

## **Session #20 Transcript – The Smart Passive Income Podcast**

<http://www.smartpassiveincome.com>

### **All About Virtual Assistants and Outsourcing with Chris Ducker from VirtualBusinessLifestyle.com**

Pat: Hey everybody what's up? Welcome to the 20th session of the smart passive income podcast. Today we're actually going to talk about everything about virtual assistants. What they are, how to find them, how it all works, tips and tricks to maximize efficiency, everything. I actually have a guest on the show today who is perfectly qualified to discuss this with me. I actually have a number of questions of my own now that I'm actually two and a half months into hiring my first full time VA or virtual assistant. We'll be chatting with a great friend of my and the friend of the SPI community, Chris Ducker. Mr. Chris Ducker from VirtualBusinessLifestyle.com. Chris and I have actually been long time friends online. We chat on Skype from time to time and we're actually able to meet last year at Blog World Expo in Vegas and while we were there we did a few videos together, hung out and watched some of the presentations during the expo. We had some tacos. It was a good time.

I will say this. Out of anyone who I know online Chris is probably one of the people that I've connected with the most. He's a real friend and he's someone I could really trust. If he was here in the states, he's in the Philippines right now. He has a company that he's running there but he was here in the states I wouldn't even hesitate for him to babysit for me and actually he's got a toddler of his own so we have that sort of connection there as well. The thing I love about Chris, he's got a very unique kind of stance or place online in the internet business world but I'll let him explain it more about that in a second. Chris how are you doing buddy? Thank you for coming on the show I really appreciate it.

Chris: No problem. It's a pleasure and thank you for such a nice intro. I feel as if I'm going to be sort of setting myself up to fail here hopefully I won't let anybody down.

Pat: I'm not worried at all. Like I said you're kind of the Mr. Virtual Assistant. You have a company there right? Tell us about your company real quick.

Chris: Actually I have three different companies here. The main one which sort of everything sits underneath is the live to sell group. We're fundamentally a total business outsourcing company. We work with clients majority of which are in the US but we have clients all over the world but the large majority is in the US. We do everything from customer service to telemarketing, lead generation, online marketing, virtual assistant services, chat support, email support all that sort of fun outsourced stuff. I also have the virtual stuff finder which is under the umbrella. We've just launched a brand new service called the web PA service which is more along the lines of online marketing but it all sits under that one umbrella.

Pat: How are you kind of involved in the online marketing business because you have this company? You're the CEO of live to sell. You have virtual staff finder. You have a blog also at virtual business lifestyle which is pretty much where a lot of my audience who may know you, already knows you from. Can you explain kind of what you're doing with that site at [virtualbusinesslifestyle.com](http://virtualbusinesslifestyle.com)? What do you do in there?

Chris: The VBL brand and community I've really built it up initially to build this sort of chart my course in 2010 whilst I was on a mission to become this full time virtual CEO and you mentioned in the intro there that I've got a toddler. He's two and a half and this time around, he's actually my third kid and there was a big gap between the second and third. This time around I just wanted to be there more because with the first two kids I was working so much, was building the career, was building the

companies and all the rest of it. I didn't really have the opportunity to spend as much time as I really would have liked to have done with my first two kids.

Now it's a little bit more different. I was in a slightly different position. I'm very much the boss and have all these hundreds of people working for me and everything. I was in the position to build a start, really kind of almost outsourcing my own work as well within the company and it went from me doing 50 hours a week behind a desk in the facility to still doing 50 hours a week because I love what I do but I now I do it all over the place. I'm very much virtual I only get into office usually only two or three times a week and at that point it's normally only for five or six hours at a time instead of eight, nine, ten hours but I mean virtual business lifestyle blog was created to kind of chart that year long goal. Once I hit the goal at the end of last year it now fundamentally just become a community on its own. We've got the podcast which you've been a guest on. Actually you're a guest; you're one of the first couple of guests.

Pat: I think I was the first guest right?

Chris: No I think you were number two, on session number two but you know what they say right? First the worst, second the best.

Pat: There you go. Third the worst.

Chris: Yes. We've got the community build up and it's just a great community now of what I call new age mobile entrepreneurs that want to be able to start businesses, grow businesses and just utilize technology and utilize lifestyle design in general just to be able to create a nice virtual business lifestyle which that name is actually given to me by my wife. She was the one that sort of liked the domain name believe it or not. I can't put my hand up and say that was my one. That was all down to her.

Pat: That's awesome. Smart passive income was me but it actually wasn't the first domain name that I selected. I actually changed it three times before I ended up on smart passive income. That's a little fun fact for your guys listening. It was originally going to be passive, aggressive income dude.

Chris: Yes you probably went with a better one I think.

Pat: But the acronym for passive aggressive income dude is PAID or paid. I thought that was the cool part.

Chris: I see the play on words there. I see where you're going.

Pat: But then I would have to explain that every single time to people and I think I made a good choice with smart passive income. Anyways, if you guys haven't been to [virtualbusinesslifestyle.com](http://virtualbusinesslifestyle.com) make sure to go check it out after this podcast. There will be links on the show notes. Again as always the show notes are available on the blog. You can just go there pick on the [smartpassiveincome.com/session20](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session20). You can go there right now to get the transcript if you want. If you want to follow all our notes as well but we're going to get into kind of talking all about virtual assistants today.

Liked I talked about earlier I just hired one two and a half months ago and it's been a pretty much life changing thing for me. I mean virtual assistants aren't for everybody but if you're trying to grow your business and if you're trying to save time and if you're trying to sort of grow your business exponentially without actually having to put more time in it yourself. Going with a virtual assistant or hiring a programmer or web designer or somebody who's almost like an employee working under you. We'll get into

the logistics of the how this all works or how you could find them and how to maximize efficiency in a second but it's been really life changing for me. I've been able to do so much more.

The thing about virtual assistants is I'm kind of cloning myself. I'm allowing myself to actually work 24 hours a day especially because the person I hired is in the Philippines. When I'm asleep he's doing work. He's name is mike. He's awesome. When I wake up the work is done and I can do work if I need work to do that day. Virtual assistants have really changed my life and I'm really glad to be talking with Chris today because he is the top expert on the subject. I know I just said I have a virtual assistant but I want to approach this kind of interview from a stand point and most of you out there listening who I'm sure probably don't have a VA or maybe you just started working with one and you want to get to know how to really maximize output from your person and how to keep that relationship strong which is important.

