

# Hiring Your Virtual Team From The Philippines



If you're doing too much in your online business, a Philippine virtual assistant could be just what you need. Find out more in this podcast episode.





**This life wouldn't be possible without a team**

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 815. Today, this is a solo podcast episode, just me. It's audio only, I'm keeping it nice and simple.

I want to talk about hiring your virtual team. It's one area that I've discovered people are really struggling with.

When I came online, I was already a general manager, I had this big team. I was running a Mercedes-Benz dealership, in the 70s, 75 people, somewhere around that region. I came online, and it was just me. And I didn't think I wanted staff, or stock or physical premises.



**“Team really is the only reason  
I can have the lifestyle I have now.”**

JAMES SCHRAMKO

Now, I still don't have a physical premise, and I don't have stock. I never went into ecommerce. But I do have a team. And team really is the only reason I can have the lifestyle I have now, because my team does pretty much everything other than recording these podcasts, and coaching students. They're the two main things I have, is a little bit of content, and a little bit of coaching. That's my job.

Of course, thinking about the business's overall strategic direction, doing a little bit of selling here and there, occasional presentation, that sort of stuff, contacts, network, communication, these are my skills. But what I'm not good at is I'm not good at editing my podcasts, I'm not good at formatting my emails to go out, I'm not good at building my websites. I shouldn't be doing any of that stuff. I'm not good at doing my bookkeeping. And perhaps you shouldn't be doing it either in your business.

## **This episode may be useful to you if...**

So if you're feeling like you're doing too many things, if your business is just smaller than where you really want it to get to, or you're working 80 hours a week, this episode might be useful for you. I want to say this episode is kind of sponsored by a business my wife and I have, it's called [VisionFind.com](https://www.visionfind.com). This is where I recommend you hire people from the Philippines. I'm going to cover that in a moment.

But since we don't have official sponsors, I might as well sponsor this episode myself. I know my wife will be very pleased that we're talking about her service here. They run a great team in that little business, and they help a lot of my clients.

## **From just James to an entire team**

But let's sort of go back in time and have a look at the overview or the history of my time online and how the team started to become a thing. Because when I did start online, it was just me. And I quickly realized that that was ridiculous. I'm just not even that good at a lot of the things I was trying to do. And as a general manager by day and a website business owner by night, it was almost comedy.

So I did hire someone to help me with support. And I did hire someone to help me write the articles. And the support was an easy one because at the time, my business model relied on fulfilling bonuses. And what I would have to do while I still had a job was I had to log in or check my computer in my breaks. And I would have to see who's purchased a product from me and wanting their bonus. And then I have to deal with them, and send them off their bonus.

And I was doing this like five, six times a day. Every time I did it, it was worth \$98 for me - \$98.50. So it was \$500 a day worth of bonus claims. And in the end, I didn't even bother checking if they'd actually bought it from me or not. I used to just send them the bonus, because eventually they could go into a membership, which led to other affiliate sales.

So I realized this was sort of more my front end. So what I really needed was someone who could just sit there, and when the people made the claim, send them off a login to the membership. And I paid a guy, I think \$500 or \$1,000 a month, I can't remember, it was so long ago. This is about 2006 or 2007.

And it worked out great. He set up a help desk, I set up SuperFastHelp.com, pointing to that help desk. And that's the first hire. The second one was the articles. Again, I had this realization that if I could hire someone to write articles for \$10 each, and I could make \$98 commission sales, then the bet was, could I spend my time doing something else like getting traffic or helping on my conversions or my sales copy instead of writing these articles?

So I recruited the receptionist at my work. We had this temporary receptionist at Mercedes-Benz, and I noticed that she was particularly good. And I asked her to write a job description to rehire the reception role because she was moving on and the full time was required. And she brought it back really quickly, and it was super high level.

And I said, Why aren't you writing articles for \$10 each? And she said, Tell me more. And I said well, this is how this online world works. And she goes, If it's so good, why aren't you doing it? I said, I am doing it. And you watch this space. And then I went on to quit my job. And she became my full time contractor. And I was actually ordering 100 articles at a time.

So I got a lot of \$10 articles and they drove my affiliate sales. So I found the leverage. But I've got to tell you, it was hard for me to hire in the beginning because of two reasons. One is, I really needed to have an income. So I needed to have an income to be able to hire someone. I didn't want to dip into my credit, or draw for my salary to pay for this hire. So I needed to sell something.

And two is, I had to work out the numbers to show that it actually made sense to do, because we always have this feeling, well, gosh, we should just do it ourselves. Or, you know, we're a bit tight with the wallet and we don't want to spend the money.

