Glossary

The plain-language terms used across The Business of Virtual Assistance, defined as the book uses them. Rules, forms, and fees change and vary by state — treat these as a starting point and confirm the current details with the official source. This glossary is educational and is not legal, tax, or financial advice.

A

Add-on — An extra service offered on top of a package and priced separately, so the core package stays clean and predictable. (Part 9)

Assumptions — The conditions a quote depends on. Writing them down keeps an estimate from quietly becoming open-ended. (Part 11)

B

Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) — A federal report identifying who ultimately owns or controls a company, filed with FinCEN. The rules have changed and depend on the entity type — confirm the current requirement at the official source. (Parts 7, 18)

Bounded estimate (quote) — A price quote written so nothing is left open-ended: it states the scope, assumptions, exclusions, an approval point, a change-request line, and the price. (Part 11)

Business bank account — A dedicated account used only for business income and expenses, kept fully separate from personal money. (Part 7)

C

Capacity — The realistic number of hours you can actually work in a period, once non-billable time is removed. It sets the ceiling on what you can sell. (Part 2)

Change request — A written note that a client wants work beyond the agreed scope, handled as a fresh decision — usually with new cost or timing — rather than silently absorbed. (Parts 11, 16)

Commingling — Mixing business and personal money in one account. It is avoided because it muddies your books and can weaken the liability separation an entity is meant to provide. (Part 7)

Confidentiality — The duty to protect a client's private information, supported by least-privilege access and clear rules for handling data. (Part 8)

D

DBA (Doing Business As) — A registered trade name that lets you operate under a name different from your legal one. On its own it does not create a separate legal entity. (Part 6)

Discovery call — A short conversation to diagnose fit before you write a proposal — a diagnosis, not a sales performance. Its outcomes are a proposal, a request for more information, nurture, or a polite decline. (Part 15)

E

Effective hourly value — The net revenue a package earns divided by all the time it actually consumed, including unbilled time. It is the truest measure of what an offer is really worth to you. (Part 17)

EIN (Employer Identification Number) — A free federal tax ID for your business, issued by the IRS. It is free — never pay a third party for one. (Part 7)

Entity — The legal form of your business — sole proprietorship, LLC, and so on — which determines your liability and how you are taxed. (Part 6)

Exclusions — What a quote or package deliberately does not cover, stated plainly so expectations stay clear. (Parts 9, 11)

F

Form 1099 — The IRS form a client uses to report the payments they made to you as an independent contractor. (Parts 7, 8)

Form W-9 — The IRS form on which you give a client your taxpayer information so they can issue you a 1099. (Parts 7, 8)

Formation — The steps that bring your business into legal existence — choosing a structure, registering, and related filings — usually done with the EIN last. (Part 6)

H

How I Work policy — A plain-language document that states your operating rules up front: payment before work, communication norms, the late-payment pause, AI use, and boundaries. (Part 8)

I

Independent contractor — A self-employed businessperson who provides services under a contract, distinct from an employee. Classification turns on how the work is controlled and is governed by IRS, DOL, and state rules. (Parts 8, 18)

Intake — The information and access you collect once a client says yes and before work begins — limited to what the approved scope actually requires. (Parts 11, 12)

Invoice — The document that requests payment: line items, terms, due date, and accepted payment methods. (Parts 10, 11)

K

Kickoff — The first working meeting with a new client, followed by a short written summary of scope, channels, and first priorities. (Part 12)

L

Lead — A potential client who has shown interest but has not yet become a paying client. (Part 14)

Least-privilege access — Giving a client's tools and data only the minimum access the work requires, and no more. (Parts 8, 10)

LLC (Limited Liability Company) — A common structure that separates personal and business liability and is taxed flexibly. The specifics vary by state. (Part 6)

O

Offboarding — The clean close-out of a client engagement — mirroring onboarding — and the natural moment to ask for a testimonial or referral. (Part 16)

Onboarding — The structured start of an engagement once the start gate is met: kickoff, first priorities, and system setup. (Part 12)

Operating system — The set of regions — email, calendar, files, tasks, money, and the rest — that together run your business day to day. Build the process first and fit the tools to it. (Part 10)

Owner's draw — Money you take out of the business for yourself. It is not a paycheck and not a deductible expense, so plan your taxes around it. (Part 7)

P

Package — A defined bundle of services sold for a set price — often a number of monthly usable hours — with stated inclusions, exclusions, and boundaries. (Part 9)

Pipeline — The tracked path a lead follows from first contact to signed client. It also names the fixed document sequence — proposal, quote, contract, invoice — that turns a conversation into paid work. (Parts 11, 14)

Positioning — How you describe who you help and the problem you solve, so the right clients recognize themselves in your words. (Part 13)

Proposal — The document that recommends an offer to a prospect. The proposal recommends; the quote prices. (Part 11)

R

Referral — A new lead passed to you by a past client or contact — a low-cost, high-trust source of work. (Parts 14, 16)

Registered agent — A person or service designated to receive legal and official mail for your business. Using one can keep your home address off the public record. (Part 6)

Retainer — A recurring fee that reserves a set amount of your time each period. It must be clearly defined so it is never treated as unlimited work. (Part 9)

S

Scope — The specific work a client is paying for — what is included, and just as importantly what is not. (Parts 8, 11)

Scope creep — The gradual expansion of work beyond the agreed scope. You manage it by naming it, explaining the impact, and offering options — not by quietly absorbing it. (Part 16)

Sole proprietorship — The simplest structure, in which you and the business are legally the same. Easy to start, but it offers no separation of liability. (Part 6)

SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) — A written, repeatable set of steps for a recurring task, so quality stays consistent and the work can be handed off. (Parts 12, 18)

Start gate — The checkpoint that confirms a client is genuinely ready for work — not merely enthusiastic — before anything begins. In onboarding it is a five-part gate. (Part 12)

T

Tax reserve — Money set aside from income to cover self-employment and income taxes, since nothing is withheld for you when you are self-employed. (Part 7)

Testimonial — A truthful, permission-based statement from a client about your work, used as credibility. (Parts 13, 16)

Turnaround — The agreed time within which you will complete or respond to a request — for example, two business days. (Parts 9, 16)

U

Usable hours — The billable hours actually available for client work in a period, after realistic non-billable time is removed. They are the basis for sizing packages. (Parts 2, 9)

W

Warm outreach — Reaching out to people who already know you, using a short, relationship-first message rather than a cold pitch. (Part 14)