

JILL TIRONE



VIRTUAL ASSISTANCE *in a busy world*

BY TERRI PARSELL HILMEY; PHOTO BY KC KRATT

Hire someone to take your car to the dealership, wait for the cable guy, housesit, or do your Christmas shopping for you (yes, even including wrapping and delivery). If the shower starts leaking in the morning, you can call them. They'll contact their plumber and send somebody over to your house to wait for them and supervise them while you go to work.

VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS

Virtual assistants offer their expertise for diverse business tasks, taking care of administrative and marketing needs, website work, transcription, or travel planning, all without the headaches of hiring. "Because they don't have to hire an extra employee, they can cut down on their overhead. There's no downtime, and they pay for only the work that I do," says **Jill Tirone** of *VAMatrix in Buffalo*, a *virtual assistant company*. "They contract for a certain number of hours, and they're going to pay for just those hours, as opposed to a whole day, with lunch breaks and watercooler time—they just pay for the project, and for the time worked. Plus, they don't have to supply any of the office space or the equipment that an in-house assistant would need."

PERSONAL CONCIERGE SERVICES

Along the same lines, but with a bent toward helping busy executives manage their personal lives, are the new concierge services. Hire someone to take your car to the dealership, wait for the cable

guy, housesit, or do your Christmas shopping for you (yes, even including wrapping and delivery). If the shower starts leaking in the morning, you can call them. They'll contact their plumber and send somebody over to your house to wait for them and supervise them while you go to work. "It's almost like having a personal assistant on a case-by-case basis, with all of the positives, none of the negatives. You don't have to worry about office squabbles; you just have to pick up the phone and we'll take care of it for you," says **A. J. DiPota**, *CEO of LifeSaver Concierge in Buffalo*.

So, as the world shrinks, and it becomes easier to work together across large distances, people are discovering that the definition of "office" becomes less and less well defined. People are partnering up on an as-needed basis, and often sight unseen, to get the job done. ☺

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Marvelous new technologies (smartphones, smaller and lighter laptop computers, wireless services, and their ilk) have changed the world of commerce forever. Businesses are being created that have never existed before, and normal business workflow models have changed along with them. Virtual assistant and business concierge services have sprung up in major cities, Buffalo included, allowing everyday busy people to hire a personal assistant on a task-by-task basis, or allowing small-business owners to keep their office staff lean and mean by contracting out certain business needs on a project-by-project basis.