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VIRTUAL FREEDOM

HOW TO WORK WITH VIRTUAL STAFF
TO BUY MORE TIME,
BECOME MORE PRODUCTIVE,
AND BUILD YOUR DREAM BUSINESS



CHRIS DUCKER

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SECTION ONE

Finding and Hiring Your Virtual Staff

There aren't too many differences between finding and hiring virtual workers and doing the same with employees that will be based in your office. However, the differences that do exist are important to understand.

There's a lot to cover in this section, and we'll focus particularly on the following topics:

- understanding the myth of the super-VA (and busting it!)
- how creating your “3 Lists to Freedom” will change everything
- the different types of virtual workers and how they can help you
- how and where to find the right virtual staff
- ten interview questions you need to ask when hiring

Before you dive in, let's get a general overview of the game and learn about the ins and outs of the playing field.

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The Fundamentals

Just like in sports, we need to begin with the fundamentals. Once you understand these principles, you can tailor your approach to streamline the process. And this is a process—one that should be followed step by step.

Here are the basic rules of the game:

- 1. Your virtual workers are people, not a program.** Though communication with your virtual staff takes place via e-mail and web-based audio and/or video chat services like Skype, VAs still deserve the same respect you would give any human being. It's in your best interest to understand each worker's communication customs and to be aware of his or her cultural holidays and traditions.
- 2. Put quality in, get quality out.** The quality of work you receive from virtual employees is proportional to the quality of the instructions they receive. Are your instructions clear and concise? Or are you giving them a jumbled mess of instructions and hoping they can connect the dots?
- 3. One size does not fit all.** All VAs have strengths and weaknesses, but they may not want to tell you that. They want to please you and will try to figure out ways to do whatever you want. This is a double-edged sword. Take care to match the right VA to each of your needs. We'll go into this in a lot more detail.

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4. **Super-VAs don't exist.** There is no one virtual assistant anywhere on the planet who can handle everything you need help with in your business. Think about it: When your roof is leaking, you don't ask your electrician to pop around and fix it. You call a roofing expert to come over and do the necessary repairs. This is one of the biggest myths in virtual staffing so I will discuss this in more detail below, but bottom line: hire for the role, not for the task.

Now that you know the rules of the game, we can get to work!

Reality Check: The Myth of the Super-VA

The idea of a super-VA is the big kahuna—the one mistake that I see entrepreneurs who are getting started with outsourcing make over and over again. Read these words carefully: there's no such thing as a super-VA. It drives me crazy when an entrepreneur sets out to find that one special VA who can do all of the work in his or her business. I can't tell you how many requests we receive at Virtual Staff Finder from entrepreneurs who are looking for VAs who can handle all of the following tasks and more:

- update blog posts
- manage social media
- edit video
- transcribe audio

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- create custom images and icons
- design and develop websites
- respond to customer support tickets
- research and recruit affiliates
- do Amazon shopping for birthday gifts for loved ones

There's nothing wrong with trying to outsource a scattered group of tasks and projects, but a single VA is not your answer. As a business owner, I can relate to the multiple hats entrepreneurs need to wear in order to get things done. However, filling your business with more entrepreneurial types who also think that they can do it all is the last thing you should do. Your focus needs to shift from finding a super-VA to identifying the specific roles your business needs to fill.

Remember, empire-building equals team-building—and you have to identify the positions your team needs before you begin recruiting the players.

Introducing the General Virtual Assistant (GVA)

I've had the pleasure of speaking on stage and working with business owners from all around the world on the subject of virtual staffing and outsourcing. No matter where I am or who I'm working with, my basic message remains the same: Every entrepreneur needs a GVA!

Even though the super-VA doesn't exist, the general virtual assistant is about as close to one as you can get. They can't wear all of the different VA hats out there, but GVAs will help you run your life and maximize your productivity

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by freeing you of time-draining, repetitive tasks that no business owner should be handling. Your GVA is your sidekick. Batman had Robin. Sherlock Holmes had Watson. Hardy had Laurel. Michael Jordan had Scottie Pippen.

Working with a GVA is the first step to realizing the power of virtual staffing. Your GVA will immediately begin saving you time and allowing you to work *on* your business instead of being trapped working *in* it.

Are you struggling to stay up to date with or roll out the following types of tasks on a regular basis?

- researching competitors' websites for lists of products and prices
- compiling a list of local events that you could sponsor or where you could exhibit
- combing your blog's analytics to find out which pages or blog posts are receiving the most traffic
- keeping your social media channels updated and interesting for followers
- getting featured in local, national, and industry-related press
- transcribing your online videos and podcast episodes to use as future e-books and in infographics to promote your products and services
- keeping your calendar updated so you don't miss an important golf date with your top client

Delegating these small tasks begins freeing up extra time for you each day. Ten minutes here and thirty minutes there can add up quickly. Delegating also gets rid of all those unresolved items you're carrying around in your head. As David



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Allen points out in his book *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, this is one of the critical factors that will allow you to focus.

