

## Outsource Your Book Marketing: Task List to Give to Your Virtual Assistant

Book marketing can be an incredibly time consuming task, leaving most authors feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. After all, few authors have the luxury of writing and promoting books full time—most of us, even New York Times bestsellers, have day jobs, families, and life commitments.

For years I've been recommending that authors hire a virtual assistant, ideally it should be someone experienced at working with authors, though basic administrative experience is the core requirement.

Virtual assistants typically work from their own homes, and you can retain their services for as few as five hours per month. The right assistant can take over the tasks you don't have time to handle, as well as the tasks you don't enjoy, freeing you up to focus on writing your next book, building your business, or attending your kids' Little League games!



### Where to Hire a Virtual Assistant

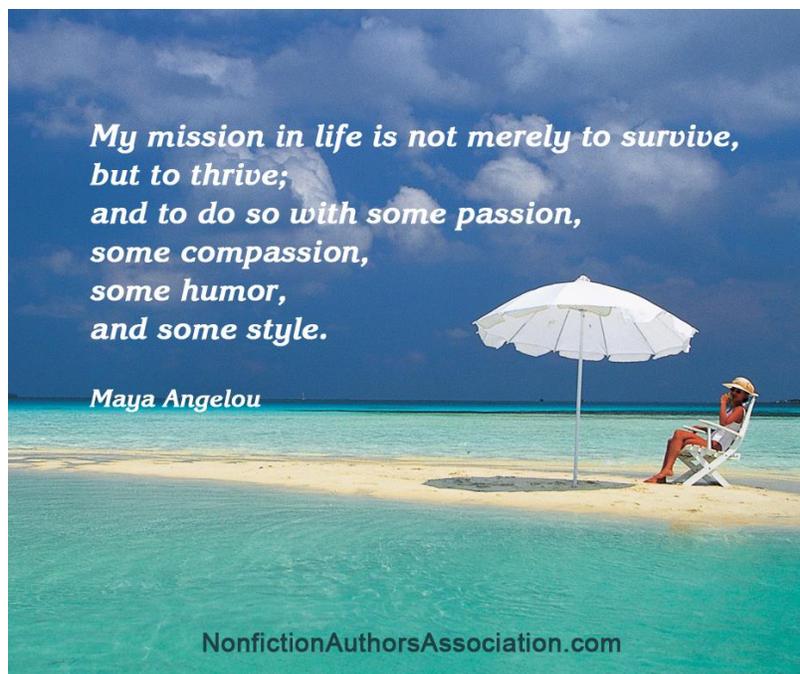
There are a number of resources where you can submit a Request for Proposal (RFP) or post a job description and receive information from applicants. In most cases, a virtual assistant should work as a contractor, which means that he/she owns their own business and pays their own taxes. And when you hire a contractor, you don't have to deal with payroll taxes or worker's comp insurance. You simply need a work agreement (which they should provide), and to arrange the payment terms (many will require some sort of up-front payment).

Most work on an hourly basis and offer packages of retainer hours each month, so you can hire for just a few hours, or really ramp things up and hire for 10+ hours per week if your budget allows. Plan to spend \$30 to \$100 per hour, depending on the experience level. And while that may sound like a substantial investment, keep in mind that spending a few hundred dollars per month can be a game-changer in your author career. If hiring someone else frees up your time to go book speaking engagements, consulting gigs or other high-dollar business, then having a virtual assistant will pay for itself many times over.

Here's where to find assistants:

- [Upwork](#) – Formerly known as Elance, Upwork is a community of freelancers from around the globe who offer a wide variety of services. You can find administrative support here, graphic designers, website designers, editors and many other kinds of freelance talent.
- [International Virtual Assistants Association](#) – Members here have received training in the field of virtual assistance, and you can submit an RFP and receive proposals with pricing options. You can also search through the member directory and reach out to prospective assistants individually.
- [Virtual Assistant Directory](#) – Maintains a directory of international assistants.
- [Virtual Assistant Jobs](#) – Another directory of international assistants.
- [Craigslist](#) – A popular place to post job opportunities, here you may find an assistant in your local community. Keep in mind that if you hire someone who doesn't have other clients, then you are essentially hiring an employee and will therefore need to handle payroll, payroll taxes and hold worker's comp insurance, which can be pricey.

