9 Reasons to Rethink Your Approach to Staffing

How to Move Forward, Increase Productivity, and Minimize Risk

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REASON ONE

It Takes Forever to Find the Right Person

Hiring employees stinks! Maybe not all the time. But more often than not, hiring someone comes with A LOT of risk and takes A LOT of time.

When it’s time to hire someone, we start asking ourselves these questions:

• Will I have time to conduct a search?
• How will I get things done while I’m looking for my next hire?
• What if I can’t find the right person?
• What if I hire the wrong person?
• Can I find a quality person who can scale with me?

You’ve probably asked yourself these questions as well as many more. My experience tells me that the person doing the hiring is sometimes just as uncomfortable with the process as the person looking to be hired.

There is an inherent problem when it comes to hiring employees: *It’s difficult to get rid of the wrong person.*

Plain and simple. The reason why so many organizations fail to hire all open positions is that sometimes it’s easier to get by with who you have versus taking a risk and hiring someone new.
The hiring process is designed to vet candidates, but it’s not always nice and clean.

- There are people who present well on paper but won’t function well in your culture.
- There are people who say all the right things but morph into a totally different person once hired.
- There are people—good people—who are identified as “ideal” during the hiring process but just don’t work out for a variety of reasons.

Finding the right person is an overwhelming hurdle that some organizations choose not to attempt and other organizations must endure hoping to find the right fit.

The good news is that new approaches to staffing are emerging to help businesses connect with the right person, minimize risk, save time, and ultimately move you closer to accomplishing your objectives.

It starts with focusing on the project you want to accomplish rather than worrying about the seats that need to be filled.
REASON TWO

Employees Cost More than Their Salary

Personnel budget is often the largest expense any business has. Unless you’re a one-person show, it is likely that you are spending a lot of money on people.

That is good and bad.

The bad part is that you have to make payroll. (It isn’t optional.) There are so many rules and regulations surrounding payroll that it makes my head spin. It’s enough to make a business of any size fearful of expanding its workforce and increasing the responsibility of leading and developing employees.

The good part is that people help you spark ideas, produce products, and offer services that generate revenue and help you accomplish your organizational objectives.

When it’s time to hire that next person, the first thing you’re going to want to understand is how much this hire is going to cost. So you calculate the salary and realize that the best candidates are probably going to want . . .

- health insurance,
- life insurance,
- short-term disability,
- and more . . .
... just to name a few. And don’t forget about worker’s compensation costs! (See “Know Thy Employee Burden Costs” at eaHELP.com for a more complete list.)

A general rule of thumb is to add 35 to 50 percent to the salary you intend to pay. This is the “true cost” of your next hire. (And probably a number that is going to turn your stomach inside-out.)

The cost of even one full-time employee can be discouraging. For growing businesses and organizations who need help, adding employees means accruing fixed costs versus variable costs.

The Great Recession is still fresh enough in our minds to cause us to pause before committing to any growth or activity that provides fixed costs such as employees. That’s why businesses are relying on freelancers and outsourced services more than ever.

Today’s business climate demands agility —especially in the area of staffing.

But there is nothing agile about the true cost of hiring employees.
Reason Three

You Have to Find a Place to Put People

Good for you! You’ve found the right person. And you feel good about the additional fixed costs that will come with your next hire. The next step is to find a place to put them.

Wait! What do you mean?

Now you need to…

- designate an office for them,
- give them a computer or laptop,
- add an additional phone line and/or cell phone with data and text messaging,
- set up their e-mail,
- order basic office supplies,
- provide them with an ergonomic desk chair and accessories . . .

I think you get where I’m going. Once you have that new employee, you have to find a place to put them.

If you’re a large organization with plenty of office square footage, this shouldn’t be a problem. Most organizations (at least growing ones) don’t always have extra space.
• What if you’re a startup?
• What if you’re an independent consultant?
• What if you don’t have any office space?
• What if you’re building a business while working from home?

Those fixed costs keep going up, don’t they?

Finding a place to put people can be a challenge. It might even mean a complete relocation or new approach to work space. That could mean thousands of dollars. That’s money you never intended to spend in the first place.

Employees need space and supplies (not to mention travel costs and continuing education) to accomplish the job you just hired them to do. As the employer, that’s your responsibility. Not theirs. And if working conditions aren’t acceptable, you could be in a lot of trouble.

Putting employees in the closet is generally frowned upon, no matter how “roomy” you might think it is.
REASON FOUR

You Need to Keep the People You Have Busy

Employees need employers to tell them what to do.

I’m not talking about barking orders at people or morphing into a quasi-dictator. Employees are expensive. That means you have to keep them busy to make them worth the cost.