I'm going to be approaching this like, I'm going to be asking your questions Chris as if I've never done it before but then of course I'm going to come in and add what I can based on my experience or ask questions based on my experience as well. I guess the first thing is what is a virtual assistant? How would you define a virtual assistant? I've heard so many definitions and meanings. How would you define a virtual assistant?

Chris: It's a question I get asked a lot and I think it really comes down to personal preference nine times out of ten in terms of what you want them to do. A VA is such a broad word nowadays. Six, seven years ago when VAs really started to really come on the scene. First of all let's say Tim Ferriss brought them to the masses with the four hour work week but they were working long before he wrote that book. That's something that we should sort of acknowledge immediately but fundamentally speaking the way I usually describe a VA is they're just like a PA or a personal assistant except for the fact that they can't pick up your dry cleaning or make a cup of coffee because they aren't at an arms' length.

That is generally what it comes down to but nowadays they kind of blossomed into a whole industry of their own and it's not just about administrative support now. It's everything from web development which I know Mike does a lot of web development for you. There's a lot of SEO work that goes on, a lot of content creation, social media, niche research, on and off page optimization and all the rest of it that goes with it. The term virtual assistant now really is just somebody that kind of just helps you from an arms' length on whatever you need done.

Perfect example, I was putting an eBook together to give away to the community for free other the last week. I sent it out to a designer. It cost me a \$100, beautiful, beautiful design. Front cover, 3d cover image, the whole lot. It comes back 35 pages, 48 hours later a \$100.

Pat: We'll talk about how important our time is and how that kind of is in balance with handing out jobs to virtual assistants as well because they're, how much is your time worth. That is something to think about especially when you're working with virtual assistants and what kind of jobs you want them to do. Sorry for interrupting. Keep going.

Chris: Yes no problem. I mean you bring up a very, very clear point. The leveraging side of any entrepreneur's time is probably about as important as anything else that he's doing because my whole deal is that you can make money. You document it every month on the blog. It always astounds me. It's like down to the cent of your monthly income. I would never do it myself. I'm just a little bit more old school but I can see why you started doing it and I can appreciate what it means to you and your brand and your community which is just, it's got to be one of the best communities in the internet.

Here's the thing you see. Money can be made. Time however, once you've spent your time it's gone forever. As an entrepreneur you have to make sure that you leverage your time properly whether you run an online business or an offline business, whatever the case may be you must make sure you manage your time properly and that's everything from handling your email right the way down to either outsourcing or delegating tasks to other members of staff or whatever but ultimately time is the absolute number one commodity for any entrepreneur. I still see a lot of people struggling with it and it's just a shame because nowadays you don't need to.

Pat: It's tough to get around sometimes and I know that sometimes we feel that we have to be the ones working on things but in order to (11:52) and spend our time doing other things that we pretty much would rather do we can hand out the jobs that we probably aren't as good at as other people who are experts who can get them done faster for us.

Chris: Yes. Exactly and that's the thing. We're a weird breed as it is. Entrepreneurs we're just a very strange breed like you say very clearly we believe we can do everything ourselves and it really does come down to what you feel you should be doing rather than what you could be doing. For instance that eBook that I had designed. That would have taken me hours and hours and hours to do because I'm not the best when it comes to graphic design or anything like that. I mean I literally gave him a handful of images that I wanted used inside the book. I gave him a concept not even an image, just a concept for the front cover and I gave him the content. That was it, the written content in a word file.

For me to have to work on that design, a 35 page eBook. It would have taken me hours if not days. When I consult it I charge anything between \$500 to \$700 or \$800 an hour depending on what I'm consulting on so that gives you a rough idea the kind of money that I could be making doing something else. That kind of tasks is a no brainer for me as an entrepreneur to outsource.

Pat: Yes for sure and you know this. When I first started out I thought I was, I could do everything and I did do everything. I learned how to do wordpress. I learned how to code. I'm not an expert at coding but I learned how to do that at all on my own. Looking back I wasted a ton of time and time is money especially in this business. Looking back I really wish I knew about virtual assistants which is kind of why we're bring this podcast out and explaining exactly what they are for those who don't know what they are. It took me two and a half months to write an eBook that was 95% already written.

I'm talking about greenexamacademy.com when I came out with my eBook. I was just using the same content that was on the site which like I said 95% of it was done. Most of it was just formatting, formatting the eBook in Adobe Professional and adding graphics to it. If I have someone on board to do it just you did in a week that's an extra two months of income I could have had. At that time I was earning \$20,000 or \$30,000 a month. Even spending a \$1000 to get the eBook done. You just said a \$100 even a thousand you I would have made that up in a day if I have gotten it up sooner.

It's a learning experience. I can only look back and kick myself for not doing it so much but now I feel like I'm in the right place where I have a virtual assistant, a programmer, who I can go to say hey my website, I want to move this over here. Can you just do this for me and I wake up, over night it gets worked on and I wake up and it's done for me. It's a beautiful thing. From there, okay we talked about what VAs are. We kind of talked about a little bit briefly about what they can do for us. You know exactly who is my audience and what they do. What types of things can a virtual assistant help for my particular audience you think.

Chris: First things first. I mean you talk a lot on the blog about niche, niche sites and getting these sites setup and run and research and all the rest of it. I actually think, I did a guest post for you quite a while back.

Pat: That was a long time ago.

Chris: It was a long time ago right. I remembered doing it. I think it was something along the lines of how I got my virtual assistant at that time to go through a whole bunch of stuff which I think is completely relevant still today plus a whole lot more. I mean the bulk of the stuff that the VAs can be probably be doing for your particular audience are probably going to be along the lines of huge amounts of keyword research whether they're using market samurai or not which I know you're a big advocate of and I believe it's a fantastic platform as well. That right there is very, very time consuming.

