

Title:

VAs - Your Secret Weapon

Word Count:

798

Summary:

Want to know how you can grow your business without growing your expenses? Here's a hint - it's easier then you think.

Keywords:

Marketing, business, business success solutions, growing a business, VA, virtual assistant

Article Body:

Probably the biggest problem with being a small business owner is right there in that phrase. Small.

Small means few or no employees. Small means you end up doing most, if not all, business tasks yourself.

Whether or not you're any good at them.

But even if you ARE perfectly capable at completing those tasks, is doing them really a wise use of your time? (Just because you CAN do something, doesn't necessarily mean you SHOULD.)

As a business owner, you should be focused on the big things - a vision for your business, putting together a plan to reach that vision, developing new products, spending time with your clients and marketing. In other words, those "big picture" tasks that grow your business.

What you should NOT be doing is worrying about getting your invoices out, mailing products, providing troubleshooting help, scheduling your time and all those other administrative duties.

In fact, the more time you spend on all the minutia of running a business, the less time you'll spend on tasks that can actually grow your business.

It's a vicious cycle. Maybe you feel like you don't have enough income to hire help. So you do the work yourself. Because you do the work yourself, you don't

have the time to work on growing your business. So then you don't feel like you have the income to hire help. And so on.

The same cycle exists if you feel you don't have enough time to locate and train help. You end up doing the work yourself because there isn't anyone who can help. And because you're so busy doing things you truly have no business doing, you'll never have the time to locate and train someone to help you out.

In either cycle, you're probably discovering you feel overwhelmed, drained and with zero creative energy. Instead of jumping out of bed excited at being in business, you wake up each morning facing a to-do list longer than War and Peace and wanting to crawl back into bed and put your pillow over your head.

So what's the solution? Hire a virtual assistant.

Virtual assistants, also known as VAs, are freelancers who specialize in taking care of the "busy work," freeing you up so you can focus on why you started your business in the first place.

Because they're freelancers, you pay them for the hours they work. And you don't pay for overhead, vacation, taxes, office supplies, a desk, etc. It's a perfect win-win for everyone.

VAs can break you out of both those cycles and put you on the path to building a successful business. They can help you with just about every business task imaginable (with the sole exception of filing - you're probably stuck doing that yourself). Some examples include:

- * Bookkeeping, including invoicing, paying bills and following up with unpaid invoices
- * Product fulfillment
- * Customer service
- * Answering e-mails and phone calls
- * Scheduling business and personal appointments
- * Maintaining databases
- * Updating Web sites
- * Submitting articles to article databases

And much more.

In fact, if you want to see a list of what a VA can help you with, check out IVAA.org (International Virtual Assistants Association) and AssistU.com. These organizations can also help you find the right VA for your business. VAs

specialize in different business services, such as marketing or bookkeeping, so make sure you find a VA who focuses on what you actually need.

I can tell you from experience that once you take the plunge and hire a VA, you'll kick yourself for waiting so long. You'll have more time to devote to the tasks you most enjoy (rather than struggling with the ones you hate), you'll be less stressed and have much more creative energy. Plus you'll probably find yourself making even more money.

Creativity Exercise -- Hire a VA

Ready to try a VA but not sure how to begin? I suggest starting small. Like five hours a month.

Make a list of everything you do in your business each day. If you get stuck, keep a notebook on your desk and write down things as you do it.

Now look at the list. Pick something you could delegate to a virtual assistant and would take around five hours a month.

Once you find the right VA and have freed up those five hours, make sure you use those hours to do something to grow your business. Maybe do some more marketing or develop a new product line.

Now after you've started seeing more income, take some of that extra money and add to your VA's tasks. Again, use the time you've freed up to continue to grow your business. Before you know it, you'll have built a thriving, successful business with less stress and have more energy and income than ever before.