It took me forever to realize that not everyone works as hard as I do. When I was younger, I assumed that hard work was what everyone did. I thought everyone wanted to get ahead.

Wrong!

My experience as an employer has been that most people are content with doing as little as possible, getting a paycheck, taking their vacation time, and going home.

Yes, I’m jaded. If you’ve been hiring for any length of time, you’re probably a little jaded about the process too.

Don’t believe me? Just walk around the office and watch people looking busy. There are employees who make a career out of looking busy. (You know exactly what I mean. You’re probably reciting their names in your head right now.)
You’ve made a full-time hire. That means you’ve purchased forty hours of their time in daily blocks of eight-hour segments. The employee is not going to feel bad if they only use twenty-five of their allotted forty hours. They did what they were told was expected of them. The one who loses is you!

What if you needed someone to fill a position but only had enough work to keep them busy for twenty hours a week? You’d have to go searching for a part-time employee. Many times the best, most-qualified people aren’t looking for part-time work. That means you have to settle for less.

Ouch!

The end result is that you have twenty hours of work but hire a full-time person for forty hours a week plus their employee burden costs. You lose . . . again . . . on every front.
Reason Five

Availability Isn’t the Same As Competency

Never confuse availability with competency. The reality is that you need to expand your workforce to accomplish your business objectives. That means you need the right person at the right price—today. (I’m confident in making that assumption because you’re probably not reading this for pleasure.)

Just because someone is available for the time you need them, at the rate you can pay, and for the tasks you need completed, doesn’t mean they are the best person for the job. In fact, sometimes the person you need to hire is most likely already employed by someone else. (Did you just hear the universal cash register in the sky ringing, adding the pile of money necessary to lure you’re next hire away from another employer?)

When you make the investment in hiring an employee, you deserve to get the best person available on the market. I want that for you too. All business owners want the best their money can buy.

Remember, the end goal is not to hire people for the sake of hiring them. You’re hiring them because it’s part of the process of moving you toward your business goals. (If you confuse one with the other, your business will go broke—and quickly.)
If reaching your business goals is the end game, then why would you settle for someone who is AVAILABLE instead of the BEST person for the job?

You shouldn’t! I want you to know it’s possible to have the most competent person available for the price you can afford and for the amount of time that you need them. Seriously.

You can have your cake and eat it, too, if you’re willing to think about staffing slightly differently than employers did during the industrial era.
There have been countless studies conducted on the eight-hour workday trying to determine how many hours a day employees are productive. Some of those studies suggest employees max out their productivity at four hours a day.

Some large companies have used this data to create variable work schedules for their employees as long as their business units continue to meet their productivity goals. Unless you’re Best Buy, you’re probably not sitting around thinking up creative work schedules for your employees.

As the business owner, you have a lot invested in what you’re doing. The most difficult part about staffing is coming to terms with the notion that no one else—no matter how much you pay them—is going to care as much as you do about your success and future.

Get over it!

Employees most likely aren’t given any ownership of the company unless you’re talking about senior executive positions in large, publicly traded companies. (And if that’s the kind of staffing you’re doing, I have to ask . . . Why are you reading this eBook?)

Employees don’t have the same “skin” in the game you do.
The idea that employees work every hour they are “on the clock” is ludicrous. It just doesn’t happen. If that’s true, why is the only staffing option that you consider legitimate one that requires a full-time employee who works eight hours a day, five days a week?

- What if you’re an independent consultant who needs help coordinating travel, setting appointments, or managing paperwork?
- What if this function only required five hours of help each week?
- What if by offloading this task-related work, you could add one new client to your list?

My guess is you’re probably doing things right now that are taking you away from your core work, the stuff that makes clients want to hire you. You know there is more opportunity out there, but you’re stuck in the middle because you don’t want to hire a full-time person.

If you’re spending time completing work-related tasks instead of work that creates revenue, it’s time to add staff. But hiring a full-time person is NOT your only option.

You have options . . . if you’re willing to consider alternatives to traditional staffing models.
What happens when you . . .

- make a bad hire?
- can no longer afford to fund a full-time position?
- discover that an employee is not a good fit?

Yep. You guessed it. You have to fire them. (Or let them go. It’s all the same thing.)

Even when letting someone go is the right decision, it’s not an easy one. To look someone in the eye and tell them they no longer have a job is so hard that most employers tend to put off making that decision too long.

Once the hard part is over, now you get to start the hiring process all over again. (Yeah! Yipee! Awesome! . . . That’s exactly what I was thinking too.)