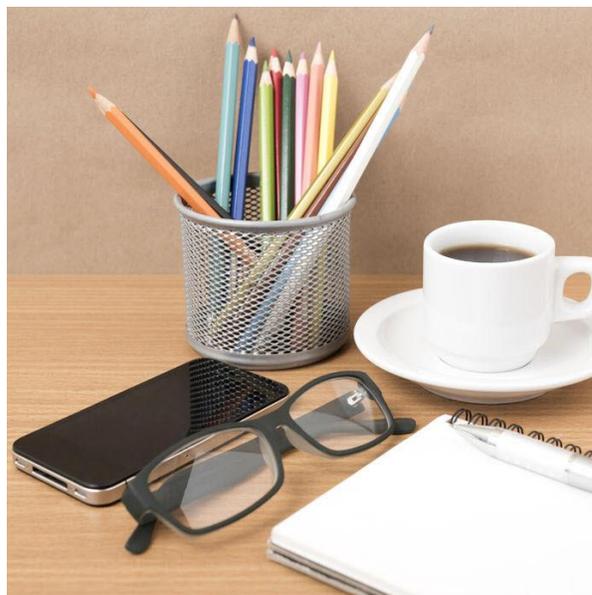
Now, on to the good stuff. Following is a task list you can provide to your assistant to help keep your marketing wheels turning.



## Tasks for Virtual Author's Assistant

### Research Tasks

- ❖ **Build a media list.** Your media list should begin with local print, radio and television since local media attention is always the easiest to get. Then expand your list to include media outlets across the country. Search media websites to begin building a spreadsheet. (Or purchase a list from a resource such as [Gebbie Press](#)).
- ❖ **Build a list of trade association opportunities.** What associations do your potential readers belong to? Visit association websites and look for opportunities such as writing posts for their blog or writing for their newsletter or magazine. Also, look for chapter meetings and see if they offer instructions for submitting speaker information. If they don't, you can email pitches to members of the board. You can search Google for terms like "association health" or [visit this directory](#).
- ❖ **Research bloggers to pitch.** Find blogs that reach your target audience and look to see if they post book reviews, accept guest blog posts, conduct interviews or host book giveaway contests. You will tailor your pitch based on the results of your research. Hint: Search Google for terms like "business book review," "business author interview," "business book giveaway."
- ❖ **Research internet radio shows and podcasts.** Find programs that reach your target audience (they all need guests!) through iTunes and [Blog Talk Radio](#). Look for their guest submission guidelines or send pitch directly to host or producer. This requires digging around on the program website to find details.
- ❖ **Build a list of book reviewers from Amazon.** Look at books in your genre and find out who has reviewed them. Each reviewer has a public profile on Amazon and many list their email address and website link because they WANT to be offered review copies of books. Build a list and then send pitches asking if reviewers would like to receive a review copy. Hint: To make this process even easier, check out the [Book Review Targeter software](#) (disclosure: affiliate link). It does all the work for you—we love it!



- ❖ **Search for websites that feature competitors' books.** Search Google for bestselling book titles in your genre plus keywords like “review” or “author interview.” Then you can pitch the site your book by referencing their coverage of a competing title.
- ❖ **Look for online groups that reach your target audience.** Check groups on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Yahoo](#) and [Ning](#). Join the groups and see if there are opportunities to share articles or announce your book. Look for participant guidelines or reach out to the group manager to inquire about rules of participation.
- ❖ **Search for speaking opportunities.** You can speak at trade associations, schools, conferences, non-profits, service organizations, chambers of commerce and corporations. Start by searching for organizations in cities near you. For example, try a Google search for “chamber of commerce Dallas” or “Dallas association.” You can also create a Google Alert for “call for speakers Dallas.”



## Book Marketing Tasks

- ❖ **Offer review copies to reviewers.** In addition to contacting Amazon reviewers (as detailed above), submit the book to review programs including [Midwest Book Review](#) (free), [Publishers Weekly](#) and [Kirkus reviews](#).
- ❖ **Apply to make your book available for review through [NetGalley](#).** This service makes a digital version of your book available to a wide network of book reviewers.
- ❖ **Host an ebook promotion via [Bookbub](#).** This service works by offering the ebook version of your book at a reduced cost (\$.99 to \$2.99) to its massive mailing lists, which can put your ebook onto bestseller lists, get people talking about your book and generate reviews.
- ❖ **Submit your book in awards programs.** While most awards programs don't generate much publicity, awards can improve credibility and give you something exciting to promote to your audience. Legitimate programs we like:

