



Virtual Assistant

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Assignment 1:

1. Discuss the role and responsibilities of a virtual assistant.
2. Outline the skills and knowledge required to be a virtual assistant.
3. Evaluate the benefits and limitations of working as a virtual assistant from home.
4. Suggest reasons why a company may employ a virtual assistant

UNIT 1
What Is a Virtual Assistant?



What Is a Virtual Assistant?

A Virtual Assistant is a professional who is highly skilled in specialties of administration, business, sales, technology, or other fields and industries that require specialised skills and services. They work from a remote location, outside of the office or the location of the client or employer. Majority of Virtual Assistants are employed separately from standard employees. Many times they are contract workers who are personally responsible for their professional accounting, tax liabilities, and other legal or regulatory requirements.

Successful Virtual Assistants normally function as a business. They seek to develop long-term relationships with clients in order to benefit both themselves as the Virtual Assistant and the client as a valuable resource. Perhaps one of the most attractive characteristics of a Virtual Assistant is the ability of their services and skills to be personalised and tailored for each of their clients and potential clients. The job description of the Virtual Assistant is usually very broad. As a result, Virtual Assistants need to be able to perform different jobs in different capacities based on the changing needs of the client or employer.

Virtual Assistants can either be hired as a business, can be contract employees, or can be employees that work remotely. Many times, the role of the Virtual Assistant is so important to a client, that they are regarded as more than a “remote secretary”, and are thought of more as executives and business partners.

Who Uses a Virtual Assistant and Why?

Businesses and individuals of all sizes and industries use Virtual Assistants. Business may use a Virtual Assistant to spread duties across people when resources are limited. Using a skilled and knowledgeable Virtual Assistant to complete and focus on a task that may normally take the involvement of more than one employee can save resources as well as time. Individuals may look to a Virtual Assistant not only for their knowledge and skills, but also for their ability to assist them with a responsibility that is complicated and complex.

Virtual Assistants have been used in a number of industries and professional that includes:

- Real estate
- Law
- Accounting
- Journalism
- Marketing
- Authors
- Web Design
- Technology
- Teachers
- University education
- Consulting

- Therapy
- Fashion
- Beauty
- Music
- Art
- Application development
- Computer software
- Computer development

Regardless of the industry, businesses and individuals normally have like events and circumstances that require the consideration and the use of a Virtual Assistant:

- A Virtual Assistant may be used if they are considered as part of a business or marketing strategy. This is common for a strategy that requires a role or assistance that is short term, or very focused in nature. For example, for a marketing strategy that wants to develop relationships with a new market, or determine the direct contacts for a specific market, a Virtual Assistant may be used to track and develop these potential markets and clients. In this case, the Virtual Assistant would have a very focused and targeted task that needs immediate and dedicated attention that may not be available through the business' regular employees.
- A Virtual Assistant may be used if a business or an individual has an important deadline, or continuous important deadlines that cannot be met with regular staff without affecting the business' or individual's normal productivity. These types of instances are normal during periods of high traffic that are not continuous in a given industry. For example, businesses or individuals may require a Virtual Assistant during a financial audit, during the holidays, or during periods increases in customers and inquiries (like during university or school registrations).
- A Virtual Assistant may be used when there is a change to an industry, legislation, regulations, or technology that current staff do not have the skills or specialisation to meet or accomplish. In this instance, a Virtual Assistant can also be viewed as a consultant or contractor because the nature of the job requires them to use their specialised skill to help the business or individual to meet this change. The difference between a consultant and a Virtual Assistant can simply be the location of the work. A consultant is normally required to work on the site of the employer when completing the work, or at least during certain periods of

the work. A Virtual Assistant will be able to complete the work remotely during majority if not all the stages of the job.

