



## WHAT IS A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT?

A virtual assistant or virtual executive assistant is a business owner, typically a sole proprietor or limited liability corporation, who works remotely to accomplish projects and/or tasks for an individual, small business, or corporation. They are 1099, Independent Contractors, and should be treated as such in accordance with the United States Internal Revenue Service's definitional guidelines. The IRS offers Form SS-8, Determination of Worker Status, to help you decide if the person you have working for you is an employee or independent contractor. It can also be a helpful guide to you as well as your independent contractor in establishing best practices when working together. You can download that form here: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss8.pdf>

### HISTORY



The term virtual assistant (VA) began to emerge in the early 1990's when technological improvements such as high-speed internet and accessibility of home-based computers became reality. This allowed workers to have an opportunity to work remotely from their home or anywhere around the world. It is tough to gauge how many VA's are available in the world as they typically offer their own websites and services. There are companies who have work-from-home job sites and services but users need to proceed with a lot of caution as all-to-often employers are treating those workers as employees, not VA's.

### WORKING WITH A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

The IRS has guidelines their guidelines and you should make sure that your VA understands those as well as you. In fact, your VA should be the one to help keep everyone focused on making sure you don't cross the line and start treating them like an employee. You want to have a conversation with your potential VA, not sure an email back-and-forth. They are people who should be business-minded and focused on YOUR success. They understand that YOUR success means THEIR success.

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### PAYING A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

A VA can be used on occasion to perform tasks here and there and they are typically paid a flat rate, agreed upon in advance, for the task. That rate should never be discussed as an hourly rate. It can be loosely based on the estimated time needed to perform the task, but should never be paid or recorded as "by the hour work". If you work with a VA team, that company would be responsible for paying each individual contractor because they would work for the VA team/company. You would pay the company only. Depending on the structure of the VA team business, you may or may not have to supply them with a 1099Misc every year.

### VA TEAM VS INDIVIDUALS

A VA team is typically managed by one contact person who in turn assigns the tasks to specific talent on their team to produce the best possible results for you. They are typically paid monthly in advance of services. The monthly fee is loosely based on needed hours and tasks. This is often the best option for entrepreneurs and small business owners who are desperate to get out of the back office work themselves, but are not able or willing to hire an employee to do the functions (ideal for the entrepreneur who works from home, themselves!).

### CONTRACTS

It is strongly encouraged that you have a contractual agreement with you VA or VA company. The contract is an accountability document for BOTH sides of the agreement, so all parties understand the scope of work and expectations as well as the limitations.



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## HOW TO HIRE A VA

Like you would with an employer, it is a good idea to do a bit of background checking as well as interviewing. A VA can be a tremendous benefit but not if you do not connect. Although it will take a few months of working with one another to learn each other's nuances, quirks, learning styles, and needs; the time put in to do so will be well worth it in the end and can result in life-long business relationships. Start with a list of all the things you either do or need to do and decide if any of them could be done by someone who is not sitting in your office. Delegate tasks!

## WHAT DUTIES TO PASS TO THE VA

The specific duties vary according to YOUR needs and, of course, the terms of the contract. Some VA's perform bookkeeping, clerical work, proofreading, or even ghost writing i.e. blogs and articles. Other VA's specialize in social media, website building and maintenance, and graphic design. A VA can even handle travel arrangements, itineraries, scheduling, or personal services such as shopping online for specific items you need, birthday and anniversary reminders, and so on. Ideally, you would partner with a VA company who can provide all the services you need under one contract.



## The advantages of hiring independent contractors include:

- Saving on benefits and a salary as you are not required to pay these to a contractor, even if the cost per hour is typically higher than an employee
- A 1099 worker can typically save upwards of 40% on labor costs
- You have a choice to work with the contractor if you want to or not, while it's not easy to fire an employee
- You can hire a specialized person for a particular task because they often have years of experience already
- Contractors have to figure out their own work permits and licenses
- There are no health benefits for contractors, which can save you money



For more information regarding virtual assistance, and to speak to someone to help you determine if virtual assistance is right for you, please visit [www.orcvirtual.com](http://www.orcvirtual.com)



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