I’m certainly not suggesting that every employee you hire is not going to work out. Nor am I suggesting that traditional staffing models are entirely defunct. I’m merely trying to underline the idea that hiring full-time employees comes with a lot of baggage. Sometimes it’s worth it. And sometimes it’s not.
What’s worse is that there are businesses who are being held back because they can’t afford to expand their staffing levels or simply don’t want to incur the risk of doing so.

- This hurts the business owner.
- This hurts the job market.
- This hurts the economy.

Hire enough people, and you will have to fire someone. It’s usually not pretty and is often very uncomfortable. This is why so many businesses choose to leave seats empty rather than risk that next new hire.

It doesn’t have to be that way. The disruption you should be worried about is achieving that next level of growth and success, not making the decision to fire and re-hire someone.
I’ve worked in small and large companies. I’m now the co-owner of a growing small business. I understand what you’re going through because I’ve been there. In fact, I’m there.

One thing I’ve learned along the way is that businesses that succeed always have time, focus, and money for . . .

1. revenue/sales generation,
2. internal systems and process developments, and
3. leadership development.

If you’re not spending the time you need to get in front of people and connect with your core audience, you won’t have a business for very long. (Unless you sell something that people have to have and only can get from you. My guess is that is highly unlikely.)

That means when you’re not spending money gaining market share, your competition is. Can you spell d-i-s-a-s-t-e-r?

Even small businesses need to be one step ahead of the marketplace. If you’re not, you’ll be left behind.
Why is the conversation about investing money in marketing and advertising and research and development important? Because if all your money is tied up in personnel, you will choke on your own payroll.

- Growth is what created the need to expand and reconsider your staffing strategy.
- Growth is what led you to hire new employees.
- Growth is what will continue to propel you forward.

If you stop growing, you die. If you spend all your money meeting payroll, your business will slowly fade away.

Remember, the end game is about accomplishing your specific business outcomes, not subsidizing the lifestyle of others. Staff should help you grow your business, not inhibit it from doing so.

I wonder if what’s holding you back from continuing to move forward and maximize marketplace opportunity is the fact that your “growth” dollars are tied up in payroll.
REASON NINE

An Affair Will Cost You More than You Think

It still amazes me when it happens. It shouldn’t shock me, but it does. It shocks a lot of us for good reasons. Leaders have “moral failures” with their staff all over the U.S. and around the globe.

Sure, you can convince yourself that this never will happen, but the truth is . . .

• A lot of leaders who have affairs are visibly arrogant people. They believe their own press and they think everyone else does too. They are only fooling themselves and catering only to people who fuel their ego. Show me an arrogant leader, and I will show you a leader in an affair or about to have one. Their arrogance, if left unchecked, will impact their success.

• Leaders need distance from their staff, especially those they work the closest with. Distance is called “forced accountability” or—in simpler terms—boundaries, guardrails, or margin.

• During temptation or as the “innocent flirting” heats up, leaders gain convenient “amnesia.” They need to remember that a decision to cheat or have an affair can be a career-ending move.
My goal is to help businesses and their leaders stay on track to meet their objectives. It’s very difficult to do this when personal relationships with staff get in the way.

One of the most requested positions we help businesses staff is the executive assistant. And you guessed it. This is also the one staff position that can create the most disruption in any business or organization . . . whether you’re the pastor of a church, the CEO of a growing company, or an official seeking or holding public office.

Don’t let poor decision making—whether that means hiring the wrong person, committing to a payroll you can’t afford, or putting yourself in a potentially compromising position—be the reason you don’t succeed. You’ve worked too hard and come too far to let your efforts end like that.

Traditional staffing works until it doesn’t. It’s not the only option available anymore. If the goal is moving your business or organization forward, then the path to success becomes more about getting there than simply relying on tradition and precedent.

Maybe it’s time to rethink your approach to staffing.
CLIENT PROFILES

Name: Greg Ligon
Business Name: Leadership Network
Type of Business: Non-Profit Ministry

Why is having an assistant important to you?

There are so many daily routine tasks that don’t take much time in themselves but all in all they add up. Having an assistant frees up time that was spent on those tasks so I’m able to focus on the strategic tasks that were clouded by the administrative tasks.

How did you staff an assistant prior to MAG?

Prior to MAG, I had an EA of two years that became so overburdened that the true administrative tasks were shifted from her plate back to mine, so essentially an EA was needed for my EA.

What made you choose MAG?