- A Virtual Assistant may be used when there an important job, or pivotal job that can only be completed by a limited number of individuals or even one individual in a business. In this instance, the Virtual Assistant may be used to complete the task that can be overseen for accuracy, when the individual does not have the time or resources to actually complete the job or task on their own. Considering that the task or job is still important, yet small, the Virtual Assistant will be an important partner without increasing the business' cost in equipment and other expenses.
- A Virtual Assistant can also be used as a “backup” or a secondary contact for a business or position. A small business may use a Virtual Assistant to answer inquiries or complaints. Considering that a small business can be so small that it may only employ one person (who may be the business owner), the Virtual Assistant may serve as a contact to keep sales and services moving while leadership or employees are on vacation or away from the office.
- A Virtual Assistant may be used by an executive or small business owner who needs personal or professional help with multiple tasks or a short or long period of time. In this case, a Virtual Assistant may closely resemble a personal or executive assistant.
- A Virtual Assistant can also be part of a strategy to grow a business. Allowing a Virtual Assistant to focus on smaller but important task while the business owner focuses on activities that directly influence the growth of the business is another use of a Virtual Assistant.

What Tasks Can a Virtual Assistant Do?

If a Virtual Assistant has been hired to complete a job, it is likely that they have been hired based on their ability and specialisation. Considering this, a Virtual Assistant can do many various tasks. For example, someone who is specialised in marketing or administration may not be skilled in high technological skills like software development and information systems. Generally, a Virtual Assistant's task can be listed in one of the following categories:

1. Accounting and Bookkeeping

A Virtual Assistant may be given a task to keep track of a business' finances. In this role, records of accounts receivables (money that is owed to the business) and accounts payable (money that the business owes) is tracked and recorded. A Virtual Assistant that specialises in accounting or bookkeeping will also be able to find cost savings opportunities for the business or the individual. This specialisation may also provide the opportunity to provide advice on accounting techniques and terminology that can assist in taxation, banking, or investments.

2. Scheduling, Marketing, and Appointment Setting

Scheduling, marketing, and appointment setting may also be an assigned task. Finding opportunities or keeping track of the daily, weekly, or monthly schedule of the client may also be assigned to a Virtual Assistant. Within this same category, the Virtual Assistant may also be charged with finding opportunities to spread the business' brand or to inform the market of the business' product or services. In this same capacity, appointment setting, scheduling, and marketing can be a combined task where the Virtual Assistant is charged with marketing the business, setting appointments, and tracking the schedule to ensure that the client keeps and has knowledge of their schedule.

3. Packaging and Shipping

With the rise of e-commerce (or internet store fronts), Virtual Assistants are commonly asked to handle task of inventory tracking, and fulfilling customer's orders. They may also be employed to serve as a point of contact should there be complications or errors in packages and shipping.

UNIT THREE

Starting Your Own Business – Decisions



How to Succeed With Your Business

Succeeding in business requires finances, strategies, consumers, and plans. We have already discussed the needs and the components of the marketing plan. The business plan is also important to business. It outlines the finances of the company, the marketing plan, the plan for the products and services, the hierarchy, as well as the outlook for plans and opportunities in the future. The business plans shows that the Virtual Assistant has a well throughout out strategy and plan to make the business successful and viable. It shows

potential investors that the business is professional, serious, and plans a long-run and history in the industry. It also outlines the ways in which the business plans to promote and contribute to the overall health and survival of the country and the businesses that it plans to do business with. In recent changes to business plans, they now also incorporate plans for CRM and social responsibility. Many business' find opportunities to contribute to community events and initiatives that not only provide an opportunity to market the business, but also shows that the business' goal and mission includes contributing to the overall wellbeing of the community in which it is marketing its services to.

Some of the keys to a successful Virtual Assistant business include:

- Dedication and patience

The role of a Virtual Assistant depends greatly on reputation and trust. Reputation as a remote and dependable professional will take time to establish with a client, and even longer to establish with an industry. Successful businesses will depend greatly on a client's past experience to determine if they return for more business or if they refer your business or services to another business or clients.

- Qualifications and Documentation of Expertise

It is not enough to "say" that you know how to do something or that you have experience and qualifications for any given task, you must be able to show evidence of your qualifications. Documentation like university credentials and degrees, as well as well as references and letters of praise from past clients will help you to prove to potential clients that you are a Virtual Assistant who is truly specialised and able to perform and delivery as indicated.

