

# How-To Choose a Virtual Assistant

1485 Words 4-6 minute read

## **It Really Is The Right Time For A Virtual Assistant!**

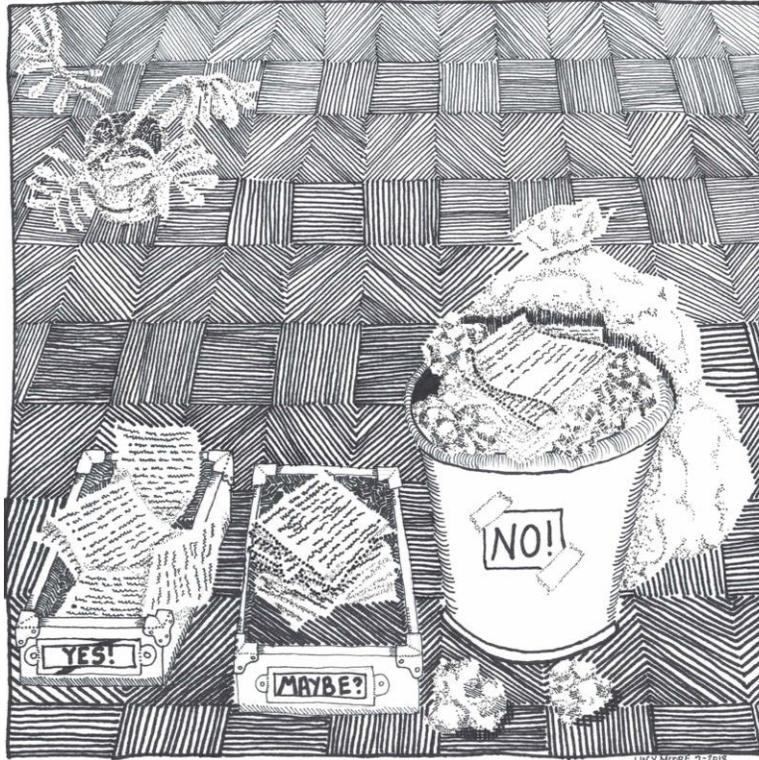
When you determine it is the right time to hire a Virtual Assistant, there is a process you should go through to make sure that the person you bring on board is the best possible fit for your needs, your business needs, the culture of your team, etc. The first part is a questionnaire interview. The second part is a personal interview. The third part is the selection process. This selection process is what I am going to go over now. You can see the information about the questionnaire interview by following the related link on our [Reports and Articles](#) page (the article is called “How-To Interview a VA”).

## **How-To Select Your Candidate!**

*You should already have some idea what it is you **want** and **need**.* These can and often are different. In fact, I feel they should be different. For example, you may need someone proficient at Excel, Basecamp, and Travel. You may be wanting to grow into a new range of products so you want someone proficient at research, and gathering quotes/communication. Alternatively, you may need someone to manage your inbox, accept scheduling calls, and keep your calendar, but you want to take your side invention to the public through Kickstarter, so you want someone proficient at crowdfunding. Getting someone up front with skills that they can grow and help you in future endeavors is only ultimately the best use of your time and energy now.

However, you may not yet know what it is you want. Maybe you are just starting out in a small startup – that’s fine too, just *have a clear vision in your head what it is you **need***, and find someone who is comfortable with expanding, or already has a wide general knowledge range. It is highly likely they can either adapt to your new needs as they come or help you solve the problems of finding another source when the issue arises.

When reviewing the answers to the questionnaire, *have them in **writing** (don’t use these for the in person interview.)* This will allow you to compare answers and details without memory, confusion, and distraction from getting involved.



Go through the candidates and pull out the **top 5 max** that stand out as good candidates. As you find a new one that fits the desired targets, put one of the five out to a second pile (this can grow to as many as necessary). You want your top picks to be no more than 5, because you want to easily get through messaging them if they click with you on a personal level. If you need to dig deeper, your second pile will give you a source of already culled prospects where you can pull the next top 5 from. Get rid of the answers of anyone who doesn't fit your needs in a way that it will be a bad mix just from the written answers. Cull the ones that either aren't in your time frame of needed availability, don't have the type of background you need or want, etc. Sift through to find the premium and the cream of the crop ones that you can work with.