Pat: Keyword research, oh yes for sure. I mean we're going through a coaching course right now and we spend a week doing keyword research and still people are having issues with finding keywords. They tell me that they actually get addicted to keyword research because it is fun but it takes up a lot of time to search through thousands of keywords looking for those golden keywords that like I talked about in previous podcasts have a lot of searches but have relatively low amounts of competition in the first page of Google.

Chris: Right. I'm curious. I want to ask you a question. Your security guard training niche. How long did you spend on the keyword research for that? I probably read it somewhere but tell me again how long it was?

Pat: It was probably a few days but I was spending hours each day going through different keywords, looking at relative keywords and going through the search numbers. It's a very scientific method for those of you who don't know but it is something that you can outsource because it's all based on numbers. You can just say hey, here are the numbers. Here's the criteria that I want you to find keywords about. Go at it and come back to me in a week or two days whatever with a list of things that meet that criteria. Then you can go from there and build a website which I believe is you're going to say eventually as far as something else that a virtual assistant can do for you.

Chris: Absolutely. I mean you look at everything across the board. You look at the keyword research even registering domain names, tracking down and comparing hosting companies, looking for blog things. Tweeting those blog things, testing maybe different graphic designers out, if you need a logo done and your VA cant design the logo then he'll get them on the 99designs.com or get them on the elance.com or whatever the case may be. They can set up social media campaigns for you and run them. They can get going with wordpress and installing it on servers. Again these are all things that probably the large majority of your audience probably know how to all do themselves but if you can outsource that work to your virtual assistant and focus on the stuff that is a lot more important to you and that can be anything like you and I we love spending time with our families. That is right at the top of our priority list for the two of us.

You've got other things like maybe you want to spend more time actually writing that eBook that you keep procrastinating about or putting together that audio downloadable cost on how to become the greatest kung fu fighter since Bruce Lee. There's a ton of stuff that you can be getting on with that is more in line with what you should be doing as the owner of your business rather than, I always say you should be marketing and selling your business as a business owner not running it. I'm a big believer in that myself and I'm talking with a company of over 250 employees. I don't

run my company. I get people to do that for me. I market it and I sell it. That's what I do.

Pat: I see it as kind of handing off the projects that even like you said you may know how to do but just using and leveraging a virtual assistant to do what you want to do and within your business as well. I'm trying to set up my VA to get to a point where I can just have a keyword, send it to him and then bam within a day or two the whole site is done. it's all ready to go and it's ready for me to put content on it because that is something that I believe in and I'm really adamant about is I want to be the one that is creating most of the content. I leave to the beginnings of a website when it's first created; I want to be in control of the content. That's what I enjoy. I love writing. If you see my blog which I'm sure most of you have I love to write. Some of my posts are 2000, 3000, 4000 words. I love to write and when I'm building these sites I love to write on those niche sites as well. I love to do research on those niche sites and come up with a better way to present that information. That is what I do but if I could easily just set it up so I could just find the keyword or have my VA find the keyword for me, set up a site and just have it ready for me to log in to wordpress and start writing. That would save so much time and make things so much more efficient and allow me to do exactly what I want to do which is write.

Chris: Right. Right. Exactly. Right, right, right. You've literally just summed it up right there for you. On the niche side of things, that's what's most important is creating that content. Number one it's got to be original so you can climb up the ranks of those search engines nice and quickly and stay there as well but number two you want to do it yourself because that way you know it's going to be done right and to a certain level of quality. You can install wordpress on the server. Even I can do that. I taught myself how to do it. It took me hours but why would I want to do that now when I can get other people to do it myself, do you know what I mean?

I guess you kind of just have to balance it up a little bit regardless of how impressive a list can actually be in terms of the task that you can outsource. There are certain things that you should not outsource and if content is one of those things that is important to you then you should not outsource it. I'll give you a perfect, perfect example. I don't know six, seven months or so ago I got an email from somebody saying that they wanted that their SEO strategy was nothing but guest posting. That is all that they're going to do. They just wanted to get on as many different blogs as possible in their chosen niche.

Their chosen niche was financial services or financial management or something along those lines. This guy had been in the business for 15 years. He was obviously very well versed, very well experienced in regards to everything financial and he wanted to basically get a virtual assistant in the Philippines to write all of these guest posts that he would then post on all these different blogs in his name. I advised him against it. He was shocked. No, I don't want to do that. I want someone else to do it all for me. I said but what makes you think a 20 something virtual assistant regardless of how good a writer they are and there are some great, great writers in the Philippines. Let me tell you, regardless of how good they are when it comes to writing articles what makes you think that somebody like that is going to be better at writing about financial services than someone like yourself who's been in the industry for 15 years.

He was just dumbfounded that I was suggesting that he shouldn't do it and not only that but you're putting your name to the damn articles. I can see if you're just trying to build a whole bunch of links back to your website or something but he was actually wanting to build his own personal brand around it as well. Insane. I don't whether the guy ended up doing it or not but he certainly didn't do it with any of my VAs. I can tell you that right now because it's something like that. It's just insane. The content creation if it's super important to you you should absolutely do it yourself. It's the best way to build up your brands as well because you're writing in your own voice just like you do.

Pat: Right. Exactly and it depends on what you want to do and what you would rather hand out. Just think about what you would enjoy and hand out everything else if you are interested in getting some virtual staff. Speaking of getting someone to work, I mean where and I know that you have a business that does this already. I expect a plug here from you but where would I go, if somebody doesn't know where to start as far as where do I find a virtual assistant? Where do I go to get a virtual assistant? Talk about your services but talk about other places.

Chris: Don't make it a 100% elevator pitch. It really depends on what you want your VA to do for you. It comes down to one of two things. It's either project based or full time. One or the other. Project based, that's not necessarily going to work with somebody that you want to hire full time and have working for you full time. A project based VA doesn't want to work full time for somebody. They're quite happy to work for a week on one project or two weeks on another or juggle a whole load of other projects all at once. A perfect example of a project based VA work is something along the lines of having a logo designed or having an introduction to a podcast done by voice over artists or which incidentally I just had one done for \$5 on fiver.com.

This female voiceover artist had been on the radio for 14 years. She was fantastic. It cost me \$5. There you go.