“Your conscious mind, like a computer screen, is a focusing tool, not a storage place,” he writes. “You can think about only two or three things at once. But the incomplete items are being stored in the short-term memory space. And as with RAM (random access memory), there’s limited capacity; there’s only so much ‘stuff’ you can store in there and still have that part of your brain functioning at a high level. Most people walk around with their RAM bursting at the seams.”

It’s crazy how many things you’re probably juggling in your head right now. But it’s stuff that needs to get done, right? So it has to go somewhere. This is where your superhero syndrome begins to kick in, leading you into thinking that working harder is the solution. But again, the real solution is not longer hours—it’s leverage.

As entrepreneurs, time is our most valuable commodity (MVC). Money will come and go, but once you’ve invested your time into something, that time is gone forever. It stands to reason that if there are any actions we can take as business owners to free up more time in our daily routines, we should take them.

Hiring and working with a GVA will help you do just that. Think of your GVA as a personal assistant (PA). Aside from bringing you a cup of coffee or picking up your dry cleaning, GVAs can do all the same tasks that an old-fashioned, in-office PA could handle.

Here are just a few of the tasks a GVA can take off your

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plate so you have more space in your mind and in your workday:

- perform online research
- make online purchases (have the GVA use a prepaid credit card with a small amount you can fund and monitor each month)
- update your calendar
- make a dinner reservation
- draft your latest blog post or upload your YouTube videos
- send your spouse a gift
- or, if you're single, send e-mails to potential dates on Match.com or eHarmony—yes, really!
- update your Facebook status with prewritten posts
- order more business cards
- collate a list of articles from online news sources and e-mail you with a weekly update
- send a follow-up e-mail or letter to new contacts you just met at that conference you attended
- book your biannual dental cleanings and then update them on your calendar

You'll see that this list is just the beginning of how a GVA can help you achieve freedom on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, the GVA role is just one of many different types of virtual workers that are out there and ready to be put on your team. The question is, what else can you get virtual assistants to do for you?

You're about to find out, thanks to a very simple, quick, and effective exercise.

Creating Your 3 Lists to Freedom

Your first step toward freedom in any situation is to begin identifying exactly which tasks you want freedom from—and the types of workers you'll need to handle those tasks. This is why at my speaking engagements, in podcast interviews, and even in traditional press appearances on the subject of virtual staffing, I always include my 3 Lists to Freedom exercise. It's incredibly eye-opening, and it gives everyone a customized list of activities to work from as we move along.

Before you start putting together your three lists, let's consider all of the activities you'll need to incorporate. First, take a moment to think about all of the activities your business needs just to maintain itself—these are the day-to-day tasks such as customer service. Next, consider all of the activities needed to grow your business; this might include content creation, for example. Then, go through and highlight the items that you enjoy doing personally. Now you're ready to create your 3 Lists to Freedom.

1. Tasks You Don't Like Doing



This is any task that makes you cringe or procrastinate. Anything can be on this list—except for selling. Selling needs to be one of your top priorities because it's the lifeblood of any business, and no one should know your product or service better than you.

Do you routinely reply to customer service e-mails, perhaps answering the most basic of inquiries? Are you still laying out and formatting your own blog posts? Does this stuff drive you nuts? Put those types of things on this list.

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Australian-based James Schramko is one of the most popular Internet marketers operating online today. He is incredibly successful. James started working with virtual assistants to simply handle work that he didn't want to do himself anymore. The result is SuperfastBusiness.com, an extremely systemized online offering with well over fifty (yes, you read that correctly) VAs running his business for him around the clock.

2. Tasks You Don't Know How to Do

Be honest with yourself. Don't let superhero syndrome kick in here. I remember trying to design and develop my first blog on my own using a premium theme. It took me eight hours of work, and I still wasn't happy with it. Why? Because I'm not a bloody web developer, that's why!

Sit back and genuinely think hard about this one. Ask yourself questions such as

- Are there tasks you're currently doing that could be completed faster by someone else?
- Are there projects you're handling that could be wrapped up in a better, more professional way?
- Are you trying to cut costs by dabbling far outside your areas of expertise?

Business coach and podcaster Jaime Tardy hired VAs to manage the web development and online marketing side of her business, EventualMillionaire.com. Why? Because she simply didn't know how to do it herself and admitted the fact, instead of trying to teach herself.

3. Tasks You Feel You Shouldn't Be Doing

This is the list I want you to give the most thought to. It's usually a huge eye-opener for business owners because it gets their internal wheels turning about how they're currently running their businesses. More importantly, this list helps you see how you *want* to be running your business in the future.