And this is something I see over and over and over again. That's why I wrote the book, [Work Less, Make More](#). Because people haven't worked out their [effective hourly rate](#). And when they do, they realize you could probably hire someone to do a lot of the things you're currently so busy with. So I hired, I scaled up.

I read 4-Hour Workweek by Timothy Ferriss. He talked about a service called Your Man in India. And I went to apply there, for an assistant. I wanted a VA. I wasn't sure I would get this one person to do. But because the book was so popular, their service was absolutely smashed, it was booked out forever. And they just couldn't find someone.

So I spoke to this friend of mine, who had an ecommerce, SEO business, and he had a team in the Philippines. And I told him that it's all booked out. And he goes, Well, what sort of person do you want? I said, I don't even know. I don't even know what they're going to do. But I think I might get some leverage in a virtual assistant.

And he said, Well, let me just find a couple of people for you to talk to. And I spoke to two people, I remember speaking to them on Skype on the way to the airport. And I picked one, hired her. And that was the start. And within two years, I had 65 people in the Philippines. So I really went big on that.

Now, over time, I scaled my business out. I had good service agencies, we had a website development business, we had the search engine optimization business, I sold both of those businesses a few years back, and the team went with them to the new owners, which was great for them. Some of those team members, by the way, are now working with my friend over at [SEOLeverage.com](#). So some of them are still working in a partnership of mine, all with the approval of the business owner who I sold the business to. So it's all cool.

And what I am sort of talking to here is this long-term aspect of the team. In fact, I rehired several of them back into my team. So here's the thing - right now in my business, I've got seven people. And the newest person in my team has worked with me for eight years, and the more established ones 11 years. So I've got a lot of depth now in understanding this Philippines market. And so I'm going to address a few of the questions I get about this.

## This is how you get the person you need

So because my clients kept saying, Well, where do I get someone? How do I get someone? I just said, okay, in the end, I just said, we'll find them for you. So I created this business, [VisionFind.com](#). My wife runs that with her little team. And they're really good at finding general VAs. That's all they find.

And I want to explain the difference between people who already have the skills and the thing you're needing help with versus people who don't. I have not, to this day, used jobs boards for finding people. There are challenges with that. Because if you go to those jobs boards, a lot of the people on there are kind of market savvy. They've worked for other people, they might work for multiple people at once.

Sure, they might know WordPress or [ActiveCampaign](#) or [Ontraport](#), or Infusionsoft, or whatever tools you're trying to get help with. But also, they may come with bad habits, and they might churn. And so that's the risk. What I preferred to do was hire people who were from outside the online world. They're typically, I think almost all of them came from call centers or recruited through families of our employee team.

And they were working for big companies like Dell or AOL, and they were helping people on the phone. They were used to going into the city working from call centers from midnight or six in the morning, or seven in the morning to do the US market. They wanted to work from their house, they wanted to work in a stable, safe employment, and they were happy to learn new things.

And so all of my team have taught themselves our online tools over time. So if you can play the long game, what that means is you can hire people who want to work for you from home. They have general VA capabilities, so they're going to have good communication, they're going to have good English, they're going to have good hardware, and they're going to have good internet, because all of those things are pre-screened.

And then you're going to layer on training of the things you want them to do. In most cases, it's like, hey, show them what you were doing, and let them take it over from you. If you're wanting them to do things that you don't know how to do, that's okay. Get access to the training. Buy training for them, buy them books, get them courses, let them use their help desk, or the support tools in the product suppliers.

So I just buy things and give it to my team and say go for it, and they learn it. And they just add new capability. So there are a few services out there. Look, you could get the agency-type service where they have a little in-house team, and they sort of lease them out to you, and they change the people on you or whatever. That's giving you some safety in case someone leaves. However, you're never really getting that intimate intellectual property or building up that business brain for your business that you do when you have a full-time in-house person.

Now, there are also these sort of task sources, you can hire people to just do short little tasks. You know, you could spend a lot of time finding three or four people that can do the task, putting it out there, they send it back, it's not right, or you have to brief them, and then you got to pay them. And then, you know, then they get so busy, if they're good. If they're not good, they're still there, but you don't want them. So that can be a challenging way to go about it. Task sourcing can really be the death of you. I don't do that.

I will have specific contractors who I use for certain high-level things. For example, I found in the Philippines, they're really good at certain things like support, content, development, that stuff's great. Where I sometimes get extra help is for really high-end stuff like [Facebook advertising](#), super high-level [copywriting](#), ultra high-level Western [design](#), and sometimes deep sort of PHP programming type applications.