- Cash Flow

Cash flow is income. A successful business must ensure that there is more money coming into the business (income), than is going out of the business (in paying of debts and expenses). There may be occasions where a Virtual Assistant will be require to invest in certain task and projects, and then be compensated for the expense once they are paid for the work. A business with adequate cash flow will ensure that they can perform a task or job that requires this investment from them.

- Healthy Clients

Not every type of client or business is good for a Virtual Assistant business. Clients who are slow to pay invoices, who have a history of non-payment, or whose communication and interactions with the Virtual Assistant are stressful, over-bearing, or even unreasonable are not healthy clients. These clients can be considered more

expensive than they are worth. As a Virtual Assistant, health is an important contributor to personal and professional performance, as well as the overall health of the business. A Virtual Assistant who is over-whelmed by a client may have their performance diminished for other clients, or potential future clients. It is important to know when a client's inquiry should be rejected, or when a Virtual Assistant should give adequate notice to a client that, as of a certain date, they will no longer be able to perform in the capacity that they were hired to perform. It is important to take note if as a Virtual Assistant you are under contract obligations to unhealthy clients. In regards, if a Virtual Assistant is presented with a contract, it is important to include an exit clause that allows the Virtual Assistant to exit from a role or a task under circumstances that are fair to both the Virtual Assistant and the client.

How to Start Up Your New Business

Depending on the type of services that the Virtual Assistant business plans to offer, there may be different requirements to starting a new business. Certain industries like law, medicine, and accounting may require certain credentials in order for a Virtual Assistant to state that they specialise in the industry or the task. However, basic task or services outside of regulated industries have generally the same requirements for start up. Starting a new business begins with brainstorming on ideas, requirements, and outcomes. When starting a new business consider:

- Legal and regulatory requirements

There are legal and regulatory requirements that should be met when starting a new business. This will be discussed in more detail further, but as a Virtual Assistant and as a business, it is important that you ensure that your business is legally in compliance.

- The type of service that will be offered

Determine if these services require specific credentials, affiliations or requirements. Also determine if there is even a need for the service. Starting a Virtual Assistant business that provides services in CD reproduction in a time where almost every industry that used CD has gone digital, is not a smart business to start.

- Keep the services narrow

If the Virtual Assistant business will be limited to the availability of just one Virtual Assistant, it may be wise to keep the range of services narrow. This will ensure that they are high performance in the areas that the business claims it can provide, and the clients in which it can target. Because a smart marketing plan will include targeting potential customers, having services that are broad and cannot actually be targeted may seem like a good idea as far as being able to take on many jobs to generate a lot of income, but it also becomes unsuccessful in maintaining relationships and marketing strategies across the different industries that the broad range of services would address.

- Dedicate time to the business

Starting and owning a business can be very stressful. While it provides freedom in the workplace, it also requires off hours of work and time dedicated to the task. As a Virtual Assistant, clients may expect that the business and its representative be available during odd hours, and likely expect fast responses to communication and inquiries. Also, being able to manage time to meet deadlines is also important in starting a business.

- Set a budget and know financial limits

Starting a business requires investments that may take time to recoup. Knowing the business' operating budget, and ensuring that the business adheres to the budget is important to the starting a business. A financially volatile business is not an attractive partner for a potential client. Also, knowing the business' budget will help to determine what kinds of jobs and task the Virtual Assistant can take on. High stakes jobs where the Virtual Assistant takes on liability may not be financially feasible for the Virtual Assistant. For example, it may be unreasonable to believe that a Virtual Assistant business with one employee can take on the task of managing the accounting duties for a multi-billion dollar global company. While the prospect can be attractive, realistically under normal circumstances this type of task is taken on by an entire department or team of employees.

UNIT FOURTEEN

Basics of the Internet



Internet Basics

The internet began as a strategic tool for the government and higher education, and slowly made its way into the houses, palms, and pockets of people around the world. As a Virtual Assistant, you will use the internet for every facet of your business and your role in the reputation, performance, and duties of your clients and business. Since you will be working so close with the internet, and since the internet directly effects how successful you will be, you should understand the basics of the internet.

