

“Nothing can add more power to your life than concentrating all your energies on a limited set of targets.”

—Nido Qubein

Top 10 Considerations When Working with a VA

By JJ Murphy

1. The Bottom Line

Time is money. How much time do you spend drafting, typing, revising and sending written communications, developing a marketing plan, handling contact management and similar tasks? Outsourcing to a specialist will save you time and money.

2. Dependability

You're not hiring an employee; you are establishing a relationship with a trained professional and fellow entrepreneur offering specialized services. VAs provide the support, experience, service resource, and expertise you need to get the work done. A VA's reputation is built on accuracy, excellent quality, confidentiality, and delivery on or before deadline.

3. Know Your Needs

Look for a VA who has the skills that match your needs. "Virtual Assistant" can mean every support service from document production, marketing, transcription, writing, accounting and bookkeeping, desktop publishing, technical hardware

and software support, data entry, graphic design, résumé preparation, website development and optimization – and more.

4. Confidentiality

All communications, work products, documents, contact information, and company information is strictly between you and your VA. A reputable VA will not divulge any information to a third party and will return all originals, drafts, and support materials to you.

5. Ethics

What is your work style? In addition to a VA's skills, trust is essential. Many VAs are EthicsChecked Certified by the International Virtual Assistants Association. IVAA (www.iva.org), a trade organization that has certification processes for their members, offers referral services and sets industry standards.

6. Virtual Value

E-mail, online communication, phone, and fax save valuable time – and money. You don't need to provide the infrastructure or bear the burdens of overhead.

7. Flexibility

Do you have a once a year project? Do you need help a few hours every month or for a quarterly project? A VA relationship is win-win – you get what you need when you need it, and you pay only for the time on task.

8. Ebb and Flow

Does your business have seasonal cycles? What are the busy times of the month or year and the slow times? A VA works with you to make the best use of these time periods.

9. Think Outside the Box

If you have employees, what is it costing you to provide the workspace, equipment, training, benefits, and salary? How much of what you are paying is for vacation, sick time, and down time? VAs use time tracking software to keep track of each client's work.

10. Work Smarter, Not Harder

A good VA will remove obstacles, to make you look your best and to give you the support you need to get the job done properly on time – the first time, every time.