

New option to bypass permitting delays thanks to President Trump

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U.S. Small Business
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5 Ways A Virtual Assistant Can Make You More Productive

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A virtual assistant is an employee who supports various business operations from a remote location. Startups can use VAs to help with inbox management, social media content, online customer support, and basically any task that doesn't require them to show up in person.

Some VAs specialize in a specific task or industry. For example, there are VAs that focus specifically on marketing, and others that work only in the tech industry. More specialized VAs often cost a bit more since they offer a more focused skillset. However, there are also general VAs who can handle a variety of tasks and work with businesses in a wide array of industries.

Virtual assistants have [been around since the 1980's](#) , when organizations like ABSSI and Home Secretaries popped up to support moms looking for work-from-home jobs. However, the niche really took off when home internet usage became more ubiquitous around the world.

And it's still growing today. In fact, Gartner, Inc. [predicts](#) that about a quarter of digital workers will use a VA on a daily basis by 2021. If your small business has yet to jump into this growing trend, here are some of the main reasons why it may be time to reconsider.

They Put Processes in Place

Inefficiencies [cost businesses](#) between 20 and 30 percent of their revenue each year. Often, these inefficiencies are a result of not having processes in place. Processes can be anything from canned responses in Gmail to automated invoicing.


Many business owners don't take the time to set up these processes because they're so busy working on their day-to-day operations. Hiring a VA gives you a way to set up these processes without having to focus on them yourself. Give your VA a list of processes you'd like to set up or hire someone with experience setting up business processes so they can identify inefficiencies on their own. This can actually make your business more efficient even when your VA isn't on the clock.

They Filter Communication

Not all of the emails, calls or live chat messages you receive are necessarily worth responding to. And some can simply receive a canned response or quick reply that doesn't require your personal attention.

By hiring a VA to manage your inbox or other methods of communication, they can filter those messages that don't require a thoughtful response. This allows you to really focus on those other messages, rather than constantly being overwhelmed with an overflowing inbox.

They Capture and Organize Data

Today's businesses have [access to more data](#)  than ever. Your data is essential for helping you make decisions about the future of your business. But too much of it can be overwhelming and distracting.

Additionally, collecting and organizing all of your data can be quite an undertaking. You can have your VA go over all of your web analytics and customer data to organize it and share it with you in digestible reports or updates. This allows you to more quickly access the information that's pertinent to your business at a particular moment, without having to pour over all the minute details for hours on end.

They Complete Tedious Daily Tasks

Things like data entry and Internet research tend to be fairly time-consuming and don't necessarily require attention from a high-level team member. But they're still essential for your business. By giving these tasks to a VA, you can feel confident about the completion of those important items without taking significant time from your own day, while saving managers and specialized employees from focusing on them.

They Let You Focus on What You Do Best

Most entrepreneurs have a specialty. Maybe you develop software products or help other businesses develop marketing plans. But when you start a business, you also have to handle support tasks like bookkeeping and marketing. If you're not good at these things, you may end up wasting a ton of time learning the ins and outs or struggling through trial and error.

Hiring a specialized VA allows you to outsource the items with which you struggle. You can trust that the tasks will be handled competently — maybe even better than you would have on your own. And it frees up a ton of your time to focus on things that you're actually good at. It also gives you a better opportunity to work on growing your business, rather than getting stuck in the day-to-day operations. This can be especially helpful for solopreneurs or very small businesses where the owner needs to wear many hats at once.