

VA Readiness Self-Assessment: 20 Questions Every Would-Be Virtual Assistant Should Consider

1. Can you comfortably say “no” to non-critical interruptions that interfere with important activities and/or create work overload?

2. Do you take pride in your work?

It’s normal to have fluctuations in the quality of your work. No one hits their marks 100 percent of the time, and entrepreneurs themselves are famous for being dissatisfied with their accomplishments and always striving for improvement. What we’re getting at here, as elsewhere in the questions, is consistency: If you don’t consistently take pride in your work, being a virtual assistant (as self-employment) may not be the best option for you, because it requires that pride of effort be primarily “self-generated”, coming before you receive the pat on the back.

3. Do you have a generally positive and upbeat attitude?

Chris’s grandfather used to tell her, “Miss Chris, life is 50 percent attitude and the other half is attitude.” An entrepreneur himself, and the father of 10 children, he often used the understated, “Yankee pearls of wisdom” that, at the time, just sounded funny to the ears of a child.

Only as she matured and pursued an entrepreneurial path herself did Chris truly understand the acuteness and value of his remarks. Successful entrepreneurs choose to go through life with a positive attitude, one of openness and assurance that they can make their dreams a reality. Attitude is a self-induced state of mind. Keep yours healthy, and your business, as an extension of yourself, is more likely to be healthy, too.

-
4. Can you communicate warmth and concerned interest effectively via phone and email?
Despite the influx of spam, Virtual Assistants still rely heavily on email to communicate with potential and current clients.

5. Do you have a solid record of establishing and achieving goals?

6. Are you willing to take responsibility for your actions even when the outcome is less than wonderful? How would you handle this type of situation?
Is there anything more frustrating than having a service provider mess up a job you've given them, then deny it was their fault – or worse yet, imply it was your fault? For example, you've taken your trench coat to the dry cleaners, and when you go in to pick it up, you discover the belt is missing. When you ask the clerk or owner where it went, he tells you there was no belt with it when you dropped it off. What is the likelihood that you'll continue using that dry cleaner? Wouldn't you have been a little less irritated, and more likely to return, if he had accepted fault and attempted to make things right? Remember this when you (on the rare occasion!) deliver less-than-perfect work. Own up, make it right, and keep the client – who may also be so impressed that he tells his network just how exceptional you were.

7. Do you embrace change as a natural progression in business life, or do you thrive on predictability and continuity?

Working with multiple clients – each with a unique working style, personality, and range of workflow – is definitely a recipe for unpredictability. Although this doesn't have to equate to chaos, it can feel that way if you don't function well in a changing environment.

8. Do you consistently make effective decisions?

9. Do you deliver your services in a memorable way? Add your ideas here.

As you might guess, a good VA always strives for this. It makes clients remember you and eager to share their "great find" with colleagues and friends.

10. Can you accept constructive criticism without considering it a personal attack?

11. Are you a thinker, a doer – or a mixture of both?

In an ideal world, every thinker would be paired with a “doer” and vice versa. Wouldn’t it be great? The thinkers could sit back and think great thoughts and, when struck with a truly inspiring idea, they could simply beckon their doer to set about turning the thoughts into reality. Likewise, the doers would be eternally grateful to their thinkers for delighting them with endless “to do” lists!

Humor aside, successful Virtual Assistants clearly need to be a mix of thinker and doer. In many cases, you’ll act primarily as a “doer” for your clients but, because you’ll also be running your own business, you’ll need to be a thinker as well, to keep your business moving forward and strategically strong.

12. Are you the kind of person who easily establishes a rapport with a wide range of people?

13. Are you a good organizer of time? Tasks? Priorities? Details? Jot down some ideas here.

To function well as a VA, you’ll need to be. You’ll be organizing your own time, tasks and details as well as your clients’. If you have difficulty managing these things in your own life, you may want to think twice about taking on these tasks for others.

14. Do you possess basic computer and technical skills needed to run the business?

15. How well do you know the Internet? Are you comfortable online?

16. Do others consider you dependable? Do you follow through on commitments?

Words to live by: Say what you are going to do, then do it. Under-promise and over-deliver. Always finish what you start. Follow through and follow up. Whatever your philosophy, dependability is key to building a solid business.

17. If interrupted, can you easily return to the task you were working on?

18. Do you hold confidentiality of employer or client information in high regard?

VA-client confidentiality is among the most fundamental principles of the industry. If you have trouble keeping confidences or secrets, you may encounter difficulties as a VA, not to mention legal liabilities if clients are harmed or perceived themselves so.

19. Do you understand the concept of “conflicts of interest” in handling multiple clients? (Some of your clients may directly or indirectly compete with each other, or have conflicting business goals. Likewise, current clients may be competitors of prospective clients.)

When working with multiple clients, you’ll have to be sensitive to the loyalties that are required and expected of you, and honor the trust that has been invested in you by each of your clients. Your first obligation is to existing clients, and you shouldn’t accept clients who relationship with you would either jeopardize or appear to jeopardize their interests. For example, if one of your clients is a real estate agent in Norwich, Connecticut, and a prospective client from a competitive firm in Norwich contacts you, it would generally be advisable to decline the second client.

20. Do you have a desire to learn about your clients’ businesses? Are you a quick learner?
One of the unique and most attractive aspects of being a virtual assistant is the stimulating diversity of intellectual and professional issues that comes from working with multiple clients, especially when they hail from various industries. A VA can wear many hats during the course of a single workday, and the opportunities for continuous learning and professional development are plentiful. Further, the more you learn about your clients’ businesses and industries, the more valued and respected (and compensated) you become.

NOTE: This assessment has been taken from Christine Durst and Michael Haaren’s paperback: *The 2-Second Commute*