How Hiring the Wrong Virtual Assistant Hurt My Business

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Over the past few days, I've been pleasantly surprised at an increase in productivity and "good work" by my newly hired COO. I shouldn't be surprised, but I am. See, in the past, I've hired cheap labor to do "tasks," like video editing, blog writing, graphic design and more.

Many of us small business owners hire freelancers to help fill in the gaps in our day-to-day business needs, and that's good. However, there's a tragic mistake many of us are making.

Freelance talent, or "virtual assistants," can only take us so far. At some point, you get tired of answering all the questions, correcting the mistakes and thinking of all the ideas. You get tired of being the traffic cop in the center of everything. You need to work ON your business and not just IN your business.

Through my mastermind group, I realized I needed to uplevel my game and invest more in higher-skilled talent.

Hiring someone in the Philippines for $7-$10 an hour is a pretty good hourly rate for them. However, at that rate, the virtual assistant is often just task-focused.

I tripled the rate and started to look for a COO, someone who came with a higher level of not only skills but THINKING as well. They're still from the Philippines, but their business experience and skillset are much more advanced.

I needed someone who could help me grow my business, not just

do tasks. So, I started to look for a "thought partner," an "integrator." This term comes from *Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business* by Gino Wickman, a popular book that many entrepreneurs read.

Overnight, I noticed a difference. The tasks I assigned were not only getting done but were getting done with a different, higher level of thoroughness.

So, what are some key tips *you* can use to hire the right freelancer or virtual assistant to help your business?

Related: 6 Mistakes Smart People Make When Hiring a Virtual Assistant

1. Craft a detailed job description

Before you start your search, create a comprehensive job description. Outline specific responsibilities, required skills and expected outcomes. This clarity will attract more suitable candidates and set the foundation for a successful working relationship.

2. Define clear success metrics

How will you know if your new hire is performing well? Establish concrete, measurable goals from the outset. Whether it's meeting deadlines, achieving quality standards or hitting specific KPIs, having clear success metrics will help both you and your freelancer stay aligned.

3. Understand your work style, and find a match

Every business owner has a unique way of working. Do you prefer frequent check-ins or a more hands-off approach? Are you detail-oriented or focused on the big picture? Be honest

about your work style, and look for freelancers whose approach complements yours.

4. Think long-term

While you may have immediate needs, consider your business's future growth when hiring. Look for freelancers who can potentially grow with your company and take on expanded responsibilities as your business evolves.

5. Avoid the "jack of all trades" trap

It's tempting to search for a unicorn who can do everything, but this approach often leads to disappointment. Instead, focus on finding specialists who excel in specific areas crucial to your business needs.

Related: 4 Ways to Hire and Keep the Best Freelancers

6. Assess skill requirements

Evaluate whether the role requires high-level expertise or if it involves tasks that can be learned on the job. This will help you determine the experience level to look for and the training you might need to provide.

7. Prioritize attitude and character

While technical skills are important, don't underestimate the value of a great attitude and strong character. Look for freelancers who are reliable, communicative and aligned with your company's values. These traits often matter more than technical prowess in the long run.

8. Test the waters

Consider hiring two to three freelancers for a small project or trial period. This approach allows you to evaluate their performance in real-world scenarios before committing to a longer-term arrangement.

9. Be open to input

Remember that freelancers and virtual assistants often bring valuable experience from working with various clients. Be open to their suggestions and insights — they might introduce innovative solutions or efficiencies you haven't considered.

Related: Hiring a Virtual Assistant? Watch Out for These Red Flags

10. Maintain regular communication

Don't rely solely on email for communication. Schedule regular video calls or meetings to discuss progress, address challenges and maintain a strong working relationship. This face-to-face time, even if virtual, can significantly improve collaboration and results.

Remember, the goal is not just to fill a position, but to find partners who can contribute to your company's growth and success.

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