I met Bryan and Shannon at Exponential Conference in 2011 and heard about their offering. We had previously outsourced many roles (e.g., graphic design, marketing, etc.) but had never thought of outsourcing our EA. However, we are a virtual company, so outsourcing this role made sense with our model. I did not struggle over the idea of an EA, but since about three or four of the people who would begin using a MAG virtual EA had never had an EA before, there was concern that they would not have anything
They spent time dissecting their day-to-day tasks to understand what their EAs could do, and so far it is working wonderfully and there is no lack of things for the EAs to do.

Separately, MAG did an exceptional job at matching the five EAs they assigned to Leadership Network. Each person’s unique EA has either served at an LN church or at a church similar to the traditional LN church. I do a lot of multi-site work, and my specific EA has worked with multi-site churches before, so that helps. One of the marketing coordinators who has a MAG EA got matched with an EA who had previous graphic design experience. Each EA is strategically matched.

I am very impressed with the caliber of our EAs. They are extremely proficient and professional, and the main selling point to me has been this—I love the internal training that each MAG EA goes through, which helps them be ready to go with the customer they are assigned to.

**List the regular activities your MAG EA does for you:**

Scheduling, tracking expenses, booking travel, managing databases, graphic design work, blog posting, blog writing, several other blog-related tasks, customer research, project-specific research, troubleshooting, and exploration so that leaders are maximizing their tools.

**How has your MAG EA made you a better leader?**

It has freed me to be more strategic, to focus on clients, to better manage my team, to plan, prepare, and to leverage my blog presence, which is a strategic focus for Leadership Network.
What advice do you have for others considering a virtual assistant?

Do it quickly!

I am already considering adding hours and/or adding EAs after only two months with MAG. I like having an EA for each person at Leadership Network because it allows for EAs to focus specifically on one person instead of having one person trying to support everyone. Because we each have a dedicated EA, no one wastes any time switching gears or staying on top of things.

Name: Sam Fagan
Business Name: Inversion Group
Type of Business: Strategic Business and Marketing Consulting Group

Why is having an assistant important to you?

Having a trustworthy assistant with like values is key to day-to-day success. Having an assistant is critical to handling the operations side of the business so that I can focus on the strategic and customer-facing side of the business

How did you staff an assistant prior to MAG?

Prior to my MAG assistant, Katrina, I had a managing partner of the business who handled the operations side of the house. However, when this person split off from Inversion Group, my need for an assistant became ever apparent.
What made you choose MAG?

I had a friend in ministry who referred me to MAG and Bryan Miles when my need for an assistant became a priority. As I mentioned above, partnering with MAG made sense from multiple standpoints such as having a trustworthy EA candidate that had been vetted by a trustworthy organization. It was also important for me to partner with a company like MAG, which shares my values. Additionally, I ended up going with MAG because handling the selection process for my EA became too cumbersome and risky. I wanted to be removed from the selection process and have MAG handle the details while I continued to run my business. This way I received a quality candidate that was leaps and bounds above anyone I was finding on my own.

List the regular activities your MAG EA does for you:

At the onset of my EA engagement, I had a list of immediate tasks that had to get done, but once those were complete, I had not taken the time yet to evaluate what my EA could handle for me on a day-to-day basis. My EA and I worked together to evaluate my day-to-day activities and determine what she could take over versus what I had to keep because only I could do some tasks. Eventually we determined that project research, writing Twitter and Facebook updates, blog post writing, and general social media management were the primary responsibilities that my EA would manage. However, as my company grows and expands, and as we bring on more employees, I see my EA becoming the central administrator for the team, collecting time sheets, sending out communications, and coordinating schedules. She is flexible, and that is what is most important to me.
How has your MAG EA made you a better leader?

My EA has freed me up to focus on expanding my business. She has boosted my social media presence and has helped me to achieve my goal of complete company transparency via social media. Additionally, by having the opportunity to manage my EA, I’m learning to recognize what makes her tick and what empowers her, ultimately making her a happy employee and making me a better manager to be able to recognize these things in my employees.

What advice do you have for others considering a virtual assistant?

I have three pieces of advice for someone considering an EA:

1. Ensure that your expectations of your potential EA match up to what you are requesting from MAG.
2. Take the time up front to learn your EA’s personal schedule (and vice versa) to ensure that you are capitalizing on his or her most productive hours of the day and to keep expectations in line.
3. Talk to your EA and find out what makes him or her tick; give tasks and projects that he or she likes to do and that are empowering—this will mean better results for you and your company, as well as a happy EA!
Why is having an assistant important to you?

Having a highly skilled EA at a low cost is critical for our church’s day-to-day operations. However, finding a candidate of this caliber at this cost is generally unheard of in the church world. Having an EA frees me up to be people-focused, which is 90 percent of my job. My EA manages the “behind the scenes” so that I can focus on the congregation and their needs. Additionally, as our focus on pastoral care became front and center, I needed someone to help me keep the pastoral care schedule in line and to help me take our pastoral care above and beyond.