Pat: She's probably just doing that because she loves it.

Chris: Yes probably. Yes exactly. Those are the different types of things. Things like designing a website or getting an eBook designed. That's not something that's going to take weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks. You can usually do those project based outsourcing tasks relatively easily on websites like elance.com which I know you've used a few times.

Pat: I love elance.

Chris: Elance is super easy to use. It's very responsive. The other ones are odesk, freelancer. These are the kinds of websites that you find people to work on those project based jobs really, really well. If you want a full time VA and you're right...

Pat: Chris, before you move on I just want to list off a few more places people can go to for project based, the one off projects. We have elance as you said. Elance and odesk together are kind of similar because what you do is you post a job and what happens is people who can do those jobs, they kind of bid on your project and you kind of select the one based on price or feedback or reviews that they've had. It's kind of an auctioning thing but it's pretty cool. I use elance and odesk all the time. Elance and odesk, you mentioned fiver, F-I-V-E-R.com which is a pretty unique website where you can go and just pretty much get anything done for your for \$5. It sounds like you got really lucky with the person you selected. You probably were looking at their reviews and stuff.

Chris: Yes. That's the thing with fiver. You've got to really look at the reviews regardless of how great the gig looks on there. If you don't have a whole bunch of good quality reviews, just don't use them because the chances are, as little as it is the chances are you're going to be wasting your money or you're just not going to see it ever again. I actually had one guy just as a goof. I had one guy actually record a happy birthday message dressed as a banana.

Pat: You can do random things like that. I'm looking on fiver right now. The featured \$5 jobs here are I will sing your idea or words to make a catchy acoustic song for \$5. I will research online and provide you prevalent information on your chosen subject for

\$5. That one sounds kind of more toward our audience. I will film my bird playing around your ad or message for \$5. That's awesome.

Chris: Who doesn't want a bird playing around your advert? I mean that's great.

Pat: I should do this and have it on the blog in a particular post.

Chris: Exactly. You should do that. I think they need to spray paint the bird blue so it's kind of resembling twitter or something.

Pat: So we have fiver. Sorry to cut you off there. We'll keep going. If you want to get logos that's not designed specifically, another great place is a place like 99designs. Have you ever used 99designs?

Chris: I haven't used them myself personally but I know plenty of people that have.

Pat: I had a couple of times.

Chris: How did your experience go? I'm sure your listeners are going to be interested to hear.

Pat: It was awesome. They do other things on there too like web design and stationary design. Anything that deals with design pretty much you get on there. What happens is you post your job just like you would on elance or odesk but what happens is people actually design the logos for you or whatever it is you're trying to design and they

submit it to you and you select the best one you like. It's sort of a contest and you rate them and provide feedback to the people that are providing those images for you. I mean I put a job for a logo on one of my sites a long time ago. Actually it was a logo for an iPhone application.

I posted a job. It was like \$150 and I had like 50 to 60 different logos come in. I had a pool of 60 logos that I could choose from to see which one best fit kind of my needs and we selected one and it was awesome. They just handed over the files and it was a really, really good experience. 99designs is pretty cool. That is called crowd sourcing kind of using the power of other people and their talents to provide things for you seeing what they look like in real time before you actually select that which is pretty cool and you also mentioned another site. There's rent a coder. There's a few other ones for one off projects but those are the ones that I pretty much use.

If I'm not going to do a one off project and I find out that maybe I'm going to be designing multiple websites over time which is why I selected to have a full time VA or I'm going to have someone come on board to do backlinking for me to help my niche sites climb the ranks of Google. How would I find someone to do that full time for me?

Chris: There are other places. You might be able to get lucky and find people on places like elance and this is where the plug starts I'm afraid guys. I apologize in advance if I'm going to start sounding like a snake oil salesman or something like that. The bottomline is I've been in the outsourcing industry for a long, long, long time. I've lived here in the Philippines for close to 11 years. I've trained probably close to 8,000 Filipinos on all times of different kind of outsourced services and skill sets and so one of the things we had seen happening particularly after Tim Ferriss four hour work week book came out, more and more people were contacting us in regards to virtual assistants.

At first it was kind of cool and it was nice to be able to see all these additional interest in your service coming in but the problem was that a lot of people were wanting to have a VA but they were not wanting to pay a professional services fee. Under my company there's a subsidiary called live to care which also provides what I call executive PAs or executive VAs. These are people who work in our facility on your time zone but in our facility managed and trained by our staff and all the rest of it. They can cost anything from \$1200 a month right up to \$2000 depending on what they're doing. These are in a facility. the redundancy in running costs and all the rest of it that goes with that but a lot of people wanted that but they didn't want to pay for it.

What we did around august last year is we sat down and we said how can we continue to help these small entrepreneurs and small business owners that want a VA but don't want to have to pay through the teeth fundamentally. That's how we came up with virtualstafffinder.com. Virtual staff finder was setup to as we call it on the website bridge that outsourcing gap between professional service provider and home based virtual assistant. Basically the VAs are screened as any of my other staff would be screened if they will be coming to work in my facility. They're put through IQ and personality tests. We check up if we can with past employers and things like that. We really, really run them through a ton of different hoops.

What we do is we present them with three finalized candidates to the person that signed up to the service and they pick the one they want to work with just like you did with mike.

Pat: Yes. I found mike through your service virtual staff finder. It was a great experience. I have heard of people finding staff for themselves. Staff who work from their homes on places like craigslist and some other area. I think there's one called bestjobs.ph or something like that. It's sort of the one being thrown around in the internet marketing industry as the place to find some virtual staff but I've heard some people having problems with that too. What I love about your service Chris and if

anyone out there is looking for a virtual staff I definitely recommend at least going to the website [virtualstafffinder.com](http://virtualstafffinder.com) and checking that out. It was great. I told Chris exactly what I needed.

