



A User's Guide to Working With a Virtual Assistant!

- or -

What, How, Why and When?

The first time I used a Virtual Assistant, I was amazed. I had thought that using a V.A. was the same as hiring someone! Horrors! Nightmare visions of thousands of outgoing dollars danced in my head, making me fearful. Instead, that first time, I saved myself hours and hours and **hours** of work, and I paid the whopping sum of...\$40.

I did a happy dance, you BET!

Now that I am a Virtual Assistant, it is time to initiate you into the joys and creative responsibilities of hiring (and, when you have to, firing) Virtual Assistants to help you get back to doing what you love to do the best!

Most have some serious questions about what a Virtual Assistant *is*, and how and when to use one. Let me offer you some serious answers!

What is a Virtual Assistant, anyway?

This may be a no-brainer for some, but it certainly isn't for all. A Virtual Assistant is basically Executive-level assistance, for your business, for your particular types of business needs, for a particular time period.

There are V.A.'s (Virtual Assistants) who do nothing but transcribe. There are V.A.'s who do nothing but set up websites. There are V.A.'s who do nothing but graphics. And so forth. If you do a search on the web or on LinkedIn for Virtual Assistants, you are going to learn more than you thought was possible.

As for *The Project Cheetah*, we are a Project Consultant, which means that – because of the breadth of our knowledge, from digital to design to copywriting to marketing, and because we are incredibly dedicated and caring collaborators - we **partner** with you, even if it's just for a very short time indeed, to help you move your business wheel forward to whatever degree you need at any given time in your entrepreneurial journey. We are not the type of Virtual Assistant that is hired for just one task; instead, we bring all of our knowledge, our suggestions, our support with us to help you move forward. We are your safety net, your resource, and your lookout.



How do I know when it is time to use a Virtual Assistant?

For many, there is a lot of resistance and confusion around this issue. Let's talk about the resistance first.

The first most common resistance tends to be along the lines of "I don't have the money." The second resistance tends to be, "I know I will do it right, and I don't know if s/he will!" [see "Do a trial run!", above] The third resistance tends to be pure control freakishness, of which, if you are an entrepreneur you have a healthy dose: "I want to do it myself!" The fourth resistance tends to be: "But I don't know who to hire!"

1. For the money-deprived, I want you to know: Your choices are to find a V.A. who will teach you how to do it yourself (I am just such a V.A. Still, while there's money involved there, you do save in the long-run), or to spend copious amounts of time learning how to do something yourself and then doing it. It's a longer road.
2. For the I-will-do-it-righters, I want you to know: At some point, you have to trust that you will choose wisely, and that if you do not, you will learn how to handle that until you *can* choose wisely. Would Steve Jobs have gotten anywhere if he had insisted on doing absolutely everything himself? Not a chance.
3. For the control freak, I want you to know that: You are STILL doing it yourself! Why? Because when that work is done, *you* have to check it! You're the boss!
4. For the I-don't-know-who-to-hire folks: Ask! Ask your friends. Ask your business associates. Ask people in your Facebook business Groups. And ask your gut. Put all of that together, and then start interviewing!

The confusion about Virtual Assistants arises, in our opinion, from the fact that this is rather a new "gig"! Once upon a not-too-long-ago-time, there were "secretaries". Secretaries became "Administrative Assistants" when computers arrived on the scene, and the projects we worked on went far beyond any definition of "secretary" that had existed previously. For many of us, becoming "Virtual Assistants" was and is a natural transition as we take our extensive experience and skill sets to the global marketplace.

Honestly, there are a few simple answers we can give to this question of when to hire a VA.

- When you feel overwhelmed by all that you have to do, all alone.
- When you are spending close to 100% of your time doing what you "need" to do, and almost no time – or too little of it – doing what you really "want" to do, and what you are truly gifted at doing.



- When you are ready to ramp up your business by delegating, so that you can personally undertake the tasks that will bring visibility to your business; things that only you can do.

Do I have to “hire” a V.A. for a specific period of time?

No. You don't have to hire anyone for any particular amount of time if you don't wish to. You're the boss, so you get to decide: (1) what you want to have done, (2) how much of what you want done, to be done, and (3) how much money you want to spend! You also get to decide what type of V.A. you want. [See “How do I choose a V.A.?” , below]

How do I choose a V.A.?

It starts with deciding a few things:

Do you want a quick task done by someone that you will rarely or never see again?
Or do you want to form a relationship with someone upon whom you can depend – someone that you can ask opinions of, and communicate with?

If you want a quick task done, that's easy to find. From fiverr.com to assistants who like project work that is very focused, or one-and-done, you can find someone who will accomplish a quick task for you with no problem.