How did you staff an assistant prior to MAG?

Prior to our MAG assistant, I had never had an assistant before.

What made you choose MAG?

Ultimately we went with MAG because Bryan Miles was a trusted advisor to me. I knew Bryan when he was at Cogun and even then, Bryan was more than the sales manager role he filled there—he was a friend and trustworthy source for guidance, someone I could always trust. When he ventured off to open MAG, once again Bryan assumed the role of trusted advisor, and I knew that going with an EA from MAG was the right choice. Furthermore, Shannon Miles, after doing an onsite evaluation of our church, was able to bring to light the day-to-day tasks that an EA could take
over for me. She, too, became a trusted advisor who helped me realize my full potential in my role as lead pastor and how I could take it to the next level by having an EA.

**List the regular activities your MAG EA does for you:**

- Schedule management
- Report management and review
- Pastoral care management and strategy

**How has your MAG EA made you a better leader?**

My EA has enabled me to be a better leader in a number of ways! Primarily, she has enabled me to spend 70 percent more time managing, developing, and leading my staff than I was able to do previously. This ensures that my team runs like a well-oiled machine while I can trust that the administrative behind-the-scenes is handled by my EA.

**What advice do you have for others considering a virtual assistant?**

First and foremost, I suggest a consultation with the MAG team. Let them come in and show you where you need help. This is what they do, and at a very professional level. It may be hard for you to think of what someone else can handle for you, but with the guidance of the MAG team, they can bring clarity to this process.

Second, re-train your brain about what you can do versus what someone else can do. You have to be open to letting someone come in and take some things off of your plate if the relationship is going to thrive and be successful.
Finally, take the time up front to get to know your EA. Understand his or her personal life, personal schedule, and discuss what works best for both of you. Set expectations up front and over-communicate your needs and wants, and ask your EA to do the same so that there are never any unspoken rules or expectations. This ensures success and happiness for you, your organization, and your EA.

Name: Tim Coan
Business Name: ALN Medical Management
Type of Business: Outsourced revenue cycle management—physician billing and implement and support their EMR

Why is having an assistant important to you?

I never had one before because I’ve always been self sufficient, but I was looking for ways to get leverage in my business. I never needed a full-time assistant, and I read about MAG in one of Michael Hyatt’s blog posts.

How did you staff an assistant prior to MAG?

I didn’t have one.

What made you choose MAG?

The description of the business model was attractive. I didn’t need someone full time. I had a great conversation with Bryan and liked him and his commitment to Jesus Christ.
List the regular activities your MAG EA does for you:

Scheduling meetings, back and forth, proactively reaching out to contacts, managing my calendar, planning and booking travel, plus odds and ends projects.

How has your MAG EA made you a better leader?

I’ve been more efficient now that my EA has taken over planning and booking my travel. I have a network of people all over—not just in Denver—so my EA has helped me be more intentional about maintaining relationships and keeping connected, even proactively suggesting whom I should meet with at times.

What advice do you have for others considering a virtual assistant?

Make the investment to go above and beyond. I describe neighborhoods to Chris so that when she sets up breakfasts and lunches, she has an idea of location. Take the time on the front end to bring on board and integrate your EA. Communicate fully and clearly through texts and e-mails so you get what you need from your EA. Talk occasionally on the phone, but if you get off on the right foot and get to know one another at the beginning, you will increase efficiency by being able to communicate purely via text and e-mail.
NEXT STEPS

If this eBook has helped you start to rethink your approach to staffing, then . . .

Businesses

Subscribe to our blog eaHELP.com/blog.

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Churches

Subscribe to our blog MAGsays.com.

Schedule a time to review your needs via phone.

Follow us on Twitter (@MAG_says).
Bryan Miles is co-founder & CEO of Miles Advisory Group and eaHELP, which he is blessed to run with his wife, Shannon. Prior to starting MAG, he worked for companies in the tech and construction industries, including Cogun, Inc., a national church construction company as the VP of Consulting. Bryan obtained his B.A. in Business from Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Bryan, Shannon, and their daughter Rainey and son Harper attend church at the Browns Bridge Campus of North Point Community Church. Bryan also enjoys backpacking and mountain climbing. You can connect with Bryan on Twitter (@BryanMiles), Facebook (MilesAdvisoryGroup), LinkedIn (BryanMiles1), or e-mail (Bryan@MilesAdvisoryGroup.com). He blogs regularly at www.MAGsays.com.