

## Relief From Afar

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In January Laura Calfayan found herself overwhelmed by a long to-do list. The principal of Calfayan Construction Associates, Huntingdon Valley, Pa., didn't want to hire someone full time, so through the recommendation of a marketing consultant Calfayan discovered outsourcing in the form of virtual assistant Deanne Splear, owner of AdminiSource Now.



Splear, located 60 miles south of Chicago, works for Calfayan on an as-needed basis but also has several other clients on retainer, including two other noncompeting remodelers. For Calfayan, Splear does tasks such as research, bulk mailings, helping with sales presentation materials, and sending follow-up and warranty letters. "Anything that can be delegated, I help with — day-to-day and big-picture operations," says Splear, who has a background in human resources, and, coincidentally, comes from a family that owns a remodeling company.

"The thing I value most so far," Calfayan says, "is that Deanne created my dream direct-mail database. It would have taken me forever to do that. She did it in a day. It's made our lives so easy."

According to Sharon Williams at the Alliance for Virtual Businesses, which represents most of the nation's virtual assistant associations, there are more than 5,000 virtual assistants worldwide. They are independent entrepreneurs, and although V.A.s (as they are called) don't need to be licensed or bonded, the associations set standards and work to maintain a high level of professionalism. Most V.A.s are paid anywhere from \$20 to \$100 per hour, depending on their skills and experience. AVB's Web site, [www.allianceforvirtualbiz.com](http://www.allianceforvirtualbiz.com), as well as sites such as the International Virtual Assistant Association, [www.ivaa.org](http://www.ivaa.org), have sections on their sites for helping people find a V.A.

Says Splear, an IVAA member, "look for a good match in skill set and personality. From a remodeler's point of view, look for someone you can delegate to. You want to free up your time. One of the goals of most V.A.s is to take the daily burden off someone's shoulders so they can focus on their business."