If you want to form a relationship with someone upon whom you can depend, and who you feel comfortable calling on, that is a bigger job.

Either way, you may want to start with a list.

If you are quick-task focused, make a list of the **types of knowledge** that the V.A. would have to know to get this task done. If there is even one thing on that list, you know the **type** of V.A. you are looking for.

If you are working-relationship-focused, you will want to make a list of *all* the types of knowledge you would want your V.A. to have. Additionally, you will want to make a list of those qualities that you want to have in the **personality and professionalism** of the V.A. you want to work with. Think about what time zone you would like them to be in, in case that is going to be a hold-up for you. Some people find it very helpful to send things off to a V.A. in India, from – let's say - the Eastern U.S., and find the work completed and in their inbox in the



morning. Others would rather be able to converse with the V.A. on email throughout the business day during U.S. times.

Why would I want to use a “Virtual” rather than an actual/local assistant?

Sometimes it’s a better choice. Sometimes it’s the only choice.

If you have room in your office to have an in-person assistant - you like to turn to the person next to you and speak to them that very moment - you’re talking about actually hiring an assistant, and financially you are in shape to do so!

Others may instead have a financial need to use an assistant only when necessary, which may be every other week, or bi-monthly, or twice a year!

It all depends on what kind of help you need, short-term or long-term!

How do I know if a particular Virtual Assistant for me?

Here are a few suggestions for choosing a Virtual Assistant!

First, have a chat!

Even if all Virtual Assistants were created equal – which we are not – not all of them are going to be equally fabulous for *you!* Don’t hire sound-unseen. There is always a risk when you hire someone to do something for you, so get a sense of who this person is.

Don’t be shy! Ask your questions!

Decide ahead of time what is important to you to know, to be able to depend on, from this person. And then ask them, and get the kinds of answers you need. Questions like, “This or that kind of thing is very important to me; can I depend on you for that?” “I like to have my emails answered by my V.A. within ‘x’ number of hours on a weekday. Is that something that you do?” And then hold them to it, or let them go if they can’t be held! You’re the boss!

Do a trial run!

Ask your V.A. to do a small job for you – something that will take a couple of hours – and then decide if you would like to continue! This gives *both* of you a chance to discover if this working relationship is going to ... er ... work!



What on earth would I do with a Virtual Assistant, anyway?

The list is literally endless, but let’s start with this limited list of what you could ask someone to do for or with you:

Setting up a website	Setting up a Facebook header	Inputting data into a spreadsheet
Setting up a landing page	Setting up a Twitter header	Designing a Speaker One-Sheet
Working on your LinkedIn profile	Scheduling Twitter and Facebook posts for you	Creating business forms
Setting up MailChimp or Aweber (autoresponders)	Research projects	Making and tracking business calls
Writing copy – for website, newsletter, social media postings, etc.	Setting up a database	Creating/designing a resume and cover letter
Creating a logo	Creating a brochure	Get DIY Trainings

Whatever you want to have done, or want to learn to do yourself, there is a V.A. out there to help you. We do almost all of the above. If you wonder which we do, don’t hold back: ask us!

I feel hesitant to give away the entire task!

You don’t have to! Break up your tasks into smaller tasks!

Only have enough money or comfort for a smaller task? Break up your larger tasks. I know that it is sometimes difficult to imagine doing this, but the amount of time you save is worth the time you spend breaking it up and handing it off!

Is more time the only payoff in using a Virtual Assistant?

Surprisingly, no! You might be surprised to hear that the amount of time you spare by working with a V.A. is not the biggest payoff! The truly biggest payoffs are (1) the amount of relief you are giving your brain; with those extra details in someone else’s hands (and on someone else’s mind), your mind is free to expand into the creativity it yearns to use on what you truly *love* to do in your business; (2) the community you are gaining; you now have someone on your *team!* Someone else is there who wants you to do well, and is there to do their best to make that happen.

So, we hope that this has been helpful to you, and we want to wrap up with repeating the basic question that most people ask: What is a Virtual Assistant? And we have this answer: Simply,



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s/he is someone who can help you, from anyplace in the world, with exactly what you need, as long as s/he is the right person for the job, and the right person for *you!*

Do you have more questions about what a Virtual Assistant can do for you? Please send those questions to ProjectCheetahHelp@gmail.com, and we will schedule a time to talk with you.

Please let us know if we can be of service, and if you would like to know in which ways we could be on your team, for a short time, or a longer one.

Good business to you!

Lori Kirstein

Owner, *The Project Cheetah*