

Introduction

If you run your own business, or are high up in a large organisation, then it's likely that you face many pressures and challenges on a daily basis. One of the most difficult, and potentially volatile, of these challenges is around recruitment. Previous studies have found that recruitment is the most important HR function when it comes to return on investment (ROI) - with companies that excel in recruitment experiencing 3.5 times more revenue growth than businesses that put less effort into their hiring processes..

Source: <https://www.rsk-bsl.com/blogs/7-mistakes-to-avoid-when-hiring-virtual-assistants/>

Recruitment gone digital

In the digital-focused world that we all now live in, even recruitment has taken a step toward the online agenda. Thanks to the magical power of the internet, companies are now able to consider options like freelancers, outsourced workers in different countries and virtual assistants (VAs), all of whom can help to take on some of the strain of a growing business.

This does, in a sense, bring its own set of challenges. Many people may not have hired, or even worked with a virtual assistant before, which means there are some new experiences to be had. As much as it would be nice, working with a virtual assistant is not as easy as pressing a 'go' button and the completed work magically appearing shortly after. This means there are new skills to be learnt, and new processes to be developed.

1. Not having a plan

Planning is the key to success in many areas of business, and hiring a virtual assistant is no different. Make sure you know what you'd actually have a virtual assistant do before you start looking for one - otherwise, you may end up enlisting their services and then spending more time trying to find things for them to do.

Some experts suggest beginning the process by creating three lists - things you hate doing everyday, things you can't do yourself, and things you shouldn't be doing. That way, you get a top level idea of all the things you need to work on, which helps you effectively delegate work to virtual assistants.

2. Too high expectations

This is a scenario where the statement 'you get what you pay for' comes into effect. Hiring a virtual assistant can definitely be a cost-effective option, particularly compared to hiring a person full time to work in-house. Although this is a clear benefit, make sure that you don't get caught up in the money-saving mindset, as quality comes at a price.

Carefully assess the quality of the work and the way a VA's skills match your requirements, and balance this against how much they cost. Although a particular VA may be the cheapest option, if the work isn't satisfactory, or you have to re-do it, then it's going to cost you more in the long run.

3. Hiring the first option

"A big mistake made by entrepreneurs is to hire the first candidate they come across. It is not because the first candidate is not qualified; but you need a pool of talent to cross-reference qualifications," explains Entrepreneur and Inbound Marketer Felix Tarcomnicu. And he's speaking the truth - after all, if you don't have anyone to compare a potential candidate to, then how do you know if they're a good fit?

A best practice technique is to gather a short list of potential candidates; around 5-6 is usually a good place to start. Try to make sure that everyone on the list has different strengths, and different things to offer. You may be surprised by who you like the sound of once you get talking. Also, don't be tempted to focus on people with tons of previous experience doing the exact same thing as you; these people may be set in their ways, and bring bad habits.

4. Leave them to their own devices

When your team are all contained in the same building, it's easier to keep track of what's going on. When they're dotted all over the world, and you only meet digitally, then it can be much tougher - and can easily lead to potential miscommunications.

Communication is key for getting the most out of virtual assistants, or any form of outsourced staff. It's vital that you know what your teams are doing, in order to keep projects on track, so set a schedule for comms that suits your needs - whether it's daily updates, or weekly video call check ins.



5. Not having a back up

When you find someone who you trust, and who does work that you're happy with, then it's easy to put all of your eggs in their virtual basket - and entrust them to do all of your work, all of the time. This can be a dangerous way to go.

One of the things to consider with using virtual teams is that changes can happen quickly, and what works for you today may not be possible next week.

Make sure that you have a back up plan that follows a clear set of processes, so that even if VAs or outsourced teams change, you're the constant, and you can re-implement your set of processes with new staff. Having these alternatives in place can prevent you getting stuck in a sticky situation if VAs pull out on you.

6. Go all in

Having a strong virtual team is an asset for a business, giving you a wealth of skills and resources to utilise when necessary. One thing to be aware of when it comes to expanding your team is the access that you give each team member - and making sure that you never give them too much.

"Make sure you understand what you'll give your virtual assistant access to, and what you should give them access to," said Kimanzi Constable, a consultant to many global corporations. "You shouldn't let anyone have complete access to every part of your business."

If possible, use online cloud collaboration software where you can change the access controls at any time, enabling you to revoke access to certain people once their work is complete.

7. Micromanaging

Now, this is a bit of a contrast to number four on our list, where we highlighted the importance of communication. But there's a key difference - great communication does not mean micromanaging people.

When you come down to the core of it, outsourcing work or hiring virtual assistants is usually because you're swamped with work, or simply don't have enough time in the day. However, you undo all of this good time-saving work if you then spend all day micromanaging everything that your outsourced employees are doing. Although it's natural to have some fear that the work isn't getting done, or isn't getting done properly, establishing strong communication processes with your team, with regular updates, should help to eliminate some of these concerns..