



WHAT IS A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT?

What is a Virtual Assistant? This is a question you've probably asked yourself if you have heard of the title "Virtual Assistant." A Virtual Assistant (VA) is an independent contractor and a home-based entrepreneur who uses the Internet, phone, fax, email, and other technology to communicate with his/her clients.

Virtual Assistants provide administrative support and/or specialized business services. Many Virtual Assistants were most often Administrative or Executive Assistants in traditional work environments before launching their Virtual Assistance Practices. Most Virtual Assistants work from their home office and, with the help of technology, other virtual locations. Technology has enabled Virtual Assistants to have a global client base.

Virtual Assistants: What do they do?

Ok...so now you know the answer to the question of what a Virtual Assistant is, now let's talk about what they do.

Virtual Assistants provide much of the same services as an onsite employee, but without the added expense to employers. Some provide general services while others provide more specialized services such as a Virtual Real Estate Assistant.

Here are some services Virtual Assistants offer (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Website and Graphic Design
- Website Maintenance and Updates
- Online and Offline Marketing and Promotion
- Accounting / Bookkeeping
- Data Entry
- PowerPoint Presentations
- Advertising in Print Media
- Desktop Publishing
- Custom Ad Design for print media
- Travel Arrangements
- Writing, Editing & Researching Services
- Secretarial Services
- Word Processing
- General and Legal Transcription Services
- Database Management
- Personal Assistant Services
- Event Planning
- Technical Support
- Coaching / Consulting
- Customer Service
- Real Estate Support

These are just a few services you can offer as a Virtual Assistant. The more specialized your services are, the less saturated the market will be. Try to find a niche and target market if you have a specialized skill and/or expertise.

Basic equipment and software needed can include, but is not limited to, the following:

Basic Equipment:

- Computer and/or Laptop
- Cable, Satellite, or DSL Internet Service
- Modem
- Fax Machine
- Printer
- Copier
- Scanner
- Telephone with unlimited long distance service
- CD Burner

Software:

- Microsoft Office (Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Word, Outlook, Publisher)
- Macromedia Dreamweaver or Microsoft FrontPage (for web design, editing, and maintenance)
- Instant Messenger (AOL, Yahoo, MSN etc.)
- Antivirus Software
- Adobe Acrobat

While all the equipment and software above is not mandatory, they are very useful and worthwhile to learn how to use.

The Virtual Assistance industry is growing tremendously. It has enabled many to start their own business while being at home with their family. There are many great resources out there if you're an aspiring Virtual Assistant.