

FINDING THE RIGHT VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

SHOULD YOU HIRE INDEPENDENTLY OR USE AN AGENCY?

Ever wish the day had 48 hours just so you could catch up on everything? If you run a business, chances are you have. There's always more to do, and never enough time to do it. For me, the solution was building a team of trusted Filipino virtual assistants (VAs). It's a popular, cost-effective approach, and I can confidently say it works.

In fact, it worked so well for me that after automating large parts of my other business, I launched my own VA agency to help other property business owners do the same. And believe me, finding the right VA isn't as easy as it sounds.

If you read my article in the last issue of *Blue Bricks*, you'll already know the basics of recruiting your own VA. This time, I want to explore when it makes sense to recruit a VA yourself, and when it's better to use an agency.

Recruiting Yourself: Perfect for Some, a Nightmare for Others

I often speak to clients who approach me to discuss their needs and how the recruitment process works. Almost all of them have one thing in common: they're short on time. Still, I often hear, "I need to speak with my business partner when I have a moment," or "I'd love to move forward, but I'm too busy to book a discovery call."

It's a bit ironic, isn't it? They're looking to hire a VA to reclaim their time, but they're too busy to start the process. That's our first key factor: time. If you can carve out 30–50 hours over a two to three-week period, there's a good chance you can recruit a VA on your own.

Second, you must enjoy — or at least not dread — talking to people. Recruitment is a people-centred process. You need to talk, listen, and assess personalities and skills. Post your job ad on LinkedIn and you could get 50 to 150 applications in just a few days.

Add a few Facebook groups, and suddenly you've got 300 candidates. Now you need to review CVs, shortlist applicants, and hold interviews. If you're naturally social, in sales, or customer-facing, this might feel manageable. But if you're introverted, dislike leading conversations, or lack interview experience, it quickly becomes overwhelming.



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If you ask yes/no questions, the answers will usually work in their favour. Try asking open-ended questions instead — for example, "Can you describe how you handled a difficult client situation?" rather than "Do you have customer service experience?"

The Time Costs You Don't See

Picture this: You review 60 CVs and start booking interviews. By the time you've held your fifth interview, another 100 applications have landed in your inbox. Now you're juggling second interviews, first interviews, and more CV reviews, all while running your business. It can snowball fast. And I promise, by interview number five, you'll barely remember your first candidate.

The only way to manage this chaos is with a clear process. Build it, follow it, and stick to it.

The final factor is experience or gut instinct. Many candidates know how to say all the

right things. They'll tell you exactly what they think you want to hear. If you ask yes/no questions, the answers will usually work in their favour. Being able to read between the lines, whether through experience or intuition, matters.

To sum it up, I believe you can recruit your own VA if you:

- Can dedicate 30–50 hours over 2–3 weeks
- Are comfortable (or at least willing) to speak with many candidates
- Build and follow a solid recruitment process
- Have some recruitment experience or strong instincts

Now, let's talk about working with a VA agency.

If you decide to go this route, there are a few main business models to be aware of:

1. Agencies with one-off, upfront recruitment fees

These agencies typically charge between £400–£800 per role.

The pros? You pay a one-time fee, and the VA is yours to work with exclusively. You'll still get to interview candidate(s) provided by the agency.

The cons? Once you've accepted a candidate, the post-recruitment support can be minimal. If something doesn't work out, replacing your VA might be difficult. You'll also have to fully manage your assistant from day one, and there's usually no trial period.

This model is best if you're confident in the agency's judgment and you're looking for a full-time VA from the start.

2. Agencies offering fractional hours or packages

These give you flexibility. You don't have to commit to full-time support. Some agencies offer packages starting from as little as 10 hours per month.

The pros? You can outsource small tasks without a big commitment. It's perfect if you only need help with one or two specific jobs.

The cons? The hourly rates are significantly higher, often £15–£20 per hour. With small

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packages, you might not get a dedicated VA. Some agencies also charge for all hours, whether you use them or not.

This is ideal if you know exactly what you want help with and only need a couple of hours each week.

3. Agencies (like mine) that fully outsource VAs to your business

In this model, we recruit a dedicated VA specifically for your business and manage the process for you.

The pros? You get a long-term team member who's recruited for your needs. There's strong post-recruitment support because the agency only benefits if your VA stays with you. There are no upfront fees, and the hourly rates are significantly lower than in the model described above.

The cons? Minimum commitment usually starts at 4 hours a day, and contract lengths

tend to be at least 4–6 months. You'll need to spend some time onboarding your VA and getting them up to speed.

This model is ideal for business owners looking for a long-term, part-time team member. Many agencies (including ours) offer a "buyout" option after a few months, so you can permanently hire the VA if you're confident they're the right fit.

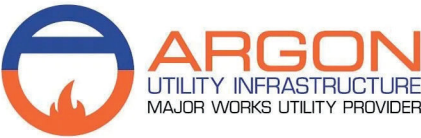
Here to Help

I hope this has given you a clearer understanding of how the VA recruitment landscape works. If you think you might need help finding the right virtual assistant for your business, **my team and I** (yes, they're based in the Philippines) would love to support you.

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