For those sort of things, I might go to my network. Even advanced [SEO](#) stuff, or things like website speed optimization, sometimes we'll just [bring in a contractor](#) to show my team what to do or teach my team or work with my team to build that up.



And we do that using [Slack](#). We just add them in, they're working alongside my team. They ask for things, we provide things, they show us what they want, we learn stuff. And over time, we can either bring that capability in-house, or we continue our relationship with them long-term. That's worked really well. It's a fantastic hybrid way to do it. The most important thing is it's not me doing it.

## **Finding the right candidate-employer fit**

Now, there are also different types of candidates who are going to be a different fit for an employer, which is why the agency at [VisionFind.com](#), they're going to find out about the employer, what country they're in, what hours they work, what business they're in. They're going to try and match them with someone who's a good fit for them. Because that's really important. I think fit is more important, style is more important than their actual technical capabilities in the initial phase.

Sometimes, you know, countries like Australia have an advantage, no doubt about it, for the Philippines because of the time zone. But you can certainly do this from the US. And often they will agree to work US hours if that's what you need. But I would question if you need that, because I'm not speaking to my team eight hours a day. We have one meeting a week for 15 minutes at the most. And we just exchange things back and forth on [Slack](#) in our For Approval channel.

Or when I ask them to do something or we have a support question, etc., they put it in there, I check it. But sometimes I don't even check it during the day. I just check it once at night. So it's not like everything in your business has to be urgent.

One great thing about the agency is if you hire someone and they leave, then they'll replace them if it happens within the first 30 days. And that could be because of whatever reason - if you don't like the candidate, and you need to let them go, or if they leave you for whatever reason, which is very rare, but it can happen occasionally. Sometimes it will happen if you're a very, very bad boss, they might come up with a reason to leave.



And this is probably one of the single biggest reasons there is instability. And you'll find if you're one of the employers whose team always leaves, that could really be a sort of a signal or a reflection on your leadership ability or your recruitment process.

Now one thing I've done [inside SuperFastBusiness](#) is, I've put my How to Recruit Your Next Team Member training. It takes you through the exact system I pioneered and developed when I was at Mercedes-Benz to hire and train the very best salespeople from scratch. They didn't have to ever sell cars. In fact, that was my preference. And I could take them, and in a short time, make them high-performance.

And that's the same process I use for my own team. All of their recruitment process, the onboarding process, the questions I ask, the way that I approach it, it's all in there inside SuperFastBusiness. If that's something you want to do, I think it might also be available at [SuperFastResults](#) as an [individual product](#). If you just want that product, and you want to buy it, go for it. It will save you a lot of wasted time and effort, because I hired lots and lots of people when I was at Mercedes-Benz.

## Creating a safe environment and understanding the culture

So my team are very, very loyal, they've been with me for a long time. I know that I've got a good leadership style for them. I know they're great team members for me. I mean, you don't get people sticking around for 11 years if it doesn't work. I'm going to share some of the ideas around how that works.

But for the main thing, I'm going to say this, what I've really focused on is creating a safe environment for them. This kind of came up in a previous episode. I had a [conversation with Nir Eyal](#), and he talked about creating a safe psychological workplace.

And it's very important. If you're hiring these people, especially in the Philippines, they're more than likely supporting five other people, you know, family members, mom, dad, maybe their spouse, some kids; they're possibly putting people through the education system, their nieces or nephews, it's very common. They're a predominantly Catholic culture, they look after each other as family units.

And almost everyone speaks English, which is, you know, a big surprise. Even though they're an Asian culture, they were originally sort of founded by the Spanish and USA influences are there. So that's why they ended up having such great English. In fact, there's more English speakers in the Philippines than there is in the UK. Think about that. Certainly, there's about three or four times more English speakers in the Philippines than there is in Australia.

So often we think, Oh, well, you know, maybe it's going to be difficult for them. But you know, when you go there, and you meet them, which I highly recommend you do when you can, you'll see they watch the same movies, they wear the same clothes, they eat a lot of the same foods as we do in Western countries. So the culture is actually extremely similar in many ways.

So the American rule pretty much gave the Philippines that education system and US English language. Now, one question that comes up, can they write for UK or Australia in English? Yes, they absolutely can. Funny thing is, in our business, we actually use dot coms and US dollars. And we pretty much write in US English anyway. And I even say words for the US market, sometimes, in my podcasts, because the bulk of my audience is actually overseas outside Australia. So I have an international business.

They absolutely love basketball, fast food and all of that sort of cultural stuff, it's all big. TikTok, the rest of it, you know, they're into it. The business process outsourcing industry is actually a significant industry in the Philippines. It's huge.

