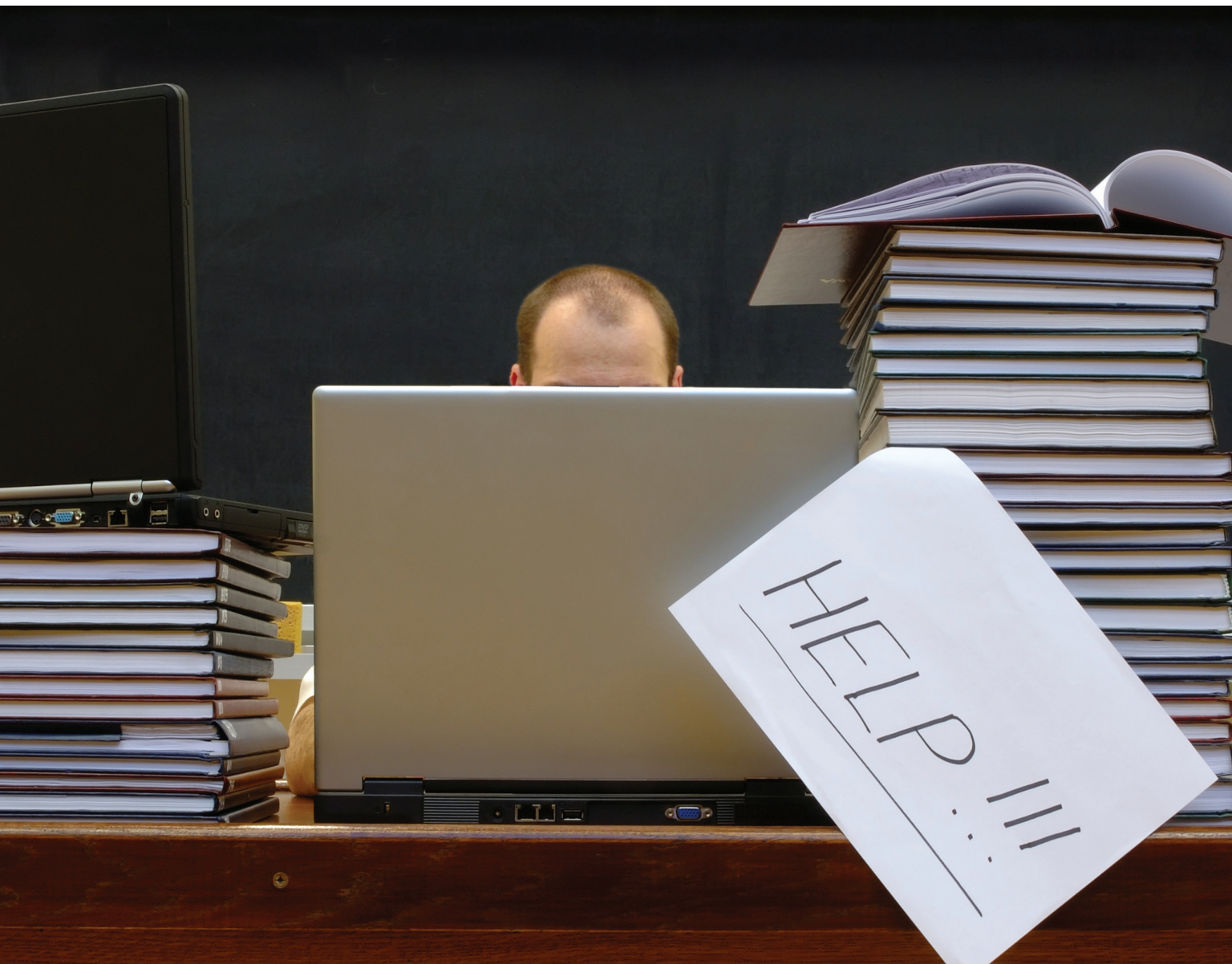


\* HUMAN RESOURCES

# YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL ALONE!

BY NICK HUGHES



One of the major barriers to business success is not having a coherent well thought out strategic action plan. Once this hurdle is overcome, the business owner faces another equally debilitating barrier. They do not have the time and/or resources to execute the plan.

