

## **What is a Virtual Assistant?**

Virtual Assistants are highly skilled, independent, professionals, working outside of traditional corporate roles and utilizing the internet and other emerging technology to customize their own work environments.

As the role of the internet and its effect on the business community evolves, what once had to be done in a traditional corporate office can now be done in one's home, in satellite offices or while travelling.

Likewise, the role of the traditional administrative assistant is changing. What once had to be done by a corporate secretary can now be easily accomplished by a seasoned "virtual" professional, working out of their home or home office. Work assignments and communications are handled through e-mail, telephone, fax, overnight mail and on-line communications, eliminating the traditional overhead associated with conventional office support.

Because the virtual assistant is often an independent entrepreneur, they better understand the needs of the small business professional. They recognize that many small businesses are either unable or unwilling to pay the full-time costs associated with traditional administrative support. And they recognize that time is valuable and offer the assistance needed to boost the client's own productivity by handling many of the more routine administrative tasks of the business.

Virtual Assistants also can provide a wider variety of services than the traditional administrative assistants, often incorporating desktop publishing, web page design, internet research, writing or other specialty skills into their available services. Because of this broad array of services, the virtual assistant is particularly valuable to small business owners, or those desiring personal assistants to help with less traditional tasks. It also allows the virtual assistant to specialize in the areas they find most interesting.

*Erin Smith & Betty Leeper*