And so they actually know about this idea of working online. I mean, in 2020, the rest of the world discovered it, but it's been a big thing there. And the candidates that we get from the call center, most of them have been trained really well by their companies. They know all about SOPs, standard operating procedures. They have very good customer service training, a lot of them have managerial experience, they would have been team leaders.

They have the discipline to go in and travel into the call center and back home, which is no mere feat. When I'm in the Philippines, you know, their traffic could be, it could take an hour or an hour and a half in a jeepney or, you know, a transit van. And it can be grueling, but they do it. They're really dedicated and hardworking, and that's what I love.

A lot of them have also graduated from university, because university and academic education is highly valued, and it's sort of the pathway. So you'll actually find, like, I would say, most of my team is more qualified than I am, academically.

Most of my team write better English than I do. Even though I'm a native, I've got some little slight improvements from time to time. They'll use words or phrases that we may not use. However, technically, grammatically, they're a little more correct than I am, quite often, which is really interesting.

They also do have a real interest in creative stuff as well. Most of them are shy until you stick a microphone in their hand, and then they'll sing. They love photos and video editing. And they're pretty savvy with social media, they all use messaging and apps, you know, especially that culture and that generation. And most of my team are a bit younger than I am, and they're very savvy. So they figure things out way quicker than I do.

And the ones who've worked in office, they really would rather just work from home. It gives them a huge amount of opportunities.

Now, you'll have to be careful - if you want to do things like use telephones, you're going to encounter a couple of issues there. One might be, depending on where your person is, you can have fluctuating internet speeds. So even if it's fast at times, it might also be slow at times, because they have this more of a sliding scale between peak and off peak.

And I've experienced that. I live in the Philippines several months a year, normally. Sometimes I can have 50 or 60 Mbps, and then it might sort of drizzle down to two or three off the same connection. And it's just because everyone's using it at the same time at night.

Also, you might have sound pollution. And what do I mean by that? You might have jeepneys or motorcycles going past. You might have animals. So it's very common to have roosters, dogs, those sort of things nearby, or family members, other people in the house. So you want to pay attention to just making sure, if you plan to use the phone. And we don't use the phone in any way in our business, even though everyone in my team has been trained with customer service and worked on the phones, we just don't need it.

But if you do, you'll need to be aware of that. And you should specify it in your application. If you don't, they're going to be pretty much the world's best support team. And I've mentioned in a few of my trainings, [my support team make a lot of sales](#), because they're very focused on helping the customer and solving their problem. And sales is really just helping people be better off. So my team are really, really good at that.

Often they can go to somewhere near work. And now this is pandemic-dependent, but usually, they can go to a Starbucks with internet or a shopping center where it's nice and cool and air-conditioned. Or they can go somewhere like an internet cafe regularly if they need to. But ideally, you'll get someone who's set up to work from home.

And one of the other interesting things I found is, you know, even if they have a family, like, often that would be frowned upon in, say, in Australia or the US or the UK, you might think, well, how could someone work for me and still run a family? And look, I've got a lot of kids, so I know about this, how hard it is. They can often have help at home at very affordable rates. So don't worry too much about that. And they usually have family members who are happy to step in and help out.

### **Rates and full-time versus part time**

So in terms of how much you pay, that's a big question that comes up. We've often started people off around 25,000 PHP per month, full time. Now you can go to Google, and you can type that in, 25,000 PHP, and then put US dollars or Australian dollars and see what it converts for you. But it's really not that much. And that's full-time.

And why do I prefer [full-time over part-time](#)? Well, yeah, it always makes me a bit crazy when I see people say, I want someone for five hours a week or 10 hours a week. I'm thinking, why bother? Why bother? Seriously, you're going to find so much for them to do. Forty hours a week is fantastic, if you can hire them.

And if they're fully dependent on you, and you are dependent on them, you're going to have a great relationship. If you get someone for 20 hours a week, part-time, there is a risk that whoever's hiring them for the other half of their week might be a better boss than you. Or they might pay them better than you, or they might offer them full-time work, and they might chop you out of the equation. It can happen, and it's a very realistic scenario.



So the odds are worse for if you hire part-time. So we can find part-time people, but I really recommend, if you can, get one full-timer, or two. I love hiring two, if you can afford it. If you could spend \$1000 or \$1500 a month to have almost everything you can think of taken off your plate and for you to never have to do it again, that is a bargain. Okay?

And two means if someone leaves, then they're trained up. The other person can train the new person, if you hire someone else. And you can increase their wage over time. Over time, of course, they're going to go up. They're going to get into 30s, into 40s, maybe the 50s, even the 60s thousand pesos per month. However, you're talking about years and deep experience and just high level, really high level.

