

Title:

Give Yourself a Raise -- Get an Assistant

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Summary:

Is your "to do" list longer than your arm? Are you so busy taking care of the urgent that you never get to the important? Do you consider the thought of getting some help but then think "I can't afford it" or "No one can do it as well as I can"? If so, you've got a lot in common with most other small business owners.

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Article Body:

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If so, you've got a lot in common with most other small business owners.

Owning your own business is a great achievement and requires you to wear a lot of hats: owner, marketer, finance manager, widget maker/service provider, etc. Wearing all these hats eventually leads to a state of burnout or overwhelm and the love, the passion for what made you start your own business in the first place drowns in all the details.

If you want to grow your business AND maintain your sanity, there are two things you need to accept:

1. It's not just okay to delegate, it's essential to your survival.
2. A virtual assistant or online business manager (whichever description you prefer) is an investment in your business - not just an expense.

Consider the following scenario:

You own a small business as a marketing guru who makes \$150/hour. Your website crashes and you spend the next five hours calling your webmaster, testing different links, doing what you can to get it back up and running. The five hours that you just spent fixing your website COST you \$750.

If you had a virtual assistant whom you pay \$50 an hour and she solved the problem in four hours (she would be 100% focused on this task and has likely encountered similar issues with other clients), the cost would be \$200.

The word "cost" is based on a simple premise. If you are fixing your website, you are not making money. You could otherwise be engaged in billable tasks or you could have completed the new client proposal that brings you a \$10,000 client - neither of which is possible if you are fixing the website.

Make sense?

Over the next week, keep a time log and track everything you do. Then sit down and make a list of all those tasks that you either shouldn't be doing (not worth your time given the sacrifice) or hate doing. Here are a few things that immediately come to mind:

* Maintaining your website * Bookkeeping - both invoicing clients and paying bills, providing accountant with data, reconciling bank statements, preparing your expense reports, etc. * Submitting articles to article sites * Creating and distributing prospect letters * Maintaining your mailing lists - online and offline * Reminding you about birthdays, arranging for cards and gifts to be sent * Spending hours on the phone with any type of support vendor (Microsoft and Comcast pop into my head here) * Handling all your travel arrangements - business and personal * Scheduling meetings, conference calls, etc. * Providing you with website and sales reports * Designing presentations for client meetings (e.g., formatting in PowerPoint) * Ordering office supplies, promotional items * Placing advertising - online and offline * Managing client mailings - promotional, holiday, sales, etc. * The list goes on. . .

Each person's list will be unique to him. You may love the clarity of mind you get stuffing envelopes but run at the thought of reconciling your checking account.

And don't stop at the above. What are those personal things that you're doing that you could contract out so you can focus on growing your business? A teenager would be great for any of the following:

* Grocery shopping * Housekeeping * Laundry assistance * Mowing the lawn

Don't think you can afford an assistant?

The first thing to remember is that virtual assistants charge you only for the time they are ACTUALLY WORKING on YOUR projects and you will most likely not need someone full time.

You would pay a traditional employee a salary, sick time, vacation time, holiday time, provide a desk and office space, pay for training, pay payroll taxes, provide software and equipment and do all this for someone who likely considers what you are offering as a J O B that he needs to go to every day.

With a virtual assistant, you are paying an independent contractor who owns her own business and charges only for time she works on your projects, has her own office and equipment, pays her own taxes, is already trained in multiple software applications and who loves what she does.

Virtual assistants are self-motivated and focused on getting things done FOR YOU. This will greatly free up your time to focus on marketing your business, attending to your larger clients and generally growing your business.

Given the above can you afford NOT to hire an assistant?

The key is to start at a level where you feel comfortable: both financially and delegation-wise. Anything that you can give to someone else will give you more time to do what you do best and grow your business!

Are you ready to get started?