I talked to Stephanie who is one of the managers there at your virtual staff finder who works for you. Stephanie was great. I told her exactly what kind of things I needed. I needed someone who was a web programmer, who was really good at it who was super smart and works kind of on their own and is intuitive and would take things that are obvious that he can do them on his own without me having to tell him to do it sometimes. Someone who is going to be able to constantly build websites for me and program and who has experience and she said okay. Two days later I got three people to choose from mike was one of them. I interviewed him on Skype and he was fantastic. I chose mike in particular because he just seemed the most real to me. He actually talked a little bit about his family. He has a son as well just like I do. So we have that immediate connection there.

When you hire someone and we'll talk about this, when you actually find someone to hire, this is going to be somebody who is going to be working with you full time for quite a while hopefully and you really want to connect with them on a certain level before you actually take them under your wing and share with them exactly what you want them to do for you. Stephanie came with three candidates. I talked to each of them. Mike seems to stand out the most and bam that was it. It was really easy. In two days I found a really professional web programmer who is excellent.

I mean I give him bonuses just because he is so awesome. He's super responsive like I'm having a little bit of trouble keeping up with him. I'm not giving him enough work. I'm giving him exactly what I want to be done but I can totally use him even more if I want to. Thank you Chris for virtual staff finder. That was really helpful. There is a cost to that service as well.

Chris: There is. I mean I'd like to be able to do it for free but unfortunately I like to make money more. I'm very honest and upfront. There are costs involved in running something like that. Stephanie is not the only person that works on that side of the business. There's a whole team of guys. Costs are in place and things have to be taken care of. There's two different options. You can sign up for just the VA matchmaking service which is \$350 or you can actually pay \$500 and go ahead and do that and do a 30 minute consultation with me personally over Skype or the phone or whatever. It's kind of just like an added bonus for if people want to just sort of go through the strategies a little bit more in how they can utilize the VAs more and things like that. I've never had anybody complain after one of those calls and say yes and hopefully it won't happen in the future.

The fact of the matter is the service has become as popular as it has a very, very, some of the biggest names in internet marketing and pro bloggers have used the service to find the VAs, yourself included and there's got to be a reason for that and I think that people generally if they want to find good quality staff they know that there's two ways to do it. You go find them yourself or you find someone who is an expert to do it for you. We've been doing it a long, long time. It really comes down to that.

Pat: Great. So we'll end the plug.

Chris: Plug over. Done.

Pat: I'm happy to do that for you because it's a great service and my audience knows that I only recommend things that I use. There is an actual affiliate link for Chris' service. So if you want to help me out a little bit too when you are interested in virtual staff. This more than a plug.

Chris: Because you like to make money as well right.

Pat: Exactly but I like to share things that are useful as well. If you want to go get a virtual staff from [virtualstafffinder.com](http://virtualstafffinder.com). You can go through my affiliate link if you want. I'm not forcing you to do this. I'm just leaving it as an option. You can go to [smartpassiveincome.com/virtualstafffinder](http://smartpassiveincome.com/virtualstafffinder) and that will take you to my affiliate link. I appreciate it if any of you guys do that. If not worries you can find a VA on your own as well. A lot of people will have VAs that they've been working with for a long time that way too. A lot of times people find VAs by asking other people do you have a VA who may have some extra time? That's a great way to find a virtual staff finder. Excuse me. I keep like sublimally saying your brand. That's a great way to find some virtual staff as well.

From there say we're given the selection of two or three people like I was. What are the tricks or what would you recommend to someone to really make sure they choose the right person. For me I feel chatting with them is really important because you can find someone and say I went to craigslist for example and I find someone who look like they're qualified. Paper can only show so much or text on a page can only reveal so much about a person. I think I feel and I'm sure you would agree it's really important to actually chat with them and talk to them on Skype on video or chat with them. See how responsive they are. Shoot them an email and see how responsive they are. See how good the communication skills are with you. Ask to see a portfolio. That's what I think is really important too or see if there's anyone that they've previously worked with who I can ask how they work as well. Is there anything you would like to add to that as far as really making sure that you're going to find the right person?

Chris: The portfolio is a great thing particularly if there is anything design related obviously. If you're looking to hire somebody on the SEO side of things. See if you can

find out websites and keywords that they have worked on. If they're real they'll be happy to share that stuff with you. The proof is in the pudding as they say but I mean I think you really hit the nail on the head pat really at the end of the day with actually just conversing because the nature of this whole virtual assistant outsourcing thing is very much on a global economic scale now. People are very much getting used more and more with every passing month and year of working in a virtual setup.

I talked about that on the blog in terms of not just working with individuals but with teams and then projects and all the rest of it. Fact of the matter is is that you cannot be picking up the phone and talking with somebody. If you can do it via Skype on video that's even better because you lose a lot in the conversation when it's just audio only than you would see if you were doing it via video. None of your listeners know right now that I have actually got my finger up my nose. I can see the title of this podcast going a little pear shaped now.

Pat: I didn't think about that.

Chris: The fact of the matter is if you talk with somebody you get a real genuine feel for the type of person that they are. When we talk about Filipino virtual assistants. Filipinos are very, very family orientated. most of the VAs that I've ever worked with or come into contact with are all working not only to support themselves and their direct family or their immediate family but also some of their siblings going through high school or college or cousins or whatever the case may be. They're very hardworking people and a lot of them do what they do not only to support themselves but also those around them. It's nice to be able to get that very clear communication up and running from day one. It sounds like you did it with mike which is great.

Nothing can replace a really good phone conversation when you're hiring somebody virtually. It's different if they come in to your office and they're dressed all smart and

they're saying all the right things in front of you face to face. That's a different ball game. If you're looking at hiring a virtual assistant you don't have that luxury and Skype can alleviate a lot of that but if you can't for whatever reason hook up on video then a phone call or a Skype conversation just audio wise is about the best piece of advice I can give when it comes to that stuff.

Pat: Yes for sure. We've been talking a lot about Philippines and some people are probably like why are we outsourcing specifically to the Philippines? I know you've lived there for a certain number of years. What would you say is the reason why? Everyone in this industry is the Philippines as far as getting hired help.

Chris: There are other VAs that work all around the world including the US, UK and any other western based country. I always get the crap shredded out of me whenever I talk about the difference between offshore, overseas VAs.

Pat: You probably get some negative comments on the blog.