They don't have travel time anymore, they can work pretty flexible hours, they can easily interact with each other. Fascinating thing, when when we look at [Slack](#) in our business, the [private messages are the bulk of communication](#). In fact, almost all the messages in our business are private messages between one to one. That means there's a grapevine of sorts, where they're just helping each other in the background, doing what needs to be done.

## Should you have them do trials?

Let's talk about trials, because it does come up. It's okay for you to have someone do a trial. But I would recommend that you pay them. Pay them to do a short test score or to work with you for a day and see how they fit in, so that you can eliminate some of that risk for them and for you. And you can see if you still feel good about them, and you can organize that with your recruiter.

I know some people, they really only use the paid test as the primary method rather than relying on resumes or interviews or references. That stuff's going to be hard to get a gauge on. It's much harder for you to call up an employer, with a Philippines employee, than it is, say, in a Western society. It's much easier for you to have them do a paid test, and then you'll be able to check it out and see what they do.

Let's see what else is important.

## What sets VisionFind apart

One thing that's different about VisionFind than most other recruiters is you will not find these candidates on the open market. They're not advertising. They're not looking for an employer in the online business. They usually get recruited through our own proprietary system of working with our network. And we find them in call centers, and we talk to them about this opportunity. And we have oodles and oodles of successful placements. I mean, obviously, we recruited 65 people in our own business from the exact same source. So if you want the same source that I've used, that's it.



Now, if you go on the jobs boards, if you use other agencies, it's fine. But just make sure you do all your due diligence, make sure you do check. So there's more than a few ways to do this. And maybe you've got a project that's one-time or you just want to hire a specialist - hire a specialist SEO business, hire a specialist media business, hire a specialist copywriter, hire a web designer, just to do your project, that is totally fine. And we still do that. But I do think a core of your own team is going to give you a strong base to get out of doing all the stuff.

## **How to keep your team occupied**

So in my team, what sort of things are they doing? They're doing my bookkeeping, on Xero. They're editing every [podcast](#), including this one, they're coming up with headlines, bullet points, show notes, transcriptions, the website, they send all the emails, they update our SSL certificates and security stuff, they do email redirects, they do - gosh, social media, basically everything other than me talking on a podcast or me coaching a client, the team will do. And that's what makes them pretty awesome.

Now, if you're not a good leader, or you don't think you can look after the people, then make sure you go through my training. And I think you'll be able to recruit people. And I think you'll be able to be a good leader.



But just keep in mind, these are people, they're not just cogs in a machine. So if you take someone on, you should be responsible to look after them. Take care of them, employ them if they do their end of the bargain, okay? And that's what I say to my team. Look, if you put in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, I'm going to do whatever I can to support you. And that's why we've lasted so long.

Other things that might be interesting for you. What if you don't have enough things for them to do? Write down a list of all the projects that you've been putting off, or that take you too long, or you're not even that good at. Write them all down.

And in some cases, come up with an infinity project. That's the technique I did. I came up with a website that we can work on that's in a market that we're interested in, that we could post unlimited content to and run the social media for. And it's actually got more traffic than SuperFastBusiness, which is a funny thing. And it's our side project which we will sell off one day as an asset.

So there's plenty you can do. We've spun off many agencies and we've helped out a few of my friends. You know, you probably have no way of knowing this, even though we don't have an agency, we still look after a few of my close, guru expert friends' websites and send out their emails, because they just couldn't find someone easily or manage a team. They put their hand up and said, Well, I'm not good at this. Can't do it. So we still do that. But they're so capable, they just slot it in.

We don't use any tricky project management tools, we just use Slack. And we use Google. We communicate very well, we have a great format for it. But I think this is a good starting point. I want to have another episode on this. I want you to ask me questions if you possibly can, so that I can answer them more. This will be Episode 815. So I'm going to come back with answers to your questions if you've got a question around hiring, about a team. If you're talking about the Philippines, especially, I'd love to help you out with that. And any other questions you've got, please ask me.

I hope you've enjoyed this episode. If you want a general VA, please don't ask for someone who's got experience with Facebook ads. Don't ask for someone who's got experience with Infusionsoft. Don't ask for someone who's got mega experiences, a video editor, we don't do that. Okay? We just do general VAs who you can train or hire training for, who are going to be fantastic at support. They can learn all the things in your business if you give them time and training, or if you plug them into an existing team as an assistant. They'll be perfect.

[VisionFind.com](https://www.visionfind.com). Hope you've enjoyed this episode. I'm James Schramko. This is SuperFastBusiness.



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business needs with help  
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