

# JAMES SCHRAMKO

## 25 Valuable Things to Know About Philippines VAs

### 1. Kinds of tasks they can do

Philippines VAs are very good at support and content wrangling - editing and putting words on websites, editing video and audio, building sites. If you use a no-code platform like Klean, that's amazingly easy for a VA to learn.

They can send out emails, do bookkeeping, manage your scheduler, reply to people in your email, manage your inbox if you want - a lot of the general stuff that shouldn't occupy a business owner's time.

You'll be amazed what your VA can do given time, training and good examples, and if you hire right.

That said, specialized areas like paid ads, graphic design, SEO strategy, copywriting, and apps are something you're probably better hiring elsewhere for.

### 2. The amount of oversight they need

Oversight will be a factor of:

- What expectations have been set from you
- How clearly your team member understands the expectations
- If those expectations are being met

Generally, a Filipino VA needs about as much oversight as a western hire. If they've worked with you for a while, it can be enough to know what they're up to in a day and what they've accomplished, with weekly meetings to align goals and voice challenges.

### 3. Weather and infrastructure

Depending on where in the Philippines your VA is, they may be more or less prone to weather disturbances and power or net interruptions.

In the city, they'll likely have access to malls for internet access if necessary, and multiple net providers. It's worth checking these things before you hire.

### 4. Critical thinking

Filipinos are normal people. You might think, because they go through school and university, and often enter call centers, that they're used to being told what to do. True, they're very, very good at following instructions. Given an environment, however, where they can and are required to think for themselves, and where mistakes are allowed, Filipinos are great critical thinkers.

### 5. Red flags to watch out for

If someone doesn't show up for their appointment, or are late, that would be a red flag, especially if they didn't communicate it in advance.

If you find that the basic level of English or comprehension is not that great, or if the

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equipment is not decent, those would be potential red flags.

Another is if they want you to pay to someone else's name. That might mean issues with them being able to have a bank account.

It would be a red flag if they don't show up often after you hire them, or if they're sick very quickly, or have got a family member always sick. They just might not like working for you.

## **6. How to be ready for your team member**

Think about this from your point of view - when you joined a business or started a job, if you've ever had a job, what did you want to happen?

When you bring them in, give them a walkthrough. Tell them about your business, what you actually do and who you serve. What are you hoping to achieve from this new hire? And in terms of systems, you can build systems together.

Share your standard operating procedures. And as you teach your things, let your hire document so they can do it from then on. Or make them a Loom video, or give them a procedures manual, if you've already got one.

Better yet, give them a buddy, someone who went through the exact same role, who'll show them the ropes.

And then check in with them very, very often.

## **7. Letting someone go**

When a VA leaves, it may be your fault, if you're a poor manager or have a toxic company or if they've had a bad experience working for you.

Generally however, it's the person and their performance. In which case, address the behavior. Tell them they haven't met the standards you agreed on and it's not sustainable.

Tell them they're free to find their dream role elsewhere, just not with your company. Give them appropriate notice and let them know you're sorry it didn't work out.

And if the person is great and you just can't afford them, consider finding them a new post, either with someone you know or through the agency you got them from.

## **8. Managing expectations**

Talk to your VA upon onboarding, and have a documented list of expectations - what they can expect from you, and what you expect of them.

One that's important is regular pay, consistent and early or on time.

## **9. Guarding against data breach**

Two-factor authentication is a good safeguard against the possibility your team member might be fished or hacked.

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A password management tool is a good idea, and when someone leaves, updating all the tool passwords they had access to.

And of course, build trust over time so you know you can count on your people.

## 10. How to pay your team legally

The rules are a bit loose on this. If you're in a country like Australia, or the UK, or America, Canada, etc., generally, your team in the Philippines will probably be viewed as an external contractor, basically a foreign contractor.

(NOTE: this is not the advice of a taxation specialist or lawyer, but James's opinion)  
This means they deal with their own tax and retirement and health funds. You can, however, provide health insurance if you like.

As far as ways to pay your team, there are many: Wise or bank transfer are a couple, or PayPal.