- [Benjamin Franklin Book Awards](#)
- [Foreword Indies](#)
- The Nonfiction Authors Association hosts a [year-round book awards program](#).
- ❖ **Monitor online activity.** Set up [Google Alerts](#) or [Talkwalker Alerts](#) and notify you when your book is mentioned online.
- ❖ **Start and manage your own online group.** Invite peers, clients, readers and friends to join. Ask questions, answer questions, get the momentum going. Consider a group on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Yahoo](#) and [Ning](#).
- ❖ **Start and manage your own podcast.** Podcasting is exploding, and it can be a fabulous way to build an audience. You will need to create a web page for each episode, plus audio files will need to be edited and distributed through an online host such as [Liberated Syndication](#). Guests will also need to be invited and vetted.
- ❖ **Set up and manage content give-aways.** You can create your own free reports, much like this one you're reading now, and give them away in exchange for email addresses (build your mailing list!). Use a tool such as [Leadpages](#), [OptinMonster](#) or [SumoMe](#) to manage give-aways.
- ❖ **Share presentation slides on Slideshare.** If you create presentations related to your book, post the slides to reach a larger audience.
- ❖ **Send press releases.** These can be sent directly to media pros and also through services like [PR Newswire](#).
- ❖ **Monitor and respond to media opportunities.** [HARO](#) is a free service that sends out emails several times per day with announcements from media pros who are seeking sources to interview. A similar paid service is provided by [ProfNet](#).
- ❖ **Thank Amazon reviewers.** Whenever a new review is received, you can click on the reviewer's name to see if contact information is available so you can send a thank you note. Or, you can search Google to see if there is a public way to reach the reviewer. Little efforts like this can create big loyalty with readers.

## Social Media Tasks

- ❖ **Manage social media sharing.** Pre-schedule and post content to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. using a tool such as [Hootsuite](#).
- ❖ **Monitor social media activity.** Respond to comments, ask questions, answer questions and keep the audience engaged.
- ❖ **Create Facebook ads.** Boost posts on Facebook for greater visibility. Can also create ads to generate more page likes, promote events and book launches, etc.
- ❖ **Periodically audit social media profiles.** Make sure bio and photo are up to date.
- ❖ **Import contacts to LinkedIn.** You can export your contacts from your mailing list (such as Constant Contact) or your personal email account and upload to LinkedIn, then send invitations to connect with each.
- ❖ **Import contacts to Facebook.** You can also export contacts from your commercial email program and import them to create a custom audience on Facebook. Facebook will match the list with its current users, allowing you to target them with Facebook ads.
- ❖ **Pin images from blog to Pinterest.** You might be surprised by how much traffic Pinterest can create for you.
- ❖ **Share blog post images to Instagram.** Useful if you are aiming for a younger audience.
- ❖ **Create branded photo memes.** If you have a good graphic design program, purchase some royalty-free images from a site like [123RF](#) or [iStockPhoto](#) and overlay them with quotes from your book, motivational quotes, statistics or any other information that is likely to get shared around your social media networks.
- ❖ **Create social media campaigns with readers.** For example, encourage them to post photos with your book. Or hold a contest and give away one or more copies of your book for all who retweet or post a comment on Facebook or LinkedIn.



## Additional Tasks

- ❖ **Manage blog content.** Post new blogs to your site.
- ❖ **Manage blog comments.** Approve and delete comments as needed.
- ❖ **Invite blog contributors.** Search for others who reach your target audience and invite them to contribute.
- ❖ **Download images for the blog.** Each blog post should have a professional photo attached to it, which improves its overall appearance, looks better when sharing via social media, and gives you another place to add your keyword phrases for search engine optimization. Good sites to purchase royalty-free images: [123RF](#) or [iStockPhoto](#). Note that it is a violation of copyright law to repurpose images from Google on your website.
- ❖ **Optimize your website pages.** Make sure keyword phrases are repeated throughout each page, especially on blog posts and pages that promote any services you offer.
- ❖ **Monitor website traffic.** Make sure [Google Analytics](#) is installed and that you check it at least once a month. Look for trends in keywords people use to find your site, as well as referring links—the places that are driving the most traffic. If you're blogging and sharing via social media, often times you'll find that this is a hidden benefit of social media—it can drive traffic to your website!
- ❖ **Manage your email marketing.** This can include designing and assembling your e-newsletter or other email content.
- ❖ **Manage travel and reservations.** Research prices and options for any business-related travel.
- ❖ **Handle bookkeeping.** Many assistants are trained in QuickBooks and other bookkeeping programs.
- ❖ **Package and ship books.** Useful if you accept book purchases directly, or want to start doing so.
- ❖ **Update author details online.** Whenever you have a new headshot or your author bio is updated, the changes need to be made to all social media sites and anywhere you have an online profile.



- ❖ **Manage production of custom social media headers.** You can hire graphic design talent for as little as \$5 per image via [Fiverr](#) to create custom social media headers for you. Change them up several times per year to keep things fresh and interesting.
- ❖ **Add new contacts.** When you collect business cards at events, be sure to update your customer relationship management system or add to your mailing list (only if you've received permission).
- ❖ **Review and refresh website.** Every month or so, add new products and services, update items that have changed, add links to media coverage, add testimonials, etc.

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