

## **Beware Cowboy Virtual Assistants**

A guide to *Choosing a Virtual Assistant* has been launched by Herts-based company AskLilach as a result of the surge in the number of 'cowboy' Virtual Assistants setting up. Their lack of qualifications, insurance and the right processes, structures, skills or experience to do the job are putting businesses at risk.

Anyone can set themselves up as a Virtual Assistant, working from their own office and using their own equipment, offering small and start-up businesses services traditionally provided by Personal or Administration Assistants in larger companies. Services include administration, business support, diary management, copy typing and call-minding and businesses only pay for the time they use – making it very cost effective.

Lilach Bullock, Director of Virtual Assistant company AskLilach, and runner-up in the National Virtual Assistant of the Year Awards 2007, said: "I get calls every week from people wanting to set up as Virtual Assistants. If a business is considering taking on a Virtual Assistant then it needs to protect itself by carrying out a number of checks. A reputable Virtual Assistant will have professional indemnity insurance, be registered with the Data Protection Act, have processes in place ensuring the security and confidentiality of client information and ensure

that contracts are in place for all work undertaken – agreeing the work to be undertaken, cost and timescale.”

A suitably qualified and experienced Virtual Assistant will help a business become more efficient and free up time they spend on non-fee paying activity so there is more focus on customers and growing the business. A Virtual Assistant provides extra resource without the business needing to employ them or take on employer liabilities such as tax, national insurance or holiday and sickness pay.

There are many factors that a business needs to take into account when considering taking on the support of a Virtual Assistant, including their relevant skills, commitment to ongoing training and study and membership of professional bodies. A guide, to help businesses ask the right questions when choosing a Virtual Assistant, is available by emailing: [info@asklilach.co.uk](mailto:info@asklilach.co.uk)