

ARE YOU BUSY . . . OR PRODUCTIVE?

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**By Mason Duchatschek**

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Are you busy or are you productive? The question is innocent enough. But can you handle the truth?

Recently I was doing some consulting with a client who carefully examined how his sales representatives spent their time. He concluded that they actually spent less than 5 percent of each day engaged in the act of selling! Imagine, 95 percent of each sales day spent on nonselling activities. Writing letters, putting together information packets, filling out paperwork, telephone prospecting, and traveling consumed their days.

As you can imagine, my client wanted to grow sales revenues. Some sales trainers attempt to convince prospects that training is the answer for everything. While I encourage the acquisition of knowledge and new skills, I disagree with the blind assumption that training is always a cure for poor sales performance.

Let's pretend that he sent his entire staff to a sales training seminar, and they learned skills that made it possible for them to double their closing percentages. The improvement would only be useful during that 5 percent of each day they spent selling.

Adding salespeople isn't always the answer either! If each rep is spending 5 percent of their day selling, it would take another 19 reps to achieve 8 hours of selling time. Common sense will tell you that the costs of recruiting, training, and managing such a force would be an awful waste of potential profit.

So let me get to the point. Are your salespeople spinning their wheels? Are they spending time, money, and energy keeping busy or producing results? If you're not sure, be on the lookout. Watch and see if your reps are doing things that less-skilled and lower-paid support personnel could be doing for them. Do your representatives spend time doing things manually that could be done better, faster, and more efficiently using technology?

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For example, are they writing and launching mailing campaigns that could be done better and faster by an assistant with a computer and automation software? Are they spending hours each day leaving messages in prospective clients' voice mail boxes instead of having sales assistants with Direct Voice Mail Marketing Systems make calls for them?

Let me encourage you to rethink the assignment of individual job responsibilities and list the tasks necessary for successful job performance. Take a look at which tasks require the specific knowledge and ability of a salesperson and which ones don't. Build teams of support personnel and leverage technology wherever possible to cost effectively and efficiently accomplish the simple, yet time-consuming, tasks that hold your salespeople back.

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Mason Duchatschek is the president of AMO–Employer Services, Inc., in St. Louis, Missouri, and co–author of the book *Sales Utopia: How to Get the Right People, Doing the Right Things, Enough Times*. His phone number is 1–800–245–0445, and his company's website is [www.amo-es.com](http://www.amo-es.com).

### **Hiring A Virtual Assistant Can Help Your Business Grow**

**By Marie Fahey**

In today's tough economical times it's hard to think of hiring someone else to assist you, but it may be more cost effective than you think. If you're spending a large percentage of your day doing "busy work" rather than working on growing your business or gaining more clients, a virtual assistant may be right for you.

Are you a writer, but spend more time researching and less time on your actual writing? Are you a professional coach, but spend more time with your newsletter and other day-to-day things and less time finding new clients? Are you a realtor, but spend more time on your mailings instead of getting new listings? Maybe you're the home business owner and you're Webmaster, receptionist, and assistant all in one, but you aren't productive enough. These are circumstances where an assistant could be used. Now you're thinking, my business is too new or my business is too small for an assistant. A "Virtual Assistant" could be your answer.

A Virtual Assistant only works when it is necessary. In other words, you only pay when there is work to be done. You might only need someone to send out your weekly newsletter, do some research for the book you're writing, keep your schedule/calendar, do a mailing for you, or all of the above. Whether it is one hour a week or 20, your VA will be there for you. She or he can live anywhere, so you do not need to provide office space or equipment. Taxes, social security, and benefits won't be a worry for you because your VA is working for herself.

Finding and hiring a VA is also an easy process. With technology always progressing and more people wanting to stay home with their families, many assistants are leaving the workplace and starting their own businesses from home and bringing all of their experience with them. You can get their

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resume and references or just hire them for a small job. As your partnership grows you'll feel more comfortable assigning more work. At any time, if either of you feel it isn't the right fit you can easily convey this to each other and end the partnership.

Trying a VA may be the best thing for your business whether it is small, large or just beginning. Focus your attention less on your usual busy work and more on growing your business. You may be pleasantly surprised at what a VA can bring to your business.

Marie Fahey is a virtual assistant, wife and mother of two living and working from her home in Massachusetts. She has 10 years experience as an assistant. If you have questions regarding Virtual Assistants or would like to hear more about her services, please contact Marie at

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3 Time Management Tips for Stay at Home Moms  
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Using Candles in Feng Shui Decorating  
Overcoming Boredom in Six Ways

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