Some questions to ponder:

- Which tasks should you simply never touch—meaning you could eliminate them from your schedule entirely, making way for more important tasks?
- Which low-level tasks could be easily given to a virtual assistant as part-time work?
- Which tasks are you handling that could be taken over by a professional who knows exactly what he or she is doing? These are tasks where the potential harm outweighs the cost savings of doing them yourself.
- Which tasks are stopping you from really focusing on the strategic growth of your business?

Mediapreneur David Siteman Garland was bogged down handling every tiny detail in his online media business, *TheRiseToTheTop.com*. Realizing that he needed more time to focus on the most important things, such as building relationships and further monetizing his blog and online brand, he turned to virtual help. He gained countless hours back into his schedule and today has one of the most popular online TV shows for entrepreneurs.

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Here's an example of how your lists might look, as you start out with the exercise. Note: This is standard stuff and generic to entrepreneurs everywhere in today's business world. Your lists should be focused on you and your specific needs as a business owner.

<i>List #1</i> Don't Like Doing	<i>List #2</i> Can't Do	<i>List #3</i> Shouldn't Do
Checking E-mail	Developing Website	Updating Facebook Page
Managing Social Media	Editing Podcast Episodes	Handling Tier 1 Support
Handling Basic Inquiries	Designing Logos & Graphics	Transcribing Online Video
Researching Travel Options	Bookkeeping & Accounts	Managing Company Blog

Keep your 3 Lists to Freedom handy: We'll be coming back to them quite regularly.

 *If you'd like to see a video version of this exercise, head over to **ChrisDucker.com/3Lists***

You now have a foundation of tasks that are easily delegated that will continue to grow over time, as they do for most entrepreneurs today—not only that, but through the 3 Lists to Freedom exercise you've deepened your understanding of yourself and the types of tasks you need

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to delegate. This is essential to your success. With that in mind, let's discuss how to find and hire the people who are going to help revolutionize the way you run and grow your business going forward.

Getting Ready to Start

This is where I begin leading you down the path to virtual freedom, distilling almost ten years of outsourcing experience into a bite-size training system that will revolutionize your personal and professional life.

But before we dive in, I need you to make me a promise. I want you to promise that before you incorporate a single virtual staff member into your workflow or hire additional staff, you will first commit to reading at least the first and second sections of this book. These sections have been specifically designed to point you in the right direction, and they will give you the solid foundation you'll need to build on.

Sure, you might stumble every now and then, but how quickly you pick yourself up and dust yourself off will depend on you consuming the content in these first couple of sections. In my experience, there are two solid reasons why your virtual staffing empire could crumble:

- 1. You build around one strong person instead of building a team with specific roles.** This is an easy trap to fall into when you find a VA who works exceptionally well for you. You may think your VA will always be with you

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and start building around his or her strengths instead of focusing on building a team. I truly value the longevity of my staff, but I would never put my company in a position where it would be completely destroyed if I lost someone. Each role within your organization should be clearly defined, and you should know exactly what you would do if someone decided to quit or if you needed to let someone go. Life must carry on.

2. **You fail to properly train your team.** Training is the foundation of your success with virtual assistants. You'll learn how to handle this part of the journey in Section 2 of this book.

I want to ensure that you don't make either of those mistakes.

Understanding the 2 Different Types of Outsourcing

In order to simplify things, think of outsourcing as falling into two different categories: project-based outsourcing and role-based outsourcing.

- **Project-based outsourcing** is used when a business needs just one task or one project completed. This might be a simple task like creating a logo or installing an auto-responder form on a website, or it could be a more detailed project like creating an e-commerce site or a mobile app.
- **Role-based outsourcing** involves finding someone

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to fill a particular role within your business on a part-time or full-time basis. In role-based outsourcing, the VA becomes a member of your team. In order for this to make financial sense, you'll need to have enough work to justify paying someone regularly to perform these tasks.

The upside to having a full-time or part-time employee on your team is the speed at which you'll be able to implement everything you want to do. But what if you don't have enough work or revenue to support a full-time or part-time virtual employee?

Great question. For now, you'll need to work with a project-based mindset but keep a long-term perspective. This means each task you outsource is an opportunity to

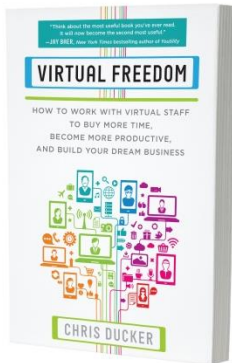
- **Learn how to properly communicate the work you want to delegate.** Save any correspondence or media that could be used to train future VAs. There's no reason to reinvent the wheel.
- **Find a VA you might want to work with in the future on a part-time or full-time basis.** Some of the best working relationships will arise out of working on smaller tasks together. Keep an eye out for promising talent that you'd like to bring on board in the future.



Whether you start on a smaller scale with freelancers on a task-by-task basis or you get started with a team of part-time or full-time workers, one thing is for sure—you had better understand who should be doing what for you.

Thanks for checking out:

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