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LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS EMBRACE HOT VIRTUAL ASSISTANT TREND

Abandon Distance Issues to Discover Outsourcing as the Key to Solving Office Woes

CHICAGO, IL – Kelly Kalmes of Project Knowledge, LLC, an Evanston-based project management-training firm, sits at her office desk jotting down all of the projects that executive assistant, Carolyn Moncel, must complete this week. Although the tasks list seems ordinary - returning phone calls to printers, editing training manuals, and drafting sales letters - the work relationship between the two women couldn't be more unusual because Moncel works 4,000 miles away from her home office in Paris.

Carolyn Moncel is a virtual assistant and president of MotionTemps, LLC. She services clients in Paris as well as throughout the greater Chicagoland area, including Bartlett-based Nancy Moran & Associates, Villa Park's CompUCoach (www.compucoach.com) and the Recruiting Network, Inc. (www.recruitingpipeline.com), in Schaumburg. Her company, along with hundreds of others like it, is part of an exciting trend sweeping the small-business world - outsourcing administrative services to virtual assistants.

A Virtual Assistant or (VA) is a highly skilled professional who works as an independent contractor. When businesses partner with them, they only pay for the time actually spent working on a project rather than an employee salary or an expensive staffing agency retainer fee. The VA is a business owner also and is responsible for taxes, training, healthcare, insurance - overhead costs that make hiring an employee expensive. The "virtual" part means that the VA doesn't have to be present on-site in order to oversee projects. VAs work from their home offices and projects can be handled over the phone, by fax or even over the Internet via e-mail.

Moncel, a former marketing manager, originally conceived the idea for her business in July 2001 while living in her hometown, Chicago. She decided to work for herself to spend more time with her pre-school-aged daughter. When her French husband, accepted a job offer in October 2002 and moved the family to Paris, Moncel decided to expand her company rather than close shop.

"When Carolyn told me that her family had to move to Paris, I was in shock!" said Kalmes, whom Moncel met back in December 2001 through client, Nancy Moran. "However she's my right arm and leg, and after talking to some of my other clients and vendors about my dilemma, they all suggested that I give it a try because Carolyn and I worked so well together."

Despite the trans-Atlantic move, the work relationship between Kalmes and Moncel remains largely unaffected. From Paris, Moncel completely runs the Project Knowledge office -- from dealing with sub-contractors, to editing company web content, to training manual editing, layout and design. Improvements in technology allow the two businesswomen to integrate projects seamlessly, swap and download files, chat by Instant Message and even talk by Internet phone - still at a fraction of what it would cost Kalmes to hire a full-time employee to work in her office.

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"Even though the VA industry is still in its infancy, some reports suggests that outsourcing, in general, can cost 50 percent less than hiring a full-time employee," said Angela Allen, president of the International Virtual Assistance Association (IVAA), a non-profit organization devoted to educating the public on the role and function of Virtual Assistants.

"If you couple the savings with superior back office-administration, affordable pricing and professionals with distinctive backgrounds, then you can see why a small-business owner would risk working long distance with a valued assistant - even if she now lives thousands of miles away from the office," commented Allen.

For \$35 per hour on average, VAs can perform everything from data entry to desktop publishing, copywriting and marketing research. They are also extremely computer savvy, often certified and come from established careers in a variety of different industries - from accounting and event planning, to theater and graphic design. Moncel, herself, left a career in marketing communications to start MotionTemps. She, along with 16 other Chicago-area VAs, is also an IVAA member, and now spends 10 months per year in Paris and the other two months working from Chicago. Her part-time status in the city allows her the chance to attract new business as well as maintain face-to-face contact with her existing clients.

"We will return to Chicago permanently in a few years and when I do, I don't want to miss a beat during the transition," said Moncel. "In the meantime, it gives me great pleasure knowing that by the time my Chicago clients awaken and have their first sips of coffee at their computers, my completed projects await them in their e-mail inboxes."

About Project Knowledge, LLC

Kelly Kalmes is president and founder of Project Knowledge, LLC, a training and project management-consulting firm based in Evanston, Illinois. For 25 years, Kalmes has been using a proven methodology, best practices, teambuilding and communication, to help organizations seek an edge in performance through project management. Contact Kelly Kalmes at (847) 328-2700, or by e-mail at kalmes@projknowledge.com. Visit the website at <http://www.projknowledge.com>.

About MotionTemps, LLC

Launched in 2001, MotionTemps, LLC is a virtual management, assistance and communications firm with offices in Chicago and Paris. The company specializes in providing complete project coordination, administrative assistance and marketing communications support to home-based professionals, small-business owners, non-profits and small-to-midsize consulting firms. The company has further expanded its presence into the European marketplace by providing an emergency service to English-speaking business travelers in need of administrative support during their stay in Paris. Contact Carolyn Moncel toll free at (877) 818-3864, by e-mail at carolyn@motiontemps.com or visit the website at <http://www.motiontemps.com>.

About IVAA

The International Virtual Assistants Association (IVAA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the professional education and development of members of the Virtual Assistance profession. Founded in 1999, IVAA holds the distinction of being the only organization offering the comprehensive IVAA Certified Virtual Assistant (CVA) exam, recognized internationally as the standard that Virtual Assistants strive to attain. Today IVAA supports over 600 members and affiliates in over 15 countries worldwide. IVAA's second annual VA Summit convenes in Orlando, Florida from October 22 -24, 2003. For more information, contact Amy Clifford by e-mail at marketing@ivaa.org or visit the website at <http://www.ivaa.org>.