Chris: I'm ready for it. I did a post on virtual business lifestyle ages and ages and ages ago in regards to how much you should be paying your overseas VA. I don't what happened or I think an American VA obviously found it on twitter via keyword search or something, hooked up on it. Went to work on me. I mean literally ripped me a new one. I kept the comment on there. A lot of people would have deleted. I kept the comment on there and I replied to it but then what happened the next couple of days tons of American VAs and I'm just using the Americans because they were basically all from the US. they put a link to this thing in one of their forums, their posts or whatever and everybody was coming over and just smacking the crap out of me, personally and anyone...

Pat: Why are they doing that?

Chris: Well because I was saying you should utilize offshore overseas Filipinos or overseas VAs because of the cost saving benefits. If you're an entrepreneur and you're boot strapping particularly right at the beginning of everything. Why would you want to pay somebody \$25 an hour when you can get exactly the same work done for \$5 or \$6 an hour. Why would you want to do that? It's insane. I can't come up with a single argument to back that up. That is basically what I was saying and I obviously as my blog had a lot of followers, a lot of people from the community backing me up and also saying that they also use not just Filipino VAs but other people that are overseas and everything and they're American. It was just one of those things.

I think the reason why the Philippines get so much press when it comes to working with offshore VAs is because number one the Philippines is the third largest English speaking country in the world. Not a lot of people know that but it's true. They are literally educated in English from kindergarten level plain and simple.

Pat: I know I'm half Filipino.

Chris: You are indeed. I know you are, absolutely.

Pat: I'm married to a Filipina.

Chris: There you go. Exactly. You know why but your listeners might still be asking the question why. Yes they not only speak great English but they are...

Pat: It's important for communication with your VA.

Chris: It is absolutely but they're also very Americanized in terms of their communities. The way that they do things. You can go to a multiplex cinema over here. They'll be 20 screens and 18 of them would be Hollywood movies and then the two remaining theaters will have some cheesy Filipino comedy or action.

Pat: Wowowee or something.

Chris: That's a great show. Google it everybody. Wowowee. It's actually off air now but it was a great show back in the day.

Pat: Oh it is and YouTube I'm sure.

Chris: I'm sure it is but the fact of the matter is that not only can they speak great English. They're very Americanized even to the point that they're having the good old stars and stripes actually on the one hand of peso bill and they're just very hardworking. They're very studious. They love to learn. They love to study. They love to research which is great. If you have a VA that say for instance hasn't done any audio transcription before. They can learn how to do that properly or maybe you want them to slice and dice a quick video together. You just send them the YouTube. There's a video on YouTube that teach you how to do everything. They're just very studious, very hardworking, very sincere, very loyal...

Pat: Family oriented.

Chris: Very family oriented.

Pat: That's what I love with those. Mike's connection with me right at the beginning because he was talking about his son and the reason why he was looking for the job was to help support him and this son. It's crazy. We'll get into the kind of price and how much a VA cost but I'm paying Mike \$700 a month for him to work pretty much eight hours a day for me. I know some of you are going to be flabbergasted by that number but the truth is and you'll go into this in a second it's just the way the economy works in the Philippines, that's a really good income for a person in the Philippines. That is the high end of hiring a virtual staff is \$700 to \$800 a month. Obviously when he does things really well for me, for instance I had him put up a website for me for one of my clients that I'm working with. He put up a website for me in two days. Totally from scratch built from scratch. I shot him an extra \$200 just because I was like man you're awesome. I did that because I really want him to stay with me because I've heard of VAs also, some people kind of mistreating their VAs, taking advantages of them and they completely leave. They're people too and they want what's best for them.

Chris: I would say that the two biggest tips that I would give people when they start working with VAs is number one pay them what they're worth. Not what you think they're worth but what they truly are worth, number one and number two pay them on time. Never be late paying a VA ever, ever, ever. That's the quickest most surefire way to make sure they're off to find another job because as you probably know Pat Filipinos don't leave to save money every month. They literally work to live. They count on that salary coming in on the middle and in the end of every month. The money is usually spent before it's even arrived. That's the fact of the matter.

Pay them what they're worth. If you feel that somebody is worth \$700 a month and pay them. If you feel they're worth \$600 then pay them \$700 anyway because you're going to be keeping them happy. You're going to be supporting them properly and they're

not going to be off looking for other jobs every two weeks. For me that's what it comes down to. A \$100 to you and me is a good dinner. \$100 to these guys is there internet and electricity for the entire month.

Pat: It's crazy how different the economies are and the lifestyles really. That's part of the reason why I'm comfortable with hiring a VA from the Philippines and paying him the amount that I'm paying him because it's a lot to him. I'm supporting his family and we're both working together and obviously I give him bonuses if things go well. From a business standpoint like we were talking about earlier it's smarter for me to utilize this virtual assistants overseas because if I were to pay \$40 an hour to a programmer here who works eight hours a day, I wouldn't have a business anymore. I wouldn't have any more money. There's a lot of debate there. I'm sure some debates will start on the comments.

Chris: I get a hold of my medieval shield and helmet and get ready for the bashing that might come my way but if you guys want to take it easy on me feel free to do that as well.

Pat: We're trying to keep this lighthearted. The community on the site is always pretty supportive of whoever it is. It's pretty much always constructive criticism. Any time I've seen some person, some figure online talk about virtual assistants and utilizing them. I've always seen the comments blast up and some people getting really strong about their feelings about it and I respect everyone's opinion and feelings. If you have something to say please do. As you know on the blog I welcome every and each comment. I don't delete any of them unless they have swear words in them or they're just degrading.

Anyways, let's talk about exactly how much the different types of VAs may cost a person. For me, I'm using a programmer, mike he's costing me \$700 a month. This is

something we, mike and I, agreed upon. The virtual staff finder found Mike for me but then after that kind of, I'm working with him and you guys are kind of out of the picture already because you guys found the person for me. It's very much I have figure out with him, negotiate and talk about our contract together and how things like that works. So that's how it works when you find someone you actually have to talk with them so you could both understand how much the person gets paid when they get paid and different terms. If someone needs a vacation time and what not. You're running a business when you have some virtual stuff. What are the kind of price points going from someone who is just kind of an administrative virtual assistant all the way up to someone who's programming word press plugins for you for example?

