

Title:

How Long Can I Expect My Virtual Assistant To Stay With Me?

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Summary:

How long can you expect a virtual assistant or in house assistant to stay with your company and some reasons that they might leave.

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Article Body:

That's the number one question I'm asked by clients, future clients, and interviewers. So how long can we expect virtual assistants to stick? My answer is always the same: "it depends". It depends on many things. But first we need to realign our thinking a little bit and better understand today's workforce.

As a small or home-based business owner, are you basing your perception of how long a worker stays in a position on your own work history? Yeah, me too. Big mistake. Personally, when I take on a position I intend to stay with it - I don't give up. I've enjoyed lengthy tenures at my places of employment throughout my career. All except one and that's a story for later.

What we need to remember though is that everyone is not like us. Especially the current workforce. I mentioned in a previous article (http://www.teamdoubleclick.com/news/free_articles/workingwithnewgeneration.html) that the days of staying in your job for the rest of your life are long gone. As business owners, we tend to forget that and we are frustrated by it.

Let me say it again in this article: A recent study said that the average tenure in a job for Generation Y is 18 months. That's realistically the max you can expect someone - anyone, bricks-and-mortar or virtual, to stick with a job. Let's leave that thought to stew for a while and talk about the "that depends" I mentioned earlier.

Depends on what?

- Things change in people's lives - everyone's lives. Mine and yours and

your virtual assistant's.

Think back to the reasons you have changed jobs in the past. What things in your past have caused a need for job changes? Pregnancy, sudden depression, death in the family, shift in financial obligations, relocation, change of career goals, a decision to go back to college, ill parents, ill children, ill spouse? Of course, and there are many more. Your virtual assistant is a human being too and they're also subject to all of these normal human occurrences. Any one of these or many more reasons are cause for a virtual assistant to move on elsewhere or even stop working altogether.

- Job likeability. You've got to like your job. I hope we can all agree on that. If you don't like what you're doing you're not going to do your best and you're always going to be shopping for a better job or better opportunity. Virtual assistants, as with bricks-and-mortar assistants, are not immune. I'm not talking about being a virtual assistant in general - though that happens too - where a virtual assistant decides she can't handle the isolation and hangs up her computer. I'm talking about all of the tasks a virtual assistant does on a daily basis. For one client she may answer phones, for another she may do data entry, and for yet another she may be asked to cold call. If she doesn't like those duties she's not going to like the job and will ask for reassignment or quit entirely.

- Boss likeability. For me, the only one I didn't stick with for a good length of time was one where I was treated like a prisoner in a concentration camp, neck breathed down and so on. I left one day for lunch and never looked back. Have you ever had a boss you just couldn't stand? How about one with whom you just couldn't see eye-to-eye. Or maybe there was the one you always thought was creepy or shifty. Would you stick with a boss that gave you those feelings? Certainly not! Yet we expect our virtual assistants to do that and we can't. With 6.6 billion people in the world every one of them is not going to like each and every one of us. And you're not going to like every one of them either.

- Then of course there's Big Bad Team Double-ClickSM. At Team Double-ClickSM our job, as we see it is this: to help you determine your needs in a virtual assistant; to locate the best virtual assistant for you, our client, based on your personality needs as well as your skills needs; to locate problem virtual assistants and send them packing before they do damage to you; to nurture the relationship between you and your virtual assistant; alert you to potential problems with a virtual assistant; to stand by what we do and what we offer; and locate a new virtual assistant for you should things not work out. Now, sometimes the virtual assistants we contract don't like this. This is when

we become "Big Bad Team Double-ClickSM". You see, we're the good guys when we're offering work to virtual assistants. However, when we have to take that work away or ask a virtual assistant for reimbursement for a client due to negligence in their actions, we're no longer popular with that virtual assistant. This quite often causes a virtual assistant to quit. In order to protect you, our client, sometimes we have to tick people off to do it.

- Theft. Yes, theft. Team Double-ClickSM is a virtual staffing agency - we're the middleman. We work hard to do the best by our clients and locate quality virtual assistants for them. And theft does happen - even from virtual assistants who've shown no signs of being anything but above board. If finances get tough, the first thing most people want to do is cut out the middleman. Why? Usually to make more money of course! While we do our best to prevent it from happening it does from time to time happen that a virtual assistant will attempt to steal a client - to make more money. I'm sure you can see how this opens a whole can of worms here and can easily mess things up for other clients. My question to you: would you want to directly hire a person with that kind of track record? Could you really trust they wouldn't try to steal something from you later on down the road? I wouldn't. In fact, this brings me to an interesting story. A virtual assistant (let's call her Jane) recently successfully stole a client (let's call him Dick) from Team Double-ClickSM. In this instance, rather than enter into a lengthy legal battle with Dick and Jane, we let it go. We of course discussed with Dick the potential for Jane the Thief to repeat her history again in the future. Three months later Dick came back and said "Gayle, Jane just stole from me - she embezzled my funds in fact." While I felt badly for Dick we predicted that this could happen which is why we'd warned him. Dick chose not to listen to our years of experience and the information we had available.

- Popularity. Team Double-Click's virtual assistants are contracted - not employed - by Team Double-ClickSM. As with most contractors (think home builders, highway builders, and other competitive bidders) we too impose restrictions, benchmarks, and even penalties on our contractors for lack of performance. Again, this sometimes makes us unpopular and can cause a virtual assistant to quit. Would you want us to do anything less in the name of protecting our clients?

Knowing what causes people to leave should help you better understand how long a virtual assistant may stay in a position. About 25% of our virtual assistants have been with us and the same clients for well over a year and many more approaching the one year mark. In fact, earlier this year one of our virtual assistants retired from Team Double-ClickSM and the client she was assigned, after being with him for more than three years.

So when asked "how long can I expect my virtual assistant to stay with me". I

always say "It depends. As long as nothing goes wrong and there is no reason for the virtual assistant to leave, she will most likely stay." As one of my daughter's teachers used to say, "It's all about cause and effect.

This article's goal was to give you a better perspective of what to expect in this day and age of hiring and some insight into what can go wrong. I hope I've accomplished that. And with a better understanding maybe we'll all be less shocked and better prepared when one of our workers - bricks-and-mortar or virtual - departs.