

S E D

S E R V I C E S , L L C

SIMPLICITY

EFFICIENCY

DETAILS

January 2013



Susan Devereaux
Principal

Happy New Year! We wish you a prosperous 2013!

Our last newsletter began a discussion of the process of engaging a virtual assistant (VA) and focused on developing a job description specific to your needs and requirements. (If you did not receive that issue, please [contact us](#) and we'll be happy to send it to you.) This issue completes the discussion and focuses on what to do once the résumés begin to arrive.

To make a comment or ask a question about the newsletter content, or to submit a suggestion for future topic, please [click here](#).

To inquire about S.E.D. Services, please [click here](#).

Quick Links

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Follow Us](#)

Engaging a Virtual Assistant – Part 2

Availing yourself of the services of a VA can be one of the best things you can do for your business. While you may not yet be running a multi-million dollar business, approach this process as if you are. Do everything you can to engage the right person for you.

Note: *Prior to speaking to any candidate, it is advisable to consult with an attorney (preferably a tax attorney) regarding the implications of paying with a 1099 (consultant status) or as a W-2 employee. It is your responsibility as the potential contractor or employer to determine what the best option for your situation is.*

You've published your detailed job description and candidates are responding – these may be individuals or companies with VAs on staff. In either case, you'll need to see a formal résumé or bio to begin the evaluation process.

Résumé Review

Compare each résumé against your job description. Does the candidate meet the minimum requirements? If the candidate is lacking specific experience in a given area, is there comparable experience that would offset the missing piece?

Setting up some type of matrix to evaluate each candidate individually and against others will make this part of the process easier. A simple chart or spreadsheet will do. However, you must have a process to clearly determine which candidates will progress to the next step and which will not.

Phone Screening

A telephone call to screen the remaining candidates will further narrow the field. This should not be a “cold” call to the candidate. Rather the two of you should agree upon a specific date and time for the call. Thirty minutes is a good amount of time for this call.

Be prepared. Know what questions you want to ask and what attributes you want to evaluate. For example, you may want to confirm that the candidate has dedicated office space. Or, if the candidate will be interfacing with your clients, use this call as an opportunity to evaluate spoken communication skills. Will this candidate represent your company appropriately?

Remember, when asking questions, you must follow the legal requirements in the U.S. – there are certain questions which you cannot legally ask! Check with an HR expert or use the information sources in the “Last Note” below if you are unsure about what you may or may not ask.

The Interview

You are now down to your short list of promising VA candidates and it is time for in-depth interviews. If at all possible, hold in-person interviews. If that is not possible, then try for a videoconference interview utilizing free applications such as Skype or ooVoo.

Again, be prepared. Have a list of questions or concerns in hand. When assembling your questions, be sure they can legally be asked. Use open-ended questions, not just yes/no questions.

This is when you should ask behavioral interview questions such as “*tell me about a time when...*” You want the candidate to open up so that you can get to know him/her and see if the two of you *click*. You need to ascertain if the candidate is capable of handling all that the job requires with minimal input from you. (A great resource for behavioral interview questions is Sharon Armstrong’s 100 Questions: How to Master Behavioral Interviews, available as a free report on *The Essential HR Handbook* website – www.theessentialhrhandbook.com.)

Take notes. Do not rely on your memory to retain important information that you learn from and about the candidate.

Reference Checking

You have a candidate you really like, congratulations! Now is the time to check references. Do not skip this step no matter how much you like the person or how much the two of you clicked! You need to obtain input from people with whom the candidate has previously worked.

As with the candidate interview, be prepared with a list of questions before you call the reference. It’s okay to ask the reference to “rate” the candidate in areas such as adherence to deadlines. However, you need more information than that, so use behavioral interview questions to elicit more complete responses.

The Offer

While negotiations can be verbal, the actual offer should be in writing and cover all agreed-upon terms, i.e. salary, hours per week, confidentiality issues, pay/invoicing frequency, etc. If you have reached an “understanding” on any point, it needs to be in writing. Whatever document is used to make and accept the offer — an offer letter or contract — it should be signed by both of you.

Last Notes

- *Keep candidates informed* throughout the process so that you don't lose a good one. It is difficult for applicants to wait for a call. So if you plan to make a decision by Friday, let the candidates know that, and keep your word.
- *Rejecting applicants* – Send a “Thank You” note or email to each candidate that does not progress through your hiring process. Keep it simple. Thank him/her for his/her interest in your organization. State that you are not able to offer an interview or position (as appropriate). Wish the candidate success in his/her job search.
- *Use available resources* – Unless you are currently an HR expert, do some research before engaging a VA. Here are two excellent resources:
 - *The Essential HR Handbook* (www.theessentialhrhandbook.com), co-authored by Sharon Armstrong and Barbara Mitchell, published by Career Press in 2008
 - *The Big Book of HR* (www.bigbookofHR.com), co-authored by Barbara Mitchell and Cornelia Gamlem, published by Career Press in 2012

At S.E.D. Services, LLC we partner with our clients to reduce the amount of time spent on support tasks with the goal of increasing the time available for revenue generating activities.

If you believe this information will benefit a colleague, please feel free to share it.

Sincerely,

Susan

Susan Devereaux
S.E.D. Services, LLC
703-766-6590
sdevereaux@sedservices.com
www.sedservices.com

To comment on or ask a question about this newsletter, please visit our [blog](#).

For information about S.E.D. Services, please visit our [website](#).