Now, schedule an interview and do this either via video through a service like Google Hangout, Skype, etc. or by phone. You want to see how well they can communicate with you, and you want to see them answer some questions on the spot, not have a chance to carefully craft answers in an email. This part of the process is quite subjective (more so than evaluating the questionnaire) so be ready to assess your gut feelings in the interview.



## **The Interview!**

During this interview, ask any questions that came up for you while reviewing their emailed answers. Did they reference a program you don't know, did they make a point that was concerning or curious to you, etc. Now is the time to ask a pointed "do you have experience with ..." question about specific situational needs you have (not specific tools, etc.) If you need someone who has experience dealing with anxiety prone dyslexic law students who can't take tests or read emails that is attending Yale and suing another major university for not accommodating their disability (yes, I have had a client matching that description) then this is the time to find out how they will fit with YOU on a personal level.

Understand when asking this question, as many people as there are, you are not likely to find someone who has extended experience with people exactly like you. However, you will likely find that someone has experience with disabilities, or even anxiety disorders, dyslexia, etc. Get as much information as you can so you can find the most comfortable best situational match you can considering all other questions.

Watch and/or listen how they respond. Are they taken aback? Are they smooth in their delivery of their experience whatever it might be? How does their experience and response make you feel?

Another important question to ask is the pointed "do you have experience with ..." question about specific tools your organization uses (if they didn't already address this in the questionnaire.) While tools can be learned, your more addressing again, their ability to think and communicate on their feet, their communication skills (especially if they have little/no experience with it) about their experience, as much as whether they address their willingness to learn/expand their range if needed.

### **Additional Questions To Consider:**

- What is your target market?
- Is there an extra charge for rush projects?
- What is considered a rush job?
- What is the turnaround time on projects I send?
- Do you have others on your team?
- What happens if you get sick, go on vacations, have technical/computer/phone issues/etc.? What is the "back-up plan"?
- How do you do your invoicing (specific day of the month, anniversary date, etc.?)
- What type of payments do you accept?
- Do you require me to sign a contract? If so, what does it entail?
- Do you charge for the time we spend emailing, or on the phone?
- Will my tasks get subcontracted to someone else?
- Do you have a non-compete contract? If so, may I see it?
- What security measures do you have in place for passwords, backing up files, project management, etc.)
- What do you charge (increments and price?)
- Do you have experience in my industry?
- Why do short - term clients end their relationship with you?
- What is the best way to make the most out of your service?
- What do your long - term clients have in common?

**If you are considering hiring a service (such as Interlocked Solutions or others):**

- How are assistants assigned?
- What happens if they are not a good fit?
- Can I set specific time zone preferences or availability preferences?
- Can I interview my prospective assistant first?

*This is another one that shouldn't be a deal breaker on its own, but getting to meet the assistant first is a positive so you can see if there is a connection, what kind of communicator they are, and if it is a good fit. Understandably, if you are already asking a VA these questions directly, this doesn't apply, but some companies may wish to not load VA's up with meetings that are not going anywhere and just allow you to switch if the fit isn't good. Base your decision on how you handle the answer to this based on the answers to other questions.*

This interview only needs to be "long enough". There is no set time, but long enough for your head and gut to get a feel for the person, assess their on the fly/off the cuff communication skills, and their fit with you on a personal level. Once this is done, give it a rating/score however you like and rank those (max 5) you interviewed from best to least, and begin making offers. If needed, you can (as stated before) resort back to your second pool if the first 5 didn't pan out to be your newest and potentially best tool for productivity and quality.

Interlocked Solutions has room currently for new clients and we are interested in talking to you about your needs. Let us create a specific plan that meets all of your needs, and has room to grow for your potential desires by contacting us today at 972-885-9187.

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