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Virtual Staffing For Your Small Business

By By Chris Malta & Robin Cowie

What's a Virtual Assistant?

Virtual assistants are independent contractors or entrepreneurs who provide administrative assistance to multiple clients. Unlike regular assistants, they work out of their homes rather than at your business' physical location.

There are numerous advantages to using a virtual assistant:

- Location. If you work from home, you don't have to find a place to put an employee.
- No Overhead. They provide their own office supplies, desk, computer, software, and phone lines.
- No Benefits. They're not your employee, so you aren't responsible for paying social security or income taxes, holidays, insurance, vacation or sick pay.
- Lots of Flexibility. It's significantly easier to find a virtual assistant who can work evening hours or weekends—after all, they're working from home. And you can give them more or less hours as your needs change.

There are virtual staffing companies that match virtual assistants with small and home-based businesses who need help running things.

How Do I Know What I'm Getting?

Gayle Buske is the president and CEO of

<http://TeamDoubleClick.com>

, a highly reputed virtual staffing

agency. Her clients are often concerned about hiring someone without ever seeing their face. She reassures them that because the agencies don't get to meet the people they send to their clients—often they're in different states—their hiring processes are a great deal more stringent. In fact Buske admits, "We turn away about 70% of the people that we interview." Those who make the grade go through a 9-part interviewing process and then are trained and certified.

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Virtual agencies try to match each client with an assistant who is a good fit for their needs. They look at qualifications, personality and work style, and hours of availability—both number and times. Whatever your unique requirements, they'll work to find someone who's a good fit.

Common Client Concerns

- How do I know that my assistant is actually working the hours I'm paying them for?

To allow you to track their progress, many agencies have their staff send daily reports of their activities. They may say how many inbound calls they received, how many outbound calls they made, how many appointments they set, what documents they worked on, as well as how many hours they put in for the day and their cumulative hours for the week. This can help you stay on budget—if you see they've already worked the total hours you planned to pay them for, you can push back other projects until next week.

- How hard is it to work with someone from a remote location?

Buske points out, "There's so much technology now that really facilitates working virtually." She contends it's as simple as hitting the speed dial instead of the intercom or attaching files to an email rather than walking them to the next room. Most of your communication will be via phone, fax, and email. There are also online meeting programs (

<http://GoToMeeting.com>

) that let you do

demonstrations and presentations, such as for training purposes.

And their skills run the gamut—everything from accounting to marketing to graphic design. Whether you need someone to answer incoming calls and do mailers or someone who can manage your entire business when you're away, you can find staff with all levels of skills.

Chris Malta and Robin Cowie of WorldwideBrands.com are the Writers and Hosts of The Entrepreneur Magazine EBiz and Product Sourcing Radio Shows. [Click Here](#)

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Choosing The Wrong Server Will Literally Make Or Break You

By Rich Hamilton, Jr

Choosing the right web server will be one of the most important decisions you will ever make with your online business. Why? Because the web server you choose will literally make or break your online business.

Today I am going to talk about two types of servers, one is Virtual Web Hosting and the other is Virtual Private Servers.

Over the last couple of years Virtual Web Hosting has been the only way to go when choosing a web server. One of the reasons that Virtual Web Hosting became so popular was because they supported the necessary files and allowed you to have more freedom than other conventional web hosts. But now you can have more freedom than ever before with Virtual Private Servers. Moreover, Virtual Private Servers should not be confused with Virtual Hosts, because they are completely different.

Before I go any further I must explain what the difference is between a Virtual Host and a Virtual Private Server, so that you can fully understand. In this article I will also go over the advantages and disadvantages of both types of servers, to help you decide which is right for you and your business. Let's get started with Virtual Hosting.

Virtual Hosting

Virtual Hosting is also known as Shared Web Hosting, where you are sharing the physical server and a single set of software applications with other users. Virtual Hosting has been extremely popular in the past for its fast deployment, strong resources, and most importantly for having a very reasonable price. Another advantage to Virtual Hosting is that you have a powerful, reliable, and professionally managed server without having to have advanced technical skills, making it ideal for an individual, small business, or even a beginner webmaster.

The disadvantage of Virtual Hosting is that you are sharing the server with other users, which are configured and controlled by an administrator, not you. So basically you have your hands tied behind your back, because you have to contact the administrator everytime you have to adjust or change your configuration settings. Even if you managed to get a hold of the administrator, they may not fulfill your request. It's up to them, they are the administrator. If you were the administrator you wouldn't have these limitations and would have full control.

Virtual Private Servers

Virtual Private Servers are a hot topic these days and for a good reason. Before I get into the advantages of a Virtual Private Server, let explain what it is first. A Virtual Private Server is a single server that is partitioned at the root into multiple dedicated servers. This allows you to share the cost of the network connectivity, hardware, and system maintenance with other hosting customers, while maintaining your flexibility and freedom.

The real advantage of Virtual Private Servers is that they allow you to have complete control and they have the security advantages of a dedicated server at the fraction of the cost. You have access to the virtual root, Telnet, web configuration files, and full CGI-BIN access. I can't forget to mention that you

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also have access to your password, aliases file, and sendmail configuration file. For many reasons you can see that a Virtual Private Server is an excellent solution for small to medium size businesses that have an increasingly complex needs.

Moreover, there is one disadvantage with Virtual Private Servers, you need to have some program knowledge to control and configure the settings. Sounds overwhelming, most businesses that offer Virtual Private Servers have very detailed manuals making them easier to configure and control no matter what your program level is.

Which one is right for you? Well, that all depends on you and the size of your network.

If you have or plan on having just one web site and have absolutely no programming knowledge, then Virtual Hosting is the recommended and economical way for you to go. A Virtual Host can cost anywhere from \$20 – \$50 a month for an account, rather than a \$100 or more for a Virtual Private Server.

On the other hand, if you have a larger network that requires multiple web sites, like ours, and you have some programming knowledge, then a Virtual Private Server is ideal for you. You can host up to 50 web sites on a Virtual Private Server account, instead of having multiple Virtual Hosting accounts, which is not as economical.

When it comes time to get a web server, make sure that the server fits your needs and that it supports the essential software for a prosperous online business.

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Hiring A Virtual Assistant Can Help Your Business Grow

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What's Missing From Your Virtual Assistant Business Website That's Costing You Clients

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