



INTELLIGENT OFFICE

# The Virtual Assistant

PART 1 OF 3



## ***Virtual Assistants vs Remote Assistants: How Different Are They?***

*Strapped with limited time and unforgiving budgets, modern entrepreneurs can't afford to spend precious resources recruiting, training and retaining a full-time staff. In turn, many look toward off-site personnel for assistance on key operational and administrative tasks. To meet this rising demand, a number of companies offer remote assistants or offsite receptionists that help with simple, everyday duties. While beneficial to certain organizations, these services have muddied the water by confusing some people's understanding of a true virtual assistant.*

# The Evolution of the Assistant

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Like any other profession, virtual assistance has a rich history that spans decades. Its birth can be traced back to temporary secretarial services, which began in the 1950s. While virtual assistance evolved from secretarial services, the concepts are distinct from one another, with the former an intentional brand of ongoing support and the latter focusing on occasional piecemeal project work.

The term “virtual assistant” was coined in 1996 by life coach Thomas Leonard during a talk with entrepreneur Anastacia Brice. This simple conversation would cause the concept of administratively supporting clients remotely to become more formally realized. With the idea already in mind, Brice turned the term into a new emerging profession, opening AssistU in 1997. The first known organization for virtual assistants, AssistU was founded to help represent the profession to the world. Since that time, virtual assistance has grown substantially, evolving from a simple sub-category of secretarial services into an executive-level support role that allows businesses to achieve more while spending less.

## Increased Demand

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After interviewing 45 business managers in 39 companies across eight industries, researchers at the [Harvard Business Review](#) found that most devoted substantial time to tedious, non-value-added duties. This finding is consistent with research from The Alternative Board (TAB), which found that [entrepreneurs spend 68.1 percent of their time](#) putting out fires and tackling day-to-day tasks and only 31.9 percent of their time actually [working “on” their businesses](#).

In an effort to free up time, a growing number of business owners are turning to virtual assistants. Because the term “virtual assistant” has come to encompass varying forms of remote administrative and digital assistance, entrepreneurs don’t always understand the distinct differences between specific services.



# Clarifying Some Important Differences

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In common usage, the terms, “virtual assistant,” “virtual receptionist,” “remote assistant,” and “remote receptionist” have become confused. Many people use these terms interchangeably without understanding the key differences, abilities and advantages of each. Attributes of each are also commonly given to the others depending on who is doing the talking or writing.

On the other hand, executive-level virtual assistants are able to provide higher level support that’s above and beyond the capabilities of a traditional off-site receptionist or home-based remote assistant. Empowered by in-depth training, Intelligent Office’s virtual assistants wield a broader scope of capabilities. They can provide upper-level support that’s tailored to an individual business’s needs. They can also create seamless interactions, while offering boundless versatility and flexibility.

## Comprehensive Training for Increased Capabilities

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While the traditional virtual assistant is likely to work from home, an executive-level virtual assistant is part of a greater brick-and-mortar presence. This fundamental difference opens the door for extensive training opportunities that broaden the professional’s support capabilities.

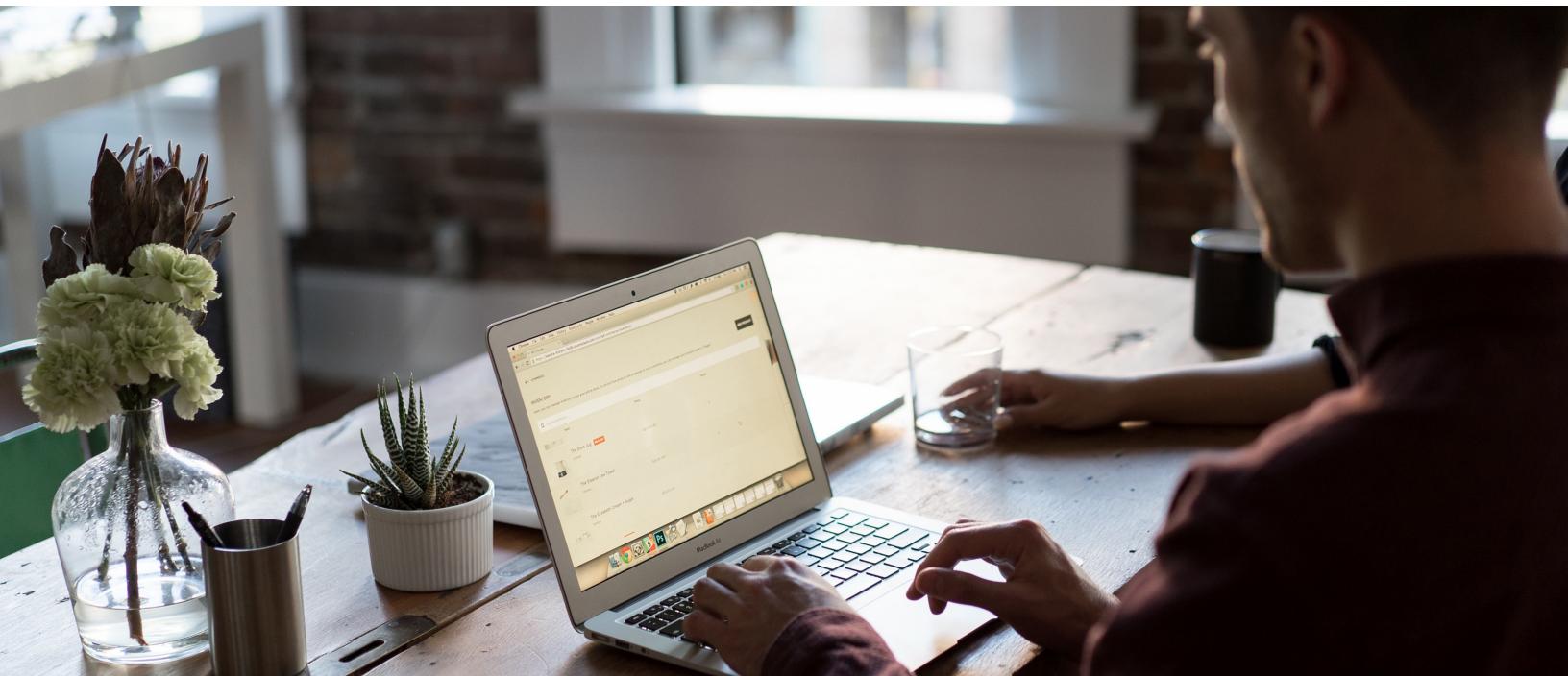
Virtual assistants at Intelligent Office, known as Intelligent Assistants, can communicate with clients, process orders, assist with scheduling, assist with meeting preparations, lead follow-ups, and other

