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## How to Hire The Perfect Virtual Assistant

Going by Pareto's 80-20 Principle, your administrative work is probably taking 80% of your time, delivering 20% result or less. So you want to outsource the work to a Virtual Assistant, leaving you free to focus on growing your business.

But then, you need the Perfect Virtual Assistant since much of your work may have a direct public interface and you would be judged by your new Assistant's work. Here's a checklist of items you need to take care of to hire the Perfect Virtual Assistant:

1. **List the Tasks:** Make a list of the tasks you want the Virtual Assistant to perform and create a **job description**. The list can include general tasks like creating and updating databases, maintaining your calendar and scheduling appointments, to the more function-specific foreign language translation, press release writing and distribution, maintaining blogs, other content writing and editing, SEO tasks like link building and article submission, internet research, book keeping, maintaining employee records, performing pre-interview screening and more.
2. **Search for the Virtual Assistant:** Perform a Google Search when searching for a Virtual Assistant. If you are looking for a good Assistant, look in at the Virtual Assistant Forums and Virtual Assistant Associations first or ask your contacts for references. You can extend your search to classifieds like Craigslist and freelance sites too.
3. **Evaluate the Site:** Good Virtual Assistants maintain professional websites with a good logo, description of their skills, experience and carry testimonials. Evaluate these elements carefully because they give you a good idea of the Assistant's capabilities, professionalism and ability to handle situations in a mature way. Further, match the listed skills with your task list. While most tasks on your list - email response, managing your calendar - could be handled by most Virtual Assistants, blog entries and website updates which require content writing or other industry-specific skills require a close match of the Assistant's capabilities with your task list.
4. **Evaluate the Applicants:** Once you filter the applicants based on their website, set up appointments and have in-depth conversations to evaluate the applicants' capabilities in handling your task list. Don't stop at the tangibles. Look for the intangibles - the person's business sense, ability to probe deeper with questions about your business and requirements, business commitment and experience in handling complex situations. Since you would be working online with the Assistant, these intangibles are a crucial element in building a working rapport that is comfortable to both.



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5. **Negotiating the Fee:** Ask for the fee she charges, evaluating it based on the tasks to be performed. Freelancers may be available at a low fee, but if you want a long-time or a high-end relationship, you would be better off choosing an experienced Virtual Assistant who charges more. Although the industry standard is in the \$30-\$60 range, you will get some outside this range too. Don't give up if the fee is beyond your budget. Try to negotiate a lower fee or see if a barter arrangement works for both.
  
  6. **Schedule the Time:** Discuss the time schedule so that there is clarity regarding the shift and the time period during which the Assistant performs your services. Agree on service levels - email response within 3 hours and so on. This gives you clarity regarding when your work gets done and helps you prioritize the tasks with the Assistant.
  
  7. **Successful On-boarding:** Once they come on board, Virtual Assistants need your continuous feedback to understand your business requirements and work style, so give it extensively. This helps you gain high levels of service and maximize your Return on Investment in the Virtual Assistant.