

Hiring Your First VA

What to expect, how to brief them, and what it actually costs.

Bringing in a VA for the first time is one of the highest-leverage decisions a small business owner can make. It's also one of the most misunderstood. This guide tells you what you actually need to know before you start.

01 WHAT IS A VA - AND IS IT WHAT YOU ACTUALLY NEED?



Virtual Assistant (VA)

Handles specific, repeatable tasks you assign to them.

Works best when you have clear processes and just need an extra pair of hands.

Ideal if you're time-poor but your business runs smoothly and you know what needs doing.



Online Business Manager (OBM)

Manages your operations, team, and projects - not just individual tasks.

Works proactively, spots problems before they happen, and takes ownership of outcomes.

Ideal if you're ready to scale or your business feels chaotic and needs structure.

Not sure which you need?

A Business Clarity Audit is the best starting point. It tells you exactly where support will have the most impact.



02 WHAT CAN YOU ACTUALLY HAND OVER?

Admin & Communications



Inbox management, email drafting, scheduling, data entry, document formatting, meeting prep.

Finance Admin



Invoice sending, payment chasing, expense logging, receipt filing, basic bookkeeping support.

Social Media



Scheduling posts, caption drafting, basic graphic resizing, content calendar management, engagement monitoring.

Research



Supplier research, competitor checks, event sourcing, contact list building, fact-finding tasks.

Client Support



Onboarding comms, follow-up emails, booking confirmations, FAQ responses, feedback collection.

Operations



SOP documentation, file organisation, project management tool upkeep, process mapping.

◆ THE RULE OF THUMB

If a task is repeatable, teachable, and not something only you can do - it belongs on your delegate list.



Hiring Your First VA

What it costs and how to write a brief that works.

03 WHAT DOES VA SUPPORT ACTUALLY COST?

Freelance / Ad Hoc

£30 – £40+ / hr

Pay per task or hour. Flexible but no continuity or relationship-building. Best for one-off projects.

Monthly VA Retainer

From £275 / mo

Fixed hours each month. Builds consistency, a working relationship, and genuine operational rhythm.

OBM Retainer

From £850 / mo

Strategic ops management across Foundation, Growth, and Premium tiers. More than task support.

04 HOW TO WRITE A VA BRIEF THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

1. About the business

What you do, who you serve, and how the business runs day-to-day. Keep it to a short paragraph.

2. Role overview

What this VA role covers in plain terms. Not a job spec - just a clear picture of the scope.

3. Key tasks for week one

The first 3–5 things you want them to take on. Be specific. 'Manage inbox' is not specific enough.

4. Tools and systems

Every platform they'll need access to: email, project manager, social media, accounting, file storage...

5. Communication preferences

How you like to communicate (Slack, email, WhatsApp), how often, and what decisions need sign-off

6. Hours and availability

How many hours per week, when you'd like them available, and any fixed deadlines or recurring tasks

7. How you will measure success

What does 'doing a great job' look like in month one? Be honest with yourself and with them.



Hiring Your First VA

Green flags and red flags when choosing a VA.

05 WHAT TO LOOK FOR - AND WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

✓ GREEN FLAGS

- Asks good questions before saying yes.**
A great VA wants to understand your business before committing. Eagerness without curiosity is a warning sign.
- Has a clear onboarding process of their own.**
If they can't onboard you well, they won't manage your processes well either.
- Communicates proactively - not just when asked.**
You shouldn't have to chase updates. Look for someone who flags things before they become problems.
- Can show examples of similar work.**
Not a polished portfolio - just evidence they've done something like this before.
- Is honest about what they cannot do.**
The best VAs know their limits. A 'yes to everything' approach usually ends badly.

✗ RED FLAGS

- Says yes to everything without clarifying.**
If they don't ask a single question before agreeing to your brief, they're not listening.
- No contract, no onboarding process.**
Professionalism runs both ways. No paperwork means no protection for either of you.
- Can't give references or examples.**
Even new VAs can show transferable work. If they can't evidence anything, ask why.
- Vague about availability or response times.**
You need to know when you can expect a reply. Vagueness here leads to frustration later.
- Disappears for days without communication.**
Test responsiveness before you commit. A quick email during the process tells you a lot.



Ready to Find Your First VA?

Finding the right VA isn't just about ticking a skills list. It's about finding someone who communicates well, works proactively, and genuinely wants to help your business grow. At Hunter Admin, that's exactly what we offer.

Business Clarity Audit



£450

Not sure where to start? The Audit maps your business, identifies your bottlenecks, and tells you exactly what kind of support will make the biggest difference.

VA Retainer



From £275/mo

Consistent, reliable task support from an experienced VA. Built around your business, not a generic job description.

OBM Retainer



From £850/mo

Ready to go beyond task support? An OBM takes ownership of your operations so you can focus entirely on growth.

Start with a free discovery call - no pitch, no pressure.

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