The realities of business life are such that we struggle to get everything done in the time available as we rush from one crisis to another. If we are honest with ourselves and if we take the time to see what we actually do in a regular day or week, we will find many activities that can and should be done by someone else. If that person is also able to help manage our time then we have hit a goldmine; we have identified the essential position to help all business owners, a Personal Assistant.

Hiring a Personal Assistant will give you the valuable time you need to enjoy and grow your business; that is, after all, your job! But before you rush out and find an assistant, there is an essential first step to be taken. You must clearly and accurately describe the job. A good Job Profile contains four major sections:

## PURPOSE OF THE JOB

A short description of the job to provide a flavour of why you want this position filled. For example: To provide administrative assistance to the owner of the company so that she can focus her attention on building the business. To manage the business owner's schedule so that he can devote his time to existing and potential clients.

## JOB PARTICULARS

Be upfront on the particulars of the job so that you do not waste everybody's time having people apply for a job that does not match their basic requirements. This section contains the salary. Describe the location of the office so that they can weigh the cost in time and money to commute. If it is a part-time position, specify the number of hours a week.

## WORK ACTIVITIES

You are doing work today that you should not be doing because they are taking your focus away from the business and/or they could be done better by someone else.

For example:

- *Setting/confirming appointments*
- *Researching*
- *Ordering supplies*
- *Organizing the office*

These are the tasks to be delegated and therefore put into the job profile for the Personal Assistant to do.

Then there is another equally important list of activities. These are the things that are not being done but should be! For example, a contact database is one of the most valuable assets that a business owns. If it is not maintained in an updated and accurate state then you cannot develop marketing strategies based upon this valuable asset. Your assistant can be respon-

sible for ensuring that the contact database is kept up to date and accurate.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

There are three major categories within the job requirements section:

- ✓ **Work experience** should relate to both the job activities and the type of business. Your assistant should be able to perform all, or at least most, of the activities required by the job. So go through the list of activities and rate them as Must, Should, and Nice. A Must rating means they must be able to perform the activity with no training. A Nice rating means if they have no experience then it is not a major hurdle; they can be trained at a later date.
- ✓ **Technical and/or computer skills** specify the technical experience and skills required to operate in your work environment. If you are a Mac shop, the candidates must know the Mac! If there is specific software they will be using, for example Constant Contact for newsletters, then they need that experience.
- ✓ **Skills and Attributes** identify the competencies, qualities, and values that you expect in your assistant. If he is to deal directly with your clients, you want someone who genuinely likes and cares about people and can verbally communicate in a positive and professional manner. If the job is detailed, then you want someone who is organized and can work accurately at the detail level. If she is to work a lot on her own, then you need someone who can work well independently.

Profiling the job of your assistant is, of course, only the first step. You need to get the word out there; you must interview, you check references, and you may put the top three candidates through one of the many online assessments tools available. However, what has been described in this article is the most important step. If you do not or cannot clearly identify the job of your assistant, then the chances of success is very remote.

An assistant is an extremely important member of your team. He or she is not hired on a whim because we feel overworked or tired. They are hired because during the strategic planning process we identified a critical need for this position in the future infrastructure of the business. Nothing happens in isolation; the strategic plans bring it all together. **E**

*Nick Hughes is President of Your Planning Partners. The company works with entrepreneurs who are serious about growing their business. They have a number of products ranging from half-day working sessions to their famous Strategic Focus Program™. They conduct regular seminars and publish an e-news for business owners who want to grow. For information on their programs, seminars and e-news visit their website at [yourplanningpartners.com](http://yourplanningpartners.com), or call 416 429-2415.*