Chris: Let's start with what you got already, a web developer/programmer. I mean you pay mike bang on what he should be making plain and simple because if you...

Pat: Based on industry standards and what not.

Chris: Exactly. If you are not to pay him that sort of level, the chances are he'd probably start taking work from other people. He wouldn't be focus on your stuff because he'd have to make more money working on other projects and etc., etc., etc. anything actually between sort of \$550-\$750 for a fulltime 40 hour a week web developer is bang on the money. I basically put VAs into four different categories. There's that web developer, SEO specialist and anything to do with online marketing, article and content writers and the last one is that more general VA. So we'll go with the general VA. General VA's are exactly that. They will do everything from online research, transcription work, data entry work. They'll manage your blog for you. When I say manage your blog, I mean you give them a word file. They'll dump it into wordpress. They'll select an image. They'll bold a text. They'll add that links and all the rest of it for you. Then you'll check everything and press the publish button.

They can manage your calendars. They can book flights for you online. They can be manage and promote your social media accounts over at twitter and facebook and LinkedIn and all that sort of type stuff. The general VA's will make anything between sort of \$350-\$500 a month depending on their experience level and the type of things that they are doing for you that is a rough guideline. I mean, we literally just have someone hire a general VA that is also going to be doing a little bit of video editing and he decided to go ahead and pay that person \$550 because they had that little bit more skillset when it came to the video editing side of things with iMovie. That was the reason behind that.

The next one is article or content writers. These kinds of people will really be writers. I mean they'll enjoy writing. They will be able to knockout anything between five to eight good quality articles every single day, original. They can then go ahead and submit them to all the directories and article submission sites. They can spin those articles. They can do, maybe upload videos for you and transcribe those videos and things like that. That type of person will usually make anything between sort of \$400-\$550 a month. This is all US dollars we are talking about. Not Canadian or Australian or whatever you want to talk about.

The last classification is the SEO guy. Everything from keyword research, niche market analysis. They can do on and off page optimization like linkbuilding and all that sort of stuff. They can also obviously manage your blog. Do anything sort of within wordpress in regards to the SEO and the marketing side of things. They can also then, help build up your online reputation personally as well as help you brand your corporate side of things as well. That person will make between, anything between sort of \$450-\$600 a month depending on what their backgrounds are like and the type of work they're doing for you. This gives you a pretty solid idea as to sort of across the board so to speak.

Pat: Thanks for that. Perfect. From there we hire VA. We understand how much we pay them. How do we manage our VA? I mean there is a lot of issues that come up here. How do we communicate with them? How do we best communicate it with them? How do we tell them what to do next? How do we keep track of their progress? How do we know if they're actually doing the work we're telling them to do? I mean lay it all out for us.

Chris: All right. I mean you're really giving me a grilling now, aren't you? Let me breathe for a minute, hold on.

Pat: You were able to plug your product so I'm going to get everything I can out of you.

Chris: All right. That's okay. I mean really, there's three or four major tools that you should be using pretty much daily with your VA. The first one is dropbox which you can get at [dropbox.com](https://dropbox.com). Dropbox enables you fundamentally to share file from one person to another. It's also great. I love it myself because I'm a big apple user. So I got it on my iMac. I've got it on my Macbook air. I've got it on my iPod. I got it on my iPhones. No matter where I am, no matter what device I'm using I've got everything I need right there 9 times out of 10. So dropbox is great for sharing files and let's say for instance you've a video you had edited by one of your VA's and now you're sending it across to the other one to do the transcription work or on a audio file just like this with your podcast that you want to do a transcription of.

Pat: That's exactly what I'm be doing after this episode is done. I'm putting this episode into dropbox. My VA's going to come and get it. Then they're going to write a transcription for it.

Chris: There you go. So dropbox is perfect for that sort of stuff. Secondly Skype, Skype has revolutionized the way that we do business in terms of voice and video as far as I'm concerned. I can't remember the last time that I made non Skype international call. So not only it is really convenient and it's sort of available on all sort of those devices all over again but it's also dirt cheap if not free. It's a great piece of kit. It is also great for, those quick IMing, those instant messaging sessions every now and then when you just want to check a little piece of info or just send a link to someone online or whatever. Like you said in intro you and I, we chat at least a couple of times a month on it and catch up and things like that. Skype is really beneficial for most people as well when working with their VA's.

Then you've got basecamp. Basecamp is a project management system. There is a whole lot of other ones out there. You got huddle.com which is another really good one but basecamp which I think you can get at [basecampHQ.com](http://basecampHQ.com).

Pat: That's right [basecampHQ.com](http://basecampHQ.com).

Chris: It is what it is. It's a project management system. You can upload files. You can give them tasks. You can put milestones in place, deadlines for projects. It's just a way for me to be able to put everything in place, in one place so to speak. You know what the really good thing about basecamp is regardless of all the bells and whistles that it comes with, you know why I love it so much? I love it because it cuts down my email between me and my people that I work with at an arm's length. For me that is huge because we do a lot of our communication via basecamp. There's not a lot of email that I get. Email is a massive time sucker for any entrepreneur as well. Anything that you can do to cut back on your email is worth its weight in gold. Basecamp is also another really good, beneficial tool.

Pat: I use basecamp. It's awesome. What you do when you're on there is you kind of setup a project. Say for instance project niche site one then I can go in there and tell them. I can just use a to do list. You could save your to do list from other niche sites or other projects that you have and just repaste it into a new project so that he knows exactly what needs to be done. While they get done he checks them off. There's also areas to leave comments within each to do or in the project itself. You can upload files. It's just a really convenient way to have everything in place. A lot of people know about my sort of folder system that I use for productivity. I have a folder for every project that they use. It's pretty much the same thing but using it on basecamp. They give you projects of different folders that you could have per project and then you can create a to do list. You can mark them off when you feel good and as you see those checklists going off that your VA does for you.

Chris: I'd also be interested in you doing it because I know you do some really cool tutorial type videos. Personally I just don't have the energy to do that sort of stuff.