upper-level responsibilities that require comprehensive training. The courses include training and culture videos, hands-on interfacing with other trained receptionists and rigorous test calls/quality control measures. Unlike work-from-home remote assistants, virtual assistants also train for specific clients to tailor their services according to each business’s organizational needs and operational practices.

# Comprehensive Capabilities

Today's business owners face unique challenges that require higher level support. Modern organizational tasks demand a specific set of skills beyond the average remote assistant's capabilities. Highly trained, specialized virtual assistants can spur growth and make a positive impact on customer relations. Whether it's a tedious, but critical task or complicated client interaction, a true virtual assistant can deliver seamless, highly effective solutions, including:

|                                    |  |                                    |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Phone Answering</i>             | <i>Coordinate Mailings and Media Campaigns</i> | <i>Outbound Confirmation Calls</i> |
| <i>Schedule Appointments</i>       | <i>Answer Client Inquiries</i>                 | <i>Sales Support</i>               |
| <i>Take Orders</i>                 | <i>Notary Services</i>                         | <i>Book Medical Appointments</i>   |
| <i>Confirmation Calls</i>          | <i>Typing</i>                                  | <i>Follow Up on Sales Leads</i>    |
| <i>Intake Questions</i>            | <i>Meeting Preparation</i>                     | <i>Order Personal Items</i>        |
| <i>Take Reservations</i>           | <i>Manage Social Media</i>                     | <i>Virtual Reception</i>           |
| <i>Gather Survey Results</i>       | <i>Conference Registration</i>                 | <i>Almost Anything Else</i>        |
| <i>Travel/Seminar Registration</i> |  |                                    |



## Personalized Roles for Unique Needs

Skilled and personable, executive-level virtual assistants are much more than remote assistants. They play customized virtual roles essential to a company's success. Defined by an organization's individual needs, these roles can take many forms, including:

- » Corporate Virtual Assistant
- » Virtual Secretary
- » Virtual Receptionist
- » Clerical Assistant
- » Office Administration
- » Part-Time Assistant
- » Virtual Business Assistant
- » Executive Assistant
- » Administrative Assistant
- » Personal Assistant
- » Sales Assistant
- » Law Office Assistant
- » Virtual Business Management
- » Virtual Appointment Management

Depending on a business owner's field or industry, a true virtual assistant can assume just about any role. Professional law office assistants can bring invaluable legal knowledge to a busy firm. A virtual receptionist can schedule appointments at a busy chiropractic office. A virtual office administrative assistant can answer the phone, book appointments and make follow-up calls to potential customers. Virtual sales assistants can proactively contact prospective clients, allowing a hustling real estate agent to focus on closing deals.

Because they are familiar with a company, executive-level virtual assistants have the flexibility to vastly outperform the typical remote assistant. In essence, if an entrepreneur can imagine it, a virtual assistant can do it - whenever and wherever it needs to be done.

# Broad Capabilities for Comprehensive Support

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A virtual assistant can be a lifesaver for small businesses with strict budgets and limited time. They can streamline daily operations and shave valuable hours off a workweek. In doing so, they allow busy entrepreneurs and small business owners to focus their talents on growing their businesses and acquiring new customers.

While they can offer solutions for uncomplicated, everyday tasks, home-based remote assistants cannot provide the executive-level support that pushes a business forward. Conversely, highly trained virtual assistants offer complete solutions that allow small businesses to compete with larger enterprises. No matter what level or complexity of assistance a business requires, the virtual assistant can provide the appropriate level of support.

## Scalability and Familiarity

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After studying 2,000 companies over 10 years, the consulting firm, [Bain & Company](#) found that just one in ten achieved profitable, sustained growth. According to the firm, the more successful companies leveraged outsourcing in more innovative ways than their competitors.

By offloading key operational and technical tasks to virtual assistants, companies can realign their budgets, scale their businesses and capitalize on specialized and technical skills. At the same time they can cut costs associated with full-time employees.

Unlike in-house staffers, which demand regular office hours, an executive-level virtual assistant is available only when needed and on-demand. This provides the business owner with much-needed scalability to help spur growth and reduce costly overhead. When they get too busy, entrepreneurs and small business owners can delegate key tasks. When things slow down, they can scale back their outsourcing commitment.

Personalized training allows the executive-level virtual assistant to provide tailored service. Client familiarity allows for seamless integration, so customers believe they are communicating with a highly-skilled staff member working on-site at an entrepreneur's office. Specialized training ensures positive customer interactions and timely solutions that keep a company on schedule and focused on success.

## What's in a Name?

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Whether they're called remote assistants or virtual receptionists, the typical off-site support person does not provide the same level of service as an executive-level virtual assistant. Experienced, versatile and highly trained, these professionals offer tailored, sophisticated service that gives the modern small business a considerable edge.



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of Intelligent Office's many services.**

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