee is over double and sometimes triple the cost of their annual salary in terms of benefits and liabilities. Significant for some is also the loss of privacy and personal issues - you are sharing your small space with others. Do they make good roomies?

### How practical is a virtual assistant?

As more agents move their marketing and communications to the Internet, virtual assistants become more and more the obvious solution to staffing problems. For an hourly fee of \$15 to \$35, less than the cost of temps or employees, agents can take advantage of professional assistance and a variety of skills at the click of a mouse.

Virtual assistants are already computer trained, and can assist with your specific needs from traditional office support services to highly specialized areas including Web page design. Call upon your virtual assistant for basic word processing, phone answering, bill paying, appointment scheduling and calendar maintenance. You can train your virtual assistant to go beyond administrative support to client development and marketing support.

There is no need to share space or even for the agent and the virtual assistant to live in the same city.

Work assignments are communicated through e-mail, phone, fax, "snail mail," or diskette. The agent can take advantage of Web-based tools such as instant messengers, like ICQ, and online calendars and planners are often used as a means of keeping in touch. Schedule changes, project reports, or customer-service alerts such as new listings for a client can be performed immediately. The virtual assistant can lend "size" to your company, which will impress potential clients.

"As cable Internet, wireless Internet, and other broadband solutions grow in the marketplace, the VA will be well-placed to leverage the additional communications tools and grow even closer to the small business or startup client," says Christine C. Durst, president and CEO of [Staffcentrix, LLC](#).

### **How to find a virtual assistant**

There are several effective ways to find a virtual assistant. Simply enter "virtual assistant" in your favorite search engine. Another solution is to search the directory at [www.staffcentrix.com](http://www.staffcentrix.com). Staffcentrix is a resource/support company for virtual assistants. You can search the pool of virtual assistants manually, or use the free referral service to search the database for those who most closely match your needs. In the directory, you can learn the virtual assistant's experience level, services provided, software and hardware capabilities, and his/her email, URL address, and other contact information. [The International Virtual Assistants Association](#) also has a comprehensive directory of virtual assistants.

Contact the virtual assistant who most closely match your needs via email. Most virtual assistants are used to proving themselves with small projects of an hour or two. Any more than that and they should be paid for their time. You can set up payment arrangements by time or task.

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