The internet is an interesting and valuable entity with no real “owner”. A collaboration of networks comes together to form the internet, and the Internet Society. Networks are two or more computer or devices that come together and communicate with each other through the same protocol (or language). The Internet Society is an organisation that oversees the maintenance, transparency and definition of the internet. Even the Internet Society brings together a collaboration of members from 90 chapters around the world. Before 1992, the internet was limited to text only. Tim Berners-Lee and researchers from CERN (a Particle Physics lab in Europe) developed the visual attributes that would become the web pages on the world wide web.

Although the internet was built to be a valuable tool free to all people, there are usages that are considered to be unacceptable or forbidden. Some of these activities include:

- Providing unlawful information
- Using language that is unacceptable, offensive, threatening, or abusive to others
- Taking actions that damage, changes, or manipulates the information of others
- Sending massive amounts of emails to people who have no relationship with you or who have not initiate the contact
- Taking actions that damage, interferes, or limits the access of someone else

How the Internet Works

To even access the internet, you will need the proper technology. Hardware comes together to create the computers and devices that help to gain access to the internet.

Technology hardware refers to the parts of technology that support and allow it to work. Hardware includes motherboards, central processing units (CPU's), chips, hard disk, random access memory (RAM), video cards, graphics cards, and sounds cards. The chipsets of some forms of technologies (like computers) control the manner in which information comes into the system and leaves out of the system. Within computerized systems, the hardware that is used and their functions include:

- Hard Disk Drive that keeps information that is not being used. Information on the hard disk drive is not lost, even when the computer loses power.

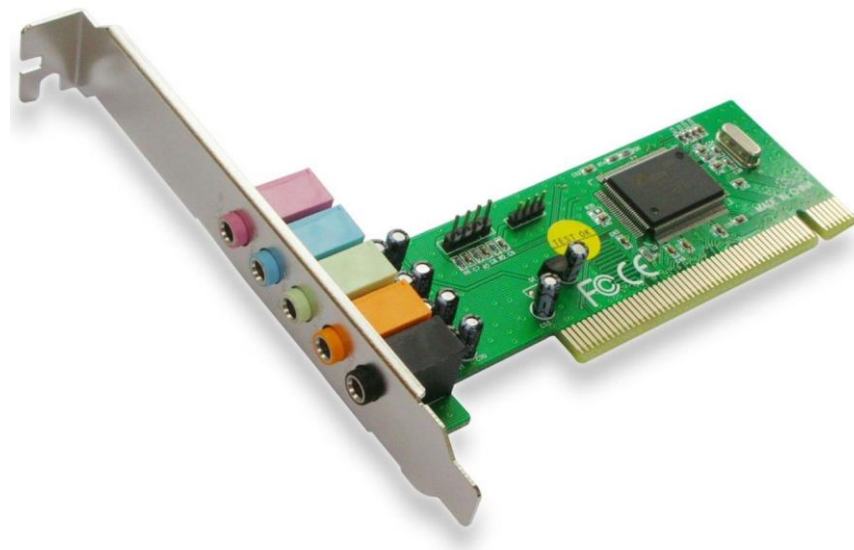


- RAM stores information and processes information that is current being used. It does not keep information, so once the computer loses power, the information

in the RAM is lost. There are two types of RAM: Static Random-Access Memory (SRAM) and Dynamic Random-Access Memory (DRAM). SRAM maintains information while it has power, DRAM continues to refresh to keep information until it loses power.



- Video cards, graphic cards, and sound cards all have like functions. They provide information to the screen, the speakers, and the video functions of the computer. They support the output of visual and audible features.



- Circuit Boards and Mother boards are the main parts of the computer that functions as the brain of technology



- Chips are a part of the overall brain system of the computer. It supports function, speed and memory.



There are also types of software that computer's use to even let them function. Many of these types of software also grant access to the internet through the uses of tool like modems, routers, and drivers. Software refers to computer and technology programs that dictate technology procedures and performances. Software uses robotic language that communicates the needs and commands of the user. This robotic language is called binary