

# Virtual Help for Real Entrepreneurs

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By Pattie Simone | Entrepreneur.com

**Learn the many roles a virtual staff can fill to help grow your business.**

If you're like most entrepreneurs, you've got piles of paper cluttering your office and to-do lists that seem to be multiplying like rabbits. The good news is that many of the tasks that keep you from being as productive (and profitable) as you could be can be outsourced. You may not think you can afford to hire help, especially in these economically turbulent times. But the fact is you can't afford not to.

## Today's Profit Formula

The internet lets you access scads of talented folks with a click of your mouse. And while some tasks, such as filing or greeting clients, might require on-site work, many administrative, marketing and sales functions can be handily accomplished using the services of one or more Virtual Assistants (VAs).

Having a VA frees you up to do what you do best. The smart profit formula for lots of successful entrepreneurs (whether they're a firm of one or many) involves a little front-end investment for maximum returns.

For example, Danny Bradbury, a Canadian freelance writer with clients in his home country, the UK and the Middle East, has seen his workload decrease by 25 percent and business increase 30 percent since using a VA for administrative tasks, such as scheduling interviews, transcribing interviews, tracking down contacts, doing back research and registering him for webinars. Sounds like a darn good deal, right?

## Three More Takes Regarding VA's...

Laurie Macomber, president of Colo.-based Blue Skies Marketing, an SEO company serving clients across the country, uses a team of virtual workers from different areas (including Canada) to handle diverse functions. Her VA, Melissa Silva, runs Alchemy Virtual Office Solutions out of her Georgia home. She accomplishes an impressive list of tasks for Macomber, including:

- \* -Team management and communications
- \* -Scheduling and tracking jobs
- \* -Setting up virtual password protected communications and file sharing system
- \* -Sending presents to clients for referrals, writing and sending out handwritten thank you notes
- \* -Research
- \* -Proofreading and "prettifying up" documents

According to Macomber, aka the Google Guru, along with the benefit of having time to run her business, she loves that she doesn't have to deal with any personnel or HR issues typically associated with a part-time or full-time employee.

"At first I thought it was outrageous when I discovered the cost would range from \$30 to \$35 an hour, but their hour is so efficient," Macomber says. "Their 15 minutes is another person's hour."

Michael Katz, chief penguin of Blue Penguin Development, an electronic newsletter relationship marketing firm in Massachusetts) concurs. He went back to work with a VA after a three-month stint with a less productive employee. His L.A.-based VA, who works for Ohio-based Coaches Marketing Source, handles behind-the-scenes tasks that include the mail server and shopping cart, as well as projects related to spell checking and what Katz calls “important detail work.”

Katz found his VA through a friend’s recommendation. Katz says his VA experience has been purely positive. “She allows me to be more effective. I know that there’s a direct connection between the increased income I see coming in,” Katz says, adding it covers the expense of paying his VA.

Kim Beasley is the owner and senior developer of several businesses, including CustomizeWordPress and Agape3 Business Services, a five-year-old web design and business consulting firm in St. Louis. She has clients all over the world, including Australia and Canada, due in no small part to her team of VAs. Unlike Katz, who prefers to utilize his VA for back-end tasks, Beasley assembled a VA team of professionals with specific skill sets that directly handle many of the services she offers. Her three VAs take care of graphic design, content management, audio and video editing, as well as a range of internal administrative work like managing Beasley’s calendar, scheduling webinars and training, putting networking information on Facebook, etc.

“I believe in using the strengths of my VAs, and those things I feel I can outsource, I do,” Beasley says.

Because of the web and the various business-related portals and programs (such as Basecamp, GotoMeeting, Twitter and Facebook) these entrepreneurs can do everything a traditional brick-and-mortar does, and more; including client prospecting, account management, selling products and providing services. Effective VAs are worth their weight in gold.

<http://www.adminsecret.com/benefits/articles/1073-virtual-help-for-real-entrepreneurs-?page=2>