

Title:

How do I communicate with my virtual assistant?

Word Count:

912

Summary:

A very valid question but also a very easy one to answer. First, you must remember that your professional virtual assistant is a human being, just like you, and just like someone who may sit in the office right next to you. She has feelings, morals, standards, kids, pets, and a life - just like you.

Keywords:

virtual assistant, communication, talk, communicate, effective work, work from home, work at home, telecommute, telecommunication

Article Body:

A very valid question but also a very easy one to answer. First, you must remember that your professional virtual assistant is a human being, just like you, and just like someone who may sit in the office right next to you. She has feelings, morals, standards, kids, pets, and a life - just like you.

While I can't speak for other virtual staffing agencies, at Team Double-ClickSM, we go to great pains to be sure our clients can communicate directly and openly with their virtual assistants. This ability is vitally important to any business relationship and especially that of a businessperson and his or her assistant. Without that communication, there is no exchange of ideas and tasks. We do monitor communication between our virtual staff and our clients, but this is simply the mechanics of our business model in motion. We monitor these communications to first be sure the communications are there and second so that we can step in if we spot a problem or see something that can be done more efficiently. However, we encourage our clients to get to know their virtual assistants on a personal level as well. As with any relationship, the better you know one another, the better you'll be able to anticipate one another's moves, needs, and pet peeves. Now that the "why" is out of the way, we can talk about the "how".

Of course, there are several options for communicating tasks, assignments, and other matters to your virtual assistant:

E-Mail is a very effective mode of communication when working virtually. It

allows you to quickly attach a file and send it to your virtual assistant so that she may make changes, print a letter and mail it, or keep it as a reference. Be sure to talk to our Client Services Rep Denise Schrock or your virtual administrative assistant if you need help attaching and sending files.

Using the telephone to communicate with your virtual assistant, while obvious is quite underutilized and so simple to do. Tired of looking up your virtual assistant's phone number each time? Simply program her phone number into your office phones and cell phone's speed dial. One-touch dialing your virtual administrative assistant is a snap and no harder than buzzing a bricks-and-mortar assistant in the next room

Instant messenger is another example of a wonderful technology, which is underutilized when it comes to communicating with virtual assistants. There are several excellent instant messaging programs and they're so easy to use.

IM programs to check out:

Yahoo: <http://messenger.yahoo.com>

MSN: <http://im.live.com/messenger/im/home/?source=MSNTDLINK>

AOL: <http://www.aim.com>

ICQ: <http://www.icq.com>

With an instant messaging program you can, with just a couple clicks of the mouse, type messages back and forth with colleagues and your virtual assistant - all in real time. You type, she types, and before you know it, the questions you and she had are all answered and you can move on.

Caution - time wasting opportunity: It's easy to get hooked into "chatting" with someone on IM, which can soak up a lot of time. IM should be used for quick questions and quick answers, and then back to your tasks. IM was not meant to take the place of the telephone for giving lengthy instructions or holding very involved e-versations.

Snail mail, while very retro, it is sometimes necessary. With so many technologies at our fingertips these days, there's very little use for snail mail except for the most formal of business communications, marketing mailings, or sending supplies to your virtual assistant.

Faxing your virtual assistant is also a popular means of communicating tasks and lists to your professional virtual assistant. However, if the items you're intending to send via fax are in electronic (editable) format already - it's best to send it as a file attachment. That way your virtual assistant doesn't

need to retype everything and spend unnecessary client dollars. Check out eFax at www.efax.com for the latest in electronic faxing - there's almost no need for a landline fax anymore.

VOIM (voice over instant messenger) is my new favorite communications toy. What VOIM allows you to do is simply pull up your instant messaging program, click your virtual assistant's name, click the call button, and voila, it rings through the computer to her. Once the connection is established (which only takes a second or two) you can talk with your virtual assistant through the computer - no phone line involved). You can then quickly delegate tasks, give instructions, or ask questions without stopping to look up her phone number, and without typing out a lengthy email. At Team Double-ClickSM, we've begun implementing the Yahoo! VOIM program and with wonderful results. If you'd like to give it a try, go to <http://messenger.yahoo.com> and download the software - it's ridiculously easy to use and best of all, it's free!

Just keep in mind that VOIM will only work with other people who download the newest version of the Yahoo! software and have a microphone and speakers on their computer.

There are many great ways to communicate needs, likes, dislikes, tasks, and training to your virtual assistant. It's all a matter of personal preference and what you're most comfortable using. Professional virtual assistants are flexible and will be happy to use whatever mode of communication you prefer. As technology advances even further, well, who knows how we'll be communicating next year or even next month!