## 11. To shorten onboarding...

Do a test before hiring. You can even pay them for a test task, that's totally acceptable. This will give you good indication as to their ability, and what you've got to work with.

When they come on board, give them procedure guides or a person to take them through the training, or do it yourself.

Don't overwhelm them, of course - give them realistic stepping stones to move forward through the business.

## 12. Limitations in bandwidth

The main limitations are their natural abilities - things like design and the like, there will be limitations. There will be limitations in terms of how safety-focused they are versus how much risk they're willing to take, and that's largely a factor of the employer.

There will be limitations in terms of time or availability, in case they get rolling brownouts or internet issues, or if they're weather-affected, or have a family illness.

Previous experience is a factor.

With time and training, however, well-screened VAs can learn and accomplish a lot and be quite an asset to your business.

## 13. The matter of holidays

Filipinos have a very family-based culture, with a lot of holidays. They even make them up as they go.

It's a great thing that inspires loyalty if you can give them all their holidays off. If needs be, however, most VAs will observe the holidays you set, and even work a different time zone if necessary.

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## **14. Hire full-time**

Some people imagine one VA taking everything off their plate and doing it all on an hourly rate. Forget that. Hire a couple of people, and hire them for 40 hours a week, full time.

It might cost you \$1,500 or \$2,000 a month to have two to three incredible team workers in your business full time, who are dedicated to your success. That's where the magic happens.

## **15. Sustainability over efficiency**

Do not over-optimize your team and burn them out. The fastest Olympic runner will last 20 minutes at full speed. Give your VAs time off.

Don't aim to be as efficient as you can be. Be as reasonable as you can be and look at the long play.

## **16. The value of new skills**

If you want your VAs to take on new tasks, offer the training and give them time to learn. Many of them will appreciate the chance to better themselves and be amazing in their roles.

## **17. Competition in the market**

Finding a VA on jobs boards will put you up against stiff competition. If you want access to candidates no one else knows of, who have been expertly screened for English, equipment and ability, VisionFind.com offers that advantage.

And yes, rates have gone up, but the market is huge and the investment is worth it.

## **18. Getting around the exchange rate**

Don't make your VAs currency traders. Better to pay them a fixed amount in their own pesos. Just consider it a cost of business and less for your team to worry about, so they can focus on being awesome at their job.

## **19. Avoiding churn**

If the average stay of your VAs is between one to one and a half years before they move on, you're doing something wrong.

Either you're getting the wrong people from the wrong place, or you're just not an employer of choice.

There are people whose VAs stay six, seven, eight, 10, 12, 15 years. They will stay, if the place is good.

## **20. Qualifying candidates for skill**

You can pay job candidates to do tasks, and you can ask them for their portfolio of what they've worked on before.

And be open to the fact that some of these candidates won't have experience and will need training. Training takes lots of forms these days - you can use Loom videos and one-on-one

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huddles in Slack to take someone teachable from zero knowledge to proficiency, in a surprisingly short amount of time.

## **21. Pay rates**

Pay rates of juniors run to 26,000 pesos per month; seniors, middle of the road, 35,000, 45,000; very, very good, 50,000, 60,000.

## **22. Integrating with Western hires**

Filipinos can work quite well virtually with Western suppliers. Plug them together into Slack - that's a great way for them to communicate and interact.

## **23. Meet your team**

If you go to the Philippines and meet your team, you'll increase your productivity and enhance the relationship by multiples. The better you know and understand each other, the better you'll get along and the better they'll know how to deliver what you need.

## **24. Getting better applicants for the role**

Skip the jobs boards and use a company like VisionFind.com, that will screen your candidates for you.

They'll arrange an interview with your candidate, and you can do some kind of a paid test task.

There, you're not competing with anyone else - you've got the exclusive on the candidate while they're with you, as long as you're responsive. If you don't respond to VisionFind for a week or two, they'll probably send them to someone else, but that's how it works.

## **25. They're people like you and I**

Your team members in the Philippines are people, breathing oxygen, with blood in their veins. They eat food, watch movies, play games, enjoy their work. They're normal people, with whom you can have the best relationship.

If you'd like help finding your Philippines VA, check out [VisionFind.com](https://www.visionfind.com)