



A Guide to Hiring A Virtual Assistant

Debbie Neese

Offshoot Virtual Landscape Services, LLC

PO Box 1302

Flat Rock, NC 28731

828.699.8022

debbie@virtuallandscape.com

www.virtuallandscape.com

Overview

Do you have more papers on your desk and feel disorganized, not knowing which job to tackle first in your landscape business? Is your “to-do” list larger than a plant catalog? You can invest more time in your day to accomplish your favorite projects with a Virtual Assistant. Through technology, a virtual assistant can make your job easier without the hassle of hiring another person to manage in-house. Not to mention the office space and equipment you won’t have to invest in or the training involved with most tasks. That’s just a few of the advantages of hiring a virtual assistant. This guide will give you the tools you need to discover what jobs to hire out to your virtual assistant, questions for the interview process, and some tools and tips to make the transition seamless.

Goals

- Identify what tasks you can delegate.
- Qualifying questions for hiring a virtual assistant
- Tips & tools to transition into using your virtual assistant.

Identifying Tasks to Delegate

I. Daily Journal of Tasks

You may have two or three ideas in mind or you wouldn’t have downloaded this informational document. Get a steno pad and start writing down the tasks you do each day from start to finish. It will take a couple days to completely compile your list. Each day you will become more detailed with tasks that you do but don’t leave anything out. Put down EVERYTHING you do all day. This exercise will be good to look back on at the end of the week to see how much you really do accomplish every week and will probably be a ‘mind-blow’. You’ll be patting yourself on the back and thanking me that I suggested doing it. For instance, your list should look something like this:

- Check my email
- Write a blog and post on website
- Check my social media accounts
- Schedule my appointments
- Make doctor’s appointment
- Call my accountant
- Send out invoices

- Schedule car/truck maintenance
- Talk to client about new patio installation

This will give you a better outlook on all that you do each day.

From that list, get three different colored highlighters and start highlighting.

- **First**, highlight the tasks that only you can do and no one else!
- **Second**, highlight the tasks that you don't have the skill set to complete.
- **Third**, highlight the tasks that you don't like to do, need help with or don't have time to do.

II. Estimate the task time

From the list you have made, go back through the colored highlights and estimate how long each task took and write it down. For instance:

- Check my email** (1.25 hrs.)
- Write a blog and post on website** (2.55 hrs.)
- Check and post to my social media accounts** (1 .40 hrs.)
- Schedule my appointments** (.25 hrs.)
- Make doctor's appointment** (.10 hrs.)
- Call my accountant** (.25 hrs.)
- Send out invoices** (4.20 hrs.)
- Schedule car/truck maintenance** (.15 hrs.)
- Talk to client about new patio installation** (.45 hrs.)

III. Creating a system to complete the task

For the tasks you want delegated, write out the system you want your virtual assistant to follow by following your own step by step process. For instance, if you are posting to your social media this might be the process or system you use for yourself to accomplish the task. Write it all out step by step. This way your virtual assistant will be clear on how you want it accomplished.

- Choose theme for monthly post (Lawn care)
- Decide on how many postings for the month: 3 videos, 6 pictures, 2 blog posts, 2 marketing
- Generate informational original content on lawn care (aeration, overseeding, dethatching)

- Film and download videos into computer. (keep under 2 min.)
- Edit videos and add logo.
- Take photos or acquire from database
- Write blog posts and schedule on website
- Get approval
- Add SEO and #hashtags
- Schedule on Social media hosting tool
- Monitor current comments and activity on all channels

All tasks to be delegated will not need a system but regular routine tasks require quality control will need a followed process. This will keep expectations clear and concise on how the process is followed. If a system isn't in place, perhaps your virtual assistant can discuss one with you and help formulate a process that will protect your quality control.

Qualifying Questions

I. Identify from the list of tasks

The finished task list will help clarify what skill sets are needed in a virtual assistant. If social media and website design skills are required, then a techie person will be on your radar. Formulate the interview questions around these tasks. If the virtual assistant sounds like the perfect fit but they're missing a few skills you really need, is it possible to train them or request they get trained? Consider those options too. Many virtual assistants will invest in educating themselves to gain a new client.

Here's a few questions to ask to make the best decision:

- How did you get into this business and why?
- What is your background in before you became a virtual assistant?
- What are some tasks you do for other clients?
- Do you perform these tasks? (i.e., xyz...)
- How many clients do you work with each month?
- How long have you worked with your longest running client?
- How does your packages/pricing work?
- How do you normally communicate with your clients?
- Do you have time to dedicate to these tasks?
- Are you available sporadically? How does a 20 hour package work?
- What days of the week and hours do you work?
- What is your turnaround time for tasks requested?
- Do you have references?
- Do you carry E & O insurance?

- Have you ever been convicted of a felony?
- What do you do when you're not working? (Get to know them.)
- What is your setup (how many computers, printers, devices)?
- How is your security setup to handle sensitive information?
- Do you have others working for you?
- What is your contract requirements for hiring a VA?
- How do you invoice and get paid?

When you are satisfied with the conversation and have completed the interview, make a list of pros/cons for each virtual assistant you interview. Compare and contrast to see which will be the best fit for your tasks and overall business plan. Plan to set up a second interview for any specifics and on when to start the work schedule. Express your expectations in the last interview with timelines, pricing and payment schedule. If you confident this virtual assistant is 'the one' then sign the contract they provide and start delegating!

Tips and Tools for Working with your VA

I. Tips for an Easy Transition

- Keep your expectations clear on what the job requires.
- Let your virtual assistant the appropriate time allotment and the timeline for completion.
- Keep communication lines open just as you would a normal employee working with on site.
- Decide on your preferred method of communication in the field and in the office.
- Assign your virtual assistant the passwords and logins or make them admin's when appropriate. Your virtual assistant may need a credit card number from time to time to charge things that are necessary with your permission. You may need to order one and set limits on it.
- Let your VA know your cyber security standards and request high standards from them.
- Keep a rapport going with your VA even if you don't have a specific task to send them for the day. Checking in with them builds rapport and keeps you at the top of their mind for when you do need their assistance.
- Your virtual assistant may send a packet at the beginning of the initial contract signing with pertinent information they will need to complete the future tasks. Ask for these forms or share admin privileges in a [LastPass](#) account.

II. Tools to Use with A Virtual Assistant

-
- A phone with texting will help keep in constant contact with your virtual assistant.
 - If you carry a cell phone that also acts as your business phone, you may want to use an app such as [WhatsApp](#) or [#Slack](#) to keep work separate from personal. These apps work well for organizations and larger groups on tasks for texting communication.
 - [Google Mail](#), Google Docs, Google Drive, Google Calendar are easy ways to share, edit, collaborate and complete documents throughout organizations.
 - Cloud based systems such as QuickBooks Online or ServiceAutoPilot makes it easy to give admin privileges virtually.
 - If your VA will communicate directly with your clients, a company email account with your domain name should be assigned. Add them to the email service account.
 - Direct them to an appropriate signature to coincide with your own company signature keeping consistency in the organization.