Pat: Yes I should do that.

Chris: I think you should do one for basecamp not necessarily right this second but at some point because your tutorials are always sort of, very layman's terms, very easy to follow.

Pat: Thank you Chris.

Chris: No problem. The last thing that I would suggest people sort of check out in regard to kind of checking up on your VA. This I want to sort of give with a word of warning so to speak. A lot of people say how do I know my VA is working. You'll know because the work will get completed. You put a deadline in place. Make sure that it's a

plausible deadline. For example if you wanted a 500 word article written that's not going to take any VA any longer in regards to researching, writing, editing and finalizing, that's a two hour job for VA writer. Maybe a little bit longer but not a lot. I mean literally that should be a deadline for that.

For example last year I did a five or six city tour of the US including Vegas to Blog World where you and I met face to face for the first time. That took PA because I have a PA inside my office and I also have a couple of VAs that I work with full time as well. That took my PA literally a week to plan because not only does she have to contact all the different travel agents and check out all the different carriers' flight wise and everything. She then also had to arrange hotels everywhere. Oh man, it's a big undertaking. Expecting someone to do that in a day would just be kind of stupid.

Here's the thing, [hivedesk.com](http://hivedesk.com) gives you the ability to check up on your VA or whoever the hell you're working with virtually on a regular basis and they'll even shoot screenshots of the person's computer and email them out to you or you can on into the platform and check them out there. I'm not affiliated with the company. There is no affiliate links as far as I'm concerned or whatever but I talk about them a lot. I've never even spoken to the company or anything like that. I know that they've tweeted about that fact that Chris Ducker, the virtual business expert loves hivedesk and they gave me a link back to the site. That's all I really wanted.

The fact of the matter is it is a cool way to kind of stay up to date with what your VA is doing but my word of warning is this. If you're outsourcing tasks it's because you want to utilize your time better and leverage more time and get more production out of yourself so why the hell are you going to spend all your time trying to kind of spy or micromanage your VA. It kind of defeats the object of the entire game.

Pat: Very important point. Great point.

Chris: Have that one with a pinch of salt as they say. They are all the tools that you really need to get going. Are you utilizing anything else yourself? Everybody's got their own way of doing things.

Pat: I'm using one more tool besides all the ones that you mentioned except for, what was the name of that kind of spying.

Chris: Hivedesk.com. H-I-V-E-D-E-S-K.com.

Pat: Great resource, thank you. I'm using last pass because the thing is especially if you have a VA that is going to be doing all these websites for you. It's going to include a bunch of different passwords and log in names and they're writing articles to different article directories. There's going to be hundreds, potentially thousands of different passwords and things they need to know. It's going to be a big hassle to every time they ask you for hey what's the password for ezinearticles. Hey what's the password of this niche site? I mean it takes a lot of time to respond to those emails. I use last pass. What last pass does is it allows me and my VA to setup log in names and passwords one time for each of the websites that we use and all he has to know is one password that is different from each of those passwords just to be able to log in to those things.

I can go into for example dropbox.com and he'll type in the one password or the last password that he needs to know which is this one kind of universal password and then it logs him in automatically. He doesn't see the actual password for dropbox but he sees that it logs him in using that kind of universal password. There's other tools out there like one password and robo form and other ones like that but last pass seems to

work best I feel when utilizing a VA and managing passwords for my VA to log in to things to.

Chris: That's another really good resource. It's good that you mentioned it. I don't currently use it but I have played around with it in the past and what I liked about it more than anything else is once everything is setup boy is it easy to just maintain. It really is.

Pat: It saves a ton of time just logging into things too. We're on the computer for hours. This isn't just for your VA but for yourself too. Any way that you can just get a little bit of extra time, make things a little bit more efficient it's going to add up. I probably save maybe a minute or two a day by just, well probably more than that. I just have one password that I use to log in to every place that I have online. It saves so much time. That time adds up. I've been doing an online business for almost three years now. I'm sure if I add up five minutes a day for three years that's going to be a lot of days saved.

Every little thing that you do to become a little bit more efficient. If you want to know a little bit more about efficiency and you haven't heard my podcast episode number 12, definitely check that out. It has a bunch of getting things done tips and productivity stuffs and hacks to help you maximize your time and efficiency. So episode 12 if you haven't checked that out already. Chris we've actually hit everything that I wanted to cover which is pretty much everything I think a person who has no idea what a VA is about needs to know or someone who is just starting out with a VA would love to learn. I mean I'm just going to say that thank you so much for the wonderful interview and helping us out in sharing your wisdom and knowledge of these as far as virtual assistants are concerned. Your spot on the show has been long overdue. We've talked about this for a long time. I'm finally glad to finally have you on the show.

Chris: It's nice. I know you've had some really good guys on the show particularly recently and it's nice to be up there in the smart passive income hall of fame all of a sudden but it was good to chat with you. I hope your audience has enjoyed the conversation. If they have any additional questions they can always drop me an email or a tweet or whatever.

Pat: For sure. Check out the show notes [smartpassiveincome.com/session20](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session20). They'll be also a transcript there as well if you want to check that out. All of the links will be there. So Chris if people wanted to learn more about you, I mean you have a bunch of different places that you're available online where would you suggest they go?

Chris: I think the blog is really the best starting point, [virtualbusinesslifestyle.com](http://virtualbusinesslifestyle.com). I also have a free eBook and audio book companion set that they can download on the blog or they can go to just [virtualassistantebook.com](http://virtualassistantebook.com) as well which kind of goes into a little bit more on the whole subject. The blog is really the best way to start.

Pat: Thank you Chris. I appreciate it. Everyone [virtualbusinesslifestyle.com](http://virtualbusinesslifestyle.com) and again his service at [virtualstafffinder](http://virtualstafffinder). My affiliate link for that is [smartpassiveincome.com/virtualstafffinder](http://smartpassiveincome.com/virtualstafffinder) and all I could say is we'll see you in session 21. Thanks again Chris you'll have to come on again and we'll dig a little bit deeper into utilizing VAs sometime.

Chris: Yes it would be great. It would be more than my pleasure to be back.

Pat: Cool man. Thanks a lot.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

